

FRATER E.S. INTERVIEWS

JOEL BIROCO



An Excerpt from *Liber Sigillum*

By Frater E.S. & the A.A.O. in Collaboration with the DKMU



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URING THE COMPLETION of this volume, along with its various pitfalls and setbacks, the author had sought out and struck up a conversation with Joel Biroco, creator of KAOS magazine and founder of the original 156 current in London. Many ideas were shared over the course of three months with him later agreeing to the inclusion of some of his more notable replies within this text in the form of a brief interview.

Biroco himself is an important historical figure within the expanse of the tradition at large, having not only paved the way for a ready alternative and novel progression of the Chaos Current, but also having introduced the writings of Hakim Bey to Europe as well as some collaborations with writer and occultist Alan Moore, who has himself become a veritable archetype of dissidence within the modern climate due to his artistic conceptions within the graphic novel “V for Vendetta” and others, which obviously, we believe, given their creation as purposeful *hypersigils* at the start, have served to offer a rallying icon by which the counterculture of today now utilize throughout the world. Even in such dire economic climates, we find ourselves routed back, again, towards an occult intent, and one perhaps direly required.

We would again like to thank Joel for his eloquent and provocative words, as well as his timely replies and agreement as to their inclusion. I personally wish you all the best, and I thank you for your body of continually relevant and inspiring work. It is my hope that we all might find a familiar strength in the relentless delving of ourselves and the Universe at large which we connect to.

The Cosmic Joke may just save a laugh to thank us for it. The interview then begins here.

E.S.: What are your thoughts on the IOT and other modern incarnations, and if they relate at all to the 156, and, if you are familiar with them, recent independents such as the DKMU and INFN?

Biroco: The IOT have never seemed to me to have any interest in 156, or, indeed, in the occult. I have seen some bits and pieces of DKMU stuff, which seems fresher and more interesting, also some nomadic magicians into chaos associated with Infinity Network. I rather liked their style. But I don't look into these formations much anymore. Many so-called 'chaos magicians' often seem to be to be stuck at some kind of basic sigilization level, but when invited to be original often begin to shine for a short period before burning out. No matter. Potential of that type is more interesting than the dreariness of sustained unoriginality. I don't really know, but my impression is that many shy away from a serious encounter (or entanglement) with 156. Even the few I

know who have had some deeper immersion have backed away at some point, perhaps when they realized quite what it demanded (this far, but no further without blood, as it were). But its nature is private and individual, and who knows who is inspired by what in private. I have always regarded the 156 current as being for those who cannot avoid it, who are swept away by it, so I can understand why others appear tentative.

I don't particularly follow the 156 current any more, I set down what I did on it at a pinnacle, though spontaneous interest in it does still arise when people ask me questions about it, as if it has simply gone deeply underground in me and is something to be evoked through a resonance.

E.S.: What is your opinion on the state of the modern occult tradition?

Biroco: Thanks for your interesting analysis, or evocation of a mood, well-expressed. While on the one hand I agree that 'the tradition' is 'suffering from necrosis', on the other I wonder what tradition is that? There are many traditions, and where is the boundary between them? Part of the problem in thinking a tradition is dwindling and in need of rescue is defining it in the first place. It can only be as one draws it. But, that said, it is fair enough to suppose there is such an identifiable territory known as 'the modern occult', and to see in it a certain shallowness, unintelligence, sentimental clinging to the past, and perplexity in regard to things that have some importance

and narcissism and indulgence in regard to trivia and mere forms ('glamour', to use the word in its original occult sense).

I suppose it is true that to feel that a tradition is going under is a call to do something about it, and so one believes the tradition exists as a tool to inject new vigor, while perhaps not being fooled that the importance of this is mostly invested in the gesture, you might call it 'gesture magick', in which one takes a stance in order to show that a stance can be taken. That the stance is an illusion goes without saying, but then magick per se is the manipulation of illusion for the supposed purpose of getting closer to reality. Should one happen to already see reality, there is no need to manipulate illusion, and magick has no purpose. One is the Ipsissimus and has gone beyond the Magus.

That said, the uniqueness of the Ipsissimus is that the truth of that can be expressed in any form, regarded as dropping down the hierarchy in hierarchical traditions but really simply the ability to use tools one has no actual need of, such as magick (so the Ipsissimus drops down to the 'grade' of Magus). For the Ipsissimus, there is no tradition, yet any tradition can be created, because that is what tradition actually is, a present creation of a supposed past in order to convey the idea of 'progress' and 'passing on', with the illusory idea that time (which doesn't truly exist) has the power of growing a fruit and ripening it. Thus a tradition is created, based on fragments of the

apparent past, and is injected with the only life it actually has, namely whatever anyone infuses into it. This is the nature of 'will'. Although there is no such thing as 'will', nonetheless one can 'do one's true will' simply by having the requisite insight and carrying on, spontaneity will take care of the rest.

