Kennet Granholm

Embracing the Dark

The Magic Order of Dragon Rouge–

Its Practice in Dark Magic and Meaning Making

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Preface

While at high school I could never have imagined that I would end up studying religion and spirituality. I was of the oppinion that religion was something for extremely gullible people, and not anything for a rational and informed individual as myself. I guess my teenage naivety got the upper hand. It was my interest in ancient mythologies that drove me to study Comparative Religion. The fact that most of my friends were already living in the city of Åbo, coupled with a nagging feeling that at the age of 22 I should probably be studying something, cemented my decision to apply to Åbo Akademi University. That things went as well as they did is not the accomplishment of me alone. I have the help, support, critique and friendship of a whole lot of people to thank. This is my thanks to them.

First and foremost I would like to thank the members of Dragon Rouge who made my research possible. Without you and the time and effort you invested in me, and my at times most certainly annoying and stupid questions, this book would never have seen the light of day. Thank you Thomas, Christofer, Tommie, Tobbe T, Malin, Åsa, Tobbe L, Kosta, Timo, Stefan, Camilla, Tina, Göran, Mattias, Christiane, Holger, Andreas, Johan, and numerous others. Working with you has been truly inspirational and fun.

During my field research I have often had to resort to kind people to provide me with room and border. Thank you Camilla & Kicki, Tiina, Tobbe, Johan & Gabriella, Björn and Bobbie. Without you my research would at the very minimum have been much less pleasant. Being arrested numerous times for sleeping in parks and back-alleys would at least have slowed down the process.

My friends and colleagues at the department should of course not be forgotten. My supervisor, professor Nils G. Holm, has been of tremendous support to me during my studies at Åbo Akademi. Docent Siv Illman – your insights are astounding. I would never have been able to finish this work without your help. Lecturer Jan Svanberg – without you my M.A.-thesis would still exist only as a brain-child, and I would never have considered pursuing a PhD.

With your fantastic openness coupled with vast knowledge and a keen intellect you are the ideal to strive for. Lecturer Lena Marander-Eklund – who introduced me to Discourse Analysis and got me hooked on it. Your tutoring in the process, and different facets, of fieldwork has also been of immeasurable importance. Professor Ulrika Wolf-Knuts – whose thought-provoking and often tough questions are at the same time both terrifying and welcome, and always greatly appreciated. You just might be the most sharp-witted human alive.

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My colleagues away from my home at Åbo Akademi. Titus Hjelm from the University of Helsinki. Together we have managed to convince foreign academics that all Finish religious scholars have long black hair, dress in leather, are into hard rock and treat black magic or Satanism in their research. Rock on man! Liselotte Frisk, Fredrik Greogorius and Mattias Gardell – the discussions I have

had with you pertaining to my research and other things academic have been very helpful.

My family at home – mom Leena, dad Göran, younger (although not smaller) brother Niklas. You have supported me through some pretty rough times and above all you have made me into the person I am today. Hope you are proud of me, I am proud of you!

My bandmates and family away from home – Maik, Pinja, Skanky, Mikko, Juzzi, Masa, Kisse. Your the best friends a bass player could have (not to mention the best band to be in – and to listen to…). You can be real bastards at times, but so can I and hey, that's family for you. I would like to thank Skanky in particular, as he took time to help me prepare my photographs for printing. Hey, sometimes even drummers prove to be useful.

My many friends who have supported me in various ways during my doctoral studies, mostly by simply being good friends. In fear of leaving out somebody I will not mention any single person by name. Just know that you are in my heart and that I am immensly greatful for having you in my life.

Inger Hassel and Kristina Toivonen at *Stiftelsen för Åbo Akademis forskningsinstitut*; you have provided a truly inspiring atmosphere to do research in (not to mention the fact that you have not expressed one word of disapproval when seeing my utter chaos of a workspace).

I would also like to thank professor John Skinner who language-checked my manuscript. Docent and lecturer Liselotte Frisk and PhD Henrik Bogdan who were kind enough to check my manuscript and comment on it. They both made me aware of obvious flaws in my manuscript and gave me armfuls of inspiration and encouragement.

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I would like to thank *1968 års jubileumsfond* for providing me with funds on several occasions, making it possible for me to do field

studies. Thank you *Stiftelsen för Åbo Akademis forskningsinstitut* for providing me with research grants – making it possible for me to live, and covering my travel expenses to a number of conferences. I would also like to thank *Branderska fonden* for providing me with a literature grant, making it possible for me to get hold on litterature I would otherwise have had difficulties in obtaining.

All of the abovementioned have helped me in my work, and without them you, dear reader, would not be holding this book in your hands. Of course I take full responsibility for any failings my study might have.

Åbo, May 2005

Part I - Introduction, Materials and Methods

1 Introduction

Dragon Rouge is a dark magical order, Dragon Rouge is a Left Hand Path order, Dragon Rouge is an alternative spiritual movement. What does all this mean? Not a lot to those unfamiliar with the field of esotericism, except that negative associations are likely to arise. Alternative spirituality then? Or the Left Hand Path? Again, these terms may not signify anything much to the reader not specifically fluent in the language of alternative religion. I use the term alternative spirituality for modes of religious thought and activity that differ pronouncedly from the forms of traditional religion. In fact, the differences may be so significant that using the word religion to describe the phenomenon might be ill suited. The Left Hand Path is one strand of alternative spirituality and dark magic is a form of Left Hand Path spirituality.

The present study focuses on Dragon Rouge and explores the forms and functions of the order. Dragon Rouge was a topic of discussion in the Swedish tabloid press in the mid 1990s, despite its relatively small number of members in comparison to the Swedish national church, and even to more formalized new religious movements. This fact alone motivates a study of the order. This is not, however, the only motivating factor for my research. Recent societal transformations have greatly affected the modes of religious life, and organizations such as Dragon Rouge are an expression of this development. Late modernity has led to a shift of focus away from authoritative institutions and directed it towards the individual. The postmodern spiritual seeker finds authority in him-/herself, and finds his/her own spiritual path to follow. The path of one individual is less and less likely to follow in the steps of another. Furthermore, the path is far more winding than the paths of the modern individual. Dragon Rouge provides material for a case study of alternative spirituality at the dawn of the 21st century.

1.1 Aim and Purpose of the Study

The main aim of the present study is to gain an insight into contemporary Western neopagan-magic spiritualities in general, and into Dragon Rouge in particular. The fundamental questions have been 'What is Dragon Rouge?' 'How does Dragon Rouge operate and function?' and 'What is specific to Dragon Rouge, and in what way does this order fit into the Western alternative spiritual milieu?'. Dragon Rouge is a rather new alternative spiritual organization and very little study has been carried out on the group (see section 1.3.1). This is why a thorough introduction to the order is called for. In addition to this, very little research has been done on magical movements similar to Dragon Rouge. In the area of Western esotericism many forms of magico-occult spiritualities have been researched, but even so, very few studies on movements adhering to the Western Left Hand Path are to be found. Therefore I consider it a meaningful task to give Dragon Rouge a comprehensive presentation. A strictly descriptive account is not enough, however, since Dragon Rouge as a movement operates with concepts which might be unfamiliar to non-magicians, including academics not well acquainted with the field of Western esotericism. My investigation aims at providing a deeper analysis as well.

I wanted to study and try to explain how and in what way the societally rather unorthodox concepts and philosophy of Dragon Rouge could give birth to a spiritual organization that is quite well integrated into the rest of society, without any real friction worthy of the name to be found. When writing my B.A. paper in folkloristics I had come across mass media-material which criticised the order quite severely (see Nilsson 1995a; 1995b; Stugart 1995; 1996; SVT 1996; Göteborgsposten 1997; Tidningarnas telegrambyrå 1997). Due to this, I initially took a quite different approach from the one I finished with. I wanted to explore how the negative media attention had affected the order, and what possible problems there might be because of this critique. My hypothesis was that such severe attention surely must have had some effect on the organization and its members. I even wrote a paper on the subject which I presented at a conference (Granholm 2001b). Later on, when interviewing

Dragon Rouge members, I discovered, however, that the negative media attention did not really affect them all that much. Certainly, they were annoyed by it and had no real confidence in the tabloid press, but in the wider perspective it did not seem to be such 'a big deal'. The negative mass media response was received mainly in the mid 1990s and has not been much of an issue since then. Nevertheless, this discovery led me to my present approach.

I wanted to investigate what it was in Dragon Rouge, and in particular in the worldview fostered by the order, that in the view of the members of the order made such disregard to criticism possible. I came to the conclusion that I had to explore the worldview and philosophy of Dragon Rouge in order to get to the bottom of the issue. In combination with the first of my questions, which had remained a constant, this resulted in the new question: 'What is specific to Dragon Rouge?' and 'In what way does Dragon Rouge fit into, and relate to, the cultic milieu?' In my view, these two questions provide a more fruitful approach to the subject of the study.

It should be emphasized that the thesis is divided into two distinct sections. The first major section, comprising of chapters 2 through 5, constitute a historic-descriptive exposition on Dragon Rouge and the context the order is imbedded in. The second major section, consisting of chapters 6 and 7, is an in-depth analysis of the ways people associated with the order make sense of life and existence. In this analysis of meaning-making the focus of the study is systematically narrowed down to dissect and shed light on formative factors in Dragon Rouge.

My dissertation is, furthermore, divided into four parts each of which deals with a specific content. Part one consists of an introductory discussion about the subject of study as well as a thorough presentation and reflection concerning source material and methods of gathering the material. Also included is a self-positioning in which I give an account of my standpoint in relation to the subject of study, as well as a self-reflective report on factors in my personal background which, according to my understanding, have influenced the study and the gathering of source materials. I also present a brief inventory of important terminology pertaining

to the present study. The terminology mainly consists of terms relative to the source materials, but I have also included some key academic concepts which are employed in the study.

Part two consists of chapters 2 through 5, which also constitutes the first principal section of the work, as mentioned above. The chapters all deal with the question 'What is Dragon Rouge?'. Chapter 2 provides a brief contextual background focusing on alternative spirituality in general, and the regions of Sweden and Stockholm in particular. Major societal changes in recent time are discussed, since such shifts in society may have a great impact on religiosity and spirituality in the contemporary world. This chapter situates Dragon Rouge within the overarching alternative spiritual milieu and in the historical context of Western esoteric thought and practice. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 treat Dragon Rouge as an order and an organization. Chapter 3 deals more closely with the philosophical characteristics of the order, providing a thorough presentation of key philosophical and doctrinal concepts. Chapter 4 takes up Dragon Rouge as an organization, providing information on the actual structure, design and functioning of the order. Here, a brief account of the historical origin of the order is presented. In chapter 5 I give ethnographic accounts of some of my fieldwork and discuss the practice of the order, on an individual as well as on a collective level.

Part three of the work, which constitutes the second principal section, includes chapters 6 and 7. In these chapters I discuss the ways in which reality is perceived, communicated and given meaning in the context of Dragon Rouge. The theoretical foundation of the analysis of meaning-making within the order is presented in chapter 6. This process of study is performed with the help of a social constructionist approach and a discourse analytical method. The focus in discourse analysis lies on communicative processes, rather than on mental representations. The main tenet that the method operates with is that social reality is produced and re-produced in social-communicational settings. Chapter 7 is the analytical portion of the study of meaning-making. I present six major discourses which play a significant role in the Dragon Rouge worldview. This is my way of dealing with the question 'What is

particular to Dragon Rouge' and of situating the order within the milieu of alternative spirituality.

In addition to the final conclusions and a summarizing discussion, chapter 8 will also include an in-depth contextualization. I will consider the spiritual milieu in which the order is situated and analyze how late modern societal transformations affect Dragon Rouge. Then, on the grounds of these considerations, I will draw my final conclusions.

1.2 Terminology

In this section I present some of the keywords and concepts which are relevant to the study, and which are important in understanding the text. I have divided the section into key academic concepts and terms which are used in a Dragon Rouge insider setting.

1.2.1 Key Academic Concepts

Western Esotericism
Western esotericism denotes "a Western form of spirituality which stresses the importance of the individual effort to gain spiritual knowledge, or *gnosis*, whereby man is confronted with the divine aspect of existence", and further emphasizes the holistic quality which is so common to this specific form of spirituality (Bogdan 2003b: 8). Western esotericism *per se* is generally considered to have come into existence, in the academic meaning of the term, during the renaissance when various esoteric notions and currents came together and where fitted into a common frame of reference (see Bogdan 2003b: 8; Hanegraaff 1996: 386-388). Western esotericism and its relevance for the present study is treated in section 2.1.

Occultism
Occultism has been defined as a series of practices grounded in the theory of esotericism. This definition is based on the works of Edward E. Tiryakian, in whose view occultism implies techniques

based on hidden and scientifically un-measurable forces in nature or the cosmos and that result in empirical effects (see Ahlbäck 1998: 166; based on Tiryakian 1972: 498-499).

Wouter J. Hanegraaff has a different view on occultism. He defines occultism as an etic term in the study of religion "which comprises *all attempts by esotericists to come to terms with a disenchanted world or, alternatively, by people in general to make sense of esotericism from the perspective of a disenchanted secular world*" (Hanegraaff 1996: 422). In practice this means that occultism is to be seen as a form of esotericism that emerged in the late 19th century, and where the idea of correspondences has given way to the idea of causality – in accordance with a mechanistic scientific worldview. Hanegraaff makes away with the distinction between theoretical esotericism and practical occultism suggested by Tiryakian. (Hanegraaff 1996: 422-423).

Alchemy

Alchemy is an important current in Western esotericism (see Faivre 1994). In popular thought, alchemy is often viewed as pre-scientific chemistry, with the purely materialistic goal of transforming lead into gold. This is true, but it is not the only aspect of medieval alchemy (Dobbs 1975; Shumaker 1972: 161), and certainly not in contemporary utilization of the craft. A keyword in the discourse of alchemy is *transmutation*, which signifies the refining rather than the simple transformation of materials. The concept of transmuting lead into gold, whilst also referring to the actual practice of transforming a cheap metal into an more valuable one, is an allegory of a spiritual alchemy signifying the alchemist transmuting his/her soul to perfection (Dobbs 1975: 35-39; Thomas 1971: 269-271; Shumaker 1972: 186-193).

Qliphoth

Qliphoth is the dark aspect, or shadow-side, of the *Sephiroth* of Jewish qabalah. In qabalah the path to the Godhead leads through ten increasingly pure worlds on the tree of life – the sephiroth. The worlds on the sephiroth are, from the most material to the most divine *Malkuth, Yesod, Hod, Netzach, Tipareth, Geburah, Chesed, Binah,*

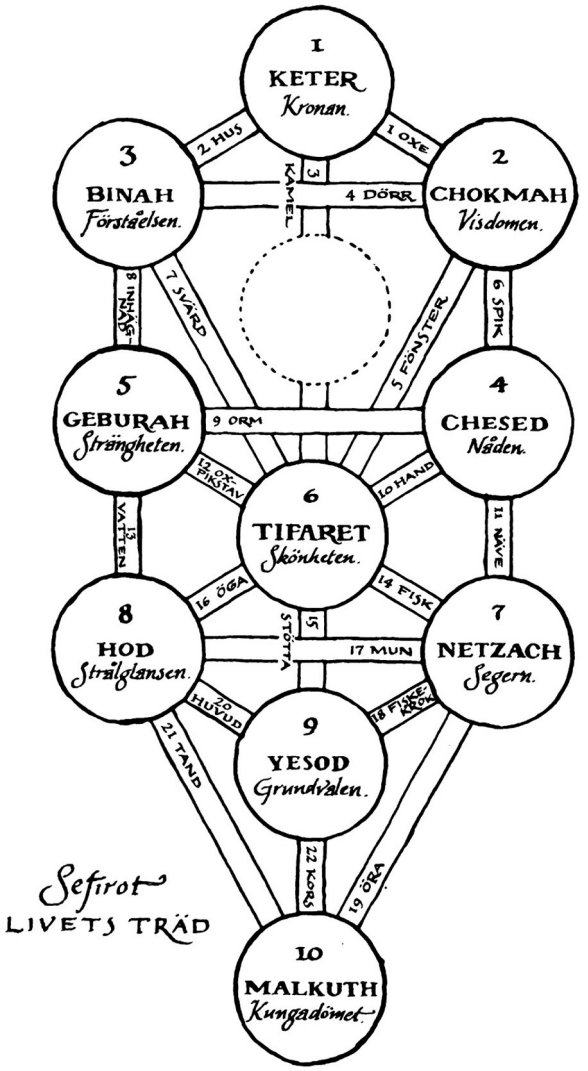
Chokmah and *Kether*. Malkuth represents the material world. The qabalist ascends through the ten worlds until finally finding union with God in the sephira of Kether. According to Jewish mysticism, in the beginning God, *Ain Sof*[1], was everything. In order to create the world *Ain Sof* had to contract itself in order for an empty nothingness to exist. *Ain Sof* then emanated through ten increasingly material worlds, the sephiroth, in order to create our world. The story of the qliphoth is that one or more of the containers or vessels in which the divine sparks of God were contained broke and some of the divine sparks, 288 in Lurian qabalah, were trapped in them (Trautner-Kromann 1992: 11).

With the withdrawal of the divine light, which returned to the creator, the vessels became the qliphoth, the tree of death or tree of knowledge (see Giller 2001: 49; 148-149; Scholem 2001: 76-77). The sparks, and *Sitra Ahra* – the Other Side, are impure as they have become independent from God (Scholem 1991: 73); they are in imbalance and form no part of the constructive forces of existence (Halevi 1976: 39). Bernhard Pick writes of a Sephiroth of Darkness or Evil which mirrors the Sephiroth of Good (Pick 1974: 77-78). The qliphoth consist of the ten worlds, from the world closest to our own to the world farthest away, *Lilith, Gamaliel, Samael, A'arab Zaraq, Thagirion, Golachab, Gha'agsheblah, Satariel, Ghagiel* and *Thaumiel*.

Magic

Magic is obviously a key concept for the study at hand. Many researchers in the field of religion have attempted to define magic and make a clear distinction between it and religion. Although old, James Frazer's definition of magic as an attempt to control the supernatural forces, in contrast to submitting to them in religion (Frazer 1987: 66-68), has shown itself to be very enduring. Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge see both religion and magic as offering compensation for experienced feelings of deprivation, and magic as offering more specific compensation to the more general compensation offered by religion (Stark & Bainbridge 1996: 36-42).

1 In the Pritzker edition *Zohar* Ain Sof (or Ein Sof) is translated as: "'There is no end'; that which is boundless; the Infinite. The ultimate reality of God beyond all specific qualities of *sefirot*; the God beyond God." (Matt 2004a: 459).



Picture 1. The sephiroth. The qabalistic Tree of Life. From Karlson 2004: 26.

In Emile Durkheim's view, magic and religion both work with the same general premises, such as belief systems, rites, myths and dogmas, but magic does not unite its practitioners in churches in the same way as religion (Durkheim 1995: 41-42).

I consider the distinctions somewhat problematic as both magic and religion in general work on the same premises and real foundational differences can be hard to find (see Hammond 1970; McDonalds 1995; Granholm 2000: 33-44, 56; Brodin 2001: 38-39). I use the term magic since this is the term used by Dragon Rouge to denote what the order does.

Cultic Milieu, Alternative Spiritual Milieu

The term Cultic Milieu was coined by sociologist Colin Campbell in the article *The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization*, published in *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* in 1972. Campbell identified the 'Cultic Milieu' as the breeding ground from which cults were born and as such a much more stable element in society than the cults which spring out of it. (Campell 1972; see Hanegraaff 1996: 14-16).

I use the term Alternative Spiritual Milieu to denote the overall atmosphere and context in which alternative spiritualities exist. The field of alternative spiritualities can be seen as a sphere in which specific movements, groups and practices co-exist and often cross over into each other. For example, a person who is a member of a Wiccan coven may participate in some 'New Age' practices, frequent the bookstores and specialist shops that druids, Aura-Soma therapists and Satanists also frequent, and be a member of a nation-wide neopagan interest organization in which Wiccans, heathens and neoshamans alike belong.

The term Alternative Spirituality is in turn defined as spiritual movements, groups and practices that do not belong to the religious mainstream, and that are not organized in traditional ways. In Swedish society for example neopaganism, Satanism, and 'New Age' could be seen as being alternative spiritualities.

1.2.2 Insider Terminology Relevant for the Study

Black, Dark, White and Light Magic, Magick

The art of magic is usually divided into black and white magic. Black magic is said to be used for egoistic and often evil purposes, whereas white magic is used for altruistic and benevolent purposes (Cavendish 1977: 12; Paranormal.se 2004a). The distinction sometimes appears as Dark (*Mörk*) and Light (*Ljus*) magic. In Dragon Rouge usage Black or Dark magic is magic where the magician explores the hidden and unknown, thus dark, aspects of existence and works with the transforming forces of chaos, whereas White or Light magic is of a more religious nature and works with the existing structures and the preserving forces of cosmos. No moral judgement is attributed to the terms, and black magic is not seen as anything either egoistic or evil. (Eriksson 2001: 2-9).

Magic is variously spelled as 'magic' or 'magick'. Magic spelled with a 'ck' instead of with 'c'-only originates from the early 20th century occultist Aleister Crowley. 'Magick' is commonly used by occultists to distinguish their art from the tricks of stage magicians (Lewis 1999: 183). 'Magick' is also used to distinguish Crowlean-based magic from other forms. Dragon Rouge members tend to use both spellings, but since the form 'magic' appears on the English version of the official Dragon Rouge homepage, I have chosen to use this form.

Regarding occultism, Dragon Rouge defines it as the theory whereas magic is occultism put into practice.

High magic, low magic

Magic is traditionally divided into high and low magic. High magic is magic used in order to perfect oneself and attain one's full potential. Low magic is magic used in order to reap material benefits, to evoke demons etc., that is to say magic without the goal of self-deification (Cavendish 1977: 12). The Dragon Rouge view is that the distinction between high and low magic is not all that functional. In the order's view so called low magic can be used with the goal of perfecting oneself (If mgt 2001/50).

Will, True Will, Higher Self, Daemon

Will is an important concept in contemporary magic. Will should not be understood as the mundane, everyday wants and whims of a person, but rather as the sum of the magician's true personality. Through magic the magician identifies and comes into contact with his/her True Will and refines his person. The term is written with a capital 'W' and is interchangeable with *True Will*. (Eriksson 2001: 120-123).

The magician's guardian spirit is identified in Dragon Rouge as the manifestation of the magician's True Will. The guardian spirit is also called the *Daemon* and the *Higher Self*. (Dragon Rouge 1996/3: 1). Aleister Crowley is often identified as the magician who made the concept of Will so important in contemporary magic, and, while this is true, the concept was used in much the same far earlier by the 16-17th century esotericist, Jacob Böhme (Faivre 1994: 63).

Magical progress is often talked about in Dragon Rouge as an alchemical process in which the magician compresses his essence into an increasingly pure form. The result is *the Black Diamond* which is the magician's compressed Higher Self, the magician having become a god. (IF mgt 2001/11; 47; Eriksson 2001: 124-130).

The Left Hand Path (LHP), The Right Hand Path

The terms *Left Hand Path*[2] and *Right Hand Path* refer to two different ways of relating to and approaching the numinous. According to

2 A somewhat trivial but still interesting issue is that of connotations of the word left. The left side has in many cultures been regarded as the side of wrong and evil. 'Vāma' can be translated as woman or left (Cologne Sanskrit 2004). In India the right hand was used when eating and the left hand when cleaning oneself after visiting the toilet. Thus, the left hand symbolized impurity, in physical as well as in spiritual matters and its connection to the female also denotes that the woman is impure. In the Western world the left and left-handed people have symbolized a broad range of undesirable qualities, such as weakness, clumsiness and dishonesty. In the Bible the tribe of Benjamin originated from the right hand side, whereas *Ehud* of the tribe was left-handed, and a murderer. The word left in the English language originates from the Anglo-Saxon 'lyft', which meant weak or worthless. The Italian word for left handed, 'mancino', also means treacherous. The Latin word 'sinister' translates into English as left or wrong, perverse (Latin Dictionary 2004). Not to forget the fact that we shake hands with our right hand, not our left. Earlier, Western psychology did consider the left-handed person to be a bearer of all sorts of

Dragon Rouge, the left side stands for *"chaos, darkness and freedom"* and the right side stands for *"order, light and restriction"* (Dragon Rouge 1996/3: 3). The biggest difference between the paths is to be found in the view they represent of purity and morality. Left Hand Path Tantra views everything as manifestations of the divine, and thus even that which is traditionally viewed as impure and demonic is holy (see Feuerstein 1998: 224-229). Therefore things such as sex can be used in order to attain enlightenment. On the morality issue ramblers on the Left Hand Path usually discard a once-and-for-all outlined and valid-on-all-occasions ethical code for an individual situational morality. The terms originate from India and are mainly used in a Tantric context (see Harvey 1997: 97). Satanism is said to be the Left Hand Path of the west (Paranormal.se 2004b). In the west the Left Hand Path is usually used for the occultists whose goal is self-deification with a maintained individuality, whereas the Right Hand Path is used for the occultists striving for a union with the divine with a resulting resolution of the magician's individuality. The terms are generally abbreviated LHP and RHP. (IF mgt 2001/50; Dragon Rouge 2004c).

Kundalini, Chakras

Kundalini is a concept originating from Indian Tantrism and stands for the innate life-force of a person, also identified as Shakti. The Kundalini-energy is represented as a snake rolled three and a half turns around a Shiva-lingam, the phallic symbol of Shiva, and situated at the base of a person's torso, in the *Muladhara Chakra*. The Kundalini-serpent is thought to usually be in a dormant state, but through meditation it can be awakened and thus it rises from the Shiva-lingam up towards the head. In travelling through the body it passes through different power-nexuses, *Chakras*, usually depicted as seven in number, and this results in activation of occult powers. A particularly important Chakra is the *Ajna Chakra*, situated in the forehead, and its activation

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unwanted social behaviours and qualities, such as homosexuality, incestuous desires, impotence, and mental disorders. See also Scholem 2001 and Idel 1988 for the view of the left in Jewish mysticism (Scholem 2001: 74-76; Idel 1988: 208). Margaret Stutley gives a short example of Left as the sinister and unwanted side (Stutley 1980: 98). See section 2.2 for more information on the Left Hand Path, feminine symbolism and antinomianism.

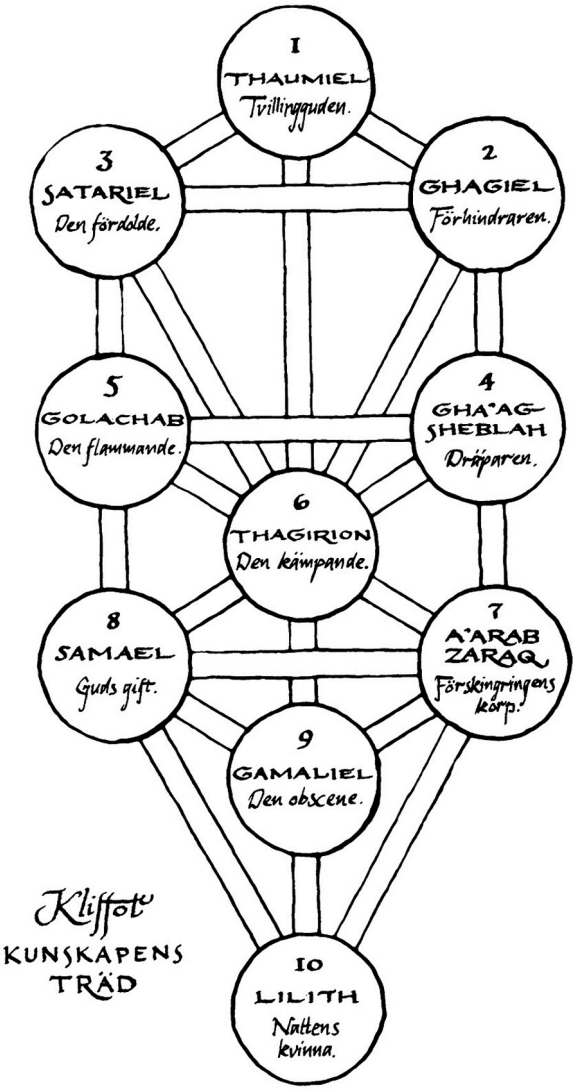
gives powers of clairvoyance (see Feuerstein 1998: 152-154). When the Kundalini rises through the seventh power nexus, the *Sahasrara Chakra*, enlightenment is attained. (Woodroffe 1956: 11-17; 1959: 652-674; Eliade 1958: 245-249; Feuerstein 1998) In Dragon Rouge the practitioners also work with hidden, thus dark, chakras which are not activated in regular Kundalini meditation (Dragon Rouge 2001g). (Dragon Rouge 2003b).

Runology, Runosophy, Rune Magic

Runology is the study of runes. This denotes the academic study of runes as well as more esoteric speculation. In fact, these two aspects are often mixed in runological works. (see Andersson 1997: 15-16). Runosophy is the more esoteric study and application of runes, or as Thomas Karlsson puts it, "the wisdom of the runes" (Karlsson 2002a: 8). Rune magic, then, is runology and runosophy put into practice. Runosophy and Rune magic are much used in Dragon Rouge, since they are among Thomas Karlsson's main magical interests. In Dragon Rouge rune magic is put into a system much similar to the sephiroth or qliphoth in qabalah (Karlsson 2002a: 114-120). Works by the Swedish runologists, Johannes Bureus (1568-1652) and Sigurd Agrell (1881-1937), including Bureus' concept of *Adulruna* and Agrell's *uthark*-theory are much used in the order (IF mgt 2001/50; Karlsson 2002f. See Andersson 1997: 99-103, 241-246 for more information on Bureus and Agrell. The uthark is discussed more in section 2.1.1). The discarding of the futhark, the common rune-row, in favour of the more esoteric uthark is also a common feature of the Swedish neoshamanic movement (See Hedlund & Gejel 1988; Gejel 1988: 101; Grimsson 1990: 80-81).

Qliphoth in Dragon Rouge Use

The *qliphoth* is an important theme in Dragon Rouge, as it stands as the model for the order's initiatory system. In the Dragon Rouge context the qliphoth consist of eleven worlds, in contrast to the ten worlds of sephiroth. This is due to the world of Thaumiel being a double world, representing separation and liberation from God and his creation instead of total union with God in Kether on the sephiroth. Whereas Malkuth is our world, Lilith is its nigth-side, actualised in



Picture 1. The qliphotic, also known as the Tree of Knowledge. From Karlsson 2004: 70.

the night and in the chaos elements present in our world, possible to access, for example, in the wild and untamed nature. The worlds of the sephiroth are ruled by archangels and the worlds of the qliphoth are ruled by demons. (IF mgt 2001/47; 49; Eriksson 2001: 10-22; Karlsson 2002e; Karlsson 2004: 24-39, 53-58, 66-67).

The qliphotic qabalist, or the dark magician, descends through the different qliphoth and becomes a god through the qlipha of Thaumiel. There are several different ways of writing qliphoth, such as *Kliffoth*, *Kelippot* etc. I have chosen to use qliphoth in the plural and qlipha in the singular as these are the written forms used on the English version of the official Dragon Rouge homepage (Dragon Rouge 2004b).

1.3 Earlier Research

In this section I present the literature relevant for my topic and used in the present study. I have divided the presentation into three parts; literature on Dragon Rouge, literature on magic and Western esotericism and literature on spirituality and meaning-making. In section 1.3.1 I treat the academic research on Dragon Rouge, as well as non-academic works, that in some way refer to or deal with Dragon Rouge. Section 1.3.2 gathers the relevant research in the field of Western esotericism and the history of magic. In the same section I also introduce works on alchemy, occultism, eastern esotericism and neopaganism, when the research in question is of relevance for this study. In section 1.3.3 I present literature dealing with meaning-making in relation to spirituality. I have also included more general works on meaning-making where these works have relevance for the present study.

1.3.1 Research on Dragon Rouge

Research on Dragon Rouge is basically non-existent, at least when it comes to higher academic research. The most comprehensive and serious study of the organization is my master's thesis from Åbo Akademi University written in the fall of 2000 (Granholm 2000). This work is, however, outdated and deals mostly with the

classification of Dragon Rouge, while still offering a basic insight into the teachings and practice of the organization. Henrik Bogdan's article *Västerländsk esoterism i svensk ungdomskultur* [Western Esotericism in Swedish Youth Culture] in the anthology *Talande Tro* [Meaningful Faith] deals mainly with Dragon Rouge, although it also gives a short presentation on the academic study of Western esotericism and a brief description of Western esotericism in general (Bogdan 2003a). Bogdan's article is a good introductory description of the order and its key characteristics, although, because of its length, it is by necessity on a very basic level. Liselotte Frisk's work *Nyreligiositet i Sverige* [New Religiosity in Sweden] contains a short chapter on Dragon Rouge (Frisk 1998: 142-147). Although this text is very short, it is still among the best published academic accounts of Dragon Rouge. The article by Bogdan draws to a large extent on Frisk's book but the author has also done an interview with the founder of the order. Both of these works, although good pieces of academic writing, are, because of the limited number of pages available, general and cursory in character.

Other writers who have mentioned the organization are Karl-Erik Nylund and Håkan Arlebrand (Nylund 1998: 239-242; Arlebrand et al. 1995: 137; Arlebrand 1998: 112-113; Wallin & Arlebrand 2001: 211). Both Nylund's and Arlebrand's accounts are biased, however, and the authors' purposes, especially Nylund's, seem to be to warn their readers about the order. Therefore, both Nylund's and Arlebrand's contributions are more useful as a general account of the more polemic attitudes towards Dragon Rouge, than as actual accounts of the nature of the order. The writers make their statements from a Christian, and anti-occultist, point of view. Nylund's book includes quite a blatant attempt to discredit Thomas Karlsson, the founder of the organization (see Nylund 1998: 239). Arlebrand's works do however have merit with regard to descriptions of phenomena and movements "further away from home". His accounts of, for example, the Theosophical Society and Anthroposophy are quite valid. Dragon Rouge is also mentioned in a work by the Finnish anti-Satanist, Riku Rinne (Rinne 1998: 13-16).

Dragon Rouge is also briefly referred to in an article by Martin Holmberg in the book *Att se det dolda* [To Perceive the Hidden] (Holmberg 1998: 256), in Jan Svanberg's Master's Thesis (Svanberg

1994: 33), in Olav Hammer's work on 'New Age', written prior to his doctoral thesis (Hammer 1997: 128) and in Henrik Bogdan's doctoral thesis (Bogdan 2003b:238). In all these works Dragon Rouge is only mentioned in passing in the context of other subjects (neopagan magic in the case of Holmberg and Hammer, Scandinavian neoshamanism in the case of Svanberg and Western initiatory esotericism in the case of Bogdan). Due to the very short and limited accounts of the order in these studies, it is very difficult to base any assumptions on them. The vast amount of different spiritual phenomena with which Dragon Rouge is associated in these texts is, however, an interesting fact. It underlines the difficulty of defining and classifying the order.

I have also acquired some unpublished academic undergraduate papers dealing with Dragon Rouge. Andrei Marin's paper *The Dragon and the Northern Star: An Anthropological Insight of a Magical Order in Northern Europe* (Marin 2000) is an attempt to formulate Dragon Rouge philosophy, practice and organizational structure for an academic audience. The paper argues quite strongly for the magico-pagan approach to the world and contains many quotations from the Dragon Rouge homepage. One of the best pieces of work dealing with the order and related subjects is Margareta Nobell's paper, *Den vänstra handens väg: Om mörkmagiker, satanister, djävulsdyrkare och konstruktion av identitet och karisma på nätet* (The Left Hand Path: On Dark Magicians, Satanists, Devil Worshippers and Construction of Identity on the Web) (Nobell 2002). Her work deals with the Left Hand Path as manifested in Western, in particular Swedish, magic orders, and discusses Dragon Rouge to some extent. Nobell's work is insightful and treats subjects often neglected in more established academic works. I have not used the undergraduate studies dealing with the order to any larger extent.

1.3.2 Magic and Western Esotericism

The subject of magic orders in general, as well as in particular, is also a largely neglected field of study in comparative religion and religious studies. One may find some works dealing with the likes of Eliphas Lévi (Alphonse Louise Constant), Aleister Crowley and

the latter's involvement in magical orders (The Golden Dawn, Ordo Templi Orientis and the Church of Thelema), but most of these accounts are more or less written from an insider's perspective or as polemics (see Howe 1972). With regard to Aleister Crowley, the works more often than not focus on unwarranted details of the man's personal life, most of which seem to have little relevance to an academic study of his teachings and practice.

The works of Frances Yates from the 1960s onward are considered to have instigated the birth of Western esotericism as a field of academic study (Bogdan 2003b: 9). As Bogdan notes, the research dealing with Western esotericism prior to this had mainly focused on certain elements, not on Western esotericism as a specific form of thought. Yates's book, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Yates 1964), is a groundbreaking study, due to the fact that it takes a new approach and attitude to the study of Western esotericism (see Bogdan 2003b: 11-13), even though there are problems with the study (see Hanegraaff 2001).

Another researcher who has contributed vastly to, and who in some ways can even be seen as the founding father of, the academic study of Western esotericism is Antoine Faivre. His book *Access to Western Esotericism* (Faivre 1994) may be considered compulsory reading for the researcher dealing with Western esotericism. In this work he presents a framework for identifying and analysing esoteric movements. Other works to which Faivre has contributed and that are used in this study are *Modern Esoteric Spirituality* (Needleman & Faivre 1993), *Gnosis and Hermeticism from Antiquity to Modern Times* (Hanegraaff & van den Broek 1998) and *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion* (Hanegraaff & Faivre 1998).

Other important scholars in the field of Western Esotericism are Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Olav Hammer and Jacob Needleman (Hammer 1997; 1999; 2001; Hanegraaff 1996; 1998; 2001; 2004; Hanegraaff & van den Broek 1998; Needleman & Faivre 1993). Although Hanegraaff and Hammer follow in the footsteps of Faivre, they deal mainly with the 'New Age Movement'. The Swedish academic Henrik Bogdan's research has focused on Western esoteric initiatory movements and his studies have also been of use in this work (Bogdan 2003a; 2003b; 2004).

The majority of the useful studies on magic focus on the history

of magical thought in the west. Authors such as Francis King, Richard Cavendish and E.M. Butler have written extensively on magic from medieval times to the early 20th century (Butler 1949; Cavendish 1968; 1975; 1977; King 1970; 1971; 1975). Although these works are old, they are not outdated. With reference to my study Ellic Howe's, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn* (Howe 1972), has also been insightful. The Hermetic order of the Golden Dawn has influenced many of today's magical societies and was also the incubator of many likewise influential magicians such as Aleister Crowley, Dione Fortune, E.A. Waite and W.B. Keats. In the research into magic and occultism many studies focusing on alchemy, qabalah and mysticism have been carried out. Concerning alchemy, Betty Jo Teeter Dobbs' *The Foundation of Newton's Alchemy* (Dobbs 1975) is a good study, giving a history, description and context of the art as well as showing the connections between alchemy and the emergence of the new materialist-scientific worldview. Influential works on the Jewish qabalah have been written by Gershom Scholem and Moshe Idel (Idel 1997; Scholem 1987; 1991).

'New Age' spirituality is a very interesting phenomenon, which relates to my studies, and here Paul Heelas and Michael York, as well as the abovementioned Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Olav Hammer, have provided important insights (Heelas 1996; York 1995). Neopaganism and 'New Age' are often linked, and as Dragon Rouge can be considered a part of the neopagan milieu, studies dealing with 'New Age' and neopaganism are important. In addition to the authors mentioned above, works by such scholars as Graham Harvey, James R. Lewis, Ingvild Saelid Gilhus and Lisbeth Mikaelsson have also been of use (Harvey 1997; Lewis 1996a; 1996b; Mikaelsson 1996; Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998; 2003).

As stated earlier, most of the research on esotericism focuses on Western traditions, while Eastern esoteric currents are not really dealt with to the same extent. Eastern esotericism, mainly Tantrism and Tantric Yoga, have, however, become increasingly popular in Western esoteric movements. Dragon Rouge is no exception to this. Therefore, I have also read existent studies on these subjects. Left Hand Path Tantrism is not really dealt with at length in purely academic research and hence I have, at times, had to draw on works that are more popular-scientific in character. I have studied the

works of the likes of Mircea Eliade, Georg Feuerstein, John Woodroffe, Julius Evola and Benjamin Walker (Eliade 1958; Woodroffe 1958; 1959; 1960; Walker 1982; Evola 1992; Feuerstein1998). A good source of academic study on Tantrism is Run Gröndahl's PhD Thesis *Den gudomliga kroppen* [The Divine Body], which deals specifically with Tantrism and Shaktism (Gröndahl 2000).

1.3.3 Spirituality and Meaning Making

Studies on meaning-making, both in the religious sphere, and outside it, are numerous. The theoretical frameworks range from sociological through social-psychological to purely psychological, and in all of these one can find a multitude of different approaches. In the more humanistically oriented psychology of religion, depth-psychology based on Freudian psychology and, in the Nordic context, integrated role-theory and symbolic reality construction, based on Hjalmar Sundén's work as presented by Nils G. Holm, have had an important standing (Holm 1997; see also S. Illman 1992; R. Illman 2004). The Jungian psychoanalytic approach has not had such a strong position in the Psychology of Religion, but much more in the interpretive frames of 'New Agers' and other neo-spiritually inclined believers (see for example Hanegraaff 1998: 496, 496-513; Bogdan 2003b: 19). A more positivist approach is taken in the cognitive science study of religious thought[3].

3 The exponents of this view often base their work and theories on socio-biological models and argue that the origin of religion can be sought in the evolution of the human animal. Notable scholars in the Cognitive science school are Dan Sperber and Pascal Boyer (Sperber 1996; 2000; Boyer 1993; 1994; 2001). Another scholar worth mentioning is Stewart Guthrie who attempts to explain the birth of religion with human anthropomorphic projections on natural objects and subjects (Guthrie 1993). Thomas E. Lawson and Robert N. McCauley have taken a slightly different approach and have studied the ritualistic elements of religion (McCauley & Lawson 1990; 2002). The cognitive approach in the psychology of religion has quite a strong standing in Finland, and here authors such as Ilkka Pyysiäinen and Tom Sjöblom have taken this approach (Pyysiäinen 1996; 2001; Sjöblom 2000). Claudia Strauss's and Naomi Quinn's *A Cognitive Theory of Cultural Meaning* is, although not explicitly dealing with religion, an

I have chosen to take a social constructionist approach to meaning-making. My theoretical base draws mainly on the works of Kenneth J. Gergen, as presented in his books *An Invitation to Social Construction* and *Social Construction in Context* (Gergen 1999; 2001). In addition to Gergen's books I have also used Vivien Burr's *An Introduction to Social Constructionism* (Burr 1995). These scholars have a very similar view on social constructionism, but Gergen in particular identifies many different forms of constructivism and emphasizes the focus on language as a tool for reality construction in *Social Constructionism*. I have also chosen to focus on language and other symbol-systems as meaning-making systems, and especially on discourse as reality-forming.

Few academic works dealing with Western esotericism and meaning-making have been published. One major work is Olav Hammer's *Claiming Knowledge*, in which he discusses the main epistemological strategies employed by esotericists to legitimize their worldviews (Hammer 2001). Hammer deals with esoteric movements from Theosophy in the late 1800s to 'New Age' in our day. While Hammer's work is important and very thorough, I am rather unhappy with the underlying tone of the work. Hammer's intent seems to be to discredit the movements he has studied and to show that their foundations are based on historically incorrect facts. As true as this often is, I fail to see the productive merits in falsifying the claims and beliefs held by 'New Age' supporters. I will give two examples from the conclusions of Hammer's thesis. First, when discussing the origin of the esoteric tradition in Enlightenment thought, and concluding that the tradition has left out much of that which was essential to the era, Hammer comments: "In a sense, the positions of the Esoteric Tradition studied here are the results of the Enlightenment gone astray" (Hammer 2001: 507). Furthermore Hammer points to the similarities between the tradition and the ways of thought of the preceding Romantic era, and goes on to state: "However, whereas the Romantic conception was capable of producing works of the greatest beauty, the literary,

interesting work in the cognitive approach to meaning-making (Quinn & Strauss 1997). Michael Tomasello criticises what he views as a too biologically determined cognitive science and points to the role of human culture in the formation of cognitive agency (Tomasello 1999).

musical and artistic products of the New Age are sometimes indistinguishable from religious kitsch" (Hammer 2001: 508). Of course, these examples are just isolated excerpts uprooted from their contexts, but this is the tone expressed throughout the work.

The works on religious reality construction by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (Luckmann & Berger 1966; Berger 1969) have been very influential in the academic study of religion. Although both works were originally written in the 1960s they are still relevant studies in religious meaning-making. I have, however, chosen not to use the works of Berger and Luckmann as much as the works of more recent discourse analysts.

In the in-depth analytical section in chapter 7, my main theoretical framework is based on discourse analytical theory and method. Different theorists have different views on discourse and therefore the method has been used in various ways. Marianne Winther Jørgensen and Louise Phillips discuss three main schools of discourse analysis: discourse theory, critical discourse analysis and discursive psychology (Phillips & Jørgensen 2000:25-28). Discourse theory was developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe and is not as practically based as the other two schools (Phillips & Jørgensen 2000:31). The primary goal in critical discourse analysis is to explore the relation between discursive practice and socio-cultural change (Phillips & Jørgensen 2000:66). Important critical discourse analysts are, among others, Norman Fairclough, Lilie Chouliaraki and Teun van Dijk (Fairclough 1992; 1995a; 1995b; Fairclough & Chouliaraki 1999; van Dijk 1987; 1997; 2001). According to Phillips and Jørgensen, discursive psychology was initially developed in social psychology as a critique of, and a response to, cognitive science (Phillips & Jørgensen 2000:97). Important discursive psychologists are Jonathan Potter, Margaret Wetherell, Derek Edwards and John Shotter (Potter 1996; Potter & Edwards 1992; Shotter 1993; Wetherell & Potter 1989; 1992; Wetherell et al. 2001). Discursive psychology is very much influenced by the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein (Phillips & Jørgensen 2000:97).

A major difference between the three schools concerns views on the role of discourse in the constitution of reality. The views

range from the rather moderate social constructionism in critical discourse analysis, where discourse is seen as both constituted by non-discursive elements and as constituting the non-discursive; to the radical social constructionism in discourse theory, where discourse constitutes everything, that is to say everything is discursive. Discursive psychology falls in between discourse theory and critical discourse analysis (Phillips & Jørgensen 2000:97). I have taken a discursive psychological approach but have tried, following the example set by Phillips and Jørgensen (Phillips & Jørgensen 2000:131-154), to integrate the different views on discourse as much as possible and have used works from both discursive psychology and critical discourse analysis. The discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe is not a part of my theoretical framework.

Good general works on discourse analysis and examples of the method in practice are provided by Louise Phillips and Marianne Winther Jørgensen, Arja Jokinen, Kirsi Juhola, Eero Suoninen and Barbara Johnstone (Phillips & Jørgensen 2000; Suoninen, Juhola & Jokinen 1993; 1999; Suoninen 1997; Jokinen & Juhola 1996; Johnstone 2002).

In addition to works dealing with meaning-making in general, I have also used works by social scientists and social philosophers, dealing with recent social change and characteristics. Zygmunt Bauman and Anthony Giddens have written extensively on the late-modern, or postmodern, period of Western societies (Bauman 1992; 1994; 1997a; 1997b; 2000a; 2000b; Giddens 1990; 1996). I have also used works dealing with identity construction written by Stuart Hall, Anthony Giddens and Richard Jenkins (Hall 1996; 2002; Giddens 1996; Jenkins 1996). Globalization theories represent a third major trend in contemporary sociology and sociology of religion, and I have mainly employed works by Roland Robertson, Malcolm Waters and Ulf Hannerz (Robertson 1992; 1995; Waters 1995; Hannerz 1996). In linking all of this to religion and spirituality, as well as in dealing with the re-enchantment of the world, I have used works by Paul Heelas (Heelas 1996; 2002).

1.4 Presentation of Sources

The material at the base of an academic study quite naturally consists of a diverse range of different sources. Such is the case with the present study as well. My main material is formed by the interviews I conducted, and recorded, with several Dragon Rouge members in 2001 and 2002. In addition to the interviews, I have also gathered responses to a questionnaire I handed out or sent to various Dragon Rouge members, information collected during my fieldwork and participant observation with the order in 2001-2004, official Dragon Rouge documents, members' papers and texts as well as books and other texts produced by Dragon Rouge members, and Internet material in some way pertaining to the order, both the official website with the members' discussion board and other Dragon Rouge-related material found on the Internet.

All of the material collected has guided me in my analysis and thus formed the present work. However, different segments of the material have surfaced as key elements in different sections of the study. The main sources in chapters 3 and 4 are the official material of the order in combination with the questionnaires and the Internet sources. The ethnographies in chapter 5 quite naturally rely on my participant observation on the order. In the discourse analytical section, where I study meaning-making mechanisms in Dragon Rouge, the interview material is mainly used, with segments from the rest of the material in a supportive role.

1.4.1 The Interviews

My main first-hand material consists of in-depth interviews with various Dragon Rouge members. The members interviewed have been active, and thus leading, Dragon Rouge members. The gender-balance of the material is good, as I have interviewed a roughly equal number of female and male members. Most of the interviews were conducted with members of the mother-organization in Stockholm, Sweden, but three additional interviews were conducted with members active in lodges other than the Stockholm mother-organization. Two of

these interviews were done with members from the Gothenburg-based lodge Helheim, and one of the interview subjects had been active in Stockholm earlier. The third additional interview was done with the leader of, the now defunct, lodge Thagirion, at that time based in Hagen, Germany. Some of those interviewed also answered the questionnaire. In this case the person first answered the questionnaire and I then interviewed this person, basing my questions on the answers received from the questionnaire. In the list of references the informants are consistently identified as Male/ Female [letter], thus making it easier for the reader to check which informants were both interviewed and answered the questionnaire. The interviews were conducted in 2001-2002.

I conducted 11 interviews with Dragon Rouge members, in total. Eleven people were interviewed. Some of the interviews were completed with two or more interview subjects at a time, but most of them were private occasions where only myself and the person being interviewed were present. Locations for the interviews were cafés, homes of the informant, the Dragon Rouge temple in Stockholm and on one occasion, when the weather permitted, in a park outside the Dragon Rouge temple. I interviewed seven male members and four female members[4].

The interviews were conducted with members who attended the meetings and courses on a regular basis. All of them had been initiated into at least the first degree, and several were initiated into higher degrees. The majority of those interviewed were engaged in some official capacity, like holding courses, producing internal material for the order, working with administrative tasks etc. The exceptions to this are two female members (Female B and C in the list of references), who were part of the women's circle and participated actively in Dragon Rouge courses and meetings, and a male member (Male D), who only joined an interview at the very end of it. Two of those interviewed are members who are responsible for the ideological formation of the order on the whole.

The interviews were recorded onto MiniDisc or cassette and

4 In addition I also interviewed an outsider to the order, mainly to study the view of Dragon Rouge conveyed by media coverage. This interview is however not used in the present study.

all of them where long and in-depth, about two hours per interview occasion. I also conducted follow-up interviews at later dates with three of the persons interviewed earlier.

Like all researchers who use technological aids when doing interviews, I experienced a couple of instances when the technology failed during the interview. When this happened, I had to rely on my memory of the interview, as well as double-checking my notes with the informant/s in question.

A possible objection to my interview material and to my choice of informants could be that the material is not representative of the order as a whole, as I have not interviewed less active members. However, I do not regard this as a problem. The choice of informants was quite natural as these where the persons most deeply involved in the order's activities and organization and who thus knew most about the principles as well as the practical aspects of its work. On the philosophical issue, I chose to treat my informants as individual members stating their personal views and not as officials acting as spokespersons for the order. During the interviews, several of my key informants, especially those long-time members who had a more prominent position in the order, pointed out that they were speaking for themselves first and foremost, and not on behalf of the order as a whole. However, as these persons organize the majority of the order's activities and write most of the official Dragon Rouge material, their views have a strong influence on other members. Where there is uniformity between the accounts of my informants and the official material, the interview material can be seen as more than simply isolated expressions of individual standpoints and views.

As my research methodology is based on ethnographic fieldwork, interviews constituted an integral part of my research (see Agar 1980: 107-110; Fägerborg 1999: 55; Rautiainen 2003: 29; Granholm & Svanberg 2004: 82). The common type of interview in fieldwork is a loosely structured interview where the interviewer and the interviewee discuss certain themes that the researcher deems important in order to understand the field. The interview-situation is quite informal and both researcher and respondent or respondents are as much on an equal level as possible. Of course the researcher always has the upper hand as it is he/she who ultimately controls

the situation. Interviews such as these can be called "informal ethnographic interviews" (Agar 1980: 90) or "flexibly structured interviews" (Whyte 2001: 163). My method of interviewing was more structured than the stereotype fieldwork interview, although I still chose to keep a relatively loose structure. The concept of Theme-interview (*Teemahaastattelu*), as presented by Helena Hurme and Sirkka Hirsijärvi, gives a good characterization of my approach to interviewing. In theme-interviews, the researcher focuses on certain themes he/she has identified as relevant for the research but the actual questions themselves are not conclusively created beforehand (Hurme & Hirsijärvi 2000: 47-48; see Rautiainen 2003: 30). I have not transcribed my interviews, but have instead chosen to simply write short summaries on content and context of each interview.

In contemporary social sciences and the humanities, the people studied are no longer viewed as passive parties in the research process. The respondent is seen as a subject who actively takes part in the research process and the creation of new knowledge. This is especially the case in interviews, in which the researcher is said to create his/her research material – in cooperation with the interviewee (see Marander-Eklund 2000: 72; 2004: 93-95; Henriksson 2004: 23-25). In the case of my interviews, the interviewees can to the highest degree be called active collaborators and co-workers. As my interviews where loosely structured and my field of interest was vast, the respondents where relatively free to steer the conversation in the direction they felt was important in understanding Dragon Rouge.

When using excerpts from the interviews, I use a form of transcription by which I try to keep the language as close to the original taped interviews as possible, whilst still making the excerpts readable. I have kept intact passages of inconsistent speech where the informant changes argumentative technique in mid sentence – something which always happens in interview situations as spoken language is not the same thing as a written text. Shorter pauses in the speech are marked by a comma (,) whereas longer pauses – signalling a new sentence are marked by a full stop (.). In situations where I have chosen to leave out passages irrelevant for the analysis this is marked out by three full stops inside square brackets ([…]).

Passages, shorter than one sentence, left out are marked by three full stops (…). Emphases made by the informant are marked by underlining the emphasized word or part of a word (Emphasize). When I have included my original question to the informant I have marked this with square brackets, italics and with a question mark ([*Question?*]). On the few occasions where two informants are present, I display the speech of one of the informants in bold font in order to distinguish the two persons speaking (I Speak **You spoke**). When no commas or full stops are included between passages by the two speakers, they have interrupted each other or continued the sentence started by the other informant present. The interviews were mainly conducted in Swedish. I have translated them into English, and present the Swedish original text in a footnote following the English translation. The interviews are archived in the Folkloristic Archive at Åbo Akademi University.

1.4.2 The Questionnaires

I started the gathering of my primary sources through sending and handing out questionnaires to various Dragon Rouge members. The questionnaires where handed out to persons who were members of the order and whom I met at Dragon Rouge meetings. The initiatory level, activity and official standing in the order varied among the informants. I received answers from members responsible for the order's ideological formation, as well as from new members not yet initiated. It is likely that the answers received were from more active members, as these were more prone to take the time to answer the questionnaire.

In total, I received 13 answers to the questionnaires. This may seem to be a fairly small number of answers but as I have a qualitative approach and have chosen to treat my informants as individuals, representing themselves first and foremost and Dragon Rouge only secondly, I do not consider this to be a problem. Furthermore, the answers I have received are very extensive, ranging from three to over thirty A4 pages. Most of the answers are 5-10 pages long. The majority of the answers received are from

Swedish members, but a couple are from members outside Sweden. One answer is from a German member and another is from a Finnish member. There is a strong imbalance in gender of the respondents as only three answers are from female members. This is something I cannot help. I handed out questionnaires to all Dragon Rouge members I met, mostly during my fieldwork, and also sent questionnaires to the different lodges and asked the lodge leaders to distribute them to the lodge members. I also posted a presentation of my study along with a request for Dragon Rouge members to participate in my research on the order's internal web forum. As I haven't had access to the Dragon Rouge members register I haven't been able to contact members directly. Those members I received answers from can be considered to be among the more active members of the order. I would probably have received more answers if my questionnaire had been a little less extensive. As the answers I have received are very informative, I am satisfied with the results.

Besides getting responses from present members of the order I also received answers from two former members. One of them was an Internet chat-room contact of a colleague of mine and, when asked, she was quite willing to answer my questions. The other former member was actually still a member when I came into contact with him. The whole situation was interesting as the person's membership ended quite dramatically, followed by a heated dispute on a message board on the Internet.

The questionnaire is not really standardised, as I changed the questions over time, according to new information I received. I also formed the questions differently for certain members I knew more about, and from whom I thus did not need as much of the general accounts as from some other members. Basically, however, the questions centred on the following themes:

1) The informant's personal background, including family background, upbringing, religious tradition in the family and events identified as formative by the informant.
2) The informant's view on society and different ideologies in general, including views on religion,

spirituality, politics, democracy, socialism, communism, liberalism, feminism, equality, homo/bisexuality, racism, Nazism, ecology and vegetarianism. I also asked the informant to define his/her religious orientation.

3) Questions about Dragon Rouge as an organization, including the informants assessment of the number of members, number of active members in the lodge/lodges he/she has experience of, gender balance, the position of female members versus male members and the informant's view on the leadership of Dragon Rouge.
4) The informant's view on how the order has been portrayed in the mass media. This question was initially important as I first intended to study how the negative mass media attention had affected the order (see section 1.1 and Granholm 2001a).
5) The informant's view on different religions, worldviews and life philosophies in relation to Dragon Rouge.
6) The informant's account of how he/she came into contact with the order and of became a member.
7) The informant's account of his experiences in Dragon Rouge and in magic, including questions on what particular magical exercises the informant practices and the informant's view of his/her own competence as a magician.
8) An explicit question on possible experienced resistance to the informant's membership in the order, as well as questions on how the informant's family and friends have reacted to his/her membership.
9) The informant's definition and exposition of what Dragon Rouge is and what magic is.

The questionnaires were handed or sent out, and the answers received, in 2001-2002. The questions and answers are stored in the Folkloristic Archive at Åbo Akademi University.

1.4.3 Fieldwork and Participant Observation

As stated earlier, no detailed study on Dragon Rouge had been published when I began my research. Therefore I had to get first-hand information on the order. In order to accomplish this I had to do fieldwork on Dragon Rouge. My main fieldwork was conducted in 2001 – 2002, with the more intensive and regular period in 2001. In 2001 I made eight visits to Sweden. On each occasion the trip lasted from about a week to ten days. My field trips in 2002 where equal in length but fewer in number. I also made some occasional field visits in 2003 and 2004.

During my fieldwork I participated in several different and more extended courses in magic practice, as well as attending one or more regular weekly meetings on each field trip. I participated in courses on astral projection, the Vril and Od-forces, ceremonial magic, Left Hand Path Tantrism and deep Draconian magic workings, to only mention a few. I was also present at the opening of Lodge Sinistra in Malmö, Sweden, in February, 2001, in which leading magicians of the mother-organization in Stockholm participated. Dragon Rouge has arranged a number of open lectures in which outside experts, mostly academics studying the subject matters, have been invited to speak about certain things pertaining to magic, mysticism or occultism in some form or another. The order has also held presentations of its practice and philosophy for non-members. I participated in activities of both types on a few occasions. Dragon Rouge in Stockholm organizes annual meetings each summer, in which members from the different lodges from around the world take part, as far as is possible. I attended the annual meetings of 2001, 2002 and 2004. The 2001 and 2002 meetings were held at the Dragon Rouge temple in Stockholm. The meetings of 2003 and 2004 were held in a newly opened temple on Gotland, an island situated southeast of Stockholm on which a great deal of ancient Norse cultic remains can be found. Future annual meetings will most likely be held at the Gotland temple.

Although most of my fieldwork was conducted in Stockholm, I also made a few trips to the lodges in Malmö, as mentioned earlier, and Gothenburg. On my trip to Gothenburg I was unfortunately

not able to participate in any of the lodge activities or visit the temple of Lodge Helheim. However I interviewed and spent a considerable length of time with some members of the lodge.

During my fieldwork I conducted the interviews referred to in section 1.4.1, handed out and discussed the questionnaires discussed in section 1.4.2, and carried out in-depth participant observation. I also spent time with Dragon Rouge members in more informal settings. According to Alan Bryman's collected definitions, the process of ethnography includes participant observation and the researcher 'immersing him-/herself' in a society in order to collect descriptive facts about its culture. This is accomplished through analysis of the cultural symbols and meanings the members of the culture possess. In the end the researcher is able to produce a field report in which he/she communicates the findings to other scholars, as well as to other interested readers in general. (Bryman 2001: ix-x; Granholm & Svanberg 2004: 74-75).

In my case, the community under study was Dragon Rouge, and the participators in the culture studied, the members of the order. According to Michael Agar (Agar 1980: 9) anthropologists have often set out with an interest in the field itself, not with a foundation in theory, which is the way sociologists and the like operate as a rule. The field is also commonly approached in a very open and general way, without the anthropologist focusing explicitly on specific aspects of it in the beginning. Thomas Hylland Eriksen underscores the importance of narrowing down the field of interest before one goes out to the field, otherwise one ends up "knowing all to little about everything, instead of enough about something" (Eriksen 2000: 29-30).

In my case, the narrowing down was of a different sort and easily done, as I was not studying a whole society, but a group, and had a specific focus on the worldview of the members of the group. In many ways, however, I functioned as the stereotypical anthropologist described in the reference from Michael Agar above. Even though this approach has been a great asset to me and my knowledge of the field, there are also several drawbacks to this way of proceeding. The time spent in the field tends to be a lot longer than if one started out with a more specific interest, the mass of material tends to grow to gargantuan proportions and the research

process easily becomes time-consuming, expensive and exhausting. Not to mention the fact that sorting out the material after the fieldwork is finished and analysing it becomes a tremendous task. Pertaining to the narrowing down of the field, one has to remember that any study of social phenomena, anthropological research being no exception, involves choices of points of focus. The researcher decides what is interesting and relevant for the study, and, thus, what is to be dealt with in depth. Thus, the ethnographic account is not an objective account of the factual situation concerning the group or society, independent of the researcher who has done the study (see Suojanen 1996: 6-7; Eriksen 2000: 34-35). This is a reason why self-positioning is of particular importance in fieldwork-based research, and needs to be accounted for.

In spite of all the problems concerning method, I am glad to have carried out fieldwork in the way I did. I had the good fortune to obtain research grants to cover the costs of my fieldwork and the time spent in the field provided deeper insights, making it possible for me to analyse things in a thorough, reflected, well-grounded and competent way. On a personal note, I also enjoyed doing fieldwork and the field as such.

Magnus Öhlander discusses three different levels of observation and participation in the context of participant observation. These are: the researcher as a passive observer, the researcher as simultaneously observing and participating, to various degrees of course, and the researcher as fully participating (Öhlander 1999; 74-77). Usually, most researchers doing participant observation are simultaneously participating and observing. In my research I started out with more participating and less observing; this in order to gain knowledge of the experiences Dragon Rouge members possibly had during the magic exercises, and thus gaining something of a common ground with them. In anthropological research this is commonly called to grasp "the Native's point of view", and concerns experiencing the world as the informants do (see Geertz 1993: 55-70). It is often stated that this is impossible to do fully, as the anthropologist is always an outsider due to the nature of his profession (Eriksen 2000: 38-39). Would the researcher succeed in "going native", totally becoming as his/her informants, the research would be seriously compromised (Stebbins & Shaffir 1991:

14). The researcher is able to do fieldwork because he/she is an outsider involved in a process of investigation.

As time progressed I leaned more and more towards observation, although still participating actively. On a course I attended late in 2002 I decided to only passively observe, taking notes and not participating at all in the exercises. As I see it, this approach had several benefits. If I had conducted my participant observation in the opposite way I could easily have been considered a disturbing outsider, and the meetings could have been less relaxed and natural. The way I conducted my research made the other participants accept my presence easier, and made me something of a peer. On the occasion when I did not partake in the practice, my presence was nothing peculiar and the other participants had no problem with me observing them. I was no longer a stranger. The possible ethical problem with this approach is that the informants may basically 'forget' that the researcher is in fact doing research, and they may therefore divulge information that they would not normally be comfortable in revealing to an outsider. I consider it the responsibility of the researcher to be aware of this fact, and to the highest possible degree avoid exploiting his/her informants.

Michael Agar identifies the process of starting fieldwork as fivefold (Agar 1980: 21, 30-39). First you have to choose the field, and in the field you choose your informants. Having done this, you review the existing literature that in some way pertains to the research at hand. Fourth, you identify your network into the field or, simply stated, your way of getting into the field and being able to do research in it effectively. Finally you have to obtain some sort of project financing in order to be able to realize your fieldwork. For me all of this was fairly simple. I knew what my field of study was: Dragon Rouge and its arenas of activity and ways of perceiving and communicating reality. The mother-organization, important as such and relatively close geographically, was a given focusing point. Who my main informants were was a matter stipulated by my field.

I had already reviewed the scarce amount of literature on the order when writing my master's thesis (see Granholm 2000). And now it was my intention to gain access to the field. This is usually not the easiest task. Many new ethnographers seem to take this procedure too lightly, and older more experienced ethnographers

deal with it as if it was a simple and straightforward process (see Agar 1980: 27-30; Burgess 1991: 43; Kaijser 1999: 29, 30-31). According to Agar, the researcher has to find his/her "network" into the field (Agar 1980: 27), meaning that one has to secure an access point to the field and not simply 'appear on the scene ready to do some participant observation'. According to Robert G. Burgess "access [to the field] is negotiated and renegotiated throughout the research process" (Burgess 1991: 43).

