ABRAXAS

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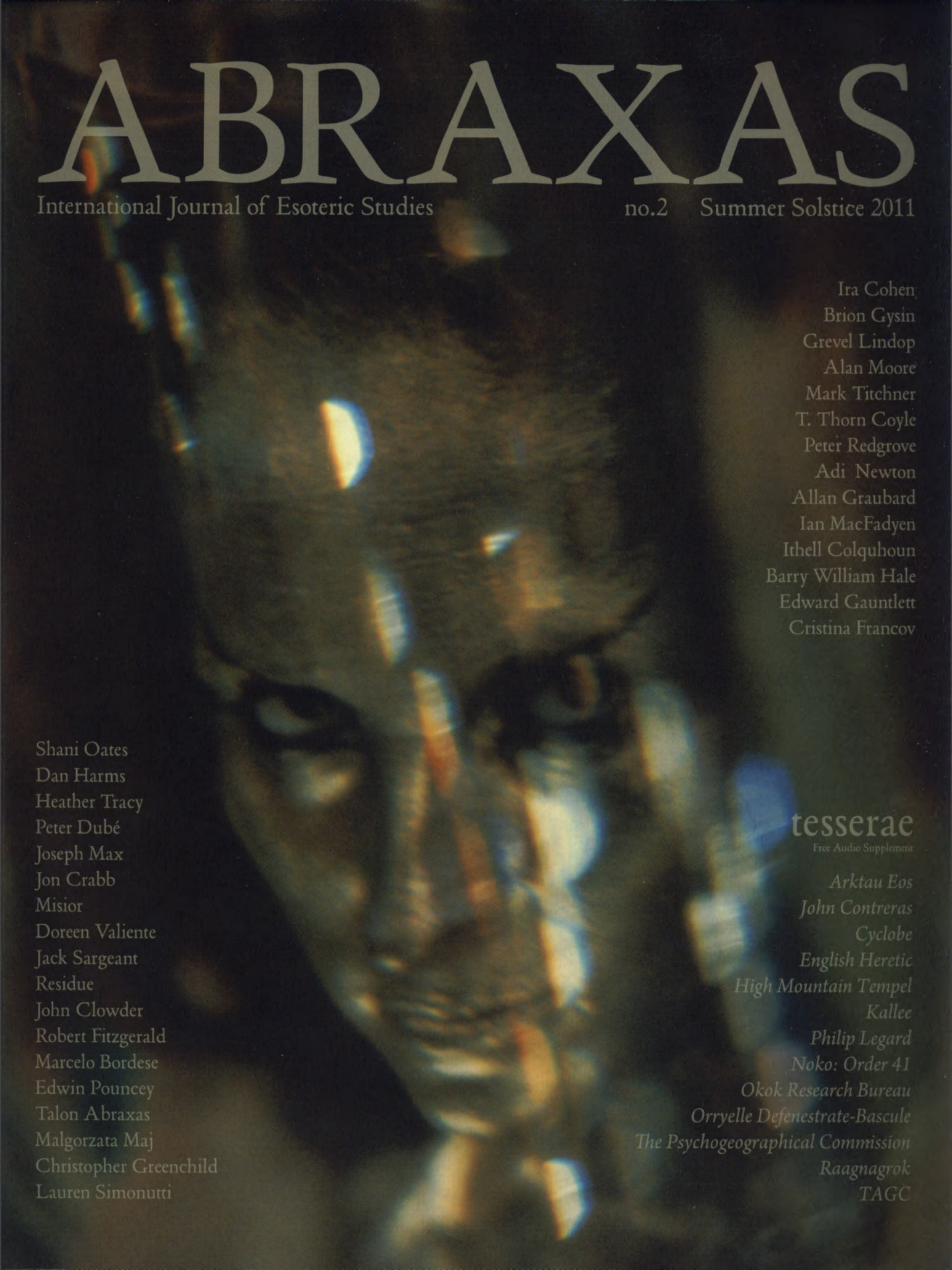

Ira Cohen
Brion Gysin
Grevel Lindop
Alan Moore
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T. Thorn Coyle
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Ithell Colquhoun
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No.II

Abraxas

International Journal of Esoteric Studies

MMXI

Editorial

Since it first appeared, the inaugural issue of *Abraxas* has been a great success. Indeed, it seems to have carried its message across the world and has garnered praise from far quarters. We are delighted, and it is with great pleasure that Christina and I now offer you a substantial second issue.

Abraxas 2 appears at a time when the world of fine art is taking an increasing interest in esotericism. Several recent exhibitions have been influential, notably *Traces du Sacré* at the Pompidou, Paris (2008) and *The Dark Monarch* at Tate St. Ives (2009). And it was in Cornwall, on a particularly stormy November day, that we met the artist Mark Titchner. Mark's work first received critical acclaim through his exhibition at Arnolfini in Bristol in 2006, but it was his innovative employment of sigils within urban environments that really caught our attention. His photo essay in this issue explores his inspiring work in this area. And as we go to press I understand Mark is planning an exhibition that will present jointly the work of John Latham and Austin Osman Spare at Flat Time House, London. The event is planned to coincide with the 2011 FRIEZE Art Fair in October, and it is a marriage we hope will prove fruitful.

Indeed, the mysterious and fecund relationship between art and magic is assuredly ancient, even if attempts to categorise esoteric art are relatively recent, and exploring these areas is one of the principal founding aims of *Abraxas*. To this end we offer here an array of subjects and approaches, from Jon Crabb's insightful essay discussing the graphic work of Brion Gysin, to Alan Moore's razor-sharp firestorm, 'Fossil Angels.' We range from Lauren Simonutti's haunting photographs, to inspiring interviews with artists Cristina Francov and Barry William Hale.

The literary arts are also represented in Edward Gauntlett's substantial analysis of the poet and writer Peter Redgrove, and in Grevel Lindop's personal account of editing Robert Graves' seminal work, *The White Goddess*. And once again we are especially pleased to offer a rich selection of poetry, including work from Peter Redgrove, Ira Cohen, Christopher Greenchild and Ithell Colquhoun.

Among the many responses we received to the first issue was a suggestion that we might somehow include work from a selection of contemporary musicians within the esoteric genre. This second issue therefore brings with it our first free audio supplement, *Tesserae*. Sourced and chosen by our guest MC Gavin Semple, these audio contributions have in some cases been composed especially for *Abraxas*, and are thus appearing for the first time. And if this was not enough, in this issue Jack Sargeant interviews TAGC founder Adi Newton.

A final note: sadly, as some of you may be aware, during the last months of production, Ira Cohen, one of our most important contributors, passed away. It was Edwin Pouncey who originally introduced me to Ira's extraordinary work, but it was Allan Graubard and Will Swofford who kindly introduced me to the poet himself, on a warm September day in New York City. Ira proved to be a generous host, and was keenly looking forward to seeing his work in *Abraxas*, even in his final weeks. This issue is respectfully dedicated to his memory.

Robert Ansell
JUNE 2011

Contents

The White Goddess: A Personal Account

Grevel Lindop

Christmas 1964 was a good one. Sixteen years old, I was still self-important enough to write my name on my possessions, so I know that among the presents I received that day were a Marseilles Tarot (the old B.P. Grimaud deck in its shiny green packet), the one-volume edition of Frazer's *Golden Bough*, and *The White Goddess* by Robert Graves. All three were presents from my parents, who, with no interest themselves in folklore, witchcraft or magic, took a remarkably tolerant view of my own enthusiasms, and simply gave me what I had asked for.

All three gifts have been lifelong companions, but the only thing I remember now about those Christmas holidays is that night after night I sat up until two-thirty or three in the morning, reading *The White Goddess* until my fluttering eyelids refused to open any more and I sank to sleep. I devoured every word of Graves' book, from its opening proclamation ('Since the age of fifteen poetry has been my ruling passion')[1] to its resounding close ('None greater in the universe than the Triple Goddess!')[2] with the intoxication that accompanies the sense of entering a new world. To ask whether I understood the book would be meaningless. I was carried along by its flow, I was intoxicated by its imagery – the Tree Alphabet, the Dog, Roebuck and Lapwing, the 'Song of Amergin' with its wonderful catalogue of transforming identities:

> I am a shining tear of the sun,
> I am a hawk on a cliff,
> I am fair among flowers,
> I am a god who sets the head afire with smoke...[3]

I sensed that I was being initiated into a cosmos of ancient secrets, a hidden world where alphabets, calendars, the trees in the forest and the parts of the human body all corresponded to make up a harmonious shimmering unity. And ruling over this miraculous realm, which might be no further away than the nearest woodland or the nearest book of poems, was the Great Goddess herself, exiled and despoiled by patriarchy but poised to return in all her beauty and splendour.

I could not follow, intellectually, the intricacies of Graves' argument (and indeed few people can, since it is tangled and digressive to an extent that largely defeats the logical mind) but I was alert enough to notice that parts of the book didn't quite make sense, in ways that owed more to misprints than to Graves' lateral thinking. On page 252 of my copy, for example, a whole paragraph was in the wrong place, making nonsense of the argument. I didn't know then that I would one day become a textual editor, but I had a strong urge to pull that paragraph out and put it back in its proper place. I also grasped two things. One was that poetry was important, since according to Graves the Goddess was also the Muse, and true poetry

was an act of inspired worship and invocation of her. I decided to find out more about poetry, and as a first step bought the Graves' *Collected Poems*. Having devoured that, I went on to other poets, and soon began writing poems myself. I had caught some kind of obsession from Graves, and more than forty years later it is still raging.

The other thing I understood was that religion could have a feminine dimension – could, indeed, be the worship of the transcendent Female as such. To a teenager raised on the aridities of English public-school Christianity, 'chapel' every weekday morning taken by a pompous lay-preacher headmaster, and chapters of the Old Testament ('for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God...') to study for homework each weekend, the idea of Goddess-worship was massively liberating. *The White Goddess* became, literally, my Bible. I began to pray nightly to the Goddess, and before long my prayers turned to invocation and visualisation in the most vivid physical form. I can only hope that the attentions of an energetic sixteen- and seventeen-year-old male were not displeasing to Her.

When I went to university, I continued to read Graves' work and to write poetry, but *The White Goddess* gradually fell into the background. Its flavour stayed with me and I glanced at it occasionally, but for the time being its work was done and other things took precedence. Robert Graves, whom I had never met or written to, died quietly in 1985. Graduate study, Carlos Castaneda, psychedelic drugs, poetry, an academic career, Buddhist meditation and marriage kept me busy until the 1990s. Then, one day in 1994, a colleague passing in a university corridor mentioned that Carcanet Press was planning to embark on a collected edition of the works of Robert Graves, with the encouragement of Graves' heirs.

Carcanet Press was my own poetry publisher, and its Director, Michael Schmidt, my oldest friend. At once I knew that I must edit *The White Goddess*. I felt a sense of absolute compulsion as I hurried to Michael and begged to be allowed to take on the text of this book, which had faded to the back of my mind but which I now recognised as a foundation-stone of my mental life. The opportunity to re-establish my connection with it seemed fated, a *sign* of some kind. Michael was happy with the idea, but there were obstacles. Faber and Faber, the current publishers of the book, saw no reason why it should be re-edited. The fact that it contained many misprints didn't bother them, so long as it went on selling. At first they wanted to charge Carcanet for the privilege of re-editing the book. Finally they grudgingly agreed to let me improve their text, just so long as they could use it, and the introduction I would write, free of charge afterwards.

Soon I was in touch with William Graves, Robert's son. 'We've got Robert's copy of the book here in Mallorca,' he told me. 'It's got all his own corrections and alterations in it. The easiest thing would be for you to come out here and work with it. We can put you up.'

It seemed as if some magical process had started, almost without my conscious volition. Robert Graves had lived at Cannellun, the house he and his then partner, the American poet Laura Riding, had built for themselves on the outskirts of the village of Deià, Mallorca. Graves and Riding had split up in 1936 soon after leaving the island at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, but Graves had returned there, after writing *The White Goddess*, in 1946, with his second wife, Beryl. The invitation to work there, with Graves' own papers and his personal copy of *The White Goddess*, was irresistible. At the end of October 1996 I took a cheap night flight to Palma, and a taxi across the island to Deià, arriving long before dawn.

The taxi dropped me at the centre of the village and drove away, leaving me in warm, flower-fragrant Mediterranean darkness. I had directions to William Graves' house and took the steeply-winding path up through the hillside village under the stars. The house, next to the church, was shuttered and it was far too early to wake anyone, so I wandered along by a high wall until I came to the wooden gateway into the hilltop churchyard where Robert Graves is buried. I turned the iron ring, opened the door and stepped through into a flickering, ankle-deep sea of red light. I had forgotten that it was All Hallows,' and the

Robert Graves, Photo: © Tim Motion, 1979

previous evening the villagers had placed hundreds of candles in red glass shades on the graves of their families and loved ones. The whole churchyard floated in gentle red light. I paced through it to Robert's grave, a simple stone slab covered, according to local practice, with cement in which the words ROBERT GRAVES 1895-1985 POETA had been scratched in careful, childlike handwriting. I had come to Graves' resting-place on the Day of the Dead.

At dawn I went down to the house and was welcomed by William's wife, Elena. After breakfast we walked over to Graves' former home, Cannellun, where I was introduced to his widow, Beryl, a delightful, down-to-earth, plain-spoken, bespectacled Englishwoman who showed me around the Graves residence. I walked through the house wide-eyed, as if in a dream. Robert Graves' coats were still on the coathooks, his hats still on the pegs. The walls were covered with paintings and batiks by his artist friends. His books were on the shelves. Nothing, it seemed, had been altered. There was no weirdness or hushed reverence. Beryl was simply living just as she always had, with the things that were familiar in her house. There were two cats and an Aga in the kitchen. She made me a cup of English tea.

Then she took me into the study, the study where Robert Graves had worked every day for forty years. There was a huge wooden chair with a rush seat. There was a sturdy wooden table covered with Graves' possessions – ink-bottles, pens, pencils, pebbles, threepenny-bits, marbles, bits of beach-glass. Beside the desk stood a huge bookcase. It was full of reference books. At elbow-level was the full-size, thirteen-volume *Oxford English Dictionary* which Graves claimed to consult every day of his life. On the mantelpiece were the brass West African gold-weights Graves described in *The White Goddess*, including the little hump-

backed flute-player sitting on the brass box with the spiral on the lid. 'You'll be all right working here, won't you?' asked Beryl.

The room was dark. It was vibrant with energy. I could feel my hair almost standing on end. 'Yes, thank you, I'll be fine,' I told her. As the door closed I sat down in Graves' chair, at his table, surrounded by his books, and I took a deep breath of the dry, woody air, that wonderful air of an old study. The force-field was almost tangible. I had come to the centre of something that had summoned me since I was sixteen. And on the desk, amid the Gravesian bits and pieces, was his personal copy of *The White Goddess*, the 1958 Vintage paperback edition. An extraordinary object, the volume bulges with pieces of tissue paper glued in by Graves to contain new text after he had already squeezed everything possible into the margins. The pages are speckled with thousands of underlinings and corrections in blue pencil and red and black ink. On several pages, passages have been rewritten, or have had extensive new material added, in blue ink, with red pencil then used for further refinement, and blue ink again on top for final thoughts. It is a work of art, a palimpsest of poetic thinking, in itself.

The corrections and additions, made in the late 1950s, should have been typed out by Graves' secretary and then incorporated by the publisher in the 1961 edition of the book. But in many cases the secretary misread Graves' handwriting or the publisher misunderstood the instructions. Changes were missed, made wrongly, or put into the wrong places. My job was to go through the book checking the current edition against Graves' copy and ensure that this time the corrections really could be made correctly.

I came to Cannellun every day to work on the book. I would stop for lunch, which Beryl, a splendid hostess, would prepare for me. She made very English things, like scrambled eggs on toast and bananas and custard. We would eat out on the terrace behind the house, in the warm sunny air of the Mallorcan 'Second Spring,' as Autumn is called there, under the bright, rocky mountainside, looking down across the road to the endless terraced steps of the silver-grey olive trees with the sea beyond. Beryl would reminisce about Robert. We worked out that her first husband, the one before Graves, had been a schoolfriend of my father's. She would discuss the articles in the latest TLS, airmailed out to her weekly. It was like having lunch with my North Oxford landlady. Then I would return to work, and, when I finished for the day, like Robert I would walk the mile down to the little *Cala* or cove nearby for a swim.

I was also able to read the immense collection of letters which Graves had received over the years from readers of *The White Goddess*. They ranged from the thoughtful and learned to the completely crazy. As I've written elsewhere,

> Experts, real and self-styled, in archaeology and early Welsh, in runes and classical studies, in witchcraft and pharmacology, wrote to offer 'corrections' (often themselves of dubious correctness) and extensions to his theories. Less erudite readers wrote to tell him of their dreams, their drug experiences, their migraines, their writer's block, their experiments in magic.[4]

It was clear that Graves had discussed matters of ritual with a number of practising witches. Amongst letters from readers, I was particularly impressed by one from a man who wrote of his own researches:

> I sometimes feel when I am wandering around in the marshes of the old knowledge, that the dam upstream is going to burst and the whole of humanity is going to be submerged by fifty thousand years of pre-history, swamping the neat subtopian conventions of the last thousand years.[5]

The writer gave his name as R.L. Bowers. Only years later did I find out that this was the famous 'Robert Cochrane,' and arrange to publish his two forgotten letters to Graves.

Returning home after a week or so, I finished correcting the book's text and wrote my Introduction, sorting out the basic chronology of *The White Goddess*' composition and adding some information, in the hope of making it a little easier for readers to approach. I dedicated my own part in the work, as Editor, to my wife Amanda, my personal incarnation of the Goddess, and thought I had finished. But I had failed to notice that the following year, 1998, was the fiftieth anniversary of *The White Goddess*' original publication. I was asked to speak at a celebratory conference, and I read the book yet again. Making a sustained attempt to follow the logic of its argument and trying to keep a clear head, I began to understand something of the complexity of its structure. The argument, self-evidently, did not move in a straight line. It was interrupted, it doubled back on itself, it jumped about. Important ideas were planted where you least expected them. It struck me that in its final shape the book had twenty-seven numbered chapters: three times three times three: the number of the Triple Goddess, cubed. Could this be an accident?

I decided to draw up a table showing what kind of material each chapter contained. It quickly became evident that the book contained three quite different kinds of substance, and switched irregularly between them. There were chapters of historical argument, showing how early Welsh texts contained evidence of the overthrow of Goddess-worship by patriarchal invaders spreading across Europe during the Bronze Age. These were interrupted by chapters feeding the reader extensive information about plant- and tree-lore and all kinds of other magical material: fascinating, but largely irrelevant to the argument. Thirdly, there were chapters setting out Graves' views on poetry and poetic thinking. *The White Goddess* was like three books which had been plaited together to make a single one. And when I counted up the number of chapters devoted to each of the three topics, guess what? There were nine of each. Nine chapters of history, nine chapters of magical lore, nine chapters on poetry. Again, a number of the Goddess. And by switching to and fro between them, Graves, like a juggler, was able to keep all three topics alive and in motion in the reader's head without ever letting the logical intellect take control and reduce the book to a linear argument. I came to see that by constantly stimulating the intellect, yet constantly frustrating it – and balancing it – by leading the reader into speculations about the Number of the Beast, the ritual laming of sacred kings, or the reason why 'so remarkably few young poets continue nowadays to publish poetry after their early twenties,' Graves was drawing the reader into a kind of poetic trance, where fact, mystery and time-transcending clairvoyance all began to operate. *The White Goddess*, indeed, was designed as a book which would induce the poetic faculty in its readers. It was a book that could make poets. (To my own knowledge, poets who have received fundamental inspiration from *The White Goddess* include Ted Hughes, Sylvia Plath, Peter Redgrove, Seamus Heaney, Simon Armitage, Eavan Boland, Stephen Rohmer, Patrick McGuinness and David Constantine. No doubt the list is constantly growing).

I also came to see that, taking for granted that Graves knew the Bible and Greek and Roman mythology inside out, the books that had supplied the essential insights for *The White Goddess* were comparatively few. Indeed, only five: Edward Davies' *Celtic Researches* (1804); Lady Charlotte Guest's translation of the *Mabinogion* (1839); Frazer's *Golden Bough*; Margaret Murray's *The Witch-Cult in Western Europe* (1921); and R.A.S. Macalister's *The Secret Languages of Ancient Ireland* (1937). These were where serious students of *The White Goddess* should begin.

All this may suggest that my relationship with the Goddess had become entirely bookbound. This was far from being the case. My practice of Buddhist meditation had introduced me to many other manifestations of the Goddess, from the Chinese Kuan Yin to the Tibetan Tara – Queen and Bodhisattva – with her threefold manifestation, red, white and green. In 2000 I received, from an elderly Tibetan lama, the Ekajati initiation, conferring sanction to perform the *puja*, meditation and invocation of Ekajati, a fearsome female protecting deity with 'one plait, one tooth and one eye,' who dances upon a human corpse, holding a skull cup filled with blood: the Goddess in Her dark aspect. The initiator tied a red thread made

of some rather elastic type of fibre around my neck when the ceremony was completed. A year later, an Aboriginal guide took me to visit a sacred site near the summit of Mount Guluga, in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales. He advised me that the mountain was sacred to – indeed, truly was – the Great Mother, and that in honour of her one should wear a red thread around one's forehead as a token of respect. He offered to find me one, but I pulled up my red Ekajati thread. It fitted my forehead perfectly. I realised that She had brought me there already equipped.

The most recent intimation of the Goddess, and the most intense, occurred in Bogotá, Colombia in 2007. It seems best to quote from the account I gave in my book *Travels on the Dance Floor*, which was written directly from a diary entry made the same night.

> The river is dark and fast-flowing. I sit in a clearing on the riverbank, as I have been told to do, and watch the disc of the full moon straight ahead. It has a reddish tinge, its light glittering on the restless surface of the water and casting shadows under the bushes beside me. Something darts from the undergrowth on my right. A black cat! It runs towards me and begins to circle me clockwise. But there's another. And another and another. In fact there are dozens, hundreds of cats streaming from the bushes and dashing around me. They run fast and they close in, dancing, brushing my skin with their fur, a whirlpool of black cats. Then, as suddenly as they appeared, they veer away and stream back into the forest.
>
> And I have to leave for my appointment. I have to see the woman. I can't go directly to her house, so I wait in the house next door. Sure enough, a slender woman with blonde hair comes in. She dances around me in a circle, close up, like the cats. I can feel the fabric of her dress and the warmth of her body. Somehow this isn't quite what I expected. 'I thought you'd be naked,' I tell her. She laughs. 'I can't dance naked for you *yet*,' she says, teasingly. And she leaves.
>
> Now it's now time for me to go to the house next door, her house. I see her at once. She's not alone. There's a man with her, and a huge black dog. She smiles at me. She has something important to tell me. I think she's speaking Spanish but I'm not sure. 'This moon is the moon of copper,' she explains. 'Copper, because it comes between silver and gold.' She gestures towards the man. 'And now,' she says, 'you must kiss my companion.'
>
> I'm a bit troubled by this. But I needn't worry. The man bends forward and gives me the slightest brush on the lips, a mere formality. We're not finished yet, however. 'Next,' says the lady, 'you have to kiss my dog.' The dog is like a very large black Labrador. I have a dog at home and I like dogs. I guess I can tolerate kissing it. I bend down and look into its beautiful, loving, dark brown eyes. The dog flickers its tongue out and gives me just the tiniest lick on my lips. No problem.
>
> 'And now,' says the lady, 'you can kiss me.' She pulls me towards her in her arms. This time it's a real kiss. I can feel the pressure of her lips, the determined softness of her tongue. We kiss for a long time and it's very good. When we're finished she looks at me, half-smiling. 'You kiss well,' she says, 'only you need to have a little more saliva in your mouth. Look.'
>
> She beckons me to come close again, and she opens her mouth. I look inside and something very strange happens. Her lower jaw seems to change shape, to elongate a little. There's something not quite human about it: a piranha? A cayman? I peer into her mouth. I can see saliva, yes, but also other things: a rounded stone pebble; a small cylinder of polished bone or ivory, about the size of a chessman; and, astonishingly, I can somehow see through the back of her throat: instead of flesh there is empty space, the sky, and in the midst of it the copper disk of the full moon.
>
> She closes her mouth and her jaw returns to normal. Once again she is a beautiful, blonde woman. She holds me at arm's length, a twinkle of amusement in her eyes, smiling as if to cheer up a favourite child. 'Don't worry,' she says. 'If you're lonely I will send someone.'

I wake with a soundless crash, my heart pounding, my scalp prickling, my skin covered with goose-flesh. I'm trembling though I'm not cold. The pitch dark room crackles with a weird energy, as if the whole place were charged with static electricity. What on earth was that? Shakily I get out of bed and make my way over to the shutters. I can see tiny threads of light through cracks in the woodwork. I open a shutter, half-expecting moonlight to flood into the room, as in some Gothic novel. But no: there's just the pale electric light from a bulb in the courtyard, my fellow-backpackers' socks and t-shirts dangling from a washing line, and the orange-flowered creeper trailing in great swathes over the whitewashed wall opposite. I'm in the Platypus Hotel in Bogotá. I switch on the light and close the shutter. The room has settled down: the unearthly energy has gone, there's just cool air and a faint smell of damp from the old walls, the timber rafters and the tiled roof. For the present there's no chance of sleep. I find my diary, then climb into the hard, square, Spanish carved-wood bed, and write down my dream.[6]

In Panama City I finally found a Santeria priest who was able to interpret my dream. 'The lady was the Goddess Ochún,' he told me, 'the Goddess of the river, of copper and of love. She granted you a vision of herself. She wants to tell you that she loves you, and if you need anything, you have only to ask and she will give it to you.' He recommended some simple rituals which I should perform to honour Her. Only very much later did it occur to me that the dream had come on the night between 30 April and 1 May: that is, on May Eve as it is in the northern hemisphere; Beltane, as it was known in the Celtic countries.

That vision led on in due course to other initiations; but perhaps the story, for the time being, should end here. I have learned to recognise that certain themes and certain quests can run through a lifetime, and that these can involve a relationship with that which is beyond – beyond explanation, beyond the world, beyond the human. I have no comments or rationalisations to offer, but only a wish to record my gratitude: to the Lady Herself, and to Robert Graves, who opened the way.

Notes

1. Robert Graves, *The White Goddess*, ed. Grevel Lindop (Manchester: Carcanet, 1997; London: Faber and Faber, 1999), 13.
2. Graves, *White Goddess*, 483.
3. Graves, *White Goddess*, 202-3.
4. Graves, *White Goddess*, xix.
5. 'Robert Cochrane's Letters to Robert Graves,' *The Cauldron* 134 (Nov 2009), 7.
6. Grevel Lindop, *Travels on the Dance Floor* (London: André Deutsch, 2008), 81-2.

Brion Gysin: Shaman of The Beat Hotel

Jon Crabb

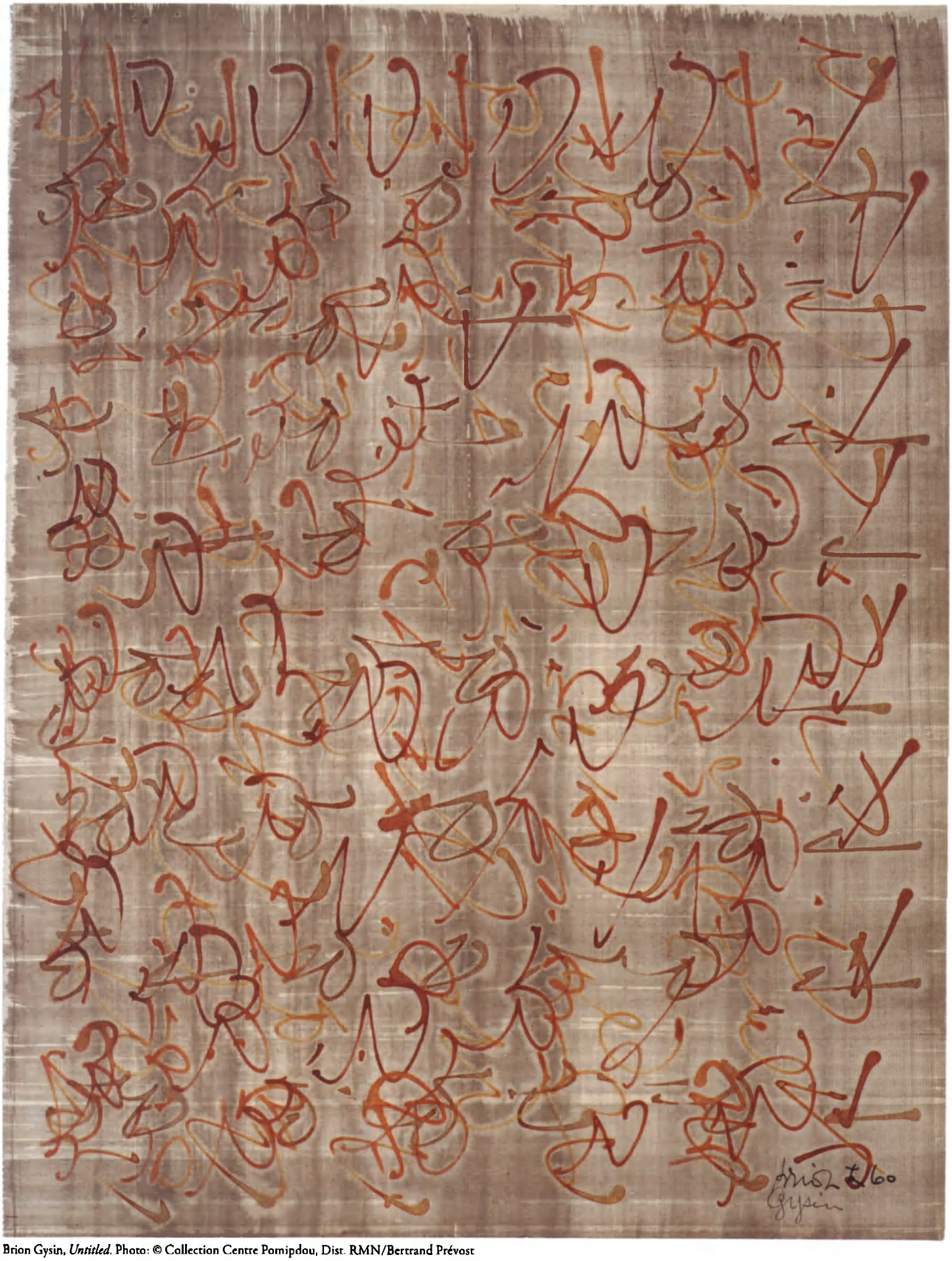
Brion Gysin is a difficult man to pin down. Even geographically he avoids simple description. His biographer describes him as 'an English-born, Canadian-raised, naturalised American of Swiss descent, who lived most of his life in Morocco and France.'[1] Before his twentieth birthday, he was briefly part of the Surrealists in 1930s Paris, but the morning before a group exhibition, his paintings were taken down for insubordination to Breton's rule. During World War Two he learned Japanese calligraphy as a military translator and met the great-grandson of Josiah Tenson, the real-life model for Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom*. This led to him writing his first book; an academic study of *Uncle Tom* and a history of slavery in Canada.[2]

This would be an opening into the black and non-white culture he absorbed for the rest of his life. On the back of this he received one of the first Fulbright scholarships in 1949 to travel to Europe and continue research on slavery, but he abandoned this project and moved to Tangier in 1950 after visiting Paul Bowles. His time in Morocco had an immense impact on him, living there during the liberated time of the 'Interzone' he experienced a unique time and place, and immersed himself in Arabic culture more fully than any of the other writers and artists who drifted through in the 1950s. While there he also travelled into the Rif mountains to the village of Jajouka where he witnessed the festival of Bou Jeloud. In the more remote areas of Morocco, remnants of pre-Islamic paganism still exist, and Gysin, with his knowledge of classical civilization realised that what he was seeing was the Lupercalia of ancient Rome, a fertility rite intended to balance the sexual forces of nature. Gysin was the first foreigner in living memory to ever see this custom and he concluded, 'Their secret, guarded even from them, was that they were still performing the Rites of Pan under the ragged cloak of Islam.'[3]

The strange wail of the pipers had a profound effect on him and he declared he wanted to hear that music for the rest of his life. With this in mind he opened a restaurant called 'The 1001 Nights' in Tangier that employed the Master Musicians of Jajouka as a house band to provide entertainment. Years later, in the 1960s, he befriended the Rolling Stones and assumed the role of tour guide for their Moroccan trips; when he took them to Jajouka the music had a similar impact on Brian Jones, resulting in the record *Brian Jones Presents the Pipes of Pan at Jajouka*, with liner notes and cover-design by Gysin.

After leaving Morocco in 1958 Gysin returned to Paris where he moved into the Beat Hotel, a popular epithet for an unnamed hotel at 9 rue Git-le-Coeur in Paris, occupied almost entirely by artists, poets and musicians during the 1950s and 60s. Its most famous residents were the American beat writers William Burroughs, Allen Ginsburg, Peter Orlovsky, and Gregory Corso. After the Beat Hotel was bought and renovated in 1964, he returned to Tangier for a while, and then moved between New York, Paris and London, in the years leading up to his death in 1986.

People who knew Gysin talked about his peculiarly self-defeating approach to material success and his difficulties managing his own career. He was concerned that he may have been too difficult to classify.[4] Because



Brion Gysin, *Untitled*. Photo: © Collection Centre Pompidou, Dist. RMN/Bertrand Prévost

he did not concentrate on one discipline, art dealers considered him a poet or writer, and publishers considered him a painter or inventor. Before reaching true recognition for any one project he was off exploring another, and in retrospect has an incredibly varied array of achievements to his name: painter, academic, translator, restaurateur, poet, novelist, inventor, mystic, performance artist, photographer, a father of sound poetry, musician, and film-maker. Friends such as Kathelin Gray, though, were keen to point out that, 'he was a painter, he did some writing yes, but he was a painter absolutely... William was the writer... He was an artist.' Although there may be some truth that his lack of financial success was due to spreading himself too thin, almost all of his work does come back to visual art. 'Although he himself said many times that maybe he did his career damage by staying in Morocco – of course that's also what made him. If he'd stayed in Paris and continued to paint and gone to the right parties, and self-promoted like artists have to...But it was Morocco that made him. Without that he wouldn't have been Brion Gysin.'[5]

Of a versatile mind, he was interested in the new and unusual, and embraced all new possibilities; he opened up new paths then left for elsewhere when the opportunity presented itself. Kuri's 2003 biography of Gysin is entitled *Tuning in to the Multimedia Age*, referring to his place as an early innovator in multimedia art.[6] In short, Gysin was a multimedia artist in an age before they existed.

Gysin's art reached a particularly striking apogee with development of the Dream Machine and his Calligraphic Painting.[7] These arose in the period 1958-1964, a fertile time of artistic experimentation with William Burroughs in the alchemical athanor of the Beat Hotel. He once wrote, 'I view life as a fortuitous collaboration ascribable to the fact that one finds oneself at the right place at the same time. For us the "right place" was the famous Beat Hotel in Paris.'[8]

In this setting, Burroughs and Gysin embraced Rimbaud's aim of complete 'systematic, derangement of the senses.' The two men dedicated their time to research, art, literary experiment, magic, cut-ups, drugs and new technology. The two became so close that they wrote a book entitled *The Third Mind*, based on the idea that whenever two minds come together a third is created. The literary world meanwhile was merely concerned that Gysin was 'a bad influence, a keef-crazed, razor-wielding, dada-spouting anarchist whose high-art theorizing was corrupting an authentic American voice.'[9]

Brion Gysin's anarchic disruption of Word and Idea, through the cut-ups; his exploration of symbol and language in his hypnotic calligraphic paintings; and his mission to storm the citadels of enlightenment and make creative vision available to all through the revolutionary Dreamachine, cast him in a peculiar role he had declared for himself as early as 1939:

> I believe that no one can be sincerely interested or more than amused by anyone doing nothing in two dimensions. Nor can any but fools be interested by a lack of emotional intelligence as expressed by worn out symbols representing nothing but their own lack of intellectual adventure. Pictures are made to live with. I am made to make pictures. *The magicians role.*[10]

This function is that of the shaman, to use an antiquated and discredited term. Although one that many others have used in relation to Gysin. José Férez Kuri describes meeting friends of his while editing the biography, *Tuning in to the Multimedia Age*: 'they talked all day about their friendship with Brion, applying the word shaman to him. I wanted to learn more.'[11] Whilst the shamanic roots of art have always been there – and in the last century been fashionably rebranded as Jungian psychoanalysis – internal, visionary exploration once again became a primary focus of the artistic elite at the turn of the last century.

> The poet Rilke had declared that 'Nowhere will the world exist but within.' The novelist Herman Hesse had mapped out *der Wegg nach innen*, 'the way within.' Many poets and writers suffered the 'crisis of the

> word,' acknowledging that a language based on describing the external world was inadequate to convey the depth and subtlety of their insights and perceptions. And painters like Kandinsky's fellow Russian Kasimir Malevich contemplated a blank canvas as the 'purest' portrait of the real. Like the 'primitives' of earlier times, the artist, Kandinsky believed, sought to portray 'only internal truths, renouncing in consequence all consideration of external form.'[12]

The problem posed by esoteric posturing is that it threatens to obscure the actual artistic output. Discussion of the fantastic must be careful not to lose itself in fantasy, and description of hierophants must avoid becoming hagiography. In the modernist canon, as Benjamin Buchloh and Douglas Crimp have pointed out, hints at the esoteric also provide favourable notions of transcendence for an elitist bourgeois culture still convinced of the holy dominance of painting as an art form, and a spiritual expression destined for sentimental appraisal.[13]

To ignore Gysin's magic is to do the artist a great disservice. It would be as inappropriate to ignore the significance of the tarot to Jodorowsky, the occult to Kenneth Anger, vodou to Maya Deren, or alchemy to Gordon Matta-Clark.

The solution is thus two-fold: to critique Gysin's work on the merits of his output, and to assert the anthropological basis for the magical roots of art. It was the founder of anthropology Johann Herder who opened the way to modern poetic theory by modifying Aristotle's theory of mimesis. He said the artist did not imitate nature, *natura naturata,* but creation, *natura naturans.*

> Herder persisted in his belief that poetry, or better, performed song, touched the human psyche in such a way as to release something into the soma that subdued rage, relaxed stress, and enabled individuals to tolerate each other's whims and foibles. It is almost uncanny that the twentieth century's highly technological research into the physiological workings of the brain explains the theta waves as being induced by images, poetry, music and performance to help regulate the body's immunological system.[14]

This mention of brain waves is a highly important precursor to the discussion of the Dream Machine in the following section. It was Aby Warburg though who first applied the principle of anthropology to art history and ritual, and his student E.H. Gombrich also discussed the connection our ancient ancestors (and existing shamanic tribes) saw between representation of the thing, and the thing itself. This research provides insights into the art of Brion Gysin.

