

## *Journal of an Enochian Bricoleur*



In the centre of the room, atop a clothed table is a wax carved altar.

In the middle of the 7-pointed star of the altar is a 3-pointed metal stand that holds a mesmerising orb.

Beneath our orb, a stick of lit incense oozes its smoke up and around the crystal ball. It warps and rises and refracts the candlelight, entrancing.

I am one of four guests at an Enochian Bornless Ritual run by a member of the Hermetic Order of the Red Dragon. He is chanting the names of the four cardinal directions and their elements, then an invocation to the governing angel of the twenty-second Aether.

Still staring at the orb, I feel calm. Very calm. I haven't taken anything psychoactive today; I don't feel sober even though I am. I pay it no mind and enjoy the sensation. I feel the presence of someone embracing me from behind, their chin resting on my shoulder.

Earlier that evening I had arrived in a suburban house in Melbourne's east that the proprietors run as a magic shop. The garden was whimsical, the entry deliberately staged.

The host, an older man, introduces himself and over tea explains the lineage of the HORD.

The Golden Dawn, he says, set the original four-grade probationary path; a Welsh branch split off because crossing the channel for meetings was impractical a century ago, and from that offshoot his own order descends. Hence the Red Dragon.

Aleister Crowley, the OTO, Rosicrucianism, chaos magic, third-degree Freemasonry and the angelic system John Dee and Edward Kelley Scried in the 1580s (Enochian) all exist in the same conceptual toolkit.

He then goes "If you don't know something it's better to make it up rather than to not try at all." To illustrate, he tells of a scrying practice with two of his neophytes:

"one was less experienced than the other in mystical arts, but had much greater results than the adept... why? No need to unlearn any fallacies when you are the fool. Knowing nothing gives you no expectations and no fear of failures, you are just brimming potentiality."

In this journal I argue that the ritual is best understood not as the recovery of an authentic Enochian tradition, but as a working instance of Lévi-Strauss's (1966) *bricoleur*: a rite that generates its own ritual virtuality from inherited symbolic fragments.



We climb the stairs and sit in a circle around the altar.

The rite opens with a group invocation. We visualise a white light above us we can nearly touch, and a warm orange glow below. We raise our right hand, "touch" the light, and draw it to the top of our heads with a chant. We then pull the orange glow up to the solar plexus.

Our hand to the right shoulder, to the left, then both hands clasped at the centre. At each point we sound a syllable in unison. Enochian or Hebrew or Latin, I cannot tell which. Voices are imperfectly synchronised, but intermittently two or three tones harmonise and the room rings.

This opening is Turner's (1967) *separation phase* in its most economical form.

There is no procession, no costume nor any preparatory fast.

The gesture and visualisation is simple and repeatable.

This is what Turner calls a dominant symbol, formally simple, semantically dense. It asserts a vertical axis between an imagined white light above and an orange one below, and it marks the threshold across which the participants leave ordinary attention behind.

The movement reminds me of the Christian cross gesture (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) which is another fragment in the toolkit.

The work is done by the hand, the breath, and the wavering chord.

Nothing represents anything yet. The room is being constituted as a different kind of space, and by the time we sit, we are no longer five strangers having tea.

The final tone fades. The practitioner steps to the altar.

He lights the incense beneath the orb and begins the Bornless Ritual, invoking earth, air, fire, and water at each of the four cardinal walls, then setting a protective seal around the circle. He walks it counterclockwise.

He notes out loud that in the northern hemisphere we would walk the other way: the *bricoleur* adapting a borrowed system to the local sky.



He returns to the altar and begins reciting in Enochian the invocation of the twenty-second Aether's spirit. The seal etched into the wax altar beneath the orb I would later identify as Dee's Sigillum Dei Aemeth.

The same John Dee who developed the Enochian Language.

It sits in shadow as the incense smoke begins to wrap the glass. In English he then goes:

"I conjure you in the name of Fire, of Water, of Air, and of the Earth; I conjure you in the name of the Heights of Heaven and the Depths of Earth's Underworld; I conjure you in the names of Hermes and Anubis, the howling of Kerkoros and the guardian dragon; I conjure you in the name of the boat and its ferryman, Acharontos; and I conjure you in the name of the three necessities and the whip and the sword."

He asks if anyone feels any new presence or sensation:

One participant feels a hand on their shoulder, another feels a hand on top of theirs and the third says they feel a weight at the back of their head.

Myself with the chin-on-shoulder feeling, I say nothing on it, and choose to express my feeling of tranquil calm.

This moment is what Kapferer (2004) calls ritual virtuality. The rite isn't representing the angel; it's producing the felt conditions under which it's presence can be reported.

Then he pulls out a Rider-Waite tarot deck from 1971 and goes around the circle giving readings. The cards get to me last. After the reading he looks at me and asks me to check the time. I roll up my sleeve and see it is exactly 9:00 PM.

The time the workshop was set to run to on the invitation.

There are no clocks in the room. He isn't wearing a watch.

The absurdity of this coincidence is what hits me and I laugh aloud.

The whole evening has been on ritual time, looped and cyclical.

All the while, the Casio up my sleeve has been running.

In the room it felt supernatural.

Stepping back, it's the moment the two clocks brush against each other and the *bricoleur* has trained the room to notice this intersection between ritual and linear time. Both can sit beside each other.

The session ends.

The closing rite is much shorter than the opening. This is Turner's *reintegration phase* executed with the same economy as the separation.

The practitioner stands and takes up a dual-headed wand, one end painted white, the other black. He visits each of the four walls in turn, speaking briefly, undoing the seal. Returning to the altar, he claps out the candles.

He says that blowing out the candles would offend the fire elementals.

We walk downstairs. The other participants leave.

At the door I show the practitioner a trilogy of books I had wanted to ask him about.

He walks me out. From outside I look back up at the room.

For ritual purposes, it is no longer the room I entered.

The Hermetic Order of the Red Dragon is not the custodian of John Dee's Enochian system. It does not preserve a single continuous tradition — it assembles one.

Golden Dawn structure, Thelemic vocabulary, a 1971 Rider-Waite deck, a Welsh founding story, the southern-hemisphere reversal of the protective seal, the Sigillum Dei Aemeth sitting in shadow beneath the orb.

Interpreting this ritual as recovery of other systems feels fragile.

Although if we read this ritual as Lévi-Strauss's *bricolage*, it's telling us exactly why the practitioner said, "if you don't know something, you make it up rather than not try at all." The rite works because it is assembled, and the assembly, performed seriously, produces a virtual domain in which presence can be felt and reported.



Kapferer, B 2004, 'Ritual dynamics and virtual practice: beyond representation and meaning', *Social Analysis*, vol. 48, no. 2, pp. 35–54.

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