I started by sending my master's thesis (Granholm 2000) to the mother-organization in Stockholm, along with an accompanying letter in which I expressed my wish to do a more thorough study of Dragon Rouge. The period I waited for some form of answer was excruciating, as I had contacted the order earlier when doing my M.A. research, and had not received any answer that time. Fortunately the thesis was accepted by the leading members of the order and I was welcomed to do more in-depth research on Dragon Rouge. My master's thesis became my key to the field and my network in was formed by the leading magicians of Dragon Rouge in Stockholm, who had read my thesis and decided to allow me to participate as a researcher. Burgess is right in assuming that relationships in the field highly influence the process of research and the knowledge produced, and in stating that the question of how the researcher has gained access to the field is in no way a minor factor in this equation (Burgess 1991: 45, 45-52). My master's thesis, and the picture of me as a serious researcher this piece of research conveyed to the leading Dragon Rouge members, helped pave the way. I was assigned the dual role of magic initiate and researcher, as discussed in section 1.5, and this had an impact on the way my fieldwork came to be conducted.

Traditionally, field notes have been viewed as pivotal to anthropological research, even to the extent that the published research has often been characterized as the field notes re-written in a form acceptable for publishing (see Agar 1980: 111). Personally, however, I do not find the actual field notes to be quite that important. If I had concentrated all my effort in taking notes I would have missed a lot of what was going on (compare Öhlander 1999: 83). I decided to do MiniDisc-recordings of the meetings and courses attended, with the approval of those present naturally, and then

write short summaries of what had transpired, mainly focusing on my reflections on the events I had experienced. I chose to view field notes as a tool for analysis and interpretation, and not as the primary objective of fieldwork. The most important tool the researcher doing fieldwork has at his/her disposal is him-/herself (Fetterman 1991: 92-93; Eriksen 2000: 27). The anthropologist does indeed constantly fine-tune this main instrument, but there is always the problem of relying too heavily on its flawless operation. The instrument must at all times work in synchronization with the agency of self-reflexivity, in order for the result to be the best possible.

In all research, but especially in fieldwork where the researcher is in close contact to his/her informants, the question of research ethics comes to the fore. I could perhaps have gone into the field 'undercover', not identifying myself as a researcher studying Dragon Rouge. Besides the obvious ethical dilemmas, however, this would have made my research less fruitful (Richardson 1991: 64-70; see Stebbins & Shaffir 1991: 2-3, 16-17). Doing open research allowed me to approach the field in a completely different way, and gave me access to material that new members generally do not get to see. (see Granholm & Svanberg 2004: 80-82). As discussed earlier, ethical dilemmas might also occur in situations in which the field researcher has been on the field for such an extended period that the informants start to view the researcher as a complete peer, effectively forgetting about the researcher's academic aims (Stebbins & Shaffir 1991: 16-17). Here I consider it the researcher's obligation to conduct his/her research with moral integrity, so that he/she does not exploit his/her informants' vulnerabilities, whilst simultaneously remaining true to the research in progress (see Pripp 1999: 45, 47-51; Kommittén om forskningsetik 1998: 35).

1.4.4 The Official Dragon Rouge Material

The official Dragon Rouge material I have had access to comprises a major part of my source material. The material is vast, and I have not had the possibility to give all of it full attention. I have mainly focused on the questionnaires, the interviews and the participant observation. The official Dragon Rouge material has provided points of reference,

and served as context and as a perspective on the group as a whole, giving elucidation and support to the rest of the material. Nevertheless, certain portions of the official material have been more important than others and have been referred to more extensively. These are the official website of the order (Dragon Rouge 2004a; 2004b; 2004c; 2004d; 2004g), the two correspondence courses in magic that I had access to (Dragon Rouge 1996; 2001j) and the rules for starting a magic group or lodge in Dragon Rouge (Dragon Rouge 2001e).

The rest of the material consists of the websites of the different lodges (Dragon Rouge 2001c; 2001d; 2004h-s), the Dragon Rouge members' papers from 2000 to 2004[5] (Dragon Rouge 2000a-c; 2001f-i; 2002a-d; 2003a-d; 2004e-f), a welcoming letter to new members of the order (Dragon Rouge 2000d), the discussion board on the Dragon Rouge website available for members only (Dragon Rouge 2001b. In addition to this, I also accessed the members' discussion board after 2001), as well as the public discussion board on the homepage, which has been unavailable for some time. I also got hold of several members-only publications that Dragon Rouge keeps available for, or sells to, its members. These include texts on the Left Hand Path, esoteric runology and qliphotic qabalah (Karlsson 2002b; 2002c[6]), and several other subjects. The Dragon Rouge magic group in Italy, which became an official lodge in 2003, has published a 'Magickal Bulletin' called 'Fiat Nox' since 2002. I have the first issue of this bulletin (2002g). Besides the above mentioned material I have in my possession several documents that in some way pertain to the official activities or philosophies represented by the order.

I also chose to include books published by Dragon Rouge members, and books where the subject matter relates closely to the order, not necessarily being sanctioned, but certainly at least approved by Dragon Rouge as an organization. These are the works *Uthark. Nightside of the Runes*[7] and *Kabbala, kliffot och den goetiska*

5 I started receiving the member's paper from issue 2/2000 onwards and have hitherto received issues up 3-4/2004. All of the issues are in Swedish, except for issue 4/2001 which is in English.

6 I have chosen to only include works by members who have published something also available to non-Dragon Rouge members.

7 The book is also available in German from the publishing house Arun Verlag with the title *Uthark: Im Schattenreich der Runen*. Apparently, the book is a bestseller on the German Amazon online book dealer.

magin by the order's founding member, Thomas Karlsson, *Mörk Magi* by Tommie Eriksson and *Mörkrets stig* by Christofer Johnsson (Karlsson 2002; 2004; Eriksson 2001; Johnsson 1996). Thomas Karlsson has also written the introduction to Tommie Eriksson's book (Karlsson 2001).

I have referred explicitly to the official material mostly by relating to the website of the mother-organization, the correspondence courses in magic and the rules governing the starting of a magic group or lodge in Dragon Rouge. Nonetheless, the rest of the official material plays an important role. I went through all of the material in my possession and my conclusions draw from all of it. The body of material is vast and cannot be treated with the same precision throughout.

1.4.5 Other Material

During my studies I have tried to collect as much material as possible on aspects pertaining in some way to Dragon Rouge, either directly or indirectly, or simply dealing with similar phenomena from an insider's point of view. Of course, my material is not exhaustive, but I was still able to collect a remarkable mass of text and various kinds of documents. I shall briefly present some of the more important pieces of material.

I collected material which is related to Dragon Rouge, written by people positive to, but not necessarily members of, the order and which is not officially sanctioned by Dragon Rouge. In this category I have access to, amongst others, a few academic undergraduate papers on the order and various website-entries which deal with the order, or with some aspects of the order's activities. Additionally, some members of the order are artists, and have in this capacity published material representing magico-occult worldviews, and who have spoken of the subject in interviews and on similar occasions. In accordance with explicit requests by the persons in question I have, however, chosen not to expose these individuals' names or artistic projects. Furthermore, the above material is not used very extensively, since I do not regard it to be as relevant as my primary sources.

Secondly, there are a number of published non-academic works which deal with, or mention Dragon Rouge, in a quite polemically critical way. These include books by Håkan Arlebrand, Karl-Erik Nylund as well as press or television material. These were discussed more in detail in section 1.3.1 and, as stated there, when they concern Dragon Rouge specifically, I chose to use this material as examples of more subjective and critically polemic views on the order and magic in general.

The third category consists of material which does not treat Dragon Rouge, but deals with similar subjects. Worth mentioning are the websites *The Mutation Parlour: Chaos Magick* (http://www.crossroads.wild.net.au/index.html) which provides extensive material on chaos magic and is maintained by people practicing this form of the art, *Paranormal.se* (http://paranormal.se) which is a Swedish online encyclopaedia and resource for things occult, and *Templi-Serpens* (http://www.templi-serpens.com), which is a Satanist site but has lots of material on the Left Hand Path and qliphoth. There are many more websites worth mentioning but these are the ones I found most helpful and relevant from a comparative perspective.

1.5 Self-positioning

I am aware of critique of over-exerting one's own person in ethnographic writing, and I sympathize with this standpoint to some extent (see Sköldberg & Alvesson 1994: 322; Davies 1999: 15-16). It is of no interest whatsoever to the reader that I was a huge fan of the animated Transformers TV-series when I was a child, that I had a poster of the rock band W.A.S.P.'s Blackie Lawless and Chris Holmes accompanied by a boa restrictor on my wall when I was seven years old, or that I have a close relationship with my younger brother. I do not, however, view self-positioning as irrelevant and simply as a means of self-promotion, or an expression of narcissism, as some exponents of the more radical critique tend to suggest. Self-reflectivity is needed in all kinds of human efforts in understanding. It should be used to treat the things relevant for academic study, and is of great

importance, especially in fieldwork-based research (see Davies 1999: 3-4). I share Mikko Saastamoinen's view that the aim of reflexivity is to bring the researcher and his/her informants to a more equal level, to make explicit the human limitations and prior understandings of the researcher (Saastamoinen 2003: 21-22).

I can identify several factors in my life-history, personality and range of interests which made an order such as Dragon Rouge an interesting object of study for me. Since I was a child I have always had a deep interest in, and appreciation of, horror movies, especially those that deal with supernatural phenomena and dark forces, as well as different popular works on the occult and on unidentified phenomena. Anything which includes vampires in any way instantly catches my attention. This interest is also evident in my preferences for music, literature and aesthetics. I enjoy rock and heavy metal music where the artists employ dark horror movie symbolism and include mythological elements in their lyrics. This interest in the dark and unknown is probably what drove me to study comparative religion in the first place. My fascination for the occult never resulted in efforts to explore it in any practical way. My attraction has always been on the fictional side and, only in theory. This exposition may seem trivial but it explains my initial interest in Dragon Rouge as an object of study. When I came into contact with the order through Liselotte Frisk's book *Nyreligiositet i Sverige* (Frisk 1998: 142-147), I was looking for a subject to treat in my master's thesis. In that situation Dragon Rouge immediately emerged as a suitable and interesting topic. In the pre-constructed picture I had formed in my mind, the symbol-language, subject matter and activities of the order appealed to my preference for horror movie aesthetics. Doing actual research gradually changed and deepened my view on Dragon Rouge and its members.

In my late teens and early twenties I was an active participant in leftist animal rights, ecological and anti-racist subcultural movements. My activism stretched from purely legal actions, such as the organization of and participation in demonstrations and the distribution of leaflets, to a few instances of civil disobedience. As I lived in Ostrobothnia at the time, the capital of fur farming in Scandinavia, my activities were not considered very agreeable. I was personally harassed a few times, and some of my friends, who

were active in the same subculture, were openly threatened. The whole movement as such was harshly reprimanded in the press and in public debate. My experiences from this period of my life greatly affected my view of the mass media. In the mid 1990s Dragon Rouge was the recipient of much negative mass media attention in Sweden (see Nilsson 1995a; 1995b; Stuttgart 1995; 1996; SVT 1 1996). My negative experiences of mass media, as well as my earlier participation in a criticized subculture, led me to sympathize with Dragon Rouge and to find a frame of identification.

My subcultural connections and my advocation of ecological living and animal rights provided a further element of mutual interest with many Dragon Rouge members. Ecology is an important aspect of the Dragon Rouge view of life, as I show in section 7.1.5. Most of the active members of the mother-organization in Stockholm are vegetarian for ecological, animal rights and magical reasons, all of which are usually linked in discourse on magic. I also share many of the views on ethics and morality of several Dragon Rouge members I have talked to. This view on morality is in itself not something specific to Dragon Rouge, but rather a symptomatic aspect of late modern society (see Bauman 1997a; 1998).

I consider myself a feminist, and this has most certainly had some impact on my research. For me feminism implies an ideology and a utopia in which people are not seen solely as, or judged on the basis of, sex or gender. Unfortunately, societal circumstances being what they are, certain extra light must be shed on the situation of women in order to provide an unbiased position on gender, ironic as it may seem. As most feminist awakening stories tend to go, my feminism was initially both unreflected and unconscious. This was the case when I started my doctoral studies. Having grown more conscious in my feminist awareness, I have recognised how some of the questions I have asked my informants have sprung from this proto-feministic state of mind. However, I do not consider this to be too much of a problem as all researchers have the load of earlier experiences, prejudices and prior understandings in their baggage. An effort should be made to identify this load and to reflect over its influence on analysis and interpretation, in the endeavour to produce as unbiased and as neutral an account as possible of the phenomenon studied.

Because of doing participant observation among Dragon Rouge members and at Dragon Rouge meetings I have frequently been asked how I can remain objective in my research. I respond by quoting Michael Agar's words: "it is hard to 'do science' with people you like; it is also hard to 'do science' with people you do not like; if you do not care one way or the other, it is hard to 'do science' because you do not understand enough about the people you do science with" (Agar 1980:18). In quoting this I aim to express the sentiment that personal relationships and emotional attachments of some sort are bound to develop in an environment of such extended and close contact as participant observation represents. They are in fact more than bound to develop; they are a necessity in this form of research (see Stebbins & Shaffir 1991: 4). If personal contacts do not develop the researcher has most likely not involved him/herself enough in his/her area of research to get any results worth mentioning, or the researcher is socially incompetent and not suitable for fieldwork amongst living people.

I do regard many of my informants as friends and I share mutual interests in music, arts and hobbies with several of them. During my fieldwork I also managed to get into one hostile situation involving myself and an informant, although this was an isolated incident soon resolved. Such experiences of both kinship and alienation do not render me incapable of doing good research, quite the opposite. Through experiencing my informants as real persons, and the whole field of research as a real arena of social interaction, instead of abstract phenomena and objects dislocated from my life, I have come to understand Dragon Rouge and its members better. This, I would say, is quite essential in any good research.

Of course the relationships the researcher shares with his/her informants affect the research being conducted, and raises issues concerning the validity of the study (see Stebbins & Shaffir 1991: 4, 12-16). According to Stebbins and Shaffir three major problems may limit the validity of the study. In my sentiment, interpersonal relationships arising during research influence all of these. Firstly, and perhaps most noticeably stemming from interpersonal relations, are the reactive effects, that is to say the atypical reactions and responses the informants have due to the presence of the researcher (Stebbins & Shaffir 1991: 13-14). Problems may also arise because

of the researcher's responses in certain situations, or due to his/her failure to respond. The researcher doing participant observation must thus have good social skills and know how to be objective without affecting the research in a negative way.

The second and third types of problems discussed by Stebbins and Shaffir stem from the researcher observing matters all too selectively, as well as not being able to observe everything of significance (Stebbins & Shaffir 1991: 13-16). The latter of the issues is relevant when discussing social relationships during fieldwork. In short one could say that the roles assigned to the researcher by the informants, and by the researcher him-/herself, greatly steer the researcher's access to different social situations. Gender, normally a factor which greatly influences the progress of fieldwork, did not pose a problem for me because of the nature of Dragon Rouge.

I was assigned the dual role of magic initiate and researcher. This suited the questions I was looking to answer well, and offered me as much mobility in the field as possible. Due to my role as researcher I was given more attention than the average newcomer, although I still had to abide by the same rules as all members. An example of this is the fact that I was not allowed to access the second correspondence course in magic before I had finished the first one, all in the nature of magic initiation.

I am a member of the organization, mainly in order to access 'members only' material. My informants are aware of this and I have also posted a message identifying myself as a researcher studying Dragon Rouge on the Internet message board of the order. I am initiated into the second degree of the order (see section 5.1.4), again mainly to gain access to material which is only available for initiated members, with the over-all aim of obtaining a deeper insight into the order. I cannot however deny my personal interest in the forms, functions and workings of the order. I would not call myself a magician, but the worldview and the people I have come across during my research represent something compelling to me. During my fieldwork, and in working with the initiation courses, I have performed the same magical exercises practiced by other members. I am intrigued by the practice and philosophy of the order, as would be expected of any good researcher doing this kind of

research in any spiritual movement. I have no intention of taking a stand for or against the possible truth or falsity of the statements made by Dragon Rouge members and represented in the official Dragon Rouge material. I consider questions of this nature irrelevant for the present study. In my fieldwork I have taken an open attitude and regarded the stated experiences of the various members as true from a phenomenological view.

PART II – Description

2 Formative Background and Context of Dragon Rouge

The following chapter gives a brief summary of the history of Western esotericism, as an illustration of the background and context of Dragon Rouge. I start by giving a brief, and by necessity simplified, account of esoteric currents from antiquity to the early 20th century. Special focus is laid on the late 19th and early 20th century phenomena of the Theosophical Society, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the mage Aleister Crowley. I will provide more detailed accounts of the 'New Age' movement and neopaganism, including a discussion of their relation to each other. Lastly, I will endeavour to go into the specifics of the cultic milieu of Sweden in general, and the Stockholm region in particular, in the late twentieth century. The aim of the chapter is to place Dragon Rouge in the context of the historical roots of esoteric thought and practice, and also to point out possible sources of inspiration and influence.

2.1 The Academic Study of Western Esotericism

Before discussing Western esotericism in any length, it is important to remember that it is a scholarly construct, much in the same way 'religion' is (Hanegraaff 1998c: 11; 2004: 489-490). As a scholarly construct there are, of course, several different constructions of esotericism (see Hanegraaff 1998c for examples). I will focus on Wouter J. Hanegraaff's and Antoine Faivre's discussions on the subject, as I feel that these are the most fruitful. It should also be remembered that there does not exist one coherent esoteric tradition, but rather that Western esotericism is a conglomerate of various different, and often quite distinct, traditions (Hanegraaff 2001: 13-16). For the sake of analysis, however, the approach of Wittgensteinian family-resemblances can be assumed.

Antoine Faivre calls the Western esotericism of contemporary

research into the field "an ensemble of spiritual currents in modern and contemporary Western history which share a certain *air de famille*, as well as the form of thought which is its common denominator" (Faivre 1998b: 2). Western esotericism *sensu* Faivre can be seen as emerging during the renaissance, when the currents 'crossed paths' and were fitted into this 'common form of thought' (see Bogdan 2003b: 8; Hanegraaff 1996: 386-388; 2004: 493).

Faivre further distinguishes between currents, corresponding to movements, schools or traditions (for example Hermetism, Christian Kabbalah and Rosicrucianism), and notions, corresponding to spiritual attitudes or practice (for example, Hermeticism and Gnosis). Some phenomena are both currents and notions (as for example alchemy, astrology and magic). (Faivre 1998b: 3-10).

According to Faivre these spiritual currents and the mode of thought can be recognized by four intrinsic and two secondary characteristics. These are:

1) Correspondences. Meaning that there are invisible linkages between everything in existence.
2) Living Nature. Existence is permeated by a living force, and nature may be seen as a manifestation of the living God.
3) Imagination and meditations. Imagination and meditation are used to access the divine spheres, which are not directly accessible through the common senses and reasoning. Hanegraaff names imagination an "organ of the soul" (Hanegraaff 1996: 398).
4) Transmutation. The three former characteristics form the foundation for the esotericist's practice, in which he strives to transmute his/her soul into a more perfected form.
5) Concordance. A secondary characteristic. There is a common basis, a true esoteric core, behind exoteric religious traditions.
6) Transmission. Also a secondary characteristic. Esoteric teachings must be transmitted from legitimated teacher to pupil. (Faivre 1994; 10-15; see also Hanegraaff 1996: 397-400; Bogdan 2003b: 14-16).

Wouter J. Hanegraaff criticises Faivre's characteristics as being too static, they do not leave room for change and transformation of esotericism. As he writes, Faivre's schemata should not be taken as stipulative (see Hanegraaff 2004: 508). Hanegraaff also notes that Faivre's characteristics mainly refer to Christian traditions of a certain period, namely the renaissance (Hanegraaff 1998b: 46-47). He does, however, also point to the fact that Western esotericism was deeply linked to Christianity a long way into the 18th century, and the emergence of non-Christian variants is due to the process of secularization, making way for alternative interpretations. (Hanegraaff 2004: 490).

Hanegraaff demonstrates the inherent problems in Faivre's characteristic by the example of occultism, or secular esotericism (Hanegraaff 1996: 406-410, 421-442; 2003; 2004: 497-499; 508). With the emergence of a scientific materialistic imperative during the enlightenment, the esoteric idea of correspondences, as well as that of a living nature to some degree, was difficult to uphold. The idea of the microcosm corresponding to the macrocosm was more or less abandoned for a more mechanistic view, in which impersonal forces permeating everything could be manipulated for he desired results. Nature was generally not seen as a manifestation of a living, personal God anymore, but rather as an arena for the aforementioned invisible and causal forces. Thus, esotericism came to terms with the modern worldview, and adapted to its requirements. Other formative elements of 19th century, and later, secular esotericism were the expansion of the scope of source-material to include oriental traditions, the emergence and esoteric adoption of psychology, and, later, the "impact of capitalist market economy on the domain of spirituality" (Hanegraaff 2004: 497-498).

The concept of the transformation of traditional esotericism into occultism should, however, not be taken to imply that all esotericism from the enlightenment onward has traded its idea of correspondences for an instrumental causality-approach. Hanegraff gives the *Eranos* meetings, organized for the first time in Ascona, Switzerland, in 1933, as an example. The attendants, including the influential scholars Mircea Eliade, Gershom Scholem and Carl Gustav Jung, had a more esoteric approach to spirituality than an occult. The approach by Jung and Eliade, along with Julius Evola,

can be termed perennialist – in the sense that they sought similarities in religious phenomena in an ahistorical. The aforementioned people have become very influential in the alternative spiritual milieu. (Hanegraaff 2001: 7-13; 2004: 501).

Another critique of Faivre's works is that his 'definition' can too easily be implemented in a futile effort to objectively and definitively mark something as esoteric or non-esoteric (Hanegraaff 1998c: 45-46; 2004: 508). A further problem Hanegraaff sees in Faivre's work is that it operates with something of an evolutionary assumption; For Faivre esotericism *per se* emerged in the late 15th century, while there nevertheless existed some form of esotericism or pre-esotericism before that. A natural implication of this approach is that there must be a beginning or origin of esotericism and that it would be productive to pursuit this line of research. (Hanegraaff 1998c: 46-47).

Both Faivre's and Hanegraaff's research is of importance for the present study. While Faivre provides a useful base-theory of esotericism, Hanegraaff expands on this to provide analysis on the transformation of esotericism through time. The secularization of esotericism, as presented by Hanegraaff, is clear in the tenets of the Theosophical Society, and even more so in the case of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and Aleister Crowley. Combined with this is the emergence of the orient as the principal source of new religious ideas.

2.1.1 The History of Western Esotericism

The present section is based on Antoine Faivre's account of the history of Western esotericism, and thus it contains some of the problems identified by Hanegraaff (see previous section). I do, for example, aknowledge the problem defining esotericism as a historical phenomenon centred around the renaissance and still with calling phenomena occurent before this period esoteric. I have chosen to do this nonetheless, as it is the most convenient solution in the present context. 'Pre-esoteric' phenomena called esoteric should be understood as esoteric in their relation to esotericism.

Early sources of Western esotericism can be found in the Mediterranean region in the first centuries C.E., especially focusing on the region around Alexandria. The *Hermetica*, a miscellaneous body of texts dealing with natural philosophy, alchemy, astrology and the likes, has had a huge impact on later esoteric thought (see Faivre 1994: 51-110). The *Corpus Hermeticum* is a conglomerate of hermetic texts by various authors, compiled during the 2nd and 3rd centuries C.E. and later thought to have been the work of *Hermes Trismegistus* – an imaginary contemporary of the Biblical Moses (Faivre 1994: 51). It became an important source of esoteric knowledge during the Renaissance (Hanegraaff 2004: 493). Alchemy, which had been more of a mundane tool of goldsmiths, started increasingly to take the form of a revealed science from the 2nd century B.C.E. onwards. (Faivre 1993: 3-7; 1994: 51-52; 1998: 112-114; van den Broek 1998: 5; Leijenhorst 1998: 128).

Other early and important sources of Western esotericism were Neopythagoreanism, which was at its peak during the two first centuries C.E., Stoicism, Neoplatonism, at its apex from about the 3rd to the 5th centuries C.E., the Jewish qabalah, as well as Arabic esoteric influences, much of which were originally inspired by earlier Mediterranean sources. More Christian sources can be found in Gnosticism and Manicheanism from the beginning of the first millennium. Characteristic to these was the highly dualistic notion of the constant conflict between the forces of good and evil. (Faivre 1993: 1-3, 7-8, 22-25; 1994: 52-53; 1998: 110-113; van Oort 1998).

The influence of Arab thought, which in its initial stages gave an impulse to reflection on esoteric subjects, can clearly be seen in the west from the 12th century onward, and inspired a revival of esoteric thought and practice. With the Muslim conquest of Spain, alchemy was introduced into Europe. Another key source of Western esotericism, the Jewish qabalah, also found its way into Western thought through the Muslim influence in Spain. Important works in the qabalah, *Sepher ha Zohar* – the Book of Splendour, and *Bahir* – a compilation of qabalistic texts, had been conceived by the Jews in Spain and found their way into European thought with the 1492 exile of the Jews from Spain. Influential European thinkers worth mentioning are the mystic Hildegard af Bingen (1099-1180) and the visionaries of the Oxford school, such as Robert Grosseteste

and Robert Bacon, who dealt with astrology and alchemy (Faivre 1993: 22-26; 1994: 53-56, 59; 1998: 112).

The Renaissance is generally seen as the period when Western esotericism, as understood by contemporary scholars, emerged, in the syncretistic combination of different esoteric practices and ideas (see Bogdan 2003b: 8). The *Corpus Hermeticum* was rediscovered and translated into Latin in 1471 by Marsilio Ficino and was the subject of much interest especially in the following two centuries. The Jewish qabalah was issued in Christian versions in the works of Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) and Henricus Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535). Agrippa's *De Occulta Philosophia*, published in 1533 but written sometime after 1510, combined the ideas of qabalah, magic, hermetism and alchemy. A later work, *Cabala Denudata*, written by Knorr von Rosenroth (1636-1689) in 1677/1684, contained translated segments of the Zohar. (Masters 1993: 140-145; Faivre 1994: 58-67; 1998: 112-115).

A key concept of the esotericism of the Renaissance was *Philosophia Perennis*. Much effort was put into the search for, and construction of, a unifying and ancient origin and idea in the different esoteric teachings and philosophies (Faivre 1998: 114-115). The source most often traced as the ultimate origin of the 'eternal philosophy' was Hermes Trismegistus, who was thought of as the creator of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, as mentioned earlier. Long-lived notions in the history of Western esotericism were stipulated by Paracelsus (Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, 1493-1541) and Jacob Böhme (1575-1624). (Versluis 1998: 218; Schipperges 1993: 154-155, 167-168; Deghaye 1993). Paracelsus broke with earlier, neoplatonic and qabalistic, notions of nature as distant from the divine and viewed nature as directly emanated from the Godhead. Böhme identified Will, a determining concept of contemporary magic, as the reason for being. He also spoke of a primordial existence in freedom, an *ungrund*, before being, as well as a sort of immanent divinity. (Faivre 1994: 58-70; 1998: 115).

The dawning of esoteric initiatory movements occurred with three short pieces of fictional writing, the three proto-Rosicrucian texts as defined by Antoine Faivre. The texts, *Fama Fraternitatis*, *Confessio Fraternitatis* and *Chymische Hochzeit Christiani Rosencreutz Anno 1459*, dealing with a secret initiatory society founded by an

imaginary and legendary Christian Rosencreutz, were published between 1614 and 1616. Tobias Hess and Johann Valentin Andreae are generally considered to be the originators of at least two of the texts. The imaginary Rosicrucian order spawned countless actual Rosicrucian orders, most of which argued for a lineage to the order of Christian Rosencreutz. The order of Freemasons, amongst others, is the outcome of the Rosicrucian eruption. (Faivre 1994: 64-66; 1998: 115-116; Edighoffer 1993: 186-202; 1998: 197).

All of the abovementioned Renaissance currents are generally identified as *Philosophia Occulta*, where the common denominator is the idea of correspondences and analogical relations between everything. *Magia naturalis* influenced a great deal of the thought of the time, especially in its more inclusive form. In this form, which saw analogies in nature without incorporating the divinity in it, *Magia naturalis* has been seen as a sort of predecessor to modern natural scientific thinking. In the other, more esoteric, form, *Magia naturalis* was about uniting nature and religion. (Faivre 1994: 66-68; 1998: 113-115).

The year 1717 saw the birth of modern Freemasonry in London, England. Although Freemasonry as we know it has thrived in Britain, the more esoteric forms of the craft were mainly conceived in mainland Europe from the 1730s onward. Freemasonry developed from a system with two initial degrees to include a third degree around 1730. In mainland Europe, higher degrees soon entered the stage, and different Masonic orders competed for the status of having *the* Masonic secrets. In addition to this, the boom in Egyptology started to influence esotericism, also bringing its influence to Masonic societies. Societies which sought their roots in ancient Egypt, instead of in the legend of Christian Rosencreutz, were formed. Esoteric Egyptianism also influenced the arts, as in the case of Mozart's opera, *Die Zauberflöte* [The Magic Flute] (Godwin 1998: 189). (Mazet 1993: 257-260, 266; Faivre 1993: 51; 1994: 71-74, 78-19; Bogdan 2003b: 131, 139).

A hugely influential esotericist of the Enlightenment period is the Swede Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). Swedenborg's esoteric carrier started in 1745 when, as the result of a dream, he began to write his *Arcana Coelestia* (published 1747/1758). He attempted to create a sort of map, or systematic description, of the spiritual

worlds. Another influential work was *The Magus* by Frances Bacon, published in 1801. It was about at the same time that the Tarot deck came to be used for divinatory and other esoteric purposes, although not all scholars agree on this subject (see Gudmundsson 2001: 30-31). (Faivre 1994: 72, 75).

Chemistry had advanced to the stage of being a 'real science', and thus the meaning and use of alchemy came to take on different connotations. Faivre differentiates between operative alchemy, in which the main goal was – or was thought to be – the manufacturing of gold, and spiritual alchemy, in which the goal was the spiritual transmutation of the alchemist. Operative alchemy quite naturally became less and less popular, while spiritual alchemy continued to flourish. (Voss 1998). The new invention of the time was animal magnetism. Franz Anton Mesmer, who had earned his doctorate in medicine in 1766, developed a theory of an invisible fluid permeating everything. This fluid was the organ through which everything was interconnected, and through its mediating effect one could thus influence everything else. Settling in Paris in 1778, he developed a practice in which he, through the use of a special machine and healthy people, could heal sick patients. Mesmer's animal magnetism was later, in 1783, put into an initiatory system in the *Society of Harmony*, which bore many similarities to Freemasonry. The teachings of Mesmer, as well as those of Swedenborg, were the forerunners of spiritualism and spiritism, which have more clearly expressed belief systems (Arlebrand 1995: 74-75; Hammer 1999: 60-63). (Faivre 1994: 75-76).

The example of Mesmer clearly shows the consequences the enlightenment ideals had on esoteric thought, the emergence of what he calls occultism or secular esotericism. Mesmer's 'Animal Magentism' is presented as a purely scientific factor, and no reference is made to any divine realm or an immanent God. (Hanegraaff 1996: 424-435). What Mesmer perceived as the ultimate cause of the phenomenon was not the divine plan or purpose of God, but the fully impersonal aspects of natural law. Consequently 'Animal Magnetism' was approach in a different matter than would have been the case in a renaissance, traditional esoteric, setting.

The novel concept of Romanticism (1790-1815) was that of a *Naturphilosophie*, which was basically a new approach to

investigating nature. Christianity began to lose its total dominance for the esotericists, and the focus on nature came as a response to this, and vice versa. (Hanegraaff 1998: 256-258). Antoine Faivre describes the essential characteristics of the romanticist *naturphilosophie* as follows (Faivre 1994: 82-83):

1) Nature is filled with symbolic significances which when deciphered point to causes and factors outside nature.
2) The effort is made to grasp nature in its plural totality, not in disconnected parts.
3) Spirit and Nature are not separated, but rather stem from the sameultimate origin. Consequently knowledge of nature is knowledge of oneself.

The idea of a *Philosophia Perennis*, of such importance during the Renaissance, acquired new meaning in Romanticism. The world had grown smaller. No longer did it suffice to only include traditions of Mediterranean origin in the eternal philosophy. Especially India and its traditions stimulated the Western imagination, but here the path to a global universalism was set. The seed of neopaganism was also sown, as ancient druidism was treated as the original religion of humanity. (Hanegraaff 1993: 377; Faivre 1994: 86-87).

Modern magic appeared on the scene in and through the works of Papus (Dr Gèrard Encause, 1865-1915) and Eliphas Lévi (Alphonse-Louise Constant, 1810-1875). Especially the works of Lévi, *Dogme et ritual de Haute magie* from 1854-1856, *Historie de la magie* from 1860 and *La Clef des Grands Mystères* from 1861 have been influential for later magicians. (Faivre 1994: 87-90).

Esoteric runology has played an important part in the Nordic context since the early seventeenth century. The academic study of runes was from the very beginning linked to the esoteric study and practice of rune magic. In 1599 the first serious work on the runes, Johannes Bureus' (1568-1652) *Runokenslanes lärospan*, was published in Sweden. Bureus was successful in deciphering the runes and was of the opinion, as were many important Swedish officials of the time, that the runic characters should be taught in school. In accordance with the time, Bureus practiced the occult sciences ranging from alchemy to Neoplatonism, with a special and long-lasting interest in qabalah. It was however in esoteric runology,

and the concept of *Adulruna*, that he found his true calling. *Adulruna*, the concept of which found its ultimate treatment in the work *Adulruna*, published in 1640, was the esoteric use of the runes. Bureus coupled the runic characters to the qabalah and created a sort of Scandinavian version of the latter. (Andersson 1997: 96, 99-102).

Another influential Swedish runologist is Sigurd Agrell (1881-1937). Agrell was an active academic at the University of Lund, Sweden, having first been appointed senior lecturer of Slavic languages in 1909, and later professor of the same discipline in 1921. Having been appointed professor he switched interests from Slavic languages to the world of runes, and especially rune magic. In his numerological speculations concerning the rune alphabet, the *Futhark* – named after the sounds of the first six runes, Agrell had an esoteric enlightenment. He concluded that the *Futhark* should actually be an *Uthark*, as the first letter in the traditional rune alphabet was actually a decoy planted by rune-magicians. With the *Uthark* Agrell was able to fit in the runes much more smoothly with numerological correspondences. The *Uthark* is popular amongst contemporary rune magicians and shamanic neopagans (see Grimsson 1990: 80-82; Hedlund & Gejel 1988; Karlsson 2002: 27-44). (Andersson 1997: 209-210, 240-246).

2.1.2 The Theosophical Society

The Theosophical Society was founded by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831-1891), Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907) and William Quan Judge (1851-1896), in New York in September, 1875. The society is considered to be the first new religious movement of the first wave, and has undoubtedly inspired much of the later alternative spiritual scene (Ahlbäck 1995: 12; see Hammer 2001: 81-82). From the very outset the society was to be a non-initiatory and non-dogmatic nodal point for people interested in spirituality, although research shows that there were aspirations to form a Masonic order out of the society (Johnson 1994: 5). The goal of the Theosophical Society was stated as threefold:

1) to form the core of an universal brotherhood of man, independent of faith, race, gender or social position
2) to encourage the study of all religions, philosophy and science
3) to study the laws of Nature and the psychic and spiritual powers of man (Faivre 1994: 92; Arlebrand 1995: 145).

Spiritism, as well as the more religious Spiritualism born out of it (see Faivre 1994: 87; Arlebrand 1995: 74-79), were very much the spiritual trends of the time and when the society was formed a stance in opposition to them was taken. Madame Blavatsky had herself earlier been a spiritist medium and this was probably another reason for the stand-point taken. At the first meeting of the society Olcott, who was elected president, expressed the blatant deceptions of many spiritist mediums as the reason for the newly founded organization distancing itself from it (see Ahlbäck 1995: 13). The Theosophical Society itself, however, would come to employ trickery in appealing to would-be members very soon afterwards. The movement seemed to be a failure as member after member left the society and new ones were hard to recruit. Blavatsky started to 'entertain' the participants through typically spiritist means, such as by materializing objects mysteriously and causing bells to ring as if rung by invisible forces. The order was a success, and these kinds of tricks came to be utilized throughout Blavatsky's active participation in the society. (Ahlbäck 1995: 13-15).

Blavatsky's first work, *Isis Unveiled* (1877), was to a high degree influenced by Gnostic and qabalistic sources, and described the human being as partly a divine spark and partly as body and reason. Not that much difference to earlier esoteric traditions thus far. The real innovation came with the movement of the centre of the society to India in 1878. Blavatsky and Olcott became deeply influenced by, and involved in, Indian religiosity and incorporated much of it in the teachings of the society, to the extent that Faivre calls the movement "largely an offshoot of Oriental spiritualities, especially Hindu" (Faivre 1994: 92). This served the renewed interest in searching for the *Philosophia Perennis* well, and probably explains the massive interest the Theosophical Society awoke and the huge

impact it came to have on the esoteric milieu. The adaptation of Indian spiritual themes is clearly seen in the differences between *Isis Unveiled* and Blavatsky's later work, *The Secret Doctrine* (1888). In this latter piece of writing the principles of reincarnation and karma are incorporated into the teachings. (Ahlbäck 1995: 13-19).

Blavatsky's interesting personality and charismatic leadership was behind much of the success of the society. With Blavatsky leaving India in 1885 after being exposed as a spiritual charlatan by Richard Hodgson of the *Society for Psychical Research*, and with her death in 1891, the society came to experience times of trouble and decline. Judge, who had stayed behind when Olcott and Blavatsky had travelled to the Orient, tried to take over the society after Blavatsky's death. This in turn led to a splintering of the society into two distinct groups, the Judge-led group in the United States and the group led by Olcott in Adyar, India. The American society finally settled on a headquarters in Pasadena, California. (Campbell 1980: 103-111). The third major theosophical group, the United Lodge of Theosophists, was formed by Robert Crosbie in 1909 as a reaction to the conflicts between the American and the Adyar theosophists (Campbell 1980: 143).

After Olcott's death the charismatic Annie Besant (1847-1933), and her controversial co-leader Charles Webster Leadbeater (1847/1854-1934), were successful in keeping the public interested in the Society and also revitalized it in many ways. Especially Leadbeater is attributed as an important figure introducing concepts, such as the *Chakras* and the *Kundalini*, from the Indian spiritual scene to Western audiences (Arlebrand 1995: 58-59; Hammer 2001: 62).

In 1909/1910 Besant and Leadbeater identified a young Indian boy, Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986), as the new 'world-teacher', or Messiah, and this kept members interested. With Krishnamurti relinquishing the title in 1929, however, the days of the Theosophical Society's greatness were over. (Ahlbäck 1995: 12-20; Faivre 1994: 92-93). The society does, however, still exist today, although with less members than in the movement's heyday. The most important contemporary fractions are, arranged according to number of members, the Theosophical Society (Adyar), the Theosophical Society - International Headquarters at Point Loma, and the United Lodge of Theosophy (ULT).

The Theosophical Society spawned many interesting and influential individuals in the esoteric scene of the late 1800s and early 1900s. Jiddu Krishnamurti, mentioned above, gathered a huge following when he moved to California after denouncing his Messiah-role (Hammer 1997: 69-70), and became an even more influential spiritual teacher. Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), who had been appointed General Secretary of the German section of the society in 1902, and constantly researched different esoteric traditions – supposedly even founding a branch of the ritual magical order *Ordo Templi Orientis* called *Mystica Aeterna*, left the Theosophical Society in opposition to installing Krishnamurti as the new Messiah. Steiner founded the Anthroposophical Society in 1912/1913, and took with him about 2500 of the German Theosophists. Steiner's, and by extension the Theosophical Society's, influence extends farther than merely to esoteric movements. This can be seen in the popularity of, for example, Waldorf-pedagogy and Bio-Dynamic cultivation.

The last influential individual springing out of the Theosophical Society that I will mention is Alice Bailey (Alice LaTrobe Bateman, 1880-1949). Bailey joined the society around 1910, but was expelled in 1920 when she began to receive messages from the Masters, and thus came into conflict with Annie Besant. Bailey started the *Arcane School* in 1923, and wrote extensively on esoteric subjects. She is widely referred to in 'New Age' spirituality. (Faivre 1994: 89-90; Arlebrand 1995: 147-148, 153-157, 167; Hammer 1997: 39-40; 2001: 62-66).

Simply stated, the doctrine of the Theosophical Society revolves around the idea of a secret core of universal truth as the basis of all religions. This Secret Doctrine is passed on by the Mahatmas, the Masters of the Great White Brotherhood, who, according to Leadbeater, lived in the mythical city of Shamballa in the Himalayas. Important Theosophical leaders, such as Blavatsky and Besant, were in direct contact with these masters and could, in turn, pass on this secret knowledge to the rest of the society. The origin of all is an eternal and infinite prime foundation, impossible for us to fathom or describe with our limited human resources, and everything has emanated from this. Since all things, matter as well as spirit, are of this prime foundation, the divine spark is imbedded in all things.

Everything in existence is "impregnated with Consciousness" (TS-Adyar 2004), meaning that everything has a purpose and a direction.

Theosophy operates with a cyclical view of time, in which the world goes through creation, evolution and destruction, just like man himself. Man evolves spiritually, through reincarnation and the law of karma. The universal cycle goes through seven incarnations, and man is divided into seven root-races, with seven under-races in each. The first root-race was purely spiritual, without a material body, but each succeeding root-race becomes more and more material. With the Arian root-race, which is the current one, man begins anew to be more spiritual. After the final under-race in the seventh root-race, the life-principle is withdrawn from the world and another universal cycle starts.

Man has seven bodies, from the material body through the astral body, the life principle and the animal soul, to the more spiritual souls of Manas, Buddhi and Atman. This is a concept based on Paracelsus' writings (see Ahlbäck 1995: 30). At death, the material body decomposes and the lower souls start to disintegrate more slowly, while the higher souls are purified and spend a time of rest and reflection in heaven before reincarnating in a new material body. (Ahlbäck 1995: 30-31; Arlebrand 1995: 149-152; Hammer 1997: 40-44; TS-Adyar 2004).

2.1.3 The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn

The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, a highly influential magic order functioning as a model for many later magical orders, was founded on February 12th, 1888. The order was formed by William Wynn Westcott (1848-1925), who invited Samuel Liddell Mathers (1854-1918) and William Robert Woodman (1828-1891) to join him in its leadership (Kaczynski 2002: 47). The inspiration for forming the order came when Westcott received an esoteric manuscript written in cipher from Reverend A.F.A. Woodford, on August 8th, 1887 (Owen 2004: 53).

According to Richard Kaczynski, Westcott found the manuscript in the archives of *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglica*, of

which he had been a member since 1880 (Kaczynski 2002: 47). The text was probably written by Kenneth Mackenzie, a leading Masonic figure who had died the year before (Bogdan 2003b: 175-176). Westcott, who was familiar with the type of cipher the text was written in, deciphered it and was aided by Mathers in putting it down on paper in comprehensible form. (Howe 1972: 1-27; Bogdan 2003b: 174-175; Golden Dawn 2004a; 2004b; 2004c).

Part of the Golden Dawn founding legend is that the ciphered manuscript contained information on a Fräulein Anna Sprengel, who was supposedly a member of a German Golden Dawn (Owen 2004: 54-55). Westcott contacted her, and was given the right to open a Temple of the Golden Dawn in London, with Mathers and Woodman as his co-leaders. The correspondence with Fräulein Sprengel, chiefly a rhetorical means to give an aura of authenticity to the order, in a time when tradition and legitimate succession in esoteric societies was of great importance, was later disputed by Mathers and eventually led to the closing of the order. Mathers, Westcott and Woodman were all Freemasons, as well as members of the *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia*, founded in 1866, and founded the Golden Dawn due to the impossibility of studying certain aspects of esoteric traditions in S.R.I.A. There was much interconnection between esoteric movements of the time, as is the case today, and at least Westcott and Mathers were members of the Theosophical Society. (Howe 1972: 1-27; Bogdan 2003b: 174-175; Kaczynski 2002: 47-48; Golden Dawn 2004a; 2004b; 2004c).

On March 1st, 1888, the *Isis-Urania Temple No. 3* was officially opened and within a year the order had attracted about sixty members. Temples elsewhere in Britain and beyond were soon to follow, such as the *Osiris Temple* in Weston-super-Mare, the *Horus Temple* in Bradford, the *Amen-Ra Temple* in Edinburgh and the *Ahathoor Temple* in Paris. At the peak of its success, in 1896, the order had initiated 315 members.

In the 1890s Mathers had become the sole chief of the order, with the death of Woodman and with Mathers outmanoeuvring Westcott. It was, in fact, Mathers' aspiration to become the sole chief of the order, downplaying the importance Westcott had had in founding the Golden Dawn, which led to its decline. Since Mathers had lived in Paris, France, since 1892, running the London based

order was a bit difficult. When rebellious sentiments arose in London, Mathers demanded an oath of loyalty of all members. Those who refused were expelled, and this, of course, only fuelled the rebellious sentiments. (Howe 1972: 34-60, 92, 219-232; Bogdan 2003b: 176-179; Kaczynski 2002: 47-49; Owen 2004: 62).

With the resignation of his representative as the head of the *Isis-Urania Temple*, Florence Farr, Mathers feared a coup by Westcott. He sent a letter to her, in which he stated that Westcott had never been in any contact with the alleged Secret Leaders of the order. He thus indirectly, and most certainly inadvertently, confessed to the fraudulent basis of the order. Westcott could, of course, not defend himself properly. Mathers tried to exert his power and end the investigation into the case; he was unsuccessful. (Kaczynski 2002: 47-68; Owen 2004: 78-79).

Aleister Crowley, recently initiated into the inner order by Mathers himself, was in London refused recognition of his initiation. He thus informed Mathers that he was willing to help him. Crowley and Mathers devised a plan in which Crowley would confront the members of the second order, masked in order to conceal his identity, and request them to plead loyalty to the order. The plan was ultimately a failure, and Mathers lost what little authority he had left. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn declined severely after the events in 1900. In 1903 Arthur Edward Waite laid claim to the *Isis-Urania Temple*, and its teachings and practices were altered. The original order changed its name to *Stella Matutina*, and operated from the new *Amoun Temple*. The head of the *Amen-Ra Temple*, J.W. Brodie-Innes, assumed control over the British Branches of Mathers *Alpha and Omega* order. Today there exist several orders which lay claim to being true representatives of the original Golden Dawn. (Howe 1972: 34-60, 92, 219-232; Bogdan 2003b: 176-179; Kaczynski 2002: 47-68; Owen 2004: 80-83).

Novel to the Golden Dawn, according to Henrik Bogdan, was the highly deliberate syncretistic approach to the study of esotericism, and the orderly fashion in which it was executed. The initiatory structure of the Golden Dawn was based on the qabalistic tree of life, and each initiation was on a hierarchical plane on subsequent sephiroth on the tree. The initiatory structure of Golden Dawn was as follows:

- Neophyte, 0°=0° which was a introductory initiation admitting a person into the order
- Zelator 1°=10°, the first real initiation and corresponding to the sephira of Malkuth
- Theoreticus 2°=9°, the second degree and corresponding to the sephira of Yesod
- Practicus 3°=8°, the third degree and corresponding to the sephira of Hod
- Philosophus 4°=7°, the fourth degree and corresponding to the sephira of Netzach
- Adeptus Minor 5°=6, the fifth degree, corresponding to the sephira of Tipareth and the first degree of the Second Order
- Adeptus Major 6°=5°, the sixth degree and corresponding to the sephira of Geburah
- Adeptus Exemptus 7°=4°, the seventh degree and corresponding to the sephira of Chesed
- Magister Templi 8°=3°, the eight degree, corresponding to the sephira of Binah and the first degree of the Third Order
- Magus 9°=2°, the ninth degree and corresponding to the sephira of Chokmah
- Ipsissimus 10°=1°, the tenth and final degree, corresponding to the sephira of Kether. (Bogdan 2003b: 169-171).

Also innovative was the order's acceptance of female members, which cannot be said to be the case for other initiatory orders of the time. In fact, over one-third of the order's members where female at the eighth year of its existence, and during its first years more female members were initiated than male. Female members also held high ranks in the order, both in an organizational and initiatory capacity. (Owen 2004: 62-65).

Prior to 1892, the order had focused on theoretical study of esotericism, but with the creation of an inner order this came to change. In the inner order, the existence of which was held secret to members of the outer order, the focus was on practice, although not neglecting the theoretical study. The inner order was much more

Rosicrucian-inspired. (Howe 1972: 75-77). Female members also held high ranks in the order, both in an organizational and initiatory capacity. (Owen 2004: 62-65).

With the initiation into the grade of Adeptus Minor the adept was initiated into the Second Order. The degrees of the Third Order were viewed as fundamentally unattainable for normal humans (Owen 2004: 58). Crowley's *Argentium Astrum* (see section 2.1.4) was subsequently devised as the Third Order of the Golden Dawn (Kaczynski 2002: 138-139).(Howe 1972: 75-77; Bogdan 2003b: 177).

Besides novel ideas and approaches to the practical study of magic and an influential model for future magic orders, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn also spawned several culturally and spiritually very influential individuals. Among the members of the order were, only to mention a few, the poet William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), Allan Bennett (1872-1923), Florence Farr (1860-1917), Annie Horniman (1860-1937) and Arthur Edward Waite (1857-1942). Dion Fortune (Violet Mary Firth, 1891-1946) was member of a Golden Dawn temple active after the tumult around 1900. (Lewis 1999: 138-142).

2.1.4 Aleister Crowley

Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) was without doubt one of the most, if not the most, influential occultists of the 20th century. His influence can be seen in his direct affiliation with magic orders such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Ordo Templi Orientis, and in magico-religions started by him, such as *Argentum Astrum* (A:. A:.) and *Thelema*. He has also had a huge impact on the origin of neopaganism and has been called the forefather of contemporary Satanism (see Arlebrand 1995: 129; Rodenborg 1998, on this sentiment), although Crowley distanced himself from Satanism and black magic (see Kaczynski 2002: 460).

Aleister Crowley was born as Edward Alexander Crowley on October 8th, 1875, at Leamington spa, England. His father Edward (1834-1887) had made himself a fortune in the family brewery business, and had, after retiring at age 26, devoted his life to religion. Well before the birth of his son, he had converted to the Plymouth

Brethren, a Christian movement, founded around 1830, which considered itself as the only true Christian congregation and adhered to a literal interpretation of the Bible. During his youth Edward Alexander was a devout Christian, idolizing his father and reading the Bible conscientiously. This changed when his father died in 1887, as the grief coupled with his mothers (Emily, maiden name Bishop) increasing religious zeal made him distance himself from religion. His up until now happy childhood was rendered unhappy, as his increasing bad behaviour got him into trouble in the Christian schools he studied at. At about age 15, Edward Alexander discovered the sins of tobacco, alcohol and sex. At age 20, he was enrolled at the Trinity College, and received his inheritance of £ 50.000 since he had come of age. At the same time he changed his name to Aleister, a Gaelic rendering of his middle name Alexander. By the early 1910s Crowley had spent most of his wealth on the publication of his poetry and other books, as well as on his mountaineering enterprises (see Kaczynski 2002: 222-223). (Kaczynski 2002: 13-30).

Having given up on Christianity Crowley bought A.E. Waite's *The Book of Black Magic and Pacts* in 1898, thinking that the alternative could be found in the opposite to his childhood religion. Although not being what he expected, he was taken with the book and found a new form of spirituality in its pages. At about this same time Crowley's poetry, which he had begun to produce in 1886, began to take on a more sexualized language. In August, 1898, Crowley met and befriended Julian L. Baker through their mutual interest in mountain-climbing, and was later that year introduced to George Cecil Jones by Baker. Baker and Jones were both alchemists (and chemists), and introduced Crowley to *The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abra-Melin the Mage*, translated by Samuel Liddell Mathers. Baker and Jones were also members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and they invited Crowley to join. He did so in October 1898. Alan Bennett, an eccentric but accomplished magician, became Crowley's tutor in exchange for room and board. With Bennett's tuition Crowley advanced rapidly through the different grades, taking the outer *Zelator* to *Philosophus* degrees between December, 1898, and May, 1899. Late in 1899 he applied for admission into the inner order of the Golden Dawn, and was refused entry. Crowley

travelled to Paris and sought out Mathers, whom he had befriended through Bennett. Mathers initiated Crowley into the inner order in January, 1900. Mathers had an ulterior motive for initiating Crowley. Mathers had begun to lose his grip on the order, and the initiation was also an over-ruling of the decision made by the order in London. His use of Crowley in an attempt to secure his authority within the order did not bode well, as noted in section 2.1.3 (see Lewis 1999: 141; Booth 2000: 3-4, 15-16, 93-95, 117-124; Symonds & Grant 1979: 14, 35, 53, 176-178). (Kaczynski 2002: 40-67).

Crowley left England to travel the world, experiencing both the New World and the Orient. In USA, Crowley experimented with individual magic practice and developed a system of self-practice and self-initiation, doubtlessly important parts of contemporary magic orders and neopagan groups. In Ceylon he met with Alan Bennett, and through him Crowley came into contact with Yoga, as well as with more general aspects of Hinduism and Buddhism. (Booth 2000: 126-132, 138-157; Kaczynski 2002: 69-82).

Back in England, Crowley met and almost instantly married Rose Kelly, the sister to Gerald Kelly, whom Crowley had befriended through his poetry in 1898 and who was a fellow member of Golden Dawn (see Kaczynski 2002: 40-41, 57, 94-96). Rose came to be Crowley's first Scarlet Woman. For Crowley the Scarlet Woman, the designation being appropriated from the biblical myth of the Whore of Babylon accompanying the Great Beast[8] – that Crowley identified himself with (see Kaczynski 2002: 17), represented contact with a powerful feminine spiritual force (see Crowley 1996: 35, verse 1:15-16).

The newlyweds travelled east for their honeymoon and eventually ended up in Cairo, Egypt, in early 1904. It was in Egypt that Crowley's really influential magical work began, as he channelled *Liber AL vel Legis*, the *Book of the Law*, which was to become the cornerstone of Crowley's magic. Rose Kelly had, while pregnant, begun to manifest occult abilities and advised, in an altered state of consciousness, her husband to perform a certain

8 Important to note is that Crowley did not regard the beast of the Book of Revelations as the Christian Satan. Instead he saw the beast as the prophet of the New Aeon, the Aeon of Horus (Kaczynski 2002: 465).

ritual. Crowley did so, and came into contact with an entity called *Aiwass* (or *Aiwaz*), which he interpreted as his Holy Guardian Angel – his True Self. Included in the book are such key phrases as 'Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law' and 'Love is the law, love under Will' (Crowley 1996). Although Crowley was not initially enthusiastic about the message of the dictate, it later came to be the foundation of his view of life and magic. The governing idea of the book is that of *Thelema* – Will, as in the ultimate authority of the True Will of the magician as opposed to the adherence to any external spiritual force. (Kaczynski 2002: 98-105; see Equinox 1998b, no. 7: 359-386 for an account on how *Liber AL vel Legis* was conceived, and Equinox 1998b, no. 7: 387-400 for an early commentary of the book by Crowley. The pages in between the aforementioned writings provide facsimiles of the original handwritten *Liber AL*).

The Book of the Law introduced the idea of three ages that the world has passed through. First, the Aeon of Isis, with the trademarks of matriarchy and the worship of the Great Goddess. Secondly, the Aeon of Osiris, which began approximately around 500 B.C., and is recognized through strong patriarchal and rule-governed religiosity. With the 1904 channelling, the third Age, the Aeon of Horus – the Son, began[9]. The Aeon of Horus is identified by the religion of the True Self. (see Crowley 1996: 47, 89-92; Booth 2000: 171-173, 182-186; Symonds & Grant 1979: 19-22).

Rose and Crowley separated in 1908, and divorced in 1909, due to the severe alcoholism of Rose (Kaczynski 2002: 143), probably a result of the death of Rose's and Aleister's daughter Lilith in the summer of 1906 (Kaczynski 2002: 126-127). In 1910 he met Leila Waddell (1880-1932), and she came to be Crowley's new Scarlet Woman (Kaczynski 2002: 171).

Crowley founded the order of the Silver Star (A:.A:., *Argentium Astrum*), as the third and highest order of the Golden Dawn, in 1907, with himself, George Cecil Jones and J.F.C. Fuller as the ruling triumvirate (Kaczynski 2002: 138-139). The occult journal called

9 This Aeon thinking was expanded on later with Michael Aquino of the Temple of Seth, who recognized 1966 as the starting point of the Aeon of Satan (Anton Szandor LaVey, founder of the Church of Satan which Aquino was earlier a member of, had earlier declared 1966 as the starting point of the New Satanic Aeon or the New Aeon of Fire) (Arlebrand 1995: 134-135).

Equinox was published in ten volumes from 1909 to 1913, and although it sold well Crowley lost money on it due to under-pricing the publication (Kaczynski 2002: 148-149). The second issue of the journal printed the first order rituals of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, which had previously been kept secret (Kaczynski 2002: 153; Equinox 1998a, no. 2: 239-294). The Adeptus Minor ritual of the Inner order was printed in the third issue of Equinox (Equinox 1998a, no. 3: 207-238). *Liber 777*, an extensive table of correspondences, was published anonymously in 1909 (Kaczynski 2002: 132, 147).

With Mary Dempsey Crowley started to work on *Book Four*, in a process much similar to the work on *The Book of the Law* (Kaczynski 2002: 193-199). *Book Four* consisted of four volumes published between 1912 and 1936. It was in this work, later published in one volume called *Magick*, that the use of Magic with a 'ck' instead of a simple 'c' first came into use. By 'Magick' Crowley wished to differentiate himself from stage magicians (see Crowley 1977: 45, footnote) as well as convey an esoteric meaning, since the 'k' stood for the female sexual organ. (Booth 2000: 194-195, 247, 263-265, 285, 301, 321). Nowadays, the writing form stipulated by Crowley is the one favoured by most neopagan magicians.

With the publication of *Book of Lies* in 1912 Crowley was visited by Theodor Reuss (1855-1923), Outer Head of *Ordo Templi Orientis*. Reuss interpreted the book as a revelation of the innermost secrets of the order, and the ensuing discussion resulted in Reuss granting Crowley degree IX, the highest degree, not counting the administrational degree X, of O.T.O. Reuss also authorized Crowley to open up a British branch of O.T.O. Crowley did this in forming *Mysteria Mystica Maxima*. (Kaczynski 2002: 202-203).

The history of *Ordo Templi Orientis* is complicated. Some sources state that the order was founded in Germany around 1900 by Reuss, Franz Hartman (1838-1912) and Karl Kellner (1851-1905) (Kaczynski 2002: 203; Booth 2000: 304-313, 423; Lewis 1999: 215-222). Peter R. Koenig gives a more convoluted picture of the origin of the order. According to Koenig, Theodor Reuss was something of an entrepreneur focusing on the formation of Masonic orders and issuing Masonic degrees. Karl Kellner was a spiritual seeker interested in Tantra and Hatha Yoga. Sometime around 1904 Kellner

and Reuss decided to involve one of Reuss' orders with Kellner's Yoga-circle, in order to recruit suitable practitioners to the circle.

When Kellner became ill in 1904, Reuss decided to expand his ring of recruitment to his other orders, and thus O.T.O. came into existence, as some form of collective consisting of members from a number of other orders. The later history of O.T.O. is not any simpler. While some sources state that Crowley had probably been appointed leader of O.T.O. by Reuss in 1922 (see Booth 2000: 304-313, 423; Lewis 1999: 215-222), Koenig writes that Crowley had most likely been expelled by Reuss in 1921, and that Crowley had declared himself Outer Head of the Order without any such sanction by Reuss. Koenig also writes that it is doubtful if any of the current O.T.O. groups stem from Reuss' original order, and that it is more likely that they are in the lineage of the Crowley instigated break-away O.T.O. (Koenig 1999: 13-26). Crowley did rewrite the O.T.O. rituals around 1914-1917 (see Kaczynski 2002: 203-204; Koenig 1999: 13-26).

The order was initiatory and focused much on sex as a way of expressing and working magic. Since this was one of Crowley's main magical inclinations, the O.T.O. suited the English mage well. In 1914, Crowley added an 11th, anal sexual, initiation as an addition to the 9th, purely heterosexual, initiation. The 11th initiation is often seen as a homosexual initiation, but in reality it only made homosexuality in the ceremonial setting possible (see footnote 110).

In 1918, whilst living in New York, Crowley met the woman who became his new Scarlet Woman, Leah Hirshig (Kaczynski 2002: 263-265). Together they planned the opening of a temple and community where Crowleyan magic and religion could be practised. Quite naturally, as Crowley's teachings were unorthodox, and due to Crowley's bad reputation, the temple would have to be in a remote and secluded location. In Cefalú, Sicily, the appropriate place was found and on April 2nd, 1920, the *Abbey of Thelema* was opened (Kaczynski 2002: 277-281). The community was very much an antecedent of 'New Age' and other countercultural communes of the 1960s and focused on sexual freedom, mainly as an aspect of the sex magic so important for the Crowleyan way of magical practice. The Abbey experienced difficult times as the British press reported the death of Raoul Loveday, together with accounts of

drug use and sexual permissiveness at the location. The last member remaining at the Abbey, actress Jane Wolfe, left on October 1st, 1927 (Kaczynski 2002: 307-340). After 1927 Crowley spent his time in correspondence with his pupil and published a number of books. Worth to mention are *Moonchild* (1928), *Magick in Theory and Practice* (1929), the *Book of Thoth* (1944) and the posthumously published *Magick Without Tears* (1973).

Aleister Crowley died of myocardial degeneration and chronic bronchitis in Hastings, England, December 1st, 1947 (Kaczynski 2002: 452). (Booth 2000: 346-364, 483).

Crowley considered himself to be a reincarnation of prominent magicians throughout the history of Western magic. The most recent of these was Eliphas Lévi, who had died in 1875, six months before Crowley's birth. Earlier incarnations were Cagliostro, Edward Kelly and Pope Alexander VI. (Kaczynski 2002: 261; Symonds & Grant 1979: 16-17). Crowley was a poet of moderate success, and published several works of fiction, mostly as self-financed publications (see Kazcynski 2002). In alternative spiritual and neopagan circles, Aleister Crowley is probably known by virtually everybody, although views on him differ. The concept of the Will, as it is understood by contemporary magicians and neopagans, can largely be attributed to Crowley, as can the importance of sex magic and Tantric practices (see Crowley 1998), which were introduced to the west in large parts through Crowley. Crowley´s definition of magick as "the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will" (Crowley 1977: 131), as well as his mechanistic view on how and why magic works, is commonly used by contemporary magicians when defining the art. In the 1940s Crowley issued a Tarot Card pack painted by Frieda Harris and wrote an accompanying book on the Tarot (Kaczynski 2002: 411). Crowley's Thot Tarot is one of the more popular Tarot decks and interpretations today (Gudmundsson 2001: 46-47).

Two students of Crowley in particular are important to mention in the scope of the present study. Israel Regardie (1907-1985) was Crowley´s secretary from 1928 to the early 1930s (Kaczynski 2002: 343). He published several works treating the qabalah (see Regardie 1945; 1973) and also published the collected rituals of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in four volumes (Regardie 1937; 1938;

1939; 1940).

Kennet Grant (b. 1924) became a pupil and secretary of Crowley for a short while in 1945 (Kaczynski 2002: 440-441). In addition to producing works on magic in which he expands on Crowley's work (see Grant 1994a; 1994b), the most important of which is Grant's three Typhonian Trilogies (see Bogdan 2003c), Grant has also participated in several works dealing with Crowley (see Symmonds & Grant 1979; Crowley 1977; Grant 1991).

Continuing his studies in Crowleyana, Grant had applied to work with O.T.O. initiations in England. With his opening of the New Isis Lodge in the 1950s (Grant 1991: 145, n5), combined with him beginning to reorganize the O.T.O. instructions, he was expelled by Karl Germer. Grant took on the title of Outer Head of the Order (OHO), without any official sanction. (Kaczynski 2002: 459-461). He formed the Typhonian O.T.O. in 1970 (Koenig 1999: 25-26).

There has surfaced documents which seem to support Grant´s claims of being the O.H.O. In these documents Crowley expresses the wish for Grant to succeed him (Crowley 1947a; 1947b), although one must remember that Crowley himself had been expelled by Reuss. It does however seem that Crowley had intended for Germer to be OHO of O.T.O. (Kaczynski 2002: 459).

Grant incorporates the qliphoth, the dark shadow-side of the light sephiroth in the qabalah, in his magic system, while Crowley generally considered the qliphoth purely evil. Regarding the Tree of Life Grant writes:

> "Occultism in the West, however, has been dominated by interpretations that take into account only the positive aspect of this great symbol. The other side, the negative or averse of the Tree has been kept out of sight and sedulously ignored. But there is no day without night, and Being itself cannot *be* without reference to Non-Being of which it is the inevitable manifestation" (Grant 1994b: 1).

Grant views balancing the negative and positive aspects of existence as very important, and as a prerequisite for high level magic progress (see Grant 1994b: 1-10, 31).