> The further back we go in history as EH Gombrich has observed, the less sharp is the distinction between images and the real things, in primitive societies the thing and its image were simply two different, that is physically distinct, manifestations of the same energy or spirit. Hence the supposed efficacy of images in propitiating and gaining control over powerful presences. Those powers, those presences were present in them.[15]

Gombrich elaborates in *The Story of Art* with comments that apply to Gysin's Moroccan experiences:

> They were not thought of as art but as objects which had a definite function...The further we go back in history, the more definite but also the more strange are the aims which art was supposed to serve. The same applies if we leave towns and cities and go to the peasants, or better still, if we leave our civilised countries and travel to the peoples whose ways of life still resemble the conditions in which our remote ancestors lived...Pictures and statues, in other words, are used to work magic.[16]

William Burroughs repeats much the same in his essay *Contemporary Artists*: 'It is to be remembered that all art is magical in origin – and by magical I mean intended to produce very definite results. Paintings were originally formulae to make what is painted happen...Writing and painting were one in cave paintings, which were formulae to ensure good hunting...The painting of Brion Gysin deals directly with the magical roots of art.'[17]

Burroughs's rhetoric is strangely similar to Gombrich's, suggesting he had read *The Story of Art*. A final quote from Gombrich ties together these two authors and also establishes the theme of writing that was so important to Gysin's art: 'If we try to enter into the mentality which created these uncanny idols we may begin to understand how image-making in these early civilizations was not only connected with magic and religion but was also the first form of writing.'[18] The last word of this introduction though, must go to the editor of the *Brion Gysin Reader*, published in 2001:

> In this age where scholars and readers are eager to think across the disciplines, to find connections between cultures, to discern the underlying matrix of an artistic moment beyond fixed notions of identity or traditional expectations – as if any of these tendencies were new – surely it is time to reassess the work of Brion Gysin.[19]

The Dreamachine

> 'It is impossible to say just what I mean! But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen'
> – T.S. Eliot, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

On December 21 1958, Brion Gysin found himself plunged into a minor visionary experience. He had been enjoying the normally mundane event of riding on a bus, and was on his way to La Ciotat, an artists' colony near Marseilles, to spend the holidays with friends and colleagues. While passing through a long avenue of trees at sunset he closed his eyes to the light of the setting sun, and in this most inauspicious of moments experienced the event that served as the impetus for much of his later work. He recorded the experience in his journal:

> Had a transcendental storm of colour visions today in a bus going down Marseilles. We ran through a long avenue of trees and I closed my eyes against the setting sun. An overwhelming flood of intensely bright patterns in supernatural colours exploded behind my eyelids: a multi-dimensional kaleidoscope whirling out through space. I was swept out of time. I was in a world of infinite number, the vision stopped abruptly as we left the trees...Was that a vision? What happened to me?[20]

His close friend and collaborator William Burroughs responded in a letter with the prophetic words, 'We must storm the citadels of enlightenment, the means are at hand.'[21] Despite the enthusiasm of this statement, it would be almost two years before practical experimentation began; nevertheless the seed had been planted for a period of intense creativity. A revolution of a turntable would produce a revolution of artistic process, perception and creativity, and would eventually filter into psychedelic culture. When Burroughs later read Grey Walter's 1953 book, *The Living Brain*, a book written by an early scientific researcher of flicker on the brain, he recognised the possible cause of Gysin's experience and lent him the book. As Gysin himself summarised on Grey Walter, 'I never met him and he never had any other effect on me except that one thing he said, just in half a sentence, that people who are subjected to interruptions of light between 8 and 13 cycles a second reported experiences of colour and pattern. I said 'Oh, wow, that's it.'[22]

This designated band of 8-13 cycles a second corresponds with the alpha wave patterns of our own brain and is the bandwidth the Dreamachine was later constructed to access. Grey Walter had built upon the work of earlier research into flicker by scientists such as Jan E. Purkinje and Charles E. Benham. It had been known for some time that flickering lights caused mental alterations and strange patterns in the vision, but the research into this phenomenon had been minimal until Walter. Physiologist Purkinje first identified the effects of flicker in 1823 and invoked his experiences by waving his hands in front of his face while looking at the sun through closed eyelids. Brion Gysin recognised similar examples from history: 'One knows of cases – in French history, Catherine de Medici for example, had Nostradamus sitting on top of a tower where with his fingers spread would flicker them over his closed eyes and interpret his visions in a way which influenced her to regard political power as instruction from a higher power.' He also suggested that St Paul's conversion to the Christian faith on the road to Damascus where 'there shone from heaven a great light round about'(Acts 22:6), may also have been a flicker experience, like the one he had on the road to Marseilles. After all 'one of the first things you do see is crosses.' Walter updated methods with the latest technology. 'Using high-power stroboscopes, and experimenting with trigger-feedback techniques where the flash was set to fire in synchronisation with, or at any chosen time in relation to, the spontaneous or evoked activity of the brain's rhythms, he produced startling results. The effect of the photic stimulation is to modulate the intrinsic brain rhythms so that in a sense the brain "is transformed temporarily into a different sort of brain."'[23]

Like sound waves, the brain has its own set of vibrations that it uses to communicate with itself and the rest of the body. EEG equipment distinguishes these waves by measuring the speed with which neurons fire in cycles per second. The 1950s and 1960s were a time of increasing overlap between the sciences and the arts, as 'kinetic' sculptures riding on the back of futurism and surrealism appeared and in a wider sense, the wonders of technology such as TV, tape recorders and other gadgets proliferated. The Dream Machine – being built in the Sixties – can be seen as part of that period where science and the arts come together. And where the science becomes the art in such a direct way; an understanding of the brain and the true mechanism of the Dreamachine becomes crucial to deeper understanding of the project. The four phases of brain activity, identified by Walter in the *Living Brain* are:

Delta	0.5-4 c/s	Deepest sleep. Minimal activity
Theta	4-7 c/s	Twilight sleep. Dreams
Alpha	8-13 c/s	Relaxation. Reflection. Creativity
Beta	14-30 c/s	Alert. Concentration. Working

Of the four levels, the alpha range produces possibly the most interesting effects. When people were exposed to a very bright light flashing within this frequency, a wide range of phenomena occurred. Visual patterns increasing in complexity, mental abstractions, altered kinaesthetic perception, waking dreams, and spatial and even temporal disturbances were all noted by Walter's subjects. The alpha band seemed to be the gateway to the subconscious and the domain of creativity lurking underneath. It seemed as though the flicker was breaking down various barriers within the brain, the wave function being subject to a process of amplification and resonance that disrupted the usual activity of the brain, overflowing and flooding new areas, pushing it into new modes of operation and essentially transforming it 'temporarily into a different sort of brain.'[24] In William James's influential study *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, he makes the oft-quoted statement:

> Our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the flimsiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different...No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded.[25]

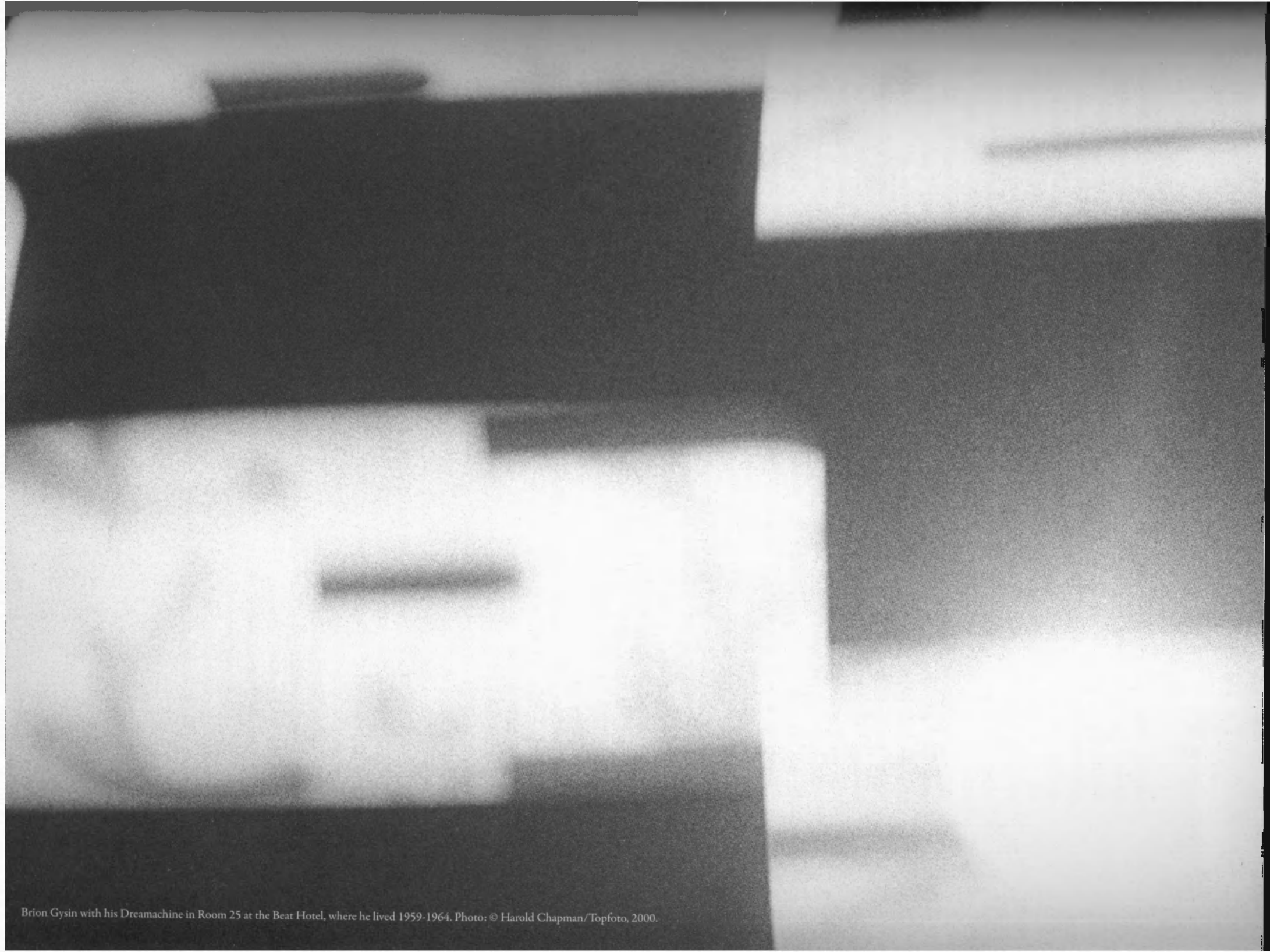
Flicker then, seemed to be one way of achieving this – an artful way of bursting the flimsy screens, and promoting new ways of seeing. Both Gysin and Burroughs were living in the Beat Hotel at the time, working hard on numerous artistic projects and decided that now the source had been found, this was another area warranting study. He wrote to Ian Sommerville, a Cambridge mathematics student and young boyfriend of William Burroughs, to ask how it would be possible to make a cheap, simple flicker device of their own. 'How can we make it at home? I mean, this is the problem. How can we do it with just what we've got?' On February 15, 1960, Ian replied to Brion from Cambridge telling him:

> I have made a simple flicker machine; a slotted cardboard cylinder which turns on a gramophone at 78rpm with a lightbulb inside. You look at it with your eyes shut and the flicker plays over your eyelids. Visions start with a kaleidoscope of colours on a plane in front of the eyes and gradually become more complex and beautiful, breaking like surf on a shore until whole patterns of colour are pounding to get in. After awhile the visions were permanently behind my eyes and I was in the middle of the whole scene with limitless patterns being generated around me. There was an almost unbearable feeling of spatial movement for a while but it was well worth getting through for I found that when it stopped I was high above earth in a universal blaze of glory. Afterward I found that my perceptions of the world around had increased very notably. All conceptions of being dragged or tired had dropped away.[26]

Upon Ian Sommerville's return to Paris, several 'beautiful machines' were made using this basic design of cylinder fixed to a turntable. Gysin would go on to refine the design by including curved slots slightly to modify the spacing and therefore diversify the flicker rate and include rows of different amounts of holes so that the whole range of 8-13 c/s could be experienced by moving ones eyes up and down the cylinder. Ian Sommerville recalled that on some models, 'Brion Gysin added an interior cylinder cover with the type of painting which he had developed from his first 'natural flicker' experience, and with eyes open the pattern became externalised, seemed to catch fire, and lick up from inside the whirling cylinder.'[27] Gysin applied for a patent for Dreamachine and received brevet no P.V. 868,281 July 18, 1961 for a 'procedure and apparatus for the production of artistic sensations...artistic and medical application.'

He had created a machine that was not only beautiful to look at with eyes open, but as Gysin would have it, 'The Dreamachine was the world's first art object to be viewed with eyes closed.' Many hours were spent staring into it, and the Dreamachine gradually became part of the increasingly complex Gysin-Burroughs personal mythology. All of this however, posed a problem that plagued Gysin at the time as much as it has for critics ever since: What exactly was the Dreamachine? Was it a sculpture? An art object? A drugless high? A novelty? An interesting lamp? Or was it an ideal replacement for TV, a grandiose tool of liberation from the millions of external images constantly defining our view of the world. An internal broadcaster that would show us our own 'autonomous movies' free from 'control,' free from programming.[28] Gysin certainly considered the last proposition possible and, as bizarre as it sounds, came close to securing distribution deals with major companies – including Phillips and Columbia Records – several times throughout his life. *In Chapel of Extreme Experience, A Short History of Stroboscopic Light and the Dream Machine* – the only major history of flicker phenomenon to date – John Geiger makes a convincing case that Gysin's project 'very nearly resulted in a Dream Machine in every suburban living room.'[29] Alternative histories aside, the Dream Machine exemplifies concerns that appear again and again throughout all of Gysin's art: repetition, cut-ups, visions and liberation.

The Dream Machine was essentially an art object dealing with *light*. From a scientific viewpoint, optical physics shows us that all vision is (reflected, refracted) light. Any thing we see is the result of light reflecting off a surface and entering our eyes, where it is received by the optical nerve and processed by the brain into a



Brion Gysin with his Dreamachine in Room 25 at the Beat Hotel, where he lived 1959-1964. Photo: © Harold Chapman/Topfoto, 2000.

sensible image. Gysin acknowledged this in his *Notes on Painting*, where he writes 'Gradations of refracted light in space are represented by pigments on a surface. Close your eyes and take away the light and there are no paintings but the ones in your Image Bank. A painter who deals in single images is a fumbling counterfeiter of the currency of Space.' Gysin's Dream Machine operates on a highly direct abbreviation of this mechanism, dealing in light only. It is very much an art object, although when the eyes are closed it actually circumvents the very art object itself. There is nothing the light reflects upon, and what is more, the eyes are closed to shut out the daily assault of more images.

In our evermore media-saturated life, our consumption of images has reached such gluttony that only a retreat to internal images can prove novel, original, or maybe enlightening. As Gysin asks, 'How many hundred thousand images have you seen today? How many hundred images did our great-grandparents see in a lifetime? Who is a painter to add merely one pre image to your incalculable store?' The Dream Machine confused and stimulated the brain into revealing images from this internal image bank and bypassed the need for yet more external images. In this way the Dream Machine mirrored the surrealists' aims to externalise subconscious imagery, by making the subconscious accessible to all. Making the internal visible connects the machine with various surrealist projects, but simultaneously liberates the experience from the elite of 'The Artist' by doing away with the artist himself. Gysin ends his text on the Dream Machine with questions resting on the deepest implications of his invention: 'What is art? What is colour? What is vision? These old questions demand new answers when, in light of the Dream Machine, one sees all of ancient and modern abstract art with eyes closed. In the Dream Machine nothing would seem to be unique.'[30]

Supposing this to be true, the Dream Machine is almost dangerous; a mythologising that Burroughs and Gysin liked to encourage. William Burroughs in particular, with his increasingly complex ruminations on 'Control' (a philosophy and aesthetic in itself) saw the Dream Machine as a highly liberating force, and incorporated passages of flicker into both *The Ticket that Exploded* and *Nova Express*. Gysin did concede however that 'Flicker may prove to be a valid instrument of practical psychology: some people see and other do not. The Dream Machine...induces people to see.'[31] Gysin related an anecdote about the mixed reception it received at a 1962 show at the Musee des Arts Decoratifs in Paris:

> It's the opening of a whole new territory which in a way is a threat to very many people who are using the same means for control or are using the same means to make great sums of money. And when the prototype of the machine which the museum later bought was being installed, and all the museum heads were standing around, a young technician was just putting the switch in and when he turned it on and shut his eyes, at my bidding, the first thing he said was, 'Why, all the museum is in here!' Well, you should have seen the looks on their faces![32]

As Gysin joked, 'The only problem with getting the Dreamachine displayed is that all the museums curators don't have alpha waves.'[33] The Dream Machine did not instantly produce mind-blowing visions in the way one might suspect if seduced by some of the artist's hyperbole. It was often more subtle than that, and the effects took a long time to fully develop. As Ian Somerville said, 'the intensity of the effect varies with the individual; melancholics tend to be irritated, some see nothing.'[34] This subtlety was part of the charm of the machine as the subjectivity of the effect meant the traditional distance between the audience and the object dissolved. You had to engage directly with the artwork; it was not something which one could maintain a barrier between or casually glance over. It radically altered the traditional format of the gallery-space and proposed entirely new terms of engagement. Now, the effect of the artist was minimal and an autonomous, subconscious process had taken over. 'This also involves the total abolition of the canvas, of the art work as such, the direct confrontation with his own cerebral world. The spectator penetrates inside an immense

psychical reserve (his own) that is continuously modified by external impulses.'[35] The implication of Gysin's anecdote is that curators – being exposed to so many external images through their profession – are the least receptive to internal imagery of their own creation.

Gysin had lived through futurism, surrealism, and Dada; he was aware of the twentieth century merging of art and science, and it is possible to place his Dreamachine into this timeline of kinetic and optical art. Duchamp had created the *Rotary Demisphere* in 1925; a half-sphere painted with asymmetrical spirals that rotated and appeared to pulse like the spirals of cartoon hypnotists. Duchamp's earlier work *Bicycle Wheel* (1913) was probably the first kinetic sculpture and even contains a curious potential for flicker through its revolving spokes. Moholy-Nagy's *Space-Light Modulator* from 1922 constantly produced changing patterns of light as it moved. While many of the works of Takis, Morellet, and other kinetic artists explore the idea of motion in sculpture and the most interesting explore the possibilities of light as an artistic material; none take the idea as far as Gysin's Dream Machine. The Dream Machine shares heritage with these works but surpasses them in theory and practice. For Burroughs and Gysin, it represented something of 'an end of art' moment. After all, 'one sees all of ancient and modern abstract art with eyes closed.' Ironically, when he tried to get the Dreamachine displayed at MoMA through his friendship with Peggy Guggenheim, Alfred Barr replied, 'The kinetic thing is over, what it is now is Pop.'[36]

The mechanism of producing images through exposure to light also aligned the Dream Machine in principle with photography. And shining a light through frames at a specific rate also had similarities to another major development of the twentieth century; moving film. Indeed, the finalistic tone Gysin sometimes adopted has similarities to the rhetoric surrounding the end of art that photography was apparently going to cause: 'Art History as the enumeration of individual images ended with the direct introduction of light as the principal agent in the creation of images which have become infinitely multiple, complex and all-pervading. Art history has come to an end.'[37] His revolving invention can be seen as a continuous roll of blank film, always revolving but leaving us to supply the pictures. The structural similarities between a roll of film, the design of the Dreamachine, and paint rollers were a theory expanded on by Gysin in his later visual art and his forays into film-making. Normal film plays at a frame rate about three times higher than the alpha range but the minimum frame-rate necessary to simulate continuous movement is only 16fps; which is much closer. This was later played with in Gysin and Burroughs' films *The Cut-ups*, but structural film finds an artistic antecedent in Gysin's invention. Tony Conrad made one of the first structural films in 1966, called *The Flicker*, a movie where certain frames are omitted in sequence so that over the course of the film, the frame rate slows down to induce a vaguely hypnotic condition. He states in an interview, 'When I was playing around with this whole thing, even early when I was toying around with the lensless projector, somebody who came by mentioned that there was this fellow named Brion Gysin who had made this Dream Machine... I thought [it] sounded just great because I very much like the way that the whole technology had a kind of daunting aura yet at the same time arose from the simplest and most easily constructed materials and mechanisms.'[38]

The Dream Machine, like its inventor, was many things. But its unification of scientific experiment and grand artistic project forms it a central place in the kaleidoscopic world of the twentieth century. It proves a potent metaphor for this schizophrenic age; it merged science and art, mimicked film and TV, and caught order and chaos in an uneasy tension. The regular strobe actually imposed order but the result was the inverse, it liberated chaos and promoted apophenia. For such a futuristic object, it took people back to a more ancient, shamanic time when 'our ancestors saw the creatures of the constellations in the apparently unorganised distribution of the stars.'[39] Like a whirling dervish of ancient Sufism, its simple spinning was a gateway to so much more. On other levels, it was a truly modern art-object.

Word and Image in Brion Gysin's Paintings

Gysin's visual art from the late 1950s onwards demonstrates a consistent and prolonged exploration into language and the juncture of word and image. His 'calligraphic' paintings and writings express his interest in the artistic potentials of the more fluid, painterly scripts used in Arabic and Japanese calligraphy, and on a much wider, theoretical level, delve into the properties of The Word as control system. The result is a large body of work that evolved along lines of extensive permutation and repetition, subtly altering from one work to the next yet remaining entirely cohesive. Guy Brett, art critic for *The Times*, attempted to reconcile Gysin's varied paintings with other similar – yet more recognised – artists: 'they evolved in a sustained period of powerful concentration, experimentation and thought. They have autonomy. They establish a language.'[40] I would also stress they establish not just a language in the sense of a continuous narrative between works, but a unique language, a new anti-language of their own.

Brion Gysin was recruited into the military during World War Two. He was trained in counter-espionage, an ironic profession for a man who dedicated much of his life to freeing himself from the agents of Control. The recent film *FlicKeR*, also reveals that in a not-so-bizarre-for-Brion-Gysin twist of fate, his London flat in the 1970s happened to be opposite the MI5 buildings. At any rate, American military officials took the decision to make the young artist learn Japanese, a language written with a brush. It stands to reason that a polyglot artist trained in military translation would be able to interrogate language to such a fine degree, but the romantic associations peculiar to oriental script equally affected his artistic nature.

> As I was a painter and interested in painting, and in paint brushes, and in ink... I learned quite quickly to understand some of the depth, not just simply for the purposes of recording the language, but the philosophy behind the attack that the brush makes onto the paper...the running of the ink and all of those rather more abstruse meanings of Oriental calligraphy.[41]

The pictorial potential for straight Japanese calligraphy alone was fairly limited. As Gysin told Terry Wilson, it hung down vertically like vines 'pinned at the top of the page and sort of dangling down at different lengths across, and not to my mind at that time satisfactorily employing the Occidental picture space, which is essentially a page as a picture is a page, or even as an icon is essentially a page.'[42] During his time in Morocco he became interested in Arabic; another calligraphic script, but one that read horizontally. A third influence which sealed together these two strains and spelled out his future work was the fairly unusual influence of the cabbalistic square, a technique of forming sentences into grids to be used for magical purposes. The story goes that he had fallen out with the staff at his restaurant and, after poisoning proved ineffective, they had resorted to magic to get rid of him. While preparing the restaurant, he discovered an amulet that contained amongst other things a script written one way, then through a turn of the paper written across the other and so on, until the spell was locked into this grid-pattern. The incantation was frighteningly efficacious: 'within a very short time I indeed lost the restaurant and everything else...'[43] Gysin did however manage to channel the magic of the curse into a positive application: 'I realized that this was a very interesting traditional example of the type of magic that one can read about in any study of magic... – I saw it as an example of a cabalistic square, which I then began to apply much more directly to my own painting when I returned to Paris in 1958...and from 1958 till 1964 I worked out all sorts of different applications of this directly applied to my paintings...and therefore inadvertently became part of that group of writing painters which is now sort of an historical movement all over Western painting, the people who recognized that writing and painting were somehow related...'[44]

The influence of his mysticism in general and this favourite anecdote in particular complicates the critical analysis of his works because it allows the numinous and the inconceivable into work that is trying to be structurally defined. It maybe takes away from the first two influences more than it adds to them. A wider problem exists in that, perhaps more so than other artists, the figure of Brion Gysin is exceedingly difficult to separate from his work – a somewhat paradoxical assessment as will be discussed later in this essay. Guy Brett speculates on what the response might be of a 'sensitive observer who came across Brion Gysin's calligraphic paintings and drawings in an exhibition without knowing anything of his life.' In light of the developments in modern art theory where the artist is no longer just a producer of beautiful objects, and art analysis has become far more complex and interesting, he suggests that such a separation is neither truly possible nor desirable. It could be argued that Gysin's life and example are vital referents for his physical work and his importance was that 'he treated visual art, literature and music as inseparable fields of a wholly artistic life that blended seamlessly.[45] As for the mysticism that made up some of his personal glamour, to crib the title of one of his books, Brion Gysin 'let the mice in' with these simple gestures and confused analysis by inviting a chaotic unknown into the structure. His paintings represent an influx of chaos into the ordered systems of language. An artist who dealt in chaos would be nothing but disappointing if he avoided the unknown or courted definition.

Regardless of its scholarly applicability, the effect of the restaurant curse proved the genesis of a large body of work. He found that if he took Japanese script and wrote from top to bottom, then wrote across the same page with Arabic script from right to left, he created a grid-pattern that covered and integrated the picture-space. The patterns of the two alien languages also interacted on the page to create a language of their own, seemingly trapped within its own embrace. The malleability of such scripts, which unlike the Latin letters used in the West, means that they are easily modified and abstracted, encouraged Gysin's personal alteration over time. The early works from this period begin as relatively strict adoptions of Arabic script; the style is noticeably Arabic even if they are not specific, translatable sentences (e.g. his spiral notebooks, *Les Chants de Marrakech* and *Les Chansons de Marrakech* from 1959). Over pages and pages of experimentation the style is subtly and gradually modified, deviating further from recognizably Japanese or Arabic writing to become more and more a product of the artist's own imagination. It is tempting in this respect to compare Gysin's script with the automatic writing of the Surrealists, especially considering his early membership in the group, but Gysin's work, while hypnotic, is precise and controlled. Moreover, his view of the Surrealists was fairly damning, intellectually characterising them as 'Freudian conspiracy.' He resisted the notion his inner space was 'furnished with objects dragged from the Flea Market.' He mocked that 'its Prophet was Vogue: "Why don't you re-upholster your old Freudian couch with raw liver?"'[46] His time in New York in the late 1940s was likely a bigger impact on this practice; he absorbed and practised gestural abstraction, having shared a studio with Matta, his biggest influence, and spent time with Max Ernst, Arshile Gorky and Jackson Pollock.[47]

As he progressed, the boundary between writing and painting was repeatedly blurred, veering from Pollock-esque chaotic lines of swirling paint to small groups of large individual glyphs. These calligraphic paintings which dealt with word and image can be compared to the work of Mark Tobey, but at the time of working Gysin was unaware of Tobey and seemed to have reached similar conclusions independently, as had other artists like the Lettrists and Apollinaire-influenced poets such as Henri Michaux. As Gysin states, 'It was in the air somehow.'[48] Gysin was actually included in one show alongside Tobey in 1963; the Galerie Valérie Schmidt in Paris held an exhibition entitled *La Lettre et le Signe dans la Peinture Contemporaine*, which included Alechinsky, Gysin, Hains, Hartung, Johns, Kline, Michaux, Tàpies, Toby and Twombly.[49] In interview with Terry Wilson, Gysin said that 'Beauborg, for example has particularly gone back and bought things of mine from that period of 1960-61, because it fits into a historical context.'[50]

In *Dead/Red 1-6* (1978), a work done much later than this intense period, Gysin seems to hark back to this practice by creating a series of English words dialled through permutations of text and painting, as if the

Brion Gysin, *Untitled.* Photo: © Collection Centre Pomipdou, Dist. RMN/Jaqueline Hyde

words themselves are in various forms of decay, decomposing into stretched out lines of post-calligraphic form. This particular work seems to literalise his long-standing campaign to kill The Word. Specific glyphs also seem to reappear throughout his work, as though he had developed a unique language for himself. Different shades and colours are added in the more complex paintings to create densely plotted webs that evoke an experience of multiple dimensions unfolding across the page from numerous directions simultaneously. This decentralised, multi-directional painting is symptomatic of Gysin's work as a whole and exhibits a constant tension between chaos and order.

Chaos is present in both the loose, expressive appropriation of calligraphy, and the complex layered marks that make up a fluctuating visual field in some of his densest paintings like *Permutations I-IV* (1960). The random, energetic flow of these paintings indicates letting go, and the abandonment of the self to an artistic trance. Footage of Gysin painting in Antony Balch's films *The Cut-Ups/Towers Open Fire* shows him to work quite quickly and freely, at least initially. Certain comparisons to Pollock can be extended here, as some critics portrayed him too as a shamanic figure, painting from instinct and with inspired movement. Pollock talked about how his paintings evoked the mindset he was in at the time of painting and about how they were an abstract real-time representation of his psyche. In Gysin's more abstract titled work (i.e. intended as some form of representation rather than purely random untitled calligraphy), the concept is extended outwards, whereupon realizing that the human mind is essentially chaotic, and prone to restructuring images from static, or visual white noise, the painting becomes a key which others can use to evoke the experience. William Burroughs in an essay, *Contemporary Artists* describes his friend's painting and why he was so impressed with it using similar terminology:

> Time is seen spatially, that is, as series of images or fragments of images past, present, and future...Here is a Gysin scene from Marrakech – moving figures, phantom bicycles, cars...This is a literal representation of what actually happens in the human nervous system; a street reminds you of a car that went by yesterday, or a boy on a bicycle years ago, in fact everything that you have experienced in that street and other streets associated with it. The pictures constantly change because you are drawn into time travel on a network of associations. Brion Gysin paints from the viewpoint of timeless space.[51]

Burroughs relates the 'ports of entry' he uses to enter Gysin's paintings. 'It is often a face through whose eyes the picture opens into that landscape...Looking at these paintings... is often like focussing on an optical instrument. I find that it takes about twenty seconds to focus at all...What you actually see at any given moment becomes only a part of a visual operation which includes an infinite series of images. This leads you along a certain path like a row or series of patterns... a series of neural patterns which already exist in the human brain.'[52] Gysin felt that anyone who *could* see, would take their time. He wrote for an exhibition catalogue, 'the retina of the human eye can register a new image every ten seconds. Therefore, it could be said, a canvas by Gysin provides enough visual images for a lifetime.'[53] Gregory Corso, an American poet living at rue 9 Git-le-Coeur at the time, was transported into sequences of intense imagery when staring at Gysin's paintings: 'I could, if I kept looking, see more, and it's not because I have a good imagination: it is because I have eyes, eyes to see what is THERE.'[54] As even the titled works like the Marrakech scenes are still based on a calligraphic format, the old adage that a picture speaks a thousand words may conceivably be true for a Gysin.

If the freedom of intentional apophenia is caused by acknowledging chaos, then the fact that Gysin's paintings are always constrained within some kind of self-imposed grid counterpoints the works with a strongly ordered structure. This initial paradox can be seen two ways, firstly that the structure allowed just that, a structure that could then be overlaid and that necessarily knits the picture together into a powerful, autonomous image. Alternatively, it can be thought that the very repetition of the grid actually makes it disappear, and

that the continual repetition further deconstructs the accepted order, similar in fact to the mechanism of the Dream Machine. This idea of permuting defined structures and therefore erasing or revealing new meaning is most clearly seen in Gysin's sound-poems such as his 'I AM THAT I AM' (1960), where he ran through all possible permutations of the divine tautology, undoing its meaning, beginning with the simple subversion of turning it into a question, 'I AM THAT AM I?' All the permutations together are striking when seen laid out on a page, but they are only really done justice when read aloud, at which point the poem takes on the quality of a mantra both illuminating and amusing. recorded several permutation poems for the BBC in 1960. One commentator wrote of his sound poetry, '"I am" is a classic of the genre. Composed exclusively of permutations of the biblical words "I am that I am," with ever more marked accelerations, he succeeds in rendering, from the initial nucleus, a crowd of "I am"s, the creation of the world in geometrical progression until it fades away in the sidereal silence.'[55]

Gysin's painting soon based itself on a grid actually painted in by a roller that had had lines cut into it. As Gladys Fabre writes, 'The use of the roller was not fundamentally different from the calligraphic patterns. The artist used it as a method of (de)construction, order and confusion.'[56] Although Gysin's most famous method of '(de)construction, order and confusion' – usually attributed to Burroughs – was clearly the cut-up method. While cutting mounts in the Beat Hotel one day in the summer of 1959 he accidentally cut through a stack of newspapers which when rearranged proved immensely amusing in their juxtapositions. It was Burroughs who really took the method to its limits and an enormous amount of theory surrounds the discovery, both from Gysin and his *Cut-ups Self Explained* text, and from later Burroughs scholars. Their importance here is just the most basic implication that 'the cut-up method treats words as the painter treats his paint, raw material with rules and reasons of its own.'[57] Gysin's most famous statement – if he can be said to have one – is, 'writing is fifty years behind painting;' the cut-up method proposed new methods of writing, through collage, randomization and non-linear creation. It also reflects back on his own painterly work that dealt so deeply with language as an artistic material. Since Korzybski's theory of General Semantics, language has been understood to define and control our conception of reality as much as describe it, so Gysin's cut-ups, permutations and bastardised calligraphy rebel against the 'word-lock of static-intention.'[58] He actually concludes his 'Notes on Painting' with a summation on the Word: 'Any point in space is an argument place and I will not be confined to one point. I will argue out the word-lock so that I can move.'[59] His paintings of lines and words writhing within the picture's order illustrate the membrane of words separating us from reality and are expressive attempts to free himself from the trap of language. Since Barthes, Kristeva, et al, 'text' has been understood as the conjunction of a network of separate meanings: 'A text is not a line of words releasing a single theological meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of meanings, none of them original, blend and crash... the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original.'[60]

Gysin's work deals with these same issues, destabilizing the control of words, illustrating their mutability, and 'seeing what words really say.'[61] Nicholas Zurbrugg, though, argues that he

> 'decompos[ed] and recompose[ed] cultural practices with a flair far out-reaching that of such predominantly text-based theoretical gurus as Roland Barthes and other "new philosophers,"' adding that 'Barthes's structuralist manifesto belatedly infiltrated the insights of avant-garde modernist and post-modernist experimentation into structuralist edicts a good *sixty* years behind painting, and a good decade after Gysin's proto-structuralist polemic...To equate Gysin's poetics with proto-structuralist theory grossly belittles the complexity of his sensibility.'[62]

Gysin ultimately aimed at total dissolution of the Word. In his semi-autobiographical, multi-levelled novel *The Process*, a character says, if 'you really want out, I'll tell you one thing you really should keep to yourself: the World is contained in that Word. If you have understood, there is no other mystery. The way out is to permutate...'Rub out the Word'."[63]

His roller poems, usually concerned with his own name are very real efforts to erase the identity of Brion Gysin through these methods in a way reminiscent of Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, wishing to disappear inside his own art.

His later work, which has a very 'urban' feel, seems to use the grid pattern as a metaphor for the enclosed boxes we inhabit, and the repetitive routines we experience, in modern cities. At times these are painted more lightly and subtly; the beautiful *Notre Dame* painting seems to fade away before our eyes and the *Naked Lunch* prints dissolve into a 'languid gray area' befitting both the apocalyptic prose of Burroughs and the dull, concrete reality of modern cities. The conflation of photography and grids was an area Gysin worked in during the late 1970s when he was living opposite the construction site of the new Pompidou Centre, a building famous for its exposed framework It connects his earliest thoughts on the Dream Machine, the properties of light, and the grid pattern into one continuous loop.

> Ten years later, when I first saw the project for the Centre Georges Pompidou in 1973 it gave me one of those old goosepimple flashes of déjà vu. It looked so like my first roller drawings in colour, that I abandoned my self-effacing spurious Zen pose long enough to exclaim: 'This is the Last Museum, what else? And who else designed it but me! ... But sometimes I am slow. It took me years to realise that the spool of film in my camera is a roller. Perfectly simple. All I, must do to organise the thirty-six possible images into a single picture is to plan my exposures when I roll my whole film over my subject...No more paint, no more glue! Thanks to Mr Eastman, I am painting with light.[64]

In a nice inversion, the Centre Pompidou (final subject of Gysin's grids) now actually contains some of Gysin's work – including a Dream machine. The documentary film *FlicKeR* features Pompidou curator Sophie Duplaix giving an holistic appraisal of the man. She says, 'Gysin reinvented the grid and made it his own with the concept of the roller, the Dream Machine and his calligraphic art. All these aspects blended together to make his work extremely unique.'[65]

Continual Permutation, Hypnotic Repetition

Brion Gysin does not easily submit to being compartmentalised. Every project fed into another, and every new discovery quickly spread like a virus across each area he was interested in. Isolating aspects of his art directly goes against the very principles of his art.

The Dream Machine, however, was a project that resonated throughout all his work. The continual cyclical whirring of the machine amplifying the continually cycling waves of the brain is a powerful vortex at the centre of the Brion Gysin project. All subsequent work either refers to it or develops along similar lines of continual permutation and hypnotic repetition. Like his literary cut-ups freeing the Word from the constraints of linear Time, the Dream Machine was a mechanical analogue for cutting up our own perceptual sense of reality, freeing us from 'the sands of Present Time.'[66] A woman from one of the early stroboscopic experiments conducted by John Smythies in 1954 apparently even said: 'If you were a modern artist you could have a wild time painting the things that I am seeing.'[67] Gysin's flame-like calligraphy breaking through the grid pattern very much mimics the Dream Machine, which is why the insides of his machines were often decorated

with such paintings. The interest in fire was something he returned to in his final work, a large ten-panelled *makimono* called *Calligraffiti of Fire*. The title was influenced by his late association with Keith Haring and a new breed of imitators. Graffiti is, after all, a method of blending word and image, often through vaguely calligraphic scripts. Kenneth Anger, discussing Brion Gysin in *FLicKeR*, also makes the point that, 'the oldest dream machine was staring into a fire... This was something to meditate on; you can see quite specific images.' His statement characteristically aligns Gysin with the ancient and shamanic as well as the futuristic and technological. Other people were apparently not as fond of his shamanic overtones. Barry Miles writes:

> His line was that he didn't regret the Cut Ups or the Dreamachine but that they caused him considerable grief because some people felt that Burroughs could have had a greater degree of commercial success if he had not been led down the garden path by a pseudo mystical conman with a pile of mystical bullshit who, the last time anybody had heard of him, had been running a restaurant in Tangiers.[68]

In the final assessment, it is Gysin's use of repetition that provides the most unifying factor in his work. For Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, repetition assumes a liberating role. For Deleuze it comes in two forms, 'naked,' which involves unvarying repetition of the same and stabilises identity and 'clothed' which introduces difference at each occurrence, and questions such stability. Difference and repetition together 'are the two powers of essence, inseparable and correlative' that engender 'a continuing process of self-differentiation and self-individuation that plays through the world that unfolds in the work of art.'[69]

Throughout Gysin's art – and most clearly expressed in the Dream Machine and the calligraphic paintings – this process of repetition performs two antithetical functions: it provides us with an identity for Brion Gysin, and it provides for *Brion Gysin* a Way Out. It enables his art to flourish within a world he created on his own terms, unfolding his identity through many permutations of many genres but at every step he aimed to be the Man from Nowhere, constantly trying to 'Rub out the Word' and leave behind no trace.

Notes

1. John Geiger, *Nothing is True, Everything is Permitted* (New York: Disinformation, 2005), 1.
2. Brion Gysin, *To Master – A Long Goodnight* (New York: Creative Age Press,1946).
3. William Burroughs and Brion Gysin, *The Third Mind* (New York: Grove Press, 1982), 49.
4. Barry Miles, *The Beat Hotel* (London: Atlantic, 2001), 271.
5. Kathelin Gray, interview with Jon Crabb, August 2008.
6. José Férez Kuri, *Tuning in to the Multimedia Age* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003).
7. The Dream Machine was originally referred to as two words, but later as Dreamachine.
8. Brion Gysin, *Third Mind*, repr. Kuri, *Multimedia Age*, 9.
9. Robert Palmer, foreword to Brion Gysin's *The Process* (New York: Overlook Press, 1987), xii. Elements of *The Third Mind* were exhibited at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, Winter 2007/2008.

10. Note by Brion Gysin in 1939 sketchbook, repr. Kuri, *Multimedia Age*, 9.
11. Kuri, *Multimedia Age*, 8.
12. Gary Lachman, 'Kandinsky's Thought Forms,' *Strange Attractor* 3 (2006), 97-107at 101.
13. Douglas Crimp, 'The End of Painting' and Benjamin Buchloh, 'Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Regression,' both in October 16, *Art World Follies* (Spring 1981), at 69-86 and 39-68 respectively.
14. Gloria Flaherty, Shamanism and the 18th Century, quoted in Dale Pendell, *Pharmako/Dynamis* (San Francisco: Mercury House, 2005), 100.
15. Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 2002), 9.
16. E.H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1972), 20.
17. Sections repr. Kuri, *Multimedia Age*, 29.
18. Gombrich, *Story of Art*, 20.
19. Brion Gysin, *Back in No Time: The Brion Gysin Reader*, ed. Jason Weiss (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), ix.
20. Geiger, *Chapel of Extreme Experience* (New York: Soft Skull Press, 2003), 11.
21. Ibid.
22. Brion Gysin, interview with Jason Weiss, in *Reality Studios* 4 (1982), quoted in Geiger, *Chapel of Extreme Experience*, 49.
23. Geiger, *Chapel*, 11, 12, 15.
24. Geiger, *Chapel*, 15.
25. William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 305-306.
26. Ian Sommerville, 'Flicker,' *Olympia* 2 (1962), repr. Kuri, *Multimedia Age*, 116.
27. Ibid.
28. Brion Gysin, 'Dreamachine,' *Olympia* (1962), repr. Gysin, *Back in No Time*, 114.
29. Geiger, Chapel, 66.
30. All quotes in this paragraph: 'Notes on Painting' (from shows at ICA, London 1960, and Domaine Poetique, Paris 1963), repr. Gysin, *Back in No Time*, 118.
31. Gysin, 'Dreamachine,' repr. Gysin, *Back in No Time*,114.
32. Miles, *Beat Hotel*, 261.
33. Ibid.
34. Sommerville, 'Flicker,' repr. Kuri, *Multimedia Age*, 116.
35. Interview with Gérard-Georges Lemaire, August 1975. 'Dreamachine,' Brion Gysin Archives, Musee de Art Moderne de la Ville De Paris.
36. Geiger, *Chapel*, 66.
37. Geiger, *Chapel*, 63.
38. http://tonyconrad.net/geiger.htm
39. Sommerville, 'Flicker,' repr. *Multimedia Age*, 116.
40. Guy Brett, 'Gysin Known and Unknown,' repr. Kuri, *Multimedia Age*, 52.
41. Brion Gysin interview with Terry Wilson, in Terry Wilson and Brion Gysin, *Here to Go: Brion Gysin* (London: Creation Books, 2001), 53.
42. Ibid.
43. Wilson and Gysin, *Here to Go*, 54.
44. Ibid.
45. Brett, 'Gysin Known and Unknown,' in Kuri, *Multimedia Age*, 51.
46. Gysin, 'Notes on Painting,' in Gysin, *Back in No Time*, 118.
47. Brett, 'Gysin Known and Unknown,' in Kuri, *Multimedia Age*, 53.
48. Miles, *Beat Hotel*, 156.
49. Brett, 'Gysin Known and Unknown,' in Kuri, *Multimedia Age*, 58.
50. Brion Gysin interviewed by Terry Wilson, in Wilson and Gysin, *Here To Go*, 55.
51. Segment also incorporated into a retrospective essay as 'Ports of Entry, Here is Space-Time Painting' in Kuri, *Multimedia Age*, 30.
52. Kuri, *Multimedia Age*, 38.