Frustration is understandable, but is as you know just a transitory expression of powerlessness. There is nothing wrong with powerlessness, since it invites the self-enquiry (atma vichara) 'Who is powerless?' One of the reasons the occult periodically sinks into mediocrity is because those at the cutting edge don't know who they are, and are left having to busk it on slim knowledge. But this is also inevitable, since the nature of an occult 'current' is to be taken up by it and carried along. One should make no effort on one's own part to determine its course, because that is the object of immersing oneself into it, to discover where it takes one. Of course, one will play a role of seeming to have a hand in its unfolding, but that hand is simply willingness, which is a word that conveys well the notion of 'will' together with 'surrender', and approaches the real meaning of 'will'. Whose will? The will of some limited ego fiction, or the will of the Self, Parabrahman, whatever you want to call it? Essentially the will of what you really are beyond abstractions such as 'God' or 'The Supreme' and other empty words.

This is that 'secret desire' you refer to, and it doesn't require any special anthropological condition for its realization.

Of course, true self-realization implies compassion for 'the other', in whatever form that manifests, and if you wish to manifest it in the occult tradition then doubtless you will find the energy to reinvigorate what you see as lacking, since one must first identify the problem. A sense of 'duty' should really drive all occult endeavor of any worth, but it seems, as in many spheres, the occult attracts a fair percentage of vainglorious fools, full of conflicting objectives. But that doesn't matter, as with insight will is applied to the true objective without trace of inner conflict. At that point, one may rise on the wave of it, or simply retire to develop oneself.

It is solely a matter of what might be regarded as 'inner calling' but is really just slight movement at the precise point, like a leaf lifted by the wind, in the direction of the way one was always going to go. Some call that destiny, but this is over-grand, it is simply chaos calling the shots and you allowing it, since that is what you have dedicated yourself to. One may attempt to apply order to chaos, but it is better if chaos does it.

This wish for enlightened elders or shamans to guide the way is fair enough, but an unnecessary corrosion of one's own inherent power. And this was the original thrust of the chaos current: destruction of the notion of authority

outside of oneself. Of course, one picks up hints as one can from whoever happens to be passing by.

The Fool is already the Magician; he simply has to realize it.

E.S.: What is the role of belief in magick, and is it needed?

Biroco: I don't see belief as something one either has or doesn't, I see it as something picked up, put down, picked up again, discarded, embraced, abandoned, found, perhaps all within the space of ten minutes, and having no great relevance to the container of these passing impressions, with 'belief' and 'no belief' being as good or as bad as each other. Since even the idea of having no belief is a belief, and what is a belief but an activation of mind, and what is mind in itself but the belief that there is one?

It is all very well to talk rhetorically about whether belief does or does not have anything to do with magick, but one must be careful not to be betrayed by an unacknowledged belief in the apparent consensus of things in which one frames one's argument, since these things are themselves belief taken as not belief, such as the idea that there is such a thing as mind, the psyche, the collective unconscious, such a thing as magick, that, indeed, there are even people to whom one is addressing these thoughts, since in a dream one may give a lecture to five hundred people, not one of them real, not even the lecturer.

How can one talk effectively about such questions while still remaining firmly entrenched within the consensus reality that one is taking for granted? Rather one must surely concede that even the things not conventionally associated with belief, such as the world in itself, is nothing more than a structure of belief, a set of conditioned responses, a work of the imagination. How can you make a point about magick not being about belief when the means for making that point elude as belief in itself? One is setting up 'belief' as some separate function one is assumed to be able to critique, 'this' is belief, 'that' is not, when the entire structure of the argument itself is underpinned by belief.

So without cognizance of that the argument becomes one of merely deciding between different types of belief and their effectiveness in what one sees as magick. The dumb belief laboriously maintained and adhered to, regardless of circumstances, in gods or demigods and their associated morals as an item of faith, and the more sophisticated belief picked up and put down as a tool, since it is surely easier to craft persuasive arguments for instance if there is a temporary suspension of disbelief in what one is doing to take on certain apparent beliefs of those one is apparently addressing, for the duration of addressing them, for 'gaining their ear' so to speak, yet drop that belief like a food wrapper into a bin when the job is done and one walks away. The latter is indeed magick, but if the belief cannot be dispensed with just as easily as it is

picked up, then one is fooled by one's own message, which might be called 'having faith in yourself', which on the surface sounds like a good thing but actually is just having faith in a conception of oneself which is no more real or interesting than a belief in the fixed gods of others.

A magician can appear to believe in anything, for as long as it is useful, or in nothing. If he is enticed by his own magick he is The Fool, but if he wields it without attaching to it as the wielder, then he is The Magician, and is free to embrace any contradiction and even contradict that, solely for the purpose of bringing forth a greater reality that does not belong to fixed categories such as 'belief', which is seen to be empty but a powerful force to operate both within and beyond. So one cannot say that magick has nothing to do with belief, rather magick is belief's master, knowing truly that belief is nothing yet has built a world. And where else does a magician operate than in a world? Only the Ipsissimus does not require a world to be at peace with himself.