2.1.5 The 'New Age' Movement

The 'New Age movement' is the academic umbrella-term given to several loosely organized spiritual movements and ideas (Frisk 1998: 163). Many academics define 'New Age' as self-spirituality, focusing on the primacy of self-evolvement in the here-and-now instead of the God- and after-world- centeredness of most traditional religions and many other esoteric movements (See Heelas 1996; 2002; York 1995). The term derives from the alternative spiritual milieu of the 1960s and 1970s, when the central optimistic idea revolved around the coming of the 'New Age', often called the 'Age of Aquarius', which was expected to bring an era of peace, harmony and spiritual wellbeing. Christianity was generally thought to belong to the prior 'Age of Pisces', and was a thing of the past. Whereas Christianity is characterised by dogmas and structured authority, 'New Age' is generally characterised by the lack of the same. (Chryssides 1999: 316). According to Paul Heelas, the 'New Age' involved a shift from Religion, in which authority is placed on outer-personal doctrines, to Spirituality, in which authority was placed on the individual and his/her experiences. 'New Age' spiritualities involve the sacralization of life rather than the preparation for afterlife. (Heelas 2002). The advent of 'the New Age' as well as the popularity of this type of spirituality can be traced to late modern societal changes, as dealt with in section 2.3.

York traces 'New Age' to the American metaphysical tradition, originally stemming from the New England transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) and Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), and finding its modes of practice in the likes of Spiritualism, the Theosophical Society and Christian Science (York 1995: 33). The transcendentalists saw inner spirituality as the core of true religion and institutional religion was disavowed. Nature, with divine forces permeating it, was seen as a model for spiritual harmony (Hammer 1997: 32). The basic foundation which the form of spirituality coined as the American metaphysical tradition was the innate potential of the human being to access the divine sphere, without the mediating hand of the institutional Church. Man was seen to have tremendous potential

within himself and only the inner, true spirituality could unlock this potential (see Hammer 1997: 35; Aadnanes 1997: 201).

Many scholars link the birth of the 'New Age movement' with the countercultural setting of the 1960s and 1970s (see Ahlin 2001: 16-19; Melton & Lewis 1992: xi). The counterculture was born through the post-second world war generation of middle-class Americans who had been brought up in material prosperity and a relatively secure society. The education of the new middle-class youth was higher than that of the previous generation and they were living in a society where the individual had been put at the centre. Two main groups of the counterculture are often under discussion, the hippie-movement and the leftist-movement, both of them converging on the strong anti-war sentiments during the war in Vietnam. The goal of both movements was to free the individual in some way, either from the oppressing influence of the parent generation, as for the Hippies, or from the oppression of capitalist society as for the New Left. In the search for freedom, the result was often the appropriation of unorthodox beliefs and practices condemned by society at large.

Hammer discusses the alternative spiritual milieu of the 1950s onwards, which in combination with the counterculture gave rise to the 'New Age movement' (Hammer 1997: 69-79). Jiddu Krishnamurti (discussed in section 2.1.2) moved to California in the 1930s after having denounced his status as World Teacher and rapidly began to attract a following. Indian Vedanta-philosophy found a breeding ground in California in the late 1930s, and along with Krishnamurti, the Guru Prabhavananda was popular among the rich and famous of the South-western USA. With the start of the Second World War the majority of the important European authors influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism, including Aldous Huxley, moved to California. The interests of the immigrated Indian spiritual teachers and the alternative intellectuals converged and a new spiritual underground influenced by eastern religiosity was born. During the late 1940s the interest in psychedelic drugs was growing and in 1953 Aldous Huxley, who despite great efforts had not managed to attain deep spiritual experiences, volunteered to take part in an experiment involving mescaline. The results were

immediate and Huxley praised the drug as a fast means of attaining the spiritual plane. A spiritual drug-subculture was born.

As a reaction to the dominant schools of psychology, Behaviourism and Freudian Psychoanalysis, Humanistic Psychology was developed by among others Abraham Maslow. It was felt that Freudian Psychoanalysis was too pessimistic and Behaviourism was criticized for its mechanical view of human behaviour. Humanistic Psychology stressed the potential of each individual instead of the focus on pathology in psychoanalysis. The school came to be appropriated much more by the alternative spiritual milieu than by academic psychology. (Hammer 1997: 72-76).

The alternative spiritual milieu mixed with the counterculture in the late 1950s through the meeting of the beat culture and neo-Hinduism. Influential authors such as Jack Kerouac were very interested in Buddhism and Hinduism (see Heelas 1996: 49-50; Aadnanes 1997: 202) and others such as Allen Ginsberg were involved in the psychedelic drug scene. Through authors such as these, the alternative spiritual milieu spread to a large number of alienated American youths. With the illegalization of psychedelic drugs in the 1970s, people were forced to find new ways to express their spiritual aspirations and an alternative spirituality emerged from the Western appropriation of Eastern religiosity, late modern individuality and the goal to attain the enormous potential of the individual, as inspired by Humanistic Psychology. (Hammer 1997: 71, 76-79).

Different timeframes have been given for the birth of the 'New Age movement'. Based on the emergence of the first American networks that used the term New Age as a self-designation J. Gordon Melton situates the emergence of the movement in 1971 (see Hammer 1997: 80). The popular emergence of 'New Age' is most often located to the 1980s. Marilyn Ferguson's influential *The Aquarian Conspiracy* was published in 1980 and the actor Shirley MacLaine's *Out on a Limb* in 1983. 1987 is usually seen as the year in which 'New Age' reached mass-audiences and thus became an element in mainstream religiosity. This was the year when *Out on a Limb* was televised, a massive festival for 'New Age' types of spirituality was organized in the United States for the first time,

and the hugely influential *Time* magazine published an article on New Age. (see Hammer 1997: 82-84; Melton & Lewis 1992: ix).

In the early 21st century few of the movements and practices generally defined as belonging to the 'New Age' focus on, or even discuss, the coming of the Age of Aquarius or view the societally transformative aspects as particularly important (see for example Hammer 1997: 285-286; Lewis 1992: 1-2). Some academics, such as J. Gordon Melton, view the 'New Age' as being passé as a movement and find that these different currents and groups instead belong to the more inclusive category of what is most often called Western Esotericism (see Melton 2004). The general ideas that were present have not, however, disappeared anywhere, although the way in which the coming universal enlightenment is discussed has changed.

Hanegraaff discusses New Age *sensu stricto* and New Age *sensu lato* (Hanegraaff 1996: 94-110, 356-361). New Age *sensu stricto* is spirituality with millenarian characteristics, occupied with the idea of the 'Coming of the Age of Aquarius'. New Age *sensu lato* on the other hand is a more inclusive category and the subject of Hanegraaff's scrutiny. In part correctly, Sutcliffe criticizes Hanegraaff's view of New Age *sensu lato* as the Campbellian *cultic milieu*, having consciously formed a movement in itself at some point in time (Hanegraaff 1996: 97), as providing more questions than answers (Sutcliffe 2003: 24). However, if treating the 'New Age' as some sort of unified form of spirituality this view is functional.

Hanegraaff further defines 'New Age' as a "manifestation of popular culture-criticism, defining itself primarily by its opposition to the values of the 'old' culture" (Hanegraaff 1996: 331) and in this he captures an important ingredient of 'New Age'. In addition to the concern with the Self, 'New Age' is largely critical of mainstream medicine, education, science etc. This is probably a remnant of the countercultural roots of the phenomenon. 'New Age' has, however, adopted a positive evaluation of a large number of contemporary mainstream culture values, two key examples of which would be individualism and capitalist economy. A number of other values held in common with much of the rest of contemporary society, such as ecology and the positivity of multiculturalism, may in part stem from 'New Age' itself. The cultural critique of 'New Age' is

not, however, particularly aggressive or subversive, as the form of spirituality is very world-affirming (Chryssides 1999), extending to the affirmation of mainstream culture on a large scale. The critique of mainstream science is also equivocal. Whereas mainstream medical science is often criticized for its mechanical approach novel scientific theories are frequently adopted and reinterpreted (see Hammer 2001: 502-503).

Steven J. Sutcliffe highly criticizes the academic construct of a 'New Age movement' (Sutcliffe 2003: 21-25). He points to examples from the works of York (1995), Heelas (1996), Hanegraaff (1996) and others and correctly points out that there are no real, fundamental essentials of a 'New Age movement' that the researchers are able to find. George Chryssides acknowledges this difficulty in defining 'New Age' and attributes this to the diversity of the form of spirituality (Chryssides 1999: 315).

The 'New Age' is a vast phenomenon and a seemingly limitless number of practices and ideas fit into it[10]. As Chryssides notes: "Its variety and eclecticism are as much part of its inherent nature as they are a part of its appeal" (Chryssides 1999: 315). The common denominators are usually, as mentioned above, the objectives of self-evolvement, self-fulfilment and self-realisation in various ways (see Frisk 1998: 163-164; Heelas 1996; York 1995; Chryssides 1999: 317-318). Recognizing the difficulties in defining the subject many scholars treat 'New Age' spirituality in terms of Wittgensteinian family resemblance. In the words of Eileen Barker (quoted in Lewis 1992: 6): "the 'movement' is not so much *a* movement as a number of groups and individuals that have a number of beliefs and orientations that have what the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein has called a 'family resemblance' – two members of the family may

10 One could mention alternative medicine, such as Reiki and Zone-therapy; borrowed and reinterpreted religious practices of tribal people, such as shamanic practices; foretelling techniques, such as astrology, Tarot-reading and I Ching; Channelling; beliefs and practices pertaining to UFO's and Parapsychology; Business training, such as Erhard Seminars Training based Transformational Technologies; alternative science and a general spiritual approach to various fields in life, such as diets (for example macro-biotic food), education, art (such as various New Age music and the novels of James Redfield) and home-furnishing (for example Feng Shui), just to name a few (see Chryssides 1999: 315; Heelas 1996).

bear almost no resemblance to each other, although they both resemble a third member". Olav Hammer recognises, again in a Wittgensteinian fashion, the following features not as necessary characteristics of 'New Age' spirituality but as often recurring themes.

- A view of the entire cosmos as an interconnected whole
- A direction in existence – indicating that humans create their circumstances not vice versa
- Everything is permeated by a divine force or energy
- Humans have mismanaged their existence but the present condition is possible to repair
- The earth is a living thing which has been abused by humanity
- Every human has his/her own unique part in existence
- A belief in reincarnation combined with a belief in spiritual evolution through the different reincarnations
- There are better ways to attain knowledge than the way science provides
- Eastern and traditional nature religion contain universal and ancient wisdom
- Humanity is on the verge of a spiritual and societal revolution. (Hammer 1997: 18-19).

Hammer also stresses that 'New Age' religiosity is essentially eclectic. Expressed with the help of the Smorgasbord metaphor, the individual picks those specific beliefs and practices which he/she likes and combines them in a way that suits him/her. No two persons' comprehension of 'New Age' spirituality is identical. Even though there are no central authorities dictating the rights and wrongs of 'New Age', and considering the seemingly limitless number of dishes on the smorgasbord, certain characteristics seem to be more or less universal. One such item is the belief in reincarnation, with an optimistic evolutionary framework (Hammer 1997: 18-21).

James R. Lewis discusses the following of Robert Ellwood's general characteristics of new religious groups as relevant for 'New Age' (Lewis 1992: 7):

- An emphasis on healing
- The use of scientific language as a means to be in sync with contemporary society
- Eclecticism and syncretism
- Monistic and impersonal worldview and view on the divine
- Optimism manifest in success orientation and an evolutionary approach to spirituality
- Emphasis on psychic powers

Lewis further points at the importance of the idea of transformation, both individual and societal, in 'New Age' (Lewis 1992: 8).

Both Hammer's and Ellwood's characterizations display the problem with the 'New Age' designate. In the Wittgensteinian 'family likeness' metaphor almost anything could be identified as 'New Age'. In Hammer's list five of the characteristics are true for Dragon Rouge, as well as many other esoteric movements, intrinsically and at least three others hold true for many members of the order. In Lewis' pick of Ellwood's characteristics at least two characteristics are intrinsic. I would not, however, categorize Dragon Rouge as belonging to the 'New Age' movement and I believe that this opinion is held by most other academics and laypeople in some way familiar with the order. I have not to date encountered one Dragon Rouge member who would identify the order as 'New Age'. It suffices to say that both 'New Age' and Dragon Rouge are part of the alternative spiritual milieu, and as such there are both connections and likenesses between them. 'New Age' spirituality and Dragon Rouge do however emphasize different aspects of the esoteric tradition.

The number of people attracted to 'New Age' spirituality is impossible to determine, as people active in the field are often not organized in groups, and may in fact disagree quite strongly with the identification of themselves as religious (although most would probably agree on being spiritual on some level). A statistical survey from 1994 shows that a large percentage of the Swedish adult population believe more or less strongly in the paranormal in ways which do not fit in with traditional Christianity (see Sjödin 1998: 66-67).

2.1.6 Neopaganism

The word 'pagan', used as a self-identification by most adherents of contemporary Western nature religion, derives from the Latin *Paganus*, pejoratively denoting people in Roman times living outside the cities and thus not a part of the city-culture of the time. Neopagans of today use the term as a positive self-designation in contrasting themselves to Christianity which is experienced to be hostile towards nature, women and life in the here-and-now. (Chryssides 1999: 336; Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 99-100). The prehistory of the positive evaluation of the word can be traced back to the middle of the 19th century, when many British intellectuals had become increasingly dissatisfied with the Christian view of nature. The term neopaganism was coined in 1891 by Christian apologist W.F. Barry as a pejorative term for the romanticising of ancient non-Christian religiosity and as a critique towards those advocating it. (Hutton 1999b: 19-20).

In the early days of neopaganism it was common to discuss this form of religion as the 'Old Religion' in the sense of an original and true pre-Christian religion having been revived by the modern inheritors of the religion. Margaret Murray (1863-1963) argued in her works *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921) and *The God of the Witches* (1931) that the people tried in the medieval witch trials where actually members of a secret pagan religion[11] (Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 102; Bogdan 2003b: 203). Murray's work was later discredited, but was in its time able to spawn renewed interest in non-Christian religion. (Hutton 1999b: 31-34; Chryssides 1999: 225-336).

Although the term 'the Old Religion' is still in use, it is much less common among the neopagans of today to claim an ancient origin (Harvey 1997: 52). It is commonly accepted among participants that contemporary Western nature religions are largely

11 Murray based her arguments on the works of scholars Karl-Ernst Jarcke and Franz-Josef Mone, as well as well as on the writings of the American adventurer, Charles Godfrey Leland, most notably *Aradia* (1899) which Leland claimed was the gospel of an Italian based branch of the pagan religion and which had been passed on to him by one of the last remaining members of this tradition. It was Leland who had characterized the alleged pre-Christian religion as 'the Old Religion'. (Hutton 1999b: 31-34).

reconstructions, not survivals (Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 102-103). This is much due to the harsh critique of the works of the important founding authors of Wicca delivered by American esoteric scholars from the 1970s onwards (Hutton 1999b: 65; Kelly 1992: 148).

There are many forms of neopaganism today, but Wicca is the largest variant (Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 102), and I will therefore treat it in more detail than the other variants. Other large fractions are Goddess spirituality, which is closely connected to Wicca, Druidry, Asatrú and neoshamanism. It was with Gerald Gardner's *Witchcraft Today*, published in 1954, that neopaganism *per se*, in the form of Wicca, was born[12]. In the book, to which the aforementioned Margaret Murray provided the preface, it was argued that 'the Old Religion' had survived into modern times. The Witchcraft Act of 1736, which had made witchcraft illegal, was repealed in 1951 and it was thus possible for neopagans to publicly profess to witchcraft (Hammer 1997: 129). In his biography, published in 1960, Gardner wrote that he had been initiated into one of the last remaining witchcraft covens.

Gardner had been involved in Masonic and Rosicrucian societies and had had some dealings with Aleister Crowley[13] (see

12 Some reports state that Wicca was founded by Gardner in 1939 (Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 102; Kelly 1992: 136) while other reports state that Wicca started with the abolishment of the Witchcraft Act (Hammer 1997: 129). What is sure is however that Gardner instigated an interest in practiced witchcraft with a series of fictional works depicting witchcraft from 1939 onwards (Hammer 1997: 129; Hutton 1999a) and later claimed to having been initiated into a coven in the same year (Bogdan 2003b: 203).

13 According to Gardner he had actually been initiated into Crowley's *Ordo Templi Orientis* in 1946 but had decided not to play an active part in the order (Hutton 1999a: 205-207; 1999b: 34, 43-55). Elsewhere it has been stated that the early Gardnerian initiations and rituals owe much to Aleister Crowley, even to the extent of being written by him for Gardner (see Bogdan 2003b: 207-208). Research by Aidan Kelly has shown that Gardner's early texts are based on direct quotations from works by Aleister Crowley and Charles Leland, from Samuel Mathers' translation of the grimoire *The Greater Key of Solomon the King*, and of Margaret Murray's descriptions of the witches' cult. The Golden Dawn and Freemasonic ceremonial texts provided the base for the rituals (Hutton 1999b: 49). Aleister Crowley was, as demonstrated in sections 2.1.3 and 2.1.4, one of the most influential occultists to appear from the Golden Dawn. The word Wicca, derived from the old English word for Witch, was used by Gardner to denote a practitioner of 'the Old Religion', albeit in the spelling 'Wica' later changed to the more correct 'Wicca' by adherents of the movement (Hutton 1999b: 44).

section 2.1.4) (Hutton 1999a: 205-207; 1999b: 34, 43-55). Ronald Hutton attributes great importance to the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (se section 2.1.3) as a forerunner, or an inspiration, for the modern neopagan religions. It was in the Golden Dawn that Western initiatory esotericism, which until then had more or less solely been dominated by Christian influences, was mixed with non-Christian elements. (Hutton 1999b: 12-13).

Important offshoots of Gardnerian Wicca are Alexandrian Wicca (started by Alex Sanders in the 1960s and gaining popularity in the 1970s) and American Feminist Wicca. Alexandrian Wicca, with the name deriving both from the first name of its founder but also from allusions to the great Egyptian city Alexandria, included high magic in the form of qabalah and elaborated Golden Dawn rituals on its program. Alexandrian Wicca is also more open to homosexuality than the more heteronormative Gardnerian variant, although there are Gardnerian Wicca-groups for all-male homosexuals (see Kelly 1992: 149). (Hutton 1999b: 58-60).

The birth of American Feminist Wicca can be traced to the founding of WITCH (Women's International Conspiracy from Hell) in 1968. A defining characteristic was the critique of the witchcraft trials as an open war waged by the Christians against the pagan witch-women, a war not only on the religion but on the whole of womankind. Dianic Wicca, born out of America, is a particular form of Wicca which admits only women and focuses largely on feminist religious issues (Hammer 1997: 133-134). (Hutton 1999b: 60-65).

Wiccans are normally organized in small covens ideally with thirteen members. As sex-polarity is an important theme in the practice of the religion the coven should traditionally have an equal amount of men and women, although there are covens that accept only female members and those that do not attach any importance to the ratio of men to women. (Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 103). According to Graham Harvey, the growing trend today is that of individual practitioners who do not meet in groups (Harvey 1997: 50). Wicca, at least in the more traditional forms, offers initiation into three degrees (see Bogdan 2003b: 218-233). Normally one should be initiated by a High Priest/Priestess of the opposite sex, although this is naturally not the case with covens with strictly same-sex members.

The practice centres on seasonal celebrations at the following occasions:

- Samhain, on October 31st, when the start of the winter, and the death of nature, is celebrated
- Yule, Midwinter or the winter solstice, when the return of the sun is celebrated
- Imbolc or Brigid, on February 1st or 2nd, when the coming of spring is celebrated
- Eostre/Ostara or the Spring Equinox, which also celebrates spring
- Beltaine, on April 30th or May 1st, when the coming of the summer is celebrated
- Summer solstice, at midsummer, celebrating the vitality of nature
- Lammas or Lughnasadh, on July 31st, which celebrates the fertility of nature, as this is the traditional time of harvest
- Autumn Equinox, which, similarly to the spring equinox, is a celebration of the balance of nature.

The seasonal cycle is called the *Wheel of Life*, as it follows the seasonal rhythm of nature (Harvey 1997: 3-13; Hammer 1997: 131-132). Most neopagans celebrate these seasonal festivals, and the timing is usually connected to the seasons of the northern hemisphere, even when the neopagans in question are living in the southern hemisphere (Harvey 1997: 3). While the other festivals derive from old northern European traditions the celebration of the equinoxes is of modern heritage (Harvey 1997: 9). A key Wiccan ritual is *Drawing Down the Moon*, which is included as a part in most other rituals. *Drawing Down of the Moon* involves invoking the power of the Goddess, represented by the moon, into the practitioner (see Harvey 1997: 39-40; Bogdan 2003b: 218-219).

Goddess Worship, or Goddess Spirituality, stems directly from Wicca. Whereas in traditional Wicca two divinities, the masculine Horned God and the feminine Great Goddess, are worshipped, Goddess Spirituality keeps only the feminine divinity, as the designate implies. Feminism, which is a recurrent theme in most neopaganisms, is most pronounced in Goddess Spirituality, and

the goddess is seen as manifest in every woman. A prevalent myth employed is that of an original matriarchy in which humans were closer to nature and which was suppressed by patriarchal Indo-European invaders. Common to both Wicca and Goddess Spirituality is the view that women are closer to the realm of magic and nature than men. (Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 100-104; Harvey 1997: 69-86).

The roots of Druidry go back as far as the 18th century. The early modern druids were not pagan but rather Christian, simply highlighting the ancestral roots of their Celtic origin. Orders of druids, these largely Christian as well, where also formed basically as versions of Freemasonic orders. It was during the 1960s and the 1970s that Druidry as a form of neopagan self-identification was born, and when neopagan druid orders were founded. The historical remains of ancient Celtic druids are as good as non-existent, and therefore the neopagan Druidry is more of a recreation than, for example, Asatrú. Reverence for nature, especially for oak trees, is very important to Druidry, as are the seasonal celebrations. Druids have an initiation system consisting of the three classes of Bards – involved in music and poetry, Ovates – focusing on communication with nature and the Otherworld and Druids – who are the public face of Druidry and manage the organizational tasks. It is however often stressed that none of the classes is more important than the others, and that a Bard should not be considered a novice Druid. Whereas Wicca and Goddess Spirituality mainly draw female practitioners, Druidry is more popular amongst males. (Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 107-110; Harvey 1997: 17-34; Hammer 1997: 134-135).

Asatrú, also called Heathenism or Odinism, is the recreation of the worship of the ancient Germanic and Scandinavian divinities. In contrast to the other branches of neopaganism, Asatrú operates with more traditional gender roles, in which man and woman are seen to have their own tasks and roles in worship and society. Traditional male ideals, such as strength and honour, are revered. Although race, and more pronouncedly ancestry, has at times been an issue in Druidry this is not generally the case today (Hammer 1997: 135). In Asatrú race generally plays a significant part, although there are exceptions. It is often stated that each race or cultural group has its own distinguishing features and religions which suite them

best, and Asatrú is the religion of the Germanic and Scandinavian people. Asatrú is also popular among right-wing political groups, although the conclusion that Asatrú equals racism should not be drawn. In fact many Heathens strongly relinquish any racist sympathies and state that these have no part in Asatrú. Heathenism is the most distinctly polytheistic of the types of neopaganism, incorporating the vast pantheon of Norse divinities whereas, for example, Wicca only operates with the god and the goddess. The seasonal celebrations of the Heathens also take a slightly different form. On Iceland Asatrú has, since 1973, been an officially recognized religion with granted rights of providing legalized life rituals, such as marriage, burial and baptism. The religion had 172 registered members in the mid 1990s. (Harvey 1997: 53-68; Hammer 1997: 135-136; Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 104-107).

Neoshamanism, defined by Lisbeth Mikaelsson and Ingvild Gilhus as the Western application of traditional shamanic techniques (Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 100), is the last neopagan branch I will treat in the present context. Neoshamanism became an alternative spiritual fad in the 1960s with the publication of Carlos Castaneda's *The Teachings of Don Juan*, and the subsequent publication of a series of books by him focusing on the same themes. A contributing factor, due to the popular countercultural fixation on hallucinogenic drugs, was Castaneda's descriptions of drug-induced spiritual experiences. Castaneda was a PhD-student in anthropology at the University of California. He claimed that he had done field work with a Yaqui-Indian medicine man called Don Juan. Although his claims were later discredited, he was awarded a PhD in 1973 for a manuscript based on his third book, *Journey to Ixtlan*, published in 1972 (see Svanberg 2003: 84-88). In addition, the academic discrediting of Castaneda's works has had little if any effect on modern day neoshamans, 'New Agers' and magicians, who still read Castaneda's books. Today the fad has become a fixture in the alternative spiritual mainstream.

In 1980, Michael Harner published a handbook on shamanic practices called *The Way of the Shaman*. In this book Harner, who was an anthropologist gone native, introduced the concept of *Core Shamanism*. Core Shamanism was presented as a general shamanism based on what was fundamental to the shamanism of different

native people around the world. Academics do not, however, accept Harner's Core Shamanism and prefer to speak of shamanisms, since the differences between shamanic-like practices in different tribal societies are greater than the similarities. (Hammer 1997: 110-113, 116-118; Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 110-111).

There are a few major differences between neoshamanism and the shamanisms of traditional people. Among traditional people becoming a shaman is not something one chooses, or even regards as a choice occupation. The shaman generally becomes a religious professional through an experience of grave illness which he (as the shaman is almost without exception a male) recovers from through contact with the spirit world. The shaman's main occupation is to function as a healer and a protector of the people, retrieving the souls of the sick from the spirit world and guarding the village against otherworldly harm. The neoshaman chooses his occupation, although narratives of 'a dark night of the soul' are common, and anyone willing has the possibility of becoming one. In contrast to traditional shamans, the Western neoshaman is one who works in a group of fellow neoshamans. Generally neoshamans draw inspiration from the tribal peoples of South, Central and North America, but Nordic influences, such as the Sámi and the Old Norse traditions, are also prominent. Although neoshamanism can be considered a distinct branch of neopaganism, it is also a practice which overlaps with all of the other branches. Most neopagan variants practice some form of shamanic technique. (Harvey 1997: 107-122; Hammer 1997: 118-119, 122-123; Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 110-112). Old Norse and Sámi inspired neoshamanism is quite prominent in Sweden and will be dealt with in-depth in section 2.2.

A distinct form of neoshamanism is so-called technoshamanism, in which dancing to techno-music at rave parties is used as a technique to come into contact with the spiritual plane. Technoshamanism is generally considered to belong more closely to the 'New Age' milieu and not as much to neopaganism. (Hammer 1997: 119; Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 112; Harvey 1997: 122-124).

The following characteristics are common to all movements and groups identified as neopagan:

- The reverence of nature and life is a distinguishing trait. Neopagans celebrate life in the here-and-now instead of focusing their spiritual aspirations on a future afterlife. Nature represents the immanent divine force permeating everything and ecological activism is the natural outcome of this view. Consequently soul and body are not seen as separated but rather as one.
- There are no authoritative dogmas and no central authority governing the neopagan groups. Neopagans can freely choose their preferred ways of belief and practice, and one's own experiences are considered to be the most important authority. The only rule is that one should not harm others: "Eight words the Wiccan Rede fulfil; An' it harm none, do what ye will" (Hammer 1997: 133). A common belief is that whatever you do, both good and bad, comes back to you threefold.
- Neopagan practices are very similar amongst the different branches. Seasonal celebrations are more or less a rule and shamanic practices are very common. The practice of magic, in a combination of high ritual magic and popular folk magic, is also a common denominator. Initiations occur in many forms of paganism, Druidry and Wicca representing the clearest examples of this.
- The view of Christianity is generally negative. Christianity is often seen as the antithesis of neopaganism, in regard to spiritual aspirations and the attitude towards nature. Not seldom, Christianity is seen as the main offender when it comes to the sources of unsound ecology and the persecution of people with dissident beliefs. It is however important to point out that many pagans strive towards a sound dialogue with Christians, and that the dislike of Christianity, as a rule, never takes on aggressive qualities.
- Sex-polarity is an important factor in neopagan magic. The male and the female complement each other,

representing what is seen as the male and female forces in existence. In magical rituals it is usually important that individuals of both sexes are present and initiations are usually provided by a person of the opposite sex. In some traditions of Wicca this goes as far as stating that the practice of magic is impossible for homosexuals. There are however groups that do not place as much importance on actual sex-polarity in the ritual context and groups that work exclusively with women and feminine forces.

- Feminism is a recurrent theme. Most neopagan groups actively work to improve the situation of women and do not accept different gender roles for the sexes. An exception is Asatrú, where traditional gender roles are assigned, although this does not hold true for all Heathen groups. (Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 100-101; Harvey 1997; Hammer 1997: 124-126).

The adherents of neopagan subgroups generally assemble in joint networks so that Wiccans have common Wiccan federations, Druids common Druidic organizations etc. The practitioners of the different head branches of neopaganism are also commonly united under national and international associations and interest groups, among which the *Pagan Federation* is the largest one. (Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 100-101).

Beside the purely religious variants of neopaganism the popularity of things pagan is also visible in the increased tourism to ancient cult sites, the huge interest in mythology and fantasy literature and the widespread use of pagan symbols (Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 117-122).

2.1.7 Neopaganism and 'New Age'

Works dealing with 'New Age' spirituality usually also treat neopaganism (see Hammer 1997; Hanegraaff 1996; York 1995; Heelas 1996). Views differ on whether neopaganism should be

treated as a part of 'New Age' or as something distinct. According to George Chryssides, neopaganism should be "sharply distinguished" from 'New Age'. Whereas 'New Age' is highly eclectic and lacks strict boundaries, neopaganism, and especially Wicca, is a clearly defined religion. It is a spiritual path for "'finders' rather than 'seekers'". (Chryssides 1999: 332). Other scholars see neopaganism as a part, although perhaps more or less clearly demarcable, of 'New Age' (see Hammer 1997: 124-125).

There are many similarities between what is seen as 'New Age' spirituality and what is considered to belong to neopaganism, but there are also many differences. According to Michael York, the similarities between 'New Age' and neopaganism amount to "eco-humanism in some variant, the belief in the intrinsic divinity of the individual, epistemological individualism, and exploratory use of theonymic metaphors not traditionally associated with the Judeo-Christian mainstream" (York 1995: 145). Both neopaganism and 'New Age' have the same anti-authoritarian structure, discarding official authority in favour of the authority of experiences and the self.

Ecology and sacralization of life (see Heelas 2002) and the individual are common characteristics of both 'New Age' and neopaganism. Nature is seen as something to be revered and the individual is divine. However, the ecology of 'New Age' spirituality is usually more focused on the individual than on nature itself. The 'healing of Mother Earth' is fundamentally a healing of the self and contact with nature is sought in order to 'find oneself'. This is also a part of neopagan ecology, but the focus is more on nature itself. Regarding the divinity of the individual, neopagans do not experience a distinction between body and soul, whereas 'New Agers' tend to view spirit as truer than matter, sometimes going to the lengths of denying any reality of the material. (see York 1995: 146-147). Connected to this is the sharp distinction between 'the light' and 'the dark' in 'New Age' spirituality in contrast to the more 'in-balance' view of neopaganism. 'New Agers' reject the dark as something purely evil and are focused on reaching and embracing the light, which is good and spiritual, whereas neopagans usually see the light and the dark as mutually dependent. The dark, as represented by, for example, death, is a necessary component of

life (York 1995: 159-160). There are however neopagans, mainly Wiccans, who condemn the dark and have a more dualistic take on reality.

Religious practice is another area of difference. Neopagans usually construct elaborate ritualistic elements for their practices, based on ceremonial magic patterns. 'New Age' meetings are mostly based on the lecture model, and where practice is involved it usually assumes a more mundane form than in neopaganism. In addition, 'New Agers' do not engage in initiations to the same extent as neopagans, at least not in the same complex forms. (see York 1995: 147). Where organization is concerned 'New Age' is much more loosely based than neopaganism. 'New Agers' move from one practice to another as individuals and are seldom organized as groups for long periods of time. The majority of neopagans are members of some group or organization and often view the group as important. Even individual practitioners of neopagan crafts may be members of some of the head organizations such as Pagan Federation. 'New Age' has no head organization. One could say that it is possible to delimit neopaganism whereas the 'New Age' tends to elude all attempts to define it (see section 2.1.4).

Another difference can be seen in the chronological focus of the two types of spirituality. Rhetorically, neopagans are focused on 'before', as in a more nature-oriented and harmonious time before Christianity. 'New Agers', on the other hand, are focused on the future, as in spiritual evolution of the self and perhaps of society. (see Kelly 1992: 138). Important to note, however, is that these are mainly discursive strategies. 'New Agers' regularly discuss 'universal truth to be found in ancient religion' and neopagans strive to live in the here and now, expressing ecological concerns for the future.

Linkages between 'New Age' and neopaganism are closest and most apparent in the practice of neoshamanic techniques, with witchcraft as a good runner-up. Neoshamanic practices cross the whole milieu of alternative spirituality, but whereas neopagans often gather in neoshaman groups with clear ideological and practice-related delimitations, 'New Agers' do not.

2.2 The Alternative Spiritual Milieu of Sweden

In the present section I will deal with the alternative spiritual milieu of Sweden in general and Stockholm in particular, focusing on the 1970s onwards. I will not treat the more organized New Religious Movements in any greater detail, but will instead concentrate on alternative spiritualities such as 'New Age', neopaganism and occult currents.

The older and more established alternative spirituality is in Sweden, as in most other countries, represented by various Spiritualist associations. Spiritualism took root in Swedish society in 1878 with the forming of the first spiritualist association. *Sveriges Spiritualisters Riksförbund* (SSR), a Swedish national association for spiritualists, was formed in 1949, and still remains active, although a split occurred in the mid 1980s and the rival *Spiritualistiska Riksförbundet för Andlig Utveckling* (SRAU) was formed (Frisk 1998: 33). *Sällskapet Sanningssökarna* [the Seekers of Truth], also mentioned by Thomas Karlsson (see section 4.1.1), was formed in 1904 and is the oldest Swedish spiritualist association still active today. In the beginning, the association was called *Frenologiska Sällskapet* and was primarily involved in phrenology[14]. In 1920, the name was changed to *Spiritualistiska Sällskapet*, as spiritualism had become more prominent in the association than Phrenology and in 1956 the current name was adopted, to indicate openness to different spiritual paths. (Sanningsökarna 2004).

Another spiritualist association also mentioned by Karlsson, *Stockholms Spiritualistiska Förening* (SSF), is active in the Stockholm region and has some kind of activity at least once a week (SSF 2004). SRAU and SSR are reported to have had up to 1000 members in 1998 (Frisk 1998: 34), and the reported number of professional mediums was likewise around 1000 in the early 1990s (Arlebrand 1995: 80).

The interest in Old Norse cultic sites and symbolism is great in

14 Phrenology was a school of science popular in the 19th and early 20th centuries which proposed that it was possible to draw conclusions about the characteristics of a human being on the basis of the shape of that person's skull. Phrenology worked on blatantly racist premises.

Sweden, although practised neopaganism is probably concentrated more to the southern regions of the country. Liselotte Frisk notes that there are several Asatrú organizations in Sweden, most of them only numbering a handful of members (Frisk 1998: 149). As discussed in section 2.1.6, there are both racist and anti-racist Heathen organizations. Frisk describes *Sveriges Asatrosamfund* [the Swedish Asatrú Society], which requires its members to adopt a non-racist and democratic stance. The society was founded in 1994, based on an interest in Old Norse customs, beliefs and religion and is mainly an umbrella-organization for a number of smaller independent groups. The society had an estimated 250 members, of whom 40 percent were women, in 1998. (Frisk 1998: 149-150).

Fredrik Skott describes a number of other Heathen groups active in Sverige (Skott 2000: 50-57). *Breidablikk-Gildet*, founded in 1975, is the oldest existing Heathen organization in Sweden. The regulations of the guild state that the end-goal is the revival of Asatrú as a religion, in a form suitable for the modern world. The guild has had a diminishing membership since its heyday in the late 1980s, when it had about 130 members, and now only involves a handful of active members.

An interesting chapter in the 'life-and-times' of Swedish Heathenism is *Svitjods Asa-Gilde*, founded in 1990, and later fashioned into *Fröjslunds Världshus*. In contrast to other neopagan organizations, this one is ruled by one central authority-figure. *Fröjslunds Världshus* is also not strictly Asatrú, as it is not the *Aesir* race of gods that are at the centre of worship, but rather the fertility gods, the *Vanir*, among whom Frey is especially revered.

Samfälligheten för Nordisk Sed was founded in 1997 as a national organization for those practising Old Norse customs or religion, and was accepted as a registered religious body in March, 2000. Doing his research, Skott found few Asatrú organizations which are openly racist. He gives one as an example, *Svensk Hednisk Front* [Swedish Heathen Front]. The homepage of the organization conveys a somewhat aggressive impression, although it is stated that the organization is not militant and that what is important is the Nordic heritage in spirit and soul as well as nature (see Heathen Front 2004). Skott estimates that there are 600-700 Swedes who are members of Heathen organizations and a still greater number of

people who identify themselves as Heathen but who are not members of any organization (Skott 2000: 49).

Wicca, as noted earlier, is the most popular form of neopaganism. Recourse to the popular search-engine, *Google*, gave 963.000 hits, whereas in comparison searches such as Christianity gave 5.670.000 hits, Islam 9.270.000 hits, Catholicism 801.000 hits, Satanism 232.000 hits, Asatru 63.000 hits, Magick 909.000 hits and a pop music icon like Kylie Minogue 982.000 hits[15]. Of course, figures such as these give no real indication of the number of people actually involved in a phenomenon, but do indeed give some pointers as to how much public interest the phenomenon in question invokes. As the Internet is global, since there is no real functional way to restrict one's web-searches on a national plane, similar figures are nigh impossible to provide for Sweden. A guiding example could be the Swedish link-collection *Fjalar*, which in the category of Religion and Philosophy lists 66 major websites, out of which 20 deal with Wicca or Witchcraft in some way or another ("Fjalar" 2004).

In an inquiry instigated by the Swedish Ministry of Health and Social Affairs the following Wicca or Witchcraft groups are mentioned: *Court of Joy Coven* with 52 members; *Häxagon* with about 40 members, *Svenska Vitkaförbundet* with about 80 members and 21 Swedish members of the *Pagan Federation* (SOU 1998: 61). This would amount to less than 200 Swedish Wiccans and witches. There are however other witchcraft organizations, and many witches are not members of any organization whatsoever.

Neoshamanism is very popular in the Swedish alternative spiritual milieu. As mentioned earlier, neoshamanism crosses the boundaries between 'New Age' and neopaganism, and functions as a religious activity employed by adherents within both fields. Galina Lindquist identifies Jörgen I. Eriksson and Mikael Gejel as two founding figures of neoshamanism in Sweden (Lindquist 1997: 28-29). The *Yggdrasil guild*, an association with the goal of developing a Nordic type of shamanism, was founded by Gejel amongst others in the mid 1970s. At around the same time, in 1976, the first issue of the magazine *Gimle*, also dealing with shamanic issues, was published (see Gejel 1996). Mikael Gejel, along with Jörgen I.

15 The search was done on the 6th of November 2004.

Eriksson, was among those behind the publication. The first four issues of *Gimle* had the subtitle "the magazine for the wisdom of Edda", and it was not until issue five that the subtitle "a magazine for shamanism" appeared. Another group called *Yggdrasil* was founded by Eriksson in 1982 and this time the group was more formalized. The activities and goals of the group were positively valued by the Swedish mass media. The main theme of the magazine *Gimle* was "the Nordic Heritage" but subjects such as Hinduism and Tantrism were also dealt with. (Lindquist 1997: 28-52). *Yggdrasil* was incorporated into the *Merlin Order* in 1994 (Gejel 1996).

In an article in the 20th anniversary-issue of *Gimle*, Jörgen I Eriksson presents four phases in the history of the magazine (Eriksson 1996: 7-9). Phase one consisted of issues one through four and focused on Ancient Norse myths, runes and, to a small extent, shamanism. Phase two, consisting of issues five through eleven, is characterized as the "Shaman issues" and indicated a shift to practised neoshamanism. This was also the period when Jörgen Eriksson and Mikael Hedlund became part of the editorial board. Eriksson calls stage three, issues 12-16, the "Miscellaneous phase" indicating a more directionless time. The scientific phase of the magazine, issues 17-22, marked a new creative direction and an attempt to publish a more professional magazine. Issue number 1/2004 of the magazine includes articles on Sufism, Nordic spirituality, the connection between music and ecstasy, a presentation of the new religious body *Moder Jord* [Mother Earth] – in which the Vanir family of fertility gods are worshipped, and reviews of two books – one dealing with Druidry and the other with Carlos Castaneda (Gimle 2004).

There are few studies on the history of 'New Age' spirituality in Sweden. I will therefore have to confine my presentation to a very short account by Owe Wikström (Wikström 1998: 34-35). In 1966, *Klubb Kamelen*, a club organizing diverse alternative religious happenings, was opened in the Old City of Stockholm.

The 1960s also saw the start of the 'New Age' magazine, *Sökaren*, and the early 1970s the opening of the alternative spiritual book shop, *Vattumannen*. In 1974, the major Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* issued a section called *Idagsidan*, which has been called the "New Age-page" (Ahlin 2001: 146-147). A magazine called

Nexus, which had some connection with the Human Potential Movement, was started in 1976 (Wikström 1998: 34).

Several centres for alternative spiritual topics were opened in Stockholm in the early 1980s. Tomas Frankell has been an important figure in the alternative spiritual milieu of Stockholm and he is the instigator behind two of the more important of the above mentioned centres, *Café Vega* – opened in 1980, and *Café Pan* – opened in 1983 (Frankell 2004). In 1990, Frankell started *Deva Center*, a centre and meeting-point for alternative spiritual matters – with courses and lectures on the programme schedule (Frankell 2004). Another important meeting-point is *Wäxthuset Väddö*, opened in 1976, a centre for personal development according to the official homepage (Wäxthuset 2004).

'New Age' spirituality is spread to a high degree through the printed medium. Jenny-Ann Brodin identifies four 'New Age' magazines which she deems to be of importance, although she does aknowledge the existence of several others. *Sökaren* is the oldest of the Swedish 'New Age' magazines, published since 1964[16]. The focus of the magazine is wide, and it had a circulation of about 1700 copies per issue in 1998. *Alpha Omega* has been published since 1995. The magazine struggled with economic difficulties in the late 1990s and was amalgamated with the magazine, *Quintessens*, in 2001, in order to secure the future of the aforementioned. *Energivågen* is a free magazine, financed by advertisement revenues, published since 1982 and with a circulation of 20.000-22.000 copies per issue, according to the editorial board. *Nexus Nya Tider*, a Swedish variant of the Australian *Nexus New Times*, was published from 1998 to 2000. (Brodin 2001: 73-74).

Articles in issues of *Alpha Omega* published from 1999 to 2002 deal with various subjects. Among them are interviews with pop artists who profess to a 'New Age' lifestyle, articles on healing and alternative medicine – as well as a critique of institutional medical science, alternative economic science, relationships and sexuality,

16 According to Owe Wikström the first issue of *Sökaren* was published in 1969 (see Wikström 1998: 34). Although Brodin places the start of *Sökaren* at 1964, she also names the year 1969 as the starting point in another section of her PhD thesis (see Brodin 2001: 27, 73). The website of the magazine, http://www.sokaren.se, does display an index of issues published since 1964.

animals as sacred agents, and articles on key alternative spiritual figures (Alpha Omega 1999; 2000a; 2000b; 2000c; 2001a; 2001b). With the merging of the magazines *Alpha Omega* and *Quintessens* in issue 4/5 2000 of *Alpha Omega*, articles focusing on magic, witchcraft and nature religion were included (Alpha Omega 2000c; 2001a; 2001b; 2002a; 2002b). The magazine *Quintessens* was more focused on magic and mythology (Quintessens 2000a; 2000b). The great range of 'New Age' becomes clear when one reads the advertisements in *Alpha Omega*. Issue 5/1999 has about 27 pages of advertisements, in a magazine with 84 pages in total[17] (see Alpha Omega 1999).

The alternative spiritual bookstore, *Vattumannen* (Aquarius), is a focal point for Swedish esoteric spirituality. *Vattumannen* was originally opened in 1972 in the city of Uppsala, 75 kilometres north of Stockholm, but moved to the country's capital in 1973 (Hammer 1997: 81). Accounts by Wikström and Brodin give the opening year of the bookshop as 1969 (Wikström 1998: 34; Brodin 2001: 27), but the homepage of the bookstore states that 1972 is indeed the correct year (Vattumannen 2004). Many of the key Swedish neoshamans have been active in the bookshop in one way or another (see Lindquist 1997: 10, 29), including the publication of several neoshaman works under the label of Vattumannen publishing (see Hedlund, Gejel, Eriksson & Eriksson 1988; Eriksson 1988; Sørsenssen 1990; Grimsson 1990). There are several other alternative spiritual bookshops in the Stockholm region but *Vattumannen* is the most prominent. With its mail-order service the bookshop effectively reaches out to the whole of the Swedish alternative spiritual milieu, instead of being limited to the Stockholm region. Of course the bookshop caters to the interests of 'New Agers' as well, in addition to being highly involved in the neoshaman movement.

There are several orders in Sweden, most of which are modelled

17 Among the advertisements are invitations to seminars, courses, retreats and fairs; information about various spiritual groups and organizations; information on books and music for meditation; the advertisements of different healing- and self-development professionals and information on Tarot specialists and Astrologists (Alpha Omega 1999). Different ways of energizing water was apparently a 'New Age' trend in Sweden during this time. Issue 5/1999 has several advertisements for energized water or technological aids for energizing water (see Alpha Omega 1999: 4, 61-63, 66, 78-79).

after Freemasonic societies and which do not engage in religious or magical activities. I will only discuss a few of the magically oriented briefly. AMORC (Antiquus Mysticusque Ordo Rosae [Rubeae et Aureae] Crucis) is a Rosicrucian[18] order founded in the United States of America in 1915 by Harvey Spencer Lewis (Arlebrand 1995: 188). The order was established in Sweden in 1933 (Arnell 2004), and is reported to have had about 100 Swedish members in the mid 1990s (SOU 1998: 62; Arlebrand 1995: 189). Members of AMORC are engaged in the study of esoteric natural laws and work through correspondence courses as well as in lodges, which exist in Onsala, Stockholm, Jönköping and Lund (Arlebrand 1995: 189-190; Arnell 2004).

Ordo Templi Orientis, briefly discussed in section 2.1.4, has Swedish sections as well[19]. The order has official lodges in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö and Roslagen. No official information on the number of members is given on the Swedish website of the order (see OTO 2004). The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (see section 2.1.3) consists of several different fractions which all claim to be the true inheritors of the original order. Golden Dawn is represented in Stockholm and Gothenburg (Arnell 2004) as the outer order of the Rosicrucian Order of Alpha+Omega, which claims to be the original Golden Dawn restored in 1999 (see A+O 2004a). The order has an Internet-based initiation system, which makes it possible for members who do not have a temple in their region to advance through the degrees (see A+O 2004b).

Svenska Satanistkyrkan (Swedish Satanist Church) is one of the more Satanicallly oriented magic orders. The order was founded as the Satanic Order by a Tommie Eriksson in 1996 (Arnell 2004), and was renamed, and possibly reformed, in 1998 (Svenska Satanistkyrkan 2004). Important to note is that the founder of this church is not the same Tommie Eriksson who is mentioned elsewhere in the present work. The goal of the church, as given on the official website, is to be an interest-organization for Satanists and to explore the hidden aspects of existence in order to effect

18 See chapter 2.1.1 for more information on Rosicrucianism.

19 *Ordo Templi Orientis* was established in Sweden in 1990 according to the timeline given on the website for Fraternal Orders in Sweden (Arnell 2004).

self-evolvement (Svenska Satanistkyrkan 2004). The order is reported to have 370 members (Arnell 2004), but I am very sceptical about accounts of such a high number of members.

The Left Hand Path-order *Temple of Set*[20] is represented in Sweden by a few members (according to Arlebrand 1995: 117; SOU 1998: 65). The homepage of the Swedish section of this organization states that the first Swedish member joined in 1993 and that the first Swedish Pylon was founded in 1997 (Temple of Set 2004). The homepage does not, however, seem to have been updated for several years and I can therefore not make any comments on recent developments of Temple of Set in Sweden.

20 Temple of Set was founded in 1975 by Michael Aquino, who had earlier been an influential member of the Church of Satan. Aquino identified Set as the entity that dictated the Book of the Law for Aleister Crowley (see chapter 2.1.3) and the year 1966 as the start of the Aeon of Satan. (Arlebrand 1995: 134-135).

2.3 Changing Society, Changing Religion

Contemporary social theorists stand more or less united behind the view that Western societies are experiencing major transformations. These social transformations affect the way we approach several key factors in our lives, such as the economy, culture, other societies and other people, religion, and indeed our very selves. In the following section I will briefly discuss a few key terms in the study of societal transformation, focusing on late modernity, globalization, glocalization and transnational connections, secularization and the transformation of religiosity, as well as on identity and individuality.

What the theorists do not agree on are the exact characteristics of this present condition and how the situation should be designated. Some theorists, following the view of Jean-Francois Lyotard and Francis Fukuyama, are of the opinion that we have moved beyond the age of modernity into something which can be called postmodernity (see Giddens 1990: 2-3; 1997: 528-529). Others, following the trend set by Anthony Giddens, see this condition as modernity taken to its extremes and call it Late, High or Accentuated modernity (Giddens 1990: 45-53; 1996; 1997: 528-529). Yet others have arrived at a middle ground, such as Zygmunt Bauman, who calls the present condition postmodernity but still views it as a phase of modernity[21] (Bauman 1997b: 3; see also 1992: viii, xvii-xviii). On could perhaps say that postmodernity is modernity viewing itself critically (see for example Bråkenhielm 2004: 1). What is agreed upon to a large extent are the particularities of modernity.

Anthony Giddens defines modernity as the "modes of social life or organisation which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence" (Giddens 1990: 1). What gave rise to modernity were the enlightenment ideals and the industrial revolution, leading to an utterly different form of social order with large-scale global implications (Giddens 1997: 55; 1990: 4). Industrialization and the new means for livelihood provided by

21 Bauman earlier had a more radical view on postmodernity, as shown by Waters et al. (Waters, Pakulski & Crook 1992: 2).

this development resulted in urbanization. The cities grew vastly larger and the countryside was to a large degree depopulated. Modern society gave rise to a different political system as well. The monarchs and emperors of old were replaced by parliamentary and governmental institutions (Waters, Pakulski & Crook 1992: 18-19). The idea of the Nation State was born in the amassment of the population in centralized regions under the rule of a more rationally organized political system. (Giddens 1997: 55-56; see Giddens 1990: 14). The modern project was above all one of creating order, rather than abiding by traditional society's acceptance of the disorderly (Bauman 2000b: 63).

The term postmodernity was formulated by Jean-Francois Lyotard in his *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Lyotard 1984), in which he argues for the rejection of the 'Grand Narrative', often discussed as the 'End of History' by other scholars, such as Francis Fukuyama (Giddens 1990: 2; 1997: 528-529). 'Grand Narrative' as a concept refers to the modern project of assigning a teleological aspect to history, evolution and other large-scale theoretical ways to view and interpret both the human and the natural world. In simple terms, the modern 'Grand Narrative'-perspective ascribed a beginning (and an end) to things worldly, moving through processes of cultural, moral and natural (etc.) evolution towards a perfect state. Progress in itself is a most modern way of interpreting things and events.

Other than viewing the present period as part of modernity or as something succeeding it, moderate accounts of postmodernity and of late modernity are to a high degree similar. The main differences between theorizing postmodernity and late modernity have to do with the epistemological basis of each view, regarding the possibilities of gaining systematic knowledge about social organization (see Giddens 1990: 2). High modernity is, according to Anthony Giddens, characterized by an ambivalent attitude towards the institutions and self-evidents of modernity (Giddens 1996: 27-28). The earlier hegemonic ideologies of reason, technological progress and institutional order are seen to have failed to fulfil their promises (see Giddens 1990: 10). The rule of reason and rationality has largely disenchanted the modern world and, according to some opinions, made life more dull, uninspiring and,

with the removal of the possibility of an afterlife, more desperate (see Bauman 1992: x-xi; Bauman 2000b: 58).

Technological progress has made life easier and has increased the relative wealth of the average person. At the same time it is however felt that there are a great number of people who have not been reached by the prospects of technological advancement. The negative aspects of technological progress have become apparent in ecological catastrophes and modern warfare. Whilst being successful in making the juridical system fairer and life more ordered, institutions have also been afflicted by excessive bureaucracy. In addition, all humans are still not equal under the law. The capitalist economic system has brought with it a general commodification of all of life, resulting in a situation where all and everything is for sale for the right price, ranging from emotions through material goods to people. In fact, shopping has become the pattern which the totality of our life is modelled on. (Bauman 2000a: 73-80). The disillusionment with the modern grand narrative of progress has led to a general rejection of the absolute authoritative status of the modern institutions of science, medicine and moral jurisdiction. These formerly hegemonic institutions have had to settle on being alternatives amongst many others. (see Bauman 1992: viii-x, xvii-xxii).

Following Ulrich Beck, Giddens identifies modernity, especially in its late phase, as a risk culture (Giddens 1996: 3-5, 28-30; 1990: 34-36). Life in a late modern society is not more dangerous than in pre-modern society but the multiple choices and their unpredictable consequences propose that virtually every human effort is to be seen as a risk taken. From this it follows that the characteristics of life in a late modern society are greatly different from life in a traditional society, where people just did not have as much leeway with regard to their life-choices.

Waters et al. identify the processes of differentiation, rationalization and commodification as those which gave rise to modernity (Waters, Pakulski & Crook 1992: 16-18). Differentiation and rationalization on a political, economic and cultural level produced specialized expertise, a situation in which the common citizen no longer had insight into the fields of life which affected him/her. The above two processes in turn fuelled the

commodification of culture. Waters et al. are careful in pointing out that these processes, and societal change, did not stop with modernity (Waters, Pakulski & Crook 1992: 16). In postmodernity these processes have intensified to the level of cultural, economic and political fragmentation. The postmodern hyper-differentiation has given rise to a sort of de-differentiation where different cultural forms co-exist and flow into each other (Waters, Pakulski & Crook 1992: 36-37).

Globalization is a major trend of late modernity. Common to the different theories in the field is the view that the phenomenon of globalization has started to accelerate recently. (Waters 1995: 4; Martikainen 2004: 41). Globalization is defined by Roland Robertson as a 'compression of the world' combined with the increasing view of the world as one interconnected place (see Robertson 1992: 8; Waters 1995: 3). As clarified by Jonathan Friedman, this refers both to increased global interdependency and an awareness of this interdependency (Friedman 1995: 70). The compression of the world stems from the immediacy of connections between people, ideas and objects made possible through technological progress (see Friedman 1995: 70). Important technologies in this regard are, for example, communication technology, such as Internet-relayed communication, and advanced transportation technology, such as more affordable and faster travel and transportation (see Waters 1995: 33-36). These technological advancements have made the mobility of people, objects and ideas both fast and easy as the limitations brought on by distance in space and time have been greatly diminished.

The awareness of the world as one place is directly linked to the immediacy of human communication and contact. With the increasingly transnational character of interpersonal relations comes the realization that our actions have far-reaching consequences, much more than just affecting our immediate physical vicinity (see Friedman 1995: 70). For example, ecological catastrophes are no longer viewed simply as regional or national issues but rather as global concerns[22]. Experiencing the world as one big interconnected

22 The Tsunami-catastrophe which occurred in South-East Asia on 26th December, 2004, is a very illuminating example of the globalizing dimensions

place has also come to erode the hegemonic idea of the nation state, at least to some degree (see Waters 1995: 27).

In analyses of globalization the phenomenon is usually divided into three major categories: the globalization of economy, culture and politics (see Waters 1995: 7-8). These three areas are of course deeply interwoven. Global economy refers to the expansion of capitalist business ventures beyond the nation state as well as to the state of transnational corporations and economic networks not being bound to any specific nation state at all. Globalization of politics refers to the way in which international politics start to treat the world as the major arena of political life, instead of focusing on the national. For example, whereas earlier wars have largely been the issue of those nations directly involved in them, the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, waged mostly by the United States, politically involved the whole of the Western World. The globalization of culture refers to the expansion of national cultural influence to a global scale. Ways of life, literature, music and art etc. originated in one cultural sphere come to affect other far-off cultural spheres and vice versa. Malcolm Waters approaches these three dimensions through various concepts of exchange. Material exchanges, referring to the dimension of economics, have a localizing tendency in that the manufacture of material goods mainly unites people on a local production-based arena. Political exchanges have an internationalizing tendency inasmuch as they stem from the demarcation of extended regions into nation states and result in dealings between different nation states. Symbolic exchanges, referring to the cultural dimension, have a globalizing tendency in that they are not bound by space and time and deal with products that may easily claim and invoke universal significance (Waters 1995: 9).

National focus was important in modernity, replacing the

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of contemporary natural catastrophes. Reports of the incident, which by 17th January, 2005, was estimated to have claimed at least 175.000 lives (MTV 3 2005), reached Western Europe within moments of the actual incident. Massive mass media coverage erupted, and people very geographically distant to the event felt deeply affected by it. This was partly due to people's own experiences of the locations affected, and partly due to the immediacy and closeness the media coverage conveyed.

regional focus of traditional society. With the focus on the global at the expense of the national, regionality has become important again. In Friedman's words, one can identify the 'universalization of particularism' and the 'particularization of universalism' as two connected processes in globalization (Friedman 1995: 72). In the world of alternative spirituality shamanism is a good example of indigenous regionally limited religious practices having been elevated to a global and universal plane. The creation of strictly nationalized variants of world religion is an example of the universal being made unique. Roland Robertson has introduced the term glocalization, a concept originating largely in Japanese business culture (Robertson 1995: 28-32). Glocalization could be defined as the globalization of localities, and is something which Robertson sees as a key notion in the process of globalization. Instead of a homogenous global world-culture, we have a mass of heterogeneous interconnected localities, not necessarily but possibly disembedded from their original localities of conception.

Transnational connections is another key term in globalization theories. Ulf Hannerz criticizes the common use of the term globalization for "just about any process or relationship that somehow crosses state boundaries" (Hannerz 1996: 6; see also Smith 2001: 3-5). Transnational refers to connections which are not necessarily global in extent, and which are not international in the meaning of involving nations as agents. Certain musical and religious subcultures as well as grassroots political activism offer good examples of transnational connections. Musical subgenres may often unite its members so that a heavy metal fan in Sweden may have like-minded acquaintances in South America, Italy and Russia who he/she communicates with via Internet relayed chat and perhaps meets in person if an interesting concert makes the paths of all four converge.

Secularization was discussed at length in the context of sociology and the sociology of religion from the late 1970s onwards and became a major issue in the 1980s[23]. Although still being discussed, the issue of secularization has largely given way to

23 The death of religion was prophesized by one of the founding fathers of sociology, Max Weber.

treatments of religion and spirituality after secularization. The theories of secularization deal with the diminishing influence of religion on a societal and individual plane. This development stems from the characteristics imbued in the late modern condition, with the decline of institutional religious authority along with other institutional authorities. Secularization does not, however, entail the decline of religiosity *per se*, as early theorists in the subject area thought.

Anthony Giddens identifies three dimensions of secularization, to be regarded as three different ways of indexing and treating the phenomenon. First, there is the level of official commitment and attendance to institutional religion. Approaching the issue at hand through these spectacles one arrives at the conclusion that religiosity has declined. On the second level, the social influence of institutional religion, the conclusions are similar. In most Western countries church officials no longer have political power or increased social prestige on the basis of their church affiliation. The third and final dimension, which Giddens calls "the dimension of *religiosity*", is the most relevant one for the present study. What is under investigation is not so much institutional, or in other words traditional, religion as people's views on spiritual matters and their religious investment, both privately and in religious organizations. (Giddens 1997: 465-466).

According to Giddens, religiosity has diminished in all three dimensions of religiosity. I do not agree totally. While institutional religion has experienced a general decline in adherence, attendance and social influence, spiritual matters are still of importance to most Western people. Wouter Hanegraaff treats secularization not as a decline or marginalization of religion, but rather as a transformation of religion (Hanegraaff 2003: 358-359), much akin to Heelas' concept of 'religion-cum-spirituality' (see Heelas 2002).

In discussing the shift from religion to spirituality, Paul Heelas notes that religion is "life informed by 'supra-self' tradition", meaning traditions conveyed and authorised by dogmatic sources independent of the religious individual. Spirituality is the sacralization of life itself, and is not dependent on any specific authoritative dogmas beyond the individual. (Heelas 2002: 358-359, 375). Alternative spirituality, with its characteristics most apparent

in what is called the 'New Age movement' (see section 2.1.5), is thriving (see Heelas 2002: 361-364), whereas the traditional national churches are not (see Sundback 2000: 47-48). In addition to alternative spirituality, 'Theistic Spiritualities of Life', as defined by Heelas, are also flourishing. Theistic spiritualities of life are set in traditional religious contexts, mostly in protestant churches, and are outwardly no different from other traditional religiosity. What differs is where the religious individual as a rule places authority. Biblical authority is still important, but, as in 'New Age' spiritualities, personal experiences of the divine are important as well. As Heelas puts it, 'purity of heart' is felt to be more important than 'purity of doctrine'. (Heelas 2002: 366-369).

The final key issue of recent sociological theory that I discuss in the present context is the question of identity. Late modern society creates new possibilities, as well as difficulties, in regard to identity when compared to early modern and traditional societies. Late modern society is a 'risk-society', as discussed earlier, where multiple choices are to be made in every field of life. Identity is no different. Late modern individuals are involved in a task of identity construction which lacks real precedence in traditional society (see Bauman 2000b: 145-147). Anthony Giddens calls this reflexive self-identity, which means processes where individuals more or less consciously make choices regarding their own identity (Giddens 1996). Giddens' account of a reflexive identity construction has been criticized on the grounds that it places too much emphasis on the conscious decision-making of the individual (see Lövheim 2003). Other identity theorists, such as Stuart Hall, do not lay as much emphasis on conscious choices regarding identity construction (see Hall 1996; 2002; see also Jenkins 1996). The common view on identity in late modern society is that of identity as a process. Identity is not acquired as the resultant combination of biological factors and early socialization, thereafter remaining unchanged under the individual's adult life. Instead, identity changes in the course of a person's progress and experiences throughout life (see Bauman 2000b: 144). It would perhaps be more correct to talk of identities rather than of identity, as the individual is not defined by one identity only. In the view of identity as a process, the individual has many identities, corresponding to the different fields of his/

her life. (Bauman 2000b: 147).

A topic which has not yet received its own theoretical elaboration, but which has been under discussion in all the above treated theory-building, is the question of individuality. Individuality is a thoroughly modern issue, and one which has only been accentuated in late modern times (see Bauman 1997b: 2-3). Whereas the social group was the main category in traditional society, the individual is the main category in modern and late modern societies. To illustrate this difference one could say that in traditional society the social group consisted of persons who were assigned identity first and foremost on the grounds of the social group, whereas in modern society social groups consist of individuals who first and foremost are individuals and collectively define the social group. Following in the footsteps of Max Weber and Louis Dumont, Andreas Buss regards protestant Christianity as a key element in bringing the individual to the front (Buss 2000).

All of the tendencies discussed above give rise to large-scale changes for religious life. Modernity entailed a desacralization of the world, replacing enchantment with reason and rationality. Protestant Christianity, having according to Max Weber given rise to capitalism (Weber 1965), adapted to the ideals and trends of the time. Approaching the late modern period, faith in modern institutions began to fade and this was the case with traditional religious institutions as well. While official church membership may not have dropped drastically in the Scandinavian countries, church attendance, and with it the social and moral influence of the church, certainly has[24]. With the shifting of focus from the community to the individual, and from the afterlife to the here-and-now, religion focusing on impersonal authoritative dogmas became less popular. Self-spirituality with a focus on life itself and with a direct experiencing of the divine came to thrive. Spirituality, instead of religion, became a means for the individual to progress through the difficult process of identity construction. With the risks inherent in the plurality of choices in late modern life the re-enchantment of

24 In a study carried out in the Nordic countries in 1997-1998, 87 percent of the Swedish informants were members of the Lutheran national church, although only 14,5 percent of them attend church at least once a month and 27 percent never attend church (Sundback 2000: 47-48).

the world provided a welcomed escape from the clutches of a finite material existence.

Globalizing and glocalizing tendencies have made the source material for the construction of one's own spiritual path compelling, easily accessible and indeed both bewildering and rewarding for many Western individuals. With the advancement of communication technologies the spiritual individual is no longer bound to his/her geographical locality in the search of like-minded people. The Internet is flooded with information and spiritual alternatives for those willing to seek. Internet chat-rooms provide ample feedback and response to those who wish to communicate their experiences. For those attracted to the security of tradition this alternative has gained new ground in the late modern period. The Christian individual may belong to a church of his choice and still be allowed, and able, to access personal experiences of the divine. The authoritative scriptures are still authoritative, but not at the expense of a personal connection to the divine sphere.

As Dragon Rouge came into existence in late modern times the abovementioned societal factors have naturally affected the formation, organization and development of the order. I will treat the effects of societal change on Dragon Rouge in section 8.2. Here I also take up Dragon Rouge in the context of the movements and individuals discussed earlier in sections 2.1 and 2.2.

3 Philosophical Tenets

This chapter will deal with the philosophical fundamentals of the Dragon Rouge type of magic, as well as with the consequences this kind of thinking has on the worldview and life outlook of adherents. After discussing more general tenets I will deal more thoroughly with the themes of feminine symbolism, the Dragon as a key motif and the question of how Dragon Rouge relates to monotheistic religion, especially mainstream Christianity. I also take a look at possible implications of dark magical philosophy on morality and ethics. Characteristic traits of the basic overview provided within Dragon Rouge will be dealt with specifically later on in the discourse analytical section in chapter 7. The philosophical considerations stem from Dragon Rouge material and express the Dragon Rouge view on things.