53. Brion Gysin, catalogue essay for exhibition 'Eight Units of a Permutative Picture' (Lawrence KS: William Burroughs Communications, 1961).
54. Gregory Corso, 'Eight Units of a Permutative Picture,' in *Brion Gysin, Who Runs May Read* (Oakland: Inkblot.xochi, 2000), 23.
55. Gysin's recording for the BBC (1960): recording at ubuweb.com, with anonymous quoted comments.
56. Gladys Fabre, 'I AM THAT AM I? Between crystal and smoke,' in Kuri, *Multimedia Age*,169.
57. Brion Gysin cited in Robert Palmer, *Rolling Stone* (11 May 1972).
58. Gysin, 'Notes on Painting,' in Gysin, *Back in No Time*, 119.
59. Ibid.
60. Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author,' in *Image-Music-Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (Glasgow: Fontana, 1977), 146.
61. Brion Gysin interviewed by Terry Wilson, *Here to Go*, 65.
62. Nicholas Zubrugg, 'Letting the Mice In, Brion Gysin's Multimedia Poetics,' in Kuri, *Multimedia Age*, 153.
63. Brion Gysin, *The Process*, (New York: Overlook, 2005), 187.
64. Brion Gysin, 'Not By Me,' Creaits 1977; repr. Kuri, *Multimedia Age*, 186.
65. *FLicKeR*, film dir. Nik Sheehan (Makin' Movies Inc. and the National Film Board of Canada, 2008).
66. Brion Gysin, *The Process* (New York: Overlook, 2005).
67. Geiger, *Chapel*, 34.
68. Barry Miles, 'The Inventive Mind of Brion Gysin,' in Kuri, *Multimedia Age*, 133.
69. G. Deleuze, *Proust and Signs*, trans. Richard Howard. (New York: Brazillier, 1972), 48. Ronald Bogue, *Deleuze on Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 39.

In the Mylar Chamber

Essays exploring the
Mylar Photographs of Ira Cohen

The Ritual Theatre of Hallucination

Allan Graubard

The Photographic Image

The photo has always been an artifice. It presents an image of a lived experience that can return us to that experience as we remember it or recreate on its own a synthetic experience that we live or relive by way of the photo itself. That even the most commonplace photo intrigues, for what it reveals or obscures is enough to signify the latent power within the simple snap of a shutter. When raised by intention to visual revelation, however, the photo claims rights that only the imagination can grant. For Ira Cohen, it is an imagination fed by art, poetry and ritual theatre, and which he uses not only to record an extraordinary time, but to present decades distant the very spirit that inhabits the Mylar Chamber.

Iridescent, spectacular, convulsive, delirious, deformative, mythic, romantic, expressionist, surrealist, Fauvist, umorous, tragic, gaudy, defiant, erotic, hallucinated, playful, visionary, childish, portentous, delicate, criminal, seductive, corrupting, transgressive, excessive, voluptuous, exquisite these images stolen from the Mylar Chamber absorb into themselves as many words as we care to give them, and then reveal themselves anew. Taken within the frame of several years (1969 to 1971) in a loft in New York's Chinatown, they recall to us a time invaded by the timeless gestures of revolt and adventure. And as they were then, so they are now, visual signs of the roads traveled, roads that allure for the encounters they inspire as the questions they pose: who are we, where are we going, how are we getting there, what do we sacrifice, what do we exalt, and whom or what do we haunt along the way?

For me, beyond all other charms that these photos retain, and what revives within them that current which makes them vibrate, *as if taken just yesterday*, is an aspect I have always searched for as a measure of character as of quality. For here, by way of Cohen's forte in taking the right photo at the precise moment, is a principle of metamorphosis that does not betray itself for anything other than what he sees in the moment. It is in the force, the wind, the speed of capture that the image sustains and surpasses itself. And it is also here that Cohen invigorates the visual plane with the magic of a poetry that his characters lived in the great theatre of masks of the Mylar Chamber.

For us now, as for him, the photographic image is never static and never simply a memento. It is the image of metamorphosis and the metamorphic image. It is the image of a moment that surpasses itself.

The Cast of Characters

Who are they, these characters drawn from libidinous encounters of body, mask and costume within the livid chamber of a dreaming eye? How do they move, what do they think in this world where the illusion of reality becomes the reality of illusion – all encompassing, vertiginous in its constancy to shock, mesmerise and fabulate, composing they who performed it and we who observe them? Can I name them by what *they* prompt me to say, here and now, this list of pre-names that uses names to satisfy my need for names?

> *I am Astarte pulling apart the taffy of white faces. I am Wonder Woman on dawn cloud rails. I am mask of distorted Myrmidons with my monkey familiars. I am Gologothic Temptation – you can drink from my two stomach tits if you wish to taste the oblivions of hashish. I am Lady Concubine walking through phantasmic razor fans. I am Dracula's ear-o-phone with octopus sucker hands. I am King Carlos devising butterfly grief tremors for my sister of spun honey. We are the Zombie Clowns crashing Berlin bomb craters for another glass of absinthe. I am Byzantium slave trader holding a gun to my ochre temples. I am Guitar Mambo in prefigured radon earthquake. I am Yorik dreaming of Alfred Jarry in Stalinist dungeon where subway hot dogs suicide Bronx rats. I am Madam Flamenco resting my chin in my hands. I am Dogon chief from pirate Zanzibar.*

The introductions do not end; the tales spin out through night windows. We sit in a circle about a dancing blue druid who taps out with silver shoes the morse code of lost Thracian lullabies. We watch as the flickering dust coagulates about hemorrhaging minutiae. We are everywhere and nowhere as we return to the image to discover when we were and, better yet, how to get there.

A *commedia* troupe pulled from theatre fantasias, holographic demons, ballet confectioneries, nightmare contusions, futuristic comic books, these are the people he lets through the door.

Go ahead, take off your face and put on that mask! The cast from the Mylar Chamber calls you.

The State of the Body

Ira Cohen is a master of dispossession and reconfiguration. His mylar photos are real time images. But they are images of reflections, without dark room tricks or other after-effects, which notate an astonishing metamorphosis. It is a metamorphosis that takes the dialectic of the mask – the frozen face inspiring a choreography of gestures in the torso and limbs – and inculcates within it our customary, if retinal, perception of the body, while returning to that perception the body's sensorial universe. For here, the body is in tumult. It trembles, quivers, shakes and seems, when sustained by the body we know, the body we touch, to have brought us to a perceptible limit – beyond which desire rises unconstrained by any kind or quality of realism, or any reference to anything less than the momentum of transformations flashing across the walls, floor and ceiling of the Mylar Chamber.

Rather than celebrate the customary body, Cohen leads us to a realm where the body, now become a desiring machine itself, gains advantages that in childhood we possessed as in maturity we abused – perhaps the better to see ourselves for 'what we are.' I put it to you, however, that what we are is nothing, can be nothing unless in counterpoint to what we are not. And that these photos of deformed, hallucinated, dematerialised bodies grant us a recognition not only of the profound permeability of beings, but of arelationship between the organic and inorganic that aspires to poetic revenge upon perceptions, systems of perception and styles of imaging constrained by a seeing steeped in habit and convention.

Lest we forget ourselves in viewing these photos, there is something more to the experience that transmits the true complicities of adventure. The dematerialised body in perpetual metamorphosis also returns us to the body, the sense of the personal body, and recognition of how vulnerable that sense is within the diversity of bodies

transformed. It is a return acute to the moment when Cohen took the photos as it is now. The body brought to its perceptible limit exposes the personal body and our ties to it, while not at the same time restricting the imagination on its behalf alone. The tension thus evoked in the image, its veritable appeal, is also true of the pleasures that fueled the rituals themselves.

Psychologically, of course, the image of the dematerialised body can spur a sense of disembodiment that carries with it the uncertain risks of delirium. Needless to say, poetry either engages such risks or fails to exceed known forms. This is the price of poetry. It is also a means toward unique forms of revelation and exaltation – forms that the mylar photos torch tenaciously.

Nor were these photos taken without full recognition of the political and cultural convulsions then sweeping the civilised world. We must remember that not only was it the first time that we had immediate recourse to televised images of war – in which the repressed, fearful, mutilated, dying or dead body held sway – but the throes of a cultural revolt, never seen before during the twentieth century, engulfed us. Is it any wonder that, for Cohen, the entire body becomes a mask for the greater *commedia* of a ritual theatre whose representations, these photos, we face again, facing ourselves in the process?

The transfigured image of the body entails a disembodiment that can charm and terrify within a revisioned sense of the magic of the body. The mylar photos – lucid, ludic and luminous – offer us keys to that revisioning.

Where It All Comes From

For Cohen it all comes from water. His interests in crystallography, then ultra violet and black light, immediate precursors of the Mylar Chamber, derive from a fascination common to us all: the visual resonance of light on and through water; water as mirror and window: opaque reflective water, transparent refractive water.

At the same time, Cohen offers a contemporary analogue to a history of artistic fascination with the qualities of reflective water, the still captured water of the mirror in which we see, and in seeing see ourselves being seen. From scribes in Pharaonic Egypt, to Van Eyck and the Delft school, Velásquez, Rubens, Magritte, or the photographers Atget or Kertresz, the mirror has offered, to our sensible gaze, a measure of who we are.

For Cohen, however, this mirror does not possess a divine solar consonance as it did for Pharaonic scribes. Nor does it possess the diminutive assonance of the convex mirror that so impressed Van Eyck and the painters of the Delft school, although their curiosity about blurs and distortions (the play of light over variable mirrors and reflective surfaces) does refer us to Cohen. Velásquez and Rubens follow suite here, especially in their mastery of implying the unrepresented mirror. Magritte, whose mirrors turn inward to subvert appearance, clarifies the way, bringing us closer yet to Cohen.

For Cohen's mirror roots in an intermediary state between water and glass, partaking of both: the mirror's reflective gaze, water's refractive deformations. His is also a medium that frames a violent water, a water that transforms light as much within itself as by throwing up reflections before churning over on itself to reveal the fierce flair of Harlequin, a disarticulated hand, a burst of primary colours that no natural cloud has ever held, itself a sudden mirror to an erotic visionary sun.

It is a medium whose frame is temporal and whose subject fleeting, a momentary brilliance that would have passed were it not for the eye of this photographer whose fingers respond instinctively, and whose grasp of nuance is a visual key to the hidden poetry of the ongoing drama. Still water, rushing water, thrashing water, whirlpool water, shallow water, depthless water that reflects and refracts, this is the hidden medium within which Cohen will chart an epochal masque forming, disintegrating and reforming before our eyes.

Yes, a fascination with the visual resonance of water, mirrors to capture and captivate in the subaqueous world of the masque.

The Ritual Theatre of Hallucination

...something visionary and with a certain flair for the theatrical...

They would gather at his loft, friends and acquaintances in the know – poets, painters, dancers, musicians, actors, set designers, costumers and more – simply to play, to initiate the great adventure of the play: He had built the Mylar Chamber – sixteen large wooden panels hinged together; eight sets of doubled panels – and hung dichro and colour spots to define the stage.

They would don elaborate costumes, fabricate masks or make up with cosmetics to distill the essence of rococo estrangement. From Marvel comic book heroes – Baron Mordo, Elecromagneto, Dr Strange – and swordplay movies seen at random in Chinatown, to his work with Jack Smith, the Velvet Underground, the ever-fecund audacity provoked by psychotropics, and more, they founded the ambiance that marked them.

Here they would evolve, day by day, a social space for a hidden theatre given over to rituals played with all the grace of explorers on the run; poet explorers inventing for themselves a parallel reality, despite and because of the games they lived. If a certain form of artistic desperation found its haven here, so did the magnificence, humor and *contretemps* of *commedia dell'arte*. If demons rose here to command with mock attack, so did erotic allurements embrace in sibylline flight. If the reflected image suddenly burst into stunningly complex, but no less apt, portraits of the created cast conjured from a gesture caught in mid-arc, then so did the sensibility of objective revelations. If in the sweet chaos of momentous fun the players found their doubles equal to themselves, then so did they find themselves equal to their fantasies. If from the Mylar Chamber several fates blossomed, having recognised themselves no where better, and in whose arc years later they would still refer the several truths and illusions they discovered or reaffirmed or cast off along the way, and that made them what they are – those still with us – and were – those not – so does their genius in doing so compel us.

The ritual theatre of hallucination was not, and can never be, a solitary dwelling place. Nor is there anything obscure in this theatre. In the photos that Ira Cohen has returned to us as witness, we find a privileged place where the hallucinations we hold of ourselves, our friends and our enemies, find us amidst *their* reflections.

Madness is not the apotheosis of reality by hallucination, but the eradication of reality from the hallucinations we have, however subtly or tenderly or brutally they appear to us.

The Far Side of the World's Mirror

Ian MacFadyen

If you can't see my mirrors / I can't see you
– Ira Cohen, 'A Letter To No One'

Ira Cohen's photographs of reflections rippling over mylar are astonishing and disturbing. These images split and coalesce, surge and flow, scatter and dissipate in radiant, phantasmagoric configurations, suggesting the flux of psychedelic consciousness and physical matter at the atomic level. Our bodies change continually through time, down to the last molecule, and in these hallucinatory pictures we recognise ourselves as shape-shifters, fugitive apparitions of a life which dematerialises all around us, every day, every night, in secret. Cohen's mylars reveal to us another world of anti-matter and sub-atomic particles spinning in reverse orbit to the world we think we know, and like to believe we inhabit. As in his swirling, vertiginous 16 mm film, *The Invasion of Thunderbolt Pagoda* (1968), where the camera slowly pans the enchanted sensorium of the Mylar Chamber, the human form is stretched, twisted, caught in the process of becoming and disappearing. Cohen has called these mylar images 'astral projections,' and they appear to have emerged from the scorned, derided outer regions of photography – the manifesting of psychic apparitions and alien visitations. The human form, masked and scarified in Cohen's documentary work, is here entirely transfigured and liquefied. The death which resides in every photograph leaks through these brilliant tableaux and seductive splendours – and we are made witness to psychic disintegration and cultural catastrophe. Disembodied ghosts of some warped image machine materialise only to disappear before our eyes; their beauty is convulsive. Looking at these disembodied, seductive terrors is like observing someone else's heightened, hallucinatory consciousness.

The Grotesque

Distortion in the mylars seems to echo surrealism and expressionism, but Cohen is drawing on a much older subculture of the grotesque, the tradition which subverts the official iconography of Christian culture, transforming conventionalised devotional images of adoration, ecstatic revelation and resurrection into perverse, decadent, subterranean reversals and mutations. Sometimes this sacrilege is quite specific: a hermaphroditic 'Angel of Light,' a 'Methedrine Cardinal' on the nod, the apparition of a Madonna in a hexagonal mirror. These anti-icons materialise among libidinous odalisques and gleeful demons, shamans and priestesses and personas of the tarot, and re-enactments of comic book superheroes like Electromagneto and Dr Strange, in a raising high and bringing low of spiritual and cultural values, revealing the shape-shifting equivalence of the great archetypes and destroying all fixed hierarchies.

Cohen was portraying – mirroring – the visionary underground culture of the 1960s and early 1970s, a way of being *other* in the world, and he captures the dynamism and flux of this culture. He was inspired in part by the iconoclastic Living Theater's attacks upon Christian capitalist society; those materialistic and mechanistic structures and beliefs are exploded and discorporated in a gleeful, delirious *danse macabre* of continual

metamorphosis and majestic mockery. It's the release of the instinctive, primitive *id*, driven by the pleasure principle and spiritual yearning and by the desire to overthrow the prohibitions of the 'auto-doxy.'

At the core of the grotesque is the artificial cave or subterranean grotto associated with cults, oracles and orgies. It is a place of secrecy, ritual, the breaking of taboos and the revelation of the mysteries, an underworld shelter for the indulgence of fantasies and the improvisation of self-transformation.

Ancient Ritual

Cohen's Mylar Chamber was a real alchemical Devil's Kitchen in a loft on the Lower East Side. Friends participated in the creation and revelation of mystery plays, which were performed by the adepts and avatars, shapeshifters and zombie invaders of Cohen's Universal Mutant Repertory Company: Loren Standlee, Ziska Baum, Angus MacLise, Raja Samayana, Tony Conrad, Henry Flynt, Jackson MacLow and others. Their rituals are staged, but the performers appear *regardless* of the camera eye, caught up in the rapture, lost in the whirl, the floating world of a new *kabuki*.

Despite the narcissism, the drag and the speed, these tableaux seem worlds away from the scenarios improvised before the silver aluminium walls of Warhol's Factory. Cohen's Mylar Chamber space is full of costumes, settings and symbolic regalia. With its variety, from richly embroidered fabrics to plastic space guns, from images from Velásquez to *The Thief of Bagdad*, it is an alchemical, theatrical laboratory for the conjuration of archetype and caricature in the great Marriage of Opposites.

The mylar images stem from the tradition of the alchemical dreamwork exemplified in the Venetian monk Francesco Collona's book, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (The Strife of Love in a Dream). Entering a subterranean land through a door marked *Mater Amoris* (mother of love), the hero Poliphilo goes on a journey in search of his lost love Polia, and encounters the goddess of love. The book abounds with images of fire and water, where everything flows and melts in arabesques. Masks and mirrors do not simply symbolise but rather actually activate the process of transference and transcendence of self, and this is done through the pursuit of hermetic and obscene riddles.

Cohen's Mylar Chamber reincarnates the grottoes of ancient Greece and Rome, places of ritual and psychic abandonment, such as Anticyra near Mount Parnassus, where underworld priestesses were said to administer hellebore to the apparently crazy and maladjusted who were sent there for the cure. They were places of exile, but also of psychic renewal and transformation; looking at Cohen's images, we become witnesses to the persistence of such ancient ritual. We see the descent of initiates into the Underworld, the untouchable ones in quest of other lives, other ways of being in the world. This soul journey morphs into the tradition of the carnivalesque, the world of reversal, the world stood on its head, a celebration of lunacy and regression. That rare spirit, *lusus naturae* (freak of nature) will perform tonight in the subterranean cabaret. It's the ancient human circus, in which the photographer-shaman summons the djinns and homunculi of 'the psychic playground.'

The Mylar Chamber was a collective environment, made by all those who took part and helped with the lighting, costumes, and make-up. The 16 screens (8 double panels) created a locus. The set itself was the subject, the mise-en-scène was the film. For Cohen, the created space operated as a kind of diorama constructed as an extension of the camera. It was a world in a box accessed through an aperture, a tableau viewed through a peep-hole. Cohen's space is akin to Duchamp's mixed media environment *Etant donnés* (1946-66), but with the scene continually changing as the camera lens was turned, rendering it a photo-kaleidoscope.

Kaleidoscope

Borges gave a kaleidoscope to Estela Canto in 1945. He told her that it was an *aleph*, as in his great story, and said that the device was a magical manifestation of God because it promised infinite permutation and a visionary transfiguration of perception. Cohen's was a spiritual apparatus, constructed from a costume trunk, colour film and spots and infra-red. Not a version of the Bachelor Machine with its deadly promise of perpetual onanistic motion, it was instead a theatrically arranged and mechanically procured version of the 'giant kaleidoscope' which Cohen experienced under the influence of majoon, an Asian narcotic confection which gave a brilliant flood of sensory transmogrification and transmutation. At the end of his essay on this drug, 'The Goblet of Dreams,' Cohen invokes the razor of Hassan-I-Sabbah: 'Nothing is true: everything is permitted.' The Mylar Chamber was in effect a Fortress of Heretics, a space for liberation and radical self-recreation. Cohen has subsequently invoked Bachelard's image of the poetic house of psychic integration, and the Mylar Chamber was indeed a place where dancers and artists and musicians, friends and lovers and fellow initiates were drawn to meet and create, and which they transformed into a model of the collective psyche.

Anti-Traditions, Black Arts, Modern Art

Cohen's work is in the occult tradition of modern art, which dates at least from Rimbaud's 'immense and systematic derangement of the senses.' This is a revisionist interpretation, in which Cubism is understood as visionary and stimulated by opium rather than as quasi-scientific and formalist. Picasso's and Apollinaire's encounters with the magus Joséphin 'Sar' Péladin (author of the treatise 'Ampitheatre of the Dead Sciences') become suggestive of the consanguinity of modern art and the black arts. It is an anti-tradition visible in various manifestations: from the renegade occultism of excommunicated surrealists, to René Daumal's experiments with carbon tetrachloride and paroptic vision, to the delirium of the Beat Hotel savants. It is a mystical modernism of ontological ambiguity, hypnagogic altered states, Eastern esoterics and the ingestion of psychotropics, and here Ira Cohen's work finds its true home. His metamorphical images are materialisations of phenomena normally unseen, 'potential' images, 'premorphously inchoative' in Werner Hofmann's phrase. For Cohen, as for Walter Benjamin, the camera provides access to an optical unconscious, making visible in exterior form what had been seen inwardly but kept hidden in the psyche.

There is a certain correspondence between Cohen's mylars and Kenneth Anger's 1949 film *Puce Moment*. The film, a homage to Hollywood myth, attempts to contact and film ghosts, luring spectres from another world through sensual rococco display and the transformation of appearance; it is a rapturous testament to Baudelaire's 'phosphorescence of decay.' Cohen, like Anger, also plays the role of magician, and reveals the apparatus behind his staged illusions, demonstrating his sleight of hand and opening up his box of tricks. But the uncanny lies hidden in the artifice, the metaphysics in the masque.

Cohen was a friend of Jack Smith, and Smith's film *Flaming Creatures* (1962) certainly influenced the mylar project; Smith himself both assisted and appeared in it. Smith's parodic B-movie scenarios, his celebration of kitsch and camp, and his art of self-recreation and baroque excess, all contributed to the aesthetics and ethos of the Mylar Chamber, as did the sense that an ancient, underworld ritual is being played out beneath the surface pastiche.

There is also an affiliation between the mylars and surrealist photography including the rayographs of Man Ray and the 'Distortions' of Andre Kertesz. The surrealists had explored notions of otherness and identity and had shown the breaking and erasure of the unified, indivisible self through the acting out of hysteria. Fragmenting the image into the shards of a shattered mirror, and spinning vertiginous states of consciousness – *tournoiement* – are found in their work. At the White Costume Ball given by Count and Countess Pecci-Blunt in the early 1930s, Man Ray had projected an old hand-coloured film by Méliès onto the dancers, and he was struck

by the eerie effect of the merging of spectators and images, the blurring of the two-dimensional and the three-dimensional; the audience became a film screen, while the projected images were moulded and melded onto human forms. This performance foreshadowed 1960s light shows, Gysin's body projections at the Domaine Poétique and Cohen's illuminated tableaux.

Particular images by other artists can also be iconographically linked to Cohen's mylar mythos. The famous 'Kiss in the Mirror' photograph taken of Cohen's friend Vali Myers in the early 1950s by Ed van der Elsken is one such. A seemingly narcissistic merging of subject and reflection, as well as a sad portrayal of the situationist maudit milieu, it shows the impossibility of bridging the external world and the self. The contact stops dead at the mirror's cold surface: the impenetrable external self and the psyche are inextricably linked and yet terminally dissociated. The mirror both doubles and divides us.

It was Vali's red-hair that connected her in Cohen's mind with the 1856 portrait of Chatterton by Henry Wallis, his image of the young poet dead in his garret. This mortal swoon recurs in variant form in the mylars, most famously in that of Jimi Hendrix whose early death determines our retrospective reading of the image as latently prophetic.

Gysin and Cohen

Cohen's mylar work is genetically and philosophically akin to the images made in Algiers in 1956 when Brion Gysin, John Cooke and Jim Skelton shaved their heads and adopted Arab-style beards and local dress. Skelton photographed Gysin in Berber costume as part of an experiment with notions of identity and selfhood, an attempt to become individually and collectively 'other.' Gysin posed and arranged the images. It was a perilous procedure, especially as they were undergoing Scientology auditing at the time, while Cooke was constructing his copper wire 'ghost traps' and attempting to contact spirits. Something of this search for spiritual transcendence, combined with image reinvention (not excluding kitsch ethnic impersonation) was played out for the camera. The pictures, however, were manifestations of a process of psychic initiation rather than being 'art works.' Gysin's later experiments with Tony Balch and Ian Sommerville involving the projection and filming of images on the body also seem intrinsically related to Cohen's work; so too does Gysin's intense mirror-gazing in the Beat Hotel where he also scryed with a stainless steel dowsing ball which Burroughs had picked up in a magic shop in Paris. Ira Cohen has specifically stated that his work relies on 'forms and rituals connected with the arts of divination and scrying or crystal gazing,' adding that his work invokes both the celestial and the demonic. There are certainly psychic risks in these heterodoxical practices of conjuration, as at the Beat Hotel where the rubbing out and cutting up of the human image threatened nullification of the ego repertoire, a terminal immateriality, and definitive out-of-the-body disappearing acts. The phenomena produced all those years ago may now be interpreted and dismissed as after-images, phosphenes, buried memories, trauma, externalised visions, drug flash-backs, self-hypnosis – or perhaps even as actual telepathy or clairvoyance. Cohen would recall looking through the rotating cylinder of the Dreamachine and seeing Gysin's face change from that of a dowager to the face of a gay Roman proconsul. An endless permutation of personas un-scrolled in the brain and every face, every briefly living mask, fitted before fleeing.

There is a photograph taken by Cohen of Gysin holding a Venetian mask to his face, his eyes lost in shadow; it is a little homage to Cagliostro, to the magician who – *larvatus prodeo* – advances pointing to his mask. The disguise does not hide Gysin, in fact it reveals him. The casual yet artful gesture of concealment only serves to confirm his knowing unknowability while hiding in plain sight the trickster game he is playing with the camera, and for an unimaginable posterity. Now you see him, now you don't – Gysin really was that masked man.

Secret Correspondences

The mirror creates an uncanny doppelganger, the double of the self who yet remains simultaneously distinct, separate, quite *other*. Otto Rank and Freud both believed that recognition of one's own reflection or double in a mirror is bound up with the fear of death and the desire to protect the ego. We project onto the reflection our desire to deny death, Rank believed, and so the idea of the immortal soul was the first reflection, the first double, our first protector and our potential destroyer. There is melancholy and a sense of loss in these reflected, reversed images, these preserved reflections of vanished seconds. As Louise Landes-Levi asks in her poem 'Rainmaker,' dedicated to Ira Cohen,

> Or
> was it all Reflection &
> there we lost the meaning & the content
> of the Symbolic Mirror, In your plenitude, appeared
> my empty State . . .

That feeling of plenitude and emptiness, sensuality and tristesse, is crucial; the expression of ecstasy becomes an existential cry for release, rapture turns into the very image of mourning, and the mylars are revealed as funereal rites for a vanishing world of possibility and delight.

The mylars cannot be separated from hallucinatory drug experiences, though they are beyond mere illustrations of drug states or generic psychedelia. One picture is titled 'The Majoon Traveler' and Cohen's description of the effects of majoon, the main ingredient of which is *kif*, as an instant magic theatre, makes the connection clear.

> You descend into unknown depths surrounded by hundreds of shining eyes. Everything is underwater and slow-motion. Is that a squid I have in my hand, or is it the Medusa turning me to stone? Majoon embeds you in black tar while you glow like sapphires or you leave your body behind and soar through the air, holding on for dear life to the long braid of your own djinni.

Cohen mentions the 'old memories and hidden desires' activated by majoon, and the way that time slows down, gestures becoming hieratic and eternal in mythic, alchemical scenarios which unfold as if in an aquarium. A stick of majoon provides access to 'magic numbers, the sword of Suleiman, scorpions and serpents, circles, stars and pentagrams are all yours for only *khamsin* francs or one thin dime.' Other mylar images are called 'The Opium Dream' and 'Opium Queen,' and Cohen has written of his first experience of taking opium in Tangier. The house on the Terrace of God was spinning around and the sky was suddenly below him not above, and he 'dreamed of Eagles & lions, their giant heads looming over the horizon in pink skies filled with clouds. These heraldic signs, visible only to me, seemed to have an alchemical meaning. The Moroccan faces were covered in green & violet shadows, and although they nurtured me, I did not tell them what I saw.'

Cohen works through secret correspondences and surprising resemblances and he interprets these aleatory connections as examples of 'radiant transmissions' from elsewhere, to be seized upon by the poet, like the mysterious coded messages issuing from the car radio in Cocteau's 1949 film *Orphée*. Recognizing and decoding these communications from elsewhere is central to Cohen's metaphysics of creation, the seeking out of striking occurrences, moments of epiphany. As he explains,

> Akashic from the Sanskrit AKASH – Towards the shining (manifestation), etheric, sky speech, the hidden meaning of the hidden meaning, the Psychic Keep, the unwritten history of mankind – past, present and future, God's book of remembrance, the Universal Radio, the Subliminal Cassette, the Cloud Doctrine, Diaries of the Radar etc... The Akashic Records are nothing less than human thought preserved as are radio waves in the ether. An adept or receiver sufficiently tuned to these vibrations would then theoretically be able to read these records, even listening in to past or future thoughts or conversations. From Poetry to Prophecy! From light – Clairvoyance.

This suggests a correspondence between the artist and the medium, the Mylar Chamber and the séance. I once showed Cohen my copy of *Experiment in Psychics* by FW Warrick (1939) with its reproductions of photographs of séances and mediums and he at once recognised in these swirling, dissolving apparitions, and manifestations of ectoplasm, distant antecedents of his mylars.

Apparitions, Reflections

Cohen's mylars seem to issue from the prehistory of the cinema, the magic lantern and kaleidoscope shows of the Phantasmagoria in Paris in the late 1790s, when the projection of images was inseperably linked with the black arts, when the illusionism of the macabre delighted and terrified audiences. Film begins with psychic phenomena, the raising of the dead, contact with other worlds, the manifestation of spirits. So it remains, though ignored or derided. *The Invasion of Thunderbolt Pagoda* is an occult as well as cult movie and it reaffirms the power of the moving image to reanimate the dead and summon spirits through staged illusions and the projection of 'living images' in an esoteric Raree Show.

In Kathmandu in 1979 Ira Cohen photographed the Tibetan Buddhist cremation of his friend Angus MacLise, artist, poet, and original drummer with The Velvet Underground. One of the images revealed the burning pyre transformed into a monstrous head with MacLise's exploded skull as the eye. It is an anguished apparition of rage and loss as unsatisfied cravings fly out of the pyre. Cohen would recall the pink fluorescence of the exposed brain and how he thought of all the nights they had stayed awake together on speed talking about the mysteries of life, now all gone forever, leaving a Big Nothingness behind. But when he developed the film he had taken, he saw the magical, transformative image and felt that this was a communication. This is photography as alchemy, the unveiling of hidden truths and psychic resemblance, the art of making visible. The image contains a prophetic significance which the photographer has divined and made apparent by an act of sympathetic magic. Man Ray discovered the same latent power of the camera in 1922 when he made a portrait of the Marquise de Casati. From a blurred, poorly lit negative there appeared a surrealist version of the Medusa with three pairs of hypnotic eyes. This kind of marvellous chance, Barthes' 'kairos of desire,' is a fortuitous moment charged with seductive menace, and it cannot be called to order. In his poem 'Camera Obscura,' dedicated to Man Ray, Cohen writes: 'It is shapely desire which shows the significance of the image / struggling to unveil itself / in the startled mirror.'

Mirrors

Mirrors appear and disappear frequently in Cohen's writing. There is John Dee's Aztec obsidian magic mirror which Cohen went to see at the British Museum; there are cracked mirrors shedding genetic secrets and 'Thinking Mirrors' which erase reflections. There are false mirrors that are broken; a kingdom of mirrors that is given away; a mirror that turns into a pane of clear glass, a mirror ordered for a twin who has lost his brother. Rusty film cannisters are filled with water to reflect and film the heavens.

Cohen is a connoisseur of the 1945 film *Dead of Night*. The mylars pay homage to two mirror-themed episodes of the film. In the brilliant 'Haunted Mirror' scene directed by Robert Hamer, a character sees in an antique mirror not his own reflection but that of an evil twin. And in the Grand Guignol montage towards the end of *Dead of Night*, a mirror buckles and undulates, its silver skin pulsating with monstrous life; we know that mirrors fracture and break, but this molten mirror challenges the materiality and solidity of the perceived world. Cocteau also used the illusion of film to turn water into a mirror in *The Blood of a Poet* (1930), and significantly the poet passes through to the mirror's other side in a re-enactment of the Orpheus myth. In Cohen's mylar images, too, the mirror loses its solidity and becomes the pool of Narcissus, the oneiric river. *The Invasion of Thunderbolt Pagoda* is literally the cinema of reflection, a filmic mirror seducing and captivating us with its own past reflections. It presents the illusion of a world which is itself a reversal and a dematerialization. The viewer becomes the helpless, possessed protagonist of *Dead of Night*, held in thrall by the double entrapment of the celluloid mirror. The voyeur is here a hypnotised victim, lost in the madness of mirror vision. As the camera slowly moves over the mylar screens, reflections ripple and evanesce, transmogrify and vanish, and we are caught up as viewers in the projection of reflection, the record of dematerialization.

We are transported to that no-place of occlusion described by Burroughs in *Naked Lunch* as the 'far side of the world's mirror.' The phrase suggests that Burroughs may have had *Dead of Night* in mind as he describes how his character Lee is absorbed into a mirror world, transported back into the past to a time that never changes. Burroughs' character is fixed forever, trapped in illusion, an old movie. He has entered the mirror of time which seals over as he passes through to 'the other side.' This is the lethal mirror which provides entry to the river Lethe before it passes through the cave of Hypnos into the Underworld of forgetfulness and oblivion. Ira Cohen's artificial grottos and caverns belong to this subterranean world. Through them passes the mutability of life, and *nepenthe* provides a brief forgetfulness of life's sorrows before the players are borne away.

In 1979 Cohen began photographing life masks cast from the faces of artists he knew and admired. The Bandaged Poets Series was conceived by Cohen and executed in collaboration with the artist Caroline Gosselin, who created decorated papier maché masks from plaster moulds. The masks were photographed both as they were made, on the faces of the sitters, and also in arranged tableaux. When writer Terry Wilson had his face bandaged and a cast taken, Brion Gysin told him that he himself had refused to have a mask made of his own face, and that Burroughs also had declined. It was bad magic, said Gysin, to give up your living image in this way; he believed the process took away the sitter's *baraka*, or magical essence. Gysin had his left foot cast instead, and Burroughs offered his right hand. In a tableau mort of body parts, these limbs sit alongside the face masks of Michael McClure, Allen Ginsberg, Eddie Woods, Simon Ortiz and others. The body parts, severed ex votos, suggest the *memento mori* of the catacombs, while the closed eyes and sealed lips of the masks express a retreat from the world into a deathly interior life. These masks, though made in life, seem indistinguishable from death masks. They express both the desire to escape from life and the yearning for immortality, epitomised by Cohen's photograph of John Cooper Clarke's mask on a poster of Tutankhamen. Against the fluidity of time and inexorable decay, Cohen has tried to fix the fleeting existence of human life, preserving each individual as an avatar. He gives each a kind of divinity incarnated through the fragile, elegiac medium of the mask, photograph and poem.

In Cohen's work, it is not simply the reflection which is fleeting, but also the mirror itself. The spirit seeks its multiple reflections but these are lost in the wind; they spiral around the sun and disappear into the azure sky or a chakra of psychedelic light. Ghosts, spectres and cinematic phantoms flicker through his poems and mylars, and in them the dead materialise briefly, only to disappear again. Cohen has called the distillation of this process of emanation and discorporation 'the invisible inanimate,' and he has sought to capture its image by treating the camera as a 'psychic shutter' which he operates by 'dream shuttle,' a process which allows him to 'exist everywhere at once.'

Licking the Skull

The camera, like the mirror, is treated as an instrument of time travel, providing visionary access for the artist exploring the alternate states of other lands and those cultures which exist on a different time-scale to the West. For fifty years Cohen has been part of the international trans-avant-garde, seekers of the esoteric margins, and he has photographed the street magicians, religious devotees and gurus of North Africa and India, as well as the artists, poets, film makers, musicians of the subcultures of New York, London, Berlin and Amsterdam, portraying and documenting the otherworlds and the underworlds, and their interconnection. Cohen respects and pays homage to cultural difference, but he also shows the merging of cultures, photographing those Western seekers immersed in ideas and images of the East, just as he himself is both witness and participant, both entering the spectacle and selecting and capturing images of its passing before him, something clearly seen in *Kings With Straw Mats*, his film of the extraordinary physical and mental feats of the saddhus at the Kumbh Mela.

In Cohen's photographs, Eastern adepts and Western initiates enact the ritualised performances of the seer, the creator, the possessed, the venerated other. They act out and project psychic power, recreating archetypal roles. They are performers in a great spiritual drama, revealed through the truth of masks. Spellbound, entranced, they are sealed off from us, hieratic, as in Japanese Noh-Theatre and Indian Katha-Kali, their gestures expressing what Baudelaire referred to as the *numen*, 'the emphatic truth of gesture in the great circumstances of life.' Cohen's subjects turn away from us, lost in trance, or else gaze at us from another time and place, looking back at us from the underworld of the photographic archive. Behind the ritual celebration of creative powers and altered states there is also and always a confrontation with death. It is behind the saddhu's mask of ash, and in the celebrated writer's gaze. Death lies, too, in ambush in the photographic negative, since the image promises an escape from the ravages of time; but it also immediately becomes a testament to erasure, the preservation of a loss. In one photograph Cohen shows us a man licking a skull with his long, living tongue, both mocking and embracing the definitive *memento mori*. Likewise, Cohen is exuberant, playing wittily with the image, and so plays with death, recognizing it, taunting it, and holding it at bay.

Seeing is Always a Creative Act

We think we see what is out there, and that the visual world exists whether or not we look it. We ignore the crucial role we play in the creation our visual world. As Richard Gregory writes in *Mirrors In Mind*,

> Although Plato was unaware of optical images in eyes, he was not entirely incorrect when he thought of vision as working by light shooting out of the eyes, and returning to mingle in an internal fire – for light enters the eyes to form optical images, which are projected psychologically out into the external world, as hypotheses of what might be out there.

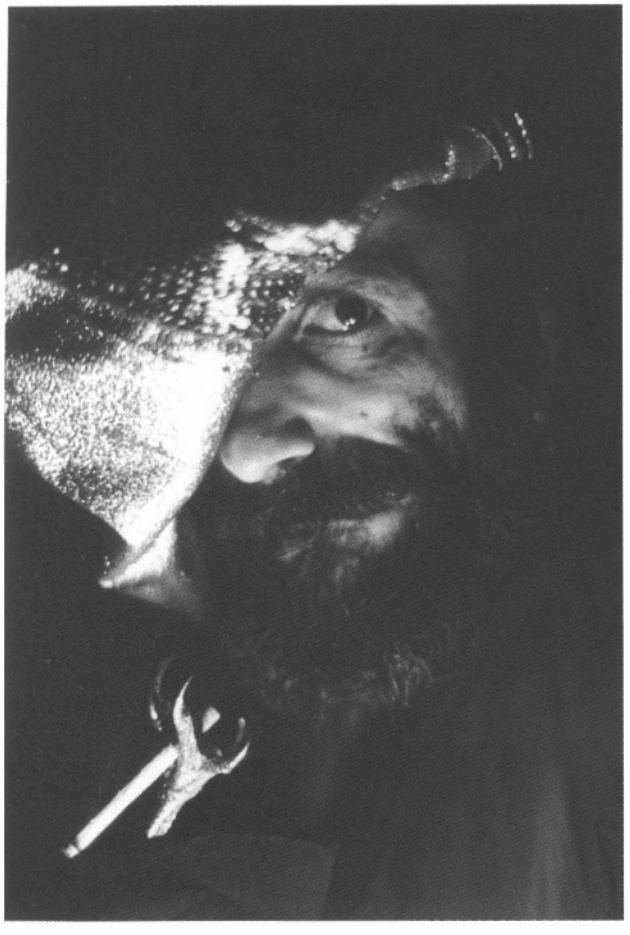
Film maker Jordan Belson believes that image-making technology always functions as extensions of the mind, that the mind creates images and then devises the apparatus which can reproduce externally the projections of consciousness. This concept radically questions widely-held notions about the relationship between the creative process and the machine, in particular the idea that it is a discarnate, dehumanised technology that determines how we see. It suggests that the Mylar Chamber was constructed in order to bring into physical existence the visionary consciousness of Ira Cohen, and the collective, visualising unconscious of his collaborators. Looking at the mylars, then, is not just akin to observing someone else's heightened, hallucinatory consciousness – it is, in fact, doing just that. We can never be mere observers, for seeing is always a creative act. It has an effect on ourselves and

on what we are looking at, and that includes the consciousness of that other. As Burroughs said, when you become aware of looking, you realise that everything is alive.