The Magus is bought and paid for by a world, on the understanding that he is its master, for if he is anything less then he must drop down the conventional hierarchy perhaps to 'Master of the Temple', which is a kind of psychosis in which one imagines everything is a sign of one's potential but unrealized greatness. Any further and it would be better to begin again, since below that point one cannot operate effectively in the occult without

belief, and any who think they can will be dangled as belief's puppet, for all they imagine they are due the capacity to be able to decide whether or not belief is relevant to them. The plain fact is that their entire entry into the stream of the occult is founded on belief, a belief that if they wish to make progress they must not only conquer but master, and, finally, use for whatever purpose it is seen fit, discarding it at will.

While it is true that a magician is not bound by belief, the question is whether he is really a magician or merely believes that to be the case. If there is any confusion over this, then we are not talking about a magician, only a believer. A magician knows, but does not discard belief as a tool in the education of others simply because he has discarded it as being of any worth to himself. Because those who believe must be persuaded of other more freeing beliefs before they will ever be in a position to discard belief, such as, for instance, the belief that 'nothing is true'. Though clumsy, I cannot say this is not a useful belief, whereas its partner 'everything is permitted' is not a useful belief, in that it bows to a permitting authority in the name of freedom and binds while seeming to allow free rein.

But, fundamentally, if one is going to imagine oneself free of belief, one may as well go the whole hog and not get stuck on mere technicalities, discarding the entirety of consensus reality, including language, world, and people, then one will soon see the degree to which belief

permeates everything, and, if it is to be transcended, then it can only be done so legitimately, not as another more subtle belief. In conclusion, the answer to the question as to whether magick really has anything to do with belief is, as always, that it has nothing and everything to do with it.

E.S.: If you could give any measure of advice to the aspiring occultist, what in the name of the burning fires of hell would it be?

Biroco: This is what I imagine I'd say to this imaginary generic neophyte (though in reality there is no such thing as a beginning magician who has any actual capacity to listen to advice, there are only train wrecks about to happen that are impossible to switch to another track and timid souls for whom the advice to be courageous is all but useless; the maturity to listen to advice generally comes much too late for it to be of any value, so I dare say the most I can hope for is a smirk in retrospect after they have made their own mistakes):

I'd say it's better not to spend too long learning basic things about the occult, instead just skip through this stuff at a fast pace, in a perfunctory fashion regardless of 'understanding' or the lack of it, rejecting much outright as just garbage artificially upheld as 'foundational'. Absorb a huge amount quickly, let it sink in later. I also think it is desirable to work through the myriad of illusions as quickly as possible (say ten years rather than

forty), also to lose interest from time to time and chuck it all in the bin. I would say don't be afraid of chaos, and if your life shows signs of falling apart, let it. I'd also say don't follow anyone, save transitory inspirations, and don't become a clown mouthing words like 'do what thou wilt' as if it meant something. I'd say know exactly who those few are who have something to teach you, and see through those who like to think they have. Embrace what you fear, converse with demons, be possessed, but never be weaker than any of it. Prove to yourself that magick 'works' in the most extreme way you can imagine but then draw back, since you have accomplished everything at this point and reveling in it will only lead you astray. When you can do it, you don't need to do it.

Be aware that hierarchical magical orders are not only dead, they are an insult to your own sovereignty and taking a vow to any of them is tantamount to slipping the chain-gang ankle bracelets on yourself, you don't need to be a slave to this sort of 'magical engine'. Prefer an exemplary solitariness to the company of mediocrity, ultimately aim to transcend magick and come to know who you are; your real identity. Read widely, experiment with LSD and DMT, and remain anarchic in spirit. Be aware that all of your apparent choices are an illusion, but do it anyway if you want. Take the bull by the horns. Jump ship at the earliest opportunity. Don't think anyone knows anything any better than you do, but if it turns out that they do, acknowledge it, thank them, but ultimately

realize that it is the greatness in you that recognizes it. Forget following recipes in occult books, make stuff up, be spontaneous, forget scripted magick, go for juxtapositional magick; improvise.

If a magical current takes hold of you, go with it, become obsessed, see where it leads you. Never back away from the Abyss because there'll only be another one behind you. Hold magical power, but don't be too quick to wield it. That just expends it. Honour your disappointments, your disillusionments. Fail big-time. Become a fucking mess. Triumph in spite of it. Give in to the tempter or temptress, but slap it down once you have grasped its nature. Come to know how maya works. Thoroughly examine your desires, exhaust your desires if you have not yet wearied of them, this is generally faster than pretending to be aloof from them (if you're still excited by desires, your world is an eggshell). Once you have taken the tour, get the slime off your hands and retire. Work fast, you don't have very long for energized magick. Dive right in, don't constantly be preparing. The allure will wear off. There is no time for the leisurely route, take all the shortcuts you can find. Better still, go direct and do nothing, the fleeting holding no more secrets. Ask yourself, once in a while, just why you're bothering with all this. What was the original aim? So you can work magick now, so what? The self that thought it was impossible has crumbled, but what about the one who isn't so impressed, what's that one's game?

Never be satisfied until you know exactly who you are, compared to that 'causing change in conformity with will' is just someone else's bullshit. Magick is for peeling the mask off the magician, rather than supernatural fulfillment of idle fantasies.

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