3.1 Dark Magic – Will, Power and Action

> Magic is the name given to the methods by which a human can approach and control the unknown. The unknown is dark from our perspective. To call magic dark indicates that it is about researching and awakening things that lie outside the structure we are situated in. (Eriksson 2001: 2).

The most common term applied by the members to the kind of magic practiced in Dragon Rouge is *Dark Magic*. Other frequent terms are *Draconian*[25] *Magic* or just plainly and simply *Magic*. The situational use of the terms varies slightly. When the term Dark Magic is used, the focus is usually on the "exploration of the unknown", in one's own psyche as well as in the manifest cosmos and in the unmanifest chaos (see Eriksson 2001: 2). The Light – Dark dichotomy plays an important role in Dragon Rouge. According to Dragon Rouge members the embracing of "the dark" by no means involves any form of moral judgment. The terms light and dark are simply used to indicate the focus on the known parts of our universe and on the

25 "The Draconian Current" is presented by Kenneth Grant (see section 2.1.4) as the ancient, true form of spirituality (Grant 1994a; 1994b).

unknown parts. Magicians of Dragon Rouge also stress that working with the dark does not entail leaving out the light. In fact, many of my informants consider this to be something almost impossible, or if possible, then very dangerous and not very productive (see IF mgt 2001/13; 47). The common view is that the dark magician strenghtens his/her existing structures, the light aspects of his/her existence, in order to cope with approaching the hidden, unconscious and dark aspects.

When asked to give a definition of magic, most of my informants have resorted to some variation of Aleister Crowley's famous definition "Magick is the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will" (Crowley *1977: 131*). Different variations on this definition given by members of Dragon Rouge are: "Magic is the ability to influence things in accordance with one's will" (IF 2001/1:9)[26], "[Magic is] the technique to change reality in accordance to my will, by other-worldly means" (IF 2001/1:7)[27] and "[Magic is] to get things to happen in accordance with one's wishes, by using the Will" (IF 2001/1:2)[28].

In the members' paper the following quotation from Richard Wagner's *Revolution* is regarded as the "guiding principle of the new age": "Personal will should be man's master, personal lust his only law, personal power his sole possession, for only the free human is holy and nothing is above him" (Dragon Rouge 2000a[29]). This quotation does indeed sum up Dragon Rouge and its brand of dark magic very well. As emerges from the extract the will (in this case the individual's True or Higher Will), lust (the libido or life-lust of man, mostly referred to as the Kundalini) and power (magical

26 "Magi är förmågan att påverka saker i enlighet med sin vilja." (also IF 2001/1:4).

27 "[Magi är] Tekniken att förändra verkligheten i enlighet med min vilja, med icke-världsliga medel.".

28 "[Magi är] Att med viljan få händelser att ske enligt ens önskningar". These definitions of magic demonstrate Hanegraaff's notion of secular esotericism, or occultism (see section 2.1). Although the view on magic is not mechanistic in any extensive way in Dragon Rouge, mechanistic definitions are nonetheless used here.

29 The original quotation in Swedish reads as follows: "Den egna viljan bör vara människans herre, den egna lusten hennes enda lag, egen kraft hela hennes egendom, ty endast den fria människan är helig och ingenting är högre än hon".

power as a quality making the magician able to lead his or her life in accordance with his/her Will, as well as giving him opportunity to seek the knowledge he or she needs and desires) are central themes. Not explicitly stated, but clearly included in the implicit message of the quotation, is the importance of controlling one's own life. The article includes the following statement: "… magic can give us the power to become creators of the future, instead of being creations of the past" (Dragon Rouge 2000a[30]).

Dragon Rouge also frequently utilizes a passage from the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* in which Khepera is identified as the "self-created" or "the great god who created himself" (see Budge 1960: 72, 93, 150; referred to in Karlsson 2001: xi). These quotations reflect the purpose of Draconian, or dark, magic to 'transmute the practitioner in an alchemical process'. The Dragon Rouge magic-system is, in fact, viewed as an alchemical path of progress leading the practitioner to identify his higher self or true Will, polish/grind his person and thus eventually ending up with the pure essence of himself (often described as the "Black Diamond"), thus becoming one with his or her true Will (Karlsson 2001: xi).

The Will is, as one can see, a central theme. Thomas Karlsson and others define magic as the art or philosophy of Will (IF mgt 2001: 11; 13; see Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 2). Like Crowley, however, Dragon Rouge makes a distinction between the ordinary, more mundane will, and a magic, inner, and *True Will*. The true Will is seen to be the essence of the magician, sometimes also likened to the *Daemon* or the magician's *Higher Self*. The Daemon is also likened to the person's power animal, in accordance with North American tribal religions.

In order to attain a clearer view regarding what Dragon Rouge means by the term Dark Magic it is useful to first take into consideration what the organization means by light, or white, magic. Light magic is seen as working with the known structures of the cosmos, as well as with the magician's consciousness. The white magician's aim is interpreted to be, in Dragon Rouge use of Judeo-Christian symbolism, to repair and re-establish the original divine

30 "... kan magin ge oss kraft att bli skapare av framtiden, istället för att vara skapelser av det förgångna".

order lost in the fall of man, or to quote Thomas Karlsson "to strengthen or re-establish an imagined ideal original order" (Karlsson 2001: x[31]). One way of putting it, using the same monotheistic references as above, would be that the white magician tries to find his or her way back to God. The dark magician of Dragon Rouge has a different goal. He or she wants to, again in symbolic Judeo-Christian terminology, continue on the road pointed out by the serpent in the Garden of Eden. In Dragon Rouge the myth of the fall of man is intrepreted differently than in traditional Judaism and Christianity. The Serpent in the Garden of Eden is understood to be a culture-bringer, similar to, for example, Prometheus. Like Prometheus, the Serpent's symbolic significance is in showing man his potential of becoming like God, by letting him eat of the fruit of knowledge (see Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 4). Thus, symbolically, man took the first steps towards becoming a god when he stepped out of the Garden.

In the Dragon Rouge view, the white magician works with the created world, God's world, not wanting to touch, or deal with, the unmanifest chaos, or his/her own unconsciousness for that matter. He/she strengthens the existing structures and values in the world as well as in his/her mind. The Dragon Rouge dark magician also works with existing structures – in fact it is quite difficult if not impossible to do without them, my informants say, since they build up our world as we perceive it – but he/she also works with chaos, the unmanifest, from which – according to this view – our manifest universe was crafted (IF mgt 2001/47). He/ she wants to "break borders and find new unique paths in which the magician does not serve the plans of some god, but becomes a god and creator himself" (Karlsson 2001: x[32]). The truly unknown is regarded to exist in our minds as well, as the subconscious parts of our psyche. By utilizing chaos, seen as the destructive or fragmentary forces in the universe, the magician edeavours to take things apart, including him-/herself, in order to be able to build something new of the parts, this time by using the creative forces of existence.

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31 "att stärka eller återetablera en tänkt idealisk ursprungsordning".

32 "bryta gränser och finna nya unika vägar där magikern inte tjänar en guds planer, utan själv blir en gud och skapare".

Chaos is viewed as containing all the possibilities of existence, as elements not yet manifested. The dark magician is supposed to be able to utilize this potential and manifest what he/she wants to manifest, by tapping into the forces of chaos. The order views Chaos as the origin of everything, in the pre-form of potential not yet manifested. To illustrate this, Dragon Rouge uses the mythologies of a vast number of religions. An example, taken from the Babylonian creation-saga, identifies Tiamat and Apsu with the primordial chaos and Marduk with the bringer of order. In the Babylonian epic the manifest universe is created out of Tiamat's body, that is to say, out of chaos. Dragon Rouge also identifies Tiamat as the red dragon, along with many other primordial beasts of various mythologies, such as Leviathan, the serpent, and in some aspects, Satan in the Bible. All these primordial beasts have the function of existing before order was brought into the universe, in fact, before the universe as we know it was created at all. They all represent chaos and, in the view of Dragon Rouge, immense power and potential one can tap into. The fact that the primordial dragons have been so feared is thought to be the doing of "life-denying religions" focused on an afterlife in another world, as well as of the sheer power and potential attributed to the draconian force.

The term dark magic is not meant to convey any moral judgment, as stated earlier. Magic in itself, it is said, can be used for both good and evil ends, and the practitioner is almost certainly unable to comprehend the full consequences of his/her actions. For example, a ritual meant to be beneficial can have disastrous consequences in a distant, and why not near, future (see Dragon Rouge 1996/2: 2). My informants do not seem to be particularly interested in using their magic for effecting changes in the mundane world. Dark magic is seen as a path of progress, best utilized to evolve the initiate into higher states of being, for gaining knowledge in order to be able to do this, and for gaining magical and psychological power to become capable of proceeding with the process. As stated in the first correspondence course in magic:

> Not seldom do people with a recent interest in magic want to obtain help with something trivial in everyday life, for example a money-ritual, curses or – perhaps most often – a love spell. It is certainly possible to realize all these wishes with the help of rituals and magic. […] If one seeks magic in order to escape into a false world of rituals and all sorts of hocus pocus because one is too weak to deal with the ordinary world, one should definitely avoid the worlds of magic. […] If one does not have the will necessary to contact the person one desires, one will not be able to win the person with the help of magic, other than possibly for a very short period and very disharmoniously. (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 2[33]).

This passage displays the Dragon Rouge attitude towards using magic in mundane settings. The attitude is that magic can be used to obtain money, promotion at work or a relationship with the object of one's desires, but the more regular methods of attaining these goals are, if not easier, at least as easy as attaining them through magic. A common rhetoric utilized in the order is that magic is highly demanding on the adept, displayed, for example, in the following passage from the first correspondence course:

> The magnitude and gigantic potential of existence and the universe is demanding. It is exhausting to become aware. It takes power to gain power and to have power (like regular [sports-] training sessions!). To Will is demanding and requires responsibility. (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 2[34]).

33 "Inte sällan vill nya magiintresserade få hjälp med något trivialt i vardagen, t.ex. en penningritual, förbannelser eller – kanske oftast – en kärleksbesvärjelse. Visst går det att förverkliga alla dessa önskemål med hjälp av ritualer och magi. […] Söker man magi för att fly in i en skenvärld av ritualer och allehanda hokus pokus för att man är för svag att ta itu med den vanliga världen, bör man definitivt undvika magins världar. […] Har man inte den vilja som krävs för att ta kontakt med den man åtrår kommer man ej heller kunna vinna denna med magins hjälp, annat än möjligtvis högst kortvarigt och disharmoniskt".

34 "Tillvarons och universums storhet och gigantiska potential är krävande. Det är ansträngande att bli medveten. Det tar kraft att få kraft och att ha kraft (likt vanliga träningspass!). Att vilja är krävande och kräver ansvar.".

This view of magic as a demanding endeavour is combined with the view of dark magic as something possibly dangerous if the adept does not approach his or her practice with the insight and patience required (see Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 1). With this attitude towards magic practice, it would be quite peculiar to use magic in order to attain mundane benefits, benefits possible to attain with more worldly methods which do not place such stringent demands on the practitioner, and which above all are not as dangerous as magic practice.

The view in Dragon Rouge is that the mgaician, by gaining more and more knowledge about the universe the magician exists in, as well as about the various astral planes and qliphotic levels, and about the hidden parts of him-/herself, his/her shadow, evolves until he/she finally becomes a god.

When using the term Draconian Magic the focus is on the utilization of the draconian force. The Draconian force is seen as twofold, consisting of the "inner dragon and the "outer dragon". The Inner Dragon is identified as the innate life-force in man, the *Kundalini*, to borrow the terminology of Hindu Tantrism – as is frequently done in Dragon Rouge. The Outer Dragon is the overall universal life-force or energy immanent in every aspect of nature, linking everything together. An alternative term to outer dragon employed in Dragon Rouge is *Vril*, a term used by occultists such as H. P. Blavatsky and Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton (Blavatsky 1895: 651; Bulwer-Lytton 1886). The inner and outer dragons are linked, so that each is an aspect of the other, neither of them existing in isolation from the other. As noted earlier, the term Draconian magic is more frequently used when the focus is placed on the utilization of this Draconian force. If dark magic is used in the exploration of the unknown, Draconian magic is used in raising energy for this task. This is, however, an oversimplification, and the terms are not always used clearly in the contexts presented here. The terms basically represent the same magic-system and ideas, while highlighting somewhat different aspects.

Magicians, especially those dealing with darker forms of magic and with individual goals, are often accused of promoting an elitist agenda. When one reads Dragon Rouge material selectively, this judgment indeed lies near at hand. To give a few examples: "Most

people sleep. They live their lives in a lethargy and lack any coherent will" (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 2[35]), "Magic is for the strong, or for those who sincerely aim at becoming strong" (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 3[36]), "To take the step and join an occult organization is a unique choice. It is made by avant-garde people who have understood that the world is run by mechanisms and forces which can not be seen or explained by the great masses, but nevertheless affect your life" (Dragon Rouge 2000d[37]).

Occult organizations are generally elitist, as are religious groups, teachings and traditions on a grand scale. For example, salvation-offering religions tend to rhetorically represent the believers as 'the chosen people', having earned a place in an afterlife-paradise, while non-believers are called heretics and will suffer in an afterlife-inferno. The word elitism does, however, ring with a pejorative tone. The Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary gives definitions of elite as "the socially superior part of society", "a group of persons who by virtue of position or education exercise much power or influence" and "the best of class", and elitism as "leadership or rule by an elite", "the selectivity of the elite; *especially*: SNOBBERY" and "a consciousness of being or belonging to an elite". Occultist movements are more often than traditionally religious ones regarded with a certain suspicion, linking the elitism of the former to socially questionable agendas. This is particularly apparent in regard to movements and groups termed as 'Satanist' by outsiders (see Nylund 1998: 239-242; SVT 1 1996; Göteborgsposten 1997; Nilsson 1995a; 1995b for sentiments of this kind concerning Dragon Rouge, and Granholm 2001b concerning the issue).

To refer back to the above quotations, it is not the individual magician *per se* who is regarded as better than other people; it is the *choice* of entering an esoteric order which is regarded as an elite choice. Likewise, the practice of magic is not something which in

35 "De flesta människor sover. De lever sina liv i en dvala och saknar någon enhetlig vilja".

36 "Magin är för de starka, eller de som uppriktigt eftersträvar att bli starka".

37 "Att ta steget och gå med i en ockult organization är ett unikt val. Det görs av avant-garde människor som förstått att världen styrs av mekanismer och krafter som inte kan ses eller förklaras av den stora massan, men som likväl påverkar ditt liv".

itself deems persons to be superior; it is the *choice* to practice it which is viewed as noble. One of my informants approached the issue in an interesting way. He likened the art of magic to playing the piano, concluded that both are something that everyone can practice but at the same time something that not all become good at. He asked me the rhetoric question "is that elitism?" (IF mgt 2001/47-48).

Perhaps the term elitism would best be supplemented with another, more neutral term. I suggest the term '*Uniqueism*', from 'unique' – signifying something unusual. *Uniqueism* does not contain the implicit assumption that 'the unique' are in an essential way better than others, but does include the key assumptions relevant for the matter. This allows for a more fruitful approach to the phenomenon.

Aware of the pejorative character of elitism, as well as the socially sinister schemes often attributed to occult movements, Dragon Rouge strives to downplay elitist statements:

> This should not be understood in some collective political meaning or in connection with thoughts about the right of the strong, which is often advanced in some occult circles in a vulgar-elitist way. Magic power is the power of one's own spirit, the power over one self. (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 3[38]).

Thomas Karlsson and others are also very keen to point out that magic power has nothing whatsoever to do with having power in a collective, societal way (IF mgt 2001/50; 47). It could also be pointed out that Dragon Rouge does not, like fundamentalist salvation-based religions, entertain a decisive distinction between believer and non-believer.

A further distinct theme in Dragon Rouge, which I discuss in more detail in chapter 7, is the rhetoric of magic as an empirical science. The view is that the magician is not involved in a blind faith-based endeavour in which his/her rational agency is left aside, but instead he/she actively seeks to verify his/her findings and experiences through empirical means. As one member says:

38 "Detta bör inte förstås i någon kollektiv politisk mening eller kring tankar om den starkes rätt, vilket ofta förs fram i vissa ockulta kretsar på ett vulgärelitistiskt sätt. Den magiska styrkan är den egna andens kraft, makten över sig själv".

> For my part magic is about understanding what we don't often see or think about in everyday life. No human being can understand or grasp the real world, what we experience as the real world is a 'model'. … At the 'periphery' of the model we meet things that we don't know and do not think exist, sometimes they can even manifest themselves in our model as 'unexplained occurrences '. By *studying* these 'peripheral phenomena', the concealed, the occult, we broaden our model, we see how the occult affects the mundane, we can develop in the direction we want and acquire greater knowledge. … The characteristic of good knowledge is knowledge which can be verified in practice. … When an occultist uses practical magic he verifies (by analogy with scientific experiments) that his model is of use and that he has learnt something of value. (IF 2001/1:6[39]).

That is to say: the magician is not involved in a blind pursuit of rewards, clinging onto the words and reassurances of others. In this view, the magician actively seeks out the truths of existence, and is not content with relying on somebody else to provide answers for him/her. Another member expresses this in a technological analogy: "[Magic is] the technique of changing the world in accordance with my will, by non-worldly means." (IF 2001/1:7[40]). A member with a natural science oriented education expresses the view that there is no real conflict between the worldviews of natural science and magic, although many scientists experience a conflict. It is simply about two sides of reality. (IF 2001/1:7). A long-time member connects knowledge attained through magic with a specific

39 "Magi för min del handlar om att förstå det vi i vardagen inte ofta ser eller tänker på. Ingen människa kan förstå eller greppa den verkliga världen, det vi upplever som verklighet är en 'modell'. … Ute i modellens 'periferi' möter vi saker som vi inte känner och tror existerar, ibland kan de till och med manifestera sig i vår modell som 'oförklarliga händelser'. Genom att *studera* dessa 'periferi-fenomen', det fördolda, det ockulta, så breddar vi vår modell, ser hur det ockulta påverkar det mundäna, vi kan utvecklas i den riktning vi vill och får större kunskap. … Det som kännetecknar god kunskap är kunskap som praktiskt kan verifieras. … När en ockultist använder praktisk magi verifierar han (i analogi med vetenskapliga experiment) att hans modell är användbar och att han har lärt sig något av värde."

40 "[Magi är] Tekniken att förändra verkligheten i enlighet med min vilja, med icke-världsliga medel."

human intention, arguing for a meaning of life. This meaning is, according to him, possible to discern through magic.

> If we live solely for breeding, why would there be any point in us having intellect and a capacity for abstract thought? […] There has to be a point to our being distinct from the rest of nature (even if some apes have been shown to have the capacity for certain forms of abstract thought) and questions surrounding this have plagued many thinkers through many millennia. … Magic is a science around this, which, in distinction to religions (which mainly build on theoretical philosophies and a few prophets' practical experiences/ revelations), builds on empirical experiences both from a large number of predecessors and contemporary colleagues as on one's own. (IF 2001/1:8[41]).

I refer here to what I wrote earlier: the magician is active in seeking out his/her answers for him/herself. The same member goes on to explain how a magician operating with many different forms of magic can cope with the often very different answers the various systems provide. "Since magic is a sort of science one does not view these [answers] as static or as dogmas, but simply as explanatory models which describe the same phenomenon" (IF 2001/1:8[42]).

The analogies between the Dragon Rouge strategy and science are not only used in interviews, they also appear frequently on the official Dragon Rouge homepage. In describing various courses and seminars offered, the words *investigate*, *examine* and *study* are commonly used (see Dragon Rouge 2004a). Words such as *concepts* and *theories* also appear. In the presentation of the order, the members of Dragon Rouge are said to "study magic and occultism

41 "Om vi lever bara för att föröka oss, så varför skulle det finnas mening med att vi har intelligens och förmågan till abstrakt tänkande? […] Det måste finnas en mening med att vi skiljer oss från övriga naturen (även om vissa apor också bevisats äga förmågan till vissa former av abstrakt tänkande) och frågetecken kring detta har plågat många tänkare genom flera årtusenden. … Magin är en vetenskap kring detta som till skillnad från religioner (som främst bygger på teoretiska filosofier och ett fåtal profeters praktiska upplevelser/ uppenbarelser) bygger på empiriska erfarenheter både från ett stort antal föregångare och samtida kollegor som ens egna."

42 "Eftersom magin är en sorts vetenskap så ser man inte dessa som statiska eller dogmer, utan helt enkelt olika förklaringsmodeller som beskriver samma fenomen".

in both theory and practice" and to be involved in "exploring the nightside tradition" (Dragon Rouge 2004b; see also Karlsson 2001: ix).

The presentation further sets the aim of the order as being the "education and development of the occult" and a "meeting point for knowledge and experiences". The focus is on "empirical occultism and a knowledge of the unknown based on experience". Words such as faith or conviction are conspicuous by their absence. According to Olav Hammer, the language of science, along with dis- and reembedded terms, theories and concepts, are often employed in esoteric spiritualities (Hammer 2001: 203-205). Hammer sees this as a form of scientism, which he defines as follows: "the active positioning of one's own claims in relation to the manifestations of any academic scientific discipline…" (Hammer 2001: 206). In my view, this description does not express what is actually going on when members of Dragon Rouge formulate and interpret experiences. As the example with the member trained in the natural sciences shows, the view is that natural sciences and magic do not rule each other out. However, they both use their own language, and do not strive towards the same goals, and therefore they do not reach the same conclusion either.

The first steps in magic progress are taken with a first correspondence course in magic, and here the individual adept's contact person is not identified as a guru, master or mage, but rather as his/her tutor. At least on a structural level this rhetoric establishes Dragon Rouge as a research-based order, in contrast to a faith-based movement. Among the members of the order there are said to be many academics. These are grouped together with musicians, painters and writers, who more commonly become linked with magic. In tracing the origin of the word 'magic', links to the Greek word 'megas', meaning great, are sought. This is further defined to mean the 'great science'. Again, magic is defined as "the art and science of working with the transcendental". (Dragon Rouge 2004b).

3.1.1 The Principles of Dark Magic

Draconian magic has three basic principles (Dragon Rouge 2004c; Eriksson 2001: 141-144). These are *vision*, *power* and *action*, and they can be placed in a continuum of events. First comes vision, the magician obtains insight by seeing the "other side" – the chaos outside our manifest universe. According to Dragon Rouge this "other side" is the whole of existence, whereas the existence we experience and perceive as everything is in fact only a very small part, a part whose image is distorted by our three main categories used to make the world comprehensible: time, space and causality. The view is that our culturally determined knowledge makes us blind to existence outside our limited world. The first principle can also be understood as visualization, meaning that the magician focuses his/her mind and will on something to achieve. (Dragon Rouge 2004c).

The second principle, power, builds on the first principle. The prosepct is that the magician gains knowledge of the world, real knowledge of the whole of existence while 'wearing a pair of non-distorting spectacles'. As stated in Tommie Eriksson's book, "knowledge is power" (Eriksson 2001: 142). The magician is considered to gain power by attaining this knowledge. Dragon Rouge states that our human and bound existence can be seen as a small part of the world enclosed in a glass cover. In Dragon Rouge words: We cannot see the outside world because our breath mists over the glass. The magician must, however, use a part of his/her own power or energy in order to gain access to the unlimited energy outside the glass cover, and the unlimited energy and power inside himself as well. He uses his power and the limited power/energy in the glass cover in order to see the "other side". By seeing this "other side", the magician is thought to gain access to the energy outside, and can use this energy to gain better and deeper insight, as well as more power to do so. (Dragon Rouge 2004c).

The third principle, action, is the finalizing aspect of the three principles. The magician has a vision, insight into how he or she wants something to be, as well as insight into the true state of reality. Through knowledge of the real the magician has gained power and

has further multiplied this power in accessing the world outside our limited perception. The final stage of magic is to act out the changes one wishes to occur. The magician canalizes the power gained and focuses it on the vision. As one can read on the Dragon Rouge homepage: "Action is the expression of magic. Through the force of actions the magician can make his visions real" (Dragon Rouge 2004c).

The three principles of Draconian magic are deeply interwoven. With one or more of the principles missing magic is not really magic at all. Without the principle of vision the magician has no insight into the state of existence, and thus cannot effect any real changes in world. Without the knowledge gained from the insight, from the magician's vision, he/she has no real magical power to effect any changes. The principles of vision and action lack potency without the principle of power. Without power the magician lacks the capacity to exercise change in accordance to his/her vision. The premise of the vision-principle also implies that if the magician lacks power, then his organ of vision is faulty as well. The magician should gain power in and through his/her vision. In some way the power-principle is always inherent in magical activity, considering that the magician gains power through his vision. The presentation of the three principles on the Dragon Rouge homepage states that the magician who does not canalize his magical power in concrete action "will become burned out" (Dragon Rouge 2004c). As stated earlier, the principle of action is also the "expression of magic".

3.1.2 Feminine Symbolism in the Left Hand Path and Dragon Rouge

Feminine symbolism is fundamental in all forms of spirituality defined as Left Hand Path. The *Vama Marga*, the 'perverse path' or 'unfriendly way' (Gupta 1981: 195), school of Tantrism is in some legends said to have been instigated by a low-caste woman, something quite unusual in the Indian male-dominated spiritual milieu. Whether or not this in fact is true is of lesser importance than the fact that this statement is noted in important founding

legends. The idea of *Vama Marga*, or *Vama Cara*, Tantrism having been founded by a low caste woman is an important factor indicating how important feminine symbolism is for the Left Hand Path.

In order to understand the importance of feminine symbolism for LHP it is necessary to understand the importance of antinomianism to the same. Antinomian is defined as "one who rejects a socially established morality" in the Merrian-Webster online Dictionary (Merriam-Webster 2004a). The antinomian stance in LHP is about embracing the acts and things thought of as impure in traditional spirituality[43]. In Tantrism this is about truly understanding the unity of everything. Even the things considered impure are as much part of the divine as those things considered pure. To cite Georg Feuerstein's *Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy*: "The Tantric masters even sanctioned practices that are considered sinful from within a conventional moral and spiritual framework. This feature of Tantra has been termed antinomianism…" (Feuerstein 1998: 9). In accordance to this, Tantra includes the *Pañca Tattva* ritual, sometimes called the 'five-M' ritual due to the five elements of the ritual starting with the letter 'M'. In the ritual the participants eat meat (*mãmsa*) and fish (*matsya*), drink alcohol (*madya* or *madirã*), take aphrodisiacs (*mudrã*) and have sex (*maithunã*), preferably with someone other than one's wife – a woman of low caste is considered extra beneficial.

The extent to which the ritual is realized varies among different Tantric traditions. The more right-hand oriented traditions tend to realize the ritual on a more allegorical and symbolic plane, whereas those more on the left tend to realize the ritual in a more concrete way. (Feuerstein 1998: 134, 239-241; see Woodroffe 1956: 112-122).

One should note that the above examples come from an extremely male-dominated culture, and that they therefore constitute a strictly male perspective. The woman is seen more as a tool than a living subject. Still the appraisal of the positive use of the 'woman-tool', instead of the traditional dismissal of everything feminine, is an interesting, and possibly empowering factor. In

43 A particular Left Hand Path stands in relation to a particular Right Hand Path. In this way for example eating meat and drinking alcohol are ways of Indian LHP – where the dominant religious tradition state that these are impure activities, and would not be antinomian in a Western context.

Dragon Rouge such a strictly male perspective is not taken. See section 7.1.6 for more on the discourse of Women's Rights, which connects closely to the rhetoric of feminine symbolism.

Dragon Rouge defines magical antinomianism as a "violation of the laws of cultural and religious tradition"[44], which gives the magician" a freedom to create his/her own traditions, conventions and rules that correspond with the magical development"[45] (Dragon Rouge 2001j/1: 4). In this way psychic energy is considered to be freed; energy that the magician can use in his magic. It is further said that the "antinomianism normally takes place on a mental plane. It is about breaking psychological taboos in order to free psychic energy."[46], and it is also stated that "if one is to break traditions and laws it is required that one maintains a very high personal moral and discipline"[47] (Dragon Rouge 2001j/1: 4).

The feminine and women have traditionally been considered impure, worldly, and thus separated from the divine, and even evil in both Western and Eastern spiritual culture. Seen from the perspective of dichotomies, she has often been looked upon as closer to nature – thus more material, whereas man has been seen as closer to culture and the spiritual plane (see Greenwood 2000: 138).

In Jewish mysticism the character of Lilith is identified as the first woman – the 'first Eve', created equal with Adam, the first man (Patai 1967: 218; Giller 2001: 65; see Jansson 1992: 36; Dan 1995: 156). Lilith was not willing to submit to the will of Adam, and was therefore cast out of, or fled from, the Garden of Eden (Ginzberg 1909: 65-66; 1925: 87-88; Patai 1967: 210; Dan 1995: 157). She then copulated with Satan/Samael and bore him a mass of different demonic children (see Jansson 1992: 30). Lilith has also been identified as a Succubus who seduced Adam and bore a number of demonic offspring to him (Ginzberg 1909: 118; Patai 1967: 220-221; Jansson 1992: 30). Liliths in the plural, and other female demons

44 "lagbrott mot den kulturella och den religiösa traditionen".

45 "en frihet att skapa egna traditioner, konventioner och regler som överensstämmer med den magiska utvecklingen".

46 "Vanligtvis rör sig antinomianismen på ett mentalt plan. Det handlar om att bryta psykologiska tabun för att frigöra psykisk energi".

47 "Om man ska bryta traditioner och lagar krävs att man upprätthåller en mycket hög personlig moral och disciplin".

such as Naamah, are said to seduce men at night time (Ginzberg 1925: 143, 147-148; see Ginzberg 1928: 284; Patai 1967: 220-224, 230).

In other accounts Lilith is said to be the wife of Samael/Satan, the in same way that Eve is the wife of Adam (Scholem 1987: 296; Dan 1995: 155), and furthermore that there is an older and a younger Lilith (Scholem 1987: 295; Dan 1995: 159) who wage war on each other (Patai 1967: 233-239). Sometimes Lilith and Samael are said to have been born in the same hour intertwined in each other (Dan 1995: 159). The younger Lilith, consort of the demon Asmodeus, is said to evoke jealousy in Samael, the mate of the old Lilith, and thus instigates war in the demonic regions (Dan 1995: 170).

Qabalah describes the *Shekhinah*, the feminine force of the Godhead, variously as an active or a passive force. At times, the Shekhinah is said to be passively impregnated by the masculine forces, and at others to be a force of active stimulation of the masculine forces. Gershom Scholem points out, however, that "the dialectics of femininity is primarily concerned – and this is worth emphasizing – not with its activity within creation, but rather within the context of the divine life itself" (Scholem 1991: 188). The feminine forces are thus still not as important as the masculine. The Shekhinah is also linked to *Sitra Ahra*, the demonic, evil and destructive other side – the qliphoth. Penetrated by the evil of the qliphoth, the Shekhinah becomes a destructive force. (Scholem 1991: 187-190).

In the west, woman has come to symbolize lust, and as lust is sin she has also come to represent sin – specifically in the meaning of enticing man to sin, and impurity. This is clearly noted in Mosaic views on menstruation, as well as in the importance of male dominance over female sexuality, extending to the normative "missionary position" during sexual intercourse, in which the woman is to surrender to the superior man (see Romney Wegner 1999: 82-83; Klawans 2000: 29, 39-40, 104-108). Woman representing sexual lust, and the awakening of sexual lust in men and angels, is illustrated in the angels being "lured by the beauty of women", and accordingly falling victims to them and having demonic offspring by them (Ginzberg 1925: 154).

In qabalistic symbolism 'male' usually represents the spiritual and pure, whereas 'female' represents the material and the demonic (Weissler 1995: 525-526). In Isaac Luria's commentaries to the bible

the male, the masculine forces, are identified with beauty, the day and the impregnating force which seeds the feminine, dry land. In cosmic dichotomy, the feminine represents the dark, negative and passive aspects of the universe while at the same time representing the enticing and alluring aspects of the divine, in the form of the forces of chaos and evil actively leading mankind, as in mostly males, to sin (Spring & Hoch-Smith 1978: 12; Radford Ruether 1983: 76-79). The actual human woman is furthermore not as holy as man, as it is said that God has spoken directly to only one woman, Sarah (Ginzberg 1909: 78).

In Indian religious tradition the feminine has not come to represent quite so negative aspects as those suggested within the Jewish tradition, but even here the female is considered spiritually impure, especially during menstruation. Margaret Stutley gives an account of how the male foetus was thought to reside in the right side of the womb and the female foetus in the left side, the evil and unlucky side, in Indian, as well as Greek, Roman, Slavic, Ancient German and Jewish, culture (Stutley 1980: 55). Penny van Esterik shows quite clearly how the traditional religious sphere of life is more or less closed to the Theravada Buddhist woman (van Esterik 1996). If she is to remain a functioning and accepted part of society a religious vocation is out of the question for her. Indian female deities include the frightening, violent and dangerous Kali, Durga, Tara, Chinnamasta and such. The divine female principle is Shakti, the active creating and destroying force, as well as Prakriti, the prime mater and the material foundation of the world – the representative of Maya, something which is viewed negatively in mainstream Hinduism (Hellman 1998: 54-56).

In many ways the feminine in the Left Hand Path represents the same as the feminine in many forms of traditional spirituality; the difference lies in how these aspects are valued. In Tantra, for example, woman still stands for lust but as there is no such thing as sin for the Tantric, she represents the worldly pleasures which can be used for transcendent purposes. As nature and this-worldly things are viewed as part of the divine, the woman acquires a different status. According to Benjamin Walker some sources of Tantrism state that that which is natural cannot be wrong, and that the natural is

thus sacred (Walker 1982: 31). In extension, moral judgments of good and bad cannot be applied to the natural, such as sex.

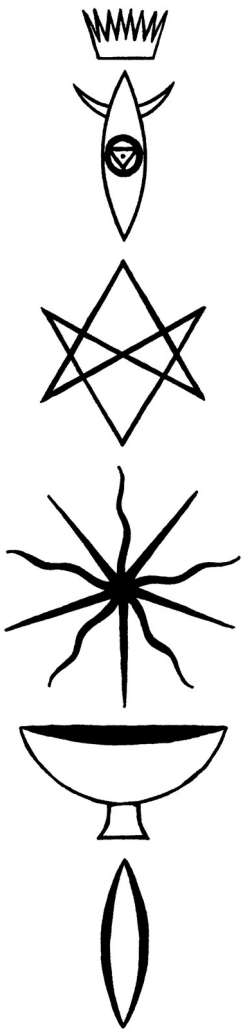
The woman represents Shakti, the active power in existence, and is as such regarded as holy. Shakti can in fact be translated as power (Online Sanskrit 2004). Shakti is the active principle whereas Shiva, the male principle, is passive (Woodroffe 1957: 46-47; Evola 1992: 5; Feuerstein 1998: 82; Gröndahl 2000: 5).

Influenced in many aspects by LHP Tantra, Dragon Rouge has taken the same approach. Lilith, a much invoked demoness, is likened to Shakti and is seen as both a creator and destroyer. She is also, as the demon ruler of the qliphotic plane Gamaliel, seen as a seducer and as the feminine aspect of the divine driven into exile. (see Dragon Rouge 2001j/6: 2-4). Dragon Rouge also states that the feminine has been restrained for far too long in our society and culture, and that we now need to focus on the feminine and bring it up to the front. In his book, *Mörk Magi*, Tommie Eriksson writes that "the feminine primal force has been banished to darkness and the dark goddess has become nothing more than a symbol of death and decay" (Eriksson 2001: 6[48]).

Another important factor affecting the appraisal of femininity is the belief in a closer link between woman and nature (see above). Consequently, as woman is seen to be closer to nature, femininity is often valued high in contemporary Western nature religion (see Greenwood 2000: 138). The same gender polarization, in which man and woman are essentially different – and in extension necessarily complementary, may however lead to restricting gender roles. Assigning essentialized qualities to man and woman, and ascribing to these 'forces' a mutual dependence, leads to an extremely heteronormative imperative. As Susan Greenwood shows, this may even lead to homosexuals being discriminated against due to their inability to fit into this heterosexist gender polarity requisite (Greenwood 2000: 147-148).

The gender polarity issue exists in the Dragon Rouge context as well, although the view is that the feminine and the masculine forces exist within each individual magician. When asking a member

48 "Den kvinnliga urkraften har förpassats till mörkret och den mörka gudinnan har blivit endast en symbol för död och förfall".



Picture 3. The alchemical symbol of Dragon Rouge (from Eriksson 2001: 18). By T. Ketola.

if sexual orientation plays a role in the practice of sex magic the answer was straightforward. Sexual orientation is not important. The dark magician focuses more on autosexuality – meaning that he/she focuses on what happens within him-/herself (IF mgt 2001/11). Thus, the practice of sex magic can be performed alone, with a same-sex partner, with a different-sex partner, as abstinence from sex, and perhaps a limitless number of other alternatives. It is further pointed out that sexuality as a force is principally the same as the life-force, or the Libido in Freudian terms, and thus it can be focused in very many different ways. For example Kundalini-meditation is a way of focusing these forces. (IF mgt 2001/11).

The symbolic language of Dragon Rouge has much feminine reference. For example, the road into the qliphoth goes through the qlipha of Lilith. The magician is to symbolically step into Lilith's womb (see Dragon Rouge 2001j/6: 2-3). The magician's development reaches a climax in the qlipha of Thaumiel, in which the womb is represented as the staring eye of chaos (Eriksson 2001: 12). In stepping through Lilith's cave, the womb of Lilith, the magician gives birth to himself. In the alchemical symbol of Dragon Rouge (see Picture 3), Lilith's womb (see Picture 4 for the Lilith symbol) plays an important part. Included in the symbol is also a goblet, which can be seen as a symbol of the womb. The key element of the symbol is the second portrayal of the womb of Lilith, this time with horns on it. Inside

this symbol is the Eye of Lucifer, which is in fact a stylized representation of the Tantric Shiva-Linga symbol: Shiva in the form of an erect penis standing inside the vulva of Shakti.

Tommie Eriksson writes that the light side of existence, the sephiroth, is dominated by male principles whereas female principles can be found on the dark side, the qliphoth (Eriksson 2001: 11). The second corres-pondence course in magic, dealing for the most part with witchcraft, also maintains that the darker aspects of spirituality are feminine:

> She represents the gate to the dimensions of magic. She is Mother Earth and through her womb life is born and dies. She is the gate to the underworld and the goddess that the witch and the warlock step down into in order to be initiated. She is the realm of death and the mother to all life. (Dragon Rouge 2001j/3: 3[49]).

Picture 4. The Lilith symbol of Dragon Rouge (from Eriksson 2001: 104). By T. Ketola.

The female aspects of the divine are as important as they are to most of the LHP partly because this female part of spirituality is left out by the dominant religions in both the Western and the Indian cultural spheres, Christianity and Hinduism. In a way the inclusion of the feminine divine, and alternative spirituality in general, could be seen as a rebellion against dominant religious traditions. In some sense this is true. Alternative spiritualities are born from the

49 "Hon representerar porten till magins dimensioner. Hon är Moder Jord och genom hennes sköte föds och dör livet. Hon är underjordens port och gudinna som häxan och trollkarlen stiger ned i för att invigas. Hon är dödsriket och modern till allt liv."

observation that the majority religion does not provide all that the seeker wishes to have. When a group of people with similar spiritual ideas meet, an alternative form of spirituality, providing that which was seen as missing in the existing alternatives, can be crafted. Being born out of dissatisfaction with the majority religion does not mean that rebellion is the only thing of importance on the agenda of the alternative. There might be, and surely most often are, motivating forces and far-reaching needs to find meaningful answers and creative ways of looking at life.

3.2 Philosophy

The declared philosophical core of Dragon Rouge is constituted by the goal of the evolution of the individual magician into a god, to go from being a creation to being a creator (see Dragon Rouge 1996; 2004b; 2004c; Eriksson 2001:130). As written in the first correspondence course in magic: "Ordinary human existence is only the surface of an enormous sea of powers. Most people float around in the ocean of existence without knowing why, or what they are doing and what affects them." (Dragon Rouge 1996/1:1[50]). In this metaphor, the magician dives into the ocean, learning more about the totality of existence and forging him-/herself a meaning with it all. The magician learns how to control his/her destiny and gains power through this.

Control is an important theme in Dragon Rouge. The magician should be aware of what affects him/her and be in total control of his life and existence. This is one of the key requirements, and indeed part of the definition of dark magic. Part of the discourse is stating that the process of gaining control through magic is a difficult, demanding and often dangerous enterprise (Dragon Rouge 1996/ 1: 1). Consequently, the individual who chooses to partake in this effort is viewed as a courageous and unique person. As one can read in the course: "To will is demanding and requires

50 "Den vanliga mänskliga tillvaron är bara ytan på ett enormt hav av krafter. De flesta människor flyter omkring i tillvarons ocean utan att veta varför, eller vad de gör och vad som påverkar dem".

responsibility. Everyone can become a magician, but few can manage becoming one" (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 2[51]).

Another key theme in Dragon Rouge is the concept of a living nature. According to the order, the ideological structures of monotheism, materialism and modernism have killed nature and taken away its soul. Nature has been removed from the divine sphere and made into something inanimate. The magician reanimates nature and sees the interconnections between all things. The city, civilization, stands for the static and the restricting structures, whereas nature stands for the active and dynamic parts of existence, chaos. (Dragon Rouge 2004c).

Key discursive themes are discussed in length in chapter 7.

3.2.1 The Dragon as Symbol

The Dragon is, as the name of the order implies, the single most important symbol for Dragon Rouge. In the words of the organization, the dragon represents an "original and limitless force" (Dragon Rouge 1996/1:2. A latent inner force according to the official Dragon Rouge website, see Dragon Rouge 2004b). According to Dragon Rouge, the dragon is "both the inner and the outer power personified" (Dragon Rouge 1996/1:3), meaning that the dragon force is the prime foundation of everything (see also the 'Five Elementary Draconian Principles', Dragon Rouge 2004c).

The 'Draconian Aphorisms' on the Dragon Rouge homepage shed some light on the symbol of the Dragon.

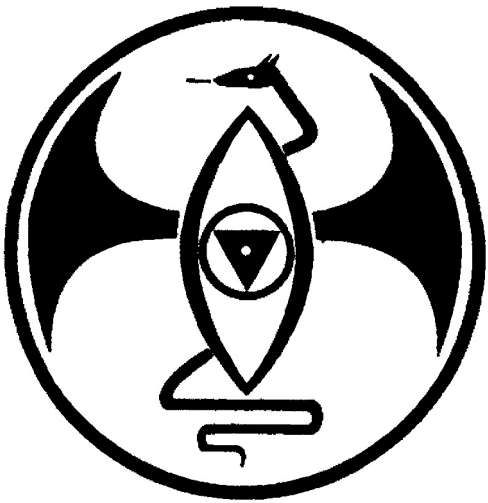
> The Dragon is the winged serpent. The Dragon unites the serpent with the eagle, what is below with what is above.
>
> The Dragon is the four elements. The wings are Air. The reptile body is Earth. The scales is [sic!] Water and the burning breath is Fire. Thus the Dragon is the fifth element – Spirit.
>
> The Dragon is, in the form of Ouroboros, the serpent that bites its own tail. The dragon is the beginning of the end and the end of the beginning.

51 "Att vilja är krävande och kräver ansvar. Alla kan bli magiker, men få kan klara av att bli det".

> The Dragon is beyond good and evil, night and day, female and male, plus and minus. The Dragon arises through the meeting of opposites. The Dragon is the polarity between plus and minus.
>
> The Dragon is the symbol of Tao – the Journey – and the Journey is the goal. The Dragon is dynamic eternity. (Dragon Rouge 2004c).

In short, the dragon is everything, and at the same time beyond everything. The dragon symbolizes the all-encompassing energy of existence and beyond existence. By connecting with this force, the magician awakens power and energy latent in him-/herself, as well as gains access to the power and energy existent in the potential of chaos.

The Dragon is also rhetorically identified as the serpent who gave the fruit of knowledge to Eve in the Garden of Eden, and the serpent in turn as Satan (see Ginzberg 1925: 121). It is the Dragon who sets the magician out on his path to self-deification (see Dragon Rouge 2004b). The Dragon, Satan and the Serpent all represent the Kundalini-force, 'the inner dragon', and its role in the magical process. The Dragon also represents 'the outer dragon', the primordial chaos from which everything was created, in the form of the likes of Leviathan and Tiamat (compared in Ginzberg 1925: 41), who are subdued, and out of whom the cosmos is created, by the forces of structure and order, represented by God, Marduk etc. (see Ginzberg 1925: 3, 16, 42). The 'outer dragon' is thus the potential resident in chaos, the potential of the dark magician to create on his-/her own (see Dragon Rouge 2004b). The combination of the outer and inner dragons, which are really one and the same, points to the ultimate union of all and everything.



Picture 5. The Dragon Rouge symbol (from Eriksson 2001). The winged serpent, representing the kundalini-serpent becomming a Dragon when rising. At the middle of the symbol is a Lilith symbol, with a Shiva-Linga at the centre.

3.3 Ethics and Morals

Zygmunt Bauman criticizes common accounts of postmodern views on morality. He regards them as "all too often the celebration of the 'demise of the ethical', of the substitution of aesthetics for ethics, and of the 'ultimate emancipation' that follows" (Bauman 1994: 2). He sees the postmodern approach to ethics not as abandoning moral questions altogether, but rather as approaching them in a new and different fashion. Postmodern approaches to ethics basically deal with the same questions as modern approaches, but have abandoned the modern way of treating them, trying to regulate moral questions in law-like ethical codes (Bauman 1994: 3-4; see also Bauman 1997a: 9-18).

Bauman proposes the following characteristics as distinctive of postmodern approaches to morality and moral questions.

1. Humans are morally ambivalent, and therefore no logically coherent ethical codes can be imposed on morality. The ambivalence of moral concerns requires solutions based on each specific situation.
2. Morality is non-rational and thus not possible to regulate in rigid rule-based ethical codes.
3. The ambivalence of moral concerns is further displayed in the fact that few, if any, choices are plainly and simply good in a clear-cut way. Most moral choices have at least some negative consequences in the long run. An example could be the ethical choice not to eat meat, ultimately leading to a decreased demand for meat-products making meat-producers lose income.
4. It is not possible to universalise morality. By this, it is not meant that all morality is relative, but that morality is not to be regulated in a system with clear rules about moral conduct without taking each individual situation into consideration.
5. From the regulative and administrative perspective morality is irrational, and thus requires administrative forces to constantly "trim" moral rules in order to "keep them in desired shape" (Bauman 1994: 13). This means,

simply put, that governmental administration, based on rational thinking, needs to regulate and constantly control the morality of its subjects, in order to transform irrational, and uncontrollable, morality into rational, and more easily controllable, ethical rules of conduct.

6. Moral responsibility is something existing prior to society, and is in fact the prerequisite for the existence of society. In a modern view society is prior to morality and it is society that gave birth to morality. Bauman states as follows: "… moral responsibility – being *for* the Other before one can be *with* the Other – is the first reality of the self, a starting point rather than a product of society" (Bauman 1994: 13. See also Bauman 1994: 32).
7. Ethical codes are relative, not morality in it self. This refers back to point 4, stating that a universal morality may in fact be possible, or exist as a common factor in all humanity. Ethical rules, almost always enforced by actors in possession of more power than their subjects, are *not* universal as they are always an attempt to rationalize ultimately non-rationalizable issues. (Bauman 1994:10-15).

Bauman recognizes the fact that postmodern approaches to morality do not in any way make moral life any easier, and that the freedom of choice inherent in the postmodern condition in fact introduces a strong feeling of insecurity (Bauman 1994: 15, 20-21). He does, however, think that the abandoning of clear-cut ethical codes may make moral life more moral. The postmodern approach to morality is basically a re-personalization of morality, and is in Bauman's view a "returning [of] moral responsibility … to the starting point of the ethical process" (Bauman 1994: 34).

Characteristic number six in Bauman's model seems to fit badly with a social constructionist stance. If one takes a closer look at what he claims, however, this does not necessarily have to be the case. According to Bauman, we face a 'situation of moral choice' from 'day one', before we have had the opportunity to learn and appropriate the socially constructed rules of ethical conduct. Morality, in a way, is deep down the way we relate to the Other. In Bauman's view, this is the prerequisite for human social life and

not the outcome of it. Ethical codes and moral rules are the socially constructed regulations born out of the necessity to find functional ways of relating to the other. (Bauman 1997a: 9-10). This definition of morality does not contradict the socially constructed nature of our views on right and wrong conduct. Whereas the base-morality of Bauman's concept is largely unreflected and of a highly ambivalent nature, reflected morality and ethical code systems are created in a social context. With Bauman's concepts it is possible to illuminate the characteristic views on ethics and morality held in Dragon Rouge.

Despite its unwillingness to dictate moral rules, Dragon Rouge actually advocates a certain kind of ethics, namely individual, situation-based morality. Each member should acquire a deep knowledge of his or her preferences and values, including the ones rooted deeply in one's subconscious, and make his or her own moral judgements when the situation so demands. This strategy begs for the abandoning of static, rule-like ethical codes found in for example many traditional forms of Christianity. Bauman identifies such closed formulations as the modern approach to morality (Bauman 1994:3-4). In Dragon Rouge a strong critique of the ethics of Christianity, in a Dragon Rouge interpretation, is combined with the following argumentation included in the first correspondence course in magic:

> It is not possible to generalize every act as either good or evil. How is, for example, a so-called evil act to be viewed if the results are good? [...] For a black magician there exists only a subjective moral code. (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 10[52]).

The exposition is followed by argumentation for a subjective morality, pointing at the downsides of rigid moral-laws.

> The Christians thought that they would be able to force man to love by morality. A forced love is unnatural and without value. [...] A black magician has rooted out all the 'Thou shalt!'

52 "Det är inte möjligt att generalisera alla handlingar som antingen goda eller onda. Hur skall t.ex. en s.k. ond handling betraktas om resultatet blir gott? [...] För en svart magiker finns bara en subjektiv morallära".

> and released 'I want to!'. If man is successful in breaking free of imposed morality he can start loving honestly – a love for the living and not for the meek and dying. (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 10[53]).

The Dragon Rouge view is, much in concordance with Bauman's outline of the postmodern approach to ethics, that a morality regulated by a rigid ethical code is fundamentally false, and as such, basically destructive to humanity. The above quotation states that a rule-governed approach to what one should do is in conflict with the innate nature of human beings and their morality, and is thus dishonest, leading to destructive tendencies in the long run (as argued in the quotations above).

The assertion "I want to!" as preferable to "Thou shalt!" is easily interpreted as complete indulgence in total freedom and lack of responsibility on the part of the individual. This concern is voiced in an interview made by Swedish television with Thomas Karlsson. The interviewer asked Karlsson what rules the magician, in this context said to be his or her own god, lives by. Karlsson answered that there are no objective rules, only individual rules which one finds for oneself (SVT 1 1996).

The magician in the instance of Dragon Rouge is indeed guided by morality, but this does not conform to the view on morality and ethics of all outside observers. Dragon Rouge is also careful to point out that the individual and situation-based morality is not about indulgence in all that one for the moment wishes to indulge in. The view is that the practice of magic, and the possession of magic power, demands great responsibility of the magician, as the first correspondence course in magic states (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 1-2).

Thomas Karlsson sums up the moral development of the dark magician as a process where "Collective and unconscious morality is substituted by an individual and conscious [morality]" (Karlsson

53 "De kristna trodde att de skulle kunna tvinga människan till kärlek genom moralen. En påtvingad kärlek är onaturlig och utan värde. [...] En svartmagiker har rensat bort allt 'Du skall!' och släppt fram 'Jag vill!'. Om människan lyckas bryta sig loss från den påtvingade moralen så kan hon börja älska ärligt – en kärlek till det levande och inte till det veka och döende".

2001: xi[54]). It is apparent from Karlsson's view of the dark magician's morality that he sees it as the better alternative.

The following quotation from the same source shows that the Dragon Rouge approach to morality fits Bauman's account (or my understanding of it) well: "The dark magician knows that there is not anything true or false, right or wrong" (Karlsson 2001: xi[55]). As there does not exist anyhing true or false, right or wrong, the magician has to find his/her own rules of conduct and, as the rules are made by him/her, he/she is free to change them if they do not fit the situation. The magician should be responsible in making his/her choices (Karlsson 2001: x) and his situation-based morality should be in alignment with his true, or higher, Will.

Even with the lack of a common law-like ethical code, combined with anti-authoritarianism and the concept of each individual finding his or her own morality, certain moral traits seem to be common to most Dragon Rouge members. The strongest of these ethical standpoints seems to be the quest for ecology. When asked about their views on certain topics such as politics, equality, ecology and religion/spirituality, all of my informants have answered that ecology is very important. In the official material, nature and naturalism play very important parts. Since one of the 'Five Elementary Draconian Principles', the five doctrinal key concepts for the organization, is "all is one", meaning the total unity of everything, encompassing the total unity of man and nature as well, this is not that surprising (Dragon Rouge 2004c).

In the mother-organization in Stockholm many members, especially the inner circle and other very active members, are vegetarians or vegans. This is variously motivated by concerns for animal rights, by ecological reasons, by health reasons and by magical reasons. In fact, the different motivates are somewhat difficult to distinguish clearly from each other as they are all intertwined. The sentiment is that the choice of a vegetarian diet is good ecologically (and for the animals) and thus good for magic practice, and thus good for spiritual wellbeing. Furthermore, the choice of a vegetarian diet is in itself good for the practice of magic (it is, for example, lighter than a meat-based diet). Thomas Karlsson

54 "Kollektiv och omedveten moral ersätts med en individuell och medveten".
55 "Mörkmagikern vet att det inte finns något sant eller falskt, rätt eller fel".

identifies the choice of vegetarian diet as one of the ethical choices surfacing in Dragon Rouge as an organization (in a presentation of Dragon Rouge for docent Liselotte Frisk and her students). He points out, however, that the choice is not something dictated to anyone on the behalf of Dragon Rouge, it has simply seemed to surface as common to many Stockholm-based members. Indeed vegetarianism does not seem to be as important to members outside the mother-organization in Stockholm.

Ecological thinking and vegetarianism are recurrent themes in contemporary alternative spirituality, specifically in 'New Age' spirituality and neopaganism. Both of these generally foster an immanent view of the divine. Neopaganism is very nature-oriented, often seeing Mother Nature as the most important deity of all (not counting the divinity of individuals themselves). 'New Age' spirituality has a similar approach, although often focusing more openly on the individual practitioner and less on nature as such (see for example Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 161-166; Frisk 1998: 172; Heelas 1996: 33, 89, 203).

Equality, extending beyond the human race, and the freedom of the individual to have his own views on politics, sexuality, society, religion etc., without the organization or other members infringing on this basic right, is important in the organization. Thomas Karlsson writes: "Everything is equal, all humans, all animals etc" (IF 2001/1:3[56]), and other members agree with him: "*Now* I respect all kinds of religious people, but not necessarily the religions" (IF 2001/1:4[57]). Concerning the magical activities of each individual member, he/she is free to experiment with what he/she wants and choose those specific methods that suit him/her best. As stated in the first correspondence course in magic:

> One can furthermore have different aptitudes for magic and different forms of magic. As a student of magic it is therefore good to experiment. Therefore we have many different types of magic in our magic course. It is then up to the individual to find what works for him/her. (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 2[58]).

56 "Allt är jämlikt, alla människor, alla djur etc.".

57 "Respekterar *nu* alla slags religiösa människor, men nödvändigtvis inte religionerna".

Taking personal responsibility for one's acts is important. The magician gains total freedom through his/her magic and it is therefore of key importance to take equal responsibility for one's acts, decisions and choices. Dragon Rouge does not advocate an objective and once-and-for-all fixed moral or ethical code. "For the black magician there exists only a subjective moral code" (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 10[59]). This does not mean, however, that the magician is free to do exactly as he/she wishes, to follow each spontaneous whim. The magician should explore his True Will, his higher self, and, through the harmony born in the embracing of the True Will, the magician attains a true morality, free from artificial conventions. (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 10-11). This is similar to Aleister Crowley's view on abiding to the Will in the *Book of the Law*. In Crowley's view The magician who follows his/her Will cannot do wrong to his/her morals (see Crowley 1996: 41-46, verses 1: 40-44).

Spirituality and the reanimation of nature are of great importance in the order. On the Dragon Rouge homepage, the ideology of materialism is strongly criticized.

> The nature and the animals are made for man to use. Man can do what he likes with animals and nature. […] Dark magic is theriocentric and views man as an animal and a part of nature. Man can become god by entering outside the human limits and by recognizing the importance of the beast. This is not to be interpreted as if one is giving in to all lower instincts. It is rather a way to value nature and the animals. The draconian philosophy is a pantheism where the divine is present in nature. […] Nature has become dead and man and the animals have become soulless organisms being compared to cars or computers. This leads to people seeking fast satisfaction of the basic instincts instead of striving to reach divinity. […] By invoking the old spirits the world is re-enchanted and man and nature win back their soul. A fellowship in a magical order should mean that the individuals become more than themselves. (Dragon Rouge 2004c).

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58 "Man kan dessutom ha olika fallenhet för magi och olika typer av magi. Som magistudent är det därför bra att testa sig fram. I vår magikurs har vi därför många typer av magi. Det är sedan upp till individen att hitta det som fungerar för denne".

59 "För en svartmagiker finns bara en subjektiv morallära".

The dark magician should feel a connection to, and respect for, all things living, and act in a compassionate and responsible manner. As the magician is part of nature, injuring or harming nature in any way would be harming oneself. In experiencing the totality of existence and the interconnections between oneself and other living beings, the magician is supposed to gain an empathic understanding of sentient beings as well as the living, non-sentient, parts of existence.

During the time I have been researching Dragon Rouge, 2001-2004, the order has become more outspoken in some of its societal critique. In 2001, the frequently asked questions section of the official homepage answered the question of the political alignment of the order by simply stating that different members have different political views and that these have no bearing whatsoever on the order or the practice of magic (Dragon Rouge 2001a). In 2004 it was still stated that Dragon Rouge is a non-political organization, but the experienced one-sidedness of official political parties is criticized and voting for some alternative political party is recommended (Dragon Rouge 2004b).

This relates to morality is via the obvious societal interests of the leading core of the order. Although Dragon Rouge in no way has a political activist or socially revolutionary agenda, it still is a spiritual organization which is world-affirming and not world-rejecting as, for example, many millennial movements. Members of Dragon Rouge regard themselves, and the order, as a part of the society they exist in – and are thus affected by what goes on in the rest of society. As stated in the first correspondence course in magic, "The magician has to think of his social role in the community. He has to stand with both feet on the ground, and not float in the clouds. He has to keep up-to-date with what is happening around him" (Dragon Rouge 1996/2: 4[60]).

The issue of good and evil is often under some form of discussion when LHP and dark, or black, magic is treated (see SVT 1 1996). In the Dragon Rouge context, it is stressed that dark magic

60 "Magikern måste tänka på sin sociala roll i samhället. Han måste stå med båda fötterna på jorden, och inte sväva ut bland molnen. Han måste hålla sig ajour med vad som händer omkring honom".

does not revolve around acts of evil, such as sacrificing children or animals in a ritual setting, or in any form of socially sinister scheme (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 10; Karlsson 2004: 17). In an article about the 'New Age' answer to evil, Olav Hammer criticizes the movement for its unsuccessful dealing with evil of, for example, natural catastrophes (Hammer 2000). Thomas Karlsson describes the evil of dark magic as a metaphysical evil, not the 'grey evil' of human conduct. From a qabalistic starting point, Karlsson discusses metaphysical evil as the evil of the dark forces, the forces of chaos which are an antithesis to the cosmic forces of God and creation. In Karlsson's view, human evil is something completely distinct from this metaphysical evil. Human 'grey evil' is the result of humans committing atrocities on each other, and often stems from good intentions or from arguably good goals and aims[61]. Metaphysical evil in the dark magical context is evil as its aim is separation and liberation from God and his creation. (Karlsson 2004: 14-18). Human 'grey evil' thus plays no real part in metaphysical evil.

3.4 Dragon Rouge and Christianity

> We have also seen tendencies which show the struggle of the old monotheistic religions to hold people in their grip. [...] The key preachings and sales-tricks of the monotheists, that is to say the Jews, the Muslims and the Christians, seem to be working through feelings of guilt. (Dragon Rouge 2000a: 2[62])

Where Christian authorities have traditionally taken a very negative approach to magic and magic orders, the attitude of the organizations themselves towards Christianity as a whole, or towards specific churches as representatives for mainstream Christianity, has varied. Magicians and esotericists living in times dominated by Christian religion often professed themselves Christians. The question of whether the proclamation of Christianity was a strategy for survival, as Christianity had such a strong and undisputed position in Western societies earlier, or whether the

61 One example could be radical opponents of abortion, who in the name of the greater good kill doctors who perform abortions.

magicians truly saw themselves as Christians, is very difficult to answer, and falls beyond the scope of the present study.

The overall attitude towards mainstream Christianity started to change with the increasing secularization of the 19th and 20th centuries. Organizations such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, with such prominent characters as Aleister Crowley, William Butler Yeats, Dione Fortune and Arthur Edward Waite as members, chose to adopt quite a positive approach to Christianity as a whole, even if some of the members of the order eventually adopted a much more negative approach to the Christian religion. Certain members, such as A.E. Waite, saw themselves as devoted Christians, in some cases even on a mission from God. Aleister Crowley adopted a different approach. He saw Christianity, in the words of Friedrich Nietzsche, as a slave-religion (variously interpreted to mean either "the religion of the slaves", that is to say, in elitist terms the religion for the part of humanity viewed as less evolved or simply less worthy, or as a religion fashioned to keep humanity enslaved) and offered his *Thelema* as a more sane and active replacement. Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's Theosophical Society, although not a directly magical organization still a part of the esoteric scene of the late 19th and early 20th century, had for the most part a negative approach towards Christianity. While all religions where viewed as having a common core of esoteric truth, Christianity was generally not very popular amongst the theosophists (Ahlbäck 1995: 13).

Contemporary neopaganism is another form of spirituality, with strong ties to a magical worldview as well as with similarities to the worldview and approach of Dragon Rouge, which stresses the negative aspects of Christianity. In this form of spirituality it is common to see the dualism of monotheistic religions as the source of the Western negative attitude towards nature[63], and, thus,

62 "Vi har också kunnat se tendenser som visar de gamla monoteistiska religionernas kamp att hålla kvar människan i sitt grepp. [...] Monoteisternas, d.v.s. judarnas, muslimernas och de kristnas främsta förkunnelse och försäljningsknep är att verka genom skuldkänslor".

63 This is also a common view amongst radical animal rights advocates, in this context expressed mainly as the subjugation of animals (see for example Eriksson 2003: 209).

Christianity as the source and motivation behind the "raping of Mother Earth". (see Harvey 1997: 222-224; York 1995: 128-129).

Religious traditions of the Left Hand Path have traditionally adopted a highly negative stance towards mainstream Christianity. Christianity is seen as the very antithesis to what is worth striving for. The attitude towards Christianity found in Dragon Rouge is somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, the order places strong emphasis on Dragon Rouge being open to people with all kinds of religious etc. worldviews in its official standing, Christianity being no exception. On the other hand, there are seen to be certain fundamental differences between the dark magical worldview of Dragon Rouge and monotheistic religion in its traditional forms. When asked to name the most detestable form of religiosity known to them, fundamentalist Christianity and Islam count high in most members' answers, due to the oppressive character of these religions, according to my informants. Thomas Karlsson himself says that:

> ...most interpretations of the monotheistic religions go very badly together with our ideology […] Submission, the need for salvation, the linear conception of time, the static understanding of paradise, the collectivism, objective morals and duty-ethics, the separation of body and spirit, the negative view of humans and the human body etc. fit badly with opinions in Dragon Rouge. (IF 2001/1:3[64]).

He goes on to point out that people with Christian, Jewish or Muslim worldviews are naturally very welcome to join the order: Dragon Rouge does not discriminate anybody on the basis of their religion. (IF 2001/1:3).

The introductory quotation of the present section is part of an article in the members' paper called "Tendencies 2000" (Dragon Rouge 2000a). The article appears to deal with world tendencies in the year 2000 which in some way affect the dark magician, and is

64 "... de flesta tolkningar av de monoteistiska religionerna passar extremt illa ihop med vår ideologi. [...] Underkastelsen, frälsningsbehovet, den linjära tidsuppfattningen, det statiska paradistillståndet, kollektivismen, objektiv moraluppfattning och pliktetik, separation mellan ande och materia, negativ syn på människan och hennes kropp etc rimmar illa med uppfattningar inom Dragon Rouge".

quite explicitly a critique of Christianity and what is seen as secular tendencies highly influenced by Christianity. Monotheistic religion is criticized as being hypocritical – in the overt act of tearfully apologizing for past atrocities whilst at the same time conducting new acts of horror, for depriving man of his/her divinity and thus enslaving him/her to the 'one god'. It is also rhetorically asked why the Catholic Church has never felt the need to apologize for burning witches in medieval times. Secular authorities today are shown to be highly infused with these same tendencies.

One member identifies himself as a "spiritual anarchist", and feels that it is very important to "listen to oneself", that is to say, to be one's own authority (IF 2001/1:6). This same informant is one of the few members I have met who have not taken an overall negative approach to Christianity. He says:

> Many DR members seem to feel a deep hatred towards Christianity, but I do not think that is sound. If one lets oneself be inspired by other religions without following them literally one should not reject Christianity either. It, too, has many interesting features. (IF 2001/1:6[65]).