Our sense of perspective dissolves, the vanishing point itself vanishes. Our vision tracks the rippling surface of things, tracing an endless fascination, a tactile gaze seeking entry, ensnared by pleasures. Our multiple reflections haunt us, and so we project and search for our fragmented, fleeting selves among these uncanny apparitions, though they seem suspended forever in their sealed domain of paradisiacal enchantment. As we look at these images, we also project onto them and they reflect us back.

This is the collective dream world entered by film-goers who give themselves up to the retrieval of past lives and the reincarnation of dead time. Watching, their eyes are open, but they are really asleep. Unconscious of their bodies, they are lost in the enchantment of shadows and light, carried away by the flow of images. They are dreaming, and like Cohen's mesmerised spectres, they drift into the night on their silver river of reflection. We believe we are different from the film watchers.

We think we know what we see, how to see, and what is worth seeing. But we too are the entranced.



Remembering Ira

Edwin Pouncey

In November 2004 I was commissioned by alternative music journal *The Wire* to interview Ira Cohen for their Invisible Jukebox feature, where a series of records are played and the interviewee is then asked to identify them and explain their relevance (if any) to their own experience. I had previously met and befriended Ira (in the company of record producer Alan Douglas) at a gallery showing of my work in New York, and later at the October Gallery where he regularly set up camp when visiting London. This was our venue for the Jukebox to take place and, although we would meet again – in New York at a screening of his 1968 film *The Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda* – the stories he told me that evening have stayed with me forever. Ira was in good form, talking non-stop and excited to be the centre of attention once more. He listened to all the recordings I had compiled and enjoyed the game we were playing as we discussed a variety of subjects from the poetry of Thomas Chatterton and the jazz music of Thelonious Monk and Cecil Taylor, to his meetings with William S. Burroughs, Brion Gysin and underground filmmaker Jack Smith, and his friendship with fellow poet and musician Angus MacLise. MacLise was particularly special to Ira, being his comrade in Kathmandu where in 1972 they set up their Bardo Matrix publishing venture – or the Great Rice Paper Adventure as it became known. As well as their own writing, Bardo Matrix published new work by such poets as Gregory Corso, Charles Henri Ford, Paul Bowles and Roberto Valenza. MacLise died in Kathmandu in 1979 on the Summer Solstice. His body was cremated on an open pyre there, and for Ira this ceremony resulted in him taking one of his most memorable, personal and mystical photographs.

'I have a lot of special photographs, but that picture is so extraordinary,' he explained to me, his memory of the occasion spontaneously jolting back after hearing a newly discovered recording of MacLise's music that I had just played him. 'It was extraordinary enough as a moment and the reality that Angus was being burned on a pyre – and then his skull cracked open. I was coming down off a long usage of opium and I was quite sick, breathing in all of those fumes was almost killing me. I was very close to the fire and I saw the skull crack open and the pink fluorescent coils of that magnificent brain – up all night on speed, talking about Chilean

jaguar cults and special initiation mysteries. I was amazed to see that and then I wanted to take a photograph of it. I have a tendency to come in closer and not to take the photograph with the long view. I was trying to get closer to make a photograph of the brain while it was cooking in the skullcap, before it turned into some indescribable nothingness that floated away on the air. I couldn't get that close to the fire, so I took a couple of steps back – and then at a certain point I stopped and took the photograph. When I got the contact sheet I saw the whole thing looked like an incredible head. The log underneath was his jaw, the straw on top was his hair, the skull was in the place of the eye and it was, in a certain way, indisputably Angus. Not as he actually looked, but somehow suggesting in a transformative way where he could be at that moment. It's just an amazing picture. It's magic.'

The other astonishing story Ira told me that day was of his trip to Nishapur in Iran where he was carrying a small bottle of mercury that had been decanted from a larger bottle in New York, a find discovered in a doorway on 42nd Street by his musician friend Tony Conrad.

'I saw the tomb of the poet Omar Khayyam, which looked a little futuristic, and also the tomb of Farid ad-Din Attar who was another great poet and wrote The Conference Of The Birds,' he remembers. 'It was during Ramadan and when I walked inside by myself there was nobody in there. I came to the sarcophagus of Farid ad-Din Attar and I brazenly lay down on my back on top of it. I'm not trying to claim a great mystical thing transpired, but I felt something of his spirit. I was lying on top of his sarcophagus that was covered with letters, probably from his poems or about his life, in beautiful Persian script. When I got up, I took that bottle of mercury I had carried with me from New York and poured it out all over the lid of the sarcophagus and it ran into all of those letters. Then I left, and I like to think that someone walked in and saw that liquid mercury shimmering all over the top of Attar's tomb. Would they think that it was the distillation of Attar's bones, or did they think that a guy from New York was crazy enough to pour it out as some kind of a positive gesture?'

Both of these stories exemplify the art, personality, and magic, of, to my mind, one of the last great heroes of American counterculture – a butterfly-winged psychedelically-charged electric shaman whose images, writings and actions deserve to be recognised by a larger audience.

After the interview Ira insisted on taking my photograph, casually picking up props from the room we were in and urging me to pose with a tribal mask balanced on my head. A few weeks later he sent me some prints of the session inside one of his elaborately decorated envelopes. On the outside he had written, 'Great to see you. Love Ira,' together with a sticker he had found on his travels that simply read Wow! – Ira was extremely fond of embellishing his correspondence with collages of rubber stamped images or glittery rainbow coloured stickers, and this regrettably final communiqué was a particularly fine example.

For the brief periods of time we spent together I felt privileged to be in his company and, although he would have probably laughed uproariously at the suggestion, Ira Cohen became my inner guru. The most valuable lesson he taught me was never to lose belief in the power of your own imagination. Marvel at the places it can take you and the miracles it can produce. Or as Ira succinctly transmitted in his last letter to me, *Wow!*

Left: 'Eye On The Etcher,' portrait of Ira Cohen taken by Chai Tanya, Khatmandu, March 1977.

Above: 'With The Eyes Of Heraditus,' portrait of Edwin Pouncey taken by Ira Cohen, The October Gallery, London, November 2004.

Lost Words

I wake up to find the
feeling which lies beyond
words
The feeling is mine but
the words do not belong
to me.
I knew that the bright
moon would come to me.
in sleep
What star submerged
rises as the gift of
revery in the time of rain?
A thought which reveals
dry stigmas
in the awakened fragrance
It is the eye of the spirit
which opens under water
When you seek you will not
find me.
I am already here.

June 6 2009 Ira Cohen

Lost Words

Ira Cohen

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Holograph reproduced from an original manuscript, dated June 6 2003.

Fig. 1, 'The Newcastle Plan,' *digital print on billboard,* Newcastle, 2006

As part of my contribution to the British Art Show 6 I was commissioned to produce a series of billboard-based works in Newcastle during the exhibitions display at Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art. At this time the city was involved with a renewal program called 'The Newcastle Plan.' One key aspect of the strategy for this plan was public consultation; during the first consultation the public identified four points as areas for concern or skepticism. My project took these four demands and presented them in Sigilised form in the city itself.

Urban Sigils

Mark Titchner

There is only one resource to avoid the horrors of daily life... never raise your eyes. JK Huysman

Our cities teem with symbols. An incessant, rapid succession of products and ideologies batter the urban senses. Private interest invades what we call public space; from the back of a bus ticket to high-resolution video screens. Into this space, from without, are flung images of desire and aspiration, a commanding pulse: More! More! More! Streets filled with gaping mouths and unblinking eyes, it pours in, this other will, an unheralded fact of the urban experience. *The public sphere as Laboratory.*

An hypothesis of sorts: what is there to do in the face of this barrage but to disengage, to become porous, to be neither here nor there, to let go? A number of years ago I began to consider that there could perhaps be an analogy between this kind of urban sleep-walking and the labour of consciously 'letting go' in the sigil process. Could this collective act of capitulation be used to activate such a thing as a public sigil?

During the 1980's The Temple of Psychic Youth initiated its project to extend the creation of sigils from the individual to part of a collective gnosis. My idea was simply that because of the very particular situation that media over saturation creates, it could be possible to introduce collectively-produced sigils effectively back into this very site by occupying the spaces where we would expect to find advertising.

Further, whilst it is perhaps impossible to produce a truly representative group sigil, the collective wills and desires upon which the sigil is based are clearly defined. This material is willingly given, courted in focus groups and strategic planning meetings and often made a matter of public record. This material, that is willingly produced to improve the consumer/social experience, is the material from which the sigil is derived. It is this that will be hidden in plain sight, amongst the very media that have borne it.

The deepest secret is always hidden even though it be openly to the public or cried from the rooftops. AO Spare

I've recently revisited the idea of the public sigil with the works that I contributed to the campaign against the Government's budget cuts to the arts. In these works the sigil aspect has become part of the overall noise and static of the image, rather than the main visual component. So much noise to make a silence.

Fig. 2, 'Voices you cannot hear tell you what to do,' *video*, Times Square, New York, 2006

A video work commissioned by Creative Time in New York that ran on a video screen in Times Square for the 59th minute of every hour. In response to the incredibly overloaded nature of the setting, which literally crawls with information and advertising, the work combined a set of imperative commands and flashing images to play upon the idea of subliminal influence. Ironically, to make a work that plays upon this fear, images and text had to operate at a speed far slower than a truly subliminal one, whilst appearing fast enough to trigger the idea of manipulation in the viewer. The coda for the work was the phrase, 'Just tell me what you want me to do.'

Fig. 3, 'The Newcastle Plan,' *digital print on billboard,* Newcastle, 2006

One aspect of the public-based sigil works is to emphasise the contested nature of 'public space,' given the influence on it by private interest. In order for these works to have the same kind of duration and quality as regular advertising, and thus engage with the fabric of the city, these projects always begin with negotiation and the purchase of space. The interest is to use these sites, or even the vernacular of advertising itself, in a way that strikes the viewer as dissonant, whether it is consciously experienced or not.

Photo © Rob Irving

Fig. 4, 'Thought is a Signal,' *digital print on billboard*, Bristol, 2006

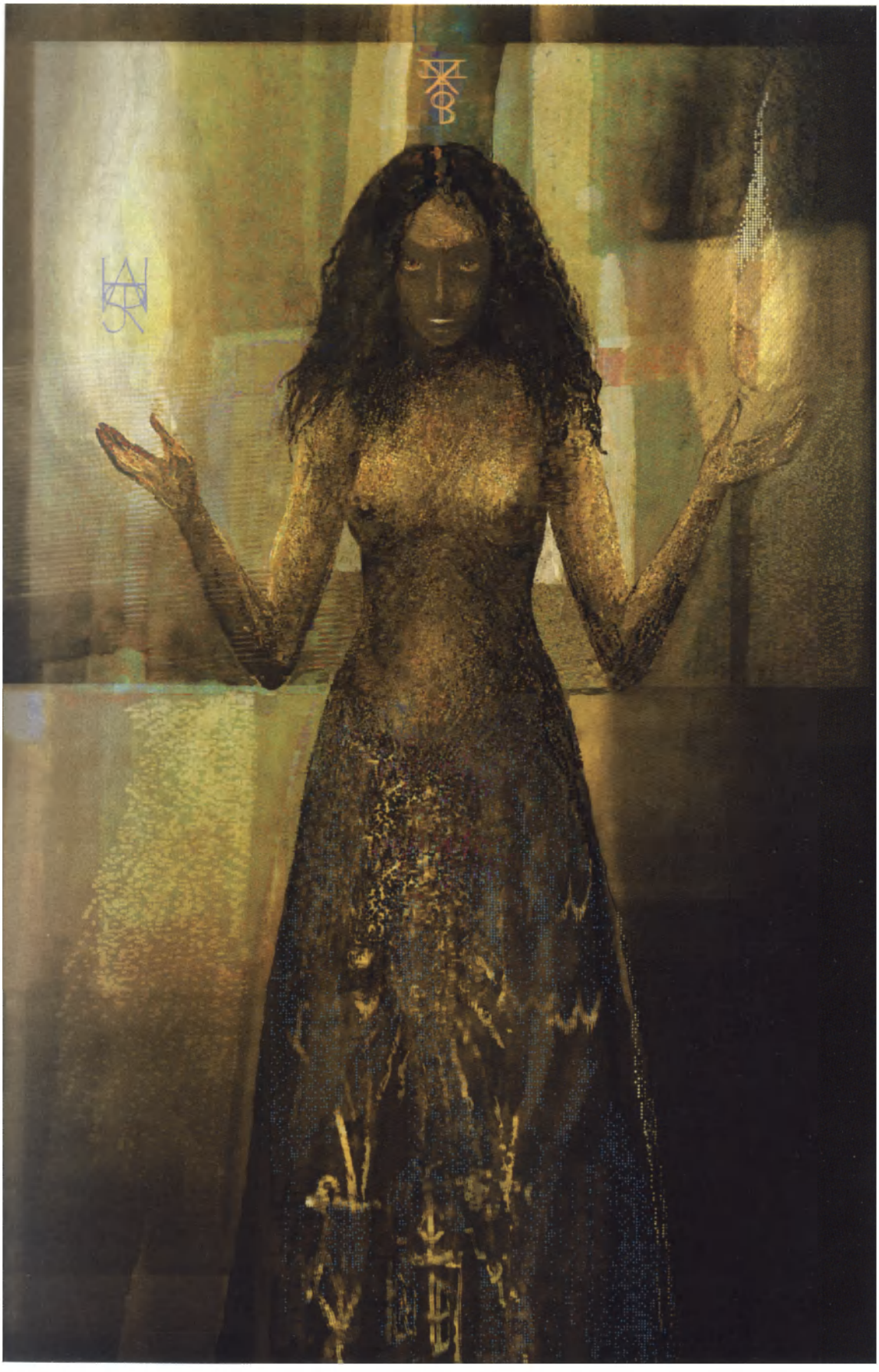
'Thought is a Signal' was a project I made in collaboration with a group of young people in Bristol. The project focused on strategies by which the individual may express their opinions or feelings in a public setting. This work was an announcement for the group, with later billboard sigils reflecting attitudes towards public art, exclusivity and consumerism. The final work in the project was an alternative audio guide for the British Art Show 6, in which the group impersonated the artists in the exhibition and talked about the intentions behind the group's work.

Fig. 5, 'The New MT,' *carved wood, paint, blood*, 2005

The first of the sigil-based works and really a simple attempt at self-portraiture, with the work as a simple Sigilised form of my name. The aspect of self-portraiture was emphasised by the liberal amount of my blood that was mixed into the paint applied to the carving. It was also an attempt to formally announce an area of interest within my practice, a degree zero. There is a certain contemporary tradition of the artist announcing their rebirth, for example in Jeff Koons' airbrushed *Artforum* ads for himself, and John Baldessari's artistic purge with his 'The Cremation Project' in 1970. This figure has continued to appear in my work ever since.

Elucidarium Zza Firanki

Misior



Finding The Long-Lost Friend

Dan Harms

The Long-Lost Friend is an early nineteenth century collection of folk magic and remedies from the Pennsylvania German community in the United States. Republished repeatedly, it became so popular that it can be called America's first home-grown grimoire. This magical receipt book is full of spells, charms, incantations, amulets, talismans, palindromes, herbs, elixirs, remedies and cures. The origins of the spells have never received close analysis. Dan Harms' work is important original research on the roots of America's first contribution to the grimoire tradition.

Archaeologists have asserted that the first cultural traits to be adopted when cultures meet are material goods. With due respect, I think that honor might also apply to the realm of magic. Spells from the Roman Empire have been used on the farms of Pennsylvania, and the same now are part of the repertoire of conjure doctors and practitioners of Afro-Caribbean faiths in two hemispheres. The grimoire *Der lang verborgene Freund*, translated loosely as *The Long-Lost Friend*, is the key that touches upon all of these.

The eighteenth century saw a great deal of migration of settlers from Germany to the United States. Many of them settled in the colony of Pennsylvania, its fertile soil and atmosphere of religious toleration making it a preferred stopping place for many emigrants. Proud of their heritage but loyal to their new land, they created their own way of life, with a distinctive dialect, art, music, humor, and cuisine. This group, due to confusion regarding the word 'Deutsch' by English speakers, became known as the Pennsylvania Dutch. This has since been corrected to 'Pennsylvania German,' but it seems that both terms will continue to be used for the foreseeable future.

These settlers prized themselves on their self-sufficiency, and both geography and language acted as barriers to make this a necessity. A Pennsylvania German household tried to meet as many of its needs as possible – planting, hunting, brewing, healing injury, finding lost items, or even making glue. In doing so, they turned to a wide variety of resources, including handbooks such as the *Kurzgefasstes Weiber-Büchlein* and Tobias Hirte's *Der Freund in der Noth* describing various household remedies and recipes.

Most of the content of these works was simply medicine mixed with chemistry, common sense, and speculation, but a few such books also provided incantations and charms, calling upon the Trinity or the Virgin Mary for assistance. These were largely derived from German folk healing traditions, brought over to this country in what little possessions the settlers could fit into their berths on the ships. This included such works as *Aegyptische Geheimnisse*, or *Egyptian Secrets* (first printed in Brabant in 1816), which was attributed to the thirteenth-century Dominican theologian Albertus Magnus. Another such book was the *Verschiedene Sympathetische und Geheime Kunst-Stücke*, a book of charms supposedly taken from a Spanish manuscript owned by an old cave-dwelling hermit who battled dragons, of which only one incomplete copy is known.[1] These volumes were soon joined by *The Long-Lost Friend*.

The Grimoire's Author

Grimoires are commonly attributed to famous figures. The English and French worlds have many books attributed to Solomon, the German grimoires attributed to Faust are legion, and both the Hispanic and Scandinavian literature trumpet the magical power of Saint Cyprian. What sets *The Long-Lost Friend* apart is that its authorship was no famous individual drawn in after the fact, but an actual man living in Pennsylvania. As such, *The Long-Lost Friend* signifies the link between the grimoires of the past and the magical manuals of the present attributed directly to their true authors.

The book's author, Johann Georg (John George) Hohman (sometimes spelled Homan or Hohmann), is shrouded in mystery. Much of our research has been frustrated due to the paucity of evidence, the multiple spellings of his name, and the common use of 'John Homan' as a personal name in the area. We know nothing of him before he appeared with his wife, Anna Catherine, and son on the ship Tom from Hamburg to America in 1820. Like many settlers to the United States at this time, they became indentured servants, working for local farmers before striking out on their own.

Both Johann and Anna seem to have brought another skill with them: the power of healing through touch and incantation. The art of *braucherei*, or 'trying,' also known as powwowing, had made the passage from the Old World, and continued to be popular among the emigrants. Hohman claims in the introduction to *The Long-Lost Friend* that he and his wife healed many of their neighbors of a wide variety of afflictions, often within twenty-four hours. If any such individual went back on their statement as to the efficacy of his treatments, Hohman stated, he was quite willing to go before a judge to bring the truth to light.

No one knows how Hohman did as a farmer or a healer, but he soon discovered publishing as a means to profit. He first became known for ballads and hymns, publishing them in single-sheet format and circulating them about the countryside. Most of these were the works of others, though Hohman did publish his own works from time to time.

Hohman soon moved out into other realms of publication. He was likely the first in America to publish a *Himmelsbrief*, a supposed letter from heaven admonishing the faithful to keep the Sabbath. The letter was said to protect a household against fire and disaster if hung therein. Hohman also seems to have published at least one other book of magic, *Der Freund in der Noth* (*The Friend in Need*), as the account books for the newspaper *Der Readinger Adler* indicate a payment for his publication of this work in 1813.[2] Another book of remedies, *Die Land- und Haus-Apotheke* (*The Land and House Medicine Chest*), appeared in 1818. In this work, specializing in remedies for household animals and dyeing, Hohman tried to keep away from charms as much as possible, though some recipes for natural magic made their way in.

Hohman's time and place was not always friendly to works of magic. The same issue of *Der Readinger Adler* (which includes his call for subscribers for *Der Land- und Haus-Apotheke*) also includes a letter by Hohman responding to claims by another publisher. Hohman stated that it was unfair to see his work as a 'book of lies and magick,' excoriating his rival and stating that the man wanted to destroy his business. Nonetheless, in the end Hohman gave into his duty to his follow man – or his need for cash, as he stated both as motivations – and published *The Long-Lost Friend*.

Hohman's introduction states that the book was concluded on July 31, 1819. The first advertisement for the book appears on February 12, 1828 in a local newspaper. Hohman covered all manner of possible cures in the book, many quick-acting, and he stated that copies were available at the newspaper office bookstore for the low price of three shillings – these still being acceptable currency in the early days of the republic.

Sources of The Long-Lost Friend

The building blocks for Hohman's work were evident in his cultural heritage. Germany had possessed a rich tradition of charms and charming stretching back many centuries, circulating through both oral and written channels. Given the nature of such material, it becomes difficult to say where Hohman might have found any particular chant, as it could have been told to him or come out of a book at hand. Hohman does give books as some sources for charms, but he also attributes some items to his neighbors or other individuals.

One of Hohman's sources does bear special mention. The *Romanusbüchlein* was a book of charms that circulated in both manuscript and printed forms, with its first date of publication being 1788 in Silesia.[3] The influence of this work cannot be underestimated; it comes up quite often in German folklore sources, and it is common for its charms to be mentioned without the title. It seems that Hohman turned to the 'Gypsy-book,' as his translator called it, out of a need for last-minute material, which might account for the large number of bullet-stopping charms from the Romanus book near the end of the *Friend*.

Hohman's book has since been published under the title *Pow-Wows*, which has led some to believe that its remedies are a combination of European and Native American remedies. New World remedies, however, are nearly absent from the book. Many of the charms can be found in German sources, and the herbs mentioned are nearly always Old World transplants to the fertile gardens of Pennsylvania. The book's American character, however, comes through strongly in Hohman's introduction, in which he appeals to the freedom of the press and the escape of such knowledge from lands where tyrants ruled.

An examination of the *Friend* turns up nearly two hundred remedies and recipes for all manner of situations. Hohman gives methods for healing burns, removing warts, bringing cattle home, making glue, brewing good beer, and dodging bullets. Some of these are remedies that are used even today – when I had my wisdom teeth removed, my orthodontist used oil of cloves to deaden the pain, just as Hohman suggests. What has attracted most people to this book, however, have been the charms. Describing a few examples of these would not be amiss.

Before beginning, a note should be made about Hohman's beliefs, *braucherei*, and their relation to religion. Hohman himself seems to have been a Catholic, who would have had neighbors of the Lutheran and Reformed churches, with members of smaller faiths also being among his potential audience. Given his numerous religious publications, Hohman was undoubtedly a Christian. At least one author has tried to argue that *braucherei* is pagan at heart, being the province of witches who left Germany to escape persecution. Given the explicitly Christian nature of their material and the statements of brauchers past and present, this is highly unlikely. It bears remembering that magic is not, and has not been, an exclusively pagan activity for quite some time.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that a few of the charms in Hohman's book clearly have their origins in pagan times. Even for the explicitly Christian material, it is quite possible for practitioners of other faiths to rewrite them to accommodate their faiths – and this has been done in some cases. Also, we should not see the use of these spells as being in line with conventional denominations. Their contents alone, which describe such non-Biblical events as Moses crossing the Dead Sea and Mary getting advice on hiding the Christ Child from the prophet Daniel, belie any claim that they represent orthodox Christian doctrine.

Origins of Charms in The Long-Lost Friend

The following charms are but a small sample of those from *The Long-Lost Friend*. Many items in the work were herbal remedies or recipes for glue, beer, or molasses. Nonetheless, the book is best known for incantations and amulets such as those that follow:

To Extinguish Fire without Water
Write the following letters upon each side of a plate, and throw it into the fire, and it will be extinguished forthwith:

SATOR
AREPO
TENET
OPERA
ROTAS

Most occultists will be familiar with the Sator square, which first appeared in Pompeii and has since turned up as a part of magical formulae for many different purposes. In Germany, its use for the purpose of fire-extinguishing was widespread. Ernst August, Duke of Saxe-Weimar, gave an edict in 1742 that wooden plates bearing these characters should be provided to officials so that they might make them available to the poor.[4] In publishing this charm, Hohman was following a tradition with a venerable history in his homeland.

Another, for the same [barking of a dog]
Put the plant, called houndstongue, under the big toes, and all dogs will be dumb before you.

This particular charm derives from the *Liber Aggregationis*, or *Book of Secrets*, attributed to Albertus Magnus, a thirteenth-century Dominican scholar whose work eventually led to his canonisation.[5] The *Liber*, likely a work attributed to him posthumously, is a collection of the magical properties of various stones, herbs, and animals. By Hohman's time, it had been translated into numerous languages, including German. Hohman seems to have had access to this work and quotes from it repeatedly in the book. Confusion between the *Book of Secrets* and the *Egyptian Secrets*, the German grimoire also attributed to Albertus Magnus, has led some to say that Hohman used the latter work as a source. Every such charm, however, can be found in other sources to which Hohman had access. One other curiosity exists regarding this charm: it is in a group of several that Hohman excised from the second printing of the book in 1828. Why the omission? Did Hohman misplace the material for those pages? Did he decide that people who stopped a dog from barking were likely up to no good? We have no way of knowing.

To Banish Convulsive Fevers
Write the following letters on a piece of white paper, sew it in a piece of linen or muslin, and hang it around the neck until the fever leaves you:

A b a x a C a t a b a x
A b a x a C a t a b a x
A b a x a C a t a b a
A b a x a C a t a b
A b a x a C a t a
A b a x a C a t
A b a x a C a
A b a x a C
A b a x a
A b a x
A b a
A b
A

This can be recognised as a variant on the famous phrase, 'Abracadabra,' used in charms and incantations since Quintus Serenus Sammonicus wrote of it in his *Liber medicinalis* in the year 212. If this originally derived from a printed source, it could be that a copier mistook the *fraktur* 'r"s in the word as 'x"s. The charm's underlying philosophy seems to be that, as the magical phrase diminishes letter by letter, so will the illness. Surprisingly, Hohman's version of this incantation brings us full circle, as the Roman physician discussed its use as an amulet for fevers in the same manner.

To Cure the Bite of a Snake
God has created all things, and they were good;
Thou only, serpent, art damned,
Cursed be thou and thy sting.
+++
Zing, zing zing!

In this charm, we see the clear Christian background of the charm, with its implicit reference to the Garden of Eden. The three crosses signify that the healer must make three crosses with his or her hand over the site of the illness, likely reflecting the threefold nature of the Trinity. The ritual cursing of the source of the injury is typical of many charms, especially those from eras in which illness was thought to be the result of demons.

The threefold 'zing' might be intended to imitate the sound of a snake's hissing. Another explanation was put forth by Don Yoder, who discovered a manuscript with the incantation substituting a German phrase for 'draw out the poison' in its place.[6]

To stop Bleeding
I walk through a green forest;
There I find three wells, cool and cold;
The first is called courage,
The second is called good,
And the third is called, stop the blood.

This is a variant on the 'Three Flowers' charm, first encountered in a Swiss manuscript from 1429. Each of the first two flowers is granted a specific virtue, while the third is given the power to accomplish a particular healing. It might be that the German B*lumen*, or 'flowers,' was misread as 'Brunnen,' or 'wells,' at some point, thereby leading to the rewriting of the incantation.

This charm also includes a narrative in which a scene is depicted which is meant to have relevance to the present situation. This is not so much a story about where the charm originates or was located, but one that grants power by its recitation. We can all acknowledge that stories have the ability to change us, and this is also true within the context of magic. Anthropologists such as Claude Levi-Strauss have indicated that the use of such tales in magic can bring about physiological changes in a person as their suffering is mirrored in the story's structure. Hohman's work includes many such charms, including the following:

For the Scurvy and Sore Throat
Speak the following, and it will certainly help you: Job went through the land, holding his staff close in the hand, when God the Lord did meet him, and said to him: Job, what art thou grieved at? Job said: Oh God, why should I not be sad? My throat and my mouth are rotting away. Then said the Lord to Job: In yonder valley there is a well, which will cure thee, [name] and thy mouth, and thy throat, in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Job is the protagonist of the Biblical book of the same name, who was cursed by God and left desolate, only to be restored at a later date. At no point in the Biblical story do he and God engage in a discussion such as that described here. Nonetheless, the objective is not to describe a Biblical event accurately, but to provide a tale that in itself holds power. This particular one might have parallels in another story, in which Jesus comes upon Peter with a toothache and attempts to cure him. The reference to the Trinity at the end is typical for such charms, but its insertion of Jesus into an Old Testament situation is typical of the fast-and-loose attitude toward Biblical narrative that many of these charms portray.

One other charm, perhaps the most powerful and famous from the book, also bears mentioning. It comes from the *Romanusbüchlein*, where it is bundled in at the end of one of the charms. Hohman separated it out, and, in later editions, it has become featured heavily on its covers and even in its advertisements:

Whoever carries this book with him, is safe from all his enemies, visible or invisible; and whoever has this book with him, cannot die without the holy corpse of Jesus Christ, nor drowned in any water, nor burn up in any fire, nor can an unjust sentence be passed upon him. So help me. + + +

Hohman's editorial decision was likely the most important made in the book's history. The *Friend* was not just a work of remedies now; it was, in and of itself, a powerful talisman protecting the owner from harm. As a salesman of the *Himmelsbriefs*, which were also seen as having similar protective powers, Hohman was well aware of how much this would appeal to his audience.

What made this declaration even more powerful was its playing to a set of assumptions surrounding many such magical books in local custom and folklore. It is not uncommon for tales about such works to separate themselves from the physical reality of paper and binding to attribute to them dark powers. A person reading such a book might be cursed by the mere act of doing so, or the book might require burning to release its powers over a family. Such works as the *Petit Albert*, the *Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses*, and the *Necronomicon* all have such lore swirling about them, and Hohman was canny enough to appropriate it to promote his work.

Hohman after The Long-Lost Friend

If Hohman set out to make money from the *Friend*, he was ultimately thwarted in that goal. The tax rolls show him to be one of the area's poorer residents, and five years after the book's publication, the sheriff foreclosed on his house and lands. His wife died in 1832, and at one point his dog left him. In brief, Hohman lived a life like that in a country music song.

In 1828, Hohman issued the second edition of *Der lange verborgene Freund*. This edition saw several charms removed, including the houndstongue charm quoted above, and the insertion of a few cures taken from local newspapers at the end. Additions would become quite common in later editions, as more material, almost always of a medicinal rather than a magical nature, was added to Hohman's original work.

Hohman's work became popular enough, it seems, to inspire at least one pirate. *Der lange verborgene Schatz und Haus-Freund* was issued in 1837 from A. Puwelle in Skippacksville, Pennsylvania. Though purporting to be the work of the 'Emir Chemir Tschasmir,' it was mostly Hohman's work, though some material was removed and over seventy recipes, few of them charms, were added. Hohman's reaction to the book is not recorded, but it was issued again in 1839, this time attributed to Albertus Magnus.

The first English edition of Hohman's book was issued in 1846 as *The Long-Secreted Friend*. We do not know if Hohman authorised this edition, or nor indeed much about Hohman's later life. His last book was a collection of hymns published in 1847, and the current scholarly opinion is that this final work was published just after his death the previous year. Nonetheless, Hohman's end remains a mystery, and his place of burial remains unknown.

The Survival of the Grimoire

After Hohman's death, the *Friend* – now appearing under the titles *The Long-Hidden Friend* and *The Long-Lost Friend* – grew extremely popular. Even as the nineteenth century progressed and modern education and conveniences came to the Pennsylvania Dutch, the *Friend* remained popular. In 1853, the book was published with a second set of charms, this one attributed to the physician D. F. Helfenstein. Edition after edition was published, most with a new recipe or two to separate it from its predecessors.

The *Friend* remained popular in Pennsylvania Dutch country, but it soon traveled beyond Pennsylvania. Its first stop was likely Maryland, where many Pennsylvania Dutch settlers had already gone. One ethnographer traveling in that area found a copy of the book, but she was unable to determine its title or to acquire a copy from the powwower who employed it. The book later became prominent in the Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia and Kentucky; at least one property in West Virginia was found, on close examination, to have tiny copies of the SATOR square arranged above every door and window in its house and barn.

The book's influence was reported as having extended to Louisiana and the Ozark Mountains. No doubt this was due to the usefulness of its remedies, but its status as a powerful talisman also likely powered its spread. In World War I, at least one serviceman carried a copy of the book into battle and attributed his safety therein to its protection.[7] Nonetheless, the reputation of the book would be denigrated – or enhanced – during the course of a bizarre murder trial in 1928.

The Hex Murder

Down through the ages, people have suspected that neighbors and kinsfolk could aim hostile magic at each other. Injury, illness, poor productivity of animals, bad luck at hunting, and any other brand of misfortune could be attributed to the jealousy or anger of another nearby, sent out to harm others. Remedies for these afflictions are legion, whether they are intended to divert the harm, to return it to its creator, or even to destroy the person. The ultimate punishment, of course, is to physically murder the caster of the spell outright. As most of these accusations have little to do with magical practice and much to do with personal animosity, this has led to the deaths of uncountable innocents over the ages, in a series of trials and hunts that continue today in some parts of the world.

Hohman's Pennsylvania was no different when it came to such beliefs. As such, he included several charms in his book intended to drive off witches – or unspecified 'bad people,' which seems to have meant the same thing. One of the charms in the 1820 edition even gave a means to treat a seat that would cause the person to sit in it to urinate and die. This seems to have been too much for Hohman, who excised it from future editions. Nonetheless, witchcraft in the anthropological sense was very much a part of the concerns and remedies of his day. Over a century later, such beliefs would lead to murder.

In the 1920s, John Blymire of York found himself unhealthy and unlucky – ill, two of his children dead, and deserted by his wife.[8] Ironically, he himself was a powwower who tried to help locals with their troubles. He himself became a client of many in his same profession, who gave him all manner of remedies which he tried in vain. Among their number was Nelson Rehmeyer, who lived a few miles away from Blymire in his youth and had known the young man for years.

During a visit to another powwower, Blymire was shown the face of Rehmeyer in a dollar bill. This was the witch who was responsible for all of his troubles, he was told. Two possible remedies were possible: Blymire could either acquire a lock of Rehmeyer's hair, or he could bear off the powwower's copy of *The Long-Lost Friend*. Hohman's work gives no indication that its possession would give the person magical power; indeed, Hohman and his wife had performed many healing sessions before the book was even published – but the folklore of the book had grown since then to the point that such a remedy seemed plausible. It was a matter of local belief that crows, including one disguised witch, would roost on the roof of any house holding *The Long-Lost Friend*.[9] Either remedy was a difficult task for Blymire to accomplish, as Nelson Rehmeyer was an incredibly strong man.

On November 26, 1928, Blymire and his friend John Curry visited Rehmeyer in his small house in Rehmeyer's Hollow. The visit was spent cordially, but Blymire lacked the courage to accomplish his goal. The following night, he returned to his house with Curry and a third member, Wilbur Hess, with a length of rope. Once inside, they attempted to subdue Rehmeyer but found the three of them barely up to the task. The men beat their host, eventually causing his death. Their purpose now confused, they contented themselves with taking a few pieces of money from around the house. After setting the body on fire, they fled into the night.

The fire went out, and a neighbor soon found Rehmeyer's body. Witnesses knew the three men had been visiting Rehmeyer, so they were quickly brought into custody. The press from the major cities came to York, Pennsylvania, to witness the three trials and report on this curious 'superstition' found even in the twentieth-century United States. Powwowers became the villains, their treatments being seen as unscientific and dangerous, with *The Long-Lost Friend* becoming a deadly instrument. The prosecution did its best to keep accusations of witchcraft out of the trial, and all three defendants were convicted.

Rehmeyer was dead, and with him died the reputation of powwowing. Many of the Pennsylvania Dutch claimed to have no knowledge of the practice, and those curers who still practiced made no overt advertisements. Yet powwow survived and passed through this time. David Kriebel's recent ethnographic work in western Pennsylvania has revealed that powwow remains a small but important factor in the pursuit of wellness in the region. Though many of the traditional charms had survived, the practitioners relied upon oral transmission and training in the path instead of written texts. *The Long-Lost Friend* was no longer part of their practice.

The Friend itself experienced a burst in popularity. Pennsylvania author and publisher A. Monroe Aurand, responsible for many chapbooks on the region's culture, re-released Hohman's book with an account of the trial in *The 'Pow-Wow' Book*, published the year after the trial. The work is still quite popular in the area, and a staple of many local library collections.

Nonetheless, the book was soon to become popular with a new clientele.

Hoodoo, De Laurence and Publication

Twentieth-century magic has been less a product of secret societies and initiatory transmissions, and more a function of marketing to the masses. *The Long-Lost Friend* became simultaneously a source of spiritual power and a commodity for sale. And this was an age in which the market was growing.

The spiritual practice of conjure, or hoodoo, became popular among African-Americans in the nineteenth century. This blend of European, African, and American medical and magical practices served the same function for former slaves as powwowing had served for Pennsylvania Germans, both of whom were populations isolated from nearby groups and deprived of regular medical care. As the African-American population moved from rural to urban areas, they brought conjure with them to the tenements and factories. Having lost their ties to the countryside where ingredients could be collected, conjure doctors turned increasingly to spiritual supply companies. These companies sold items such as candles, baths, books, amulets, and other items from a wide variety of spiritual paths. The most notable of these was the De Laurence Company of Chicago.

Growing up in Cleveland, L. W. de Laurence spent time teaching hypnotism in Pittsburgh before setting up shop in Chicago with partners who were most likely fictitious. In his massive catalogue, which acquired a magical reputation of its own, de Laurence sold any number of spiritual goods, including such spiritual texts as the *Key of Solomon*, *The Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* – and *The Long-Lost Friend*, which de Laurence issued in 1924. Hohman's work might have already reached the market, as an advertisement for the book 'Wondrous Pow-Wows' was advertised in the famous African-American newspaper *The Chicago Defender* in 1919, but de Laurence's influence was the likely impetus for its popularity.

Through de Laurence and many of the other spiritual suppliers, Hohman's book reached an even wider audience in cities across the country. Even as the reporters railed against the superstition of the Pennsylvania countryside, copies of *The Long-Lost Friend* were sold alongside the *Books of Moses* in stores not many blocks from their newspapers. When Harry Middleton Hyatt conducted his research among conjure

doctors that led to his monumental five-volume study *Hoodoo – Conjuration – Witchcraft – Rootwork*, he found numerous examples of grimoires being used. Though *The Long-Lost Friend* was by no means the most popular book (the 'Secrets of the Psalms' from *The Sixth and Seventh Books of Moses* proved to be much more common) such charms as the insertion of sage leaves into one's shoes to bring cases to court do appear in his work. Perhaps the influence was greater, but Hyatt tended to turn off his tape recorder when he realised he was being told a written charm.[10]

De Laurence was not merely selling in the United States. His publications became even more popular in the Caribbean, where he became known as a magician so powerful that even his address was kept in confidence. In 1972, a *New York Times* article discussed how the *Books of Moses* and *The Long-Lost Friend* became popular works in the Caribbean.[11] Indeed, their influence became so troublesome to the authorities that de Laurence publications are still banned for import to Jamaica.

The Long-Lost Friend Today

The book's influence seems to be moving expanding still. A friend of mine grew up in Florida in the 1970s, interacting with people of many different occult paths. He recalls going to Jacksonville to a local spiritual supply company, and recalls that the *The Long-Lost Friend* was featured prominently on the shop's shelves. Most spiritual practitioners in the area, no matter what their path, owned a copy of the book, drawn in by its promises of power and cheap price. He said this was true not only for the ceremonial magicians, the witches, and the hoodoo practitioners, but also for those who read palms and told fortunes. Even people who attended the snake-handling churches consulted practitioners who used charms from *The Long-Lost Friend* for their fellow congregants, even though the churches themselves condemned such practices.

