

Interview with Alan Moore

“Living within the butchered corpse of magic”



Alan Moore (65) is best known as the author of influential comic book-series such as *Watchmen*, *V for Vendetta*, *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* and *From Hell*. These and other signature Moore inventions - like the working-class occultist John Constantine (*Hellblazer*) - have been turned into Hollywood movies over the past 20 years, much to Mr. Moore's chagrin.

In 1993, on his fortieth birthday, Moore declared his intention to become a ceremonial magician. In autodidactic fashion, he has made good on this promise for the intervening 26 years.

Splendor Solis reached out for an interview, posing ten questions via email. Moore kindly obliged, responding with ten pages of answers. The complete Q&A can be found as a PDF supplement to this issue, the following is a compressed version.

“The main benefit of magic to me on an everyday level, other than in my work, is as a language with which I can read and interpret the events of the world, from a dream to a news bulletin to a chance occurrence. The four magical weapons, indispensable to any magician or to any human being for that matter, are the tools with which I evaluate my actions and decisions, and have thus far never let me down”, Moore explains.

Wonderful and grandiose

In various interviews touching on his occult career and ideas, a combination of playfulness and seriousness comes across. Early on, Moore publicly identified as a ‘worshipper of first-century snake-puppet Glycon, the last-created of the Roman gods.’ In his answers to Splendor Solis, he mentions psychedelic drugs, the cut-up technique of William Burroughs and Brion Gysin, and The Moon & Serpent Grand Egyptian Theatre of

Marvels, an “entirely imaginary magical order”:

“We thought that this sounded both wonderful and ridiculously grandiose at the same time. Membership was extended to whoever we found ourselves working with. There were no meetings, no robes, no special handshakes, no requirement to share the same beliefs as anybody else, and no hierarchical grades. I did insist on being referred to as ‘Imperial Basilisk’ for a while but everybody took absolutely no notice of this”, Moore says.

“Most importantly, by not embracing a quasi-religious overall belief system, we were not afflicted by the predictable emergence of dogmas, which it seems to me are an end to enquiry; an end to genuine thought. Also, while the historical past of magic is a magnificent treasure trove of ideas, I feel that if we saddle ourselves with the Victorian Rosicrucian Freemason furnishing of groups like the Golden Dawn, we run the serious risk of magic become a kind of historical re-enactment society. Better, I think, to attempt a magic sufficient to our present day.”

Promethea



The topic of magic crops up in both works like the comic book *Promethea* - giving a colorful 101 introduction to kabbalistic concepts such as the Tree of Life - and as background radiation in the 2015 novel *Jerusalem*, about his native Northampton (“one of the ten longest novels in the English language”).

“[My] investigations into the various sephira (...) gained an additional impetus when I was visiting each individual sephiroth as research for the ‘Kabbalistic Road-Trip’ sequence in *Promethea*, being written, of necessity, to a deadline. **Actually, it may be that in both magic and art, deadlines can sometimes be a useful aid to productivity. Even in the absence of a traditional magical order, some form of discipline is obviously essential.**”

Demonization - on a literal level

When asked to mention magical operations that have had “interesting effects in your life”, Moore lists several, one of them being a demonic encounter:

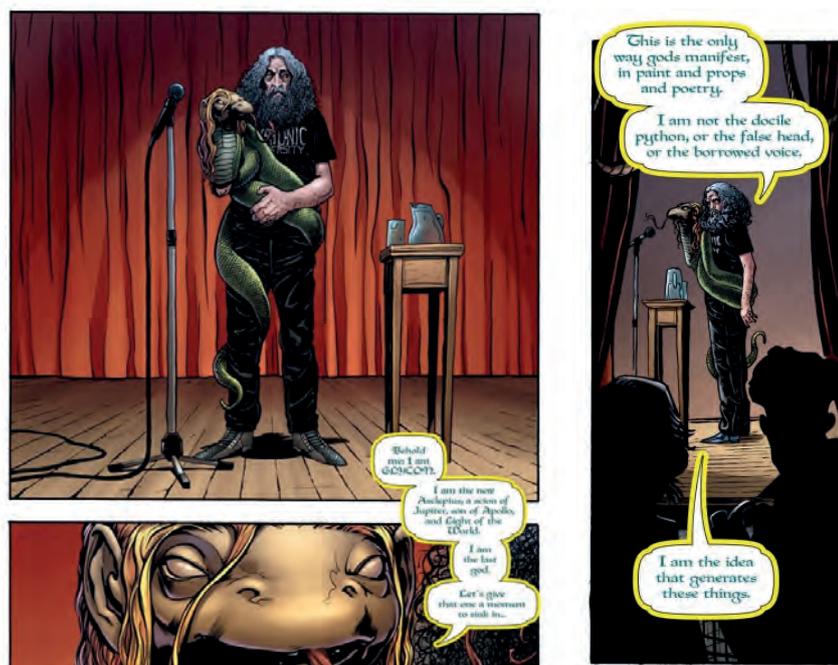
“My (accidental) encounter with an entity that presented as the demon Asmodeus was interesting and instructive on a number of levels – it left me with a strong impression that demons, or possibly just this specific demon, were fourth dimensional entities existing outside conventional, linear human time, something that later seemed to be partly confirmed when I read a description of the fabled ‘Asmodeus flight’, as mentioned in Shakespeare. More