There does indeed seem to be a deep dislike for at least certain aspects of monotheistic religion within the order, on both the individual and the collective levels. This does not, however, entail a hatred of Christian, Muslim or Jewish people. I point to an earlier quotation: "*Now* I respect all kinds of religious people, but not necessarily the religions" (IF 2001/1:4[66]). Monotheistic ideology and its consequences are criticized. Monotheism is said to stand for the subjugation of humans in general, and women and nature in particular, including many acts of violence towards the aforementioned. Monotheism is seen as the original idea behind materialism and modernism, both imposing severe restrictions on thought, choices and an individual morality. Furthermore, monotheism, materialism and modernism are experienced as very

65 "Många DR medlemmar verkar hysa ett djupt hat mot Kristendomen, men jag tror inte det är sunt. Om man låter sig inspireras av andra religioner utan att [följa] dem bokstavligen skall man inte förkasta kristendomen också. Den innehåller en hel del intressant den också.".

66 "Respekterar *nu* alla slags religiösa människor, men nödvändigtvis inte religionerna".

much alive, even in a secular society like Sweden. (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 10; 2004c).

A further reason for the difficulty of incorporating the magic of Dragon Rouge in a Christian worldview is the fact that Dragon Rouge "explores the forbidden parts of the creation of God" (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 4). The Christian magic adept would therefore be better served by choosing a path which leads to becoming one with God, instead of becoming like God – the goal of the Dragon Rouge magician.

4 Organization

4.1 History

The following account of the history of Dragon Rouge is based on, and compiled from, information provided to me by various Dragon Rouge members, as well as what can be read on the order's homepage, URL *http://www.dragonrouge.net*. I am well aware of the problems involved in having my recount based on the retellings of Dragon Rouge adherents ten years on, but as there are no other sources I see no alternative to using this method. The retrospective account of Dragon Rouge history consists of both facts and filtered accounts, and functions partly as a founding legend providing an air of mystique and authenticity to the order.

4.1.1 Thomas Karlsson

The history of Dragon Rouge begins with the order's founder Thomas Karlsson. Karlsson, born 1972 in Stockholm, Sweden, reports having had extra-corporeal experiences from the age of three onwards. As a result of this, Karlsson did not experience a clear border between waking perception and sleep, something of importance for his later magic development. Because these experiences manifested themselves at such an early age, they never seemed all that strange. It was not until the age of 12[67] that Karlsson realized his experiences could be regarded as occult. (IF mgt 2001/49). He recounts having been fascinated with myths, religion and symbols, by the operas of Richard Wagner and by surrealist artists such as Salvador Dalí, as well as having been encouraged in the two last-mentioned indulgences by his parents. (IF 2001/1:3).

At the age of 12, Karlsson started experimenting with the occult together with a friend of about the same age. The experimenting included trying to evoke demons by using grimoires[68], using a quija

67 On an intriguing, though trivial, note Jesus Christ is stated to have been the same age when he drove the merchants out of the temple.

68 Medieval handbooks on magic, usually containing spells, incantations and descriptions of demonic entities.

board (IF mgt 2001/49), as well as visiting cemeteries and pre-Christian sites of worship. By this time Karlsson and his friend had been joined by other people, forming a loose group. According to Karlsson, he himself was the most active of them all, even having contact with much older magicians. The first occult organizations Karlsson contacted were two spiritualist associations in the Stockholm region, *Sanningssökarna* [The Seekers of Truth] and *Stockholms Spiritualistiska Förening (SSF)* [Stockholm Spiritualist Association]. He discovered early on that the border between serious spirituality and utter nonsense could be quite hazy in occult circles (IF mgt 2001/49). Karlsson did not try to channel spirits in the Spiritualist fashion and was drawn early on to darker forms of spirituality (IF mgt 2001/49). (IF 2001/1:3)

Among the earliest written accounts of the occult which Karlsson absorbed were books by Eliphas Lévi (Alphonse Constant Louis), Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, as well as folklore-black magic books and some general works on the occult (IF mgt 2001/49). Literature by Aleister Crowley and Anton Szandor LaVey entered the picture somewhat later. Crowley proved inspiring as his texts were so multifaceted, whereas LaVey's worldview seemed all too materialistic. (IF mgt 2001/49). Karlsson studied the occult with such intensity that his schoolwork suffered at times. The occult studies did not, however, have a solely negative impact on his more mundane studies, as Karlsson, at the age of 14, held a school presentation on Aleister Crowley and magic for a somewhat confused audience consisting of his fellow pupils and, in Karlsson's words, a "somewhat impressed teacher". (IF 2001/1:3).

By the time Karlsson reached the age of 17, his small gathering of occultist had already expanded into a regular group practising magic and studying occultism. Karlsson himself had regular contact with a 25-year-old male, who in turn had contacts with prominent figures in occult circles. According to Karlsson, the focus of his group was dark, although not satanic. Besides the workings with his own group, Karlsson also had contact with other magicians and occultists, attended shamanic meetings and witches meetings, participated in Yoga-courses, met and discussed with Heavy Metal Satanists and 'New Age' consultants. He also worked in the

Vattumannen esoteric bookshop in Stockholm, as well as doing tarot readings at the shop *Jolanda den tredje*. It is safe to say that Karlsson had immersed himself deeply in the esoteric and alternative-spiritual Stockholm of the late 1980s.

A very important influence for the forming of Dragon Rouge was the contact with a group based in Gothenburg, Sweden, practising yezidic and typhonian[69] magic. According to Karlsson, the Gothenburg-based group was quite loosely and unofficially organised and studied the darker aspects of spirituality. (IF mgt 2001/49). Karlsson reports having learnt many of the terms and concepts later used in Dragon Rouge from this particular group, as well as having received some important texts and artefacts from it. The texts received mostly dealt with the Draconian force and were inspired by the qabalah, as well as some texts consisting of yezidic material (IF mgt 2001/49). This group gave Karlsson the impetus to go ahead and start an actual magic order. The group also suggested using the red dragon as the main symbol.

At about this time, in the late 1980s, Karlsson visited Morocco in the company of, in Karlsson's words, an insane Englishman with suicidal tendencies. An event of crucial importance for the forming of Dragon Rouge occurred during this visit to Morocco: Karlsson visited the famous *Jamaâ El-Fna* Square in Marrakech, encountered a Dervish (a Sufi/Muslim mystic), and received the following prophetical announcement from him: "The old shall be destroyed and a temple shall be build for the Red Dragon" (IF 2001/1:3[70]). After the encounter, Karlsson returned to Sweden and formed Dragon Rouge with the help of his nearest friends and companions. (IF 2001/1:3).

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69 The branch of the Ordo Templi Orientis founded by Kennth Grant (see section 2.1.4) is called the Typhonian O.T.O. It is possible that the group mentioned by Karlsson worked with Grant-inspired magic. There are similarities between Grantian magick and Dragon Rouge. For example, Grant speaks of the Draconian Current as the original spirituality, incorporates the qliphoth in his material and considers it imoprtant to balance the positive and negative aspects of existence (see Grant 1994a; 1994b).

70 "det gamla ska gå under och att ett tempel ska byggas åt den röda draken".

At present, Karlsson is a PhD student in the department of the History of Religions at the University of Stockholm. He is writing a thesis on Johannes Bureus and Gothic qabala, with an approach combining the history of religions and the history of ideas (information from personal correspondence with Thomas Karlsson). Karlsson points out that his aim is to keep his esoteric practice separate from his academic work, and that his sources are different when operating in each sphere.

4.1.2 The Founding and Development of Dragon Rouge

On Dragon Rouge website one can read that "Dragon Rouge was inofficially [*sic*] founded 1989 by seven young magicians with Thomas K. as the main character" (Dragon Rouge 2004b. See also Dragon Rouge 2001c). One can further read that the organization was founded "following the advice from a circle of old Yezidi-Tyfonian magicians who left their great work of awakening the dragon force to their younger inheritors". One can assume that the older Yezidi-Tyfonian magicians consist of the Gothenburg-based group mentioned in section 4.1.1. On New Year's Eve, 1989/1990, Dragon Rouge was formally, and under ceremonial proceedings, opened for the public (Dragon Rouge 2001a, Dragon Rouge 1996/1:7, Frisk 1998:142). In 1989 Dragon Rouge had existed as a closed order (IF 2001/1:8).

Thomas Karlsson says that Dragon Rouge "started as an unprejudiced search for a darker spiritual ideology or path, with a fascination for the symbols encircling the Left Hand Path" (IF mgt 2001/49). He goes on to say that organizations such as the Typhonian Ordo Templi Orientis (see footnote 69) and Temple of Seth were inspirational in the beginning, but also that Dragon Rouge has come to evolve differently from these organizations. At first, meetings were held in the homes of members and magic workings in nature were important, practice being of key importance from the very beginning, as the accentuated theory-centeredness of many magic organizations was the very impetus for forming Dragon

Rouge. Thomas Karlsson had early on been irritated by the seeming lack of practice and all too much focus on theory found in the magical organizations he had come into contact with. (IF mgt 2001/49).

When asked about the importance of Anton LaVey's writings for Dragon Rouge, Karlsson responded that they might have played a more important part in the early Dragon Rouge, even though Satanism has never played any major part at all (IF mgt 2001/49). A common idea among the active members of the organization is that LaVey's writings may have sparked the interest in the darker aspects of spirituality among many Dragon Rouge members, but that the members all eventually will mature, or already have matured, beyond LaVey's kind of satanic philosophy. LaVey's Satanism is seen as something possibly belonging to the individual member's past but as being, at least in some ways, ill suited to the philosophy of Dragon Rouge (see IF mgt 2001/51).

The number of members involved in Dragon Rouge grew considerably in the mid 1990s (IF mgt 2001/49). This was probably due to the extensive media attention given to the order. In 1995, Dragon Rouge held a ceremony where the child of two of the members was baptized (Frisk 1998:142; Nilsson 1995a; 1995b). Representatives for the Swedish tabloid newspaper *Aftonbladet* attended the ceremony and wrote a highly critical article labelling Dragon Rouge a satanic organization. The child in question was said to have been baptized in the name of Satan, when the ceremonies involved in the event never implied anything of the sort (Nilsson 1995a; 1995b; SVT 1 1996. Frisk 1998: 142, is also of the opinion that the baptism was not a satanic one).

What actually took place, according to the order, was a ritual where the Draconian force, also seen as the life-force of the universe as well as the life-force immanent in every living being, was channelled for the benefit of the child being baptized (SVT 1 1996). The parents of the child were, however, outspoken Satanists and their beliefs and values were taken to represent the totality of Dragon Rouge (IF 2001/1:8). Dragon Rouge made the headlines due to this incident, and the headlines consequently attracted more media coverage (see for example Götebrogsposten 1997; Stugart 1995; 1996; SVT 1 1996; Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå 1997). A member told me

about an incident where *Veckorevyn*, a Swedish magazine aimed at adolescent girls, had featured an article called *Satanists Molest Young Women* and included a photograph of this particular member. The photograph had been taken from the earlier article in *Aftonbladet* and the article in *Veckorevyn* had nothing in particular to do with Dragon Rouge (IF mgt 2001/51). Needless to say, my informant did not have anything to do with any form of molestation of young (or for that matter old) women. The whole incident was even given some attention in Finland, as the anti-Satanist Riku Rinne mentioned the baptism in his book *Pimeys väistyy* (The Darkness Yields) (Rinne 1996:13-16).

Most likely due to the media coverage, more possible adherents became to be aware of the existence of Dragon Rouge. The number of members doubled from about 250 to 500 in a very short time (IF mgt 2001/53). Veteran members of the organization view the events of the mid 1990s somewhat ambiguously. On the one hand, the media coverage gave the Dragon Rouge publicity, which helped the organization to gain a considerable increase in the number of serious members. On the other hand, some of the members attracted were not interested in spiritual aspirations, but mainly in the sensationalist Dragon Rouge portrayed by the media, a portrayal that Thomas Karlsson and the inner circle of the order did not feel represented Dragon Rouge very well (IF mgt 2001/49, 53).

During the early days of Dragon Rouge, the membership paper, which in 1990 was called *Quintessens* (IF 2001/1:8; Bjarke 1991), came out irregularly, largely due to the fact that it had to be copied manually, but also because of the lack of time and material. Thomas Karlsson was almost solely responsible for the functioning of the organization. The meetings, the first of which were officially held in 1991, and the organizational structure were irregular. The meetings, mostly practice-oriented, usually took place in the home of an early member, or alternatively as practical magic workings in an outdoor setting. A long-time Dragon Rouge member attaches great importance to the media attention on the organization during its early days. He notes: "The number of members started to rise and then one day the media became aware of us" (IF 2001/1:8[71]).

71 "Medlemsantalet började att växa och så en dag fick media nys om oss".

The first media-appearance, apparently in 1991 (see Arlebrand 1995: 11), was on a Swedish television programme called *Fri zon* (Free Zone).

My informant blames the youth and naivety of the organization for the somewhat misrepresentative image given of the Dragon Rouge. The media-appearances were viewed as good PR and, as Dragon Rouge wanted to expand and attract more interesting and suitable members in Sweden, as something necessary. The media-appearances Dragon Rouge took part in during the following years accomplished this. Earlier, the few non-serious, and at times even bordering on slanderous, media statements that had not mattered during the earlier days of the order now began to matter as Dragon Rouge and its number of members grew. Contact with the media started to assume large proportions, and the final blow came with the very negative article in the Swedish evening paper, *Aftonbladet*, mentioned earlier. Something radical had to be done.

The media-attention attracted an increasing number of members, a great many of these unserious and attracted by the misrepresentations of Dragon Rouge as something sensationalist and satanic. This combined with a state of organizational structure, which was not really modelled for such a large number of members, created big problems for the order. My informant feels that the organizational structure of Dragon Rouge in the mid 1990s could have accommodated about 50 members, the system basically requiring that the central administration personally knew all members, whereas the actual number of members had grown to about 500. (IF 2001/1:8).

Two long-time members had by this time started to help Karlsson with the compiling and copying of membership papers but the management of the task, based on manual labour, as well as managing the members-register, which was a combination of handwritten and typewritten lists, still became too big a job. For a time, key figures in the Dragon Rouge management considered closing the organization and going back to being a closed order. However, the decision to go on with the help of some radical organizational changes was taken. The following core elements where agreed upon:

- Withdrawal from the media, or only appearing in media contexts which seem to have special relevance and which are beneficial to the order and its practice in some way.
- A rationalization of the administration, that is to say, a more effective management.
- A division of the workload, one member taking over the layout of the members' paper as well as the management of the membership register.
- Leaving the task of copying of the members' paper and other members' circulars to a professional copying firm.
- A restructuring of the register of membership, making it easier to discover which members had renewed their membership fee, as well as sending out remittance slips to members when it was time for them to renew their membership.
- Editing and introducing a correspondence course in magic. (IF 2001/1:8).

In connection with these changes Dragon Rouge acquired its first premises, and in these the first Dragon Rouge temple was built. Three female Dragon Rouge members opened a magic shop called *Mandragora* as well. An annual meeting was held for the first time. During this first meeting the following was agreed upon:

- Set the publication of the membership paper (called *Dracontias* since number 1/2002, earlier *Draksådd* for the Swedish version and *Cauda Draconis* for the versions in other languages) to four times a year.
- A slight increase of the membership fee
- The goal of attracting members outside Sweden
- A reworking of the correspondence course
- Creating a homepage on the Internet. (IF 2001/1:8).

According to my informant, most of the goals were achieved within a year of the decisions having been made. A first homepage had been created (Thomas Karlsson and the other key members recognize Internet as one of the main sources for attracting foreign

members) and a few members outside Sweden had joined the order. The division of the workload continued, as another long-time member took on the responsibility of translating the membership paper into English, calling the English version *Cauda Draconis*. Later, Dragon Rouge lost its first premise and acquired a new, more permanent one. As for the membership categories, non-serious members eventually ceased to be members, as they did not renew their membership, and the percentage of active members greatly increased because of this. (IF 2001/1:8)

4.2.1 Organizational Structure

Dragon Rouge is organized in three layers. The outer layer consists of all members who have paid the yearly membership fee. (IF 2001/1:3). These members receive a publication for members, *Dracontias*, four times a year. Most courses and meetings arranged by the Stockholm section of Dragon Rouge are open to the public, that is to say, to people who have not paid the membership fee. Members receive a discount on the cost of the courses though, as well as having the possibility to attend meetings not open to the public, such as the annual meetings, usually arranged in the summertime (see Dragon Rouge 2000a-c; 2001a; 2001f-i). Some lodges have different policies regarding the admittance of non-members to meetings. For example, lodge Helheim, situated in Gothenburg, has a stricter policy, not allowing non-members to attend so easily (Dragon Rouge 2001d).

Dragon Rouge members have the opportunity of taking correspondence courses in magic, which in turn makes it possible for them to be initiated and gain deeper insights into the magic system of Dragon Rouge (Dragon Rouge 2000a-c; 2001a; 2001f-i). Completing the first initiation gives the member access to the second organizational level (IF 2001/1:3). Besides deeper insight into the magic system, initiation into the degrees also gives admittance to some of the courses in which only members initiated up to a certain degree are allowed. Usually these courses are more elaborate and require more serious and/or insightful participants. The degree

requirements for these courses are usually degree 1.0 or having started the first correspondence course (the first degree to be initiated into: for more information on the initiatory system see section 4.2.4), sometimes degree 2.0 or having started the second correspondence course (see Dragon Rouge 2000a-c; 2001a; 2001f-i).

After having been initiated into the third degree, the initiate enters the third organizational structure, the Dragon Order. The initiate swears the Dragon Oath, basically ceremonially declaring him- or herself to be willing to be more deeply involved in the work of magic, as well as in the organization's inner workings. Initiation into the third degree and the swearing of the Dragon Oath gives the initiate admittance to the inner core of Dragon Rouge, known as the Inner Circle. (IF 2001/1:3). The taking of magic oaths was seen by Aleister Crowley as beneficial for the magician's development. He saw magical oaths as expressions of Will, and furthermore as something that one should not, or could not, break (see Crowley 1977: 62). The division of the system in two is similar to the structure of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, where members where initiated into the Second Order after receiving the fifth degree (see section 2.1.3). The difference is that the First Order activities of Golden Dawn where strictly theoretical, while the Dragon Rouge initiate focuses on practice from the very start.

The administrative tasks of Dragon Rouge are divided between five main members. Thomas Karlsson is mostly active in the organization's ideological formation, as well as holding most of the courses and meetings and writing a great deal of the magic material. Another member takes care of the register of members and most of the mundane tasks concerning magic material, such as the graphic layout. A third long-time member is responsible for the correspondence between the order and members abroad, as well as holding some courses. Two more recent members have taken over the work on the homepage and the main correspondence with Swedish-speaking members, respectively, from the three aforementioned persons. (IF 2001/1:8; IF mgt 2001/48; personal observations).

4.2.2 Membership

An article in the Swedish evening paper, *Aftonbladet*, in 1995 claims a membership of about 200 members for Dragon Rouge, whereas the organization itself is reported to claim about 300 members (Nilsson 1995a; 1995b). In an article in *Dagens Nyheter* in 1996 a long-time member of Dragon Rouge states the number of members of the organization to be 300 (Stugart 1996). An official inquiry made in 1998 by the social department of the Swedish government states that the number of paying members of Dragon Rouge is 350 (SOU 1998: 65). The numbers are said to be taken from the *Catalogue of Churches, Denominations and Movements in Sweden 1998* (Katalog över kyrkor, samfund och rörelser i Sverige 1998) and to be accurate as of 20th August, 1998. Liselotte Frisk writes that the organization was said to have had about 400 members in 1997 (Frisk 1998: 143).

A long-time member of the organization stated in 1997 that the number of members of the order was 400, and further that the number of members was about 15 when he first joined (Johnsson 1997). In a questionnaire, one member informs me that he joined in 1991 and that the number of members at that time was about 20 (IF 2001/1:8). In Arlebrand (et al.) it can be read that the organization reported a membership of 500 people in 1997 (Arlebrand et al. 1998: 89, 112). In 2001 the number involved in Dragon Rouge was said to be about 200 members in Sweden, about 70 members in Germany (information obtained at the 2001 Annual meeting) and 50-75 members outside Sweden and Germany (IF 2001/1:8). This would give Dragon Rouge about 300-350 paying members. In correspondence with a member responsible for the administrational tasks regarding membership in 2004, I was informed that the order had about 130 members in Sweden, 34 members in Germany and 16 members in Italy. The total number of members is estimated to be about 250 persons.

The numbers of members given must not, however, be taken at a face value. With movements of the network kind, which Dragon Rouge could be described as, membership can be very loose. If one counts a membership of 250 persons one must remember that this is the number of people who have currently paid the annual

membership fee of the order. Having paid the membership fee does not mean that the member is an active member, that is to say takes part in courses and meetings etc. Apart from this, non-members may take part in meetings and courses, at least the courses open to non-members. Thirdly, organizations always affect the surrounding society and often instigate some kind of social response. In my view, the people involved in an organization in this way may very well be counted in the organization's field of influence. In the case of Dragon Rouge, the organization has triggered a great deal of media attention and thus probably, at least at certain times, instigated a moderate response for or against the organization. One may therefore say that Dragon Rouge, without doubt, has affected the lives of a great many more than the 250 people enrolled as members at the time of writing.

Regarding the age-spread of members, the official website of the order states that it has members of all ages (Dragon Rouge 2004b). The average age of members is said to be about 18-30 (IF 2001/1:8). According to my own experience the statement regarding the average age of Dragon Rouge members is quite correct, although the most active members seem to be around the ages of 25-35. The average non-Swedish member seems to be somewhat older, ranging from about 25 to 40 years of age. According to a former member, the order used to have members as young as 13 in 1996 (IF 2001/1:13).

Utilizing James A. Beckford's model for classification of social movements and, more particularly, the participation in social movements, one may distinguish between different degrees of participation. I consider a short presentation of Beckford's model in order here (Based on Beckford 1985: 76-93). Beckford's model is a twofold one, focusing on *External Relationships*, that is to say, the relations between the movement members and the surrounding society, and *Internal Relationships*, that is to say, the relation the movement's members have to the movement itself and each other. I will disregard the external relationships as they are irrelevant in the present context. Regarding internal relationships, Beckford distinguishes between five different types: *Apostates*, *Patrons*, *Clients*, *Adepts* and *Devotees*. The types range roughly from lesser participation to greater participation in the movement.

The apostate and patron types differ somewhat from the other three types. Apostates are former movement members who for some reason no longer participate actively in the movement's activities and, according to Beckford, therefore no longer have many social relationships with active movement members. Patrons are non-members who give their support to the movement, be it economic or ideological. Beckford recognises that there are many possible modes of apostasy, for example making it possible for an apostate to function as a patron. In cases where the former member has a negative attitude to his former movement, the types apostate and patron do, of course, not correspond. (Beckford 1985: 83-84).

Clients approach the movement in order to attain certain benefits without letting their involvement in the movement affect their life much outside the movement. Adepts are more deeply involved in the movement, regarding it as an important part of their life and letting their involvement affect larger parts of their everyday life. Devotees are members who are highly involved in the movement and invest greatly in it, both economically, emotionally and time-wise. For devotees, the involvement in the movement is reflected in all or most parts of their life outside it. Movement authorities affect the life of the three latter types in various degrees, ranging from the subtle or implicit and encompassing only some specific areas of the member's life in the case of clients, to the explicit and encompassing most, or all, areas of the member's life in the case of devotees. (Beckford 1985: 82-83).

Regarding Dragon Rouge, I have met or talked with members who can be situated in most of the five categories. I have come across apostates (both former members who have adopted a negative approach to the order, as well as members who function as patrons in giving a positive account of the order to me), patrons, adepts and devotees. Clients could probably also be found, but may be harder to reach as well as harder to motivate to aid me in my research.

In my master's thesis I proposed that most members of Dragon Rouge could probably be seen as belonging to an amalgam of the client and adept types (Granholm 2000: 76). I would now like to revise my statement and propose a somewhat different solution. I still believe that most members can be seen as an amalgam of the

client and adept types, meaning that they receive the organization's material, at the very minimum reading the membership paper sent to them four times a year, and maybe participating in some of the meetings and courses. The client-adepts do not let their Dragon Rouge involvement affect all areas of their life but do, however, view their magic practice as being very important and influential in their life. However, most of the members I have met, discussed with or received answers to questionnaires from, conform to the adept or devotee types in Beckford's model. This is only natural and to be expected when doing research on social movements, as the members who have taken the time and effort to aid me in my research most likely have a deeper involvement in the organization than members who do not feel as motivated to participate in the research.

The question of the movement or its authorities influencing the everyday life of members is somewhat problematic. Most members I have heard from argue that their involvement in Dragon Rouge, and more specifically their magic practice, has changed their life profoundly and that all aspects of their more mundane life are infused by their magic practice. This can, however, be seen as a discursive strategy (see sections 7.1.1 and 7.1.2) playing on the importance of magic, and does not necessarily mean that everyday decisions made by my informants have changed in any major way. Nevertheless, I feel that my informants' opinions should be treated with respect, including their opinions suggesting a changed outlook on everyday decisions. The decisions made have not necessarily changed, but the way the informant views his/her choices and decisions most certainly has. The member's magic practice and organizational involvement has opened him/her up to a new way of perceiving the world around him/her, filtering his/her observations through glasses tinted by magic knowledge.

Regarding the order itself affecting the everyday life of its members, the influence may range from non-existent to very small for most members. As Dragon Rouge has a highly anti-authoritarian character, similar to most (other) neopagan movements (see Lewis 1996b: 3; Harvey 1997: 212-214), and does not maintain any clear rules about how one should lead one's life, it is unlikely that members would approach the organization's materials searching

for authoritative statements on how to lead their lives. For the most active members, the ones most suitably described as devotees, the situation is different. For these members, life in Dragon Rouge is profoundly interwoven with their everyday life, in the form of concerns about the organization's finances, ideological and organizational development etc.

Beckford's model has, however, like all models, certain limitations, particularly with regard to Dragon Rouge. Many members express sentiments towards the order through which they could be placed in the client category. Dragon Rouge functions as a meeting place where the member may meet other practicing magicians and maybe learn from their experience. When participating in the activities no longer feels compelling they stop going to meetings and no longer renew their annual membership fee. However, regarding the practice of magic the answer is different. Magic can not be abandoned so easily: "once a magician always a magician" is something I have heard Dragon Rouge members say on more than one occasion. Where does one place members of this kind in Beckford's model, members who act as clients towards the organization and as devotees towards the practice of (specifically Dragon Rouge type) magic. I have even experienced this with members who are apostates in relation to the organization.

4.2.2.1 Gender

According to Dragon Rouge, the percentage correlation between male and female members in the order has varied throughout the order's history. At the beginning the percentage of male members was at least 75 %. During the mid 1990s, when the number of members grew rapidly, the percentage of female members grew to about 60 %. In recent years the percentage of male and female members has been about 50-50, with a slight preponderance of male members. (IF 2001/1:8). From my experience during my field work in 2001-2004, female attendance at the meetings and courses at Dragon Rouge Stockholm is slightly lower than male attendance. Of about 8 to 15 members attending, about 1 to 5 have been female.

This is, however, something that my informants recognize (IF 2001/1:8). If one were to draw conclusions regarding the percentage of female members in the organization from empirical observations at meetings, one would arrive at an estimated 20-30 %. This would not, however, include members who do not participate in collective activities, but who have paid the membership fee and who could be working with the correspondence course. As I cannot, and would not out of respect for individual members' integrity, access the register of Dragon Rouge members, I have no way of checking the accuracy of my informant's estimate. As my informant has developed and worked on the current members register since the mid 1990s, and has insight on the matter, I believe he can be regarded a reliable source.

Dragon Rouge seems to be very keen on having a balance of female and male members. This may in part be due to the slight preponderance of male members combined with the ideological aspiration to focus on female magical, religious and mythic characters and themes. According to Thomas Karlsson, about one third of the members of the Inner Circle are female, with slightly less in the initiatory Inner Circle and slightly more in the organizational (IF 2001/1:3). According to another informant, a long time-member to be considered a regular member of the Inner Circle, most of the members in the administration and other key positions in the order are male. He is, however, very specific in pointing out that this is something the organization has tried to counteract. He believes that the reason why men hold the key positions is due to female members being less active in the collective aspect of the order and working more individually, thus not becoming involved with administrative and other tasks. According to one of my informants, the male domination in the administration is proof of the order not having any kind of gender hierarchy, as some of the most tiresome and mundane aspects of the order's work, such as posting mail etc, is done here. (IF 2001/1:8).

Almost all of the Dragon Rouge material is written by male members and likewise almost all of the courses, meetings etc. are held by male members. The order does, however, express the desire to have more female members participating more actively and has instigated specific female groups within the order. The belief is that

groups of this kind can function to activate female members to become involved in the order's inner concerns, as well as taking care of their own individual evolution in magic. (IF 2001/1:8; IF mgt 2001/57-58).

As one can see, the Inner Circles of the order are very male-dominated, although the order has a stated goal of involving more female members in its inner affairs, and has a strong discourse on women's rights. The Inner Circles consist of long-time and high initiated members, who have invested the most in the order, both time-wise and emotionally (see section 4.2.3). Those who have been members for the longest time are all male. There are no active women in the mother-order in Stockholm who have been members for as long as the male members of the Inner Circle. There are, however, a few women who have been with the order for a considerable length of time, and begin to take on more official tasks. Examples are the Stockholm-based female members of the women's group. Lodge Magdan in Poland is run by female members, and the Italian lodge Sothis has at least one leading female member. I have no current information on the other lodges.

4.2.3 The Inner Circle

The Inner Circle of Dragon Rouge is the inner core of the order responsible for the administrative, ideological, economic and other practical issues of the order. The Inner Circle comprises of various individuals who have taken a more active role in the organization, meaning that one is not elected into the Inner Circle through some sort of democratic elections. I have been informed that the Inner Circle has a dynamic structure, the constitution of which depends on the questions discussed (IF mgt 2001/49; IF 2001/1:8).

According to Thomas Karlsson, the Inner Circle is not one body, constant in its structure. The Circle consists of persons from the following categories: members who have been in Dragon Rouge the longest time; the most active members; the most competent members; the members who have attained the highest degrees in the initiatory system and the lodge masters and leaders of the various spheres of

interest. (IF 2001/1:3). When asked what counts as being an active member, Karlsson responded: "…someone who is involved in Dragon Rouge on a regular basis (either as a participant in meetings, as a practitioner of magic, as a co-worker etc.)" (IF 2001/1:3[72]).

One long-time member feels that members who take part in the correspondence course and/or attend meetings, seminars and courses, can be said to be active. He goes on to say that probably 75 % of the members outside Sweden are active, whereas about 50 % of the members in Sweden are. The smaller percentage of active members in Sweden, when compared to the percentage outside the country, is due to the order being better known in Sweden, and thus attracting more peripheral members. (IF 2001/1:8). The fact that the average age of Swedish members is a bit lower than the average age of foreign members may play a role in the lesser degree of activeness of the Swedish members. Dragon Rouge is probably the first occult organization most of the Swedish members have joined, whereas the older non-Swedish members may have participated in other orders, or at least become better acquainted with the field, thus making their decision to join the order on a more reflexive and aware base.

According to my observations, the ideological Inner Circle of Dragon Rouge consists quite constantly of three main members. Thomas Karlsson, and two other members who have been involved in the order since 1991. These are the most long-time members, and have actively participated in Dragon Rouge for well over ten years. These three persons have produced the vast majority of the order's material, and have, since they have much experience in magic practice, largely formed the Dragon Rouge system. Other members do produce material, published for example in the member's paper, but are not involved in decision-making processes in any higher degree. The lodges have their own inner circles, consisting of the lodge leader and those active members who work in close co-operation with him/her. Officially the lodges have five core members: the lodge leader, vice lodge leader, treasurer, scribe and an additional member with variable function (see section 4.2.4).

72 "…någon som engagerar sig i DR regelbundet (antingen som mötesdeltagare, som magikursutövare, som medarbetare e.dyl)".

The Inner Circle of the mother-order is at times, for example when issues of major impact for the order as a whole are treated, complemented by the lodge leaders of the various lodges. Also, when questions concerning various specific theme-groups, such as the women's group, are treated, the representatives of these may be contacted.

As Dragon Rouge is a quite small order, the administrative Inner Circle of the mother-order, as well as those of the lodges, consists mainly of the same persons involved in the ideological Inner Circle. This is natural, as it is these persons who have invested most in the order and are the most involved and active of the members. In Stockholm the administrative Inner Circle consists of the ideological Inner Circle aided by, mainly, two other members (see IF 2001/1:3; 9).

Members of the Inner Circle have expressed hopes that the situation where no individual member is crucial for the existence of the order would arise. The sentiment that Dragon Rouge should be able to exist even if anyone in the active core of the order ceased to be active for some reason or another has been expressed. (IF 2001/1:8).

When members are asked about the Inner Circle the following picture emerges:

- The Inner Circle consists of long-time Dragon Rouge members, with more experience than newer members
- What distinguishes Inner Circle members from ordinary members is that the former have more insight into the function of Dragon Rouge as an organization, concerning membership as well as the degree of advancement of members, the function and activities of the lodges and taking care of various organizational tasks, such as sending out the members' paper and other circulars etc.
- Members of the Inner Circle do not treat ordinary members any differently and are not treated differently themselves because they belong to the Inner Circle. Visitors to the Dragon Rouge temple would probably not be able to distinguish Inner Circle members from non-Inner Circle members (IF 2001/1:1; 4-5; 8).

Important to note is that the above is a view of the inner circle as derived from members of the order. From my own observations, I can agree with much of this. What could be added is that, as the inner circle is not an elected forum, a member's entry into the circle would have to be affected by that member's social standing among the leading members, at least to some degree. That is to say, a person who would be qualified on purely magical and activity-based merits would probably not become a member of the inner circle if he/she were extremely unpopular among other active members of the order. This is logical, since functioning as a person in a leading position in any kind of organization will require that person to be capable, willing, and indeed allowed, to deal with a vast number of other individuals.

4.2.4 Lodges and Ritual Groups

Dragon Rouge was founded in Stockholm, Sweden, but has spread to several other places in both Sweden and elsewhere. The Dragon Rouge group in Stockholm is called the mother-order, and it is there that the central administration of the order is located and where all major decisions are made. The local sections of Dragon Rouge, situated in various cities in Sweden and throughout the world, are called lodges. These are groups sanctioned by the mother-organization and officially working with the Dragon Rouge material and magic-system.

There are at the time of writing (January 2005) one lodge, besides the mother-organization, in Sweden, one in Germany, one in Italy and one in Poland. The Swedish lodge is called lodge Sinistra, is located in Malmö, and was founded in 2001. The German lodge, which attained lodge-status in 2004, is called lodge Heldrasil and is located in Thüringen, Germany. Earlier a lodge called lodge Thagirion, founded in 1999, was located in Hagen, Germany (Dragon Rouge 2001j). The German lodge underwent some changes in late 2001, both regarding its practice and leadership, and was for a time called lodge Tunrida (information from personal correspondence with a German Dragon Rouge member). The Italian

lodge attained lodge-status in late 2003, is called lodge Sothis, and is located in Naples, Italy. Lodge Magan, situated in Silesia, Poland, attained lodge-status during the fall of 2004.

In the fall of 2004, information regarding the earlier lodge Helheim, located in Gothenburg and founded in the late 1990s, was taken off the official homepage of the mother-organization. This was reportedly due to the inactivity of the Gothenburg-based lodge (information received during the 2004 annual meeting). Dragon Rouge has had several earlier lodges, most of them situated in Sweden, but with one earlier lodge situated in Finland. The lodges have a lodge-degree between 1 and 5 reflecting, the time the lodge has been an official lodge of Dragon Rouge as well as the level of activity of the lodge (Dragon Rouge 2001e). Lodges Sothis, Heldrasil and Magan have lodge-degree 1.0, and Sinistra has lodge-degree 2.0, as did lodge Helheim. (Dragon Rouge 2004d).

Dragon Rouge currently has two ritual groups, one of them situated outside Sweden and one situated in Sweden. The ritual groups have no official names and are identified by their location as ritual group Växjö (Växjö, Sweden) and ritual group Prague (Prague, the Czech Republic). Ritual groups during the period 2000-2003, not counting the ritual groups which have since then become official lodges, have existed in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and at an unspecified location in Germany (IF mgt 2001/49-50; IF 2001/1:8).

A long-time member of Dragon Rouge divides the lodges into three generations (IF 2001/1:8). The first-generation lodges were all situated in Sweden in cities like Gävle, Östersund and Gothenburg. The member in question equates these with the Dragon Rouge ritual groups of today, as they where not as organized as the current lodges. All of the first generation lodges have ceased to exist. The lodge in Gävle was called Black Earth Lodge (Håkansson 1991), and was active in the early 1990s. The second generation of lodges consisted of lodge Helheim in Gothenburg (a new lodge, different from the earlier one in Gothenburg), lodge Odin in Karlshamn and, another lodge in Sundsvall. With the second generation of lodges the activities where more organised, with some exceptions. Lodge Helheim and lodge Odin started contributing with material and working in closer co-operation with the mother-order in Stockholm and the lodge in Sundsvall ceased to exist. Lodge Odin, active in

Karlshamn from mid 1997 to 2001 (IF 2001/1:2), ceased to be an active lodge in early 2001 due to problems in managing the lodge as well as to the opening of lodge Sinistra in Malmö, quite near Karlshamn.

In 1998, the members' paper began to be published in English as *Cauda Draconis*, in conjunction with *Draksådd*, the original Swedish equivalent, successfully opening the organization for non-Swedish speaking members. Lodge Thagirion, opened in Hagen in 1999, took on the job of organizing lodge-activities in Germany as well as translating *Cauda Draconis* into German. (IF 2001/1:8).

The first lodge of the third generation was opened in Malmö, Sweden, in February 2001 (IF 2001/1:8). The third generation of lodges is exposed to far stricter rules than the earlier two generations (IF mgt 2001:49; IF 2001/1:8). Details of these rules are given further on in this section. The lodges of the second generation have, according to Dragon Rouge, functioned very well and continue to exist as fully fledged lodges beside the lodges of the third generation (IF 2001/1:8).

The characteristics of the lodges and ritual groups differ from each other a great deal (IF 2001/1:8). Whereas the mother-order has quite an inclusive agenda regarding its practice and overall image, the lodges for the most part have specialized in some particular tradition or theme. Lodge Helheim focused on the darker aspects of Nordic mythology as well as on the Gothic in art and literature. Lodge Sinistra has something of an academic approach. Lodge Sinistra has also focused on the 19th century artistic milieu and its preference for decadence. Lodge Thagirion focused very much on European paganism, the Nordic tradition and Demonology. As lodge Tunrida, the German lodge reportedly focused on much the same themes and also worked actively with runic Yoga (personal correspondence with a German Dragon Rouge member). Focus on the Nordic tradition, on qliphotic qabalah and Tantrism in the form of Kundalini-Yoga is common to all of the lodges, largely due to the mother-order's endorsement of these themes and techniques.

The rules for opening a lodge or starting a ritual group have become stricter over time. Earlier it was quite easy to open a lodge, basically you just needed to get the approval from the Dragon Rouge

Inner Circle, and as there where no specific rules concerning the opening of lodges, it was quite easy to obtain permission. In 2001, Dragon Rouge established a set of rules for opening lodges and ritual groups. (IF mgt 2001/47; 49). The following rules apply when opening a Dragon Rouge ritual group (Dragon Rouge 2001e):

The person wishing to start a ritual group should have met, and been recommended for the task, by some member of the mother-order. If this has not been possible for some reason or other, the person in question should send a photograph and a description of him-/herself, as well as some proof of identity, such as a copy of his/her passport, to the mother-order. The person wishing to start the ritual group should also have begun the first Dragon Rouge correspondence course in magic (although he/she is not required to have finished it when forming the ritual group). The activity of a ritual group is also somewhat restricted, as the group is not allowed to call itself Dragon Rouge or to have an official name other than the city it is located in. Furthermore, the ritual group does not have the right to represent Dragon Rouge officially. Quoting the rules for starting a ritual group or a lodge "The magical ritual group … has merely been given approval to work with Dragon Rouge's material under organized forms" (Dragon Rouge 2001e[73]).

The rules for opening a lodge are naturally somewhat stricter. In order to start a lodge one must be initiated to at least degree 1.0 of Dragon Rouge and be at least 20 years of age. The person wishing to start the lodge should have started and run a ritual group with regular activity at least once a month successfully for at least a year. The applicant should report on the activities of the ritual group to the mother-order once a month for at least one year preceding the opening of the lodge, including the signatures of those attending the activities.

The lodge should consist of a minimum of five active members, organized as lodge master, vice lodge master, treasurer, scribe and one person with an optional function. The requirements for the three first are the same as those mentioned for the person opening the lodge, that is to say, initiation into degree 1.0 in Dragon Rouge as

73 "Magigruppen … har enbart fått godkännande att under organiserade former arbeta med Dragon Rouges material".

well as a personal presentation sent together with some proof of identity to the mother-organization. The person who wishes to become lodge master should be recommended by five active Dragon Rouge members from the region where the lodge is supposed to be opened, including written motivations as to why this particular person would be a good lodge master. As a final requirement, the lodge master is obliged to sign a contract regarding the opening of the lodge with the mother-organization. I will deal with the specifics of the contract further on. When all of the requirements are met, the lodge is opened in a ceremony headed by representatives of the mother-order in Stockholm.

In February, 2001, I had the opportunity to attend the ceremonial opening of Lodge Sinistra in Malmö Sweden (see section 5.1.3).

The contract for opening a Dragon Rouge consists of the following 9 points:

1. The lodge is approved as a fully fledged part of Dragon Rouge with the signing of this contract and the approval of the directives in it. The lodge can consequently call itself by a specific lodge name.
2. The lodge contract is for a period of two years at a time and is after that extended for another period if the mother-organization and the lodge so wish. If a lodge master wishes to resign his commission to organize the lodge before the end of the period, he undertakes to do this with the approval of the mother-organization in order to ensure the continuity of the lodge.
3. The lodge receives the lodge degree 1.0 when it is approved as a fully fledged Dragon Rouge lodge. There are five lodge degrees, in which ritual groups have the pre-degree 0. Lodges can improve their lodge status by: age as a lodge, activity, members in relation to its region, the number of initiates, magical as well as organizational, and economic contributions to the mother-organization. At the time of

writing, lodge Sinistra had received degree 2.0 whereas the younger lodges have degree 1.0 (Dragon Rouge 2004d).

4. The lodge is obliged to have regular activity of at least six meetings a year. The lodge shall plan and finance a visit from the mother-organization once a year. The lodge master shall be present at the Dragon Rouge annual meeting. Exceptions are made in agreement with the mother-organization.
5. The lodge is obliged to four times a year report in writing to of its activities to the mother-order. The report should include information on activities, budget, active members, goals and plans.
6. The lodge should strive to have a good economy and to expand its possibilities. Attaining premises for the lodge are worth striving for. Surplus from the lodge activities go to the common lodge-fund, and a surplus is worth striving for. Purchases in addition to what is required for meetings are to be negotiated with the mother-order.
7. Lodge leaders should strive to attract serious members. Unsuitable members are barred only in negotiation with the mother-order. Lodge leaders should be prepared to act as a mediator in the lodge and should work for a good and representative spirit in the lodge. Lodge leaders shall work for a good and respectful relation between members and other lodges.
8. Lodge leaders should work for the benefit of the members' magical and initiatory advancement and lead the way in this matter.
9. The lodge may not under its name pursue activities outside or in conflict with Dragon Rouge. The lodge should act loyal and in unity with the whole of Dragon Rouge and the Draconian current.

4.2.5 Finances

It is expensive to run any kind of organization, and this is true for spiritual organizations as well. Often people have a rather negative attitude towards religious or spiritual organizations which require their members to pay for various services (see Rothstein 1997: 305-306). This is seen as incompatible with the goal of spiritual progress or salvation and, as a result of our Western, Protestant, Christian heritage, is viewed as belonging to the material, non-spiritual realm. The issue of the Scandinavian national churches collecting church taxes is not considered in this view.

Dragon Rouge has, like every other organization, various expenses that need to be dealt with. These include, for example, the rent for the premises where the Dragon Rouge temple is situated, costs for printing the correspondence courses, members' papers and various other Dragon Rouge productions, costs for material needed in the practice such as incense, music to meditate to as well as the equipment to play this music on, candles etc., as well as various other expenses accruing from the activities of the organization.

Dragon Rouge has various methods for financing its activities. The membership fee is currently 250 SEK (150 SEK in 2001 and 200 SEK in 2002) a year for members living in Sweden, 30 euro for members living in Europe and 35 euro for members outside Europe ($ 20 in 2001) (Dragon Rouge 2001a; 2004a; 2004g). Other sources of income for the mother-organization are participant fees for the regular Tuesday meetings and the more extensive weekend courses, and the income from selling the correspondence courses and other printed material. A fund was established in 2002, mainly for the purpose of establishing a temple on the island of Gotland (Dragon Rouge 2002a). The fund is financed by arranging special events, such as art exhibitions and festivals, as well as by voluntary donations from members. Dragon Rouge is registered as an ideological organization, which means that it does not have to pay income tax.

4.2.6 Initiatory Structure

Dragon Rouge has an initiatory system consisting of 11 degrees. The system is built upon the 11 qliphotic levels (see section 1.2 for more information on the qliphoth), and the different degrees are consequently named after the qliphotic levels (Degree 1.0: Lilith etc.). To proceed with the initiation, the member needs to buy the correspondence course in magic and do the exercises described in it. The course extends over a period of 6 months for courses 1.0 and 2.0, and one year for course 3.0. The material for the courses is divided up over the period so that the customer receives one part of the course every month until he or she has received all of the course material. The initiate is also given a personal contact-person, someone who has studied the Dragon Rouge magic system for a longer period, who answers possible questions the initiate might have and assists him/her in the studies. During participation in the higher courses the contact between the initiate and his/her tutor is said to become more and more personal (Dragon Rouge 1996).

Upon finishing the first course the initiate is expected to write a short report of at least one page, summarizing his or her experiences and feelings during the course. The initiate should also write at least one page giving his or her view on the draconian magic system. The requirements are higher for the higher courses. On completing the second correspondence course the initiate should write a lengthier essay on his/her experiences, and also express in which direction he or she would like to steer his/her magical development. After finishing the first course and having sent in the writings dealing with the initiate's experiences and view on the Draconian magic system, the initiate can be initiated into the first degree of Dragon Rouge.

The initiation can be performed in the company of the initiate's tutor or by the initiate him-/herself, in consultation with his/her tutor. The initiations into the higher levels can no longer be done by the initiate for him-/herself, the presence and assistance of at least two persons initiated into Dragon Rouge is required. Lodge masters can initiate members into the first degree and into half degrees between the regular degrees (such as 2.5, a half-degree for

a member who has already been initiated into degree 2.0 and is preferably already working with the third course). Only approved members of the mother-organization can, however, initiate members into full degrees above degree 1.0.

Dragon Rouge members can buy the first and second correspondence course without having been initiated, but the third one is strictly for members initiated into the second degree. After initiation into degree three, and further into the Dragon Order, the magical development of the initiate is more closely connected with the activities of the other members who have attained the higher degrees and, reportedly, with the development of the organization as well (information gained during my participation in the 2001 annual meeting). There are, as of yet, no correspondence courses for degrees above the third one, although there has been some discussion regarding the possibility of having courses for the higher degrees as well. At the time of writing (January 2005), there were no developments on this front.

The members initiated into the higher degrees of Dragon Rouge have been reluctant to tell me what degree they hold. The reasons given have been that it is a personal or inner issue not to be divulged to others, and that the higher degrees are held secret in order for the grading not to become some sort of competition. What I have been told, however, is that not one member has reached the 11th degree. Even if this would happen, the progress would not stop there, as a dark magician is never finished with his studies. The road is as important as the possible goal.

Before the correspondence courses became available[74], the initiations where less ordered. During this period the number of members in Dragon Rouge was smaller, as well as most every member being Swedish, and the initiations were mostly carried out on the basis of acquaintance. As it was possible for the inner core of Dragon Rouge to personally know almost every member, and have some insight into their magic workings and development, it was also possible for the inner core to teach and initiate members in a

74 Correspondence courses have been available since the mid 1990s. The first correspondence course became available sometime in 1995 or 1996, the second in the late 1990s and the first part of the third course in the second half of 2001.

totally different fashion. With the increase of members in the mid 1990s (see section 4.1.2 for details) initiations in this fashion became impossible to maintain. Thus the correspondence course was developed in order to aid the situation. (Dragon Rouge 2001a). See section 5.1.4 for an ethnographic account of a Dragon Rouge initiation.

The Dragon Rouge degrees are number and named in the followin manner:

- Degree 1.0 – Lilith
- Degree 2.0 – Gamaliel
- Degree 3.0 – Samael
- Degree 4.0 – A'arab Zaraq
- Degree 5.0 – Thagirion
- Degree 6.0 – Golachab
- Degree 7.0 – Gha'agsheblah
- Degree 8.0 – Satariel
- Degree 9.0 – Ghagiel
- Degree 10.0 – Thaumiel
- Degree 11.0 – Thaumiel (Dragon rouge 2005b).

The Dragon Rouge initiatory system is similar to the initiation system of the Golden Dawn (see section 2.1.3). The Golden Dawn incorporated the qabalistic Tree of Life as a model for its initiatory structure and Dragon Rouge has incorporated the qliphoth, the shadow-side of the qabalistic Tree of Life, into its structure. Instead of the ten worlds of the sephiroth, Dragon Rouge operats with eleven qliphotic worlds, a number that both Aleister Crowley and Kenneth Grant identify as the number of magic (see Grant 1994a: 9-10). Grant also incorporates the qliphoth in his system, as a necessary element for attaining high magical initiation (Grant 1994a: 7-8). However, in Grant's system the qliphoth are entered through the Abyss, Daäth, which can be seen as a shadow sephira beneath the three highest sephiroth, Binah, Chokmah and Kether (see Grant 1994a: 7-8). O.T.O. initially operated with nine functional degrees, and one administrational, but received an XIth degree through the innovations of Aleister Crowley.

As said earlier, the degrees are not discussed among high initiates of the order, and this has been said to be in order to prevent

any competition in regards to degrees. The degree of the magic initiate is not important in itself, and is only a mark for the individual himself of his/her magical progress. This mirrors what Kenneth Grant writes regarding the O.T.O. degrees in some way. He writes of the O.T.O. degrees as "lesser cricles upon the rim of that greater Cirlce or Wheel which is in process of continual revolution" and declares that all the degrees are equivalent (Grant 1994a: xiii).

5 Practice

5.1 Ethnographies

In the following chapter I will provide ethnographic accounts of various Dragon Rouge activities. In this way, I will try to share with the reader some of the first-hand experiences I have had of the order, and thus hopefully provide a more vivid and compelling insight into the actual practice of the magicians of Dragon Rouge. The names used are pseudonyms, in order not to compromise the anonymity of participants. Regarding the different rituals and workings of magic, I will give more detailed descriptions of these only in cases where the ritual is widely used and has been published for non-Dragon Rouge members to view.

I will not provide a deeper analysis of the rituals performed at the annual meeting, due to the large number of them, but will instead analyze the elements of the course on ceremonial magic, the opening of lodge Sinistra and the initiation into degree 2.0 – Samael in the chapters dedicated to them. In chapter 5.2 I will discuss the common trends of Dragon Rouge courses and meetings, and discuss the order's practice in general.

5.1.1 Dragon Rouge Annual Meeting

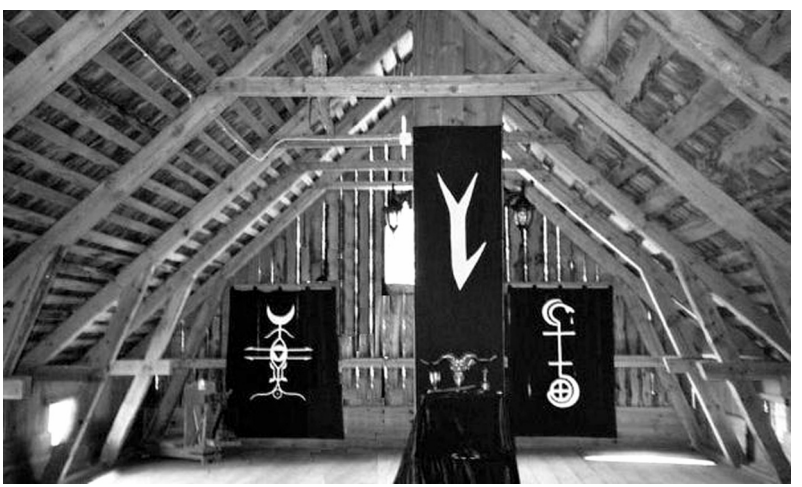
The 2004 Annual meeting of Dragon Rouge took place on Saturday, 24th July, in a small country location on Gotland, an island off the southeast coast of Sweden, renowned for its numerous ancient Norse cultic findings. Dragon Rouge has been preparing a temple on the site and this was the second time the meeting was held at this location. This was the first time I had attended an annual meeting on Gotland, out of three attendances all in all. An intensive week-long course in magic, with up to seven hours of magic workings, rituals and meditations each day, was arranged in connection with the meeting and the majority of the members attending the annual meeting also took part in the course.

The weather was generally cloudy when I awoke at four a.m. on the morning of Saturday, 24th July, ready to start my journey to Gotland. I had already packed the necessities for the coming weekend, of which the most important would be my sleeping bag, my ground sheet and, of course, my trusty notebook and pencils. I started out for *Nynäshamn Färjeterminal*, from where the ferry to Visby, the capital of Gotland, would leave. I met up with a bunch of dark-clad people in their mid-20s to early 30s upon arrival. Long hair as well as shaven heads were predominant among the male travellers. A total of thirteen Dragon Rouge members boarded the ferry to Gotland after shaking hands with each other and introducing themselves to members they had not already met. The atmosphere was quite international, as three of the travellers had come all the way from Italy, two from Greece and one was of German origin. Together with me from Finland, the number of foreign participants outnumbered the Swedish members. The scene was dominated by men, as only three female members were present, and only one of them from the Stockholm mother-organization.

As we stepped off the ferry after the three hour long journey, we were met by two additional members who were to attend the meeting. The weather was still gloomy when we boarded the bus heading towards the interior of the island. A member from Stockholm checked that nobody supposed to be with us was lost. Yet another member boarded the buss at the bus station at Visby. The bus trip took one hour, and now the only stage left on our journey before arriving at our destination was a short five-kilometre trip by car. Arriving at our predetermined location, we were greeted by those who had arrived earlier, mostly long-time members of the mother-order in Stockholm. Of these six members three were male and three were female, one of whom was a woman of Scottish origin. Twenty-two persons in total, six of whom women and eight of whom foreigners, were present for the annual meeting.

Those of us new to the location were shown around the site and the two temples built there. The main temple was situated in an old all-wooden barn of the traditional Scandinavian type. The barn was painted in the standard earth-red colour of Swedish country buildings of old, and had a green-painted metal roof. The building was in two storeys, with the first floor sporting some tools

and the narrow staircase to the second floor housing the temple. While the floor of the first storey was of earth, the floor on the second storey consisted of massive wooden boards. The wooden floor was half covered in a floor-mat made of organic material, consisting of several different sections with circular motifs. Three bunches of dried flowers hung from the ceiling next to the staircase. As with most old barn-buildings, the walls were not insulated and there were gaps between the planks in the walls, allowing for the air to permeate the temple room and the visitor to see outside if he/she placed his/her eyes close enough to the wall. The slanted roof of the building made the main temple room take on an almost triangular shape, disturbed only by the support rods on the sides of the room and the main supporting pillar of the room (see picture 6 for a view of the temple).



Picture 6. The Dragon Rouge temple on Gotland. The photograph is taken a year before the annual meeting of 2004 and the floor mat mentioned in chapter 5.1.1 was not present at this time. The painting on the window (see picture 7) was not in place at this time. The picture has been manipulated in order to remove a person standing at the left side of the main supporting pillar. Photograph: Dragon Rouge.

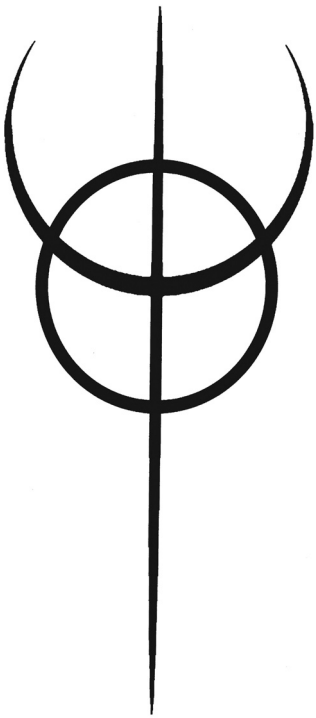
The focus of the temple was the south side of the building, where the small, and only, gable window was painted with magic symbols, mostly in a red colour (see picture 7). On each side of the window there were black sheaths of canvas with magic symbols painted onto them in a white colour. A small table housing the altar stood in front of the main supporting pillar of the building, in plain view as one climbed up the staircase and in line with the pillar and the window. The altar table was covered with a dark red cloth and had two candlesticks with dark red candles in them. The altar also housed a small metal statue, a sort of a stylized head of a goat.

Picture 7. The window painting at the Dragon Rouge temple on Gotland. The symbols on the top part of the window are Adulruna symbols. Photograph: Dragon Rouge.

After familiarizing ourselves with the temple we sat down and had tea and sandwiches provided for us by the order. Magic was not really the topic of discussion, although a few questions concerning the practicalities of the order arose. Instead people mostly discussed music, issues of religious intolerance in various countries as well as engaging in general small-talk. At about three o'clock it started to drizzle, which we were not too happy about as we

had really hoped to have the meeting outside. 'Aaron'[75] made a joke about doing a sun ritual and when the rain stopped he was humorously complemented for his potent ritual.

At about four o'clock pm, Thomas Karlsson told us that the meeting was about to start and asked us to come to the outside temple. Several members had the pin sporting the *Clavicula Nox* symbol, a trident with a circle adjoined to it (see picture 8), on their clothes, and three of the female ones had changed into ceremonial robes. The outside temple was on the same grounds as the barn housing the main temple. The outside temple was located on a surface of earth, with four very simple wooden benches, crafted from boards and with wooden stumps for legs. These were placed in a rectangular formation, for the attendants to sit on. At the spot in between of the benches a fireplace had been built of an old metal barrel buried in the earth. The outside altar consisted of natural elements. On top of four tree stumps objects such as a tree branch, functioning as the magic wand, some white- and red-



Picture 8. Clavicula Nox. A Dragon Rouge symbol. The trident represents dark male principles, such as Shiva and Lucifer, and the circle represents dark female principles, such as Kali and Lilith. The union of the symbols represents the union of the energies and thus the elevation and empowerment of the magician. (from Eriksson 2001: 140). By T. Ketola.

75 All of the names, except that of the order's founder Thomas Karlsson, are pseudonyms created in order to ensure the privacy and anonymity of the members.

currants with leafs still attached and a rock could be found. Also present were a metal goblet, a bottle of beer to be used in the ceremonies, a green candle, a metal bell and a trident, a bent bar and a tool of some sort, all made out of iron. Behind the four tree stumps stood a wooden pole about 1,5 meters high, and all of this was overshadowed by an alder tree. The tree stumps were surrounded by a circle of small stones (see picture 9).

Picture 9. A partial view of the outside altar at the Gotland temple. The picture has been cropped and manipulated to remove a cat on the left side of the altar.

As we sat down on the benches, leaving the one in front of the altar empty, Thomas stood at the altar, his back turned away from us, ringing the metal bell and simultaneously moving it up and down. After a while, Thomas turned to face us, whilst still ringing the bell. Now he moved the bell first up and down and then sideways, from the left to the right. Four burning incense sticks, placed around the fireplace, spread their

aroma as Thomas gave the bell to the person sitting on the bench to his right. This person rang the bell moving it in a vertical direction and then gave it to the person on his right. This same scenario was repeated until the bell reached me. I rang it, moving it up and down, and then gave it back to Thomas. After this initial ritualistic element, the actual meeting started with Thomas giving a brief talk on the mythical history of Gotland. The lecture ended with a short opening ritual honouring the island and its mythical magic powers. Thomas faced the altar and read the ritual text whilst holding the goblet containing a small quantity of beer in his hand. At certain passages he would hold up the goblet while the rest of us repeated the ceremonial utterings. The ritual ended with Thomas pouring the beer from the goblet over the circle of stones at the base of the altar. After this he stood in silence for a while, still facing the altar.

Upon turning towards us again, Thomas started talking about the founding of the temple in Gotland and gave us detailed information on the progress of work on it. The next item on the programme was the Dragon Ceremony, which is the most common ceremony in the Dragon Rouge context. I will here give a detailed description of the ceremony (see Eriksson 2001: 138-139).

> Thomas: Melez!
> Everyone: Melez!
> Thomas: I call the Dragon, the lord of Ancient Atlantis, you who dwell in the abyss in the depth of my soul. I call the Dragon. Rise up out of the depths of the oceans. Emerge out of the darkness. Let your fires light up the darkness of my existence!
> Thomas: Lepaca Qliphoth!
> Everyone: Lepaca Qliphoth!
> Thomas: Marag!
> Everyone: Marag!
> Thomas: Tehom!
> Everyone: Tehom!
> Thomas: Kamusil!
> Everyone: Kamusil!
> Thomas: Nogar!
> Everyone: Nogar!
> Thomas: Leviathan!
> Everyone: Leviathan!
> Thomas: Ruach!
> Everyone: Ruach!
> Thomas: Moschel!

Everyone: Moschel!
Thomas: Nagid!
Everyone: Nagid!
Thomas: Theli!
Everyone: Theli!
Thomas: May the flames from your jaws become the power of my existence. I call you, you the most ancient of the ancient. O'Tehom, emerge from the kingdom of shadows, rise from the black sea of chaos and destroy the lies we take as truths. I conjure your power so that it becomes a part of my being. May I, wanderer on the path of the Dragon, be filled up by the life-giving and death-delivering fires from the red dragon's jaws!
Thomas: Tehom!
Everyone: Tehom!
Thomas: Harombrub!
Everyone: Harombrub!
Thomas: Roggiol!
Everyone: Roggiol!
Thomas: Buriol!
Everyone: Buriol!
Thomas: Marag!
Everyone: Marag!
Thomas: Abahim!
Everyone: Abahim!
Thomas: Theli!
Everyone: Theli!
Thomas: Ipakol!
Everyone: Ipakol!
Thomas: Loriol!
Everyone: Loriol!
Thomas: Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Everyone: Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Thomas: Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Everyone: Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Thomas: HO DRAKON HO MEGAS!
Everyone: HO DRAKON HO MEGAS![76]

After the Dragon Ceremony another long-time member stepped up to lead us through a Kundalini-meditation practice, arguably the most fundamental practice of the order, and one which takes

76 The words spoken jointly are different names of dragon-like creatures from various mythologies, with the exception of *Lepaca Qliphoth*, which means open up qliphoth – a request/demand for the portal of power to manifest. *Ho Drakon Ho Megas* is described in the first correspondence course as ancient Greek for 'the great Dragon' and is typically used at the end of ceremonies and rituals. (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 5).

many different forms. Thomas sat down on the bench to participate in the meditation. We sat on the benches with our eyes closed, our backs straight and our feet firmly on the ground, partly in order to achieve a close connection with the magical forces of the earth. We breathed deeply through our noses. 'Barnabas' spoke in a calm and slow voice and asked us to feel the wholeness of our bodies and then to feel another energy, below us in the earth. The rhythm of our breathing corresponded with, and aligned itself to, the rhythm of the energies below us. As we felt the energies moving up inside us, from the ground through our spines upwards travelling through the different chakra centres, we stood up, still with our eyes closed, and stretched our hands towards the sky, in imitation of a tree. We crossed our hands in front of our chests, thus closing the flow of energy and containing it within our selves. After a while we sat down, taking three deep breaths, and opened our eyes.

After this, Thomas presented the next item on the programme and a third long-time member stood up to give a presentation on the developments of Dragon Rouge during the past year, as well as informing us on plans for the future. A few magic groups in Europe were about to attain lodge status and several new magical groups were to be founded. When finished, at 4.40 pm, he sat down and let Thomas present the next item on the programme, the individual presentations of the lodges. The lodge leader of lodge Sinistra in Malmö started as he represented the oldest existing lodge of the order with members present at the meeting. He gave quite an academic address on the past year of lodge Sinistra and the future plans of the lodge. Witchcraft was identified as one of the important recurrent themes.

At this point of the meeting, a farmer steered his tractor to the nearby field and started collecting hay. Because of the noise we had a short pause while waiting for the farmer to leave. The atmosphere instantly became more relaxed and playful, with jokes about the farmer actually being a Swedish Secret Service agent on a mission to spy on this "dangerous cult".

The next lodge to present its work was the Italian lodge, lodge Sothis. The lodge leader spoke of the activities of the lodge as "practical work on a research and theoretical basis", thus restating the aspirations of the order to be focused primarily on practice, but

basing this on a deep foundation of actual theoretical research (see section 4.1.1). As he stepped down, a member from the newly started ritual group in Uppsala, Sweden, took over and gave a short presentation of the group's practice and aspirations. As there were no more official representatives of additional ritual groups or lodges present, 'Cyrus' read the greetings from the absent members. Most of the people presenting the work in their groups also mentioned the female circle of the order (see section 7.1.6 for more analysis of the matter). Throughout this programme, each member present sat patiently and attentively, listening with apparent interest to what the current speaker had to say.

The next presentation, given by 'Barnabas', went under the title "Initiation – to follow a Path to its end". 'Barnabas' stressed the importance of the individual magician and his/her devotion to the magic path taken, relating this to the importance of the group as a supporting foundation for those who walk this path. The group is not a rigid organization, stale and dead in its tracks, but rather a living and dynamic organism, its body consisting of the likewise dynamic individuals of the order.