Even today, the book remains extremely popular. Companies such as Health Research and Kessinger include reprints of it in their lines, and it has become a staple of the standard repertoire of magical works found at several sites on the Web. Catherine Yronwode, an online hoodoo spiritual supplier in California, states that this book is one of the two most popular titles for her business.[12] This is not just a matter of nostalgia or historical interest, but of practical need: readers still turn to the book for solutions to their problems. A member of one Internet forum claims that soldiers still carry copies of the book into combat, and another claims to know bluegrass musicians who carry the book in their instrument cases for luck.[13]

Our era has also seen an increase in the practice of powwowing. This practice had not died out entirely but it had declined to the point where people were relying mainly upon orally transmitted charms instead of written works such as those in the *Friend*.[14] Those who seek to revive the practice are both Christian and pagan, and they are more likely to rely upon the printed books. The revival here is in its early stages, so it will be seen what sort of impact it has on the land where Hohman lived.

Recently *The Long-Lost Friend* was once again a factor in a court case. In 2006 a charm was found in the right shoe of reputed organised crime boss 'Gorgeous Vinny' Basciano during his trial for murder and racketeering, which read as follows:

> I, Vincent Basciano, before the house of the judge, three dead men look out the window, one having no tongue, the other no lungs, and the third was sick, blind and dumb.[15]

The spell, which Basciano's lawyers attributed to Santeria, is virtually the same as one Hohman derived from the *Romanusbüchlein* for his book. The charm also contained a list of individuals connected with the other side of the trial, which was not specified in Hohman's work. Under suspicion that this was a hit list, many of Basciano's contact privileges with the outside world were removed.

All of this is surprising, especially when we consider the context of the work. Hohman was not writing his book for snake-handlers in Florida or New York City gangsters. Rather, the content of the book makes clear that his intended audience was his fellow German-speaking countrymen, who needed remedies for common afflictions and problems on their farms. Nonetheless, *The Long-Lost Friend* has a basic appeal to needs for safety and freedom from pain that are universal. As long as those needs exist, *The Long-Lost Friend* will be present in one form or another.

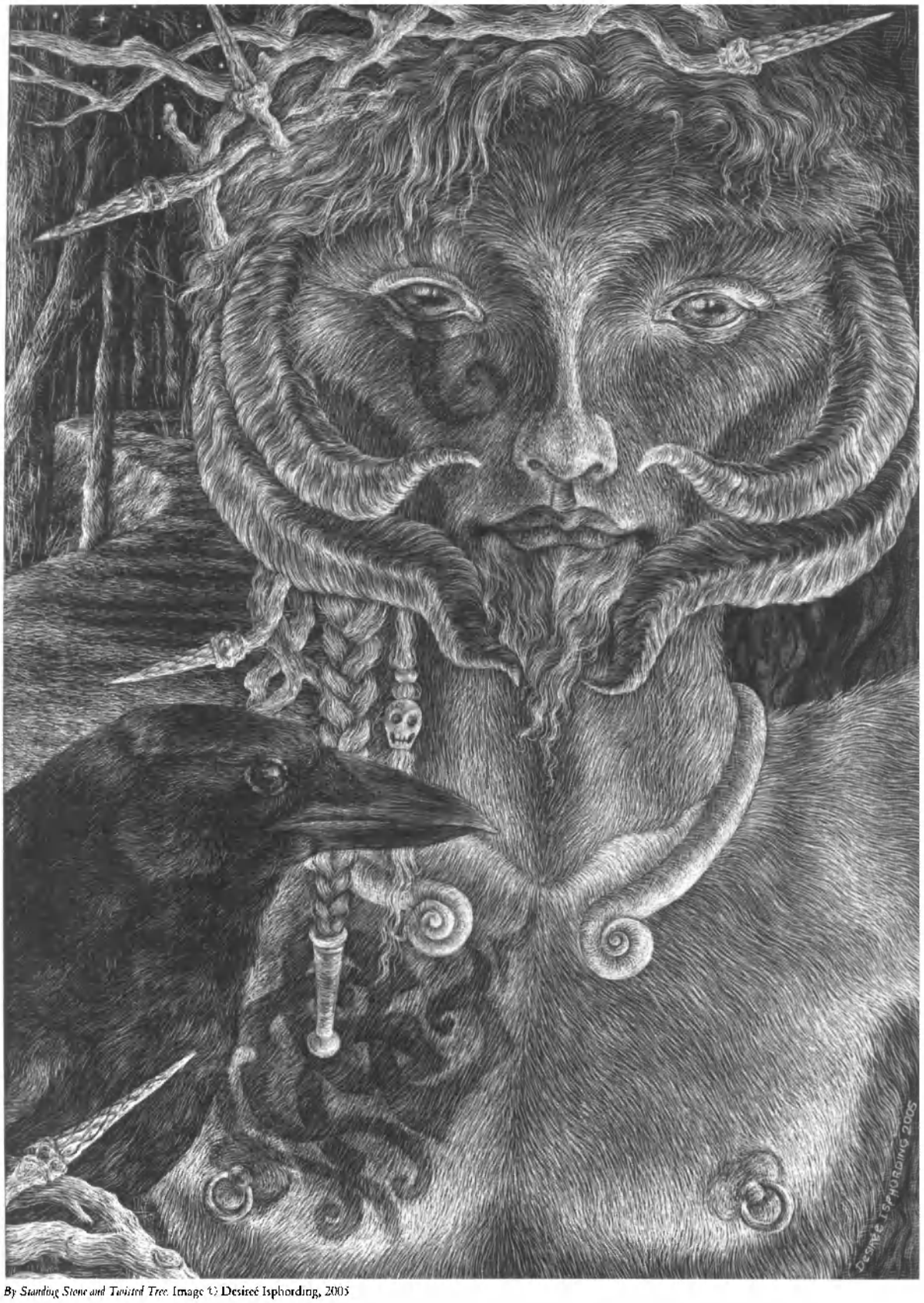
Notes

1. *Verschiedene Sympathetische und Geheime Kunst-Stücke, welche nie Zuvor im Druck Erschienen*, (Offenbach am Mayn [Reading PA?]: Gedruckt in der Calender Fabrike, auf Kosten eines Tyrolers [bey Jungmann und Bruckmann?], 1805).
2. Wilbur Oda, 'John Georg Hohman,' *Historical Review of Berks County* 13 (1948), 67.
3. Available at Joseph Peterson's Esoteric Archives, http://www.esotericarchives.com.
4. William Evenden, *Deutsche Feuerversicherungs-Schilder* = German Fire Marks (Karlsruhe: VVW, 1989).
5. Albertus Magnus, *The Book of Secrets of Albertus Magnus of the Virtues of Herbs, Stones and Certain Beasts, Also a Book of the Marvels of the World*, ed. Michael Best and Frank Brightman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), 9.
6. Don Yoder, 'Hohman and Romanus: Origins and Diffusion of the Pennsylvania German Powwow Manual,' in *American Folk Medicine: A Symposium*, ed. Wayland Debs Hand et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).
7. Owen Davies, *Grimoires* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
8. The details below come from J. Ross McGinnis, *Trials of Hex* (Davis: Trinity Publishing Company, 2000).
9. Gerald Milnes, *Signs, Cures, & Witchery : German Appalachian Folklore* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 104.
10. Harry Middleton Hyatt, *Hoodoo-Conjuration-Witchcraft-Rootwork: Beliefs Accepted by Many Negroes and White Persons, These Being Orally Recorded among Blacks and Whites* (Hannibal MO: Western, 1970).
11. Lindsay Haines, 'Obeah Is a Fact of Life, and Afterlife, in the Caribbean,' *New York Times* (10 September 1972), 10-11.
12. http://www.luckymojo.com/hoodoohistory.html#admixtures.
13. On soldiers, see http://forum.luckymojo.com/pow-wows,-or,-the-long-lost-friend-t6808.html. On bluegrass musicians, http://www.doktorsnake.com/2010/03/11/traiteurs-louisiana/.
14. David W. Kriebel, 'Powwowing: A Persistent American Esoteric Tradition,' *Esoterica* 4 (2002), 17-29.
15. Stephanie Cohen, 'Vinny "Gorgeous" Winds up Doing Time for a "Spell,"' *The New York Post* (21 December 2007), 3.

To Raise the Dead and Enjoy Congress with Them

Peter Dubé

Put on a mask: a black one, and bring together what is necessary with face obscured. The deformed stub of candle allowed to gutter out uninterrupted; the broken glass; the narrow box whose inner surface you have covered top to floor with tiny intersecting lines; the grey and porous mound of modeling clay. Pack them together carefully without the thought of names you long to speak, then hasten to a place deep underground – one far too isolated for an ungracious upending of your time. Let hours lengthen, dulling, and let the glint on glass, the flat, the malleable clay rest in a kind of numb anticipation until your body and your hidden face grow tired. This done, take in your hand the ready clay and start to shape the hours still ahead. Knead substance with excessively deliberate care: precise, articulate deployments of your thumbs. Squeeze at it shaping first the torso swelled with life, the legs and feet that lend it motion, and set it on a still imagined hill to gather burgeoning fruit or water from an untasted spring. Create a pair of arms, long muscled, and imbued with force; alive and ready for the job of building out of emptiness a house, an armoire, and a dining table. Long and wide, shape carefully each joint and limb: the strong and easy hips, the knees and elbows, all of the body's hinges. Leave it headless till the end. Then stud this crafted body with the shards of broken glass; range them one after the next along the arms, the legs, the sturdy feet and the articulate hands. Wrapped up in glittering highways, awash in trapped and violent odds of light. Cover every surface save – clearly formed and crisp – a cross across the figure's chest. A pair of warring vectors on the manikin heart. These all alone leave unadorned and seal the creature in the coloured box before undoing every egress from the room; you veil the doors and windows as dutifully as your own face. Then holding that strong head in both your arms sit covered in the burgeoning darkness till the sounds begin. The knocking at the stopped coffer, the sudden movement where still nothing breathes. Again the lost are come, are stirred in knotted corners at your wish and you may put your questions to them. They will respond: if yet your courage holds.



By Standing Stone and Twisted Tree. Image © Desireé Isphording, 2005

Invocation of the Horned God

By the flame that burneth bright,
O Horned One!
We call they name into the night,
O Ancient One!
Thee we invoke, by the moon-led sea,
By the standing stone and the twisted tree.
Thee we invoke, where gather thine own,
By the nameles shrine forgotten and lone.
Come where the round of the dance is trod,
Horn and hoof of the Goatfoot God!
By moonlite meadow, on dusky hill,
When the haunted wood is hushed and still,
Come to the charm of the chanted prayer,
As the moon bewitches the midnight air,
Evoke thy powers, that potent bide
In shining stream and the secret tide,
In fiery flame by the starlight pale,
In shadowy host that rides the gale,
And by the fern-brakes fairy-haunted
Of forests wild and woods enchanted.
Come! O come!
To the heart-beat's drum!
Come to us who gather below
When the broad white moon is climbing slow
Through the stars to the heaven's height.
We hear thy hoofs on the wind of night!
As black tree-branches shake and sigh,
By joy and terror we know thee nigh.
We speak the spell thy poer unlocks
At solstice, Sabbat and equinox,
Word of virtue the veil to rend,
From primal dawn to the wide world's end,
Since time began –
The blessing of Pan!
Blessed be all in hearth and hold,
Blessed in all worth more than gold.
Blessed be in strength and love,
Blessed be, where'er we rove.
Vision fade not from our eyes
Of the pagan paradise
Past the gates of death and birth,
Our inheritance of earth.
From our soul the song of spring
Fade not in our wandering.
Our life with all life is one,
By blackest night or noonday sun.
Eldest of gods, on thee we call,
Blessing be on thy creatures all.

Doreen Valiente

Lauren Simonutti

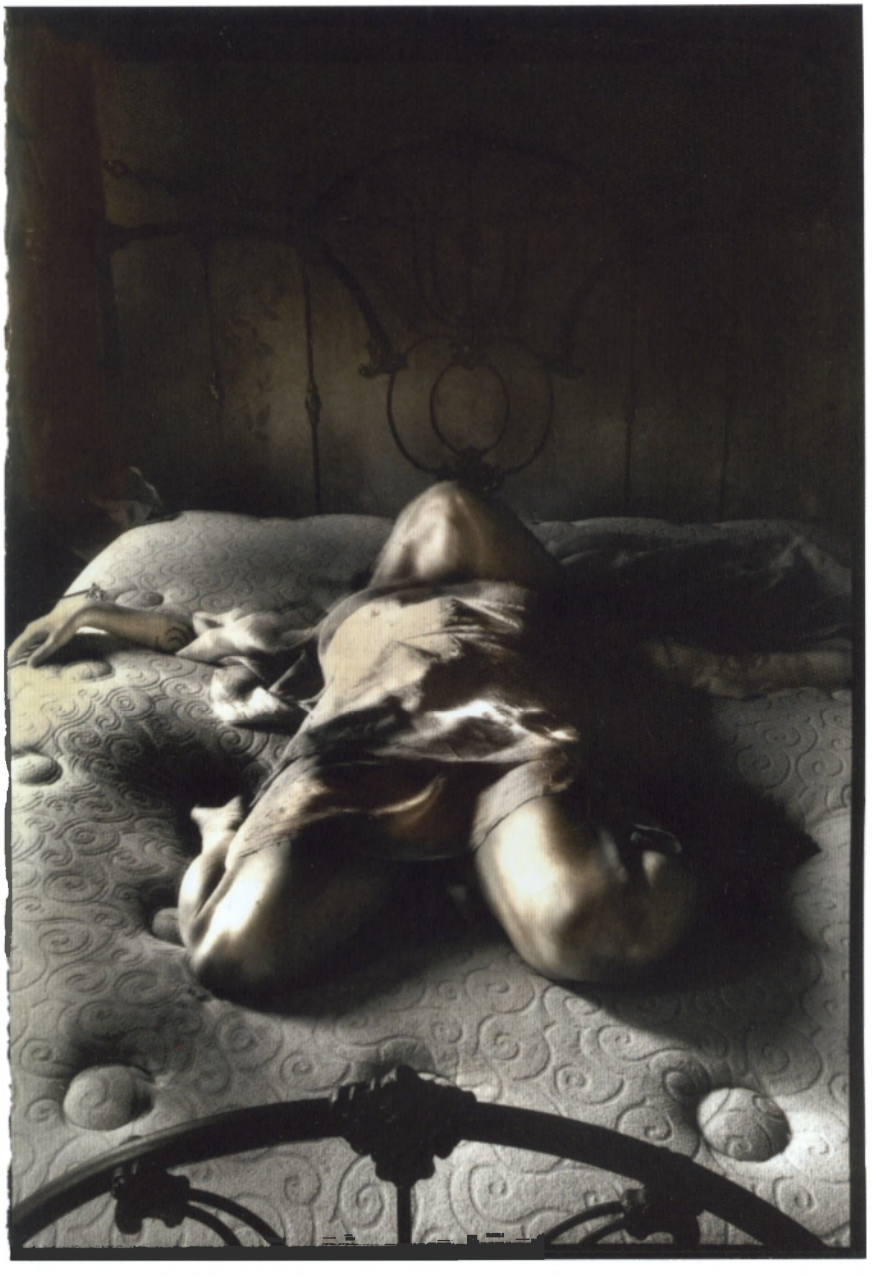
FIVE STUDIES

1. Veves

2. Chaos is a god with no reflection

3. Baby, bolt and the ouija board

4. W is its own altar (from The Devil's Alphabet)



5. Whirligig

Out of the Zero Hours

Residue

IO:EVOE

The Transvocatory Media of Barry William Hale

An Interview by Robert Fitzgerald

For the past twenty years or more, the Australian artist Barry William Hale has been quietly, riotously, chaotically and methodically creating a body of artwork and magical artifacts, both physical and sonic, that stand alone. From his first published work of ink drawings, *ASH* (1995), and the multi-media collaboration of sound, image and ritual that is NOKO, to the most recent book of demonic paper-cuts, *Legion 49* (Fulgur, 2009), and all the graffiti and manic sigillic scrawls left on serviettes, walls, books, scrap paper – in fact any available surface left unprotected – Hale demonstrates a rare originality and fluidity of both line and execution. The impact of his art is felt within the eye and beneath the skin. It instills a viral seething in our very blood. Here he talks with his friend, the author Robert Fitzgerald.

RF: Describe your personal and magical relationship to dreams and dreaming.

BH: I'll open with two apposite quotations, the first from *Liber Aleph*: 'The True Will chooseth to reveal itself within a phantasmagoric phantomine of dreams unruly and strange' and the second from Deleuze 'What appears in the phantasm is the movement by which the ego opens itself to the surface and liberates the a-cosmic, impersonal, and pre-individual singularities which it has imprisoned. It literally releases them like spores and bursts if it gets unburdened.'

For me the Phantasm is seen as a line between the conscious and the unconscious, a thread that traverses back and forth from the interiority and exteriority via passionate forms of communication. These forms are liminal events poised on phantasmic thresholds, ravished by the phantasms of desire. They are irrepressible gravities drawing us into intoxicating delirium; marvelous masquerades of mimesis, subtle seducers satisfying unfulfilled desires, harvesting the imperfections of sleep; ravishing reveries, harlequin coats composed of diamond facets of being and non-being in an endless orgiastic spectacle. The will is clothed in robes of symbolic order partaking of luminous hieroglyphic pageants. Such is the power of dreams and non-corporeal being generating profound transformations within our psyches, and touching our sensorial bodies with an inscrutable tangibility, in that there is no differentiation between the real and non-real. For the occultist and magical practitioner these chthonic forces are harnessed and utilised – dream incubation, deliberate repression, and conscious sublimation – willfully calling forth libidinal energies, loosening pure desire.

Regarding my own dreams and practice therein... in one dream I was given a large and incomplete book from a Tibetan aesthete who had the appearance of a Bön-po Master. He was the present custodian of this book which

reached back via a long lineage of demon-quellers and ghost-catchers into antiquity. Its richly illustrated pages depicted a myriad of catalogued demons and other supernatural creatures. As I watched him draw the final picture with masterful execution and in a distinctly traditional Tibetan style, replete with blank unfolded pages to the side, he passed the book to me, so that I might continue to collect the beings that belonged in the pages of this never-ending book. In the waking world, *Legion 49* was one of my first contributions to this curious tome. Yet there remains an endless array and catalogue of demons, known by either name, signature or description of appearance, attributes and function.

RF: Would you say that ritual while dreaming should be considered in the same manner as when awake?

BH: Well, the Bön and Buddhist traditions of Tibet believe the application of spiritual practice or performance within dream produces exceptional results, and some say this type of praxis is nine times more effective than when performed during the waking state. Personally, I would say that this kind of dream-working is a sign that the magical practice, or particular ritual, has been fully absorbed by the individual, because if I have been practicing a particular ritual it is only when I perform that ritual in dream that I know it has become an essential part of my practical repertory. The Star Ruby ritual has, for example, been used by me on numerous occasions in dream. I had to use this ritual in a dream that was instigated by the genii of *Liber 231*, following the construction of my first two wheels in that series of works, wherein I was visited by a genius of Sumerian proportions. Just gigantic! Another occasion occurred in London during my morning practice, in which the execution of the *Star Ruby* was disturbed. That evening a minor misunderstanding with a good brother ensued and my sleep tormented by a demon in his form. This identification was ascertained by looking into his eyes, for his identity could no longer be concealed. Thereupon I began to perform the *Star Ruby* unbroken, and following the NOX formulation my mouth became a vacuum through which the demon was rapidly sucked into and annihilated. More often than not, these experiences of ritual dream spontaneously heralded a subconscious reflex fusing their exaction in both realms. There are many other experiences relating to the *Star Ruby* and the application of the NOX formula, and demonic attack is representative. Another common occurrence was that a ritual would begin in dream and I would later become aware that I was awakening and my consciousness would create a thread between the two worlds – and so it became of the utmost import that the ritual was completed.

I once had a dream-within-a-dream in which I felt incredibly tired. I lay down to sleep and had another dream-within-a-dream that I was in the back of an old Ute being driven by two men of African origin down these dirt roads with tall fields of yellow crops browned by the sun. I had no idea where we were going and was a little apprehensive of the whole situation. We finally arrived at a dusty clearing filled with a congregation of other Africans. There was a small four-posted open structure with a galvanised roof. Everyone was dressed in dusted white clothes; most of the men had no tops and white rolled up pants, and the women wore simple white dresses with scarves tied around their heads. There were two men who seemed to be in charge. One had a machete and a pirate flag draped over his shoulders; the other wore a short sleeved shirt and straw hat. A collection of drummers began to play a rhythmic battery, whilst a repetitive chorus of song broke out and the congregation began to sway. I found the words of the song coming out of my mouth and the dance began to make my entire consciousness real; side-to-side steps with a small bob and turn of the head. With each bob I could feel my awareness falling away and I recall a few of the congregation looking intently at me with piercing eyes. Then my consciousness fell away again and I found myself in an awe-inspiring grotto with the roof and walls lined with human skulls. Within was a circle of water with a small island in the center where a tiny amorphous figure with two black eyes captivated me. Then I found myself waking in the dream state where I had fallen asleep and then I began to hear the birds of morning in the mountains overlooking the valley of the waters with the song ringing in my head. As I awoke from this very unusual dream, my girlfriend at the time asked if I was alright because I was covered from head to toe in perspiration and my legs had been moving vigorously in my sleep.

NOKO: HYPERCUBE 210 / VEH. Photo: © Michael Strum, 2010.

Dreams may also be given as an initiation, or as seal upon an initiation. In the Middle East, the initiation to become a geomancer is transferred by spittle and is usually performed in graveyards. The potential initiate would know the power had been transferred if s/he dreamt of horses that night. Some Voudoun initiations require that one must remain in the temple and sleep with your head upon a rock for up to 21 days. Receiving or seeking knowledge by the process of dream incubation has a long history. The seeker sleeps in the tombs of saints or grottos sacred to the gods, like that at Delphi. One slept in these places in order to receive a revelation in dream. There are accounts of *tertons* or treasure-finders of the Himalayas retrieving physical sacred objects in dreams, terma-teachings guarded by dakinis and hidden by ancient Masters in clouds, trees, rocks and holy statues. These await disclosure and for the resonant keys to be unlocked; teachings and tantras received in dream when the time is ripe for their reception, dissemination and practice. The techniques and examples are vast.

I think the occultist, via praxis and willful engagement with the night side, uses a greater portion of their lives in sleep as an opportunity to gain valuable magical experience. Applying ourselves within this sphere, we are able to greater expand our abilities. Crowley writes in *Liber Aleph*, 'Inner Silence of the Body being attained, it may be that the True Will may speak in True Dreams; for it is written that He giveth unto His beloved in Sleep.' For when the body is pure the 'Lord bestoweth a Solar or Lucid Sleep, wherein move images of pure Light fashioned by the True Will.' These are not the dreams of common men, but rather the keys for obtaining spiritual knowledge, the Sleep of Shiloam, and the dreams of the Immortals.

RF: For years you have been drawing upon any available surface beings you call 'auto-demons.' What are they, exactly, and where are they from?

BH: These drawings, in contrast to my paintings, seem to have a completely different feel. Instead of originating from a self-contained ideological system, they emerge from an intimate and fleeting experience and capture the momentary and contingent. The technique of their summoning resembles the Surrealist automatic drawing: anthropomorphic shapes emerge out of filigrees of wandering lines or figures captured in a cloud of smoke. I produce these scribblings in ectoplasm in a relatively short amount of time, and in quick succession. They tie into the image without resemblance as the process produces myriad entities without any genealogy – just begetting and consuming themselves in an endless continuum. The demon hordes are not produced by any process of filiations; rather they are more likened to contagion and agency. These drawings seem to have the capacity to act as an after-image. For Derrida, this retention has already repeated something that is no longer present. The trace is a ghost of production and a trace that is necessarily present inscribed in a halfway house.

Actually, my first major engagement with the process of automatic drawing was via ink, pen and paper following the performances of the Mass of the Phoenix – *Liber 44* – alongside a reading of *Liber Tzaddi* from the *Holy Books of Thelema*. I would scribble in ink on standard size thick cards and place them on a wall in sequence from left to right. I repeated this process every sunset for 144 days. They were largely abstract gestural expressions and were exhibited alongside an early series of graphical works known as *ASH* in 1995.

The next engagement was drawing with glow-in-the-dark chalk upon the surfaces of my room. You could only see them, naturally, when the lights were off at night. This became a rather obsessive process I called 'Nocturnal Emissions' and during this period the abstract gestural surface of the previous series morphed into coagulated forms defying anything recognisable as *possessing* form.

The process continued its transformation in Mexico, as more noticeably figurative forms began to emerge. This occurred during my travels through the Yucatan peninsula and beyond, along the Mayan trail, so to speak. One of my Mexican traveling companions commented that what I was drawing was Maya! And that the forms emerging during our travels possessed strong psychic or structural resonances with Mayan writing, although this was not apparently evident in any formalistic sense. But what I began to notice in looking for said resonances, was that all of my automatic figurations were drawn in profile. The repetitive similarity did indeed bear more than a passing resemblance to Mayan hieroglyphs. It is interesting that both Mayan and Egyptian art found on walls, codex and papyri depict figures or gods from a side perspective. Developing upon this idea, I filled small spiral-bound sketch pads with automatic drawings I then called 'Peripheral Spectra,' as these entities could only be seen from the side because they emerge out of our peripheral vision, or from beyond our conscious field of vision. This series was exhibited in the Front Room, Sydney, Australia, in 2003, and contained over nine hundred drawings. Most of these drawings emerged from the filigree embellishments of the signature: a mark of authenticity each time it is executed and through repetition its style is re-forged into a distinctly observable aesthetic.

Recently my automatic drawing process more closely resembles Wittgenstein's 'disinterested gazed,' because it derives, not from an explicit trance-state, but more from a simple occupation of time. In many respects the 'automatic' in my work is related to gestural memory, and so drawing in this fashion becomes purely organic. There is no 'lust for result,' just the act or process itself. Who knows what these auto-demons will have in store for me in the future...

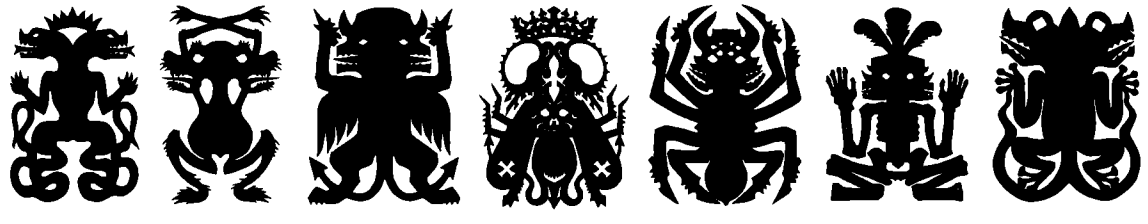
RF: So, would you say that development of the automatic process can lead to a deepening induction, or initiating experience?

BH: Well, there have been numerous times when I have experienced trance induction through sigilisation. For example, one such occurrence happened at the final working of a 49 day BABALON operation that involved working with seven pomba-gira serving as avatars. Each of the seven pomba-gira was worked with by seven different participants, along with Exu. Each week culminated in a rite to each of the Red Ladies at the T-roads, with a BABALON rite in temple. The last ritual was comprised of all seven T-roads and all the pomba-giras being thanked

for their participation over the previous seven weeks. At the final T-road, the signature of the pombas unfolded in a particularly surprising manner. During the chalking of the sigillic forms, they unraveled in a continuous manner from the hand, and in so doing affected the induced trance state; the hand became the possessed medium of the Scarlet avatars. This was an automatic, cryptographic and direct expression: the glyphs became a type of unconscious writing serving to anchor the connection with these formidable entities in a quite miraculous manner. There are many examples during the rites of the Afro-Caribbean diasporic traditions whereby the signature of the spirit is drawn and blessed during possession.

RF: You mentioned Mexico, was it there you first became interested in Mexican paper-cut art?

BH: Yes. Generally, I am attracted to folk forms, as for me they display a vibrant exuberance and a raw complexity. What also attracts me are the distinctive aesthetics that emerge from strong local traditions, where fabrication is seasonally recurrent, ephemeral, and functions in meaningful cultural contexts. They are carriers and custodians of spiritual tradition. Mexico is alive with these folk traditions, which are different in every region. It's like walking through a witch's gingerbread house... and I followed the crumbs to the striking paper-cut tradition of the Otomi Indians. Their deities are represented by cut-outs from tree-bark, which are then used in their rituals and ceremonies covering all aspects of religious life, including shamanic and sorcerous practices. One aspect I found enthralling was that it seemed a fusion between the chthonic Otomi tradition and the infernal hierarchies of the Spanish Inquisition. Paper-cuts are used for cursing, casting and removal; taking away bad luck, misfortune and disease. These demonic dukes, kings and queens take on the features of the Spanish conquerors, complete with goatee beards, bald heads and boots. Montezuma is even incorporated into this pantheon. It was this cultural fusion with its potent aesthetic that gave me the inspiration to work with the demonic pantheons of the Western Occult Tradition.



Papercuts from *Legion 49*, Fulgur Limited, 2009

RF: Speaking of which, in your first published book, *Legion 49*, the Servants of Beelzebub are paper cuts. Did they suggest the idea to summon them in this manner?

BH: *Legion 49* is a survey of the conjurational arts, magical techniques, methodologies, and it analyses of some of the key texts wherein Beelzebub is featured. Among these are the descriptions of the 49 servitors of Beelzebub that were mentioned in a footnote to the poem, 'The Jinn Vision' in Crowley's collection of homo-erotic poems, *The Scented Garden of Abdullah the Satirist of Shiraz*. It is interesting that in The Testament of Solomon Beelzebub is associated with inciting sodomy. Anyway, Crowley's footnote also mentions that the images of the servitors were received via a prominent Irish woman psychic. Gerald Yorke has an annotation in one of Crowley's manuscripts of the *Goetia* that sheds further light on these images: 'The following description of the 72 evil spirits of the Goetia are taken from pp 39-40 of the Bagh-I-Muattar by A.C. They follow the actual results of a well known Irish lady as a result of research work undertaken by WB Yeats, then an active member of the Golden Dawn. Yeats merely showed her the sigil of each – or so he told me at a Ghost Club dinner.' The Ghost Club, formed in 1862, was a paranormal research organ-

isation that included some prominent members of the Golden Dawn. The annotation goes on to say the psychic was also shown the sigils of the 49 servitors of Beelzebub from Mathers' edition of *The Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*. This suggests that perhaps the Golden Dawn had in its possession a set of sigils for these servitors, implying that there were in existence sigils for the entire retinue of Abramelin demons. Another thing that became apparent during my study of Abramelin was the direct relationship between the Beelzebub squares and the names of the servitors; the servitors' names featured prominently within the acrostic, double acrostic and palindromic squares. I also discovered that Mathers' attribution of some of the squares to Beelzebub was incorrect, as the servitor names were missing from them. Inspiration from the Mexican paper cut tradition combined with the list of psychically received images of the Servitors to give me what I needed to produce the 49 Shadow-Kuts contained in *Legion 49*.

RF: Any future paper cut projects in the works?

BH: I have produced a smaller series based on the descriptions of the Rulers of the Qliphoth given in *Liber ARARITA*. And another series will illustrate Levi's *Ten Philosophers of Decadence*. I have also begun shadow-kuts for a BABALON book incorporating mixed media. And, as always, I am working on a catalogue of demons from some of my favorite grimoires.

RF: So where did the ideas originate to create the iconography behind the *Liber 231* wheels? And why gargoyles?

BH: I guess being a visually-oriented artist, the 44 sigils from *Liber CCXXXI* have always fascinated me. In that Holy Book, they are divided into two sets of twenty-one sigils, one for the genii of the Domes and the other for the Cells, or Prisons, of the Qlippoth. They are the intelligences that inhabit the twenty-two paths on both sides of the Tree of Life. However, I chanced across an old copy of *Magickal Link* where there is a note that cites Crowley speaking of an alternative arrangement for the sigillum of *Liber CCXXXI*, one in which they might be arranged in a circle, a wheel girded by the four cherubim. This alternative is exactly the kind of thing that feeds my artistic temperament, because to my knowledge, a graphic demonstration of this had not been realised. My initial elaboration was two pencil and ink drawings dealing with the Wheels of the Domes and Cells separately, produced in 1996. There was also another double composition in black and white, along with a full color painted canvas. In these early renderings the Wheels were treated separately and singularly, but the idea evolved to a point where both sets of twenty-two sigils became interlocked, creating the collusion of the realms of Heaven and Hell in the same composition. The cherubic figures gave way on these doubled wheels to interlocking demons, angels and figures drawn from a broad range of cultures. This series, 'Heralds of the Apocalypse,' was first exhibited at the Horse Hospital, London, in 2004.

RF: And this collusion of realms proved fruitful for you?

BH: I have always been fascinated with the depictions of heaven and hell, in both literature and art: anthropomorphic citadels, the gates of hell, the underworld and its inhabitants, the visionary experiences of the Prophets and, of course, the Apocalypse of *Revelation*. Other elements include alchemical and hermetic *emblemata*, magical motifs and religious iconography. Yet another powerful influence, especially for the color paintings, is the art of the Carnival. The very nature of Carnival best captures the realm of the fantastic, with all its mythic and dream-like qualities of childhood fascination. It produces a sense of wonder and amazement, with its gypsy caravans, swirling magical creatures, fortune tellers, cryptological anomalies, and endless spectacles of the imagination.

RF: And this menagerie is your palette?

BH: Well, this can be seen in the next series of 231 Wheels, which were eleven large-scale color paintings that were exhibited in Sydney and Melbourne in 2004. They depict a wide array of mythical creatures and divinities, angels and demons. The inspiration for these emerged from the genii of the Wheels themselves. There is a natural tension created between the Wheels that imply various cycles of symbolic manifestation, and creating them was induction into a completely immersive visionary experience. One painting would usually take up to 80 hours of intense focus over a five-day period, I slept only long enough to get up and paint again. During this time I fell into a visionary lucid state where my attention was absorbed into the field of the painting. Reality and the canvas bled into a continuum of experience.

As to the nature of the compositions themselves: the cherubim represent the four demarcation stations equally distributed about the ring of the Zodiac. Each symbolises an element. Within the wings of these four beasts are contained all astrological possibilities and admixtures. Biblically, they are the four animals beneath the Chariot of God. From an astro-talismanic application of the Merkabah, the dust beneath the feet of these beasts generates a matrix of creation. The organisation of demons in an astrological framework appears to be a hallmark of the earliest magical traditions. The demonic divisions of the thirty-six zodiacal decans from *The Testament of Solomon*; the planetary hours of the seven days of the week in *The Hygromantia of Salomonis*; the 72 sub-decans and demons of the Lesser Keys of Solomon – all illustrate the Shemhamphorasch, or seventy-two lettered name of God. It seems as if there is no season, month, day or hour not subjugated to demonic possibility. Many descriptions of demons bear strong resemblances to the symbolic representations of the early zodiac. Chimeras, for example, were once mythical creatures made of the parts of three of more different animals, and represented a tripartite year. When one begins to consider the astrological nature of demons, one sees that there is no end to the elemental combinations.

RF: And the gargoyles?

BH: The gargoyles are grotesques, those populating medieval church roofs, and serving specifically to prevent water erosion of the stone work. Some of the earliest examples of these are the lions that line the roof of the Temple of Jupiter. Many are embodiments of the seven deadly sins, and comprise both virtue and vice in one. The grotesques inhabiting the various perches, rooftops and spires are reminiscent of the retinue of demonic workers who fashioned the First Temple of Solomon, constrained to the strictures of the faith via magical means and supernatural agency. In the paintings they serve as wards of both genii and qlippoth.

RF: Tell us about NOKO.

BH: NOKO is an art research project which represents the performing aspect of my esoteric engagements. It has provided me with a creative mode of exploring and developing magical ritual practice and involves longstanding collaborations with Scott Barnes [sound realization] and Michael Strum [visualizations]. We met at Sydney College of the Arts in 1993 and have an ongoing friendship that provides absolute creative freedom within a structured ritual work environment. The products and residues include sound recordings, AV works, installed works, live performance, 2D mixed media, animation, writing and photo documentation.

RF: What started you guys working together?

BH: Our earliest work was an exploration of the Four Great Watchtowers of the Enochian magical system of John Dee and Edward Kelley. This project spanned several years and culminated in an exhibition, NOKO MADA (1995), which included art residues, an AV compilation VIDEO CHANOKH, and an audio cd, NOKO TEX. The series included the contributions of Michelle Moo, who was also a member of NOKO from 1993-99.



NOKO: L-R Michael Strum, Barry Hale and Scott Barnes

Photos: © Elinor McDonald, 2010

The working process used the magical technology of the Enochian keys or calls to investigate the subquadrants of the Enochian watchtowers in their entirety. Michael created visuals incorporating 2D and 3D animation with processed live video recording of the rituals, whilst Scott responded sonically with pre-recorded material and live improvised content. These events were recorded live as a residual documentation of the workings.

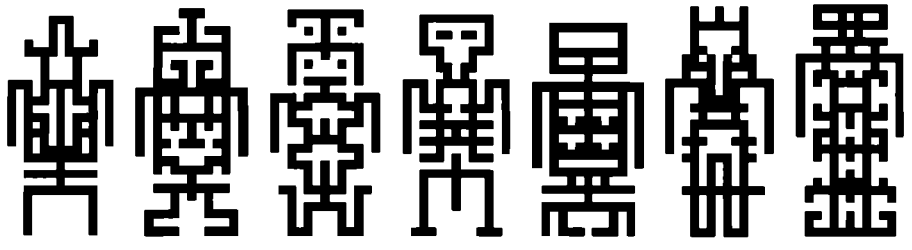
Later came NOKO: Q231, magical sound works undertaken with Scott Barnes generated from magical workings with the Qlippoth of *Liber 231*. This was followed by a catalogue of further magical sound pieces by Scott that revolved around a new investigation into the Enochian magical system, with particular focus upon the Angelic alphabet: NOKO:210, NOKO: 7x3=21 sq (which included a sound piece by Daniel Winter), and NOKO: PA Gsq. Scott often creates virtual machines, defining potential phase spaces that provide a variety of sonic outcomes. Raw material gleaned from these data sets is then fed back into the compositional process. The work exhibits plasticity; themes coalesce from disparate elements, or disintegrate into a range of new material. This consequently draws inspiration from a broad palette of musical influence. The sonic response to the ritual is often intuitive and improvisational. And more recently, NOKO ORDER 41: CONJURATION OF BEELZEBUB was produced in conjunction with my book, *Legion 49*, and a CD of the audio was included with the deluxe edition, so it's pretty rare. An AV feature was also produced under the same title which was performed at the Equinox Festival in London, 2009. Other residual products included sound and AV works, notably an audio-visual grimoire of the 49 Servitors of Beelzebub drawn by Michael Strum, and consisting of 49 short animation loops that we have scheduled for a future release.

RF: And recently NOKO were asked to perform at the Sydney Biennale?

BH: Yes, in 2010 we were asked to perform CONJURATION OF BEELZEBUB as a live AV performance at the seventeenth Australian Biennale. It was great, and since then we have been asked to perform in Tokyo, and elements of our latest project were presented at the Esoteric Book Conference in Seattle [2010] and at the FRINGE festival in Adelaide earlier this year.

RF: And what are you working on at the moment?

BH: Oh, *Hypercube 210*. It's the culmination of a long-term magical exploration and an interdisciplinary research project. It has opened a new direction in the investigation of the angelic alphabet system, with particular focus on the Lingua Angelica vel Adamica, received by Dr John Dee and Edward Kelley. It comprises 21 discrete elements, analogous to the 21 letters of Enoch, which have been arranged as a triptych where each of the seven compositions structurally references its numeric correlates.



Alphagenii from *Hypercube 210*

RF: And how are these elements brought together?

BH: [Laughs] Well, from the start of the *Hypercube 210* project we recognised that presentation would be a challenge, but throughout the creative process particular attention has been given to the form that the final published work would take, because it is essential that the final form conceptually reflects its content. You could say it's a multimedia project that deconstructs the more traditional notions of the book, collapsing linear narratives for a rhizomatic model. It will provide for the participant multiple points for entering the *Hypercube 210*, and multiple routes of departure. In a sense it is a mapping of the exploratory process that can continue to be expanded upon... the idea is to produce an immersive engagement with the contents that becomes wholly interactive, the conceptual quintessence of the *Hypercube 210* being reflected through the multiple facets that compose it. And of course, we are working with Rob Ansell at Fulgur to make this happen.

RF: We shall certainly look forward to it. Thanks Barry.

BH: Thanks Robert, as always it has been a pleasure.