importantly, I believe I learned something about the essentially reflective nature of such entities, in that initially my reaction to the presence of a demon was one of fear and repulsion. Seemingly in response, the demon presented as fearsome and repulsive. Only later, when I’d decided to approach the entity with respect and an absence of aggression, did the entity become respectable and amenable, so that we could have an interesting conversation together. From this I deduced that what I was seeing was a clear example of how the phenomenon of what we refer to as ‘demonization’ actually works on a literal level, as if to suggest that some social group such as black, gay or working-class people, if treated as demonic and ‘other’, will most generally respond to such insulting preconceptions by behaving exactly as demonic as their persecutors believe them to be, thus reinforcing this perception and, to some degree, internalising it.

Further to this, it was after the encounter with Asmodeus that I decided a useful criterion for further occult explorations might be something like “Does this experience give me any useful insights into the mundane, ordinary world and my life within it, or is this information

that is beyond both verification and practical purpose, in effect unfalsifiable and of little use on my path as a magician, as an artist, or as a human being?” I’ve found this to be a useful way of sifting out the occasional nonsense, noise and static that might arise during the

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magical experience, and suppose that it could be seen as an extension of the Emerald Tablet's key dictum, "As above, so below."

"There were lots of other operations, all of them yielding what seemed to me to be important key insights into both the magical and mundane levels of existence. Then, at a certain point, these insights all seemed to become internalised to the point where every element of my life is now informed by my understanding of magic, so that every act becomes a magical act. This has seen a decrease in, if not a cessation of, my ritual and ceremonial activities, and an apparent increase in my magical reach and capability."

Moore has liberally shared his views on magic in interviews and artworks the past 20 years.

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"What keeps the occult hidden these days, despite the easy availability of its most esoteric lore, is no longer the stern admonishments of religion but simply the inability of the modern worldview to see or understand that lore for what it is. Now, while this may be a somewhat annoying and frustrating state of affairs, I contend that it is much more promising than having to pursue our magical agendas under the threat of imminent burning or disembowelment. In the 21st century, the only obstacle between us and the revelatory magical experience is the obstacle of our own modern minds, which I think makes the whole thing appear rather more doable."

Orders and Anarchy

As a professed anarchist, Mr. Moore expresses strong reservations against hierarchical initiatory orders:

"In terms of the advantages of magical orders, I suppose it has to be said that the regimented focus that groups such as the Golden Dawn were capable of has left us with some of the most sophisticated writings and the most beautiful artefacts in contemporary magic, although the members of these orders were almost entirely wealthier-than-average middle-class people, and this would certainly have been a

significant factor in the impressive material accomplishments of such organisations. This is not to diminish those accomplishments; simply to suggest that money may have played as great a part in them as magical talent and ability.

However – and this may only be from my own perspective as a belligerent working-class anarchist, so please bear that in mind – the drawbacks seem to me to greatly outweigh the benefits.”

[For Mr. Moore’s thoughts on Anarchy and Magic, Fascism and Religion, please see the Q&A PDF]

“In opposition to the undeniably beautiful accomplishments of organisations such as the Golden Dawn we must surely cite the equal-or-superior work of lone practitioners like Austin Osman Spare or his South London predecessor and inspiration William Blake. Blake, of course, famously said that he must create his own system or be the slave to another man’s, which I feel is very pertinent to what we’re talking about here. In any practical circumstances, a magical order is often prey to the ego and personality of the individual or individuals at its centre. With a properly balanced personality – whatever that is – forming the nucleus of such a group, this obviously doesn’t have to be a negative experience and may indeed be very rewarding, but it should be remembered that as a demographic, magicians tend to include more than our fair share of egotists, and that it is hardly unknown for us to end up psychologically and morally lost. This is bad enough when considering the single individual that it happens to, but if that individual is at the centre of an order and can drag everyone else down the same neurotic path to nowhere, then it’s little short of disastrous. In a worse-case scenario we’re



From Hell

talking about a number of people ending up with their lives and personalities damaged, and in a best-case scenario we are talking about a number of people who have simply wasted perhaps years of their precious human time. So, the upside of magical orders seems to me to pretty much boil down to the existence of Enochian Chess, while the downside appears to be potentially catastrophic.