At five-fifteen pm, the often mentioned female circle presented its work. In distinction to the earlier speakers, all of whom were male, the representatives of the female circle took the stand as a group. 'Drusilla', 'Eunice' and 'Hepzibah' stressed the fact that, contrary to what one might believe because of its name, the female circle is not only for women. The point of the circle is to work with feminine aspects of the dark and of magic. At the time of the annual meeting the members of the female circle were all women. They are spread throughout the world and thus the actual practical work of the group is rather difficult. The circle creates magic seals[77] based on combined astral visions[78] and holds joint rituals at predetermined times during

77 Magic seals are the symbols of superhuman entities which can be used to conjur and command these beings. Magic seals can be found in, for example, grimoires.

78Astral visions refer to perceptions attained on the 'astral plane'. Astral plane refer to a certain level of existence or perception which is thought to exist beyond the material plane. The magician travels to this planes in his/her 'astral body', which he/she can separate from his material body when in trance. Another idea is that the magician, using mediation, can see into the astral plane without leaving his/her body.

the full moon, as well as during the dark moon. In this way, rituals in which all the members of the circle participate are possible even though members are scattered around the world. After the rituals the members discuss with each other, treating the effects and results of the ritual. The members had experienced many shared visions, and were working on creating pathworkings[79] based on these. The premise of the circle is that women channel the feminine forces differently from men.

The last item on the programme before the dinner break, was 'Aaron's' presentation of the Dragon in Arabic literature and mythology. He concluded his presentation by leading the Dragon Ceremony in Arabic. Again the rest of us repeated the power words as 'Aaron' raised the magic wand as a signal for us. At about 17.35, we took a break. The initial discussions mainly concerned the last presentation, and specifically the Arabic version of the 'house-ceremony' of the order. Quite soon the discussions extended to include more mundane matters, such as music and film. At half past six, we moved to the garden for dinner, which was prepared by the female members present[80].

At eight pm, the ritualistic elements of the annual meeting began anew. As we moved to the outside temple, Thomas lit four incense cones at the fireplace and the scent of musk filled the temple area. The women who were to perform the female circle ritual later, were initially absent in preparation for their ritual, and we waited for them for a while. 'Immanuel', 'Barnabas', 'Jachin' and 'Kenan' stood in front of the altar facing us. 'Immanuel' and 'Jachin' each held a canvas with magic symbols. A jar of incense, a dagger some folded canvas and two file folders were placed on the bench closest to the altar. The preparatory mantra of the women could be heard in the background. A cat, belonging to a couple of the attendants and which had been at the temple region for most of the time, lay in the grass beside us.

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79 Pathworking is practice in which the magician in meditation visualizes specific symbols and concepts and lets these give rise to further visions. Traditionally pathworking is understood as a qabalistic exercise in which the qabalist visualizes his ascent on a path on the sephirotic tree.

80 This clearly contradicts the stated absence of gender roles described by two of my female informants (see chapter 7.1.6).

Again, as the official programme had not started yet, the atmosphere was quite relaxed and people were joking over the apparent dark clothing of most of those present. One of the Swedes made a joke about trying out a dress code prescribing that everybody could come dressed as they like as long as the colours worn were not black. As we sat and waited, some of us started to become a bit impatient and Thomas went to check up on the female members. Upon Thomas' return, at twenty past eight, we decided to start without the women with a lecture Thomas had held earlier in Germany. As the women not present at that moment had heard the lecture before, they would not miss anything important. This marked a departure from the predetermined programme schedule. The theme of the lecture was dark magic, qliphoth and qabalah, which are the themes of the book recently written by Thomas (Karlsson 2004). After a little while, the women arrived one after one, and it was decided that their ritual would be the last part of the programme, as it would have to be performed in the indoor temple anyway.

Next Thomas performed the Opening of the Seven Portals ritual, which is described in his book *Kabbala, kliffot och den goetiska magin* (Karlsson 2004: 115-116). With the aid of a compass, Thomas drew out the four cardinal points around the fireplace with the magic wand. Before starting, he waved the wand twice counter-clockwise around the fireplace. Next follows a description of this ritual, based on the description in the abovementioned book (Karlsson 2004: 115-116).

> Thomas turned to the east and pointed the magic wand in the same direction.
> - I open the portal of dawn in the east and conjure the element of air in the name of Amaymon!
> He turned to the south and pointed the magic wand in the same direction.
> - I open the portal of noon in the south and conjure the element of fire in the name of Göap!
> He turned to the west and pointed the magic wand in the same direction.
> - I open the portal of evening in the west and conjure the element of water in the name of Corson!
> He turned to the north and pointed the magic wand in the same direction.
> - I open the portal of night in the north and conjure the element of earth in the name of Zimimay!

Thomas now lowered his head and pointed the wand to the ground.
- I open the portal to the underworld in the sign of the letter Mem and conjure the element of primordial water and its salt and black colour in the name of Lilith!
He turned his head to the sky and pointed the wand upwards.
- I open the portal to the skies in the sign of the letter Shin and conjure the element of primordial fire and its sulphur and red colour in the name of Lucifer and Samael!
Thomas held the wand at the level of his upper midsection.
- I open the portal to the astral world in the sign of the letter Aleph and conjure the element of primordial air and its quicksilver and white colour in the name of Chiva and Sariel!
Thomas, and all of us along with him, closed our eyes and tried to feel the arrival of the powers conjured. After opening his eyes Thomas picked up the goblet which was filled with beer and held it up to each of the directions whilst greeting the forces.
- I greet you Amaymon and offer you a drink!
- I greet you Göap and offer you a drink!
- I greet you Corson and offer you a drink!
- I greet you Zimimay and offer you a drink!
- I greet you Lilith and offer you a drink!
- I greet you Lucifer and Samael and offer you a drink!
- I greet you Chiva and Sariel and offer you a drink!
We all joined him in saluting the forces.

Directly after performing the ritual, when the portals were opened, 'Kenan' took over and performed a ritual designed by lodge Sothis. 'Kenan' stood in front of the altar and on each side of him stood another Dragon Rouge member, once again holding the canvases with magic symbols. Again, the rest of us responded when the power words were spoken, and again, the ritual was ended with the ritualistic uttering "Ho Drakon Ho Megas!"[81].

At about nine o'clock pm 'Barnabas' held a lecture on Vayrayana Buddhism and spoke in particular of the Tantric aspects of the religion. When he had finished, at a quarter past nine, Thomas requested for some more incense to be lit and as I happened to have a lighter I performed the task. We took a short break as it was starting to get quite cold and some people wanted to put on more clothes. The next item on the programme started with Thomas lecturing briefly on Thule, as the mythical Gotland, and then he proceeded

81 In the first correspondence course in magic the uttering is said to be Ancient Greek for the Great Dragon and is used when conjuring the Draconian force (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 5).

to guide us through a meditation. He consulted the compass and we all turned to face the north, which is the cardinal point of dark magic and demons. We performed an invocation of Odin and Hel, after which we stood in silent meditation. The ritual, and the outside part of the annual meeting, was concluded with a sacrifice to the Gothic Gods and Goddesses. Thomas poured the rest of the beer onto the altar stones and we turned to face the alder tree in front of the altar. We stood in silence for a while, but at about ten o'clock we prepared for the last part of the official programme of the annual meeting, the female circle's Lilith-ritual.

The Female Circle's ritual work was a most suitable ending for the annual meeting. After a short pause, we all gathered in the inside temple, on the second floor of the old barn house building. The artificial lighting was turned off and the room was lit only by two red candles standing on the altar table. The four women who were about to lead us through the ritual, three of whom were wearing ceremonial robes, had gathered in front of the altar, two on each side in front of it and facing each other. The rest of us gathered in a semi-circular formation around them, so that no one stood behind the altar. As ceremonial tools the women had a goblet filled with red wine, the bell used earlier outside and one dagger each. Again the scent of incense filled the air, this time from an incense stick sitting on one of the candlesticks on the altar table. The ritual started with 'Eunice' ringing the bell. The women took turns in reading parts of the ritual, and they each read in a different language – Italian, English, Swedish and German. Certain passages were read out in unison, but even then in four different languages. The rest of us again responded by reading the power words at the appropriate moments. The wine was used to symbolize the life-giving element of blood, and perhaps in this case the magical qualities of menstrual blood. Before taking a sip of the wine the women stated "I drink of thee to take your power into me[82]". The ritual, and indeed the official programme of the annual meeting of 2004, ended with a seated meditation. After we had finished, we were quiet and still for a moment. Although the meeting was officially over we were by no means about to go to sleep. We gathered around the benches at the outside temple, lit a fire in the fireplace and enjoyed each other's good company until the early hours of the morning.

82 The words are based on my own approximate recollection.

5.1.2 Course on Ceremonial Magic

On the weekend of August 5th and 6th, 2001, I attended a course on ceremonial magic. The course was held at the Dragon Rouge temple in Stockholm, Sweden, and the practice was performed in a nearby forest. At about five pm on Saturday, I made my way to the metro station where Dragon Rouge members meet up before courses. This is standard practice, as there might be new members, or even non-members, among the attendants, who do not know the location of the temple, which is not publicly announced. I was met by a male and a female member and we walked together to the temple. As we stood outside the building housing the temple, an ordinary residential high-rise building, we were met up by two other members, again one female and one male. We went inside and moved down to the basement where the temple was located. The premises consisted of one larger rectangular room about 25 m^2 in size, a smaller room a few square metres in size and the altar-region connected to the main room. There was also a small bathroom with just a toilet and a sink on the premises, to the direct right of the outer door of the temple. The main room was furnished with two large wooden tables with four wooden chairs around each of them in the centre of the room, a sofa on one far side with a small table supporting a globe[83] to the left of it and a stereo music system to the right of it, a sideboard on the other far side – to the left from the outer door, as well as a small Feng Shui fountain in between the small wall space between the storage room and the Altar room. The tables had five-candle candlesticks and incense holders on them. The walls had borders of Egyptian hieroglyphs depicting different aspects of Egyptian mythology. A particularly interesting passage was one taken from the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* (see Budge 1960: 72, 93, 150), introducing Khepera. The passage was translated to me as "I am the one who created myself". The room was regularly lit up by four wall-mounted lamps.

83 A miniature flagpole with the Clavicula Nox symbol (see picture 8) on a red flag is attached to the top of the globe, to humorously portray Dragon Rouge world domination. This item, among many others, shows the playful atmosphere taken to the organization and magic as such, even though the members I have met are very serious about their magic practice and Dragon Rouge as an order.

The smaller room functioned as a sort of storage room and held various items not used regularly in the temple, as well as books, a refrigerator and a hotplate. The bathroom had a few posters, including a comic strip humorously depicting a Christian priest (the strip was taken from a Swedish newspaper) and a poster of a painting by Salvador Dalí. On the bathroom mirror, there was an old sign in Swedish. The sign translated roughly as "Do not take God's name in vain. Do not swear! To swear is proof of a lack of culture and education.[84]".

The altar area was obviously the centre of attention in the temple. The room holding the temple was adjoined to the main room without any connecting door, and was beside the smaller room on the premises. The altar consisted of a table covered with dark canvas. On the altar were to be found the statue of a dragon, four

Picture 10. Dragon Rouge temple in Stockholm, Sweden. Photograph: Dragon Rouge.

84 "Missbruka icke Guds namn. Svär icke! Att svärja är bevis på bristande kultur och bildning".

candlesticks, an incense holder and various other ceremonial items, such as a bell, a dagger, a magic wand and metal goblet. A trident stood behind the altar, as well as a sword on each side of it. On each side of the altar, a black canvas with the Sorath-symbol painted in white hung from the ceiling. There was also a pillar on each side of the altar. On the floor, to the walls of the altar space, there were black pillows used in different rituals and meditations as the floor was quite hard and cold (see picture 10 for an overview of the altar area, and pictures 11 and 12 for close-ups of the altar).

As we waited inside, the rest of the members who were to attend the course came in, along with Thomas who had been waiting for them at the metro station. All in all, we were six male and three female participants, all of whom had at least some experience of magic and the order. A few members who had not paid for the course in advance made their payment, and we sat down at various seats on the premises, some at the tables and others on the sofa. An incense stick had been lit and placed in the incense holder on the table I was sitting at, the one closer to the altar

Picture 11. A close-up of the altar at the Dragon Rouge temple in Stockholm. What is seen here are the trident behind the altar, the Dragon statue and the candles on the altar-table. Photograph: Dragon Rouge.

area. The course started at about five-thirty pm with Thomas distributing magic correspondence tables to each of us. All except Thomas and two other male members had note-books in which they made notes during the lecture. Thomas stood in front of the table nearest the altar area, with his back turned to the altar so that he faced us.

The lecture started by treating a few basic concepts and principles of dark magic, as discussed in section 3.1.1, and went on to deal with dark ritual and ceremonial magic in specific. The building of the temple, something which we were to do in the ceremony ahead, was likened to the building of one's soul. Thomas illustrated the difference between white and dark ceremonial magic with an example of the temple of Jerusalem. Whereas the symbolic

Picture 12. A close-up of some of the items on the altar at the Dragon Rouge temple in Stockholm, Sweden. Notice the wodden wand. Magic wands used in Dragon Rouge are always tree branches which have not been crafted in any way. Photograph: Dragon Rouge.

meaning behind build-ing the temple of Jerusalem, a white magical or religious ceremonial activity, was to recreate the original perfect struc-ture of the Garden of Eden, dark magical ceremony could be compared to the tearing down of the temple. This is not to be understood in a literal, destructive fashion. White ritual magic works to protect and establish the perfect divine sphere or circle, whereas dark ritual magic works to destroy it and escape from it, in order to access the divine forces beyond the ordered universe. Symbolically, the dark magical tearing down of the temple is thus carried out in order to build something new instead. All through the lecture, references were made to many different mythologies and mythological figures, and correspondences between them were rigorously sought. Some way into the course Thomas picked up a lecture-pad and placed it on a stand in front of us. He used the pad to draw different symbols discussed and to further illustrate the points of his lecture. We went on to discuss the typical practicalities of ceremonial magic. As white magic strives for a union with the divine, and in ceremonial form to re-establish the divine circle of creation, the altar usually stands at the centre of the ritual sphere, surrounded by the participants. In dark magic, on the other hand, where the goal is to break free from the boundaries of creation, the altar is usually placed in front of the attendants, as a portal out.

Thomas was frequently interrupted by comments and questions from the other participants, and these interruptions often steered the lecture into different directions, giving rise to new comments and discussions. Towards the end of the lecture a knock was heard at the door, and another female member entered. This was a long-time member who had been unable to attend the course from the very start. She sat down on the sofa. At this point, Thomas had moved on to discuss the practicalities and symbolic significances of the ceremony we were to perform the next day. He declared that each of the four cardinal points was represented by an element, and these in turn were represented by four magic tools. North represented the element of earth and had the pentacle as its symbol. East represented the element of air and had the sword as its symbol. South represented the element of fire and had the staff as its symbol. West represented the element of water and had the goblet as its symbol. There was some discussion about the different

correspondences between cardinal points, magic tools and the elements, as different magic-systems link them differently. We decided to use the above correspondences. The lecture ended At about eight-thirty pm. Before going home, we discussed some rather general topics not really connected to magic *per se*.

For my part, the second day of the course started with a prescheduled interview with a female Dragon Rouge member. I met her and a male friend of hers, also a member, at the temple and started the interview at about three-twenty pm. About an hour and a quarter later, other members, arriving for the second part of the course, began dropping in and we ended the interview. We started preparing for the course, the second part of which would focus on performing a practical dark magic ceremony. At about a quarter past five pm, we left the temple and headed for the nearby forest, a few metro stations away from the temple. Here we were to perform the ceremony. All of those present the day before, five male and four female members, were present for the second day as well. Some of us had travelled to the forest by car, whereas I and a few others had arrived by metro.

Although August tends to be a rather warm late-summer month in the Scandinavian countries, this particular Sunday was quite cold, and all of us were wearing extra warm clothes. Luckily the sky was clear and we were not expecting any rain. The forest we went to was coniferous, although most Scandinavian forests are mixed. The trees were mostly pines, with a small number of spruce and juniper. We walked into the forest by a woodland path, careful not to destroy any of the forest plants. As we walked, I was told that we were heading for a spot where a Dragon Rouge ceremony had been performed the previous spring.

Before seeking out the final spot for our ceremony, we stopped by a moss-covered stony mound. Here Thomas asked us to perform a short meditation in preparation for the ceremony. We chose places to sit by the mound and sat down to meditate in the presence of the forest and nature, also focusing on being in the forest. In contrast to most of the other meditations I had performed in the Dragon Rouge context thus far, this one was conducted privately, with no one to lead us through it. Exactly like the other members, I sat facing the steep with my eyes closed. After finishing and taking a few deep

breaths we stood up and walked along for a while, until Thomas asked us to stop again. He gave a short theoretical talk, mostly focusing on the presence of the Dragon, or chaos, in nature. Among the magicians and academics mentioned in the short lecture was Mircea Eliade, whose writings have earned much respect among the members of the order, as is the case within many neopagan and 'New Age' groups.

When he had finished, Thomas asked us to search the forest and pick up some object which for some reason appealed[85] to us. He asked us not to choose the dead bird found earlier, as it was to be used as a collective item. Most of us picked up dead sticks, while two of the female members chose pine cones and one female member chose a fallen, but living, pine tree branch. Thomas came back with a living pine tree branch with a cone still attached to it. We made

Picture 13. The mound were the initial meditation was performed during the course on ceremonial magic.

85 The Swedish word 'Tilltala', which could be used both in the meaning "to please" (as in: this object pleases me) and in the meaning "speak to" (as in: "this object speaks to me"). In the above sentence 'appeals to' should be understood in both of these senses.

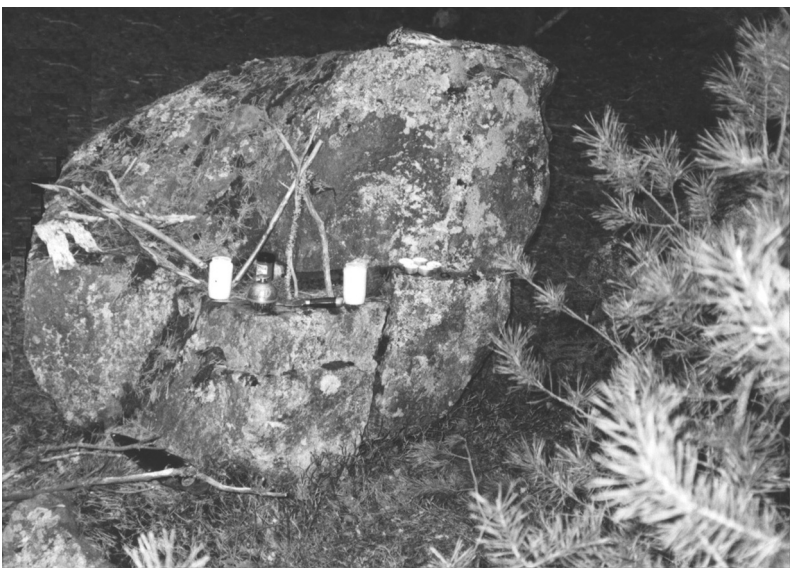
our way to the place where the earlier Dragon Rouge ceremony had been held the previous spring.

We took a small break before entering the area, which for anyone who had not been present at the earlier ceremony would not differ in any way from the rest of the forest. There were no visible markers to distinguish this part of the forest from the rest of it. It was up to the magician and his feeling for, and vision of, the woods to make up and draw out the natural magical area. In a line-formation we proceeded to enter the area, moving in through a passage formed by two pine trees standing next to each other. These two trees formed the portal into our natural temple (see picture 14). Before entering, each of us ritually opened the portal to let us in, by using the objects we had picked up in the forest. Thomas showed us the rock used as an altar during the previous ceremony. It stood in line with the 'portal' through which we had entered the area, about 12 metres away from it. Before beginning, we prepared the altar. We had brought with us four small tealights, two larger candles of the grave candle type, the ceremonial dagger and bell from the temple, and a jar of incense. We placed these items on the

Picture 14. The 'portal' through which the temple was entered.

altar, and poured some of the powdered incense into a small fire-proof container placed beside the tealights, on the right side of the rock. Some twigs collected from the forest were also placed on the rock, a bunch of them lying flat on the left part of the rock. Three special twigs were placed in an erect position at the centre of the altar, two of them forming a triangular shape with the third one facing the sky between them. The carcass of the small bird found earlier was placed on top of the altar stone. Behind the altar, slightly to the right of it, stood a tree functioning – according to Thomas – as an *Axis Mundi*.

We sat down on the ground and discussed the symbolism of the ceremony we were about to perform, as well as the role each of us would have to play in it. The female members were to represent time, taking the roles of the three Norns, *Urd*, *Verdandi* and *Skuld* – or the past, the present and the future, and Hel – as that which is hidden. The six male members represented the cardinal points and the elements - North as water, East as air, South as fire, West as



Picture 15. The altar for the course on ceremonial magic.

earth, with the additional directions of above and below. We identified with beings from Norse mythology corresponding to the element in question. I was to portray *Surt* – the Fire Demon, as the representative of South and Fire. Thomas, who represented 'That which is below', portrayed *Hraesvelgr* – the eagle. There was some discussion about the mythical beings connected to the elements before we chose which particular being we should portray. After making our joint decisions, we prepared our ceremonial utterings, the ritual lines we were supposed to read when it was time for our contribution to the ceremony. Lastly, we took some time to get into the character of the mythical being we were supposed to portray, then meditating briefly on this.

With the help of a compass, we sought out the cardinal points in order to know at which positions we should stand. The woman representing the past stood by the trees functioning as the portal to the temple, the woman representing the present stood on the right-hand side of the altar and the woman representing the future stood behind the altar, next to a tree marking the outer boundary of the temple region. The woman portraying Hel stood on the left-hand side of the altar. Those of us who represented the four elements stood at our respective cardinal points, with our backs towards trees marking the boundaries of the temple. The male members representing the above and the below stood at the centre of the area, next to a circular formation of small stones. Before we started, Thomas and the rest of us discussed and planned the specifics of the ceremony. The following proceeding was decided upon: Hel – the Hidden, would start and end the ceremony; the Norns – the Past, the Present and the Future would be next in line, the four cardinal points, starting with north and finishing with west, would perform their part, lastly followed by the directions of below and above. The ceremony in its totality would symbolize the creation of the universe and, more specifically, the creation of a dark magical universe – and in it the magician. The final act before beginning was the lighting of the incense at the altar.

Hel: - I am Hel, that which is hidden! (ringing the ceremonial bell).
Hel then moved into a position behind Urd.
Urd: - I am Urd, the border/boundary to the past; memory, birth!
Hel rang the bell and moved to stand behind Verdandi.
Verdandi: - I am Verdandi, the middle and the being!
Hel rang the bell and moved to stand behind Skuld.
Skuld: - I am Skuld, the border/boundary to the future!
Hel rang the bell and moved to stand behind the North/Fenris.
Fenris/North: - I am Fenris, the border to the north. Carrier of the unyielding earth!
Hel rang the bell and moved to stand behind East/Loke.
Loke/East: - The clear thought of the east am I, Loke of the Air!
Hel rang the bell and moved to stand behind South/Surt.
Surt/South: - I am Surt, the border to the South. Fire, Energy!
Hel rang the bell and moved to stand behind West/Jörmungandr.
Jörmungandr/West: - I am Jörmungandr, the border to the west!
Hel rang the bell and moved to stand behind 'That which is Below'/ Nidhög.
Nidhög/That which is Below: - I am Nidhög, That which is Below!
Hel rang the bell and moved to stand behind 'That which is Above'/ Hraesvelgr.
Hraesvelgr/That which is above: - I am the Eagle, Hraesvelgr, the border to the above. The sky and the hail!
Hel rang the bell and moved to her own position at the left side of the altar.
Hel: - I am Hel, the hidden! (ringing the bell).
Next, each of us in turn, according to our place in the ceremony, walked to the altar and placed our sacred object from the forest on it. While at the altar we read ceremonial lines. After this we went back to our places. First Urd walked to the altar.
Urd: - I, Urd, call the Red Dragon from the Past! Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Everyone: - Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Urd placed her sacred item on the altar and went back to her place. Verdandi moved to stand at the altar.
Verdandi: - I, Verdandi, call the Red Dragon, in the Present! Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Everyone: - Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Verdandi placed her sacred item on the altar and went back to her place. Skuld moved to stand at the altar.
Skuld: - I, Skuld, call the Red Dragon, in the Future! Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Everyone: - Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Skuld placed her sacred item on the altar and went back to her place. Fenris moved to stand at of the altar.
Fenris: - I am Fenris. I call the Red Dragon from the North! Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Everyone: - Ho Drakon Ho Megas!

Fenris placed his sacred item on the altar and went back to his place. Loke moved to stand at of the altar.
Loke: - Representative for the element of East, Air, the power of Loke, the Dragon is called! Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Everyone: - Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Loke placed his sacred item on the altar and went back to his place. Surt moved to stand at the altar.
Surt: - I, Surt, call the Red Dragon from the South! Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Everyone: - Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Surt placed his sacred item on the altar and went back to his place. Jörmungandr moved to stand at the altar.
Jörmungandr: - I, Jörmungandr, call the Red Dragon from the West! Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Everyone: - Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Jörmungandr placed his sacred item on the altar and went back to his place. Nidhög moved to stand at the altar.
Nidhög: I, Nidhög, call the Red Dragon from Below! Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Everyone: - Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Nidhög placed his sacred item on the altar and went back to his place. Hraesvelgr moved to stand at the altar.
Hraesvelgr: - I, Hraesvelgr, call the Red Dragon from Above! Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Everyone: - Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Hraesvelgr placed his sacred item on the altar and went back to his place. Hel moved to stand at the altar.
Hel: - I am Hel! From the hidden I call the Red Dragon! Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Everyone: - Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Hel: - Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Everyone: - Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Hel: - HO DRAKON HO MEGAS!
Everyone: - HO DRAKON HO MEGAS!
Hel placed her sacred item on the altar and went back to her place. We stood in silent meditation for about two minutes, after which Thomas pronounced:
- We can declare the ceremony ended.

We collected the items we had brought with us and removed the dead bird from the altar stone, mostly in order not to awake unnecessary suspicions in other people who might visit the forest. We left the temple region through the same gate we had come in through, and opened and closed the gate symbolically with our hands. The sacred items picked up from the forest were left at the altar. We left the forest and returned to the city. The ceremony took

about thirteen minutes in its entirety, not counting the meditations and preparations we carried out before it. In total, we spent about one and a half hour in the forest.

The ritualistic part of the course on ceremonial magic started with an initial meditation. The participants sat by a mound and were specifically asked to meditate on the presence of the forest and the nature around them. The purpose was for them to separate themselves from their everyday reality, and focus their minds and bodies on the magic work at hand. The collecting of natural objects was supposed to strengthen the identification with nature, the 'totems' collected in a fashion imbuing the magicians with their force.

The short break taken before entering the 'temple' was important. The supposed function of the break was to separate the sacred space, and to mark a difference between the magical and the non-magical. The 'opening of the portal' while passing through the passage formed by the two trees also helped in marking this difference. By using the items collected from nature the sense of connectedness to nature was also strengthened.

Next on the schedule was preparing the altar that was going to be used during the ceremony. The objects brought along were candles, incense and incense-holder, a ceremonial bell and a magic dagger brought from the Dragon Rouge temple in Stockholm. Items collected in the forest and placed on the altar were a collection of twigs and the dead bird found on our way to the temple-area. In *Magick* Aleister Crowley describes magic tools important in ceremonies (see Crowley 1977: 46). Among the most important are the magic wand – representing the magician's Will, the cup (or goblet) – representing understanding, the sword – representing reason and the pentacle – representing the lower parts of the magician's being. The magic attire, consisting of crown and robe, as well as a book of conjurations and a bell, are also described as important. In the context of this particular ceremony, and in the Dragon Rouge context in general, the magic tools are interpreted a bit differently. The wand and the pentacle represent Will and the earth, the body, in a similar fashion to Crowley's description, but the goblet is usually taken to represent water and feminine aspects,

and the sword the element of air. Of the four key magic tools only the sword, in the form of a dagger, had been brought along. In this context, however, the items collected in the forest represented the wand and Will, and the altar, and the whole temple, could be seen as representing the earth. Magic attire is generally not used in Dragon Rouge. The book of conjurations is similarly not as important as in traditional magic, as the order's ritual work has a highly improvised character.

The preparation of the ceremony mirrored this improvisational characteristic. The participants discussed and in union agreed on what in particular they should represent and portray, but the specifics of the ritual text delivered by each participant was not dictated. The beings portrayed in the ceremony were all from ancient Norse mythology, and this element was thus interiorly consistent. The secondary representations were similarly consistent. The mythological beings were understood as representations of some sorts of 'extended cardinal points', an existential continuum, namely: Time (past, present and future), space (north, west, south, east, above and below). The most important official in the ceremony represented the hidden aspect, the realm of death, rebirth and chaos, and thus as the element which all the other elements can be found in. An interesting factor was that the participants were divided on the basis of gender. The females represented time and the males represented space, and the hidden aspect, *Hel*, was represented by a female. That '*Hel*' was placed on the left side of the altar is also of importance, as the left is interpreted as the hidden side, representing chaos. When deciding which mythical characters should be portrayed the likes of Balder were ruled out, as they were taken to represent 'lighter' principles, that is to say principles of order rather than chaos.

After agreeing on the key elements of the ceremony the participants meditated again, and again the purpose was to focus body and mind on the ceremony and to mark a separation of normal and magic reality. Specifically focusing on the elements and mythical beings each participant was supposed to portray, allowed for them to embody the characteristics of each particular being.

The temple, as part of unbounded nature, was marked off from the rest of the forest by the positioning of the ceremonial officials,

the 'portal' the temple had been entered through and the tree representing an *axis mundi*. The lighting of the incense at the altar marked the start of the ceremony.

The first half of the actual ceremony functioned as a defining of the limits of the ceremonial universe, or as expressed in the theoretical portion preceding the practice: "the creation of a dark magical universe". Each of the officials represented one aspect of a continuum, and the ritual presentation of these aspects constructed this continuum. *Hel*, representing 'the hidden', started and ended the presentations, thus signalling the source of everything in the realm of chaos. The ringing of the bell is interesting when considering Aleister Crowley's understanding of the use of the magic bell. Crowley writes: "At the sound of this Bell the Universe ceases for an indivisible moment of time, and attends to the Will of the Magician" (Crowley 1977: 111). The ringing of the bell can thus be understood as the act through which the magician's ritual uttering is rendered real, in the case of this particular ceremony the act through which the aspects of space and time came into existence. That it was the official representing *Hel*, chaos – the source of everything in the Dragon Rouge view, is also important in this context.

The second part of the ceremony, in which each participant in due order approached the altar and offered their magic item to it, can be seen as a symbolic act endowing the newly created magic universe, and the inhabitants of it – the ceremonial officials, with power. The ritual act consisted of, in a way, sacrificing the magic item, representing the will, to the forces of chaos, which in this case was also the magician offering the item. Thus the magician sacrificed his/her person, his/her Will, to him-/herself, in order to attain power. This sort of sacrifice is much discussed in the order, and acts of mythological beings such as *Khepera* and *Odin* stand as a model for the magician.

The meditation, performed while standing after all of the ceremonial officials had finished their parts, functioned as a focusing and processing of the ritual elements, and as a return to normal reality and a normal state of mind. The declaration of the ceremony as ended strengthened this sentiment. The final aspect was the cleaning of the temple, in practice meaning the gathering of the

items brought along. The 'closing of the portal', performed when leaving the temple-area, functioned psychologically as a final marker differentiating between magical and non-magical reality.

The differences to traditional magic ceremonies are quite noticeable. In Aleister Crowley's account of magic ceremony the particular shape of the temple, as well as the shape and size of the altar, is of key importance. Similarly, Crowley describes the use of a magic circle as very important. The magician should stand inside the circle and never leave, or otherwise the 'hostile [magic] forces' outside the circle could harm the magician. (Crowley 1977: 46-50). In Dragon Rouge magic circles are never used. The argumentation behind this is that the dark magician works with these 'hostile forces' (not understood as hostile, but rather as misinterpreted) with a different approach, and a protecting circle is therefore unnecessary – in fact it might even be a hindrance.

5.1.3 Ceremonial Opening of Lodge Sinistra

During my early field studies, I was invited to experience something quite rare and unique, the ceremonial opening of an official Dragon Rouge lodge. The date was Saturday 17th, February, 2001, and the place was Malmö, Sweden. I had arrived in Stockholm two days earlier in order to participate in some other Dragon Rouge activities, and took the train from Stockholm to Malmö on Friday morning. I had corresponded with representatives for the soon-to-be lodge Sinistra earlier, and was met by three Malmö-based members at the railway station. Dragon Rouge members from Stockholm soon joined us, as well as a few more members from the Malmö region. The evening was spent in a Chinese restaurant discussing various subjects, some of which concerned Dragon Rouge and magic, some of which did not.

Before heading for the location where the ritual was to be held, we met up with a few other Dragon Rouge members not from Malmö, this time a man and a woman from Gothenburg and a man from a small city in the south of Sweden. At about four pm, we travelled to the location of the opening ceremony. It was to be held

in the home of one of the Malmö-based members. He had arranged a room in his apartment for the occasion. At twenty to six, the last person attending had arrived. In total, there were 17 persons present, of whom six were women. Before starting the opening ceremony, a few of the Malmö-based members were initiated into the first degree of the order. The leaders of the lodges, the core-persons of the order – the long-time Stockholm-based members – and those about to be initiated moved to the main ritual room, while Thomas asked the rest of us to move to another room. Chanting, ringing of the ceremonial bell, and what I made out to be the 'invocation of Lilith' ritual, were heard from the ritual room. As usual the initiations concluded with the ritual uttering "Ho Drakon Ho Megas!". I will present a Lilith invocation as described in *Kabbala, kliffot och den goetiska magin* (Karlsson 2004: 118) as an example.

> Thomas: Lepaca Lilith!
> Everyone: Lepaca Lilith!
> Thomas: Ruach!
> Everyone: Ruach!
> Thomas: Badad!
> Everyone: Badad!
> Thomas: Arioth!
> Everyone: Arioth!
> Thomas: Samolo!
> Everyone: Samolo!
> Thomas: Sched!
> Everyone: Sched!
> Thomas: Lilith, open your womb, open the shell of darkness and appear from the cave of dark dreams! Lilith, let your blood stir like the lava from the volcano to become the force through which the Dragon rises!
> Thomas: Opun Lilith
> Everyone: Opun Lilith!
> Thomas: Ama!
> Everyone: Ama!
> Thomas: Layil!
> Everyone: Layil!
> Thomas: Naamah!
> Everyone: Naamah!
> Thomas: Rimog!
> Everyone: Rimog!
> Thomas: Arioth!
> Everyone: Arioth!
> Thomas: Lirochi!

Everyone: Lirochi!
Thomas: Lilith!
Everyone: Lilith!
Thomas: O'Lilith, in your embrace the world is seduced and there the remnants of the ages meet under the shadow of your cruelty!
Thomas: Naamah!
Everyone: Naamah!
Thomas: Rimog!
Everyone: Rimog!
Thomas: Arioth!
Everyone: Arioth!
Thomas: Lilrochi!
Everyone: Lilrochi!
Thomas Lilith!
Everyone: Lilith!
Thomas: Lilith, you hold the sceptre and you hold the domination. Give us dominance and the fulfilment of dreams!
Thomas: Lepaca Lilith!
Everyone: Lepaca Lilith!
Thomas: Ruach!
Everyone: Ruach!
Thomas: Arioth!
Everyone: Arioth!
Thomas: Naamah!
Everyone: Naamah!
Thomas: Samalo!
Everyone: Samalo!
Thomas: Shed!
Everyone: Shed!
Thomas: Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Everyone: Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Thomas: Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Everyone: Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
Thomas: HO DRAKON HO MEGAS!
Everyone: HO DRAKON HO MEGAS!

As usual, Thomas read out the power words of the invocation in an intense voice, and the rest of us responded in unison in an equally stern fashion.

The initiations were finished in about half an hour, after which we all took a short break. Before starting the opening ceremony, Thomas showed the soon-to-be lodge officials and me the lodge-contract, a document stating the rights and duties of a Dragon Rouge lodge (see section 4.2.4).

When we were ready to start, all of us moved into the ritual room. The room was a standard living-room in a residential apartment, about 3x5 meters in size, but the appearance of the room was quite different from what one is used to. The walls were painted in a dark red colour, emphasizing the dark wood panels of the room. The only lighter colours in the room were the ceiling and the radiator by the window which were white. The window, on one short side of the room, was covered with black canvas. An altar, consisting of a table covered with black cloth was placed in front of the window, at the very centre, and on each side of it an ordinary kitchen chair had been placed. There was no electric lighting in the room, but a metal chandelier housing four candles hung from the ceiling and an iron candelabra about 1.2 meters high stood on the left side of the altar. While the six red candles in the candelabra were lit, the candles in the chandelier were not. Placed on the altar were a wooden Western-type dragon statue – positioned in the centre, six lit red candles – three on each far side of the altar-table – and three additional unlit ones in various colours, a ceremonial metal bell, a metal cup for incense and a ceremonial dagger with its sheath. The altar was decorated with red roses and rose-petals, and housed a wooden stick functioning as the magic wand (see picture 16). On the left wall of the room (taking the side with the altar as the front side of the room) hung two leather whips and a bouquet of dried roses.

Picture 16. Altar at the ceremonial opening of lodge Sinistra.

As we entered the room the atmosphere was expectant. The esoteric atmosphere of the room was further intensified by the scent of Dragon's Blood incense and the scant candlelight casting its shine on the altar. Thomas stood in front of the altar, wielding the magic wand, and on each side of him, on the chairs beside the altar, sat a female Dragon Rouge member from the Stockholm mother-organization. The rest of us stood in a semi-circle around Thomas and the altar, with the three lodge leaders present, and me, closest to them. We started off by Thomas leading us through a Dragon ceremony (see section 5.1.1), directly followed by a standing Kundalini-activating meditation – directly connected to the earlier ceremony. After three deep breaths, Thomas continued by ceremonially proclaiming the reason for those present having gathered on that day, the ceremonial opening of lodge Sinistra.

He spoke of the mythical being Lucifer, and this being's role in dark magical settings. Lucifer is seen as the light-bringer, the one who can show the magician the path out of creation, and lead him/her to become a creator in his/her own right. He held a copy of *Le Grand Grimoire*[86] in his hands, which he soon passed around the room. He had opened the book on a page displaying a Lucifer-seal, and we were to focus on the seal and say the name Lucifer. As the book made its way back to Thomas, the two women sitting on the chairs beside the altar drew the shape of the seal in the air, using the magic wand. We read an invocation of Lucifer from the grimoire, in the customary fashion. Thomas read it out loud first, and the rest of us repeated it, the language being French. Thomas drew an inverted pentagram in the air with the wand. The time for the official part of the ceremony had arrived. The lodge leader of lodge Sinistra stepped up to the altar and signed two copies of the lodge-contract. In conclusion, Thomas drew yet another symbol from the grimoire in the air, using the magic wand.

The whole ceremony was very intensive. The darkness of the room combined with the scent of incense, and the fact that a whole room was occupied by a group of people all focusing on one ceremonial ritual, made the experience very powerful. After the

86 *Le Grand Grimoire*, also called *Le Dragon Rouge*, is a handbook in magic originating from France in the 1850s.

ceremony, we blew out the candles and left the room. The topic of discussion was the atmosphere and intensity of the ceremony and many of those present were almost in a state of ecstasy. The common opinion was that it all amounted to a feeling of strong presence in the room, almost as if some sort of being or force had been present during the rituals.

After relaxing a little and gathering our strength, we headed out to the city centre in order to start the more mundane celebrations in a restaurant where we had booked a table.

The Lilith invocation is one of the more basic Dragon Rouge rituals. As the first qliphotic level, the opening to the qliphotic spheres, Lilith represents the dark side of the normal world. Lilith's sephirotic counterpart is Malkuth, which in qabalah represents the material world. The first uttering of the invocation, *Lepaca Lilith* - meaning "open up Lilith", is a summoning of the qliphotic force. The terminology used in the invocation is quite powerful, such as references to 'the cruelty of Lilith' and a request to 'let Lilith's blood stir like lava'. This is to be understood as a reflection on Dragon Rouge interpretation of the character and nature of the qliphoth. Lilith is attributed power, in the phrase "you hold the sceptre and you hold the dominance", and the magician doing the invocation seeks to attain this power. The power-words uttered are the names of various demons, demonesses and 'chaos-dragons' (mythological dragon-like beings, which in Dragon Rouge are seen as representing chaos). The uttering *Ho Drakon Ho Megas*, the common ending of Dragon Rouge rituals and invocations, summons the power of chaos.

Concerning the room in which the ceremonial opening of lodge Sinistra was performed, it must be said that it was not solely devoted to magic – except for on this particular occasion. Consequently, the dark red colour of the walls represented the aesthetic preferences of the inhabitant of the apartment first and foremost.

As said, the room had been specifically prepared for the opening ceremony. The room had been cleared of everything not essential for the ceremony. The sole window of the room had been covered by black fabric, and the altar had been arranged in front of it. The covering of the window can be seen as an isolation of the

temple from the outside world, effectively rendering it a sacred space – effecting the magician's attainment of an altered state of consciousness. The items on the walls of the room, the dried roses and the whips, as well as the chandelier and the candelabra, probably illustrated the aesthetics of the apartment's inhabitant, although they suited the atmosphere sought. For example, the dried roses could be seen as a symbolic representation of negative and destructive forces.

The items on the altar, on the other hand, were of particular importance, and represent the typical content of a Dragon Rouge altar. The dragon statue (see picture 17) is a central piece on any Dragon Rouge altar. It represents the chaos-forces, the life-force in the form of the kundalini-serpent, and in extension the innate occult powers the magician can learn to control through the use of magic. The magic wand, an essential part of almost all magic as a representation of Will (see Crowley 1977: 46), is of particular design in the Dragon Rouge context. The wand is always a tree branch which has not been crafted in any way. It represents the magician's Will as a natural thing, as chaos in contrast to crafted items, which represent order. Candles are generally used in inside ritual-contexts, as electric lights are always turned of. On this occasion the number or colour of the candles were of no particular importance. The roses and rose-petals covering the altar had no particular importance, other than as celebratory for the opening of the new lodge. The metal bell is often used in Dragon Rouge rituals (see sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2. See section 5.1.2 for the symbolic purpose of using the bell). The Dragon's Blood incense is used on rarer occasions, as it is rather expensive. The incense is made of the dried fruit of a palm tree, *Daemonorops Draco*, and gives of heavy smoke and has a strong and distinct scent. The name, of course, indicates a significance in a magic order called Dragon Rouge.

The female members seated on both sides of the altar, active members of the mother-order, represented the feminine qliphotic forces. That the members seated on the chairs were female was of particular importance, and this is interesting when considering the generally non-essential view on gender in the order.

The opening started with a Dragon Ceremony, which involves the magician conjuring the power of his own life-force, as the

Picture 17. The dragon-statue on the altar at lodge Sinistra.

kundalini, as well as the magical powers in existence. The kundalini is represented as a serpent coiled in the base-chakra, and the first passage of the ritual quite obviously specifies the rising of the force. The kundalini is also called 'the fire serpent', as the rising of the force is said to produce a warm or burning sensation along the spine. In the second passage the words "flaming jaws" are uttered, again in combination with requesting the dragon to 'rise from the depths'. The Dragon Ceremony was combined with a kundalini-meditation, in which the previously performed ritual was performed in order to strengthen the effects of the meditation. The meditation also functioned to focus the body and mind on the magic process at hand.

Before treating the next ritual element, the Lucifer-invocation, the character of Lucifer must be discussed shortly. Lucifer is conjured as the light-bringer, a force which guides and helps the magician see his/her way in darkness. Thus, invoking Lucifer is not seen as sinister or destructive in any way (see Kaczynski 2002: 505 n37). The invocation was said to be performed in order to "provide the Luciferian light" for the work of the new lodge. This

can be compared to the Neophyte initiation of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, in which the initiate was to declare "My soul is wandering in darkness, seeking for the Light of Occult Knowledge, and I believe that in this Order the knowledge of that Light may be obtained" (see Bogdan 2003b: 185). The painting of the Lucifer-seal in the air was an act of visualization, further focusing the mind on the process of magic. The participants were not using a wand, but using the finger represented the directing of Will. The grimoire the seal was taken from, *Le Dragon Rouge*, is of particular significance, as this is one of the stated origins of the name of the order. The grimoire is used on rare occasions.

The signing of the lodge contract, when done in a ritual context, can be seen as a magic oath. Magic oaths are not to be seen as general oaths, as they are supposed to reflect the Will of the magician. In Crowley's words, magic oaths cannot be broken (see Crowley 1977: 62). The signing of the contract also signalled the end of the ceremony, which was cemented by Thomas – as ceremonial leader – drawing yet another seal from the grimoire.

5.1.4 Initiation into Degree 2.0 - Gamaliel

I did my initiation for the second degree, 2.0 Gamaliel, on Tuesday, 30th November, 2004. About a week and a half prior to the initiation I had sent a text of about two A4 pages dealing with my experiences and reflections of the second course to my contact person in the order. The text also dealt with my view on the Draconian magic system. It is a standard and generally required procedure in Dragon Rouge to send texts of this kind to the order, along with the request for initiation, before the actual initiation is to be performed. The order then considers the reflections and decides if the person in question is suitable for initiation or not. I have been told that initiation is not often denied a person. It is only if the person requesting initiation appears to be seriously unbalanced or mentally unfit that it is suggested to the individual that initiation would perhaps not be suitable.

The initiation ceremony was preceded by a regular Tuesday meeting, the last one for the month of November, and thus the last one before going on to another theme. I arrived at the metro station where members meet before courses and gatherings at five minutes to seven pm. A few members where present and more arrived as the time approached seven. At about seven minutes past seven, we started to move towards the Dragon Rouge temple, as it was not likely that any more members would arrive. I will here skip the proceedings of the Tuesday meeting, which focused on shadow-meditation, and go straight to the initiation.

At about twenty past eight, most of those attending the meeting were about to leave. Thomas had told us before the meeting that we were going to do a second degree initiation, and that those members who already have taken the second degree could stay for the initiation. Thomas, 'Drusilla', 'Malachi' and 'Lael' stayed for the initiation, whereas the other members were either in a hurry somewhere or not initiated into the second degree. I asked Thomas if he might have a piece of paper so that I could write my ceremonial text into a finished form, and 'Lael' gave me a sheet from his notebook. I sat down at the table to write my text and the rest of those present stood by the sofa and discussed unrelated things. At about a quarter to nine I was finished and handed the notebook and pen back to 'Lael' and the text to Thomas. Thomas asked me if this was the version for the archive and I answered yes, but that I would first be using it during the ceremony. As we prepared for the ceremony, I asked Thomas if I was to be reading the Dragon Ceremony, which I do not know by heart. He told me not to worry as there was a book with the text by the altar. Thomas turned to the others and asked their opinion about what kind of music we should be using. 'Lael' made a suggestion and accepted this. The music had some (shamanic) drumming in it, which at first affected my concentration a little, as I was quite nervous. Later on, as I became more involved in the ceremony, the music did not bother me at all.

Thomas went to the sideboard and took out the grimoire *Le Dragon Rouge*, also called *Le Grand Grimoire* (see footnote 85). The Lucifer invocation from the grimoire was to be used in the ceremony. Next, Thomas asked us to move to the altar region and the ceremony was about to begin. The lights in the temple were switched off and

the only illumination came from the candles in the altar region. One red candle in a dragon-shaped candleholder, placed on a large mirror on the floor, and four red ones on the altar. Thomas took out the two swords standing by the altar and placed them in the corners by the altar.

Thomas informed us that we were going to start with a short meditation and we all sat down around the mirror, clock-wise me, 'Lael', Thomas, 'Malachi' and 'Drusilla' – Thomas with his back towards the altar and me facing him. We focused on the candle in front of us and conducted a short meditation. After the meditation, Thomas briefly discussed the second initiation. It is particularly important as it is the last initiation before the Dragon Oath (see section 4.2.1) and thus before entering the Inner Order – *Ordo Draconis et Atri Adamantis*. It is also an initiation which one cannot perform by oneself, as is possible with the first one. Afterwards, Thomas asked us to stand up and 'Lael' and 'Malachi', who were going to act the guardians during the ceremony, to take their places. They both moved to a corner of the altar region, 'Lael' to the left of the altar and 'Malachi' to the right of it, each of them facing me and away from the altar region. Thomas stood in front of the altar and I stood behind him, with 'Drusilla' on my right side, slightly behind me.

Thomas picked up the magic wand in his right hand and the book with the Dragon ceremony in his left. The grimoire was placed on the right side of the altar. Thomas started by reading the Dragon ceremony (see section 5.1.1) from the book, whilst pointing the wand towards the altar. As usual, we responded by repeating the power words and the reading was ended by the ceremonial uttering, *Ho Drakon Ho Megas*. Next, Thomas picked up the grimoire Le Dragon Rouge and opened it up at the page with the Lucifer invocation. The same invocation was used in the ceremonial opening of lodge Sinistra in Malmö, Sweden (see section 5.1.3). Thomas briefly explained that we were going to read the Lucifer invocation in order to bring the Luciferian light into the ceremony. Thomas read the invocation out loud, first with doing it individually and then with us repeating each word. When he had finished he put down the grimoire and turned to me. He invited me to step up to the altar in order to be initiated. I responded by doing so, and he gave me the

book with the ceremony to read from. I read the ceremony out aloud, using my magical name, and the others present repeated the power words. After that, I read the ceremonial text which I had prepared myself before the initiation.

I put the book down on the right side of the altar and lifted up the paper with my ceremonial text, which I had held in my hands for the duration of the ceremony. I read the text aloud and the others responded to certain phrases.

The ceremonial text:

> I, Daemon Gaeh'Nae'Ha, invoke Lilith, Hel, Hekate and Kali. I invoke you in the name of Tiamat, Leviathan, Jörmungand and Nidhögg – in the sign of the Dragon. Give me power to tear down and destroy the Old in order to give birth to the New.
> I promise to go deeper into the unknown and hidden in my Self and in existence. I want to walk in the darkness of the night and the black fires in order to be born in a new dawn. Give me strength, courage and endurance to tread the paths that lead to the dark mysteries. Give me courage, strength and endurance to face and embrace the dangers and setbacks I encounter on my journey. Give me courage, strength and endurance to walk my path to its end.
> Lepaca Lilith!
> Everyone: Lepaca Lilith!
>
> Initiate me in your mysteries. Take me in your dark embrace and envelop me. Burn away the restricting and make me free.
> Lepaca Gamaliel!
> Everyone: Lepaca Gamaliel!
>
> Lilith, take me in, give me your dark kiss and lead me on your night-time journey. Take me beyond my limitations and show me the possible in the impossible.
>
> I swear an oath to unrelentingly continue my journey on the path I have taken. I willingly step into the jaws of the Dragon, into the womb of Lilith, and am tempered in the destructive fires. Kali, ancient/original mother, show me the secrets to giving birth to myself. Lilith, Hel, Naheema, Hekate, Kali – embrace me and come in me. Consume me so that I may create myself anew!
>
> I swear an oath to give to my order as my order has given to me. I stand by my sisters' and brothers' side and face the unknown together with them.
> Ho Drakon Ho Megas!
> Everyone: Ho Drakon Ho Megas[87]!

87 The text was, as mentioned, created by me and a few remarks on its composition may be in order. In Dragon Rouge initiations, the initiate is

After I had finished, Thomas turned to me again and declared me initiated. He welcomed me into the second degree of the order. I shook hands with those present, and Thomas declared the initiation ended and said that we could leave the altar region. I left first, turning towards the altar when at the exit and bowing to it. The rest left after me. We turned on the electrical lights in the temple and Thomas blew out the candles. We had a brief discussion, after which I handed my ceremonial text over to Thomas for archiving[88]. We put on our outdoor clothes and left the temple.

In comparison to the initiation into the first degree, the second initiation was more complex and elaborate. The texts required for the first initiation, both the reflective account and the ceremonial text, were shorter and much less personal than those required for the second initiation. Otherwise the ceremonial settings were quite similar.

The initiations of a magic order are, naturally, of central rituals in an initiatory order's practice. In Dragon Rouge the road to initiation goes through performing exercises described in correspondence courses, and then providing the order with a report of one's progress. The documents an initiate needs to provide in order to be

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supposed to provide an individual ceremonial text, which the initiation ceremony revolves around. Each successive initiation will require a more and more extensive, elaborated and personal text. The text for the second initiation was supposed to include ceremonial oaths in which I declare my future magical intents, as well as my role with regard to Dragon Rouge. The oaths are, as said, ceremonial, and are not to be viewed as mundane promises. Their purpose is to focus the initiate's attention and consciousness on the magical progress at hand. The text is, as said, something which the initiate is supposed to construct by him-/herself and will therefore mirror the special interests and dispositions of the initiate. In my text, I chose to deploy mythological creatures from various different mythologies. I also consciously included a lot of sexual references, since I felt that this would be suitable in my initiation. Likewise, I chose to invoke feminine deities and demonesses. The sexual references were combined with self-annihilating passages indicating submission to the forces called upon. The text has a religious tone comparable to Tantric texts, especially those commonly defined as Left Hand Path.

88 The reflective accounts of the initiation courses and the ceremonial texts are archived by Dragon Rouge. They become a sort of documentation of the initiate's magical progress.

approved for initiation can be likened to the system of university exams. The student of magic does the exercises required of him, and then writes a paper on his/her reflections on the material, his/her experiences during the course as well as on the general topic of his/her interpretation of draconian magic. The order then decides whether or not to approve the candidate for initiation. The documents the candidate provides can be seen as a form of 'proof' that the individual has undergone the necessary training and that he/she is proficiently advanced in his/her practice of magic. Interesting as this is, I will focus on the actual ritual of initiation.

The Dragon Rouge rituals of initiation are from the very outset different in character in comparison to traditional rituals of initiation, as they are found in, for example, Freemasonry and the Hermetic Order of Golden Dawn (see Bogdan 2003b for examples of these). Traditional initiatory orders usually have fixed rituals, to be performed in the same fashion each and every time. This is the opposite to Dragon Rouge initiations. First and foremost, the initiate is supposed to write the text for his ritual of initiation for him/herself – and thus the ritual text will be different on every occasion. The purpose is to foster the initiate and his/her imagination, and train him/her in the construction of rituals. This could also be seen as a difference stemming from the primary forces conjured. The focus of Dragon Rouge rituals, especially in an initiatory sense, are chaos-forces, whereas Right Hand Path rituals focus on order and structure. The rituals of Dragon Rouge seem to mirror this focus. The ritual text should include a magic oath, which is of great importance, as discussed in chapter 5.1.3. Displaying the *ad hoc* character of the ritual setup, the number and function of ritual officials was not determined beforehand. The only rule was that those attending had to be of at least the degree the candidate was to be initiated in.

Before the ritual started the candles at the altar-area were lighted and the electric lights were turned off and meditative music was played. This was all in order to set the mood for the ritual, and help the initiate, and the ritual officers, focus on the ritual reality, and marking the border between magic and non-magic. In choosing roles for the officials the male members present acted the guardians – again a traditional gendered role. Thomas, as highest initiate, and

my tutor in the order, acted ritual leader. Persons were situated so that the person initiated was at the centre, and thus at the centre of attention.

The ritual was started with meditation, again focusing the mind and body on the act of magic. The magic wand was used in the incantations and invocations, directing the Will of the person reading the invocation. See section 5.1.3 for the purpose of the Dragon Ceremony. The Lucifer-invocation was also used in a similar fashion as in the opening of lodge Sinistra (see section 5.1.3). Before performing the reading of the ceremonial text written by myself, I also read the Dragon Ceremony. In this way I was supposed to become more deeply involved in the ritual, and attain a closer connection to the forces conjured. My reading of the text prepared by myself ended the ritualistic part of the ceremony. The shaking of the ceremonial officials hands represented a formal welcoming of me into the second degree of the order, and also signalled a return to normal reality. This was again cemented with Thomas declaring the initiation ended. Leaving the altar-area I was again the centre of focus, as I left the altar-area first.

5.2 Discussion and Analysis

The above examples from my fieldwork show the standard structure of Dragon Rouge courses and meetings. First, the person who will be functioning as course-leader, usually one of the active long-time members, starts by giving a theoretical talk on the subject of the course. Various sources for the information given are used but, almost without exception, some kind of scientific works from comparative religion, anthropology or some related field of science which pertain to the phenomenon in question, are referred to. Works by Mircea Eliade and Carl Gustav Jung, for example, are frequently used. Other common sources are works on magic, or the phenomenon in question, written by insiders. This literature is too extensive to be treated in detail, but books by Julius Evola and Kenneth Grant can be mentioned. Of course, the works referred to and used vary according to the theme of the course. As almost all of the leaders I have witnessed giving courses have some background in academia, some having taken a few courses while others have a university degree, it is no surprise that the academic lecture functions as the pattern for the theoretical portion of a Dragon Rouge course.

The course leader stands in front of the sitting audience while delivering his/her lecture and often utilises some form of visual aid, such as a lecture-pad to make illustrations on. The course participants often take notes and ask the course leader questions when something is not clear to them. Comments are also common. Literary references are similar to those a university lecturer would make, say for example in a course on ancient Egyptian religion.

The point I am trying to make is not that the course leaders of Dragon Rouge use deceitful means in order to make their activity more credible, or that the Dragon Rouge course is a false simulacrum of the genuine thing, a regular university lecture. What I am saying is that for both the course leader and for most of those participating in the course, the university lecture is an accessible and familiar pattern to model the learning situation on. Much Western magic literature strives to study and explore the unknown, and then communicate the results to the audience, in much the same external

fashion an academic work would, granted the fact that the epistemology, subjects and methods of insider occult literature are not accepted as such in an academic setting.

After the theoretical part is over a short break is taken, after which the actual main part of the course, the practice, commences. Representatives of Dragon Rouge frequently criticize what they experience as the exclusive focus on theory in many other magical orders and occult organizations (IF mgt 2001/49). It is felt that both parts are necessary. On the one hand: theory without practice would be rather pointless, in fact a person not putting into practice what he/she has learnt would not be considered a magician, but rather an occult theorist. I have been told on many occasions that there is no such thing as a theoretical magician (see Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 4). On the other hand: practice would become almost impossible if one did not ground it on a theoretical basis. At the Stockholm temple, which is the location of most of the courses I have attended, the practice is performed in the altar-room. After the short break following the theoretical portion of the course, the participants move to this area. The course leader usually puts on a record with some kind of meditation music and lights the candles and some suitable type of incense at the altar, while the electric lights are turned off. As the room is lit only by the dim glow of the candles, the participants sit down on the pillows in the altar-area, in a circular formation, with the course leader closest to the altar. During courses that involve the participants standing during the working of magic, the pillows are naturally not used. The practice is usually begun with some kind of Kundalini-meditation, which the course leader guides the other participants through. After the meditation, the actual practice commences and at the end of it another, shorter, meditation is held. Typically, members sit down in the chairs around the tables in the main room, after getting their breath back and relaxing briefly, to discuss the experience of the practice. It is during these analyses that the members can draw on each other's experience and construct a logical and coherent totality out of the practice.

In his doctoral thesis, Henrik Bogdan provides a description of the Neophyte ritual of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, the introductory initiation into the order (Bogdan 2003b: 180-192). The ritual is ordered in a strictly regulated fashion, with prescribed

ceremonial officers located at fixed positions and the ritual text and proceedings to be performed in an ordained way. The Dragon Rouge ritual is much less rigidly bound, to the extent of being constructed individually for each and every new occasion, even involving improvised elements. Dragon Rouge ceremonies too, which in other ways are set in the tradition of early 20th century magical orders, follow the occasion-bound and improvised model (see section 5.1.2 for an example). In comparison to Wiccan neopagan rituals and initiations, the Dragon Rouge variants likewise appear much less rigid (see Bogdan 2003b: 220-233; York 1995: 225-230 for examples of Wiccan rituals and initiations). Many neopagan rituals are, however, much more flexible than the Gardnerian Wiccan rituals, as demonstrated by Graham Harvey (Harvey 2000).

Galina Lindquist uses the notion of play when discussing neoshaman ritual activity (see Lindquist 1997: 124-125, 294-296), and this notion is suitable for the Dragon Rouge attitude towards ritual, as well. Lindquist uses play in the sense of "a basic existential modality generative of spirituality and creativity, where an agreement on the altered conventions of behaviour allows the players to generate alternative social spaces which can be subjectively experienced as a different reality" (Lindquist 1997: 124). In this approach, the ritual reality is collectively crafted in the context of the ritual and, in the rules of the play and during the play, becomes the relevant reality. A stage play is a suitable comparison. In performing Shakespeare's *Hamlet* the actors take on the qualities of the characters in the play. The stage becomes the court of the King of Denmark, and, if the actors are good, the audience can for the duration of the play experience the course of events as reality. At the very least, the emotional attachments and reactions should be genuine.

Related to the notion of play, and also relevant in the context of Dragon Rouge ritual, is playfulness. As noted in the above ethnographies, the mood of the participants in between specific ritual elements is very light-hearted. While the actual ritual elements are performed in a serious state of mind, the shift to a much more relaxed atmosphere can be almost instantaneous when the ritual elements are interrupted or the ritual is ended. The participants are determined and take their activities seriously, but this does not

hinder them from joking about it when the time is appropriate. This is an immanent factor in late modern alternative spirituality, and the ritual-as-play approach can shed light on how it functions. The actors in the ritual adhere to the rules of the play, when the play is being acted. In a largely improvised ritual, which is common in the Dragon Rouge setting, there are nonetheless conventions and rules of conduct. Each actor knows the modes and approximations of the ritual setting and can play them out. When the ritual is over, or pauses for some reason, the participants no longer follow the rules of conduct. In fact, maintaining the serious atmosphere might detract from the ritual, as the period in between might then be experienced as a part of the actual ritual setting. In a way, the jokes before and after a ritual delimit the actual ritual, and mark the borders between ritual and non-ritual.

As the order is not limited to any one system of magic or to a strict focus on one specific religious tradition, the courses function mainly as an introduction to the issues dealt with. It is then up to the individual members to dive deeper into the form of practice they have just been introduced to, if it is felt to be something worth exploring in greater depth. As I have not studied members of Dragon Rouge involved in individual magic practice, something which would be extremely difficult to do, I cannot say much more on the subject of individual practice. The order's correspondence courses in magic do however shed some light on the issue. The first part of the first correspondence course teaches the basics of meditation – focusing on Kundalini-meditation – and guides the student through fundamental practices in which the will and concentration are trained.

The second part focuses on rituals, teaching the student how to construct his/her own rituals rather than giving ready-made recipes for them, although a basic purification ritual is described. The practice of dream control, and consequently astral travel and projection, is also described and recommended. The astral plane is also the theme of the next two parts of the course. Part five of the course treats Tantra, and hence goes in more depth into the practice of Kundalini-meditation by focusing on the energy travelling through the different chakras, as well as offering the basics of sex magic. The concluding part of the first course describes a quite

elaborate ceremony as a form of conclusion to the first part of the magician's journey. (Dragon Rouge 1996). Most of the exercises prescribed are described in only the most basic fashion. The theory and ideas behind the exercises are, however, treated at length. In this way, the adept will be able to mould the rituals and practices in a way that suits him/her best and gives him/her the most efficient means with which to approach magic. Even the rituals described at length function mainly as examples of how to possibly go about practising magic.

The second correspondence course gives even less detailed descriptions, and here as well the emphasis lies on explaining the idea behind the exercises. The description of a witchcraft ritual and a few demonic invocations are the exceptions. A few exercises prescribed in the second course are: Kundalini-meditations, astral-/dream-travels, various meditative exercises in nature, invocations and visualisation exercises. (Dragon Rouge 2001j). The practices learnt earlier, however, are not something to forget and leave by the wayside as one progresses. For example, much of the material in the second course consists of more advanced continuations of subjects introduced in the first course.

Common to both courses is that the exercises are designed for an individual practitioner, not for a group of magicians. This is also the case with the majority of the courses I have attended. What is learnt can be practiced without the aid of other magicians. Exceptions occur, of course, such as the course on ceremonial magic described in section 5.1.2 above, and ceremonies performed in this fashion, which requires the co-operation of a number of magicians. The point of focusing on the individual is not to foster an attitude of isolation among adepts. On the contrary; an overtly individualistic approach to magic, in which the adept disregards all and everything outside him/herself, is strongly discouraged in the material (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 2; 2001j/1: 6). Since the correspondence courses are meant to work for anyone interested in the practice of the Dragon Rouge type of dark magic, and as many would-be practitioners are likely to be the only ones in their respective regions, forms of exercise which do not require the attendance of more than one practitioner are taught. The magician who masters the exercises by him-/herself, will master the

techniques when doing joint practice as well. The elementary descriptions of possible exercises, combined with the advice for the adept to construct his/her own forms of practice, also foster the novice magician a pragmatic attitude towards the practice of magic.

As stated earlier, the courses of the order mainly function as introductions to specific forms of practice or to new ideas, with a few exceptions where a course dives deeper into themes explored in prior courses. Courses arranged by the Dragon Rouge mother-organization in Stockholm from early summer, 2000, to fall, 2004, have, for example, treated the following subjects:

- Ancient Norse magic and rune magic
- Magic in the confines of nature
- Tantric Kundalini/Chakra-exercises
- Goetic magic [89]
- The exploration of magical forces, such as Vril and Od[90]
- Ancient-Egyptian based magic
- Qliphotic exercises

Among the more in-depth courses, which often require that the participant has already been initiated into at least the first degree of the order, from the same period, the following themes can be found:

- Advanced rune magic
- Preparatory courses for initiates into the first and second degrees, treating the subject themes of the correspondence courses
- The course on ceremonial magic described above in section 5.1.2
- Advanced Tantric practices
- Faustian magic (focusing on the legend of Dr. Faust)
- Advanced qliphotic practices

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89 Goetic magic is a common term for so called 'low magic' (see chapter 1.2.2). The term is also used for magic based on grimoares, especially the goetia.