Exhibitions and Performances

1990-1994 Subterranian series, Warehouse Redfern, Victoria Park, Sydney.
Performance collaboration, Jan Taylor Gallery, Sydney.
Performance collaboration, Gunnery, Sydney.
Performance collaboration, Airspace, Sydney.
'Golem 1 & 2,' Warehouse Redfern, Sydney.
Performance, Domain, Sydney.

1995 'Ash,' Polymorph, Sydney.

1997 'Noko Mada,' 4 year collaborative project-mix media collaborative with Scott Barnes, Michael Strum and Michelle Moo, Polymorph, Sydney.

1999 Chinatown Lighting project, Conceptual consultant and artistic designer.

2003 'Heaven and Hell,' Chrisse Chotter Gallery, Sydney.

2003 'Peripheral Spectres,' Front Room, Sydney.

2003 Group Show, Front Room, Sydney.

2004 'Heaven and Hell II,' The Artery, Melbourne.

2004 'Heralding the Apocalypse,' including animation collaboration installation with Daniel Winter, Horse Hospital, London.

2004 Group Show, Knot Gallery, Sydney.

2004 'Ekto-plastik,' animation with Daniel Winter, screened at the Horse Hospital, London.

2004 'OVIII,' mixed media and NOKO 210 performance with Scott Barnes, Knot Gallery, Sydney.

2004 NOKO performance with Scott Barnes, launch for *Waratah* No.2, Sydney.

2005 'OVIII,' mixed media and collaborative animation installation with Daniel Winter, hypercontemporary lodge, Sydney.

2005 Privately commissioned installation.

2005 Live Performance '7x3=21sq,' hypercontemporary lodge, Sydney.

2005 'OVIII,' mixed media, including sound and animation collaborations with Scott Barnes and Daniel Winter, Candid Arts Centre, London.

2008 USA art/science hybrid research with prominent neuro-scientist.

2008 'NOKO : PA GSQ_e' collaborative audio-visual project and CD master.

2009 'NOKO: Order 41,' performance Equinox Festival, Conway Hall, London.

2010 Podcast interview for 'Thelema Now.'

2010 Animations, Revelations Film Festival, Perth.

2010 NOKO: Order 41 'Conjuration of Beelzebub,' performance, 17th Australian Art Biennale, Sydney.

2010 NOKO: HYPERCUBE 210 performance/art panel, Esoteric Book Conference, Seattle.

2011 NOKO: HYPERCUBE 210, four performances, IRIS cinema, FRINGE Festival, Adelaide.

Publications

1998 *Noko TEX*, a one year project with Scott Barnes, Michael Strum and Michelle Moo (limited edition CD + AV).

2004 *NOKO 210*, with Scott Barnes (limited edition CD).

2004 *The Waratah* No.2, art and text fusion, primary text and artistic contributor (limited edition journal).

2005 *NOKO 7x3=21sq*, with Scott Barnes and Daniel Winter (limited edition dual CD).

2006 *Waratah* No.3, art editor (limited edition journal).

2009 *Legion 49*, Fulgur Limited, including NOKO: order 41 CD in the deluxe issue (limited edition book).

2010 *A Gathering of Masks* by Robert Fitzgerald, Three Hands Press, artistic contributor (limited edition book).

2011 *Abraxas Journal* No.2, Fulgur Limited, interview and signed silkscreen print for special issue.

2011 *MEON 3*, Audio-visual collaboration with Adi Newton from TAGC.

Hallowe'en children from *Haunted Air* by Ossian Brown, forward by David Lynch, afterword by Geoff Cox, published by Jonathan Cape, 2010

Portrait of a Magical Maker

Amy Hale talks with Joseph Max

Joseph Max is a striking man, rather tall, with thick silver hair falling down past the center of his back. He has bright, sky-blue eyes. Max is an innovator within American chaos magic and he brings his professional theatrical and musical background to his ritual design. Unlike the stereotypical chaos mage, he hardly goes out of his way to appear menacing; he is quick, lively and passionate in discussion, although one would not be wrong in sensing a bit of the trickster in him. He is also quite the magical craftsman, with his creations ranging from Golden Dawn temple tools to a handsomely detailed radionics device. Max has been engaging magically with an American movement emerging primarily from the West Coast and Burning Man culture known as the Maker Movement. The Maker Movement combines a DIY ethos with art, futurism, community and technology in a way that genuinely celebrates the spirit of human creative potential. Here, Joseph and I sit down to discuss the development of his magical craftsmanship and life as a Chaos magician within the context of other Northern California subcultures of the past two decades.

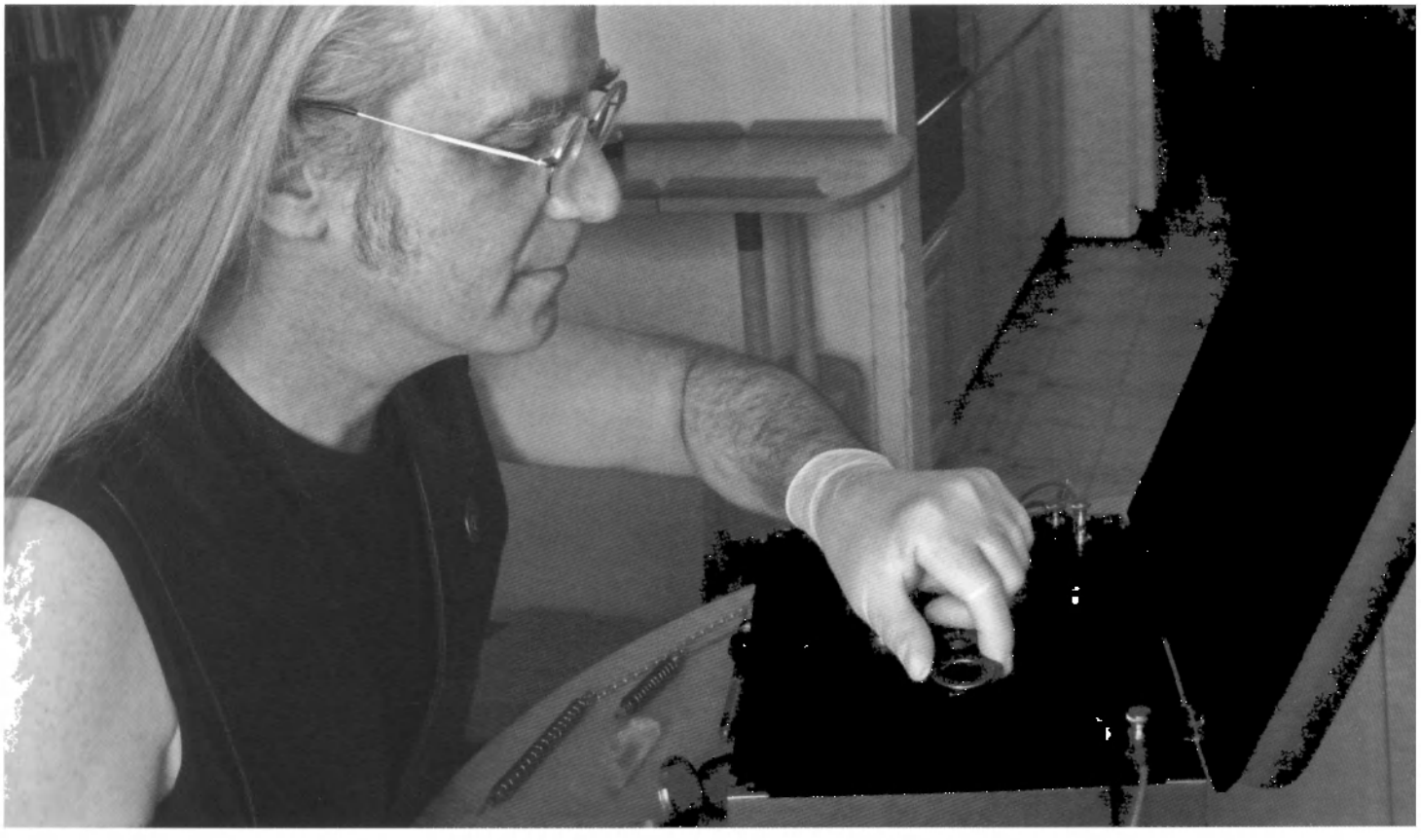
AH: Tell me about your introduction to Chaos Magic.

JM: I had become acquainted with some pagan and magical folks in the Bay Area through early computer BBS systems (pre-internet!). Chaos magicians were early adopters of computer information systems, so there was a lot of cross-communication with magicians, trans-humanists, the Mondo 2000 crowd, psychedelic researchers – the internet allowed all these people to finally interact with each other. There were pagan folks in the East Bay (Oakland area) through which I eventually met my current spouse. And I had also met online some people on the old Nirvana-net BBS system who dropped the term 'chaos magic,' and I remember replying, 'Chaos magic? Is that spell-casting with fractals? Invocations of Mandelbrot? What?' Those people led me to the Peter Carroll book, *Liber Null & Psychonaut*, and I found something that really resonated with me. I could make it work within my more scientific mind-set.

I broke up with my ex-wife in 1992 and began to delve into magic, kind of as a coping mechanism and a search for meaning. In 1993 I met up again with those same chaos magicians who had pointed me to Carroll's works. I ended up joining the AutonomatriX Guild in 1993 and throwing myself into an intense period of magical study and practice. I was living in a house near the ocean in San Francisco, and had turned my room into a temple. I worked at a bookstore on Polk Street at the time, near the other bookstore on the street, Fields Books, which specialised in occult and mystical tomes. I pretty much grabbed for myself every book on magical practice that came through the store, and tried working just about anything. I was fascinated with Spare and really dived into his Zos Kia cultus practices. I think I even went a bit mad for a time, I was 'hearing voices' and conjuring spirits from the Goetia, and building Enochian tablets.

I look at all this as the time of my 'college of hard knocks' magical training. I jumped in the deep end of the pool, almost drowned, but learned to swim.

I also got into the rave scene in early-1990s San Francisco, mostly because I had skills with audio systems, but I was also doing tarot readings at raves and parties. I even built up a clientele, but the problems I had with being a professional tarot reader were two-fold. One, I started to be so much more open to psychic influences around me that it became painful. I couldn't bear to be in close proximity with people who were emotionally disturbed – it would make me physically nauseous. Two, the people who became my clients wouldn't leave me alone. People can, I discovered, become addicted to divination, to the point they can't make any decision at all without consulting an oracle. I suppose that's how the storefront card readers and palmists stay in business. But the drawback is that they want you to advise them in



their personal lives in the same way they would expect from a psychiatrist, but you're not making anywhere near the money that psychiatrists make!

I had it in my mind to try to infuse the burgeoning rave scene with a strain of real magic. I thought it was the perfect venue for it, since so much of it was trending toward various new age practices anyway. I thought if the energy generated at a rave could be channeled and guided to specific ends, it would be powerful work. I even got permission to compose and perform opening ceremonies for a series of raves called 'Augasim,' promoted by a British ex-pat named Mark Heley who produced the Toontown raves in San Francisco. There were a lot of British rave people showing up in San Francisco at the time, who felt they were being chased out of England as the authorities clamped down on the scene there. It was like the 'British Invasion' of the 1960s all over again.

Sadly, it didn't pan out. I found that it was impossible to channel the power being raised to any purposeful end. For all the ravers' rhetoric about 'one-world-ism' and futurism, most people came to the raves to dance, get high, and groove, so focusing that power was just not feasible. Eventually I moved to the East Bay, because the scene in San Francisco had gotten pretty drug-riddled and toxic by that time, and I needed a change. I met my current wife through the aforementioned pagan friends, and I owe a great debt to the East Bay pagan folks who essentially pulled me out of my tailspin and gave me space to pull myself together again. Eventually, we had a daughter, and that is the most powerful working of magic I have ever done.

AH: What was your take away from chaos magic?

JM: What I learned from chaos magic is versatility. I needed chaos magic theory to finally wrap my skeptical mind around a plausible framework for what is generally known as magic. I learned the key to magical efficacy is controlled manipulation of the mind-state called 'belief.'

AH: You are involved in a Golden Dawn order as well, aren't you?

JM: I had dabbled in Golden Dawn work even before I discovered chaos. The Open Source Order of the Golden Dawn came about by complete accident. I was one of the people at Sam Webster's demonstration for Pantheacon 2001 [Ed. a California pagan festival] called 'Ceremonial Magic is This, Not That.' I was the *Dadouchos*. Then a lot of us all decided we'd like to keep doing this stuff, just for fun, you understand, and it grew from there and didn't stop. That we're approaching our tenth anniversary is astounding to me.

AH: Tell me a bit about how you started making magical implements? How did you acquire your skill base for making tools and other magical things?

JM: One way of looking at it is that I conjured the skills I needed! I'd never been all that handy as an artist, though I had some skill in mechanical drawing – I'd thought about becoming an architect when I was younger. But my attempts at 'fine art' painting or sculpting were pretty weak, to be honest.

Around the time I got interested in Enochian Magic, it was fairly obvious that there was a lot of 'stuff' involved. My attempts at making wands and such before that were pretty pathetic. Either I had to find someone to make these things, or make them myself. So early on, using accoutrements I had made by photocopying and cut-and-paste (I still have the Tablet of Union I made at the time out of construction paper), I called on certain spirits of the fire watchtower to guide me and give me the skills I needed to craft magical objects. Within a few days I was crafting a Golden Dawn style fire wand – which I also still have – and it came out very nicely. It's hard to describe, but there was a shift in my perception as to what was needed and how to go about it. What changed is that I seemed to have gained an instinct for what mediums to use, what materials to use, how to mix paints and get the results I intended - it was not so much 'skill' per se, but artistic intuition that I gained. I just instinctively could tell that the paint needed to be just this consistency and the brush strokes need to be that direction and length, and so on. Since then, it's just a matter of practice, practice, practice!

AH: What sorts of magical items have you made? What is the importance of finding the right materials?

JM: Well, the first serious one was the fire wand I mentioned, which I think had something to do with my communication with the fire spirits of the watchtower tablet. Since Enochian was what I was interested in, the next thing I wanted to make was a Holy Table. Now that's an interesting tale. I was in the midst of my 'craziest' time in my magical development, my 'long dark night of the soul,' still finding my way through what Robert Anton Wilson called the Chapel Perilous. Now, anyone who's ever made Enochian tools will tell you that shit happens! I think the spirits begin to notice you and show up unbidden – MacGregor Mathers once said that while you might find the Goetic Spirits, the Enochian Spirits find you. And I was such a novice, I had bitten off so much more than I could chew at the time, that I had no idea how to control it.

So one night I was painting Enochian letters on the Holy Table, and as far as I can remember, it was suddenly morning and I woke up in my bed without any idea how I got there. When I went to the room where I had been working the night before, the table was vandalised; someone had taken the brush and the black paint and scribbled all over the surface of it. Obviously it had to be me. And written on it were words, 'You don't know all you need to know,' under what looked like a human head with a lion's face. In time I've come to associate that image with my own higher self (being a quintuple Grand Stellium Leo), I was communicating to my lower self. I wasn't ready to make that tool yet.

That whole batch of Enochian tools came to a bad end. But that's another story.

AH: What sort of personal magical value does making things have for you? Tell me about the magical process involved when you make an item.

JM: Making magical tools is what the Masons call 'operative work.' The making of them is in and of itself a working of magic. This is especially true of the Enochian tools, and anything that involves flashing colors. Just try painting the tiny lettering of a Rose Cross lamen in flashing colors and see what it does to you! It's very difficult to keep yourself focused on the task, which is what my real problem was with my earlier work. I hadn't learned to banish properly, to invoke the powers I needed to remain tightly focused on the job at hand, and I tended to go off in trances.

So, in making a magical tool, one is making magic. Sometimes I almost think it's the most powerful magic of all, that I don't need to do anything with the tool after it's finished, that the making itself is the magic.

There is the feeling that any artist has in the making of a work of art: the pride in accomplishment, the satisfaction of seeing something that was once an image in a higher realm become manifest. It's the drawing of power down through the four realms of the Qabalah. From the inspiration of Atziluth, to the formation of a concept in Briah, to the planning stage in Yetzirah, and the final concrete manifestation in Assiah. Lon Duquette has a great description of the process in *The Chicken Qabalah*, where he uses the metaphor of making a chair. First there is the inspiration of Atziluth: 'There shall be CHAIR!' Then in Briah we encounter the Platonic idea of Perfect Forms: 'What is CHAIR?' Well, it's a thing a human sits on. That is its perfect form, a pure concept of functionality. But everything from a sawed off stump to a Herman Miller Areon is 'chair,' and we immediately recognise a 'chair' when we see one, classify it in our mind intuitively and immediately as 'chair' even if it's actual shape is something we've never seen before. Next, what shape it must take is formed in Yetzirah, this is where the 'drafting' of how to go about making a specific chair occurs. And finally, it's manifested in the so-called real world, Assiah. But enough of theory!

When I do tool work, I always start with chanting the Three Ahs [Ed: a method of Taking Refuge used in the Open Source Order of the Golden Dawn], which is my tradition in doing any work of magic. I invoke Ptah, the Egyptian creator god, to guide my sharpen my mind and guide my hands – I have a nice statuette of Ptah that sits with me while I'm working. But that's as elaborate as I get. I don't do any banishings because I don't want to toss anything out – I might need it!

One important thing is to never create magical tools when you're not feeling well. If you're pissed off or depressed or otherwise indisposed, this negativity can get worked into the tool itself. There have been times when I tried to force myself to work on a tool, and it never comes out right. Sometimes I'll just set up the stuff I need to do the particular job and leave it set up until I get the feeling it's time to do the work. There are times when a tool or artifact decides when it's time to be made. Often I'll have a problem in execution of some kind or another, or I haven't figured out how to go about getting a desired result, or something doesn't come out as well as I expected. It means the tool wasn't ready to be made. Then at a later time I feel an inspiration to work and it all just comes together. So I've learned to sense when the time is right. I know it's time when I sit down and can feel the power of the tool wanting to manifest itself. And then the work is almost effortless.

Creating magical tools is somewhat like creating any other kind of visual art, but in many ways it's also like making music. Sometimes you're 'on' and sometimes you're not. I guess one of the significant factors is the love of the process itself. If it's approached as a chore, as a job, it's not going to infuse the object with power. A musician rehearses and trains hard because it's not a chore, it's a labor of love. It doesn't feel like work or drudgery. Playing the instrument is an expression of her or his love of the music. It's an act of love. I like having interesting and artistic stuff to make magic with. I've always been drawn traditions like Enochian and Golden Dawn because, for all their hidebound traditions, they have cool tools.

AH: Why did you decide to build a radionics device?

Photos: © Amy Hale, 2011

JM: I got the inspiration to build one from John Michael Greer, who had built his own and demonstrated it at Pantheacon 2008. Along with me providing musical accompaniment on computer and theremin, we performed a radionic chakra balancing ritual using his machine. I've always been a techno-geek, and here was a metaphysical practice that makes use of the trappings and symbols of modern technology. See that radionics box? That's an altar. The sample well is a cup, the dials are disks, the pendulums are wands and it even has an antenna-sword to transmit into the air. A radionicist utilises complex tools and instruments built to exacting formulae, preferably made by his or her own hands, makes calculations based on sacred geometry, consults tomes of arcane lore written by masters of the art, performs complex ritualistic procedures, all in the service of causing change to occur in accordance with the will. For me, it felt like a perfect fit.

There are many types of radionics devices, but the Hieronymus Machine is one with fairly complete plans to build it available on the web. This is thanks to a fellow named Bill Jensen, who acquired Dr Hieronymus' papers and equipment from his estate after the good doctor passed away in 1994 at the tragically young age of ninety-five. To his great credit, Bill decided to make his plans to construct the Eloptic Analyzer available for free to the public, which is what both John Michael Greer and I based our machines on. Building it still takes a good bit of practical skill with electronics, like knowing how to solder connections and how to read a schematic diagram. But it opened up a way for people of modest means to acquire one of the best and most renowned radionics machines. If you look on the internet, most full-fledged, functionally-electronic machines cost anywhere from $1000 to $10,000! And I'm sad to say, in many cases it's a money-gouging racket. There are some machines being built and sold that are, quite literally, nothing more than a fancy front panel, some dials attached to it that are connected to nothing, and an empty box. Sometimes there's a slab of thick plastic inside to give it some weight.

There are a lot of plastic-box machines, some of them with clever marketing but not much functionality. I even saw an advertisement for a Chaos Magick Box, and all that was on the outside of the box was a tiny red light, a switch, and a pair of what looked like metal coins mounted on the panel. Supposedly you visualise your chaotic intent while touching the scary looking 'talismans' on the panel. I have no idea what's inside, but most of these machines include some kind of Reichian orgone-accumulator widget, and Reich's name and work are bandied about in ways that probably has him spinning in his grave fast enough to generate electricity. There's a lot of natural crossover between radionics and Reich's orgone technology, but even though they both existed concurrently, they were never combined when Reich was alive. They both involve what I've come to call aetheric energy,

and I use the term 'energy' with great reluctance because it doesn't involve anything that a physicist would call energy. What's being generated, manipulated and transmitted is pure information, the only thing that can travel faster than light. It's the only way to explain magical effects, once you step out of the purely psychodramatic model.

AH: How does radionics work?

JM: I took it as a challenge to come up with an explanation in 25 words or less, so here goes: 'radionics is the metaphysical art and science of using physical instruments and symbols to analyze, model, generate, project, amplify, store and manipulate subtle energy modalities.' Of course, the short description means you have to define the terms. These subtle energies are known by names such as chi, prana, orgone, nous, entelechy, hormic energy, odic force and elan vitale. This subtle energy was originally known in radionics tradition as 'electronic reactions,' later as eloptic or aetheric energy.

However, radionics, in spite of its traditional name, has nothing to do with radio waves or any kind of electromagnetic energy. Radionic or aetheric energy, for lack of a better term, does not behave according to the physical restrictions of electromagnetism, such as the speed of light or the inverse-square law. So using the term 'energy' in this case is only symbolic. What appears to be the case is that radionics works by receiving and transmitting quantum-level information, not energy as a physical scientist would define it. Information is the only thing ever to produce observable effects faster-than-light. It's called quantum entanglement, but I won't go into a long explanation of it here, I wouldn't do it justice. I tell people to look up Bell's Theorem, Non-Local Quantum Entanglement and the Aharonov-Bohm Effect if they want the weird science theories to explain radionics.

Radionics looks like a form of sympathetic magic, since it works with samples, called witnesses, of the target – like hair or leaf clippings, fluid samples, or even photographs, if the photograph being used was in contact with the original light waves of the subject. So polaroid snapshots are the best, and digital photography is problematic. Radionics posits a holographic universe model, so the pure information of a witness in a radionics device contains a microcosm of the source where it came from, and can be used to quantify and qualify that source's aetheric energy state. When transmitted it can induce specific responses from the target which receives it, by causing a change in the target's aetheric energy state. So if I want to affect the health of a tomato plant in my garden, I'd use a leaf cutting as the witness. That cutting contains the DNA that is the life-code of the entire plant, so it's entangled at the quantum particle level with the rest of the plant, even if it's removed from it.

Radionics seeks to use this quantum-information entanglement effect to analyze matter and energy, either directly or at a distance, and to cause changes to occur according to the designs of the radionicist.

This theoretical underpinning is applicable to any kind of magical effect, but one of the things that attracts me to radionics is that the practice engages these mechanisms directly, instead of obliquely. The traditional magician conceives of what they do as, well, whatever cultural paradigm they've chosen to frame their practice. On the other hand, radionics dispenses with gods, spirits, and higher-power symbolisms. Instead of saying, 'I'm summoning a god-form to manifest a magical effect, which is really behind the curtain (so to speak) manipulating quantum mechanical effects,' radionicists say, 'I'm manipulating quantum mechanical effects.' Period. So in the sense of the deconstruction of magical paradigms, it shares something with chaos magic.

But because one can frame all magical effects this way, it's pushed radionics in two directions. One is that the symbols are all that matters, it's magic! Radionics devices and procedures are simply symbols, no more or less than the regalia and rituals of magicians and shamans. Radionic tools and procedures resonate with the Modern mind, like the staffs, daggers, robes and candles of ancient wizards did with people of the era in which they arose. Radionic devices simply aid the radionicist

in 'spellcasting' the magical intent of their own psyche. If this is the case, it follows that one can get the same effects using symbols of machines. Actual wires, crystals and other components can be replaced with drawings or pictures of them. One can build a radionics machine out of a shoebox by drawing a picture of a circuit on the lid and making dials out of cardboard. Others, like Dr Galen Hieronymus, the pioneer of the field that designed the machines I use, claimed that symbolic machines are not effective for transmission of eloptic energies. Personally, I fall into this camp. But I like bells and whistles, so maybe that's just my personal prejudice.

Unsurprisingly, this is a subject of heated debate within the radionics community. What appears to be beyond doubt is that radionics devices are psionic in nature: they will not function unless interfaced with the nervous system of a human operator.

It's a problem that magic has always had - how do you model what it is? In very ancient times, magic was a matter of controlling a quality, a spirit if you will, that all things possessed. A rock, a tree, the sky, the earth, an animal or a human being, all had a spirit, and to control the thing you controlled the spirit. So our cave-and-jungle-dwelling ancestors painted scenes of the hunt on rock walls, and dressed themselves as animals to enact a ritual hunt: sympathetic magic was the first magic. Eventually a special class of magic-users arose, and the priesthood was born. This begat gods and goddesses, special classes of spirits that only the priesthood could control. Magic became something that was performed by gods, but at the behest of the priests. Eventually it evolved into a means to control society, and since a single God is more efficient to work with, monotheism was invented. All magic, all miracles, were considered to be from God, even if the priest-magician was doing all the work. This explanation, this model of magic remained in place all the way through the Renaissance. How does magic work? Simple! God does it!

When science began to arise with the Enlightenment, magic users started to use the new models to explain their magic. The planets are controlled by gravitation, a mysterious force that projects through time and space, so why not magic? Magnetism is another invisible force of science that became a model for magic. Magicians began to talk about rays and so-called animal magnetism. Then when the wave-like nature of electromagnetism became known to science, magicians started talking about vibrations. And when quantum mechanics was formulated, which is damn near a magical world-view anyway, the magicians began to describe what they do using concepts of non-locality and stochastic observer-created reality. And that's pretty much where it stands today. In every case, the explanation for how magic works reflects the dominant paradigm of its particular age.

AH: Is radionics the next big thing?

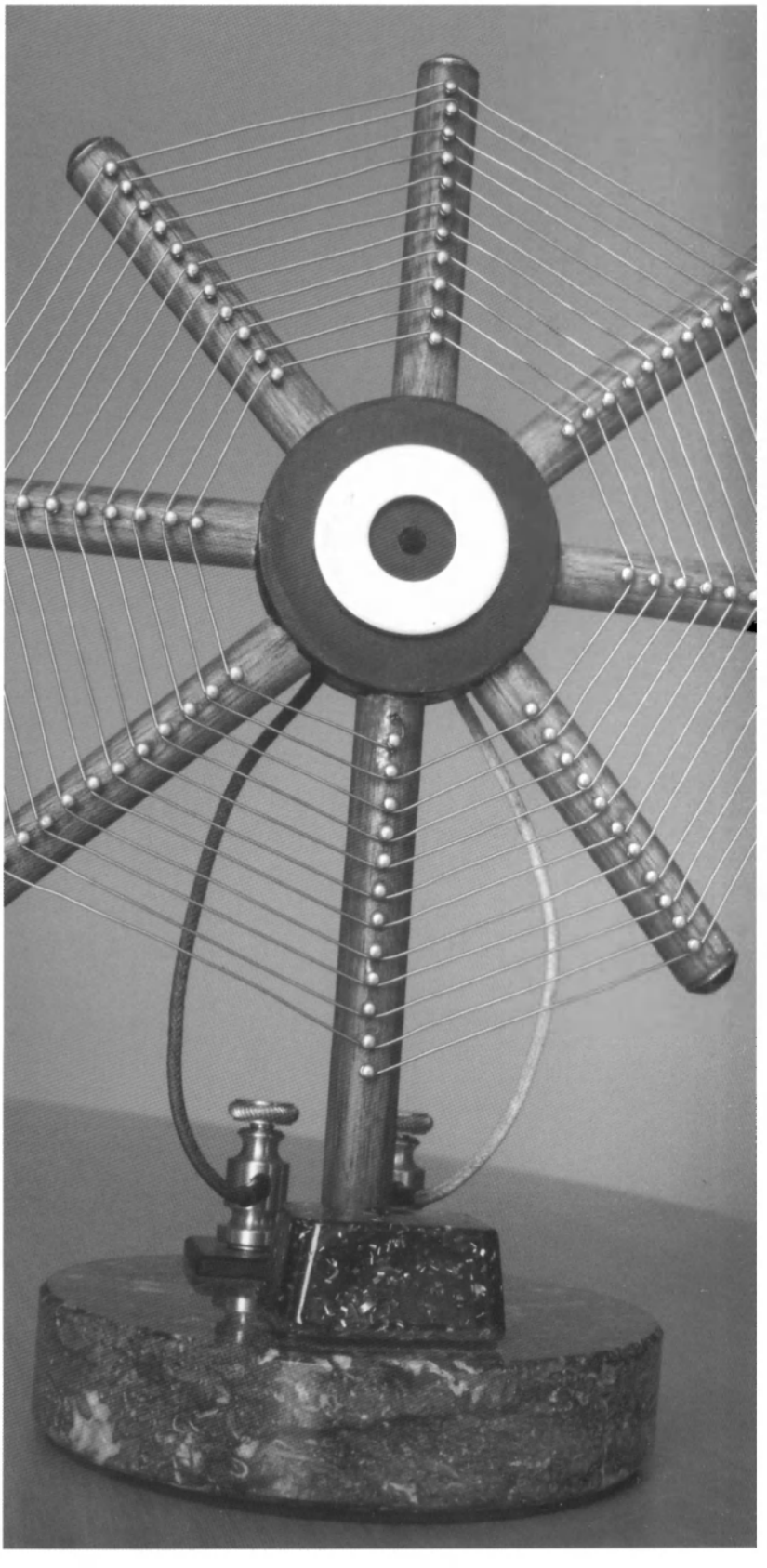
JM: I think what I'd call aetheric magic might be the next big thing. John Michael and I talked recently about how we thought it was going to catch on as the next cutting-edge magical practice. Chaos magic was the last big craze, but has just about played itself out. It was the punk rock of the occult world, but the concentration on stripped-down technique has ended up being artistically barren. Art and meaning are left to the individual practitioner, and not everybody has the artistic creativity to do it justice, just like everybody can't be a poet or a musician. Well, they can try, but with often embarrassing results. I always tried to put elements of drama and good production values into rituals I created, but so many chaos mages have the attitude of, 'a sigil, some blood, a good orgasm... what else do you need?'

For a long time magic has been considered an antiquarian art. We're supposed to take as an axiom that all the secrets of magic were discovered and perfected by ancient masters long ago, and subsequently lost, so all we poor moderns can hope for is to mimic them and hopefully recapture a glimmer of the glorious past. Ever since the Renaissance there seems to be a rule that magic has to be something that isn't created, it's re-discovered. John Dee was reaching all the way back to Enoch. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries they looked back to the foutreenth and fifteenth, with all the old grimoires like the Keys of Solomon and Abramelin. The Golden Dawn and

Aleister Crowley cemented a nineteenth-century neo-romantic motif on ritual magic that's held on for a hundred years, though it's beginning to show some wear. Now I think what we'll see next is a revival of styles and methods from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It kind of happened with the rediscovery of Austin Spare by modern practitioners like Kenneth Grant and Peter Carroll some twenty years ago. But even Spare styled what he did with that same kind of neo-romanticism that was typical of his time. He embraced it even as he rejected it, because it still formed the style of his work.

The Golden Dawn and Theosophy arose in the wake of the British empire's appropriation of the old cultures that it conquered. India, Asia and Egypt were all the rage in popular British culture. Antique art and culture always get romanticised, and it takes minimum of a hundred years to gain enough distance for this to happen – which is roughly the maximum life span of a human being. Not until everyone who could have possibly been alive is gone can a past culture be totally romanticised.

Now we find a kind of neo-modernism arising, and pop culture that reflects the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century styles, as in goth and steampunk. We've got the Maker sub-culture emerging in the United States, that exemplifies the workshop inventor mentality of the early industrial revolution. Art Deco is experiencing a revival in architecture. This popular culture is going to influence mystical and magical subcultures as it always does. So just as 1960s pop culture, with its combination of bacchanalian revelry, witches-at-the-Ren-Faire fashion sense, and dawning-of-the-age-of-Aquarius idealism influenced the magical styles that arose during that time, 21st-century pop culture is going to influence what becomes the next big thing in occult culture. I think we're going to see Steampunk Magic and Gothic Paganism and magicians who emulate Dr Tesla instead of Dr Faustus. We're still reaching back into the past, but a more recent past. And finally, to answer your question, radionics is a big part of that magic of the early twentieth century, and so I can see it being a part of the neo-modern trend.



Astral Flight

Talon Abraxas

The Metamorphic Self

Body, Vision and Transfiguration in the work of Cristina Francov

The Artist talks with Robert Ansell

Cristina Francov, at times identified under the pseudonym 'Naagrom,' was born in March 1989 over the arid terrain of the city of Aguascalientes, Mexico. An early fascination with the esoteric mysteries seemingly encoded in the works of the great European masters developed into an interest in photography. In this discipline she is entirely self-taught, but a limited academic foundation in the methods of oil painting and drawing has led to her becoming recognised, both nationally and internationally, for her contribution to the art of digital manipulation in Mexico.

Marked by an unusual visual maturity, Cristina's work offers us visions and allegories through a series of self-portraits that employ a transfiguration of her own body. Such images seem as humanistic, carnal and colloquial as they are fantastic, mythological and obscure. Now armed with a degree in Graphic Design, here she talks about her work.

RA: Do you remember the first moment a work of art held a magical power for you?

CF: The first time an artistic piece burned a mark, indelibly perhaps, upon my mind was during childhood. I was carefully observing the many little characters in 'The Garden of Earthly Delights' by Hieronymus Bosch. In those days my mother sought out and collected art books, and it was among these that Bosch and Dürer, and many other great artists, filled the open pages with images that were strangely pleasant to my eyes. I think it was here that began the pure fuel which feeds my imagination... that fascination for the grotesque in art.

RA: And the grotesque is often even present in the margins of formal religious art...

CF: Yes, despite the careful strokes, outstanding chromatic use, and the angels and maidens of overflowing dimensions and serene porcelain faces, very frequently can you spot a homeless person, a stray black dog wandering or, what most intrigued me at the time; the theme of fleshly death presiding over the people... beneath their own ceilings, over their own plazas and bridges... the symbolic and the supernatural over the same canvas. It seemed a premonition of a dim and deeper truth in what I saw.

RA: Was this kind of religious art a strong early influence for you?

CF: Magnificent works of art bearing a distinctive religious seal were the threshold between what I saw in my books at home and what led me to investigate other artists who steered away from such classical and clerical commodity. And of course, as I advanced through the centuries of art history, I developed a persistent interest in all those mysterious characters who didn't appear to fit in...

Left: *Auto-inducido rincón del vientre*, digital media, 2010.
Overleaf: *Cuatro caras de una virtud*, digital media, 2009.

RA: Have any particular artists inspired you?

CF: 'The Black Paintings' among other works by Francisco de Goya, to cite one of many examples, became the quintessential source of my artistic inspiration. But also the simple yet truthful sketch 'Automatic Writing' by Max Ernst, as well as exceptional and strange works by Giorgio de Chirico, Leonora Carrington, Remedios Varo and Claude Verlinde. These all grounded my inspiration and exploration of the dream-like themes, and this manifested in my personal work... and I feel that, ironically, it is very distant from the *modus operandi* of the surreal manifestation of the avant-garde. After all, I've always found it a devious and dual game... seeking to align my work with the manifestations of others. They probably had a simple light of inspiration completely different from mine. The lightning bolt that finally struck me came directly from the work of William Blake, Jean Delville, Xul Solar and of course Osman Spare. By this time I had already taken a workshop in engraving by invitation of one of my school mentors, who is also a magnificent artist. Blake's work inspired many techniques for me, thanks to his *Poetical Sketches* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.* Although engraved works did not become my strongest element, they did bring the incorporation of the mixed techniques that led me towards digital manipulation, and of course, my creative soul was being reconfigured with the vitality of myth, with a rapid charge of fire and allegory, symbolism, simplicity, mystery and ritual.

RA: Were these artists the primary reason for your interest in magic?

CF: There were other incentives which stirred an unexplainable and unwavering interest in me towards magic... the marvelous thing about Mexico is that, like many other developing countries, traditions are a deep hollow where people live impassively. In my earliest years I met a couple who were craftsmen and were always downtown on Saturdays. They taught me – with great empathy – herbalist methods and the basic notions of prophecy, and afterwards we would sometimes take trips to places where they would usually go to live, as well as practice their art.

RA: Did this initiation influence your creative life?

CF: It pierced a focal point where curiosity would filter into my head. I spent most of my time involved in research and investigation instead of actual field practice, at least in aspects concerning magic, but I avoided excessive theorizing and contextualizing and instead emptied my beliefs and amalgamated all this light into a more personal and creative flow.

RA: The 'creative flow' is something all artists will be familiar with... how does it work for you?

CF: For me the creative flow is a blood relative of inspiration. I find the source of this in music, nature and its sounds, dreams and spiritual changes that are constantly tied to my physical and mental development. I really like to take my time to meditate, and I do it often because it represents my primary creative moment. Sometimes the relish of doing something comes without respecting my other activities, beginning with sudden flashes in my mind. Then I suspend it all, rushing to capture and enjoy what I'm experiencing internally. On occasion I try to set certain sigils in order to bring these creative perspectives into my hands harmoniously, but I rarely succeed in the action. I've even considered means by which I might encode an emanation to suit personal limitations, rather than to surrender to it, to live it, and to understand it clearly.

I've grown-up during a time when a spiritual avidity and magical matters have broached mainstream culture – most of the time in a vulgar manner – but it has facilitated access to the work of many extraordinary artists and authors. It has given opportunity to study the relationship between art and the occult through works that would have been

Left: *El trígono de las lesiones,* digital media, 2010.

difficult to seek out in so little time, so far from their source. Despite my declared love for these legendary creators, artworks and masterpieces, I think it a fatal error to try to replicate an atmosphere created by another artist. Our hands freeze, our soul is blinded and our voice silenced. Not to mention that severe inner turmoil regarding who we are and what we do... I think pretentiousness leads to an ignorance of the nature of our own results. If I start to find empathy with something there is a penetrating stab into the beauty of that essence, to that creative flow. However, using the feelings that emerge from these manifestations are, undoubtedly, an important creative driver.

RA: So how do you see your own work in relation to the tradition of self-portraiture?

CF: Originally I started this practice because of the lack of models, but then I realised the many advantages. It is indeed within this tradition that I find motivational points in common with many other artists throughout history. It has been a very broad point of analysis for artists, for critics, and for audiences. It touches the playful, the autobiographical, the obsessive, the critical, and most of all, the introspective. Often it has to do with what you want to see, appealing to that unreality. Its an idea that Kant has touched on, referring to that resemblance of what we *want* to notice, even though it might be something inconsistent with what we objectively see. So I have worked as my own object of desire, validating personal concepts that represent those deep inspirations... which is something very tricky.

RA: Would you say that being your own 'object of desire' can become obsessive?

CF: The repetitive roles are an undeniably obsessive behavior. In my series 'Temples of Ether,' being vulnerable to desires and vulgar misadventures, the resulting work gave way to psychological disturbance and disruption that would gradually gain ground in my life... but certainly, I think the biggest contribution is the unraveling of inner matters. I have addressed the action of self-portraiture as an actress who declares her beliefs and interests, but above all, as someone who adopts passionately the act of personal assessment, transfiguration and change... to see oneself and allowing illumination by stronger lights from the unconscious.

RA: Your self-portraits seem in perpetual metamorphosis, as is your name. Spare talked of the 'faveolated Ego,' so would you say these portraits represent aspects of yourself? Are they a map of your experiences, or of your psyche?

CF: All artworks are a kind of self portrait, but perhaps when we think we are 'showing' ourselves to the world through a personality we are often victims of our own deception. Our image, our person, may be a construction of the otherness, a reflection even. Spare also refers to identity as an obsession, which I find very interesting. Working with our own body often prompts a strong release of energy which moves cyclically... I also feel that death and life are precisely metaphorised with the end and start of every artwork, the 'object of contemplation' becomes a log of changes, beautifully descriptive, automatic and poetic. We can find these kind of cycles everywhere in our daily life.

But being personally refracted in images has been a very powerful source of intimate knowledge, true knowledge, at least for me. Using oneself to explore occluded aspects in a way that is not self-induced.. I mean through *conscious* thought... encourages a mystical, wide open, portal to something bigger inside. Is not enough to say 'I am this, I am I' for it can be faulty, and we can get lost. Is not my will at all to be recognised in the photographs as I am in daily life. Yes, they are self-portraits, but not necessarily of my corporeal state, because the body itself could be an obstacle that limits expression – an anthropomorphic literalism. No, it should not be an obstacle, the body may be deformed and worked upon endlessly.