I'd suggest that while it is much better to work with other people than to work alone – which invites solipsism and possibly psychosis – my own preferred



solution has been to work with a small group of trusted friends who share similar inclinations and interests, usually in magical workings that have only two or three persons present.”

Only and always an art of consciousness

For several years, there has been talk of a Bumper Book of Magic by Alan Moore and the late Steve Moore (no relation). According to Moore, this is still stuck in “Development Hell”.

“I hope that the book ultimately helps clarify the working principles of magic and

make their fundamental connection with human consciousness evident. I hope that it will re-contextualise magic historically, hence inevitably politically, hence inevitably ethically. I hope that it will empower people in lucid, practical terms, and that it will dispel at least some of the self-mystification and live-action role-playing aspects that I perceive in some areas of contemporary occultism.”

Could you summarize main perspectives your magical practice has given you?

“I don’t know if I can summarise, but I can extensively sample:

There is the realisation, relative to the High Priestess path, that all artists and magicians, irrespective of gender, start out as male in that they are attempting to penetrate their chosen mystery; to penetrate magic; to penetrate art. If they are successful in this, however, they must inevitably become female, in that by becoming its mortal embodiment they will have become magic; become art; become the thing that others seek to penetrate.

There is the understanding that with settled urban living there came a situation where people, for the first time, didn’t have to grow their own food. This enabled people to specialise as priests, viziers, performers, artists and writers, and thus removed many of original shamanism’s societal functions, be that spiritual, political or as the dispenser of visions. With the Renaissance, science and medicine were similarly hived off from the body of magic, which – other than the essential ecstasy that is at the core of the magical experience but which is detrimental to an ordered urban society – left magic’s access to the inner world as its only selling point, before Freud and psychoanalysis turned up to appropriate that as well.

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Basically, in all human culture today, we are living within the butchered corpse of magic. My assumption is that this is the process of Solvé, and requires the complementary process of Coagula to rectify the situation.

There is the knowledge that magic can only and always be an art of consciousness, born from our first apprehension of consciousness itself. This has led to attempting a redefinition of magic as “any purposeful engagement with the phenomena or possibilities of consciousness”. (If this should seem narrow, bear in mind that everything in our individual universes is subjective and only exists to us as an element of our consciousness.)

There is the fundamental assertion that, at least in the conceptual terrain of Idea Space, the idea of a god is a god.

There is the suspicion that this material world, the Kabbalistic Malkuth, may not be a wholly separate sphere from the Kabbalistic sphere of dreams and imagination, Yesod. It might be that they are, rather, two points on a graded scale. There is either no barrier between these two states or, perhaps more likely, such a barrier is remarkably porous. That if space/time is a solid of at least four spatial dimensions, as Einstein insists, then it is both unchanging and eternal. The

same goes for every single thing within that system, including us.

There is my belief that magic is in some manner alive, that it is not a neutral force like electricity, and that it might be thought to have an agenda of its own. Following from this, I feel that one should not bother magic over something that is perfectly achievable by other means, even if those means take a lot of personal time and effort. In short, magic probably has better things to do than helping me sort out my overdraft.

That it is possible to construct an argument, from logic and likelihood, that Christianity is a literalist misunderstanding of a Gnostic instructional parable, rather than an attempt by sophisticated Gnostics to insist that a man who had physically existed in living memory was in fact entirely a symbolic figure. I mean, why would anyone do that?

Finally, there is the insight that the word magic really doesn't need a k.”

Mr. Moore, who - according to the 1989 song Can U Dig it by Pop Will Eat Itself - “knows the score”, concludes his missive to Splendor Solis:

“Anyway, I hope the above answers are of some use to someone, and apologise again regarding the delays to The Bumper Book of Magic. My very best to everyone – Alan Moore.”

These are Mr. Moore's general reflections about orders. The only context I gave him regarding the SR+C was the following: “I'm writing for the members only journal of SR+C, a small but dedicated international order of practicing magicians.”

His answers will be found in their entirety in the Q&A PDF, perhaps to be renamed “The Flying Moore Scroll”.

Article by *Fr. I.T.A.*