90 Vril and Od are terms used in Dragon Rouge as more or less synomynous with kundalini, reflecting slightly different aspects of the life-force.

- A week long intense magical course
- A weekend-long course, focusing on the magical use of total silence (meaning that the participants will not speak at all during the course) (Dragon Rouge 2000a-c; 2001f-i; 2002a-d; 2003a-d; 2004a; 2004e-f).

In the advanced courses the same themes surface more frequently than is the case with the more basic courses. Tantric and qliphotic practices, along with runic, Ancient Norse and nature-based themes, form the more common areas of course-activity.

The practices described are those that are arranged by the mother-order, and which even low initiated members can partake in. As the order mainly consists of these low initiated members, there are no officially arranged courses that deal in specific with higher degree practice. It would simply be more or less pointless, as there might not be enough people to attend. Correspondence courses are available for the first three degrees, and after this the practice for initiations is done in closer and more personal co-operation with one's tutor in the order. Higher initiated members may do practices together, but this is not in an official Dragon Rouge capacity but rather on a personal level. In the spring of 2005 it was announced that there will be some co-ordinated workings initiates of degrees 2.0, 3.0 and 4.0 arranged later in the year (Dragon Rouge 2005a).

Due to my choices concerning research methods and delineations, as I have chosen to focus on the official practice, and due to my low initiatory level, I have not had access to higher degree magic practice. Courses beyond the first do, however, shed some light on higher degree work. Courses two and three mainly provide deeper focuses on themes already present in the first course. Stated goals and focuses of degrees beyond the first are:

- Degree 2.0 – Gamaliel – Astral magic, withcraft, the mysteries of the dark moon and the dark goddess
- Degree 3.0 – Samael – The philosophy of the left hand path, the wisdom of insanity, Yezidic magic and the dark side of the charkas

- Degree 4.0 – A'arab Zaraq – Luciferian magic, the dark side of Venus, Eroto-mysticism and the path of the warrior
- Degree 5.0 – Thagirion – The illumination of the night-side, the dark sun and the union of the god and the beast
- Degree 6.0 – Golachab – Ragnarök, the activation of Surt/Sorath and the magnetism of lust and suffering
- Degree 7.0 – Gha'agsheblah – The higher levels of Eroto-mysticism and preparations for the abyss
- Degree 8.0 – Satariel – The opening of the eye of Lucifer/Shiva/Odin and the Drakon principle
- Degree 9.0 – Ghagiel – The lighting of the Luciferian star
- Degree 10.0 – Thaumiel – The accomplishment of the promise given by the serpent, divinity
- Degree 11.0 – Thaumiel – The black hole, the step into the new creation, Universe B (implying the magician's creation of an existence of his/her own) (Dragon rouge 2005b).

Part III – Meaning Making

6 Theoretical Perspectives

In this section, I will investigate different approaches to meaning making, i.e. the way meaning is attributed to reality in the Dragon Rouge context. Studies in the psychology of religion have of late been mainly informed by two distinct theoretical schools, namely the social constructionist school, with a more humanist approach, and cognitive psychology, which is based on positivist natural sciences. Constructionist approaches have been around for a long time, a classic work in the field being Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* from 1966 (Luckmann & Berger 1966). The school is used in social psychology, as well as in gender and queer studies by authors such as Judith Butler (Butler 1990; 1993; 1997a; 1997b). Cognitivist approaches have gained more recent popularity in the study of religion as they begun to be used more in the late 1980s and in the 1990s, with authors such as Dan Sperber and Pascal Boyer (Sperber 1996; 2000; Boyer 1993; 1994; 2001).

I have chosen to take a social constructionist approach, with focus on language as a meaning-making device, instead of basing my analysis on cognitivist theory building. I consider this approach more helpful in analysing the particularities of the field of study, the informants and my own role in the process of research. I regard cognitive science's relative lack of interest in the communicative processes involved in meaning-making as a serious drawback. As I have no way of accessing the inner thought processes of my informants, and, even more importantly, as my informants have no way of accessing the inner thought processes of their fellow Dragon Rouge members, other than through language, I regard the study of language as – not only the mediator of meaning but rather the mechanism through which meaning is constructed – as a highly important focus. However, as different tools for analysis highlight different areas of the field of research, and give different and often equally valid results, I welcome research that focuses on different aspects of the field.

6.1 Social Constructionism

Social constructionism is the main foundation on which discourse analysis builds (Phillips & Jørgensen 2000:11; Jokinen 1993:39). Kenneth J. Gergen identifies five different kinds of constructivist stances in his book, *An Invitation to Social Construction* (Gergen 1999:59-60). These are:

1) Radical constructivism, in which emphasis is laid on the ways in which individuals construct what they take to be reality in their minds.
2) Constructivism, which like radical constructivism sees the mind constructing reality, but here in a systematic relationship to the external world outside the individual.
3) Social constructivism, in which the inner mental process of reality construction is highly dependent on the individual's social relationships.
4) Social constructionism, in which emphasis is placed on discourse as the means through which reality is communicated and constructed.
5) Sociological constructivism, which focuses on the ways in which social power structures influence the human construction of reality, meaning and self.

As the focus in this study is on discourse, I will focus on social constructionism and only in passing treat the other four constructionist stances. Kennet Gergen discusses four working assumptions which social constructionists usually support (Gergen 1999:47-50). Gergen does, however, point out that these assumptions are not, and should not be viewed as, finite conclusions (Gergen 1999:47). The four assumptions are:

1) "The terms by which we understand our world and our self are neither required nor demanded by 'what there is'" (Gergen 1999:47). This means that our language and other means of communication cannot

provide an objectively true map of the world "as it is". Any number of alternative explanations could have similar value (as long as people respond to them in an approving manner, as explained in assumption 2). Gergen is careful to point out that this is true for all forms of human communication, not just spoken and written language. By extension, this assumption could be understood as a declaration of the total equality of all and every account of a specific event etc. It would, for example, be just as right to state that an apple will float in the air if you let go of it as it would be to state that the apple will fall to the ground. In criticising social constructionism on this basis, one does not take into account the other assumptions that the theoretical school works with.

2) "Our modes of description, explanation and /or representation are derived from relationship" (Gergen 1999:48). This assumption holds that our ways of understanding the world and events etc. are constructed in a meaning-making endeavour with other communicative beings. The tool is mainly language but also other communicative systems, and the endeavour is impossible without co-workers. We do not construct meanings in our individual minds as such, but rather construct them in communicative events with our fellow humans. As the accounts of the nature of reality, a specific event etc. are dependent on the co-operation of our fellow humans, an account that no-one else adheres to is without value. A convincing reality is constructed when people produce it in social relations. Gergen also points out that we, and thus our communication for that matter, are not able to exist without the natural surroundings which sustain us. These natural surroundings cannot, however, be understood outside communication. Peter L. Berger expresses the same view in the following way:

> Society is a dialectic phenomenon in that it is a human product, and nothing but a human product, that yet continuously acts back upon its producer. […] There can be no social reality apart from man. Yet it may also be stated that man is a product of society (Berger 1969: 3).

3) "As we describe, explain or otherwise represent, so do we fashion our future" (Gergen 1999: 48). The communicative endeavour of constructing meaning is an essential form of social action. When we, in our social relationships, construct meanings we create other forms of social practice. In Gergen's account social institutions such as law, education and intimate relationships are dependent on the words we use to describe and define them. In the communicative process of meaning-making, we are constantly involved in a retransformation and reproduction of social relationships and institutions. Social relationships and social institutions cannot exist without and outside the communicative acts producing them. Relationships and institutions are never finitely made, and defined and exist in a state of constant reproduction and reconstruction through communicative renegotiation. Our futures are constructed in the ways we reproduce and transform existing institutions.
4) "Reflection on our forms of understanding is vital to our future well-being" (Gergen 1999: 49). For our futures to develop into desirable and beneficial directions we have to assess our present standpoints. A traditional resorting to 'common sense' and 'shared values' is not all that helpful, as 'common sense' and 'shared values' are situated in specific discursive realities and thus give no objective guidance as to how one should progress. The constructionist has to think and judge reflectively and grasp multiple standpoints to one and the same question. He/she has to submit personal standpoints and 'obvious truths' to interrogation. By attaining a view from a multitude of

standpoints and criticising 'self-evident truths', the constructionist can see and judge his own standpoint better.

The four main features inherent in most social constructionist works as presented by Vivien Burr are very similar to Gergen's assumptions (Burr 1995: 2-5).

1) A critical stance to seemingly self-evident knowledge, meaning that the categories we use to divide up and make sense of the world are not the only ones possible.
2) Our way of understanding the world is historically and culturally specific.
3) Knowledge is created and maintained in social processes in our daily interaction with our fellow humans.
4) Knowledge and social action are linked, meaning that our way of understanding the world results in concrete acts.

The specific examples Burr gives to explain the main features are very helpful and enlightening (Burr 1995: 2-5; see also Granholm 2004: 194-196). As one can see, the main concern in social constructionist theory is to question historically and culturally created, apparently self-evident truths, not the least of which are the constructionist researcher's own truths, and to examine what consequences these truths have on life as we live it.

I will highlight the assumptions/main features in the following examples (based on Burr's example in Burr 1995: 3).

Take, for example, our everyday categorisation of humans into two distinct groups, men and women. One might argue that there are strong grounds for maintaining this distinction as there are important physical (and many would say psychological) differences between men and women. There are, however, many other differences between humans; for example, length, colour of skin, eyes and hair, build etc. Any one of these differences could stand as the key factor for dividing humans into specific groups. We could, for example, divide humans into blue-eyed, short and fat ones, and

brown-eyed, brown-haired and thin ones; we have, however, chosen to use the categories of man and woman.

In addition to this, the distinguishing traits defining what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman have varied throughout history and have been different in different cultures. The specific characteristic traits associated with men where different in medieval times than from what they are in Western society today. Likewise the traits associated with masculinity in Japanese society are different from the traits associated with masculinity in the Western cultural sphere. The traits and characteristics linked to femininity and masculinity are constantly produced and renegotiated in social interaction and are never finitely defined and laid down.

The splitting up of mankind into the two categories of men and women, and the defining of the characteristic traits associated with the categories, has resulted in actual repercussions for both men and women. For example; as women have been thought to have inferior analytical intellectual capabilities to men and, in turn, have superior empathic and nurturing capabilities, women have been relegated to the domestic sphere to take care of the household and the offspring, whereas men have dominated the public, political arena. This has, in turn, created an imbalance of power in which men have had the opportunity to dominate women in largely any way they have felt like. This has further resulted in an ideology which condones, supports, and indeed encourages, male domination over women, on the grounds that this is beneficial both for women and for society as a whole.

In accordance with the fourth assumption in Gergen's model, it would be beneficial and perhaps even necessary for the individual, society and humanity as a whole to reflect over the male-female dichotomy, looking for differing examples from different cultural spheres and historical periods and to question the 'self-evident' truths regarding men and women. This is, however, not relevant within the scope of the present study.

6.2 Discourse Analysis

As stated earlier, discourse analysis builds on a social constructionist foundation (Jokinen 1999:39; Phillips & Jørgensen 2000:11). In discussing discourse analysis, the first task should be to define discourse, something ignored by many scholars, which has consequently resulted in confusion surrounding the concept and its use in academic works. Another reason for the confusion concerning the term is its the widespread use in various disciplines, often with widely varying meanings (Wetherell & Potter 1987: 6-7).

In the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, discourse is defined as "verbal interchange of ideas" or "formal and orderly and usually extended expression of thought on a subject" (Merriam-Webster 2004b). As used in discourse analytic research, the concept is defined somewhat differently, but still focusing on the 'speech in use' notion given in the dictionaries. Jonathan Potter uses discourse for "texts and speech in use", 'in use' meaning in actual situations where language or other symbol-systems are used (Potter 1996: 15; see Wetherell & Potter 1987: 7; see also Suoninen 1999: 19-20). Important to note is that discourse is not only bound to written or spoken language (as discussed in section 6.1), but to all communicative acts. For example, a certain composition of pictures in an advertisement or the creative use of musical notes played by specific musical instruments can communicate meaning in the same way as a verbal statement. Vivien Burr describes how it is possible, and often done, to 'read' other people's clothing, behaviour etc. for meaning in the same way we read texts for meaning (Burr 1995: 50-51; Fairclough 1992: 3-5; 1995a: 54). Norman Fairclough defines text as the written or spoken product of the text-producing process (Fairclough 1992:3). I would like to state, however, that text should not be understood simply as human language communication produced in written form, but rather in a more inclusive way as everything we can 'read' meaning into. Not all of our human communication, and thus discourse, takes place on a conscious level. A major part of our communicative acts are on a subconscious level, expressed in the way we act, move, look, talk and remain silent.

Eero Suoninen (et al.) likens discourse to meaning-systems (Suoninen et al. 1993:26) which construct reality in a certain way (Suoninen 1999:21). Michel Foucault uses discourse in the sense of speech and texts in use, as well as the practice responsible for a certain type of speech and text (see Rosengren 1993:57). A clarifying example could be medical discourse, in and through which for example alcoholism is treated in a different way than in an economic discourse. Louise Phillips and Marianne Winther Jørgensen define discourse as "a fixed way of talking about and understanding the world (or a section of it)" (Phillips & Jørgensen 2000:7). Vivien Burr describes discourse as "a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events" (Burr 1995:48).

According to Helena Hurme and Sirkka Hirsijärvi, discourse constitutes an organized whole which is a time-bound process containing an attempt to influence the listener or the reader (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2000:51). A distinction should be made between themes and discourses (see Suonien 1997:67-68). To use an example I employed in an earlier essay (Granholm 2001a). A thematic field could, for example, be Satanism, as in all the discussion surrounding the subject of Satanism in a TV-programme focusing on this particular subject (see SVT 1 1996). Discourses, on the other hand, are the different viewpoints and ways of seeing and experiencing the subject-matter which are expressed in the program. For example: the discourses of 'Satanism as a legitimate philosophical way of thought', 'Satanism as a danger for society' and 'Satanism as harmless and naive' could all be expressed in the same theme of discussion, namely 'Satanism'. The same discourses could also be expressed on completely different themes, such as 'Adolescent violence' or 'Religion and spirituality'.

Suoninen (et al.) list five basic presumptions that discourse analysis builds on (Suoninen et al. 1993: 17-18; Suoninen 1999: 18; see also Phillips & Jørgensen 2000: 11-12).

1) Language use constructs social reality
2) There are several competing systems of meaning
3) Acts of meaning-making are bound to the context they appear in

4) Actors are attached to meaning systems
5) Language use has consequences (see also Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2000: 51).

As we can see, the basic tenets of discourse analysis are very similar to those of social constructionism. One could perhaps even say, at the risk of oversimplifying, that social constructionism is the theory and discourse analysis is the practice. As Gergen states, however, there are many different forms of constructivism and not all forms focus as much on language and other symbol systems as the vehicles of social reality construction (Gergen 1999: 59-60).

To further highlight what the basic assumptions signify, some clarifications might be in order (based on Suoninen et al. 1993:18-45). In discourse analysis language is not seen as a direct reflection of an underlying true reality (see Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2000:17; Marander-Eklund 2000:19, 48-50). For example, the word 'table' does not in itself spring from the physical object 'table'. A clearer case would be Suoninen's (et al.) example of something as abstract as colours (Suoninen et al. 1993:19-20). When we see living grass and say that its colour is 'green', it is so because of cultural convention. We could just as well call it black, if the case were that 'blackness' was the common and socially accepted denominator of the object. Concepts are defined in relation to each other. Again, in the case of colours, the colour 'red' is defined in relation to other colours and vice versa.

Likewise, other concepts and words are defined in relation to each other. For example, 'table' is defined in relation to 'chair' 'wall', 'ceiling' etc. Language use not only describes the world but constructs it to a high degree, or as Margaret Wetherell and Jonathan Potter express it, discourse is "not partially constitutive, but thoroughly constitutive" (Wetherell & Potter 1992: 62).

The word 'table' not only refers to the object 'table', but also brings with it a whole mass of ideas concerning the nature, use and purpose of the 'table'. An object defined as a 'work bench' is something completely different from a 'dinner table' even if the objects were physically completely identical. The understandings we connect to different words and concepts are the result of social convention. When we see a wooden board elevated on top of four

wooden legs, we interpret it to be a table because our cultural and social knowledge, communicated to us through language, tells us it is a table. If we lived in an English-speaking community without tables we would not understand the object as such. Even though the connection between objects, meanings etc. and words is quite arbitrary, the individual is not able to attach meanings to words equally arbitrarily, as the understandings we attach to words spring from social conventions. In order for communication to be fruitful and even possible the individuals communicating must have similar understandings of the subject matters communicated. Suoninen (et al.) are careful to point out that the importance placed on the constructive nature of language and other meaning-systems does not entail the separation of 'real reality' and language, but rather language is very much part of and in 'real reality' (Suoninen et al. 1993:21). Quoting Wetherell and Potter:

> New Zealand is no less real for being constituted discursively – you still die if your plane crashes into a hill whether you think that the hill is the product of a volcanic eruption or the solidified form of a mythical whale (Wetherell & Potter 1992: 65).

Wetherell and Potter go on to say that this materiality of reality does not mean that it is less discursive. The way that death due to the plane crashing into the hill is understood is thoroughly discursive (Wetherell & Potter 1992: 65).

The second basic tenet of discourse analysis deals with the fact that there are many different ways to understand and interpret any one single situation, event, thing, object etc. In discourse analysis, the different ways of interpreting it are called discourses or interpretive repertoires, and consist of relatively coherent systems (see Suoninen et al. 1993:26-29). Quite often, the separate discourses pertaining to an object of communication are in conflict with each other, even though this does not always have to be the case. For example, when discussing propagation in a country such as Finland, several distinct discourses frequently arise. Someone might argue for the benefits of adoption and labour immigration as a means to increase population, on the grounds that overpopulation is a global problem and that no one country should be viewed as an isolated

unit, whereas someone else might argue for the importance of supporting increased procreation among the populace, on the grounds that the population of the country is not growing at a sufficient rate. Each of these discourses contains a plethora of assumptions and ready-made convictions. The second discourse is the dominant one in Finnish discussion and can, if and when it comes to totally overshadow any possible conflicting discourse, be called a hegemonic discourse, that is to say, a discourse which is taken for granted and considered as objective truth (see Jokinen & Juhila 1996:20, 53-61).

As discourses are language and other symbol-systems in use, they cannot be studied independently from their contexts. The context is always a social-relational situation in which the actors are engaged in communication. This would be the case, for example, with an advertisement in a newspaper, where the message is communicated through a medium where the two parties of the process probably never meet in person and the actors need not be in actual contact with each other. In the above example, the actor communicates in a mediated way and the respondent interprets the message through the culturally, socially and ideologically available tools he/she has at his/her disposal, and then perhaps communicates it further. Discourse exists in the act of communication, with the creator of the advertisement communicating his/her idea and the respondent interpreting this idea in the same way as two persons physically at the same location would communicate. Many discourse analysts see the interaction between actors in communication as an area of special interest (see for example Fairclough 1995a:125-128; Jokinen et al. 1993:31-32; Jokinen & Juhila 1996:45; Suoninen 1997:77-78)

The context of the communicative process must be taken into consideration in order to perform an adequate analysis. Context might not necessarily mean the physical circumstances of the communicative process, but rather the context of the text segment being analyzed in relation to the textual and intertextual setting it is embedded in. For example, the researcher cannot simply extract a segment of text in which the informant states that 'Lesbians shouldn't get medical help to become pregnant' and simply leave it at that. If the informant goes on to say 'We have a problem with

overpopulation and adoption should always be the first alternative', it gives the earlier segment a completely different meaning than if the informant claims 'Homosexuality is an abomination'.

The researcher always uses his previous cultural knowledge and initial assumptions in the course of doing an analysis (Jokinen & Juhila 1996: 45-46). It is important for the validity of the study that the researcher identifies his/her initial assumptions (and prejudices for that matter), and reflects on how these influence the analysis, and in the case of the researcher creating his/her material in fieldwork and interviews, influence the material in itself. With reflection on one's assumptions and the use of earlier cultural knowledge the study can be made better.

The basic notion of the actor being attached to meaning systems delineates a path for the researcher where he/she concentrates on the social conventions of communication and the systems of meaning produced, rather than on the individual actors themselves. Whereas cognitive science usually focuses on the inner mental life of the individual, discourse analysis focuses on relational communication and meaning-making through symbol-systems in use. Cognitive science views human communication as the manifestation of inner thoughts already formulated in the mind of the person communicating. Consequently, discourse as such is only interesting for the cognitivist as a means to access the inner processes of the human. In discourse analysis, on the other hand, discourse is seen, not as a simple and direct mirroring of the individual's thought-processes, but rather as a tool to formulate and maintain thought-processes. Discourse, and accordingly human meaning-making, is something which is not situated outside the context of discourse. To put it simply: an event may occur in a real world outside human discourse but we have no way of attaching meaning to that event outside discourse. The event of, for example, becoming pregnant only gains meaning in and through discourse. The pregnancy is represented as a blessing, or a nightmare, when we communicate it to someone else.

With the above example of pregnancy, the event becomes a positive or negative thing in our communicating it to others. To quote Wetherell and Potter again: "discourse and ideological practice are inseparable from other social practices" (Wetherell &

Potter 1992: 61). Every aspect of societal life is steeped in ideology and discourse and, furthermore, there is "no 'versionless' reality" (Wetherell & Potter 1992: 61-62). In societal convention the interpretation of the situation depends much on the circumstances of our life. If my partner and I were a happy couple with a stable economy, most people in our circles would probably consider the pregnancy a joyous event. If, on the other hand, I was a 15-year-old girl and the pregnancy was a result of rape, the situation would be completely different. In the latter case, societal norms maintain that pregnancy through rape is never a good thing, and that teenage pregnancy is likewise a negative thing for child, mother and society, and as such I would have considerable difficulties in convincing people that I was happy to be pregnant and that my pregnancy was a good thing. Through the discourses of 'teenage pregnancy is negative' and 'pregnancy through rape is negative', my possible prior self-identification (although the discourses mentioned may, and likely will, already have influenced my initial interpretation of the situation) as a happy future mother is rendered null. The most likely consequences are that I will be approached with ample information about the possibilities of aborting the foetus or adopting the child after birth and strongly advised, or even compelled, to do this. At the very least, I will be bombarded with gestures of sympathy for my 'unfortunate condition'. The pregnancy is thus through the discursive acts of others, due to the societal conventions identifying it as undesirable, represented as a bad thing and the consequence might very well be abortion or subsequent adoption. Discourse is social action (see Suoninen 1997: 56-57), and discourse analysts such as Norman Fairclough see the main task of the analyst as the illumination of the connections between discursive practice and social practice (Fairclough 1995a: 16-17).

Discourse is also an integral part of identity, or more specifically the process of constructing and negotiating identity (See Gee 1999:13-17; see also Fairclough 1995a:12 regarding mass-mediated identity-construction). Identity is not something an individual acquires when growing up, and which then stays basically unchanged until the individual dies. According to Mia Lövheim, identity is a continuing process in which the individual reflexively constructs a meaningful and coherent narrative based on his/her

experiences and which is then revised in relation to others as well as in relation to new experiences and information (Lövheim 2003: 120-121; based on Giddens 1996). When identity is analysed through discourse, it tends to be seen as something even more flexible and variable. Individuals have many different identities, all constructed and expressed in relational contexts. "You project a different identity at a formal dinner party than you do at the family dinner table", as expressed by James Paul Gee (Gee 1999: 13). Although people have, most likely, always expressed and constructed various distinctive identities, the extent of the variation and the reflexivity and openness of the process may be in response to the particularities of late modern society (see Giddens 1996). Although an intriguing issue, the question of identity will not, however, be treated in greater depth in the present study.

7 Dragon Rouge and Meaning Making

7.1 Discursive Strategies

I have focused on six major discourses that I have found in my material. I call these the *Magic-is-all-encompassing-*, the *Self-evolvement-*, the *Individuality-*, the *Magic-is-Demanding-*, the *Nature-* and the *Women's Rights* discourses. These discourses are key elements in the Dragon Rouge magic system and the order's practice of magic. There are other repertoires to be found in my material, but I have identified these six as the most important. In sections 7.1.1 to 7.1.6, I present the discourses, give examples of the contexts in which they are used and discuss their importance for Dragon Rouge's overall conceptual world. In section 7.2, I treat the interlinking of the discourses. The discourses exist in a complex and thus work in unison, supporting each other. On the other hand, some of the discourses contradict each other. This is a common trait of human meaning-making, and I will show how this works logically.

In his PhD thesis, *Claiming Knowledge*, Olav Hammer discusses certain discursive strategies employed by adherents of various Western Esoteric and 'New Age' movements (Hammer 2001). The first of these strategies is the appeal to tradition, in which a historical lineage is constructed for the spiritual ideas of the movement. Not uncommonly, the idea of a *philosophia perennis* or a universal core of truth to be found in all religious traditions in the world, and delivered in pure form by the movement in question, is present in the appeal to tradition. This particular strategy is a key element in much Western esotericism and falls under the characteristic element identified by Antoine Faivre as transmission (see Faivre 1994: 14-15). A 'New Age' group could, for example, include the practice of shamanism on its schedule and seek justification by recognizing shamanistic elements in as wide an array of traditions as Native American religious practice, Tibetan Buddhism, Old Norse religion, Ancient Greek religion and the ancient religions of the Middle East. Shamanism is thus asserted as a genuine and pure form of spirituality.

The second strategy discussed by Hammer is the scientification of the esoteric worldview. This means that adherents to the movement claim a scientific, rational base for their belief and practice. An example would be Chaos magic, which builds on Chaos theory and Quantum Physics. A further, more common, occurrence is the psychologization of many esoteric theories. Here, movements draw on popularized psychological theories, especially Jungian, to seek justification for their worldview. Henrik Bogdan discusses this briefly in his PhD thesis dealing with Western Esoteric initiatory movements (Bogdan 2003b: 19).

The third and last strategy is that of experience. Here, the members of a movement place authority on their personal experiences in the realm of esotericism, as well as on the experience of others. It is not uncommon for movements to be formed on the basis of the religious visions or experiences of a certain founding member. New members attain their own experiences modelled after the founding ones, and these are, in turn, incorporated into the religion to give it further authority. Although Hammer's analysis is sound, the underlying tone of his work is critical. In addition to analysing, he also questions the claims made by esotericists on the grounds of theim being false (see section 1.3.3 in the present work for an example). In my view, one should take into account that the discursive strategies constructing a legendary past history of the esoteric movement in question are part of the founding myth of such movements. As Henrik Bogdan puts it when discussing the founding myth of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn: "this should not be viewed as a simple fraud or an attempt at deceiving would-be members, but rather as an expression of a certain form of thought in which legitimacy can be founded on spiritual rather than on historical grounds" (Bogdan 2003b: 173-174).

All of these strategies can be found to a greater or lesser extent in Dragon Rouge as well. Like most esoteric movements in the West, Dragon Rouge incorporates elements from diverse religious and esoteric traditions around the world, such as Tantrism, core shamanism (with distinct Old Norse traits), post-enlightenment magic currents and qabalah. All of these traditions, and many more, are said to contain elements of truth – and almost every religious tradition to be found in the world can have some usable traits or

something of interest (see IF mgt 2001/14; 2001/52; 2001/54; 2001/56; 2001/58). Even more apparent, is the use of various myths in the Dragon Rouge context. Many "world-creation" myths are shown to incorporate some sort of dragon as the powerful chaos-element which must be defeated and controlled in order for the world as we know it to be brought into existence.

The discourse of a *philosophia perennis* does not, however, necessarily mean that the members accept at face value the claims of an underlying "true" esoteric religious core behind all of the exoteric religions of the world. As my informants have said to me, and as I have discovered for myself: magicians and the practice of magic are pragmatic. The magician uses what he or she needs in order to complete the ritual etc. For example, one of my informants told me that he can be a devoted worshipper of Christ in one ritual and a devoted worshipper of Satan in another, all according to the nature and requirements of the ritual in question (IF mgt 2001/13-14). On the Dragon Rouge homepage, one can read a critique of overly analytical thinking. For the magician, it is better to practice analogical thinking, in which connections between things are seen instead of differences as in analytical thinking (Dragon Rouge 2004c).

Scientification, mostly in the appeal to psychological theory, is also a much employed strategy in Dragon Rouge. There is evidently, however, a conscious attempt to place higher authority on purely mystic or esoteric models of explanation, as one would expect from a postmodern re-enchantment of the world. Among the discursive strategies identified by Hammer, the appeal to experience is the strongest one in Dragon Rouge. The most common way to claim the truthfulness of one's beliefs is to appeal to personal experiences of the magic realm. Personal experiences are, as a rule, discussed at the end of a magic meeting (see section 5.2). Here, the members can put their experience of the magic just performed into words and put it all into context. The early magico-mystical experiences of founder Thomas Karlsson are also of importance. These experiences are not directly referred to as a source of authority, but they function as a legend legitimating Thomas Karlsson as a genuine magician, and thus legitimating Dragon Rouge as a genuine magical order.

Important as the discourses of tradition, science and experience are, they do not reflect the core discursive practice in Dragon Rouge. The abovementioned discourses are general components of occultism, or secular esotericism. They do not provide insight into the particularities of the order, and do not form the basis of the Dragon Rouge worldview and value-systems. The discourses treated by Hammer are more of rhetorical tools, providing a believable foundation for esoteric worldviews otherwise ill fit in the frame of mind of a rational-secular world. I have chosen not to focus on the aspects legitimating an esoteric interpretation of the world, but rather on the more interior aspects of an occult worldview – aspects fusing the components of occult practice into a coherent and, for certain individuals, compelling worldview. The majority of the discourses treated can probably be found in some form in most late modern neopagan and magic movements, and are thus not unique to Dragon Rouge. Rather, they point to important connecting points in the cultic milieu.

Discourse analysis is an intricate matter. There are no clear rules or conventions as how to conduct an analysis, and the main tool is the subjective mind of the analyst – combined with his/her nature as a communicative and interpretative being. The key point is, however, quite simple. The researcher is to analyze his/her material thoroughly and find and identify recurrent meaning-conveying elements. One is also to reflect on how these elements occur in the material. Are they of a primary character, or is their main function to support other argumentative segments? Discourses are, as defined in section 6.2, more or less coherent meaning-complexes. Discourses can in this way be separated from themes, which are the subject matters in, and through, which the construction of meaning-systems is performed. To provide a visual; one could say that themes are horizontal – concerning general topics of discussion, whereas discourses are vertical – cutting through several themes, providing meaning-systems in which the subjects of discussion are evaluated and placed in relation to other subjects. (see Granholm 2004).

The discourses treated in this chapter surfaced in both my ethnographic research and the official material of the order. When conducting the interviews and when pre-analyzing the

questionnaire answers certain interpretative repertoires seemed to take dominating positions. My informants regularly stressed the demands this specific form of magic places on the practitioner, and often talked of the higher goals of one's magic practice. The important role magic played in the informant's lives combined with the unique and total character of dark magic seemed to frame the discussions as well. The difficulties Inner Circle members had in finitely defining the Dragon Rouge magic system for each and every individual suggested that individuality was highly praised, and many members went to lengths in order to stress that female members had a very important standing in the order. All of this was done although the questions I asked did not seem to demand answers of this sort. When analyzing my material in more depth these initial interpretations only grew in strength.

The discourses treated in the following chapter provide the frame in which the subjects discussed among Dragon Rouge members, and treated in courses and meetings, are placed. For example, discussions on magical progress were variously infused with notions of the importance of nature, of finding one's own individual path and on finding ways out of restricting gender roles, in a self-evolutionary process, of dealing with the demands imposed by the work undertaken and of the holistic nature of the process. By and in themselves the subject themes of initiations, rituals, meditations and astral journeys mean little. It is in placing them in meaning-systems that they gain importance and form a worldview and provide a sense of purpose.

7.1.1 Magic is All-encompassing

The Magic-is-All-encompassing discourse is twofold. First, it treats the Dragon Rouge system of magic as a more complex and inclusive system than many others, in particular systems of white magic and religion. Second, it deals with the idea of magic as pertaining to all fields of the practitioner's life. The reason for my treating it as a single discourse instead of two separate discourses, is the interlinking and basic oneness of the two themes. The Dragon Rouge system of magic permeates all fields of the practitioner's life because it is so complex. The following excerpt illustrates my point.

> Light magic, is more related to religion as I see it because there is a desire to, leave things in the hands of I mean that one views, cosmos and existence, like, things, how should one put it, that there are, laws and there are obviously laws but the dark magician and the light magician view these laws differently a light magician sees these laws as, I mean the laws, start out from some kind of reason I mean that that which to human reason seem good, are the laws this classical that the Greek philosophers, some kind of, a bit Platonic I don't know, but the dark magician, perhaps dives deeper, and sees so to say tries to see what it is that actually controls I mean what do the actual natural laws look like. (IF mgt 2001/47[91]).

In the same context, the informant stresses that dark magic entails a more active stance to life, in which one assumes control of one's life instead of letting some higher force steer one's fate (IF mgt 2001/47). The Dragon Rouge magician lives his/her magic. In the practice of magic, the magician learns the deepest secrets of the universe

91"Den ljusa magin, är väl mera besläktad med religionen som jag upplever det för det finns en önskan att, lämna saker i händerna alltså man man man ser väl på, kosmos och på på på skapelsen, som att, saker och ting, hur skall man säga, att det finns, lagar, och det finns självklart lagar men den mörka magikern och den ljusa magikern ser på de här lagarna annorlunda en ljus magiker ser på att de här lagarna är, alltså lagarna, utgår oftast från någon slags förnuft alltså det det som för det mänskliga förnuftet verkar bra, det är lagarna det här klassiska som de grekiska filosoferna, något så här, någon sorts, lite platonskt jag vet inte, men men alltså en mörkmagiker, kanske går djupare, och ser liksom försöker se vad egentligen är det som som styr alltså hur ser de här egentliga naturlagarna ut".

and existence and this obviously affects his/her life. The complexity of the Dragon Rouge magic system creates a situation where the practice of magic comes to affect all aspects of the magician's life. The same respondent goes on to criticize religion and white magic for weighing the forces, and especially the darker, hidden aspects of existence, on a moral scale.

> …so that I see it as a natural development, I see it as qliphoth that the dark side exists is natural, it's not like, it's something that's wrong but, but, it's something that's completely natural in other words not to take in the dark side, that's unnatural like, it's something which is a part of us in the same way as we have a shadow, and it's a bit interesting because, I think that, there is some theory that, that, that Jesus, that he cut off his shadow and thus created the Anti-Christ and it's a bit interesting if we are to see it like that, because it has to be in some way the worst thing one could do to, cut off one's shadow because the shadow is a natural part of you as long as you are in harmony everything will be, good, but if you cut it off then it means that, it becomes the total duality where one part is totally good and the other is fully evil, or fully if one now should say which means that it has to be very dangerous to let loose, this, other side it is really not taking one's responsibility in some way. (IF mgt 2001/47[92]).

What the respondent says, is that not having such a complex system as Dragon Rouge is inharmonious, and possibly dangerous. The magician has to use all aspects of him-/herself and not be limited to only one side. The Dragon Rouge system is a way to do this. In

92 "...så att jag ser det som en naturlig utveckling, jag ser det som att kliffot att den mörka sidan finns det är naturligt liksom, det är inte som att, det är någonting som är fel utan, utan, det är nånting som är fullkomligt naturligt alltså att inte ta med den mörka sidan, det är onaturligt alltså så att, det är ju nånting som är en del av oss precis som vi har en skugga, och det är lite intressant för att, jag tror att, det finns någon teori om att, att Jesus, att han klippte av sin skugga och där igenom skapade anti-krist och det är ju lite intressant om vi ska se det så, för att, det måste ju på något sätt vara det värsta man kan göra att, liksom klippa av sin skugga för att skuggan är ju en naturlig del av dig och så länge som ni är i harmoni så kommer allt och vara, bra, men om du klipper av den så innebär det ju att, det blir den totala dualiteten liksom att den ena sidan är totalt god den andra sidan helt ond då, eller helt om man då ska säga vilket innebär att det måste ju bli väldigt farligt att släppa lös, den här, andra sidan det blir verkligen att inte ta sitt ansvar på något sätt"

incorporating all aspects of his/her person, a magical and highly significant task for the practitioner, the use of magic quite naturally affects the magician's whole life. Later on in the interview, the respondent dives deeper into the idea of cosmic harmony, and in the process demonstrates the interconnectedness of everything.

> it is something we usually call the breath of the dragon, which is in some way a pulse in the cosmos which some also call chaos, this breath like, you have a dissolving phase and a joining phase and they go in waves and as a magician one learns to ride this one finds this pulse in oneself for example we have the breath we have the heart we have like, the seasons we have night and day we have it everywhere so it's very easy to use it. (IF mgt 2001/47[93]).

Two female members of the order speak in a similar fashion.

> I mean if one did not, believe that everything was linked then one wouldn't even be a magician, because it's then when you can really influence something when you believe that there are connections, and then it's self-evident that if I do a lot of negative things, then it has a negative affect and then it rebounds on me in the end. (IF mgt 2001/55[94]).

These two examples show how the practice of magic can affect daily life. Everything is interconnected and thus everything you do through magic affects everything else you do, and vice versa. In fact a magician cannot really do anything which is not magic, as everything he/she does affects everything else he/she does.

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93 "det är någonting som vi brukar kalla drakens andetag, som är på något sätt en puls i kosmos som även vissa kallar för kaos, den här andningen liksom att, du har en upplösande fas du har en sammanfogande fas och det går liksom om vart annat och som magiker lär man sig att rida på det här man hittar den här pulsen i sig själv till exempel att vi har ju den här vi har ju andningen vi har hjärtat vi har vi har liksom, årstiderna vi har natt och dag vi har det här överallt så det är väldigt enkelt att använda sig av det".

94 "alltså om man inte, trodde att allting hängde ihop då skulle man ju inte ens vara magiker, för det är ju då man faktiskt kan påverka nånting när man tror att de har samband, och då är det självklart att om jag gör massor med negativa saker, så påverkar det ju negativt och då slår det tillbaka på mig i slutändan".

The discourse appears frequently in the official Dragon Rouge material, such as the correspondence courses in magic and on the Dragon Rouge homepage. On the Dragon Rouge homepage, the 'Five Elementary Draconian Principles' are part of the Magic-is-all-encompassing discourse.

> All is one
> Ouroboros or the dragon that bites its tail shows the eternal return and that the beginning is the end and the end is the beginning, in the small is the great and in the great is the small, the one is the all and in the all is the one. That which is above is like that which is below (Dragon Rouge 2004c).

In the first correspondence course in magic, it is stated that "The universe is a gigantic unit of different forces that move in different ways." (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 1[95]), and in treating the control of power-points in the magician's life that "… man is connected to countless points in existence …" (Dragon Rouge 1996/3: 10[96]). Magic is a way of seeing, experiencing and controlling the myriad of forces that constitute existence. Effecting changes in existence through the means of magic is made possible by the fact that everything consists of power, forces and energy in one form or another (see Dragon Rouge 2004c), and that the individual magician is, as a part of these forces, connected to everything else. On an individual level, with reference to the second quotation above, the magician can, and indeed needs to, explore how he/she is connected to different influencing points in his/her existence. The magician needs to explore these points of influence in depth and learn of their origin, mechanisms of influence, and go beyond their seemingly trivial points of reference. In this way the magician, according to the order, becomes the one who controls these points of influence instead of simply being controlled by them.

Magic and magic power in itself, is defined as being the prehistoric, original and all-encompassing force of existence. "Magic is force, the force of Will, and this force exists in the magician and

95 "Universum är en gigantisk enhet av olika krafter som rör sig på olika sätt".

96 "…är en människa knuten till oräkneliga punkter i tillvaron …".

around him/her." (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 2[97]), and in discussing the Dragon as a symbol of chaos "which is the original and limitless force" (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 2[98]).

The Magic-is-all-encompassing discourse has similarities to item number one in Faivre's characteristics of esotericism, the idea of correspondences (see Faivre 1994: 10-11).

7.1.2 Self-evolvement

The discourse of self-evolvement deals, as the label implies, with the personal growth on many levels of the practitioner of magic. Commonly, members of Dragon Rouge see the practice of magic primarily as a road to personal evolution, although not necessarily in the secular, or in the often more restricted 'New Age', aspect of the term. The personal evolution of the Dragon Rouge member is not limited to this plane of existence, but reaches into the astral planes and the afterlife. The magician's personal evolution is about transcending human limitations and becoming something more than what he/she is. As stated in the first correspondence course in magic, the goal of the dark magician is to "develop an elevated consciousness" (Dragon Rouge 1996/6: 1[99]). The magician should "work with the dark forces in order to dissolve all his/her limitations and thereby come into contact with the magical forces and capacities" (Dragon Rouge 1996/6: 3[100]). Reference is also made to C.G. Jung and his psychological notion of the "process of individuation" (Dragon Rouge 1996/6: 2).

Similarly, the self is not understood exactly as the self of self-help manuals. The self of the magician is something which is carved out from underneath the layers of false selfhood veiling the True Self (called the Will, as is the case in most forms of contemporary

97 "Magin är kraft, viljekraft, och denna kraften finns i magikern och runt denne".

98 "… vilket är den ursprungliga och gränslösa kraften".

99 "att utveckla ett upphöjt medvetande…".

100 "…arbeta med de mörka makterna för att lösa upp alla sina begränsningar och därigenom komma i kontakt med de magiska krafterna och förmågorna".

magic). The task of the magician is to find this core-self and to strengthen it gradually, by the use of magic, so that it can grow and evolve. By exploring him/herself and existence in meditation and other activities, the magician acquires a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of everything.

An advanced member of the order defines the Dragon Rouge system of magic in the following way: "It is the frame you could say, the dark alchemical path of evolution" (IF mgt 2001/47[101]). Alchemy, as understood in contemporary occult interpretations of the documents and texts of medieval alchemy, is an esoteric practice with the goal of purifying the soul until a divine state is attained, in the metaphor of transmuting lead into gold. This practice of divine transmutation is primarily the becoming-a-god of Dragon Rouge. Diving further into the discussion of Dragon Rouge dark alchemy, this same member says:

> To evolve oneself if we say it like that, to become a more, a more enlightened, and to be able to have access to more energy to, really go in to the deep in oneself, it's certainly something really demanding and it's not something which gives immediate rewards but it's rather the way that you become a more, how should I put it a more, you live more you get more out of life and you can do more stuff which results in that, you in that way, in some way become a, what should I say, a more, yes, a more, you give back you can't avoid giving back I mean that if you as a dark magician you reach, different enlightenments different energies through these different systems and techniques then it will surely get that way that in your magic practice you work, you should attain these things for yourself of course but, when you do then, you will unavoidably spread it further to others. It will surely be like that. (IF mgt 2001/47[102]).

101 "Det är stommen om man säger den mörka alkemistiska utvecklingsvägen".

102 "Att utveckla sig själv om vi säger, till att bli en, en mera upplyst, och kunna liksom ha tillgång till mera energi att, liksom gå verkligen på djupet i sig själv, det är ju något som är väldigt krävande och det är inget som ger omedelbar vinning utan snarare är det väl så att du blir en mera, hur skall man säga en mera, du lever mer du får mer ut av livet och du kan göra mer saker vilket gör att, du på det sättet, blir ju på något sätt en, vad skall man säga, en mera, ja, en mera, du ger ju också tillbaka du kan inte undgå att ge tillbaka jag

One can see that although the informant is answering a question about magic as good or evil, and pointing out that the evolved dark magician is a force of harmony, he must still point out that the magic evolution is first and foremost a magic evolution for the individual.

According to the first correspondence course in magic, man attains free will in the alchemical process of dark magic (Dragon Rouge 1996/6: 9). Before this process, man's destiny is pre-determined.

Dragon Rouge is about total personal development. In the process the magician will live a fuller life, thus becoming a more harmonious person and in the end be able to overcome death (see the quotation below). The magician is said to be able to fulfil all his/her dreams and the magic power of the magician is the power of his/her own spirit (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 2-3). The magician who has reached the highest stage of magic evolution has perfected him-/herself and become a god (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 6). The way to perfecting the self is through awakening the internal Dragon-force, and in doing this it is important to direct the force to the specific goal and purpose of perfecting oneself, and, furthermore, actively reflecting on exactly how one wants to evolve (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 8; 1996/3: 1). The magician's personal evolution is thus no passive process. The magician must constantly be aware of the process and actively work for his/her progress.

A good idea of the extent of the self-development is revealed in the way the order defines the higher will.

> it's about a sort of more instinctive inner will, which is similar to what Crowley means by the True Will although perhaps not, it was his definition and we have another perhaps, and, to, in some way, fulfil, one's existence, we feel is, to like, create for oneself a so, how should I put it such a complete a so, perfect and whole, soul, that it can withstand, just about everything if we say it can withstand, death it can withstand, it is like its own universe like its own, how should one say and only then

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menar att om du som en mörkmagiker du når, olika upplysningar olika energier genom de här olika systemen och teknikerna så kommer det ju att bli så att i ditt magiska arbete jobbar du ju, du skall ju uppnå det här för dig själv så klart men, när du gör det så, kommer du oundvikligen att sprida det vidare till andra. Det blir ju så.".

> can one complete one's existence as one isn't any longer controlled by, the limitations we have here, and to reach a, to reach a god-stage. (IF mgt 2001/47[103]).

Personal evolution is the main concern of the Dragon Rouge magician. A male member of the order criticizes the practice of white magicians and 'New Age' practitioners of using their magic to help others in mundane matters. The respondent cast light on the issue by pointing out that it is almost impossible to see all the consequences of one's actions. A superficially benevolent thing, like healing a sick person, can backfire, for example, if the person healed then neglects the reasons why he or she became sick in the first place, whereas a superficially malevolent thing such as injuring a person can be the right course of action, for example, if the person injured otherwise would have caused greater suffering to others.

> This thing with constantly running around helping others on a pretty, low level like Oh you've hurt your knee now I must help you and this, it is a bit that, people want to justify themselves by, by becoming good, on paper, it's a bit this Jesus-thing now we shall sacrifice each other a bit that that I have to I mean the classic thing is that people who cannot manage to face their own problems, they fill their lives with others' problems, … and I have seen this in many light magicians who I have, met … You cannot help anyone else before you have been helped yourself, and this is probably my basic view on dark magic that one, helps oneself, but not in order to help others but you help yourself in order to, like, advance in your life and… (IF mgt 2001/47[104]).

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103 "det handlar om en sorts mera instinktiv inre vilja, som är liknande det som Crowley menar med the True Will fast det kanske inte, det var ju hans definition vi har väl en annan kanske, och, att, på något sätt, fullborda, sin existens, anser vi är, att liksom, skapa sig en så pass, hur skall jag säga en så pass komplett en så pass, fullkomlig och hel, själ, så att den kan stå emot, i stort sett allt om vi säger den kan stå emot, döden den kan stå emot, den är liksom, sin egen, sin egen, sitt eget universum ungefär sin egen, vad man skall säga och då först kan man ju fullborda sin existens genom att då är du ju inte längre styrd av, de begränsningar som vi har här, och att nå ett, att nå ett gudastadium".

104 "Det här med att hela tiden springa runt och hjälpa andra på ett ganska, lågt plan att oj nu har du skadat knäet nu måste jag hjälpa dig och det här, det är väl lite grann att, folk vill liksom rättfärdiga sig själva genom att, genom att bli goda, på pappret, det är lite det här Jesus vi skall offra oss för varandra lite

In the first correspondence course in magic, a method of training through creating a 'soul-mirror' is introduced. The adept has to list his character traits; the ones he/she thinks are good on one list and the bad ones on another. He/she should then meditate over the lists and go deeper into his/her real self, in order to explore whether the traits considered good really are good and vice versa. The lists should then be revised and the list of bad character traits burned. (Dragon Rouge 1996/3: 1). The magician thus goes beyond a secular psychological reflection over his/her personality; he/she actively seeks to refine his/her person through a ritual. Later on in the course, it is stated that the common man uses less than one thousandth of his/her potential, and that, through magic training, one can access and achieve the totality of oneself and one's potential. The magician expands beyond his/her limits. (Dragon Rouge 1996/3: 2-3).

There are however many ways to use magic and not all of them are only beneficial for the magician's personal evolution. Instead of focusing on mundane things one can achieve with magic, such as gaining riches or other physical benefits, the magician should "concentrate on [magic] which is self-developing" (Dragon Rouge 1996/3: 6-7[105]). In order to break away from limiting everyday inhibitions, the magician can perform a 'death-ritual', in which he/she symbolically dies and is reborn purified and re-energized (Dragon Rouge 1996/3: 11).

The discourse of self-evolvement has similarities to characteristic number four of the intrinsic elements of esotericism in Antoine Faivre's classificatory schemata: transmutation (see Faivre 1994:13-14).

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grann att att jag måste jag menar det klassiska är att personer som inte klarar av att möta sina egna problem, de fyller sina liv med andras problem, … och det har jag sett hos många ljusmagiker som jag har, träffat … Du kan ju inte hjälpa någon förrän du själv har blivit hjälpt, och det är väl min liksom grundsyn på mörka magin att man, hjälper sig själv liksom, men inte för att hjälpa andra utan du hjälper dig själv för att, liksom, komma vidare i ditt liv och…" .

105 "[den magi man bör] koncentrera sig på är den självutvecklande".

7.1.3 Individuality

The individuality discourse seems to be the distinctive discourse of late modern society, and in this regard Dragon Rouge is no different from the rest of society. The discourse stresses the individual freedom of the Dragon Rouge member. Each Dragon Rouge member is free to, and indeed expected to, make his/her own choices regarding the practice of magic, progress in his/her magical journey, level of commitment to the organization and magic in itself. The leading members I have interviewed go to great lengths to express how important it is that the member is his/her own person and has the right to choose the ways of practicing magic that best suit him/her. At the same time, the total indulgence in individualism of certain satanic organizations is discouraged. It is stated that Dragon Rouge consists of its members, is formed by its members and that the organization therefore is in a state of constant change. As one leading member says:

> Dragon Rouge we. It's such a wide spectrum of people involved and our magical system grows all the time and evolves with the members which means that, one can very one can really, take in anything, with some, limitations but if somebody is for example really interested in shamanism then then, it's a part of the system. So that, people, perhaps wonder okay what is your system, and it's a bit difficult to describe because it can be quite individual. (IF mgt 2001/47[106]).

What the member is saying here, is that the individual member is totally free to choose the forms of practice that suit him/her and that a once-and-for-all definition of the Dragon Rouge system of magic is impossible. In the first correspondence course in magic it is said that Dragon Rouge introduces and works with many different

106 "Dragon Rouge vi. De är ju så pass brett spektrum med människor som är med och vår vårt magiska system växer ju hela tiden och utvecklas ju tillsammans med medlemmar vilket gör att, man kan ju mycket man kan egentligen, ta in vad som helst, med vissa, begränsningar men om någon till exempel är jätteintresserad av schamanism så så, är det en del av systemet. Så att, folk, kanske undrar okej vad är ert system, och det är väl lite svårt att beskriva för det kan vara ganska individuellt".

forms of magic, and that it is up to the individual magician to test them out and decide which he/she wants to work with and which of them work best for him/her. Later on during the interview the interviewee says that the basis of Dragon Rouge is a "dark alchemical road of progress", and that this is the only idea required that members adhere to (IF mgt 2001/47). However, he quickly retracts this with the words:

> Or required…, […] a member for example who, does not partake in a correspondence course and isn't initiated, who just is a member, can basically [believe what he/she wants to] we have no control over that similarly to political parties for example. They do not know what alignment all the members have. I mean you can become a member of the Conservatives if you want to even if you're a communist for example the same way as a Satanist could become a member of Dragon Rouge and that does not mean that we are Satanists. A nonconformist religious person could become a member and it's not we who are nonconformists because of that but, you could say, the outer members. (IF mgt 2001/47[107]).

Even though he does speak in the discourse of individuality, the specific individual's freedom to define Dragon Rouge is linked to his/her level of activity in the organization.

As the order is dependent of its members, to the degree of being non-existent without them, total individualism would not be beneficial to it, and thus not for its members either. Dragon Rouge can be seen as a group of individuals, where the one strong thing keeping them together is the discourse of individuality. The first correspondence course states that the magicians of course "constantly help each other" but that it still is of crucial importance that the magician "stands for himself and only after that collaborates with the other magicians" (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 3). The magician

107 "Eller måste och måste man, […] en medlem till exempel som, inte går någon brevkurs och inte invigs utan bara är medlem, kan ju i stort sett [tro vad han/hon vill] det har vi ju inte någon koll på det på samma sätt som ett politiskt parti t.ex. de vet ju inte vad alla medlemmar har för inriktning jag menar du kan ju gå med i moderaterna om du vill fast du är kommunist t.ex. på samma sätt så skulle ju en satanist kunna gå med i Dragon Rouge och de betyder ju inte att vi är satanister det skulle ju kunna komma med en frikyrklig person och då är vi ju inte frikyrkliga utan om man säger dom yttre medlemmarna".

should not be a burden on the other magicians or the order. On the Dragon Rouge homepage, the individuality of dark magic is said to be something completely different from the individuality of modernity, which is so prevalent in contemporary society. According to Dragon Rouge, "Materialism … leads to a superficial and desperate form of individualism" which is characterised by "Ego trips and superficial satisfaction", and which "becomes destructive both for the individuals and their surrounding world" (Dragon Rouge 2004c). The individualism of modernity, and most people, is thus no real individualism at all. According to Dragon Rouge, individualism for the dark magician is:

> an on-going transformation and development process that can lead the magician to a divine state and make the self break the boundaries of this life. The magician will realize that desperate egoism does not benefit his individualism, but that individualism is developed through an un-egoistic and dedicated fellowship with equals. (Dragon Rouge 2004c).

What the real individuality of the dark magician consists of is demonstrated in the ritual of the seven power-points, discussed briefly in section 7.1.1 (the ritual is described in Dragon Rouge 1996/3: 10). The magician liberates him-/herself from the dependence on factors that have controlled him/her earlier in his/her life, for example, an important relationship. This liberation not only frees power for the magician, but he/she is additionally free to choose the things important for him/her freely. In contrast to the preceding state, when the magician was in the relationship because of his/her dependence on it, the magician is now in the relationship because he/she chooses to be in it.

The individuality discourse goes even deeper. It is stated in the first correspondence course that "Reality is individual"[108], meaning "That which one understands as reality is reality" [109] (Dragon Rouge 1996/2: 4). In this way, the dark magician constructs his individual reality in the same way he constructs him-/herself, through the practice of magic.

108 "Verkligheten är individuell".
109 "Det man uppfattar som verklighet är också verklighet".

The individuality of Dragon Rouge is, like the discourse of self-evolvement (see section 7.1.2), something different from the individuality of society in general. The dark magician goes through two distinct processes of becoming an individual. The first is the stage which all humans go through, the process of becoming an individual in relation to the mother. The second stage is the stage dark magicians can go through; they can, in and through their magic evolution, pass through another birth and "become individuals in relation to existence" (Dragon Rouge 2004c). In short, the magician becomes a god, deifies him-/herself. Not only is the dark magician an individual, for him/her all answers, morality and reality is individual (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 3; 1996/2: 4).

When discussing such a personal issue as sexuality, and its influence on the practice of magic[110], two female members of the organization replied as follows:

> *[Homo- bi- and heterosexuality in, magic, in Dragon Rouge? … Does it have any magical significance?]*: Yes, it can probably have, **mm, yes in the way that one that, or yes, for my own part at least that one is so, so open as one can be that I don't have any restriction there either, if one like if one sees when one works magically with, some form of sex magic, I don't have any restrictions so, whether it should be masculine or feminine, so in that way, one is probably more open** *[… O T O for example have, some initiations, where it is like, like with homosexual intercourse … is there like any, anything where for example heterosexuality, has a, a role, or where homosexuality has a role, where for example, either has a, unique position?]*: … **no but I believe actually on the whole that openness, is that which, which is** yes but we do not use, as far as I know, **no,** in the form that **n**

110 I asked the question because sex magic is a common feature in contemporary magic. The Great Beast 666, Aleister Crowley (see section 2.1.3), was a strong advocator of sex magic. *Ordo Templi Orientis*, a magical order that Crowley was linked to, had sex-magical initiations in its higher degrees. The 8th degree involved an auto-sexmagical, masturbatory, initiation, and the 9th a heterosexual initiation. Crowley introduced an 11th degree which involved an anal-sexual initiation, which has often been described as a homosexual initiation. According to Henrik Bogdan, the initiation was not strictly homosexual, but opened up the possibility for male-male sexual initiation (Bogdan 2004: 30). Sex-polarity is an important factor in Wicca and many other neopagan and esoteric movements as well. See Bogdan 2003b: 218-233 for the importance of sex-polarity in Wiccan initiation.

> **no, not ceremonially at least, it is probably then if one does it privately but nothing which is a part of,** Dragon Rouge's **of the system** system, no it's not. (IF mgt 2001/55[111]).

What I intended to ask, and what I thought I was asking, was if the dark sex-magical ritual should be of a hetero- or homosexual nature or if it made any difference, but my question was taken as an invitation to explore the respondents' view on sexuality. They stated that each individual member chooses the forms of practice that suit him/her and his/her sexuality is of no importance for magical progress.

When discussing early magic experiences and the possibility of his siblings having had similar experiences, an advanced member said:

> that is very difficult to conclude as these kinds of experiences, are, I mean often very strictly personal, since they can be interpreted in so many different ways, so that even if she had them her context, so to say, would not so to say, so to say legitimize it, for her to talk about it. (IF mgt 2001/11[112]).

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111 "*[Homo- bi- och heterosexualitet i, magi, i Dragon Rouge? … Har det någon magisk, betydelse?]*: Ja, det kan det väl ha, **mm, ja, på så vis att man att, eller ja, för min del i alla fall att man är så, så öppen som man kan vara att jag inte har någon begränsing där heller, om man liksom om man tänker när man arbetar magiskt med, någon form av sexmagi, så har jag inga begränsningar så, om det att det skall vara manligt eller kvinnligt, så på så vis så, är man väl mera öppen** *[… O T O till exempel har ju, vissa invigningar, där det är liksom, liksom med homosexuellt samlag … finns det liksom någon, nånting där till exempel heterosexualitet, har en, en roll, eller där homosexualitet har en roll, där till exempel någondera har en, särställning?]*: … **nej men jag tror faktiskt överhuvudtaget att öppenhet, är det som, som är** ja men vi använder oss inte av, vad jag vet, **nej,** i form att **inte nej, inte ceremoniellt i alla fall, det är väl kanske i så fall i fall man gör det privat men ingenting som ingår i,** Dragon Rouges **i systemet** system, det gör det inte". This was an interview with two respondents. The questions in parentheses and *italics* were asked by me and the two respondents are identified with answers by respondent number two being in **bold** font.

112 "det där är ju väldigt svårt att avgöra eftersom den här typen av upplevelser, är ju, alltså ofta väldigt strängt personliga, eftersom de kan ju tolkas på så många olika sätt, så att även om hon skulle ha det så skulle kanske hennes kontext, så att säga, inte så att säga, så att säga legitimera, för henne själv att berätta om det".

He states that each person has the right to, and indeed has to, define his/her experiences[113] for him-/herself. This concerns active Dragon Rouge members as well. The order does not have a rulebook which states how experiences should be interpreted, although the common thing after a meeting including practice is to sit down and discuss the experience with all other members present. In this setting the personal experience is brought to a social level and the meaning of the experience is negotiated with the others who had a similar experience.

7.1.4 Magic is Demanding

The Magic-is-demanding discourse centres on the idea of the practice of magic as an activity which demands much of the practitioner, physically as well as mentally. The discourse presents the magician as a balanced, capable and courageous individual, distinct from ordinary people, non-magicians. The dark magician gains control over his life and situation, as well as knowledge, through "seeing under the surface", but this art is a "difficult, demanding and dangerous" one (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 1). As stated in the first correspondence course in magic: "Magic is not for the weak"[114], "It is tiring to become aware"[115] and "It takes power to acquire power and to have power"[116] (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 2. See also Dragon Rouge 1996/3: 4). For most people, magic is far too demanding, and even the would-be magician should be dedicated to his/her craft.

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113 In the Swedish language the English word 'experience' is conveyed by two different nouns, 'erfarenhet' and 'upplevelse', depending on the use and context of the word. 'Erfarenhet' (*Erfahrung* in German) is used in the context of something which has given a person some kind of knowledge – as in the sentence "I have much experience of childcare". 'Upplevelse' (*Erlebnis* in German) refers more to the emotional interpretation of an event, such as in the sentence "That car-crash last night was a terrible experience". In the context of magic experience the simultaneous usage of both meanings could be argued.

114 "Magi är inte för de svaga".

115 "Det är ansträngande att bli medveten".

116 "Det tar kraft att få kraft och att ha kraft".

The magic of Dragon Rouge is frequently distinguished from the magic of white magicians and from religion.

> Religion, it's like, describes a relation to, we'll say, the hidden forces that is more passive, that is to say we say a religious person, can be in contact with forces which are similar to the forces a magician is in contact with but, he has a more passive relationship and he sees his life situation as controlled, by these forces rather than that he himself can control the forces, one could say and as I would describe magic it's that, one, confronts different forces and, different concepts and one goes into this, in order to, discover one's own, connection to them, and in order to, be able to yes [control them]. (IF mgt 2001/47[117]).

Here, the magician presents himself as a person actively in control of his own destiny. The control he has reached as a magician is not something given to him. He has worked hard to attain it and is working hard to keep it. According to the Dragon Rouge position, dark magic is much more demanding than religion or white magic. Even white magic is demanding, and the white magician should be mentally and physically fit, but the dark magician working with the forces of chaos has to be even more stable (Dragon Rouge 1996/ 1: 3).

> That we step into the, unknown to illuminate it one could say and there we have the Lucifer, principle the one who, who, illuminates the unknown and who has, the power and it requires a lot of power and an energy and a lot of Will and a lot of, dedication to be able be able to walk this road, and it is probably this that many take for some form of elitism […] What we have it's, it's, an initiatory system which must be able to offer a, like, a form of connecting thread on this journey because it can be dangerous perhaps to be thrown

117 "Religion, det är liksom, beskriver en relation till, vi säger, de dolda krafterna som är lite mera passiv, alltså vi talar en religiös person, kan vara i kontakt med krafter som är liknande de som en magiker är i kontakt men, han har ett mer passivt förhållande och han ser sin livssituation som snarare styrd, av de här krafterna än att han själv kan styra krafterna, kan man säga och som jag skulle beskriva magi så är det att, man, konfronterar olika krafter och, olika begrepp och man går in i det här, för att, upptäcka sin egen, koppling till dem, och för att, kunna ja [kontrollera dem]…"

> into this kind of development if one doesn't know what one is doing (IF mgt 2001/47[118]).

What the magician does, is not something for the faint-hearted. The magician has to throw him/herself fully into the practice of magic, he/she has to eat, drink, breathe and sleep magic. Already from the start, the adept has to be a balanced and powerful individual in order for him/her to become a true magician. Here, we also see the courageous aspect of the magician. The practice of magic can be dangerous and the magician is someone who has the courage to travel his road.

> *[Psychic stability and instability and magic?]*: **I believe it can be dangerous (laughter)** *[Magic can be dangerous?]*: Yes **yes** yes, at least this form of magic that we work with **mm,** I mean one goes, down so much in, into one's hidden parts and so so I believe it can be, if one is unstable then it can, 'easily be too much chaos' like **mm** wow, and not being able to, it is that which is so important as a, chaos magician like to be able somewhere to, keep an eye (laughter), no like keep, have to work it is so important to work upwards and if one is a bit unstable no it can be really dangerous **mm** one can become insane, **one loses oneself I believe one has to have a quite basic** lose oneself **exactly, I believe one has to have a quite basic somewhere still, I mean order, in one self not on a superficial plane but as a basic order and somewhere a quite open, self-image,** yes **and contact and so that one so as to say somewhere has it is difficult to say what 'reality' is but one has still have to have some kind of contact with the outside world, which is somewhere, which lies at a level at least adjusted to society (laughter) so to speak, because, otherwise I believe that it is really easy to get lost in all sorts of things in one self and, in everything one drags up because one draws up pretty strong forces sometimes,** that is true **so I believe that it can be very dangerous if one is,**

118 "Att vi går in i det, okända för att belysa det kan man säga och där har vi ju Lucifer, principen den som, som, belyser det okända och den som har, liksom den kraften och det krävs ju en väldig kraft och en energi och en väldig vilja och ett väldigt, liksom dedikation för att kunna kunna gå den här vägen, och det är väl det sedan som många kan kunna tolka som en form av elitism [...] vad vi har det att, det är, en ett initiatoriskt system som skall kunna erbjuda en, liksom, en sorts, röd tråd på den här vandringen för det kan vara det kan vara farligt kanske att kastas in i en sån här utveckling om man inte vet vad man gör".

> **unstable, or if one like is just depressed or something for a while then I believe that it can be, to do too big things then can be,** that is true **dangerous,** but at the same time it is good to have a system to go by as we have here **mm, that is really true** I believe that it would be really dangerous in any case for me as a private in other words I mean that if I worked completely by myself and not have any contact with any other, chaos magician or something … it is that which can be good with us all having a system to go by, **exactly,** one has to have a light in the dark. (IF mgt 2001/55[119]).