Right: *Concertando el secreto del Silencio*, digital media, 2011.

RA: I am interested in your comment about the artwork as an object of contemplation. This brings to mind the idea of creative flow as a devotional practise... would you say there is a similarity?

CF: Absolutely, its about being devotional, its about rejecting that intent towards personal obsessions. Again from explorations I have learnt to channel the creative flow in total solitude, from the moment of conception to final treatment – in this case digital retouching. For me, working both behind the camera and in front of it as the object of contemplation is what fully embodies that which is seen inwardly. I'm not saying in any way that using other models breaks this wonderful concatenation, I think it's about the personal way in which each artist works. I get very excited (creative flow) when I allow something to trap me in a particular atmosphere, and then feel that I can represent it not only through plastic media, but bodily. I think this is the ritual, and to accomplish it successfully I need to leave almost everything else behind – what others expect of me, even what I expect of myself that has nothing to do with the work. And I try to ensure my work is near where I sleep – as a tribute to my oniric sources while the energy circles are closed.

RA: Do you have any other elements of ritual that help with manifesting your intent?

CF: Before my body assumes the position to be photographed, I relax through musical vibrations. Strong incenses also assist hermetically, as a self-induced womb. There is also sometimes a physical manifestation, an exclamation to release energy alongside the music, there is a yell, tears, silence, etc., if the photography demands. Never during this process do I consciously think of my work related to stereotyped cultural roots, things must follow the flow mentioned earlier.

RA: Tell us about your series 'Temples of Ether' – what was the idea behind it? Is it an ongoing project?

Above: *El corazón del cuarto, el cuarto del corazón*, digital media, 2009.
Right: *Durante las noches, yo...*, pencil and charcoal, 2011.

CF: Yes and no... because I'm not actively working on that series. The first and last photo represent the beginning and end of that circle which develops from the self-decay and blindness born of vulgar concerns. The pictures were developed and operate within a hostile environment where the air... usually a symbol of vitality... becomes dense and obstructs the process of life. Lightness is dominant rather than Darkness. Dawn and sunshine are the cause of the confusion. The object of desire is a seed, a metaphor whose repetition binds the whole story.

Finally the substance, allegedly found, finds focus in the last picture as an anthropomorphic figure, while clusters of ether are totally consumed behind... purifying one after another, through the power of the flame. I was a Temple of Ether, as we all are, and after the ignition key we transform into a purer, although not final, form.

As you can see, in this series I encountered a line between what is apparent and what lays beyond, a theme I have begun to explore in the work that has followed. At the beginning I said yes and no, well... *may*be the series has ended, but the path that came out of those burned temples keeps going.

RA: Fascinating. You are also a gifted as a traditional artist, can you see yourself pursuing a non-digital approach at any time in the future?

CF: Thank you. I am cultivating myself a little more on these techniques because I am interested in challenging the perception of digital media being frivolous as much as possible. Drawing and painting are insurmountable... the vitality of line and mental *freedom that is* offered is just not comparable to a digital re-creation. Earlier I mentioned that I used to incorporate these techniques into my photographs... this is why I do it. I think too that the autonomy of the hand is always in conflict with the inflexible computer. To some extent, for me it is ideal to be able to do everything directly with my hands, again it would close a creative circle that would be wonderfully strong. Ultimately I feel very motivated to incorporate these traditional results into my strongest body of work.

RA: Recently Leonora Carrington died... she was also an expert in traditional techniques. How do you regard her work and her legacy as a female artist working in Mexico?

CF: The legacy of the master Carrington goes beyond what has been said publicly... although her death has already been forgotten by much of our population. But her aesthetic legacy in Mexico is part of a thriving visual culture: Orozco, Clemente, Siqueiros and Herran (who by the way was from my city) to name a few. More importantly, along with Varo, these artists have provided valuable wealth to our concept of art and to visual settings... they have touched the mystical fibre of the country with their mythic images. Over the past century this has seemed like an earthquake upon this land, whose political and social concerns were always the priority, and these led by men. But certainly I think there is much to exploit from Carrington's magnifi-

cent symbolic works, rather than her figure as a female pioneer during hard times. More personally, Carrington has been one of those muses who has motivated me to dig deep trenches into my way of perceiving. It was – and still is – a radical solution to the huge dose of reality offered by the Mexican landscape. Perhaps that is something which many members of my guild would like to carry forward, and we can do so thanks to artists such as Carrington and her incredible aura, combined with a little nostalgia.

RA: Speaking of that large dose of reality... last year you were travelling through Mexico. To what degree does the landscape and mythology of the country inspire you? Do you feel connected to it?

CF: The visionary art of the Mexican indigenous people inspires me greatly. As you might expect, it is a source of endless knowledge. These days the ancient shamanic tradition is hard to find in the city, so encountering people living in the middle of nowhere who still practice the old ways is quite an event in itself. Just by analyzing the Huichol art we can realise the tremendous maze of thought and awareness surrounding the reality of these people. Lately for example, shamanism has become popular among urban groups thanks to characters like Alejandro Jodorowsky, who as a director has opened the way through his symbolic films. Now, due to this openness, 'psychomagic' and 'psychotherapy' have become very strong ideas between ordinary people, as well as professional therapists.

I must say, and you will understand, that we are a society that lives by, and for, legends and myths. Each holiday is steeped in folklore... for example the allegory of *la muerte,* the cult of death, is typified by the Day of the Dead... a revered tradition and one of the most important festivities in the country. It gives us a vision of the idea of dying – of the idea of transcending to other planes to be reborn – as cause for motivation rather than disgust or fear. And pre-Hispanic mythology and Catholic beliefs have been blended in such a way that ritual practices are quite automatic and natural.

To resume... the visual richness and energy in Mexico is strong. Often when visiting an open camp you can feel this vibration around people (surprisingly, almost the majority) who, quite secretly, continue the practice of witchcraft in many of its manifestations. Maybe it is this re-connection with the nature of the old ways which draws most participants to get involved, and in my case, to bring something of it over the canvas.

RA: And what do you plan to bring us in the future?

CF: I am finishing college and to me this is a blessing, for I need more time for my projects. I'm currently working on a series called 'Star Sowers,' which incidentally I decided to offer as a tribute to master Carrington. For this series I have been employing a bit of hermetic philosophy, Fucanelli's written work, Stoic concepts, Chaos Magic and something from the Cathar Heresy. It is interesting to have an immediate reflection on my work, and not a romantically brooding personal story. I've worked in this way before and I'd like to continue. I will be also be working with a series of portraits using traditional techniques, and some others with clean photography under the theme of witchcraft. For the first time I'd like to present and publish this apart from my digitally manipulated work. Possibly it will take a long time to finish, but it will definitely be worth it.

RA: We shall look forward to that Cristina, thank you.

CF: Thank you.

www.cristinafrancov.com

Left: *Dos pudiendo ser Tres*, digital media, 2011

Sorceress in Mauve

Who loves getting dirty
and loves standing
drenched in the rain
Since this
enables her to prophesy.
She is a pacy spicy chick
And bowses
over his body-everything
with her every-thought.
She enters the penetralia
of the most ordinary room,
being inwardly
Satisfied with mere space, enters
the vaults of the ancient book
ample as a forest of leaves;
Then she sleeps and ages
a hundred years; wakes
in her youth, renewed.
She can come out in the form
of other people's wizards;
at one time they all tried to
Prevent her being a wizard
on the grounds that she was a girl.
She wears diamonds and furs
Like the World's Vagina; out of the neck
of the spacious garment an
ejaculation soft as air.
Her perfume fills the potential sky
at midnight, like hair shaken out,
the hair that protects her
With its wings folded
about her head, and there is
in her urine
A secret garden.

PETER REDGROVE

Pashupâti: A Cainite Trimurti?

Shani Oates

Illustrations by Arnett Taylor

> Shiva looked at the Gods and said: 'I am the Lord of the Animals; the Courageous Titans, the Asuras, can only be destroyed if each of the Gods and other beings assumes his animal nature!' The Gods hesitated to recognise their animal aspects. Shiva said to them: 'It is not a disgrace to recognise your own animal (the species of the animal kingdom corresponding to the principle that each god embodies on the Universal plane). Only those who practice the rite of the brothers of the animals, the Pashupâtas, will be able to overcome their animal nature.' It was thus that all the Gods and Titans recognised that they were the Lord's cattle and that he is known by the name: Pashupâti – Lord of the Animals.[1]

Nothing expresses our humanity more than the animal, finding transmission in symbolism and action. Considerable time and effort has been spent exploring the sublime relationship with the animal kingdom. Adam, it is claimed, was given dominion over the beasts of the fields and the earth, sky and seas. He even named them to better assert his authority over them (Gen 1:26-8).

An intriguing correlation between the metaphysical date for the 'birth' of Adam (circa 6000 BCE) coincides with the appearance of a naturalistic reverence for horned animals through ithyphallic zoomorphic symbology, especially across Old Europe and Asia. Of these, the glorious '*Trimurti*' as 'Pashupâti, Lord of the Animals' here poised in the asana of manifestation and crowned with magnificent (lunar) bull's horns from Mohenjo-daro, is the finest example.[2] Variant forms depicted with stag antlers (stellar), goat or rams (solar) horns are frequently accompanied by other horned animals and serpents.

It has ever been our obsession, since the loss of this ante-deluvian status, to study the dynamic between ourselves and the animal kingdom, with particular regard to how mastery of the *three realms* engenders atavistic potencies within selected individuals, inspiring them to re-instate that original and primal unity. The 'fall' philosophically refers to the loss of individuation, of connectedness, from whence the ego grew exponentially through knowledge of 'good and evil,' concepts that are merely polarisations of comprehension divergent from the harmonic centre. As a tri-func-

tional metaphysical condition of edenic status preceding those later dualisms, it avoids their consequent pitfalls.

I had the first tantalizing experience of divine triplicity in my seventh year, during the summer storms of 1966. This first initiatory event propelled me into what became my personal argosy, my search for completion within its mysteries. Thwarted by orthodoxy, I stepped out, a fool upon the pilgrim's path towards Truth, to experience an alignment of beatific symmetry. Yet, ultimately the Holy Fool is the wisest of men, for the very act of humility, assures the highest attainment – that of understanding the No-Thing.

Four decades were to pass before my next experience of *Trimurti*. It occurred during an intense working. In it, I was given another glimpse of his form, and another key to his Kingdom. This all-too-brief glimpse of *Trimurti* I hurriedly fixed to paper, capturing some mystery, perhaps, of that sublime form.

I felt compelled to further explore his attributes, and found that certain illustrations arrived serendipitously, and these further increased my ardour and curiosity. One image particularly stands out: it portrays the profound moment when Cain received both mark and exile.[3] Above his brow, three curling flame-like strands suggest the fire-brand of the Hebrew letter *shin*, the triple fire and triple horns of this eponymous and eternal wanderer (in the sense of eternal seeker).

Magical treatises frequently advise us to consider our animal nature. In other words, to progress, we must first regress. Animal behaviour mirrors cosmic phenomena, all stages of evolution from the realization of physiognomy to generic biological diversity. Yet our endeavor for supremacy over the animal within requires us to subsume the ego - the devil, often characterised as the inner beast. Seductively, this offers congress from a reverse perspective – involution as a means *back* to the Creatrix, rather than evolution *towards* it. Primality as the key to sublimity.

Further research confirmed a sophisticated and composite structure coalescing distinct thematic triads in social and religious contexts, repeated across geographical space and historical time. Every Clan/Tribe would have been dedicated to a single tutelary deity, albeit known and approached through a different name and quality to each of the *three* social groups within it, relating to the priest, warrior and craftsperson. These categories may be broadly typified as those who *pray*, those who *fight* and those who *work*.

Jewish gnosticism fostered an obscure faction asserting antinomistic heresies also concerned with the *three* classes of men, designated by function within the nomadic Kenites. It has been assumed by many erstwhile researchers that the root of Cain lies in the kenite word for Kayin, meaning lance and in the Arabic word for smith; although these are by no means proven, they nonetheless serve to increase our understanding by adding yet another layer of possibilities regarding the enigmatic relationships between archaic words and the historiography of esotericism. Developing this further, we could tentatively place Cain as the man of earth – the physical labourer; Abel would be the psychical man – the warrior; and Seth, the spiritual man, or priest-king.

This premise of societal *tri-functionalism* was actually given credence in the sacral, martial and economic roles ascribed by Dumèzil in 1929 to the much disputed classes of priest, warrior and labourer.

Threefold Cain Myth, Threefold Hindu God

At the heart of the witch tradition I follow, a core mysticism is the gnosis of Cain, as it is immersed within various Luciferian streams.

It has been suggested that the root of Cain lies in the kennite word for *kayin*, meaning lance, and in the Arabic word for smith. Although unproven, on a mystical level this idea adds another layer of possibilities of enigmatic relationships.[4] Jewish gnosticism fostered an obscure faction asserting antinomistic heresies also concerned with the *three* classes of men, designated by function within the nomadic Kenites. Developing this further, we could tentatively place Cain as the man of earth – the physical labourer; Abel would be the psychical man – the warrior; and Seth, the spiritual man, or priest-king.[5]

This has parallels, I saw, with the Hindu triune divinity or '*Trimurti*' (three-in-one) known as Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. I realised that this Trimurti's three deities can be fruitfully compared to different aspects of Cain.

Horns

Within several branches of Traditional Craft, horns symbolise divine virtue, bestiality, chthonic destruction and aphrodisial potency.

Horned animals in recent centuries suggest to us the bestial, primal, lustful, wild and fierce – they suggest sexuality and chaos. But throughout the archaic world, horns suggested something quite different: the divine qualities of authority, rulership, majesty, prestige, glory, strength and virility.[6] Horned beasts also convey other subtle mysteries, depending upon context. The noble stag suggests the way of solitude and purity, the psychopompic guardian of the mound from which Gwynn ap Nudd, the fair bright hunter, rides out. The ox is a symbol of fortitude and service to others, agriculture and prosperity. The bull is of the Heavens, the eternal father-creator, 'Hu Gardarn' in Welsh mythology – 'Old Brazen Face' of medieval folk rites. The ram is fleet, alert and epitomises leadership, virility and warrior-ship seen in the gods Mars and Thor.

Ithyphallic and horned imagery was popular in the bronze-age with the stag and bull, shifting in the Iron-age to wide appearances ram and boar. In Northern Europe, tribal leaders were sometimes portrayed naked, sporting the horns of their tutelary totem. The Welsh Triads mention three Bull Chieftains of Britain and the pastoral community of the Brigantes who similarly revered a horned bull.[7]

Romano-British deities are often portrayed with ram's or bull's horns and occasionally with stag antlers. Appearing on singular and composite images of Apollo, Mercury, Mars and Pluto, among other synthesised deities, they form several

intriguing triplicities. Lightning rods invoking Status, Truth and Justice were wielded by the storm gods Adad and the horned Jupiter as *Dyus Pater*, 'father' and 'thunderer.'

And not just in Europe: in India, Shiva the mystic initiator dances wildly both as Mahadeva, the white hart and as *Mahakala*, the black bull, wielding his trident or triforked stang and his *thunderbolt* (ashani), generating alternately inertia and vitality.[8]

Triplicity of Role: God, Hunter, Hunted

Humans are poised between beast and god, and our role is all that separates us from them both – as we are the hunter of the former and the hunted of the latter. Hence the axiomotic statement by Robert Cochrane: 'the Hunter, Old Tubal Cain and the Roebuck in the Thicket are both one and the same Divine Presence.'[9]

Pythagoras stated that all things transform and change into another form: that nothing dies. We can add, moreover, that all three exist, each within the other, standing between Creator and Creation. Each of us has the potential to access this triune functionality of Creator/Preserver/Destroyer; we will find these three in the elementary levels of ourselves, where our titanic primality resides. We are subject to nature, part of nature, yet we may conquer (our own) nature. Our spiritual evolution may be achieved through and understanding of the mystic triplicities of nature – that is, of god, the hunter and the hunted.

In hunting, traditional societies prescribe particular modes of conduct. Myths and lore surrounding the hunt confirm a synthesis of spirit between hunter and hunted, irrespective of who is ultimately successful. Myths hold the assumption that humans can overcome even the most primal forces locked within the deepest levels of their being.[10] These primalities refer to the otherworld nymphs, sprites, angelic forms etc under the aegis of Pashupâti and through whom He is revealed.

The Triune Mahashvara

Also from the Indus Valley, circa 2000bce the seated ithyphallic *Maheshvara* (prototype of Shiva) crowned with bull horns, is again depicted with *three* faces.[11] Lord of the *three worlds*, his eyes are of the sun, moon and celestial fire. Bright twin to the dark and hairy, blind and lame Woodwose (form of the black Shaivite bull); this Lord of Triune Magics channels spiritual wisdom of the head, vital or fiery energy of the breast and earthly abundance and eroticism of the loins, he is *Vindos* - (white hart) the hypostastic theriomorph.[12] His linga is the all pervasive pillar of light, the bridge and ladder between the *three realms*; it is the still point – *ex nihilo*, qutub of all potential.

We find the encompassing protective spirit also in the Greek god Phanes, sometimes referred to as a two-faced androgyne, surrounded by four winds; Phanes other times is presented as the triple god, a bringer of light, love and wisdom. Like *Pan Protogonas* the zoomorphic, winged and radiant Phanes has also been depicted as the centre of a flaming universe of spinning planets and light.

> "Then I looked and I saw that lover, beloved and love are one," and behold, the two saviour figures along with even the Allah of Islam and the Devil as well, have become one. "For in the world of unity," said Bayazid, "all can be one – glory to me!"[13]

Pashupàti is the primordial force (purusha) of creation, whose sacrifice and dismemberment generated all form, confirming him as *victim*, *slayer* and *priest*. As force, or breath, he is Master of the Winds, supported by the shining 'Devas' who in His sacrificial act to them, are also created by His essence, each of eight assigned to an octagonal world, or facet of his crown. Cognate with the *Lia Fail*, meteoric ben ben, beth-el and sacred stone of kingship, this omphalos jewel, the adamantine throne, eye of the grail cup, fulcrum and axis mundi between Khaos and Order through *Luz* the eternal light, is the storm bringing vajra of the eight winds that uphold the intermediate world of shadows.

These spirit 'winds' are the utterance of the Word, as light is the reflection of the dark void of the fractured body of Adam Kadmon, manifesting and sustaining creation through the dynamic of one becoming seven, (becoming eight) becoming one again and so on. Upon the fire altar of Agni the eternal light signifies the point of sacrifice, of immanence and manifest form. Here the wild physician, god of death, magic, creation and healing, *Mahadeva* Pashupâti (meaning sexual exhaustion resulting from spent semen in the procreative act) is sacrificed *thrice* to cyclic time, the universe and to virtue (as *creation*, *existence* and *presence*).[17]

Virtue is present only within 'natural law,' – only within it can the integrated self experience the celestial realms, and go beyond into the complexities of existence and non-existence. The spirit teachers of the spiritual, animal and plant realms divulge sacred tenets of life, death, the natural and praeternatural realms.

Each orgiastic rite performed and each sacrifice offered unites the practitioner with the Creator, identified as One – himself born anew in the continuity of the All, but crucially projecting back to the exact moment of flux within the nexus of Ur-Khaos. There is no other thing that brings humanity in such intimate proximity to the divine. Of considerable relevance here is a notion drawn from the original meaning of Khaos, formed by two words: *ak* (mighty) and *aos* (spirit of life). In this sense it implies all infinite space or all potential, rather than the mundane and even profane association of confusion, now inferred by it.[18]

Of course, this invokes the third hypostases, the synthesis of all duality within the equilibrium – the sentient potential of the Source, regarding ambivalently all existence and the triune vibrations of *animal*, *vegetable* and *human* consciousness devoid of artificial boundaries, constructed by ego to revoke that Truth. To comprehend this holism we need to lift the Veil of the Mysteries, to access the Source and realise its subtleties by which the manifest form reveals our *tripartite* nature, indistinct from it. The human psyche is a mechanism constructed to buffer alternate realms of reality to which we become exposed; but only once we commit to that unrelenting argosy.

It is helpful to consider the three roles of creator, preserver and destroyer, in these one can recognise body, soul and spirit (*hyle*, *psyche* and *pneuma*). God archetypes (particularly Shiva and Dionysus) that typify these three have epithets which reveal their functional qualities, commonly: 'First Born'; 'Lord of Time/Maha Kala'; 'Lord of Death'; 'Lord of Animals'; 'The Howler'; 'The Hunter' and 'The Shining Archer.'[19]

Triplicity in Ritual

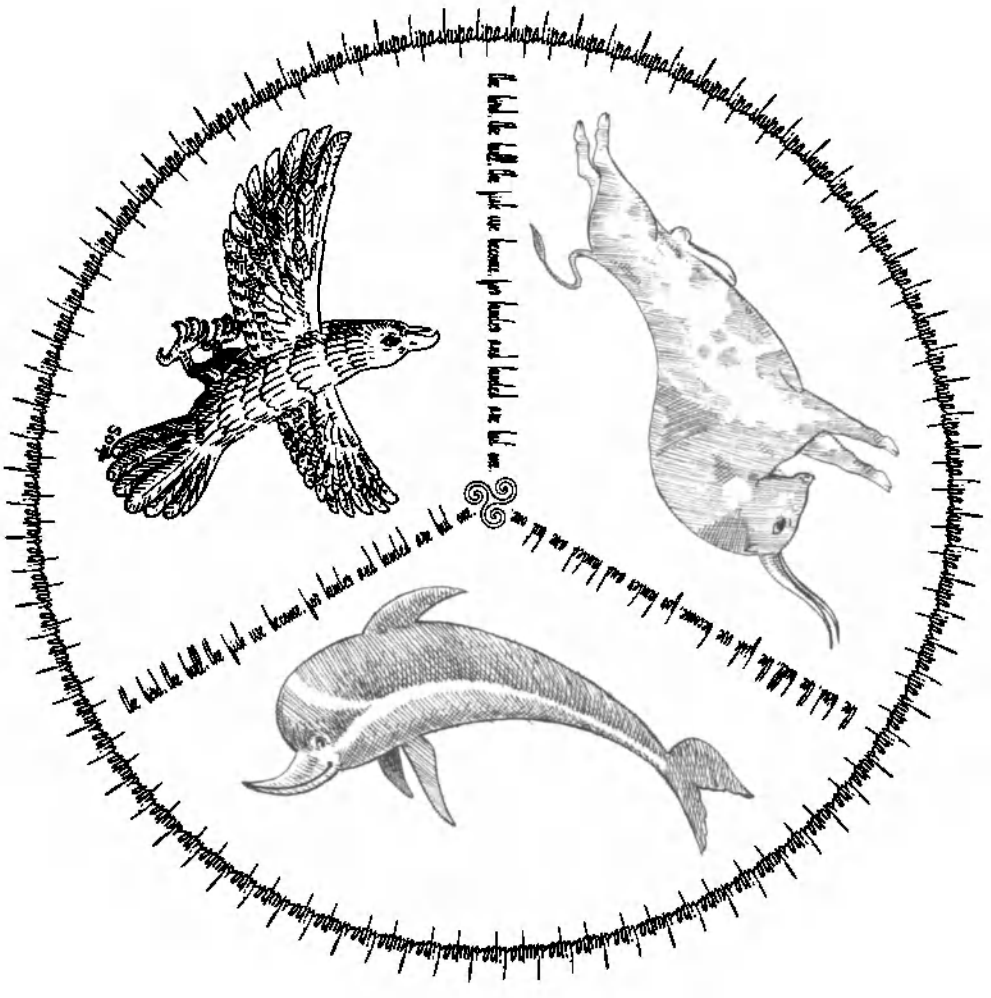
Developments in ritual practice shift from literal acts of sacrifice to those of the breath and of sound in mantra. Silence and time in meditation join human psycho-physiological functions with that of the cosmological, celestial plane. Thus in wind and fire are the elements of our life force given up to the creative force itself.[20]

Tantric sexual acts add a third fluid element in semen and other effluvia (*aleph*, *shin* and *mem*). This sublime elixir is imbibed to discern the subtle essence or Virtue of deity within.[21] Through savage acts of orgiastic ecstasy, untamed daimons articulate recognition of our base nature, extorting it as a tool for liberation. Pleasure is a divine and transcending state, facilitating connection and awareness of god. Matter, sanctified through the mystery of creation and its vital presence occurs through the rites of the phallus or linga. As the bindu or literal seminal point, the veil between being and non-being is breached, negating our perception and reality of time. All exists in the point; the point is the All – the Xoanon, pillar and altar of creative gnosis. Rather than fertility, it denotes the primary, manifest symbol of raw potency where inner subtle gnosis is revealed through external bliss.[22] 'Solve et coagula:' that is to say, scrutinise all elements of yourself, dissolve those deemed inferior, endure the fracture, then summon revitalised segments of the self to congeal. Regress to progress.

Imagery with these threefold gods effectively opens the psyche to introspection and shift in consciousness, a technique much exploited by numerous occult artists, such as Austin Osman Spare, Arthur Rackham and Aubrey Beardsley.

Spare in particular regarded the sub-conscious a treasure trove to be plundered in his search for anamnesis – the memories of past and other lives, together with all primordial states and bestial stages of being. His strange excursions into the void obsessed him. Spare induced extreme visionary states achieved through exhaustive dance and sexual activity in a practice known as 'The Black Sabbath.' His 'Death Posture' allowed him to steal, like Prometheus before him, the primal fire of true gnosis, from the purity of the unsullied qutub, the ecstatic moment where force is realised as form.[23]

Rites of passage and rites of initiation follow a fundamental form that has survived the test of time. Spare, more than most perhaps, best exemplifies these principles most specifically in his auto-eroticism. Some anthropology of art has considered the penis as divine icon as it shifted away from crude pillars, monoliths and ploughs to more subtle forms, first as fish, then as bird, and finally as mammal. Fish indicate masturbation, generating the requisite offering of sperm, the seed and life force of generation. They also symbolise heritage, through its receipt between master and student forging an eternal psychic bond on all psychic, intra psychic and extra



psychic levels. Birds indicate anal penetration, and the bull indicates fruition or fecundity of coupling.[24]

Other studies highlight these same three forms (fish, bird and animal) as totemic beasts of transvection, with particular note to those practices centered upon trance work or *seidr*.[25] Medieval literature, especially the Treasuries and Folk Narratives, including the poetry of the famed Bard Taliesin, describe the notable transformation of Arthur and Gwion Bach into a fish, a bird and an animal in order to master the *three realms* of *land*, *air* and *sea*. Avatars, involution and savior figures are indicated by the 'fish,' even as the bird equally represents the transcendent spirit of the avatar, though clothed in the elemental virtue of thunder and lightning, in addition to divine manifestation. The animal depicts the realm of earth, and of our congress with all states of being.

Occult thought asserts if a person really understands the divine creative principle in its sublime levels, with its attendant sanctifying imagery (notably the phallus) then that person will be free from all fear, death and re-birth. To accomplish this, one undertakes initiatory rituals involving acts of sacred sex, focusing upon body orifices analogous to the chthonic regions of the earth itself. One focuses on the lair of the

kundalini, that inner serpent that mirrors the mighty Leviathan, Tiamat of the deep Marah. The interior labyrinth is entered and stimulated, luring the fire-serpent from its lair, sometimes with shocking brutality, to ensure the awakening of the primal essence. But yet, it is only through mastery of Shakti (the generative virtue of Shiva) will harmony with natural forces transpire.[26] Thus are opened the three pathways to a realisation of divine will, otherwise known as Fate.

Significantly, ascetics are by tradition unclothed and unkempt, exhorting freedom from all bonds of civilization, preserving intimacy with the anarchic chaos of a primal state. Mystics and mendicants revel as the wild bacchante entranced in their reveries to gain gnosis. But it was said that in order to be truly free we must satisfy the sages by study, the gods, by sacrifice and our ancestors by begetting sons, inferring in the post-edenic *triad* of *Seth, Abel* and *Cain* respectively, a nomadic formulae indicative of primordial return, a Rite of Wandering, instigating the correct purpose in the medieval Quest tradition.[27]

Pashupâti and the Three

Pashupati is a threefold god made up of three gods: Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma. Shiva faces right, and is the future, and is the destroyer. Vishnu, facing ahead is the present, and he is the preserver. Brahma faces left, and he is the past and is the creator. I feel that these three aspects of Pashupâti are parallel to the three figures in my own tradition of the triplicity of Cain, Tubal Cain and Lucifer.

Brahma, meaning expansion in terms of the involution of god into matter, developed further the concept of the cosmic Pashupâti, retaining the remote aspects of a nebulous All 'Father' (deserving of an entirely dedicated study to his Supreme Mysteries) is the neuter and balancing principle of the All between, above, below and behind the tanists Shiva and Vishnu. Brahma as the uncreated, yet self creating (parthenogenic) cosmic force without form, is surely Lucifer, articulating through the Old Horn King residing in the North a more remote and nebulous Cainite form. So I began to ask, exactly how do Shiva and Vishnu reflect my own stream of Cainite gnosis? A small, yet succinct tabulation clarified much:

BULL – Primordial – *Mem*	**RAM/GOAT** – Fallen – *Shin*	**STAG** – Restored – *Aleph*
Farmer – Cain – Freya	Warrior – Abel – Hagal	Priest/King – Seth – Tyr
Descending, centrifugal force	Stable, orbital tendency/sacrifice	Ascending, centripetal force
Brain as transmitter of life	Shepherd/Body as Sheath	Heart as Preserver of Life
Shiva	**Brahma**	**Vishnu**
Spring – Plough – Eurus	Summer – Auriga – Zephyrus	Winter – Draco – Boreas
Man and Beast	Male and Female	Light and Dark
Soul	Body	Spirit
Astral triplicity	Ethical Triplicity	Supernal Triplicity

For the triad of an All-Father and two sons, medieval mythic literature then conspired to furnish me with further, lateral examples. In Wolfram von Eschenbach's tale, the hero Peredur learns that there are two Kings within the Grail Castle: the maimed Fisher King and another, Hidden King, extremely old. The three represent the three stages of what was, is and will be.

In animal symbolism as outlined by Joseph Campbell, the bull of heaven, the young stag and the sacrificial ram.[28] Even more explicit by association is the inference of the ram as the sublimating spirit of mind and community; stag as spontaneous yet consensual pleasure and reciprocity in womb and phallus; and in bull we see the pure arrow of truth leading through the eye to the heart.[29]

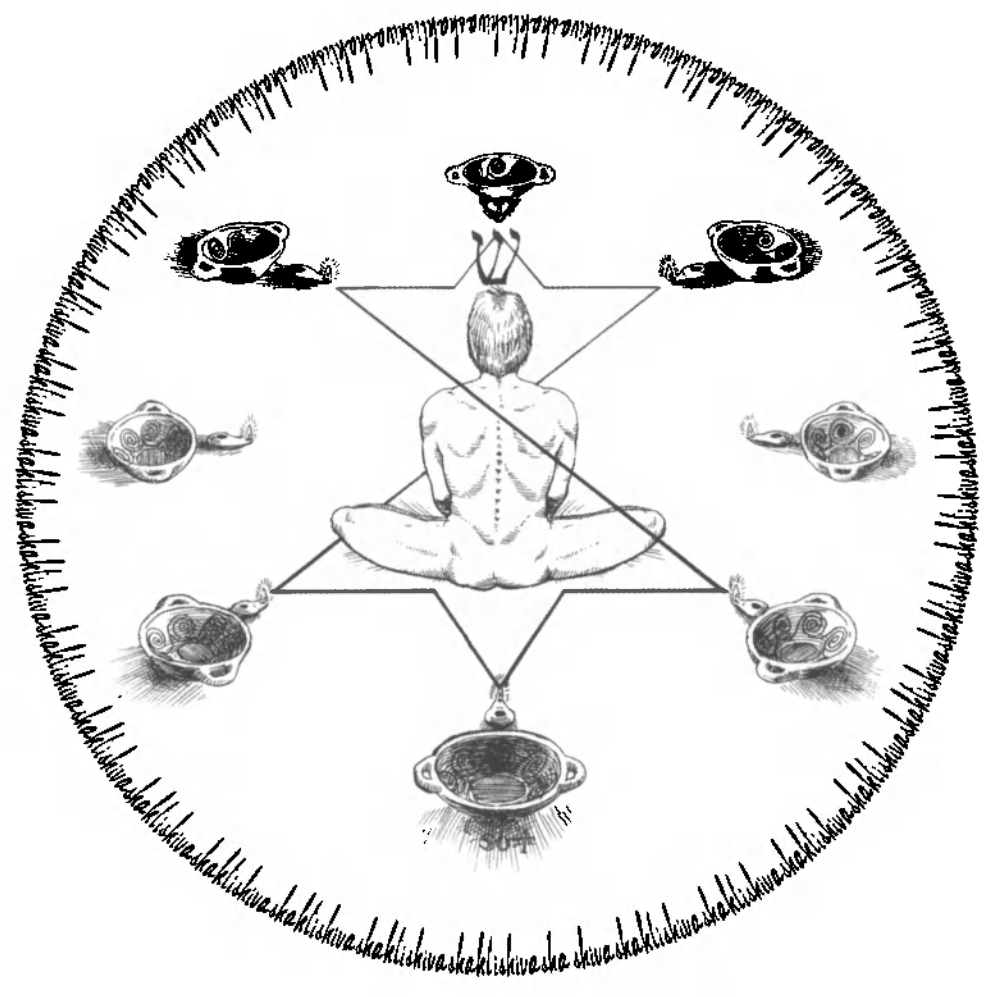
When speaking of Shiva or Vishnu here, we should specify those aspects we are alluding to. Vishnu is a 'Bright Lord' and corresponds to god forms like Apollo, Orhmuzd, and Horus. He manifests through various avatars, including Krishna. Shiva shares the healing, trade, craft and mercantile qualities of Hermes and the chthonic powers of Hermes, Osiris and Dionysus and the Bull totem. As a destroyer of poisons (ego) and the bindings of the soul (ego) illusion (ego), Shiva dances into oblivion these impediments to our liberation. Ash and bone signify corruption of matter. What better place for devotees to propitiate Shiva as the outcast hermit or 'night-prowler' than the charnel grounds to demonstrate their mastery over form, death and illusion?[30] Shiva carries a trident, which reinforces the triplicity of all things and evokes the Pythagorean Y, thus serving as the perfect glyph for this principle.[31]

Without the virtue of Shakti the first manifestation (immanence), Vishnu (transcendence), remains a corpse himself, awaiting rejuvenation via the mantic dance of *Maha-Kali-Deva Primal*. Vishnu occasionally assumes the feminine role of Shakti to couple with Shiva. Ahriman and Apollo also fulfil these trans-gender roles within the Mysteries, paralleling their counterparts Ohrmuzd and Dionysus, completing Divine Triads with Zurvan and Zeus respectively. We can note that Phanes also possesses both male and female qualities, as do Baphomet and Mithras.

Early Vedic gods were simply anthropomorphized forces of nature. Indra, god of the firmament, for example, embodies the manifest atmosphere and is associated with Vayu, as the wind god. His weapons are those by which he ensnares his 'foe' (the unrelenting and searing drought): the *thunderbolt*, arrows, a hook, and a net, which he also uses to generate rain, lightning and thunder. The Romans equated him with Jupiter (Chesed) and his domain was air.

Rudra is another proto-type of Shiva, associated with the bull and wielder of the *lightning rod/bolt*. Yet it annihilates lies; it is the flash of initiatory knowledge and the power of the sky gods. Iconic narrative employs symmetry of symbolism, . , the rod is almost always balanced with the ring. Representing essential aspects of tribal fealty the ring or crown is rulership of this earthly plane – lightning shatters all things except the (oath) ring of life. Temple (treasure) rings placed upon altar stones for the sacred purpose of oath-taking are attested in various Germanic texts, such as Havamal and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles; even Odin swears on one to Freyr and Njord.

The Fire God Agni has three forms of manifestation: in the celestial regions as the Sun, in the air as lightening and upon the earth (his particular dominion) as natural fire, ruling simultaneously over the earth, air and sky. Agni mediates between men



and the gods, bears witness to their actions and protects them from harm. Fire is the most sacred element and it must be remembered how the hearth as the primary epitome of domesticity and sedentary civilization, signifies the rudimentary presence of deity. Nomads by comparison carefully transported wildfire as blazing scones with them from camp to camp. Agni is represented with seven tongues, each named distinctly for one of remaining seven guardians of the Compass – yet another fascinating concept shared by my own tradition.

Within the mysteries of Abraxas is a fascinating reference to the sevenfold 'rose of flame' as the (*spiritus*) breath or World Soul. Sophia in her manifest form of the Shekinah, is both cognate and relevant to these fiery *jinn*.[32] Again eight qualities or emanations that when engaged cumulatively inculcate the ability to overcome mundane obstacles by magical transcendence – an art mastered by many known Sages. Again we witness a seven plus one system derived from the three: after the 'Father' (the transsexual prime cause), twins of complementary yet paradoxically opposing forces or *tanists* are frequently presented as brothers. Celestial twins emanate the qualities of light and dark and the cusp between them. Shin is the glyph

for this primal fire, depicted artistically as the tri-lobed iris or lily. Poetically, this is seen in the Awen and the triskele among others.

Within the prefixes of Janus and Diana, both meaning twins and winds of oak is a clue regarding the identity of these enigmatic deities. The oak leaf itself has eight lobes correlating succinctly with the octagon and star of Venus. There is also a hint in the word tanist of tan/teine for both oak and fire. Mistletoe which has two leaves is especially revered when it grows upon the oak, harvested to celebrate the 'Noel' - the rebirth or renewal of light. Time or life separates night and day, sky and earth, to name but two examples, as a dynamic of eternal conflict, aspected within twin beings, each seeking to overcome the other. Distinctly opposite in sexuality, (and often given as 'brother' and 'sister') a divine syzygy contrives the formation of the divine androgyne, finding expression in the bearded Aphrodite, or the effete Dionysus, or even Baphomet.[34]

Exploring intuitively the etymology of humanity, a possible composite suggests that H/u, meaning twin (serpents?) and 'manity' as progeny/offspring from the primal couple (also twins?).[35] Intellect, science, understanding and truth given as masculine qualities are complemented and completed within love, religion, wisdom and will expressed as feminine. H/u may also be the H in horizon, again poetically interpreted as the wheel of golden light, the bounding enclosure of life in sequential time under the aegis of Saturn. Of course the 'Seat of Resplendent Fire' is *Caer Sidi* – the keystone (throne/altar) of Saturn, the *Ak-ur-an-os*, or 'great ruler of the golden age.'[36]

Farmer and Shepherd: Cain and Abel

Myths of the 'Fall' including those relating to angelic beings exemplify Cainite Gnosis. Where Cain and Abel are viewed as tanist counterparts (composed of a perceived protagonist and antagonist), one is deemed incarnate/mortal and one discarnate/immortal being demonstrably synonymous with the Greek twins Castor & Pollux and their earlier Sumerian counterparts: *Meslamta-ea* & *Lugal-irra*. Aspected astrologically as Gemini, they share the one soul, never twain, revealed in shadow through the other's light. The true phenomenality of non-duality lies in the mystery of the eternal 'Hero,' in the Mask of Dionysus through which Apollo is concealed and revealed. Like Janus, their function as portal guardians, particularly of the gateway to the Underworld, was signified by specific symbols of office including ram-headed staffs, horned caps and the hand-mace, qualifying their divine authority. These twins are found in the earliest known examples of Nergal/Hades/Pluto and the Sister, later Bride and Queen of the Underworld, revealed as none other than 'Ereshkigal.' Helen of Sparta, daughter of Nemesis (another facet of the Erinyes as a guardian aspect of fate, especially regarding oaths) was also sister to the *dioskouroi*, the twin heroic saviours – Castor and Pollux.[37] Possibly the most significant twins are Prometheus (forethought/providence) and (hindsight/regret) Epimetheus.[38] The true phenomenality of non-duality lies in the mystery of the eternal hero: it is through the mask of his 'twin' Dionysus that the god Apollo is concealed and revealed.

Of all the countless archaic myths of rival 'twins' who retain the dual dynamic, one can returning to a simple contrast of farmer (evolution) and shepherd (stasis).

Cain, the first farmer 'overcame' his shepherd brother and 'twin,' Abel, in a story where semantics is everything. Cain is of divine (immortal) 'blood' (read avatar of spirit), Abel as the son of Adam is doomed to 'die.' Seth represents the race of man, also born of Adam, but whose soul is 'human.' We have the spirit of Cain or Abel within us, the seeker or the sleeper, the wanderer/hermit/mendicant or the person of roots, of material distraction, of worldly concerns.