The above excerpt demonstrates the courage aspect of the discourse, as well as the relatively tough requirements on the magician. The magician should "dedicate all his power and attention" in his magical activities and progress is only attained through "great sacrifices" (Dragon Rouge 1996/3: 10). The magician has to be in

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119 "*[Psykisk stabilitet och instabilitet och magi?]*: **jag tror att det kan vara farligt (skratt)** *[Magi kan vara farligt?]*: ja **ja** ja, i alla fall just den här formen som vi jobbar med **mm**, alltså man går, ner så mycket i, sina dolda sidor och så så tror jag att det kan vara, om man är ostabil så kan det, 'lätt bli för mycket kaos' liksom **mm** huj då, och inte kunna, det är ju det som är så viktigt som, kaosmagiker liksom att kunna, någonstans, hålla ögat (skratt), nej liksom hålla, måste jobba det är så viktigt att jobba upp och är man lite ostabil nej det kan vara riktigt farligt **mm** man kan ju bli, sinnessjuk, **man går bort sig jag tror att man måste ha en ganska grund** förvilla sig **ja precis, jag tror man måste ha en ganska grundläggande nånstans ändå, alltså ordning, i sig själv inte på ytligt plan men som en grundläggande ordning och en liksom nånstans ganska öppen, självbild,** joo **och kontakt och så att man liksom ändå nånstans har det är ju svårt att säga vad 'verkligheten' är men man måste ändå ha någonslags kontakt med omvärlden, som är nånstans, som ligger på en nivå som i alla fall är samhällsanpassad (skratt) om man skall säga, för att, annars tror jag att det är jättelätt att man bara går vilse i allt möjligt i sig själv och, i allt som man drar upp för man dra ju ändå upp ganska starka krafter ibland,** verkligen **så jag tror att det kan vara väldigt farlig ifall man är, instabil, eller om man liksom bara är deprimerad eller någonting under en period så tror jag att de kan vara, att göra för stora grejer då kan nog vara,** verkligen **farligt,** men samtidigt är det ju ändå bra att ha ett system att gå efter som här **mm, det är det ju verkligen** jag tror att det skulle vara jättefarligt ändå för mig som privat alltså jag menar att om jag skulle helt jobba själv och inte ha kontakt men någon annan, kaosmagiker eller någonting … det är det som kan vara bra med dethär att vi alla har ett system att gå efter att, **precis,** man måste ju också ha en lykta i mörkret". This was an interview with two respondents. The questions in parentheses and in *italic* font were asked by me and the two respondents are identified by answers by respondent number two being in **bold** font.

touch with him/herself and be in a sound and fit mental state. Practicing dark magic can be downright dangerous for the mentally unstable or otherwise problem-ridden individual (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 3). The order is a quintessential tool for the adept, and it is an order of exceptional individuals. As two female members state: "*(Is magic something that you, in other words wouldn't recommend for, all humans?)* **No, I would** No **not** no, not this form of magic" (IF mgt 2001/55[120]).

Dark magic can be dangerous even for the aware and stable magician. In the first correspondence course in magic, a magic experiment which almost resulted in disaster is described (Dragon Rouge 1996/4: 3-4). A group of Dragon Rouge magicians had gathered in order to perform a joint astral journey. As the magicians gathered on the astral plane, they discovered that one of them was missing. He had got lost on the astral plane and had ended up in a form of astral labyrinth from which he could not find his way out. It took the joint efforts and assumed risk of all the other magicians in the group to help him find his way back. After waking up, he felt ill and was disoriented. Several Dragon Rouge members have also told me how they have experienced nausea and almost physical injuries in Kundalini-meditations where the Kundalini-force has been awakened all too rapidly and strongly (personal correspondence with Dragon Rouge members).

The talking of the dangers of certain spiritual activities is common to many religious and spiritual traditions practising extreme forms of mediations, rituals etc. In Tantric Yoga, the dangers of the tradition and the practices linked to the tradition are often treated at length. In Tantra, it is often stated that acts that would condemn a normal man to eternal suffering in Hell mean salvation for the Tantric adept. Tantra is said to be the path for *Viras*, heroes. (Woodroffe 1956: 112-117). Common to many expositions of different LHP traditions is that the tradition is a quick but extremely dangerous road to salvation (see Svoboda 1986: 12). The discourse

120 "(Är magi något som ni, alltså inte skulle rekommendera för, alla människor?): **Nej, jag skulle** Nej **inte göra det** nej, inte den här formen av magi **nej**". This was an interview with two respondents. The question in parenthesis and in *italic* font was asked by me and the two respondents are identified by answers by respondent number two being in **bold** font.

of magic as demanding establishes dark magic as an activity for unique, brave and exceptional individuals; individuals who are out of the ordinary. The discourse can also help to protect the practitioner from the possible lack of understanding, and in many times probably even ridicule, from outsiders to the tradition. Through the magic-is-demanding discourse the individual can stand on his/her own and gather strength from the fact that he/she has had, and still has, the courage, conviction and insight to make more out of his/her life than the common man, even if he does not have any magic-performing colleague in his/her immediate physical vicinity to draw support from.

The discourse of magic-as-demanding also portrays the dark magician as an elite a some sort. I refer to the discussion on the subject in section 3.1.

7.1.5 Nature

The concept of correspondences, the idea that everything in the cosmos is interlinked in someway and that everything you do affects something else as well, is, as a rule, an important aspect of esoteric worldviews. Nature is something which is often viewed as sacred in a magic reality, and as a key to the mysteries of the universe. This is apparent particularly in contemporary esoteric spirituality and neopaganism. The critique of monotheistic religion and its devaluation of nature, is a key factor in the Dragon Rouge nature discourse.

> … there was a harmony somewhere that one did not destroy nature unnecessarily for example, but then, when this started, in and with Christianity, all forms of nature, worship like this, it is sort of like this, it's a miscreant it's idol-worship … sure I mean in for example Sweden this form of earth-religion continued for a very long time there was this with instead of calling for Odin one called for Jesus but it was exactly the same force that came. (IF mgt 2001/47[121]).

121 "… det fanns en harmoni någonstans att man förstörde inte naturen i onödan till exempel, men sen så, när det här liksom började, i och med

The discourse plays an important part in the 'Contra 3' statement on the official homepage of the order, much in unison with the above quote. Instead of a dualistic monotheistic worldview, Dragon Rouge adheres to a monistic worldview where "there are connections between everything" and "where the divine light is [still] present in man" (Dragon Rouge 2004c). Nature is thus living and divine. Dragon Rouge is opposed to the materialistic notion which, according to Dragon Rouge, stipulates that "nature and the animals are made for man to use" and that "Man can do what he likes with animals and nature" (Dragon Rouge 2004c). Another result experienced with materialistic ideology is that man himself becomes a "soulless organism being compared to cars or computers" (Dragon Rouge 2004c). This view of man, animals and nature naturally limits man's possibility to reach beyond his limitations and fulfil his potential.

As everything is connected, harming nature would be harming oneself. Man should respect the divine nature and all parts of it. Many Dragon Rouge members are vegetarian or even vegan, often because of a respect for animals, which in itself is a magic act. It is stated on the Dragon Rouge homepage that "Man can become god by entering outside the humans limits and recognizing the importance of the beast" (Dragon Rouge 2004c). The magician thus frees him-/herself from the ideology of materialism and experiences him-/herself as a part of the divine nature. In realizing his/her connection to everything else the magician has a great tool for magic development.

Nature is not just something outside oneself, outside the urban environment; nature is inside the magician.

> What one as a dark magician does, is to, one starts to, animate nature again through experiences we say that one one, we work with the Kundalini which is the life-force which is, incorporated in the body and it's awakened then, through

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kristendomen så 'äh' men vad då, all form av natur, dyrkan såhär, det är liksom så här, det är en avart det är avgudadyrkan … visst jag menar till exempel i Sverige fortsatte ju den här typen av jordreligion väldigt länge det fanns ju det här istället för att kanske ropa på Oden så ropade man på Jesus men det var precis samma kraft som kom".

> different channels and [*illegible word*] and when this force is awakened then one can more easily have magical experiences and and, and all of this, and this means that, one gets a slightly different, different view of things suddenly the trees aren't pieces of wood but can they again become cosmic. (IF mgt 2001/47[122]).

Nature, and the care of everything living, is important as it all is a part of the magician. What the magician does, reflects upon him/her, and therefore it would not be proper for him/her to do destructive things to nature, magically or otherwise. As nature is a powerful and important force for the magician, it would be plain stupid for him/her to disturb or destroy it unwarrantedly.

> Yes for me it's self-evident that everything, everything is linked, everything belongs together everything I do affects somebody else, both humans and animals and the whole planet, so to me it's really important that I do not, destroy, unnecessarily, I do as much as I can in order to like, take care of everything living, this I feel is strongly connected to magic, exactly because one is aware of I mean otherwise one wouldn't, I mean if one did not, believe that everything was linked then one wouldn't even be a magician. (IF mgt 2001/55[123]).

Much Dragon Rouge magic practice employs nature in one form or another. In the Dragon Rouge correspondence course in magic, the adept is encouraged to write down a list of what he/she wishes to

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122 "Vad man som mörkmagiker gör, är väl att, man börjar, besjäla naturen igen genom upplevelser vi säger att man man, vi jobbar ju med kundalinin som är livskraften som finns, förborgad i kroppen och den väcks upp då, genom olika, kanaler och [*otydligt ord*] och när den här kraften är uppväckt då så kan man ju lättare, få magiska upplevelser och och, och det hela, och det innebär ju att, man får ju en lite annan, annan syn på saker helt plötsligt så är inte träden trädbitar utan det här är de kan igen bli kosmiska".

123 "Jo för mig är de självklart att allt, allt hänger ihop, allt hör ihop allt som jag gör påverkar någon annan, både människor och djur och hela planeten, så att för mig är det jätteviktigt, och självklart att jag inte, förstör, i onödan, jag gör så mycket jag kan för att liksom, ta vara på allt levande, det tycker jag hänger ihop jättemycket med magi, just eftersom man är medveten om alltså annars skulle man ju inte, alltså om man inte, trodde att allting hängde ihop då skulle man ju inte ens vara magiker".

accomplish in his life and to bury that piece of paper in the soil or in a natural body of water, such as in a natural pond (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 15). Although not stated explicitly, the idea seems to be that nature, through the soil or the natural water, imbues the magician with power in order to effect the realization of the wishes on his/her list. A similar strategy is described in the ritual of creating a 'soul-mirror' (described in section 7.1.2), in which the magician is told to *"plant"* (note the choice of word, my translation from the Swedish "plantera") a list of his/her character traits considered good in a place in nature which feels personal for the magician (Dragon Rouge 1996/3: 1). Powerful magic items can be found when "strolling in the forest" (1996/3: 7).

When using living parts of nature, such as cutting a branch of a living tree as opposed to using a fallen branch, in magic rituals, the magician should "ask the living natural object for permission" before doing so (Dragon Rouge 1996/5: 9). Hurting nature is thus not something which is totally out of the question as long as the magician recognises nature as alive and pays it due respect. In discussing witchcraft, as a distinct form of dark magic, nature is often said to be the best teacher the witch and warlock can have. It is said that the best places to come into contact with the truly magical forces are in nature untouched by human hands (Dragon Rouge 2001j/1: 5-6). The structured existence and surroundings of the city, human civilization, are said to complicate and hinder the magician in his/her magic development (Dragon Rouge 1996/2: 5). The city is the pivotal creation of human civilization and represents, as such, the forces of order and structure, the light forces of existence. Nature, on the other hand, represents primordial chaos and the dark forces of dissolution and creation. The forces of order are passive and stable, and cause this reaction in humans as well, whereas the forces of chaos are active and instable, and thus support and strengthen the creative and active agency in man.

The nature discourse partly corresponds with elements one and two in Faivre's intrinsic characteristics of esotericism, the notion of correspondences and the idea of a living nature (Faivre 1994: 10-12). The nature discourse of Dragon Rouge does, however, incorporate a form of ecological thinking and action, possible through, but not required in either, the notion of correspondences

or the notion of a living nature. This form of ecological thinking is very common in neopaganism and in much of the 'New Age' milieu (see Harvey 1997: 126-142; York 1995: 166).

7.1.6 Women's Rights

The women's rights discourse is most prominent among the female members of the order, but is also more indirectly produced in the teachings of the order. Female deities and demonesses, such as Kali, Hel and Lilith, are of special importance in rituals and texts. Male deities play a much less visible role. On an organizational plane, the order has a women's ritual group. The group is not strictly limited to female magicians, although it focuses on feminine aspects of magic and at the time of writing consisted of only female magicians (see section 5.1.1 for an example of the Women's Circle's magic work). A female member active in the formation of the women's group has the following to say about the group:

> For the order itself, it [the women's group] is very important because, if it would only be, men, who hold the threads all the time things will obviously take a special direction. So I think that it is very important and I know that, Thomas, and the others also feel that it is important. (IF mgt 2001/57[124]).

The leading members of the order are also careful to point out that the percentage of female members in the order is high (see also Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 7; 2004b).

> *[The position of woman and man in Dragon Rouge?]*: There's **No,** I mean there's no difference we're humans we're magical creatures **I'm of the opinion that it really feels like we've moved beyond those, there aren't any gender roles in DR, it is, I've never felt that it's of any significance** that I've

124 För orden i sig så, är den [kvinnogruppen] jätteviktig för att alltså, om det bara skulle vara, män, som håller i saker hela tiden det får ju en speciell riktning självklart så blir det ju så. Så att, jag tycker att det är jätteviktigt och jag vet att, Thomas, och de andra tycker också att det är viktigt.

> been treated, in any other way because I am, a woman **but then again we are quite untypical also, I mean purely like, if one is to be superficial then we're very untypical, when it comes to purely normal I mean it is the girls who have driver's licences and fix the cars and it's the boys who sit and, sit at home and,** never having done military service (laughter) **no exactly no one has done military service and it is that is to say we are very untypical so also so that we, we've probably moved beyond at least these traditional, gender roles**. (IF mgt 2001/55[125]).

The above excerpt is the response from two female members of Dragon Rouge concerning the position and role of women in the organization. As one can see, the members are careful to give the image of women in the organization having an important role and emphasize this through inverting the traditional gender roles of men and women. It is the women who are technologically capable and active, and it is the men who have taken on a more female passive role. The point is not to exhibit the male magicians as lazy and incompetent, but rather to stress the fact that the female magicians have a strong standing in the organization. The excerpt also employs the discourse of individuality, in stating that the members of Dragon Rouge are untypical. The magicians of Dragon Rouge create their own roles and are not bound to traditional gender roles.

In practical matters the order operates with non-essential gender, the case seems, however, to be different in certain practices.

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125 "*[Mannens o kvinnans ställning i Dragon Rouge?]*: det finns **Nej**, alltså det är ingen skillnad vi är människor vi är magiska varelser liksom **jag tycker att det känns faktiskt väldigt mycket som att man har gått bortom de där, det finns inte nåra könsroller i dr, det är, jag har aldrig känt det att det är någon betydelse** att jag har blivit behandlad, på något annat vis för att jag är, kvinna **men sen så är vi ganska otypiska också, alltså rent sådär, om man nu ska vara ytlig så är vi väldigt otypiska, vad det gäller, rent vanliga alltså typ det är tjejerna som har körkort och lagar bilarna och det är killarna som sitter och, sitter hemma och,** aldrig har gjort lumpen (skratt) **nej precis ingen har gjort lumpen och det är alltså vi är väldigt otypiska så också så att vi, vi har nog gått bortom i alla fall de här traditionella, könsrollerna**". This was an interview with two respondents. The question in parenthesis and *italics* was asked by me and the two respondents are separated with the answers by respondent number two being in **bold** font.

For example, in presentation of the women's group's work at the annual meeting of 2004 (see section 5.1.1) it was said that women channel the feminine forces differently from men, in the ceremonial opening of lodge Sinistra (see section 5.1.3) two female members had a specific ritual function, in the course on ceremonial magic (see section 5.1.2) the participants were divided into groups according to gender, and in the initiation into the second degree of the order (see section 5.1.4) the male officials played traditionally male roles. A division is also made into the feminine and the masculine, although these forces are thought to exist in both men and women.

Obviously the male-female dichotomy does play some part in the Dragon Rouge context. Whether the dichotomy is based on a psychological notion, that women are more easily associated with the feminine and men with the masculine – both for the person taking on the role and for the other persons participating, or on a metaphysical level, where women and men are viewed as actually embodying actual feminine and masculine forces, is difficult to answer. In the light of Dragon Rouge discursive practices and philosophies I deem the first interpretation to be more likely, although this probably varies among individual practitioners. The order does, however, operate on a more gender-de-essentialized level than, for example, Gardnerian Wicca. In the above examples from the ethnographies, the division into males and females was not absolutely necessary. In the pragmatic nature of the order the rituals and ceremonies could have been performed equally well even if there had been only men or only women attending.

The relative lack of women in the Inner Circles of Dragon Rouge does, however, show that the women's rights discourse need not have practical consequences to its fullest suggested degree.

In the official Dragon Rouge material, the women's rights discourse rears its head most clearly in the critique of dominant contemporary religion and values. In stating what terrible atrocities the all-powerful Christian monotheistic God is involved in according to the Bible, the repression of women is specifically mentioned, together with genocide (Dragon Rouge 2004c). The other acts are lumped together as "most thinkable atrocities" (Dragon Rouge 2004c).The reason for the down-valuation of women and the feminine is said to be the fact that "The monotheistic god is

generally always a man" and that this, in turn, has resulted in the defining of women as the evil and dangerous Other (Dragon Rouge 2004c). When asked about her view on Christianity, a female member responded: "I don't like Christianity, because, it is a, denial of femininity on the whole" (IF mgt 2001/58[126]). Moslem religion and culture is criticised for being oppressive and violent towards women, and the same is said about medieval Christian religion and culture (Dragon Rouge 2001j/3: 3; 2004c).

The women's rights discourse has to be understood in the context of contemporary Swedish society in which the order was born and developed. The idea of equality between the sexes is a very important and normative guideline in Swedish society. As in all of contemporary Western society, the aspiration in Sweden has since the middle of the twentieth century been to forge a society where individuals of both sexes have equal opportunities and possibilities. The political powers have attempted to effect this process through law and education. The Scandinavian societies have been forerunners in the ideology of equality, and Sweden has taken an especially active role in the process. This is not to say that the ideology has had all the desired effects, or that it in itself does not fall short in some way. Even in Swedish society, women are generally in a less advantageous position than men, and lack the power status that men have in their capacity as men. As Dragon Rouge is a part of Swedish society and adheres to many of the dominating ideas of Western society, even though it still criticises some of the key dogmas of the secular west – as I have shown earlier in this text, the order, quite naturally, also agrees with the ideology of equality between the sexes. In this ideology no human should have his or her possibilities or rights decreased (or increased for that matter) because of their sex.

In addition to this, the discourse of women's rights is to be understood in the context of the appraisal of the feminine aspects of the divine, which is of such great importance in Dragon Rouge. As shown in section 4.1.2, the usage of female symbolism in dealing with the divine is a key concept in Left Hand Path traditions. The feminine represents the dark and hidden aspects of reality, whereas

126 "Jag tycker inte om kristendomen, eftersom, det är ett, förnekande av kvinnlighet överhuvudtaget".

the masculine represents the light and obtrusive forces. In the second correspondence course in magic, the woman is said to "represent the gate to the dimensions of magic" (Dragon Rouge 2001j/3: 3[127]). "She is Mother Earth and through her womb life is born and dies. […] She is the underworld and the mother of all life." (Dragon Rouge 2001j/3: 3[128]). The physical human female represents the actual feminine forces of existence and, as such, repressing her would be a symbolic act of repressing the feminine forces, and would thus hinder the magician in his magic development. In Tantrism one can find several good examples of how women are praised, and even worshipped, as representatives of Shakti. One example is Yoni-Puja, in which a human woman and especially her genitals are worshipped (see Gröndahl 2000: 63; Walker 1982: 59).

Reverence for the feminine divine, with special attention being given to the needs of female members, is typical of neopagan movements. In the early fall of 2004, Dragon Rouge was defined as a feminist magic order on an online-encyclopaedia website. There was some discussion on the Dragon Rouge members' board about this identification, most of which took the slightly amused stance "now we have been identified with every single existing political ideology". As the order wishes to stay independent from any specific political ideology or movement, and feminism is generally considered as such, the identification was not popular and the text on the encyclopaedia website was changed.

127 "…representerar porten till magins dimensioner.".

128 "Hon är Moder Jord och genom henne föds och dör livet. […] Hon är dödsriket och modern till allt liv.".

7.2 The Web of Discourses

All of the above-mentioned discourses are deeply interwoven and exist in a dialogical relation to each other. For example, the magic-is-all-encompassing and the nature discourses are deeply coexistent and build on and support each other. This same relation can be seen between the nature and the women's rights discourses, between the self-evolvement and the magic-is-all-encompassing discourses, the women's rights and the individuality discourses, and so on. The prerequisites of a discourse can be seen in one or many of the other discourses and in this way the discursive complex is built into a coherent whole. I call this condition and process of coexistence and interdependency the web of discourses. Another suitable metaphor is that of a tunnel-system. A system of tunnels consists of several tunnels which intersect at various points along their individual paths. Although each tunnel is a separate whole, there is no tunnel-system without the intersecting of the tunnels. In the web-metaphor, each of the threads of the web are necessary in constructing the web, as well as in keeping it functional.

In the Dragon Rouge context, the nature and women's rights discourses are closely connected. As the feminine aspects of the divine, of existence and of cosmos/chaos are the ones focused upon, and viewed as inherent in nature, interlinking quite naturally occurs. Feminine magic powers and female divinities are considered to be more representative of the dark and unknown forces which the Dragon Rouge magicians strive to reach, and nature in itself is where these forces are to be found. To quote passages from the first correspondence course in magic: "[The woman] represent[s] the gate to the dimensions of magic" and is "Mother Earth" through whose "womb life is born and dies" and who is furthermore "the underworld and the mother of all life" (Dragon Rouge 1996/3: 3). Woman and nature are quite obviously closely connected, even to the extent of existing within each other. With this in mind, both the women's rights discourse and the nature discourse can be more easily understood, and become more coherent and viable. Within the nature discourse, nature is seen as the source of magic, the living thing from which the magician draws his/her power and through

which the magician can access as well as strengthen the powers and forces inherent within him-/herself. Nature gains a twofold value. As the source of magic forces, nature is quite obviously important for the magician and should thus be preserved and protected. As a living entity, nature should gain the same rights as any other living entity, and included in this view is the moving away from the human being as a rightly privileged organism. The woman, as a part of all of this, is seen in a different light than traditionally and gains a status as an equal to her fellow man. The recognition of the relative disadvantages for the female sex craves conscious and active action in order to counteract these disadvantages.

Similarly to the nature and the women's rights discourses, the discourses of magic-as all-encompassing and nature are closely linked, perhaps even more closely than the aforementioned discourses. In a large part, the esteem for nature stems from the idea of the interlinkage of everything, which is the key concept of the magic-is-all-encompassing discourse. I will return to an interview excerpt introduced in section 7.1.5 in order to demonstrate this more clearly.

> Yes for me it is self-evident that everything, everything is linked, everything belongs together everything I do affects somebody else, both humans and animals and the whole planet, so to me it is really important that I do not, destroy, unnecessarily, I do as much as I can in order to like, take care of everything living, this I feel is strongly connected to magic, exactly because one is aware of I mean otherwise one wouldn't, I mean if one did not, believe that everything was linked then one wouldn't even be a magician. (IF mgt 2001/55[129]).

129 "Jo för mig är det självklart att allt, allt hänger ihop, allt hör ihop allt som jag gör påverkar någon annan, både människor och djur och hela planeten, så att för mig är det jätteviktigt, och självklart att jag inte, förstör, i onödan, jag gör så mycket jag kan för att liksom, ta vara på allt levande, det tycker jag hänger ihop jättemycket med magi, just eftersom man är medveten om alltså annars skulle man ju inte, alltså om man inte, trodde att allting hängde ihop då skulle man ju inte ens vara magiker".

As we can see, the high valuation of nature stems directly from the idea of the interconnectedness of all and everything. In this view, the human being steps down from the god-given position of absolute ruler of things material, and takes up residence as a part of everything else. The divine essence of nature is recognized and reasserted, as shown in earlier quotations in section 7.1.5. Included in the magic-is-all-encompassing discourse is the truer and more total position of dark magic, in comparison to religion and "white" spirituality – even nature-based such like Wicca, as advocators of the total unity of everything. It is felt that "white spirituality" disregards the dark as a part of the totality, and falsely attribute lighter aspects to nature. As a result, dark magic becomes the more functional advocator of the protection of nature as well, although this is not directly stated in any of my source material.

As said earlier, the magic-is-demanding discourse represents the magician as a person actively in control of his/her own life and destiny. The way to achieve this control is through the identification of the interconnectedness of everything, which is the tenet of the magic-is-all-encompassing discourse.

> That we step into the, unknown to illuminate it one could say and there we have the Lucifer, principle the one who, who, illuminates the unknown and who has, the power and it requires a lot of power and an energy and a lot of Will and a lot of, dedication to be able be able to walk this road. (IF mgt 2001/47[130]).

This quotation, first presented in section 7.1.4, shows the connection between the two aforementioned discourses. Everything is connected, it is the magician's task to show the interconnections – mainly for him-/herself in order to progress in magic, and this pursuit is potentially dangerous for, and demanding of, the would-be magician. Seeing the interconnectedness of everything, fully – also including the dark aspects regularly neglected by white

130 "Att vi går in i det, okända för att belysa det kan man säga och där har vi ju Lucifer, principen den som, som, belyser det okända och den som har, liksom den kraften och det krävs ju en väldig kraft och en energi och en väldig vilja och ett väldigt, liksom dedikation för att kunna kunna gå den här vägen".

magicians, means experiencing them. Experiencing the dark is dangerous, demanding and exerting, partly due to inherent psychological defence mechanisms, and partly due to the cultural and religious expulsion of these aspects into a dark void.

The self-evolvement and the individuality discourses are interconnected at the most basic level. The ultimate goal with the dark magic of Dragon Rouge is, as stated earlier, the attainment of god-like status for the magician. God-like status is signified by the magician identifying, communicating with and strengthening his/her core person, talked of as the Inner or True Self/Will etc., in the end becoming a creator of his/her own reality. In the process of personal evolution, the magician is indeed obliged to nurture his/her individuality. As noted in section 7.1.3, the Dragon Rouge discourse of individuality does not specifically separate the individual and the collective, but rather the two of them – and the well-being of the two - are dependent on each other. In the following interview excerpt, presented earlier in section 7.1.3, the intermixing of the two discourses becomes clear.

> *[Homo- bi- and heterosexuality in, magic, in Dragon Rouge? … Does it have any magical significance?]*: Yes, it can probably have, **mm, yes in the way that one that, or yes, for my own part at least that one is so, so open as one can be that I don't have any restriction there either, if one like if one sees when one works magically with, some form of sex magic, I don't have any restrictions like that, whether it should be masculine or feminine, so in that way, one is probably more open**. (IF mgt 2001/55[131]).

The intimate question of sexual orientation becomes the pivotal point of the nurturing of the person's individuality, in an obvious

131 "*[Homo- bi- och heterosexualitet i, magi, i Dragon Rouge? … Har det någon magisk, betydelse?]*: Ja, det kan det väl ha, **mm, ja, på så vis att man att, eller ja, för min del i alla fall att man är så, så öppen som man kan vara att jag inte har någon begränsing där heller, om man liksom om man tänker när man arbetar magiskt med, nån form av sexmagi, så har jag inga begränsningar så, om det att det skall vara manligt eller kvinnligt, så på så vis så, är man väl mera öppen**". This was an interview with two respondents. The questions in parentheses and *italics* were asked by me and the two respondents are identified by answers by respondent number two being in **bold** font.

exercise in personal development. Although a key notion in the individuality discourse is the freedom of the individual to make his/her own choices, the interlinkage of the discourse with that of personal evolution highlights a perhaps more basic, and arguably more magically oriented, point in the discourse. The individual freedom is not only, and perhaps not primarily, for the mundane freedom of choice but serves higher purposes in the process of becoming a god.

In addition to the self-evolvement discourse, the individuality discourse is also closely linked to the discourse of women's rights. The individuality discourse entails the freedom and, as stated earlier, the outright responsibility of the individual magician to be and become what he/she is. The women's rights discourse, on the other hand, maintains the tenet of the female members to have the freedom to stay clear of constricting gender roles. The two discourses operate together quite easily. As the quotation below shows, the two discourses tend to coexist, lending authority and credibility to each other.

> **I'm of the opinion that it really feels like we've moved beyond those, there aren't any gender roles in DR, it is, I've never felt that it's of any significance** that I've been treated, in any other way because I am, a woman **but then again we are quite untypical too [...] we've probably moved beyond at least these traditional, gender roles**. (IF mgt 2001/55[132]).

The absence of traditional gender roles in Dragon Rouge is not simply a worldly and political undertaking, but goes much deeper in the task of stressing the individual freedom of the magician to go beyond traditional gender roles. The Dragon Rouge magicians are depicted as untypical, and thus exceptional and enlightened

132 "**jag tycker att det känns faktiskt väldigt mycket som att man har gått bortom det där, det finns inte nåra könsroller i dr, det är, jag har aldrig känt det att det är någon betydelse** att jag har blivit behandlad, på något annat vis för att jag är, kvinna **men sen så är vi ganska otypiska också [...] vi har nog gått bortom i alla fall de här traditionella, könsrollerna**". This was an interview with two respondents. The question in parenthesis and in *italic* font was asked by me and the two respondents are separated by the answers by respondent number two being in **bold** font.

individuals, who have had the courage, conviction and insight to discard gender roles when they are not beneficial. The excerpt plays on the discourse of self-evolvement as well, in stressing the 'moving-away' from traditional gender roles. Gender roles are not mentioned as something that has always been viewed as false in the order, but rather as something which has been forsaken in the process of magic, and its inevitable personal, development. The women's rights and the individuality discourses could, however, come to some sort of clash concerning the extreme importance of female symbolism and female deities and demonesses in the Dragon Rouge context. Hypothetically, the focus on femininity could result in an essentialization of the feminine, with an accompanying essentialization of the femininity of the female members. I have not, however, noticed any development in this direction and do not consider it very likely to occur, especially in view of the critique of the experienced 'white' spirituality-gender dichotomy, as expressed by various Dragon Rouge members.

The self-evolvement and the magic-is-demanding discourses are very strongly associated. Dark magic is seen as the ultimate path to godhood and, although not clearly stated in the material I have access to, basically the only really effective way of gaining it[133]. The magic-is-demanding discourse functions partly as a form of explanatory device. If dark magic is the best way to attain the goals sought, something I imagine most spiritual persons would argue of the path they have taken – if not universally then at least for themselves, then why is it not more popular than it is? The answer comes from the great demands and possible dangers which this effective means of spiritual progress places on its practitioner. The interview segment below highlights this quite clearly.

> To develop oneself if we say it like that, to become a more, a more enlightened, and to be able to have access to more energy to, really go into the deep part of oneself, it is certainly

133 Dragon Rouge does not view other spiritual paths as truly inferior, but simply notes the different goals of other paths. For example, the goal of traditional qabalah is not personal godhood, but rather union with the godhead. The critique is mostly directed at what are viewed as undue fear of and untenable moral judgments on dark magic practice and dark magic forces.

> something really demanding and it is not something which gives immediate rewards. (IF mgt 2001/47[134]).

The process of personal evolution through magic is difficult at times, requiring sacrifices and total devotion of the practitioner. Although the rewards are not immediately experienced, the magician will progress and become a more harmonious person, which in turn, as becomes clear later in the interview, reflects back on the magician's surroundings.

The magic-is-all-encompassing discourse, in the specific sense of dark magic as all-encompassing, and the self-evolvement discourse support each other as well. In the excerpt below, a Dragon Rouge member discusses the difference in the view on natural laws between white and dark magicians.

> …there are obviously laws but the dark magician and the light magician view these laws differently a light magician sees these laws as, I mean the laws, start out from some kind of reason I mean that that which for the human reason seem good, are the laws this classic that the Greek philosophers, some kind of, a bit Platonic I don't know, but the dark magician, perhaps dives deeper, and sees so to say tries to see what it is that actually controls I mean what do the actual natural laws look like. (IF mgt 2001/47[135]).

Dark magic is more truly all-encompassing as it dives deeper into the structure of existence. The process of dark magical exploration is a process of personal evolution, since the gaining of insight takes place on a cosmic level as well as a personal level. Magic forces and

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134 "Att utveckla sig själv om vi säger, till att bli en, en mera upplyst, och kunna liksom ha tillgång till mera energi att, liksom gå verkligen på djupet i sig själv, det är ju något som är väldigt krävande och det är inget som ger omedelbar vinning".

135 "…det finns självklart lagar men den mörka magikern och den ljusa magikern ser på de här lagarna annorlunda en ljus magiker ser på att de här lagarna är, alltså lagarna, utgår oftast från någon slags förnuft alltså det det som för det mänskliga förnuftet verkar bra, det är lagarna det här klassiska som de grekiska filosoferna, något såhär, någon sorts, lite platonskt jag vet inte, men men alltså en mörkmagiker, kanske går djupare, och ser liksom försöker se vad egentligen är det som som styr alltså hur ser de här egentliga naturlagarna ut".

the practice of the art infuse every aspect of the magician's person and existence. The practice of magic without the accompanying personal evolution is pointless and, one could argue from the standpoint of the above discourses, not real magic at all.

I have not treated every possible interlinkage between the discourses in the above discussion. Important to note, however, is that even those discourses which are not directly connected are linked through the mediating agency of another discourse. The point of this section has not been to refute the claims made by the magicians of Dragon Rouge, and I fail to see any academic relevance in such an approach. What I have set out to do is to show how the different discourses encircling and permeating the phenomenon of magic practice in the Dragon Rouge context are employed in supporting each other, thus making the field of magic practice inherently solid in communicating it to oneself, other magicians and outsiders. Discursive practices which rhetorically reinforce different areas of human understandings of the world and events, occur constantly in every field of human communication, ranging from children in the playground arguing who is the strongest comic book superhero, through scientific research to political practice on a global level (see Potter 1996).

Part IV – Finale

8.1 Summary

Chapter one of the present study was an introductory section focusing on background factors pertaining to the study. I presented the outlining purpose of the work as an effort to understand the magic order Dragon Rouge, and to put it into the context of the alternative spiritual milieu. The guiding questions for me were 'What is Dragon Rouge?', 'How does Dragon Rouge operate and function?' and 'What is specific to Dragon Rouge and in what way does this order fit into the contemporary Western alternative spiritual milieu?'. As the subject area is fairly unknown in the academy[136], not to mention virtually quite unstudied, I also presented key terms and concepts used in the Left Hand Path tradition to which Dragon Rouge belongs.

My research is based on primary source material collected by myself. During 2001-2004, I carried out field study in the order, including participant observation. I also completed qualitative interviews with active members of the order. These two materials constitute my main source material, but I also handed out questionnaires to members, collected official member's material that the order distributes, and acquired literature connected to the order.

Apart from the introduction and the conclusion, the bulk of my thesis is divided into two distinct main sections. The first of these, part two, consisting of chapters 2 to 5, is mainly a historical-descriptive account of Dragon Rouge and the background context of Western esotericism.

Esotericism has a long and profound history in the Western world, with notions and currents that surfaced in the milieu from the early first millennium onwards having a continued influence in later esotericism. Greatly influential notions and currents are,

136 One work dealing with spirituality which could be defined as belonging to the Left Hand Path is Justin Woodman's unpublished PhD thesis, *Modernity, Selfhood and the Demonic: Anthropological Perspectives on "Chaos Magick" in the United Kingdom* (Woodman 2004).

for example, alchemy, which articulated the rhetorical language of Western esotericism and introduced the concept of transmutation, and qabalah, Jewish mystic speculation on the nature of the Godhead. Esotericism, in the current academic understanding of the term, came into existence in the renaissance, when earlier esoteric elements where fitted into a 'common frame of mind'.

Of importance to 20th century neopaganism in particular, is the changing view of nature, which began to take hold with the writings of 16th century esotericists such as Paracelsus. It was stipulated that nature was part of the divine, and not something separate from it. This was to be even more strongly articulated in the *Naturphilosophie* of Romanticism. Rosicrucianism became an esoteric trend in the 17th century, and countless initiatory orders were founded, Freemasonry being the most influential of these.

The enlightenment, and the ideologies of reason and rationality it introduced, introduced trouble for both traditional religion and esoteric worldviews. With increasing secularization the esoteric worldviews adapted to the rational-scientific frame of mind, and the idea of correspondences was generally more or less transformed into a causality-based approach.

With European expansion into Africa and Asia, inspiration for esoteric spirituality began to be sought outside the home ground of Europe. Egypt was the focus of 18th century esotericism, whereas India was the focus of the 19th century. The Theosophical Society, founded in 1875, introduced concepts such as the chakras and reincarnation to the Westerners, and Aleister Crowley brought Yoga and Tantrism to the west in the early 20th century. Crowley also established the True Will as the prime foundation of a magician's power, and the Theosophical Society introduced new forms of spiritual practice and the eclecticism which came to rule the esoteric milieu in the 20th century. The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, founded in 1888, modelled its initiatory system on the qabalistic tree of life, and this came to have a huge influence on later magic orders. The Golden Dawn was also the generator of many figures important for the magical community. One of these was the aforementioned Aleister Crowley.

The fascination with pre-Christian religion and culture, which had been expressed with increasing intensity from the beginning

of the 20th century, was put into practice in modern-day forms of spirituality from the 1950s onward. Gerald Gardner founded Wicca, as the first true neopagan religion, based on a fictive account of a pre-Christian witch cult. Orders of Druids, Nordic Asatrú organizations and feminist Goddess Worshippers, were soon to follow. Reverence of nature and the conceptual fusion of body and soul were prime foundations, and academic research on tribal religion became the inspiration for neoshaman practices (see, for example, Svanberg 2003).

The 1960s counterculture ushered a 'New Age' in spirituality. Time-proven esoteric elements were mixed with non-European components in the eclectic example set by the Theosophical Society. The focus was on the self and personal evolution, instead of on a distant divinity, as in 18th century – and earlier esotericism. The 1980s saw a mass-popularization of this 'New Age' spirituality, and terms such as charkas, crystals and healing became almost household words.

The alternative spiritual milieu of Sweden and Stockholm is broad and varied. The country exhibits esoteric movements ranging from Spiritualist organizations, through neopagan and 'New Age' –groups, to initiatory magic orders such as *Ordo Templi Orientis* and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

In section 2, I also briefly discussed postmodernity, globalization, secularization and identity, and assessed the effect of these social factors' on religion and spirituality.

Chapters 3 to 5 dealt with Dragon Rouge from the point of view of the order's philosophical tenets, organization and praxis. The principal term used in Dragon Rouge to describe the system of thought and practice is dark magic. The term signals the exploration of the dark and unknown, both in the self and in existence. The ultimate goal of the Dragon Rouge magician is to become a creator, in contrast to a Right Hand Path-approach in which the goal is to become one with God. In the process of magic progress, the individual dark magician transmutes his/her core being into a more and more aware and godlike state.

The three basic principles of draconian magic (which is another term used in defining the philosophy of the order), vision, power and action, provide the guiding line for the magicians of Dragon

Rouge. The magician perceives the totality of existence and visualizes what he/she wants to occur. Through this perception of totality, and through different magic practices, the magician then gains power to express his/her Will. Action is the above put into practice, and is the manifestation of magic.

As it is a Left Hand Path order, feminine symbolism is of grave importance to Dragon Rouge. It is felt that mainstream religion has pushed the feminine forces of existence into the dark and focused unhealthily only on the light male forces. As in mainstream religion and culture, nature is linked to femininity, although the difference here is that nature is seen to have a value in itself – not only as a means to an end.

According to Dragon Rouge, morality is a key point for the dark magician, although not as collective ethical norms. In the order's view, the dark magician is required to explore his/her self, and consciously develop a morality which suits the individual magician. Accordingly morality is seen as something that cannot be codified in a rule-governed system, in which each situation that arises has a clear-cut and definite answer. The magician must, however, take absolute responsibility for his/her actions and choices, as this entails the taking charge of one's own destiny.

The overall attitude towards Christianity is generally negative in Dragon Rouge, as is the case in much of contemporary alternative spirituality. Christianity is seen as being responsible for a host of atrocities, such as the subjugation of women and the abuse of nature. Individual Christians are not, however, scorned in any way, and it is stated that Christians are welcome to join the order, although the common view is that the life-philosophies and goals of the two spiritualities would probably be an ill match.

Dragon Rouge was founded in 1990, and is thus a relatively young organization. The key founding figure is Thomas Karlsson, who felt that existing esoteric groups and movements could not provide what he sought. In the mid 1990s Dragon Rouge received a great deal of, mostly negative, mass media attention. The publicity received led to the order attracting many new members. This, in turn, led to administrational changes in the order. Dragon Rouge has, at the time of writing, about 250 members, of whom about half

are located outside Sweden. According to the order, about half of the members are female.

Beside the mother-organization in Stockholm, Dragon Rouge is organized in a number of lodges and ritual groups. Lodges, at the time of writing located in Sweden, Germany, Italy and Poland, are sanctioned by the mother-organization to work officially with the Dragon Rouge material and magic-system. Ritual groups are groups of members working with Dragon Rouge material, with the aim of attaining lodge-status. A members' paper, called *Dracontias*, is published and sent to members four times per year.

The Dragon Rouge initiatory system consists of 11 degrees, based on the qliphoth – the shadow side of the qabalistic Tree of Life. For the three first initiations the adept progresses by working with correspondence courses in magic, and requesting to be initiated into the corresponding degree when finishing the course. Initiations beyond the third degree are dealt with in a more personal and individual fashion. At the third initiation, the adept also swears the Dragon Oath, and is initiated into the Dragon Order, which is the inner magic core of the order. The organizational and ideological Inner Circles consist of those long-time and higher initiated members who work actively with the organizational and ideological aspects of Dragon Rouge.

Dragon Rouge is a highly eclectic movement. Elements from most mythologies are incorporated in one way or another, although certain themes surface more often than others. Tantric practices, including Kundalini meditation; Old Norse mythologies, including shamanic techniques and rune-magic practices; Goetic magic and qliphotic exercises; and magic workings within the confines of nature, appear most often on the schedule. The different techniques are often mixed in ways that appear most functional for members, and each individual member is supposed to find ways of practicing magic which work best for him/her. The typical Dragon Rouge meeting and course usually consists of a lecture, practice – often including meditative elements, and a discussion following the practice. The Dragon Ceremony and the Lilith Invocation are recurring and central pieces of the ritual practice.

In sections 5.1.1 to 5.1.4, I dealt with four different kinds of Dragon Rouge activities in detail. These were: an annual meeting,

a course on ceremonial magic, the opening of a Dragon Rouge lodge, and an initiation ceremony into the second degree of the order.

In the second separate analytical section, part three, I studied Dragon Rouge from a discourse analytical point of view in order to highlight themes which are distinctive to the order, and which make Dragon Rouge what it is.

Discourse analysis is grounded in social constructionist epistemology, which entails that human beings are involved in processes of social reality construction. This does not mean that there is no objective reality, only that we are not able to access this objective reality other than through the interpretative mechanisms of social communication. Social constructionism, which is a form of constructivism emphasizing the importance of language and other sign systems in social reality construction and meaning-making, works with the following four assumptions:

- Our means of communication are not able to provide an objectively true account of the nature of reality.
- The way in which our social reality is formed is directly linked to our social relationships with other communicative beings.
- Communication is a form of social action, and thus constructs and reproduces what it is communicating.
- Seemingly self-evident knowledge must be viewed critically, as this does not consist of objective truths and often maintains hegemonic power-relations.

In discourse analysis, discourse is defined as "communicative systems in use", suggesting a focus on actual communicative events, instead of viewing communication as a means to access the inner thought patterns of persons. Meaning is produced and reproduced within communication. Discourses are meaning systems, that is to say specific ways of interpreting the world, aspects of the world and specific events, and contain as such ideological dimensions.

In my research, I found six major and recurrent discourses, which were essential to my informants in Dragon Rouge. The magic-is-all-encompassing discourse expresses the Dragon Rouge system

of magic as more complex and comprehensive than many other spiritual systems. The discourse also formulates magic as something that is deeply woven into all fields of the practitioner's life. Furthermore, everything in existence is deeply interwoven, and this through forces that the magician can access and control. The self-evolvement discourse concerns the primary goal of the magician to grow both personally and spiritually, ultimately to the extent of the magician becoming a god. The personal evolution of the magician requires him/her to dig deep into the core of his/her self, in order to access the totality of his/her person and to transmute it into a more compact and perfected state. In the individuality discourse the magician has total freedom and responsibility for his/her own actions and choices. No one else can make these decisions for the magician, and this is also expressed in the prerequisite of the practitioner to find his/her own way of doing magic, the order simply providing some of the tools.

The magic-is-demanding discourse represents the magician as a courageous and exceptional individual, as one who has taken a step into the unknown, although well aware of the enormous task ahead. Magic, especially dark magic, is also risky, if not outright dangerous. The magician should therefore be focused and determined in the process of magic evolution. The reverence, and magic importance, of nature are the focus of the nature discourse. Nature is divine and has an intrinsic value. In addition, forces of chaos can be most easily accessed in nature, as untamed nature is the opposite of the structured city and civilization. Founded and developed in egalitarian Swedish society, a women's rights discourse is more or less bound to be found in the order, but the Dragon Rouge variant extends further than this. Monotheistic religion is seen as the principal cause for the feminine aspects of existence having been pushed aside into the dark, and to access a total spirituality the feminine forces have to be approached. In the effort to access these feminine forces, the positions and situations of women often come into focus, especially in the critical view on Christianity.

These six discourses are intertwined in what I call the web of discourses. The discourses are co-existent, support each-other and appear in each other's company. Together they form what could be

called a discourse complex, which more or less produces a coherent and complex system of meaning-making.

8.2 Dragon Rouge in Context

In section 2, I briefly discussed the history of Western esotericism and, in greater depth, the Theosophical Society, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Aleister Crowley, 'New Age' spirituality, neopaganism and the Swedish alternative spiritual milieu of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. I also treated societal changes that have had a profound effect on spirituality and spiritual life. How does this connect to Dragon Rouge, which is obviously my point of focus? Dragon Rouge is firmly grounded in Western esoteric traditions, as are the Theosophical Society, the Golden Dawn, 'New Age' spirituality and neopaganism. Earlier esoteric currents and notions provides the backdrop to movements such as Dragon Rouge, as does the late 19th and early 20th century esoteric and occult movements discussed in chapter 2. 'New Age' spiritualities and neopaganism spring up slightly before Dragon Rouge, but are as phenomena contemporary with the order. The Swedish alternative spiritual milieu is the locality and cultural-ideological framework in which Dragon Rouge is immersed.

The rhetoric of spiritual alchemy, a longstanding esoteric current and notion, is one of the main communicative strategies in Dragon Rouge. In alchemical language use, the process of magical progress is referred to as a compression and transmutation of the magician's True Self (see Eriksson 2001: 124-130). In line with the Egyptology which became prominent in the 18th century, Egypt is identified as a, or perhaps the, origin of esoteric wisdom. Instead of finding the *elixir vitae* one manufactures the Black Diamond, the life-providing black-earth shores of the Nile being the obvious frame of reference. Qabalah, another influential notion and current, is of vital importance to Dragon Rouge. Following the Golden Dawn's incorporation of the qabalistic Tree of Life, the sephiroth, as a model for the initiatory system, Dragon Rouge has adopted the eleven spheres of the qliphoth, the shadow side of the sephiroth – or the

Tree of Knowledge, as a model for its initiatory system (see Bogdan 2003b: 238). Dark astral planes, magic experiences and various mythological elements correspond to the qliphotic spheres.

The three Proto-Rosicrucian texts attributed to the imaginary Christian Rosencreutz, and his mythical secret initiatory society, were the inspiration of real initiatory societies. Freemasonry was the most successful of these and has in turn become a model on which other initiatory societies are modelled. As an initiatory order, Dragon Rouge builds on the roots planted by Freemasonry. Furthermore, as an esoteric order founded in Scandinavia, the runologic and rune magic works of the Swedes, Johannes Bureus and Sigurd Agrell, are also important for the order.

Elements from Indian religiosity, especially Tantrism, are very central in Dragon Rouge. The concepts of chakras and that of Kundalini, which in Dragon Rouge is identified as the inner Dragon or life-force of man – and which is thus pivotal to the magic works, were largely introduced to the west by Charles Leadbeater of the Theosophical Society. The Theosophical Society was also the most important movement in terms of the focus of esoteric interest in India. Aleister Crowley explored Tantric Yoga and crafted Western sex magic out of it. Sex magic has become one of the key elements of contemporary magic, and as the life force is identified as the libido in Dragon Rouge, sex magic is central to this order as well. Crowley was also the mage behind defining and establishing Will as the agency of magic. Will, or True Will, is the organ of magic, and indeed the core of the magic personality, in most of contemporary magic and neopaganism, and Dragon Rouge is no exception.

In combining the rhetoric of alchemy with Crowleyan concepts, the Black Diamond is identified as the core of the magician, or his/her Will manifest. Crowley also broke with earlier esoteric tradition in turning from God-centeredness to the pursuit of becoming a god himself, which is the precise goal of the Dragon Rouge magician. Although Aleister Crowley dismissed black magic, and had a bit more 'right-handed' approach to magic and the goals with it, he canbe seen as the inspiration for and forefather of Western Left Hand Path magicians. Dragon Rouge shows many similarities to Kenneth Grant's, who has been highly influenced by Crowley, ideas on magic. For example, Kenneth Grant frequently names the

"draconian current' as the original form of spirituality, and introduced the qliphotic as a noteworthy concept in contremporary magic, and not just as something to be avoided.

On a more contemporary note, recent societal transformations have played an important role in the way which spirituality has come to be formed in contemporary Western society. Late modernity brought with it distrust in older authoritative institutions, including institutional religion, and is in itself a factor in the birth of new spiritualities such as 'New Age' and neopaganism. The fragmentation of late modernity generated a situation where there no longer existed a single true alternative in the religious sphere for many individuals, which in turn favoured an eclectic and syncretistic approach, where components from various religions and mythologies are disembedded from their original contexts and freely re-embedded in new spiritual constructs. 'New Age' spiritualities, where almost everything can be incorporated in one fashion or another, are the most apparent contemporary example of this phenomenon, but Dragon Rouge is no stranger to eclecticism. There is probably no mythology known to Western comparative religion or anthropology which has not been, or will not be, explored by some Dragon Rouge magician.

The transnational connections of a globalized world have made distance a minor factor in the spread of spiritualities. Dragon Rouge was founded in Stockholm, Sweden, but was soon discovered by would-be-magicians from all around the Western world. The first foreign members were Germany, where the number of members might exceed the number of Swedish members in the near future, but nowadays the order has members in Europe, North, Central and South America. With the conception of correspondence courses, and the advances in communication technologies, physical proximity is no longer a prerequisite for working with the Dragon Rouge magic-system.

The similarities between 'New Age' spiritualities and neopaganism are numerous, as are the similarities between the aforementioned and Dragon Rouge. They are all mainly spiritualities of life (see Heelas 2002), where the self is placed at centre, and discourses of personal evolution, individuality, nature and women's rights, identified as key elements in Dragon Rouge,

permeate them all. The resacralization of the world, in a world after secularization, is central to these kinds of spirituality. The similarities between neopaganism and Dragon Rouge are particularly striking. From the list of characteristic traits of neopaganism in section 2.1.5, all but one could be used to describe Dragon Rouge. The importance of gender polarity is played down in Dragon Rouge, as it is in most Left Hand Path organizations, where both the feminine and masculine forces and traits are thought to exist to a higher degree in each individual, regardless of sex.

When discussing the similarities between 'New Age' spirituality and Dragon Rouge, the difficulties in defining 'New Age' become apparent. In Olav Hammer's list of possible elements of 'New Age' spirituality, presented in section 2.1.4, most features could be said to exist in almost all contemporary esotericism. In the instinctual feel for "what 'New Age' is", which most people who are familiar with this form of spirituality have, Dragon Rouge would most likely not be grouped in this category. Nevertheless, as both are parts of – and share the prehistory of – the overarching tradition of Western Esotericism, there are similarities and connections.

The Swedish context, and especially that of Stockholm, is of particular interest when discussing Dragon Rouge. This is, after all, the locality and milieu in which the order was founded and in which the headquarters of the order are still located. Thomas Karlsson, the primary founding member of Dragon Rouge, was involved in much of the spiritual underground of Stockholm before founding the order. As discussed in section 4.1.1, he tried out several spiritualist movements in his youth. He also used to work in at the 'New Age' bookshop *Vattumannen*, the focal point of alternative spirituality in Stockholm. The Swedish neoshaman circle was centred on the bookshop in question, as described in section 2.2, and Dragon Rouge has no doubt been influenced by this group, at least in the early stages of the order. Many of the same themes have been touched upon by both orders, such as ancient Norse mythology, and runology – and particularly the *Uthark* theory of Sigurd Agrell – and neoshaman techniques. In the early days of Dragon Rouge the order was criticized by the neoshamans of Yggdrasil (see Bjarke 1991), although this has not been the case later on, at least not to the same extent.

Generally, views of, and relations to, neopagan organizations are positive in Dragon Rouge, although Wicca is an exception. Many Dragon Rouge members criticize Wiccans for being too light-oriented and condemning the exploration of the dark (see IF mgt 2001/50; 2001/52). At times, the dislike has been mutual (see Wiberg 1999a; 1999b). I have, however, met one member of the order who identifies herself as Wiccan (see IF 2001/1:5).

The links between Dragon Rouge and the Swedish 'New Age' milieu are not as apparent, although they exist. Thomas Karlsson was involved in the publication of the esoteric magazine, *Quintessens*, which was later on amalgamated with the 'New Age' magazine, *Alpha/Omega*. Generally the focus on the dark aspects of existence are not favoured in 'New Age' spirituality (see York 1995: 159-161).

8.3 Conclusions and Discussion

In closing, I underline the results of my study by briefly discussing the key points. They are – as one can see from the subsequent passages – the following:

Age-old esoteric traditions are maintained in Dragon Rouge. The order has a distinct and formative founding figure. The order is characterized by eclecticism, but with a special focus on Indian and Old Norse mythology and religion. In the programme lectures on various topics are important, but actual practice is seen to be more central. With the help of discourse analysis, I have shown that there are certain guiding principles common to most members of Dragon Rouge, and that it is through communicative praxis that a comprehensive worldview is produced in the order.

Dragon Rouge is a contemporary alternative spiritual organization. Dragon Rouge is also a magic order in a lineage, existing in a continuum of earlier esoteric and occult phenomena. Esoteric ideas and practices have co-existed with mainstream Christianity for the extent of the latter's existence, and has at times had a major impact on the development of mainstream religion, philosophy, science and art. Central notions and currents in Western

esotericism, such as alchemy, qabalah, Rosicrucianism, and magic, all play a part in the background and present reality of Dragon Rouge, as discussed in section 8.2. Obscure as the order might seem when viewed in the context of present day Swedish society and religious tradition, it nonetheless stands on the shoulders of long-lasting traditions. The concepts and terminology Dragon Rouge operates with are neither novel nor anomalous, when considering Western esotericism as a whole.

Although existing in a long line of esoteric predecessors, Dragon Rouge is, nonetheless, a distinctly late modern phenomenon. The disembedding of elements from foreign spiritual traditions and reembedding them in new contexts has been the practice of Western esoteric movements since the move of the Theosophical Society to India (see section 2.1.1). The eclectic imaginative reincorporation of foreign spiritualities has however accelerated since the 1960s, most notably with the 'New Age' movement. This acceleration has in turn resulted in a more accentuated decoupling of chosen elements from their origins, in order to more smoothly be able to fit the often disparate components into a coherent system and a Western late modern way of thinking.

Dragon Rouge is strongly eclectic, in many ways more so than individual 'New Age' groups are. Spiritual practices, philosophies and mythologies are ransacked for useful elements, and when found these are tried out and possibly incorporated into the Dragon Rouge system. Several Dragon Rouge members express the sentiment that the very foundation of 'the Dragon Rouge system' is inclusiveness (see IF mgt 2001/47). Any element an individual practitioner is interested in exploring may be a part of that individual's personal magic system, and if this person is active in the order, the elements incorporated will most likely be tried out by other members. The key-word here is eclecticism, coupled with pragmatism. This is also clearly exhibited in the improvised fashion in which rituals and ceremonies are composed – marking a difference to many other earlier and contemporary orders and movements, in which the form of the ritual is strictly dictated by tradition. Also in contrast to traditional esotericism, as well as to the 'New Age' movement, Dragon Rouge is strongly grounded in practice. The intellectual capacity to interpret esoteric source material is also valued, but it is

in practice that magic is manifested. In the latter aspect, Dragon Rouge bears more resemblance to neopagan movements than to earlier esotericism.

Even though Dragon Rouge incorporates elements from most religious traditions, two cultural spheres function most often as sources for inspiration, namely, the Scandinavian and the Indian. Old Norse mythology, including the esoteric speculation and interpretation of runes, is a fundamental for the order. In the footsteps of Johannes Bureus, the nine worlds of Old Norse mythology are incorporated into a qabalah-like system, this time around into one which centres around the qliphoth. From Indian spirituality especially Tantrism is an element of great importance. The concept of Kundalini, the life-force and sexual energy of the human – with the feminine Shakti as its active focus, is central to Dragon Rouge. In a most eclectic fashion a Kundalini-awakening-exercise can be performed in a Scandinavian shamanistic setting – performed as a drum-journey. Qabalistic demonesses such as Lilith are addressed together with Indian deities such as Kali and Old Norse deities such as Hel, all in a syncretistic mix. Distinct, but in some way similar, deities and demons are thought to ultimately represent the same hidden forces, and thus addressing them in the same ritual setting is only natural. Another central source, perhaps even more central although most often situated in the context of the abovementioned ones, is the qabalistic tradition.

As already demonstrated the eclecticism of the order is governed by the discourse of individuality. The order is extremely reluctant to dictate choices, and the members have a responsibility to explore and choose their spiritual path for themselves. The resulting magic system becomes a highly individual one, constructed from a vast array of different components. In simplification one could say that for the Dragon Rouge magician there is no higher authority than the self, not when it comes to choices regarding magic progress.

The process of magic progress is also a process of identity construction for the dark magician. In a predominantly reflexive way, the magician goes into him-/herself and dissects his/her self, in order to 'access his/her true self'. In a society and an era marked by secularism, the magicians of Dragon Rouge are involved in a re-

sacralization and re-enchantment of daily life. Through magic, most every event and choice can be rendered universally meaningful to the individual, and mundane incidents become something far more. The dark magician seeks an answer to the question 'what is the meaning of life and existence', and finds it in him-/herself.

Social movements of the late modern period are characterized by transnational connections. Dragon Rouge has in a short time spread throughout the Western world. The Swedish originated order has not spread in such a high degree to its neighbouring countries – Finland, Norway or Denmark, but instead to countries such as Poland, Germany and Italy, and even to North and South America. The interplay between members in different countries is widespread, and there even exist ritual groups the members of which live far away from each other. Rituals and ceremonies are performed in unison, although individually, and the results are then communicated through the mediation of e-mail.

Although Dragon Rouge is a non-hierarchical organization, there nonetheless exists one central person behind the foundation and ideological development of the order, namely Thomas Karlsson – who was only 17 years of age when founding the order. Besides being the key founder of the order, Karlsson has also been the driving force behind Dragon Rouge, his early and later occult experiences leaving their mark on the order as a whole. Karlsson's non-magical experiences, as well, have had an impact on the paths Dragon Rouge has come to take. He is at present enrolled as a doctoral student at the institution for the History of Religions at the University of Stockholm, and has a M.A. degree in the History of Ideas at the same university. Considering the similarity between the theoretical portion of a Dragon Rouge meeting and a university lecture, whilst remembering that the Theosophical Society was also involved in lecture-like activities, the university background of Karlsson is not unimportant in assessing Dragon Rouge and engagement in the practice of magic.

When considering the eclectic, pragmatic and improvised character of Dragon Rouge, the conclusion might easily be drawn that there can not exist any general ideological basis of the order. This is however not the case. The discourses which I treated in chapter 7 give expression to the formative principles. They provide

the mold in which the different components of dark magic philosophy and practice are set and combined, and the glue which holds them together. In the discursive praxis of Dragon Rouge, the often discrepant elements incorporated are forged into a coherent system. Through the web of discourses, a comprehensive view of reality is produced and maintained.

As a result, it can be argued that Dragon Rouge as an order, although not explicitly advocating any one way of interpreting the world, does indeed operate with a general worldview. Whereas the occult and metaphysical interpretations may vary to a large degree, the views on the mundane world, society and morality are more generally held in common. Similarly to most neopagan movements, nature and femininely interpreted forces and characteristics are highly valued in Dragon Rouge. Civilization is considered to represent the structures of cosmos, whereas nature represents the potentials inherent in chaos. Masculine forces are linked to exoteric mainstream religion – the Right Hand Path, whereas feminine forces are connected to chaos and nature – the Left Hand Path. Mainstream religion, represented by Christianity, is criticized for wrong-doings against nature and women – and even more centrally, for maintaining ideological structures which legitimize these wrong-doings. The dark magician needs to appraise nature and the hidden feminine forces of existence, naturally extending to a discourse of women's rights.

In opposing civilization and nature, and in appraising individual responsibility and choice, the ethical code systems of traditional Christian culture are discarded. The choice is to go for an individual situation based morality, also a feature common with most neopagan movements. The main exercise the dark magician is involved in is self-evolvement on an elevated level. Combined with the critique of materialism this striving displays a search for 'something more out there', and involves a re-sacralization of the secular world. The Dragon Rouge magician is not content with what secular society has to offer concerning the meaning of life. Indeed, he/she is on a trek to find better alternatives. This common 'Dragon Rouge-frame of mind' does not necessarily involve each and every member in the same fashion or to the same extent, although it is likely to be more and more adopted with increasing participation

within the order. In the spirit of eclecticism, human communication, individual responsibility and choice, the discourses of Dragon Rouge are negotiated in joint operations. The discourses do not exist outside communication, and each member communicates and highlights differently.

* * *

Research on alternative spiritualities is on the rise in different areas of religious studies. Research paradigms concerning contemporary esoteric trends are in the process of formulation, and questions concerning what the overarching subject field should be called are being negotiated. Perhaps the subject field is in itself so different from traditional religion that traditional methods and approaches will no longer suffice. Will the study of contemporary Western Esotericism constitute a new strand of the academic study of spirituality, in such a way as to require its own theories, methods and approaches? Questions such as these surfaced at the international ASANAS (Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies) conference in Wolverhampton, England, in 2004[137], and the answer was generally a hesitant yes.

Studies in alternative spiritualities such as the 'New Age' movement, contemporary magic orders and neopagan organisations suggest that the methods of traditional comparative religion may indeed be unable to provide sufficient answers. Whereas world religions such as Christianity, Islam and Hinduism have scriptural canons and are constructed on authoritative doctrines, the case is generally different with alternative spiritualities. There are no authoritative doctrines, no official scriptural documents or authoritative organisations. Individuality is highly valued, and groups are loosely organized and dissolve and reform in a fluid fashion on a regular basis. Participant observation is almost a requirement if the researcher is to truly catch the nature of the movement, and while ethnographic research has a long tradition

137 See, for example, the paper delivered by Graham Harvey at the 2004 ASANAS conference (Harvey 2004), in which he argues that the research tools need to be further refined, as studies in the field of neopaganism have highlighted the shortcomings of current positions and methods.

in anthropology, the cultural anatomy of the informants is largely different from that of the informants the traditional anthropologist is familiar with. Neopagans and contemporary magicians are often highly educated and self-reflexive individuals, and are more often than not familiar with the academic fields the researchers hail from. The dialogical nature of the research progress will necessarily be a key element. It is probably not an accidental occurrence that a large number of academics studying neopagan movements, for example, consider themselves to be neopagans. This is an issue often viewed as awkward in religious studies, but is something which will have to be discussed openly sooner or later.

Whilst 'New Age' spirituality and neopagan communities have received a huge increase in academic interest, apparent in the increasing number of academic dissertations and publications on the subject area, so called Left Hand Path spirituality is still basically virgin territory in terms of research. Although the Left Hand Path is a much rarer spiritual tradition than the Right Hand Path, it nonetheless plays a culturally far more important role than the number of people actually involved in Left Hand Path organizations suggests. Popular culture is one field where Left Hand Path themes rear their heads with increasing frequency. One example is the film *The Ninth Gate*, directed by Roman Polanski in 1999, which contains apparent LHP themes. The present work is a case study of a Left Hand Path organization. As organizations such as these are very varied in form and function, my findings are not directly valid for other Left Hand Path organizations. Research on Dragon Rouge can, however, shed some light on the nature of the form of spirituality in general.

Recent societal change favours alternative spiritualities. The possibilities and insecurities of a late modern world, combined with its globalized and glocalized nature, place individual experience and life in the here-and-now at the centre. Many spiritually inclined individuals can no longer motivate any authority outside the experiences of the self. Spirituality has become a major factor in the process of identity formation, and in the fluidic framework of the late modern world, identity is never something finitely defined. The late modern spiritual individual is one who is always a seeker. He/she expresses him-/herself through spirituality and finds like-

minded persons at great geographical distances, brought close through advanced communication technologies. Alternative spiritualities matter, as they provide people with a sense of purpose and direction, and not least, because people choose to engage in them.

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Embracing The Dark

The study of Western Esotericism is an emerging academic field with research mainly being carried out on historic currents ranging from the renaissance to early modern Europe, and on "The New Age Movement". The mode of spirituality called the Left Hand Path has, however, not yet attracted the attention of academia. The present study of the dark magic order DRAGON ROUGE constitutes an attempt to contribute thoroughly and creatively to this line of research. Objects of study are the organization, philosophy and practices of the order, as well as the complex discursive conventions involved in the adherents' construction of coherent world views. In an attempt to shed light on the particularities of this contemporary, late modern esoteric phenomenon, a historical perspective on Western Esotericism has here been combined with a discussion on the impact of recent societal change.

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