Nevertheless, Cain should not be perceived as the negative first murderer; rather we should see him as the involutionary catalyst, the anarchic principle of challenge and change, of innovation. He was effectively exiled and 'cursed' with the mission of bringing civilization to his tribal, nomadic world, effectively to become that which he had despised – that is to say, a nomad.

The sedentary arts of civilization form, I believe, the 'mark' by which Cain was known. It is unlikely though not impossible to have been marked physically in the form of a brand, tattoo or deformity. A spiritual mark would of course have been present at birth, providing the driving force of his avatistic dynamism. But the mark could also have had an additional presence in the form of a physical attribute – such as horns.

Sexuality and Kundalini: Hinduism and Cainite Witchcraft

In many mystical traditions, especially of the Qabalah, the Shekinah represents the feminine aspect of God's essence. Hinduism similarly assumes the vitalization of male deities by virtue of their feminine counterparts, *shaktis*. They are deemed lifeless in her absence. Only through unification with her does a male god achieve his true potential. Hinduism says that each human carries within himself both male and female elements, forces rather than sexes, and union brings an understanding that obliterates all distinction between male and female.

Shakti is Creator, giving life through the Bull, and his workers; Shakti is Preserver, sustaining the knowledge of existence/wisdom through the love of the Ram and his warriors; Shakti is Destruction through death, witnessed via the priest and holy psychopomp – the Stag. Accordingly, and in line with this triplicity, in the ancient world of the apocrypha, the source of the Cainite myth, there were three seasons and three main winds only.

These three potencies relate to the three pillars of the Tree of Life and by default to numerous other mythical poles from the Bile Tree to the May Pole, from the Stang to Yggdrasil. Crossroads or intersections of contact are frequently described as the 'point of crossing,' 'where three paths meet,' but better, 'where the indwelling god may be raised!'

A vital clue here may be confidently associated with the Kundalini, rising snake-like from its coiled state at the base of the sacrum, crossing the metaphysical subtle bodies of *Ida* and *Pingala* through the hypothalamus, the Pearl of Shiva to subsume the ego and the superego to the left and right, flooding both hemisphere's of the

brain with trance inducing gnosis. All green deities draw upon the power of the axis mundi, the spirit body linked to the crown via the World Soul, the Shakti herself. Classical texts describe the dancing by devotees around a tree or pole, believed to house the daimon of the god it was dedicated to.

Initiatory and magical rites manipulate the kundalini often by sexual means to re-align the outer physical, etheric and astral subtle bodies with the inner subtle bodies, the *Ida*, *Pingala*, and *Sushumna*, fusing a blissful experience of individuation – 'I am He, I am God.' We may return to the metaphysical and holistic communication of the animal (fish), human (bird) and divine (daimon) levels of being that occur most successfully within the primal tantric rites of the Shaivite devotees, whose naked, ash strewn bodies are dedicated through the eight star points as living temples to Shiva. In lingam rites associated with death, transfiguration and initiation, this octagonal dedication is extended to eight grain filled pots placed around the devotee. During these workings, the 'flame of virtue,' Shakti, is passed sexually from master to pupil.[39]

What is remarkable about such rites is an association to the eight sided octagon, seen as feminine here, as is normal in Hinduism. Yet it is aligned to Vishnu, who as protector and saviour, is actually the androgynous Shakti. Shiva is the generative principle; Brahma, is the spark of unification betwixt.

These 'maithunic' rites initiate the 'hero' whose quest for Nirvana drives them through many trials of the spirit, and of the flesh. Sexual union replicates the primordial act of creation, inducing the pure light of gnosis, a mystical signature that reverberates the initiate beyond, gender, senses and into a state of realization, of non-duality. Order is sacrificed to Khaos as the hero/initiate moves from prostatic orgasm to union with his Shakti, in a frenzied act of self-gratification, united as one in the divine androgyne.[40] It is perhaps worth remembering here that the Primordial 'Adam' was considered to be the first divine androgyne, acquiring a sexual status only after separation into the human form of itself as male and female. The purpose is clear, to acquire the reinvestment of Grace lost through this perceived 'fall.' 'That which failed to become two-in-one flesh (love), will succeed in becoming two-in-one Spirit (individuation).'[41]

There is, within, Gnostic texts, a new key to looking at the sexual union of the opposing twins, which can have implications for Cainite Witchcraft today. A tenet of the Ophite Gnostics of Syria asserts a triad of Man (god), Son of Man, (heavenly Adam) and third man (Seth). Grammatically Seth (masculine and feminine gendered) is ambiguously male, whilst the other two are deemed androgynous. Another Gnostic text discusses Norea and Seth, brother and sister, twins believed analogous to Tubal and Namaah. Curiously, Namaah appears in both Sanskrit and Hebraic texts, both meaning beautiful or beloved one. She is the *feminine* twin, counterpart and manifest wisdom of Tubal, erroneously presented I believe, as one of three 'brothers' forming a triplicity with Jubal and Jabal.

Concluding Thoughts

There are three inseparable qualities of Cain which pertaining to 'civilization' – smithcraft, music and farming – and all three are demonstrated in the Indian three-fold divinity, *Trimurti*.[42] It is tempting to observe in this a parallel with the Saxon blessing of flags, flax and fodder, the three F's of fate that serve Providence – the bane or boon of a tribal or tutelary deity – in this case Tubal Cain. Prometheus, of course, was the Luciferian twin connected to Providence.

Surviving artworks lend further example of the triadic model of divinities, from Janus to Hekate, from the Gorgon to the Graiae. Janus is sometimes shown with three rather than two faces; some examples refine their separate features even further by clearly distinguishing them as male, female and androgynous.[43] Janus celebrates the eternal mysteries by encapsulating them within an aspect of time: Cosmologically through initiatory rites; astrologically through the celebration of solstice thresholds, and mythically through the rites of transmogrification. Like *Trimurti*, he orchestrates the beginning, the end and (in apparent contradiction only), eternity.

My intimate vision of Pashupâti retains the triadic form relative to the three realms, but with his horns and his three faces, he has come to bring to life for me the triune roles of the three central Cainite figures of the Traditional Craft. In my own tradition, these refer to the Father and the divine twins. In another parlance, it speaks of the enigmatic 'Hunter, Old Tubal and the Roebuck in the Thicket.'[44]

A triplicity of time is distributed through the lunar/left past and solar/right/future eyes and the third eye of the world, *Janus Coeli* – the glorious pearl of the present and doorway of heaven, the indivisible instant, the pivotal point twixt past and future that is a true reflection of eternity within time. In the true temple of the heart, *yod* (seed point) the hidden matrix of conjunction is Adocentyn, the throne and altar of the Shekinah from whom flows the *elixir vitae*, twin streams of water and blood – the precious life force, combining in *luz* the light of the mind ignited when the fusion explodes therein creating the Tao – *verbum lux et vita*.

Rulership by divine twins is noted as commonplace within the arcane spheres of mythology: one priestly, residing in the heavens, while the mortal other, remains earthbound as his judicial envoy. Eliade expounds beautifully on the doctrine of the avatar whose eternal wisdom is in fact an enforced spiritual renewal expressed through signs and symbols appropriate to his/her era of descent.[45] Symbols accrue new layers of meaning to inspire and enflame those jaded by tradition, for it is only through fresh eyes that we see clearly. Each avatar must re-interpret the vital message, provide keys and guide each true seeker towards freedom, negating attachment to desire and of result. Austin Osman Spare exemplified this modus operandi more than any other, pushing himself constantly to breaking point, ever striving to acquire this extreme measure of self-mastery. The savage within stands between and beyond all dualism, all polarity – and it has been here clearly demonstrated, the smallest atom of our being holds the *tripartite* key to the Ultimate reality.

May Old Tubal Shepher Ye all... ROBERT COCHRANE

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Peter Redgrove: Blood and Dreams

Edward Gauntlett

'The best blood is of the moon, monthly' (AL III 24)

British poet and writer Peter Redgrove (1932-2003) was a scientist by training but a poet by nature and vocation, whose life's work was to adjust our perception of the world. In pursuit of this aim he pushed the Romantic philosophy as far as he could: in his work he used magic, myth and oft-neglected fact in his attempt to make his readers reconnect, through their physical bodies, with the cosmos he perceived as a dark goddess. By the time of his death in 2003 his work was recognised and respected in the literary world. What was less recognised is the extent to which his work is inextricably linked to magical tradition.

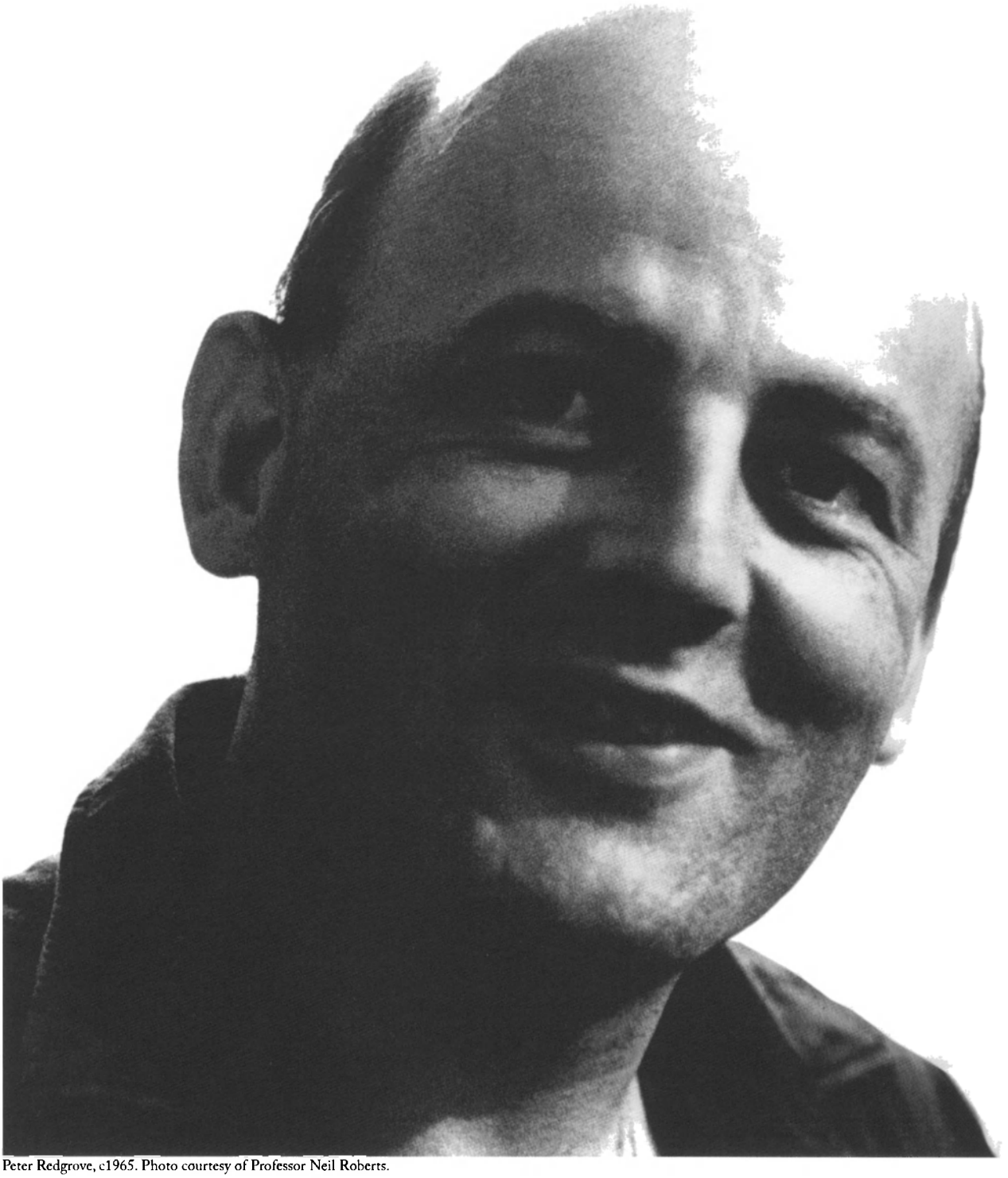
Shamanic Initiation: 'It Made me a Poet'

As a young man he attended Cambridge to read sciences, but spent most of his time with poets such as his friend Ted Hughes, and left without taking a degree. His poetry, therefore, has something of a scientist's eye for detail in nature and a physicality, even when dealing with mystical or visionary states. One obituary said of his early poems, 'There were resemblances to Hughes's poetry in the subject matter, but Redgrove indulged a kind of expressionist fantasy about it.'[1]

Redgrove's various writings frequently touch on what he sees as a core human problem: that we are cut off from nature. We strive to hold ourselves separate from it, praying to an immaterial, distant deity (or to science) in the hope of a future 'life' in some utterly non-physical, pain-free state. Where might a solution lie to this existential quandary? One solution might be to pursue occultism in the form of witchcraft, alchemy or ritual magic. A complementary solution is to find union through our sexuality. Redgrove advances a combination of the two in his programme of promoting human re-union with nature.

Redgrove's most obvious literary ancestor is Goethe, and there is a passage in Colin Wilson's *Religion and the Rebel* (1957) which states western civilization's problem:

> There is the famous story of Goethe and Schiller leaving a scientific lecture in Jena. Goethe said restively, 'There is another way of apprehending nature, *active and living*, struggling from the whole into parts.' Schiller replied mistrustfully, 'That's not practical; it's just an *idea* of yours.' Yet Goethe had put his finger on the central problem of the decline of the West.
>
> Over a hundred years were to elapse before Alfred North Whitehead settled down to defining that problem in his book *Science and the Modern World*. It is a question of the 'bifurcation of nature.' Knowledge has come to mean something dry and static and logical, and the poet's intuition is attacked by profes-



Peter Redgrove, c1965. Photo courtesy of Professor Neil Roberts.

sors for not being logically deduced from accepted premises. Yet, as Spengler knew, even the great mathematicians are usually artists and not logicians – Newton, Gauss, Riemann. ... The mark of greatness is always intuition, not logic. Our civilisation has unfortunately made an imaginary distinction between the two, which is called 'philosophy.'[2]

A development on the difficulty for esoteric students is also summed up in Redgrove's novel *The Beekeepers*, in a speech occurring in a play within the novel:

> We're like Faust. We'll sell our souls to get what we want. Except that science has sold them for us and we've nothing to bargain with any more, and nobody to bargain with either. We've got the nothing we never asked for. ... A modern man speaking to modern men and women. I'm sure I do speak for everybody here when I say that we have not lost our appetite for marvels. We still want there to be something. I think we don't really care whether it is an illusion or not, so long as it is a grand illusion. We go from guru to guru, from sham to shaman, from confidence man to hypnotist to magician to new wave priest to megalithic stone circles to tantric yoga to Tai-Chi to alchemy to Jungian psychology – and all the way back again via dowsing and animal magnetism. Well, as I told you, I share this .... You'll see how I became a spiritualist, and sought final answers. Then I became a black-magic practitioner, and the prize I got there was a nervous breakdown. Naturally that turned me into an analysand, and I sought my answers from a psychoanalyst. The psychoanalyst couldn't believe his luck, and so he incontinently hypnotised me. I didn't care for this, but somehow it made me into a poet. Yes, a poet. And since the only good poets are dead ones, it became incumbent on me to die. And as I died I saw something. And I have come back here on to this stage to ... show you what I saw ... and to ask you, my peers, the big question, whether what I saw at the end was true.[3]

In shamanistic initiations the candidate has almost to die in order to have their visionary experience. When Redgrove went into the army for his National Service, not finding it to his liking he either broke down or pretended to do so (he was a bit cagey later as to how much of it was put on). As a result he was diagnosed as incipiently schizophrenic and put through a full course of fifty insulin shock comas. In his description, all the sugar was sucked from his blood until he was practically dead. Essentially he was killed fifty times. Did this make him a shaman? He says that he recalled it later in his poetic career as an experience of death and dismemberment in the sense of dissolving into Earth, returning to the Great Mother, though he did not have visions of gods or ancestors. Nevertheless, it coloured his approach to poetry as being a means of 'bringing something through' from inner realms. Poetry, he said, was 'clearly a branch of religion ... what poetry is about is what is commonly called sacred.'[4] He goes on to say that the modern world has forgotten what religion is for, forgotten that it ever had a practical value in developing us in a sort of magical or mystical way.

Taking sides with the Romantic poets, Redgrove takes up the issue of the objective / subjective split. Poetry, like music, has an effect on the reader, one that can be measured on an electro-encephalogram for instance. Is that subjective? And is poetry true? In science 'subjective' is equivalent to 'untrue.' Philosophically all knowledge is subjective since we have only our sense impressions to go on and they are at one remove from the 'object.' *Everything* is filtered through our senses and conditioning. Science grudgingly admits some subjectivity when it comes to quantum mechanics and, less esoterically, placebo effects. Redgrove says, 'the placebo effect is a very wonderful thing indeed. It means that you can take a sugar pill believing it will do you good and it *will* do you good. This is worth looking into I would have thought, but it's the very thing that science keeps out: the power here – the Romantic idea – ... that the material world is responsive to the energies of the mind.'[5]

Most of us are conditioned to believe we are not our bodies, that the essential person is somehow distinct from

their physicality. Descartes may be largely to blame for this, but his ghost-in-the-machine argument did articulate an investigation into the general understanding of his time. Cartesian dualism has made us feel we are apart from nature and this feeling, says Redgrove, is a major part of the problem of civilisation. Even at his most mystical Redgrove will write about the texture, sound, smell and colour of natural things. He urges his readers to re-inhabit their bodies fully and, through them, the world.

In some ways this may be seen as a recommendation to return to the state of pre-civilised man, which is impossible; too much has been lost and too much else accumulated in the bedrock of our psyches. But, he suggests, methods gathered from archaic magical techniques and aimed at initiation can counteract this, to some degree. Mircea Eliade pointed out that the Palaeolithic techniques of agriculture and pottery were steeped in sacrality. Later these were joined by metal-working and the skills involved were all part of the mysteries arising from the sacredness of the cosmos. He says, 'It would be vain to wish to reconstitute his [primitive man's] experiences; too much time has elapsed since the cosmos has been desanctified as a result of the triumph of the experimental sciences. Modern man is incapable of experiencing the sacred in his dealings with matter; at most he can achieve an aesthetic experience.'[6]

Redgrove's poetry is often an attempt to create and elevate this aesthetic experience of matter. In terms of his writing he saw the poetry as primary, the layer closest to the central core of inspiration. A poem is a real thing, a thing to be experienced and felt in itself and not necessarily 'about' something else. His novels, plays, short stories and essays were, in his opinion, at more or less greater distances removed from this core. Nevertheless he is possibly best known for three prose works, which will be discussed below.

Man of Blood, Kenneth Grant

The mysteries into which Redgrove delves are primarily physical and entirely feminine. Anthony Thwaite said that he was 'seen as a sort of unacceptable Ted Hughes ... [a] warlock, shaman going on crazily about menstruation.'[7] Redgrove himself said 'I have blotted my copybook irretrievably red for danger by collaborating in a book on menstruation, and have received many insults from the masculinist establishment as a result.'[8] Peter Porter, in an article published in *Poetry Review* in 1981, remarks that:

> Redgrove's imaginative experiments in the poetic dimensions of sexuality lead him to believe, like Graves, that masculinity can only be itself if it serves the feminine principle, the Great Mother. He has accordingly made several side-tracks from his main poetic course ... to demonstrate scientifically truths he thinks are neglected today. The most famous of these is *The Wise Wound*, which, when the hostility of academic experts abates and the sniggers of menaced journalists die down, will be seen as a revolutionary work.[9]

There is a parallel to be drawn here with Kenneth Grant. In an extraordinarily puerile review published in *Agape* (1976), Israel Regardie said of Grant's *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God*, 'his innumerable obsessions relative to menstruation and the subtle forces in and emanations from vaginal secretions, suggest he should have supplied a package of dried menstrual blood with each book. All the student need have done in that instance would be to have opened the package and dissolved the contents in water, like instant coffee. Magick without effort indeed.'[10] Regardie viewed alchemy in psychological/ metaphysical terms, but Grant takes the opposite view, and in *The Magical Revival* writes, 'the most ancient mysteries were of a physical, not a metaphysical nature. There was an esoteric and an exoteric version of them ... But, contrary to what is usually supposed, the metaphysical was the exoteric version, not *vice versa*.'[11] Regardie, possibly with this passage in mind, called *The Magical Revival* even more pernicious than *Hidden God*.

In a parallel to what Regardie wrote about Grant, I myself have seen Redgrove condemned out of hand for daring, as a man, to discuss and lecture on menstruation. *The Wise Wound* was written in collaboration with his wife, Penelope Shuttle, and a few words on their relationship are necessary. Shuttle said in an interview:

> But how do two people write, man and woman, when they write both their collaborative works and their own works? Imagine it to be like the alchemical double pelican; one person reads the other one's work and absorbs it into themselves, like the child of the pelican feeding from the blood of the maternal breast; then, nourished by the work, that writer will write; and in turn offer that work back to the partner .... In some works, the collaborative works, the page will be shared between us ... in the separate works, the other will be there like an invisible spirit.[12]

And Peter Redgrove says, 'The works of both of us are by our Magical Child' and 'we initiate each other; and since we are both artists we are able to do this on several levels.'[13]

In investigating the feminine principle, Shuttle and Redgrove looked first at one of the defining features of women. *The Wise Wound* (1978) was the first book to consider menstruation in an holistic way, beyond its biological dimension. A crucial point is that women's mysteries are, as Grant asserts, fundamentally *physical* and can be recovered though meditation on the body's rhythms and cycles. Male mysteries are learnt externally and can be lost; but women's mysteries arise from their bodies and their bodies' connections to the earth and the moon, and so can never be utterly lost. There is a denied or neglected value in the menstrual cycle that can, if recovered, enable women to initiate themselves and, through their bodies, to initiate men.

Men have appropriated a version of the primal mysteries, but have lost their meaning. They see this in, for instance, the redeeming blood of Christ, the Adam as 'man of blood,' and communion wine. But as Shuttle and Redgrove point out at the beginning of *The Wise Wound*, at the heart of Christian scripture lurks the *Song of Songs*, a tantric text which says 'thy navel is like a round goblet which wanteth not liquor' – a clue if ever there was one. Shuttle and Redgrove maintain men know that, as *Liber AL* has it, all power resides in women; men resent this, have always resented it, and have tried to take over the mysteries without having the physical equipment necessary. In their failure, men have occasionally attempted to wipe out the true female mysteries: Shuttle and Redgrove speak of the 'nine million menstrual murders' of the European witch craze. And it gets worse: where the power of women is not denied, it is asserted to be wholly evil. Pliny is cited, who, in his *Natural History*, wrote of menstruating women, 'If ... they touch any standing corn in the field, it will wither and come to no good ... the herbs and young buds in a garden, if they do but pass by, will catch a blast, and burne away to nothing.'[14]

Shuttle and Redgrove understood the fear of women, menstruating women, to be linked to witchcraft terrors. They accept this in a positive way and define witchcraft as 'the natural craft of the woman.'[15] This gets around a question: who or what initiated the first witch? Redgrove and Shuttle are unfazed: women, by their physical nature, are, if not already initiated, primed to initiate themselves at the menarche; it is just easier if there is another, older, archetypically wise woman there to help them through it.

Shuttle and Redgrove cite and quote from Kenneth Grant in favourable terms. *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God* is referred to favourably as 'Kenneth Grant's illuminating study of sexual magic,' and they cite Grant when they speak of 'the red substance of female source' as 'the prime menstruum of magical energy.'[16] This, of course, relates to the Thelema's potent Scarlet Woman. In the essay 'The Menstrual Mandala,' Shuttle and Redgrove state that, 'to masculinist science and religion, women are essentially breeders of children. They have only an ovulatory function. Their other half, the menstrual half, is neglected. In this side of their being they are conveyors of imaginative and creative energies, and initiators into creative modes of sexuality ... *The Wise Wound* was the first book *ever published* to show the range of that neglected area.'[17] [my italics]

Sex Magic, Blood Dreaming

Redgrove and Shuttle propose and develop a thesis that women experience increased sexual desire and enjoyment 'immediately before, during, or immediately after the bleeding.'[18] At one time this was taken for granted and considered natural; to some it was even evidence of female depravity. In 1910 Havelock Ellis wrote that desire would rise during the period and that 'it was an important time for erotic experience, fantasy driven autoeroticism and sexual dreams.'[19] Shuttle and Redgrove, however, identify a point at which science concluded that conception was rarely likely to result from intercourse during the period; heightened sexuality then would, therefore, be non-adaptive, would not fit into the evolutionary scheme of things – and so it was decided this phenomenon could not exist. If women reported they did have increased desire at menstruation, they were told they were imagining it – a medical curse. The experience of such desires might then be seen as evidence of a depraved or perverted nature and thus become a source of shame.

Delving further into the 'subjective' realms of the unconscious, Shuttle and Redgrove wrote *Alchemy for Women* (1995), which developed from their original explorations in trying to overcome Shuttle's problems with premenstrual syndrome. Redgrove had trained as a Jungian analyist, and the work took the form of dream analysis. They identified that Shuttle had certain types of dream with particular times in the cycle, and tried to tease out the messages.

Through both books they argue that women are more creative, and *differently* creative, during menstruation, but that this fact has been smothered by masculinist taboos, misunderstanding and denial. Ultimately men are just jealous since 'women are by nature the strongest dreamers.'[20] A basic premise of sexual magic is that the creative act, if denied a product on one plane (i.e. a baby), will have to produce something on another. Women, by their nature and through their capacity for dreaming, are superior to men in this form of creativity. Men know this at some level and, knowing where the real power lies, try to steal it.

> Anthropology shows how men during the course of tribal history have invented rites of shedding blood in order to steal magical – that is, political – power from the women and to break up the latter's solidarity. In tribal society no woman is allowed to come near the man's rituals of shedding blood from artificially produced wounds in their bodies. They would by their hilarity break the imitation 'magic' of what comes so naturally to the woman. In our society the males have instead tabooed and ignored the woman's shedding of blood with the same result: the women lose their connection and communication with each other, they lose their solidarity, and menstruation becomes regarded even by women as an anomaly and a sickness.[21]

In Redgrove's radio play, *Snow Black and the Long White Shadows*, the black girl says to the white man, 'Well, that is redland, Master, where the children come from. You have seen my blood but I have only seen your cut finger.'[22]

The Blood in the Tradition

Shuttle and Redgrove were making a contribution towards the rehabilitation of women's mysteries and giving them everyday relevance. The route they took was to start from a fundamental and distinguishing feature of women's lives and try to rescue it from appearing to be an unpleasant curse by revealing it as a 'life-enhancing, creative experience.' This they did through working with the cycle of dreams, not just observing connections but using analysis of the dreams, initially, to understand and overcome manifestations of PMS.[23]

> The female cycle is not just a physical or physiological matter, it is also accompanied by spiritual events – that is, dreams. The dreams, if you like, are the meanings of cycle-events ... and ... these dreams, once contacted, are the source of a feminine sense of reality which is otherwise missing from our lives ... collective images – heroines, gods, goddesses – come out and tread the boards, mingling with the people from our ordinary lives, all transformed in the rotation of the cycle.[24]

In the Western mystery tradition there is a longstanding denial or neglect of feminine mysteries. One finds no mention of menstruation, for instance, in Gareth Knight's *The Rose Cross and the Goddess*; in his *Qabalistic Symbolism* there is reference only to the acceptable, ovulatory, function in terms of the 'Mysteries of Hecate, relating to the forces released when a woman's reproductive period is ended.'[25] When advocating the addition of blood to a personal symbol within his 'Sangreal Sodality,' W.G. Gray says, 'women are particularly reminded that menstrual blood is entirely forbidden.'[26] In the Abramelin system the mage prohibits practitioners' wives sleeping with them or entering the prayer room during menstruation. This attitude can be traced back to biblical taboos given in Leviticus, especially chapters 15 and 18; and in 21:18: 'And if a man shall lie with a woman having her sickness, and shall uncover her nakedness, he hath discovered her fountain, and she hath uncovered the fountain of her blood: and both of them shall be cut off from among their people.'

What is the reason for these taboos? Redgrove and Shuttle assert that is because women are then at their most powerful. That grandfather of mythic anthropology, James Frazer, referred to the 'deeply ingrained dread which primitive man universally entertains of menstruous blood.'[27] But in common with other taboos 'the object of secluding women at menstruation is to neutralise the dangerous influences which are supposed to emanate from them at such times ... The same explanation applies to the same observance of the same rules by divine kings and priests. The uncleanness, as it is called ... and the sanctity of holy men do not ... differ materially from each other. They are only different manifestations of the same mysterious energy.'[28] In Aleister Crowley's *Liber AL*, menstruating women are charged with divine power, hence the reference to 'the blood of the moon.'

It is therefore logical that sexual magic should take place during the period. Redgrove's understanding of what should constitute sexual magic is some distance from Aleister Crowley's though not, I think, from Kenneth Grant's. Crowley acknowledged the Scarlet Woman as necessary because she had all the power, but in his philosophy she is there only to facilitate the manifestation of the magician's genius, or to provide him with other benefits. In this respect Crowley reinforces the masculinist position that women have only an ovulatory and child bearing function – albeit in this case it is a magical child. This is also, perhaps, revealing of an assumption that in a magical act the woman is, in effect, merely the battery that powers whatever it is that the man has in mind. A look through Crowley's *Rex de Arte Regia* diary shows that he took an interest in operations during menstruation but, far more often than not, IX° *opera* undertaken when his partner was menstruating were done with the object of obtaining money ('red gold' is given as the aim).

For Redgrove, in contrast, the aim of sexual magic at the time of menstruation is soul re-integration through working with visions and dreams. *The Wise Wound* was, in part, a survey of the effect of denial of these mysteries – arguing that when suppressed, these dreams turn into nightmares. An entertaining part is the discussion of some films, like *The Exorcist*, *The Blood Beast Terror* and *The Gorgon*, as fantasias on the theme of the suppression of menstrual rights and the fear of changes in women at their periods because of masculinist denial or attempts at control. In *The Blood Beast Terror* the monster is a sort of were-moth, a woman who metamorphoses into a giant blood drinking moth every full moon. Her father attempts to control her by scientific experiments involving blood and semen.

> This film must have arisen from appalling anxiety about the menstrual changes in a woman's temperament, and from great fear of the blood. The Professor attempts to control this anxiety by using the blood and his sperm for 'scientific' or 'magical' purposes. Love-juices become scientific reagents. He attempts to become a Moth-er on his own account, just as the film Frankenstein tries to create 'scientifically' out of dead bodies and galvanizing sexual lightning. ... What this mystery images, however, is the rediscovering of the power and virtue of menstrual blood, and with its help, the remaking of oneself. If the blood is mixed with semen, as in intercourse at the period, then a homunculus will in a sense be created: a new self.[29]

The film image *par excellence* in this respect is, of course, Count Dracula, who liberates the menstrual side of previously vapid and repressed women, making them dangerous sexual predators reborn into a new, freer life through the shedding of blood. Shuttle and Redgrove note that Dracula appears evil only to the upholders of morality and the *status quo* within the film: the audience is basically on his side. The horror lies in anxiety and fear of the blood, but the fascination accompanying it arises from the rediscovery 'of the power and virtue of the menstrual blood.'[30] Dracula is almost the hero but is defeated each time by masculinist, scientific and Christian virtue. Each time he returns, revived by some blood ritual; thus he is the animus of menstruation, periodically reborn in blood through magic.

Following from the exploration of the expressions of horror at blood as shown in the films, *Alchemy for Women* gives practical suggestions for constructing a menstrual dream mandala, working with the dreams as spiritual and magical events in overcoming or transforming any nightmare manifestations. Developing the theme of the *animus* they say:

> He can also be a dark angel, or an angel falling in flames. The image of the falling Lucifer with flaming hair is quite frequent and depicts the hot energies of the menstruating womb (the demon's head) and the fall from the 'heaven' of child-bearing and ovulation. So it will seem to some quite a wicked image to dream, and this is how guilt arises. When such a dream is resisted, it turns into physical distress. Knowledge of what the dream is saying relieves the pain and guilt. Equally, the menstrual animus may appear as the Horned God of the Witches, and this is a reflection of the womb as the demon's head, with its 'horns' of the fallopian tubes, ready to impart menstrual magic.[31]

Note that all women already bear within themselves an image which is, and is the matrix of, the Horned God. The central point goes back to the mysteries being physical and a knowledge and understanding of them being recoverable by women entirely from within themselves: 'the dream cycle once grasped is direct inner knowledge independent of masculine tradition.'[32]

The witches say that only a witch can initiate another. In birth, a woman comes from a woman, who came from a woman and so on; there is an unbroken chain. Men do not have that, neither do they have an easily identifiable physiological cycle comparable to a woman's. Combined with an ingrained objective, detached, scientific attitude to the world, men tend to be doubly cut off from it. Redgrove says a man should get into sync with his partner's cycle and observe his own dreams in the light of hers. Getting in touch with dreams and sexuality through physiological cycles stimulates mental abilities as dreams and sexual excitement are linked; working towards combining the two creatively will lead to some sort of magico- mental development. This, and not 'red gold' should be the object of sexual magic. Shuttle and Redgrove remark that, 'ancient texts say that the woman is best on top during menstruation and then she is a "doorway to other worlds."'[33] One of the very few books on magic that Redgrove recommends is Louis Culling's *Complete Magick Curriculum*, whose first exercise is dream recall, leading to access to the 'borderland state' in which magic takes place and where sexual magic is especially potent. Culling goes on to recommend prolonged sexual intercourse as a means of entering the borderland state fully while conscious.

Nuit's Synaethesia and Oedipal Nightmares

I imagine many magicians come to Redgrove initially through reading *The Black Goddess and the Sixth Sense* (1987). Lest there be any question as to the identity of this goddess, the book's dedication is 'To Nuith.' Redgrove's goddess is thus revealed as the dark lady of the night sky and stars. The blackness of the goddess refers us to the use of senses other than sight: synaesthesia and the picking up of information from our lesser used senses, particularly smell and touch, is discussed at length. Disconnecting from the over-dependence on sight is one of the main themes of *Black Goddess* – the importance of actively engaging in extra-sensuous perception, bypassing logical thought, as described by the Sufi poets, the Romantics and, latterly, Rilke. In practical terms, Redgrove advocates taking up some sort of activity which is going to develop this, such as yoga (especially *pranayama*), meditation or mysticism, ritual magic and dreaming. Now and then he almost explicitly recommends exercises in imagining (for instance) the taste of chocolate, as given by Franz Bardon in *Initiation into Hermetics*.

For Redgrove, the root of Western problems is in our attitude towards the feminine. Perhaps this started as early as the faceless palaeolithic Venus figures. In the last issue of the Surrealist magazine *Documents* (1930), Michel Leiris published an essay entitled 'The *Caput Mortuum* or The Alchemist's Wife,' accompanied by a photograph of a masked but otherwise naked woman. Discussing this in *Surrealism and the Occult*, Nadia Coucha says, 'she is made more mysterious in her anonymity, and Leiris describes her as Nature and the human symbol of the exterior world, which men try to dominate.... hiding the face, the "quintessence of human expression," reduces woman to an "infernal and subterranean significance."'[34] Redgrove reverses the Christian perception of women as fundamentally flawed by referring to the tradition that only Adam was expelled from Eden so the flaw is actually in the masculine side of human nature. We have a terrible complex of attitudes lurking in our psyches as a sort of combination of woman / vagina / sex / sin / death / hell / punishment. Hell and death are of the infernal and subterranean 'Underworld' realm of Black Isis. Once again the monotheist scriptures have the redeeming verses of the *Song of Songs*: 'I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.' But the denial of the goddess makes her terrible, with consequent psychic damage, both individual and collective. This assertion is of course subjective; so is it true? We can answer with Pilate (John 14:38): 'What is truth?'

Redgrove points out that 'the earth's magnetic field, generated by the bow-shock of its motion in the sun's field, resembles nothing so much as a great winged figure, folded in robes, it's an angel shape ... clutching the earth to its heart. The magnetosphere is shaped around us, in space ... And it might be an image for the Black

Goddess. It's clearly a feminine figure. It is a spirit of the earth which is seen in another way as magnetism. And it is also black, because it's not visible. But it also reaches into the protoplasm of every living thing there is.'[35]

Our Bodies Still Live in Eden

That, in a way, is a scientific, objective fact; but the image is poetic, Romantic and creates a link between the external universe and our subjective experience of it. Is it true?

The question of truth runs through *The Black Goddess*. It takes us back to the problem of our lack of connection to the cosmos and the absence of a sense of the sacred. We are stuck in one paradigm, which is essentially that of the Oedipus complex as proposed and developed by Freud. 'The image of Oedipus and his cursed nature and the plagues visited on his world by his apparently innocent actions corresponds to the way modern Western humanity sees itself ... Freud's paradigm seems undoubtedly *there* ... One can ask, however, not only if it is true, but if it is the whole of the truth.'[36] Redgrove says it is, like its origin in Freud's mind, a dream, to be questioned and analysed. Redgrove wants us to ask: what does it contain, and what does it leave out? We can use Freud's Oedipus paradigm to explain the way the world is – run by the male psyche at war with itself and with the world, in which the system is 'only haunted by women, who cannot in it achieve expression.'[37]

There is a great deal of scientific information in the first two thirds of *The Black Goddess*, piling up evidence that life forms a continuum within which animals interact but many details of which are hidden from humans – we are largely blind. Similar observations were made by T.C. Lethbridge, who overcame the cognitive gap to a degree through dowsing – a form of extra-sensory perception. The point Redgrove comes to is that some people, such as witches, shamans and poets, can see beyond the prevailing Oedipal consensus by having better or extra senses. The danger for such people is that if they come up against the consensus in any confrontational way they are likely to end up in the psychiatric system. As Salvador Dali said, 'the only difference between me and a madman is that I am not mad.' But who decides? In H.G.Wells's short story 'In the Country of the Blind' a sighted man comes upon a community of people blind for many generations and cut off from the world so they have no concept of sight. He assumes he will be able to rule them, but they regard him as sick, his vision as some sort of hallucination. Their doctor proposes that the diseased organs in his head be removed since they are affecting his brain and excision is the only way to cure him. Plato's parable of the cave runs along similar lines.

Western culture treats the world as something out there to be controlled and refuses to fully realise that we are all parts of it. As an example, Redgrove talks about weather and the fact that about 30 percent of us are sensitive to changes in it. Obviously we are all more or less aware of the effects of weather and reluctantly admit such states as seasonal affective disorder. But in general the weather has been ignored since the Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution banished immeasurables and put us into factories on fixed hours regardless of external conditions. This is all bound up with the exploitation of nature and we may yet live to see the weather take its revenge. So much in the change to modern civilisation was consciously or unconsciously repressed that 'it is difficult to forgive our forefathers for the intellectual dishonesty of ignoring what it was not expedient to understand, while professing reason. Since weather was natural and could not be controlled, it was ignored. It has become another of the plagues of Thebes.'[38] Equally, magical and mystical states of consciousness are subjected to scientific evaluation and reductionist explanation or dismissal: examination of the numinous tends to kill it. Where Western occultism takes its cue from Crowley's ultimately unhelpful 'The Method of Science – the Aim of Religion,' it follows this path to its own detriment.

Coleridge was weather-sensitive and acknowledged that this would, depending on his mood, manifest either as poetry or rheumatism. He theorised that it was not just the temperature or humidity that affected him, but some deficiency of electrical or other imponderable fluid.[39] More attention is now being paid to the effects of

electro-magnetism on living organisms, but again there is some resistance to the idea, as there is to the assertions made by some that the microwaves of the mobile phone network might be a contributory cause to, for instance, the widespread incidence of 'hive collapse' and the disappearance of bees. The Romantics would argue that as all is linked there must be a knock-on effect of alterations to the invisible forces around us; they would say we were blind. Redgrove writes:

> the body appears to respond as a whole, by a kind of diffused or comprehensive sense, to certain of these environmental influences, especially the electrical and magnetic ones. This is as the Romantics believed. It is as though we are understanding now what Blake intuited, that the senses were, in Eden, spread over the whole being. It might seem, then, that our bodies still live in Eden, but our minds refuse to know it. There is a magical tradition that women never left Eden; men may turn out to be the unfortunate poison-victims of their sexual stress hormones.[40]

The world is full of electro-magnetic fields and fluctuations and our bodies also generate these. Redgrove again comes close to quoting Franz Bardon on the electro-magnetic occult anatomy of man as given in *Initiation into Hermetics*. Importantly, Bardon says, 'The alchemist will recognise that the human body represents a genuine Athanor in which the most perfect alchemistic process, the great work or the preparation of the *'philosophers' stone'* is visibly performed.'[41] Redgrove urges his readers to take up practices designed to heighten our connections to our bodies and, through them, to the subtle forces in the world. He wants us to *feel* these forces ourselves, not try to explain them away. Through increased weather sensitivity, as an example which he discusses at length, one should, perhaps, become more aware of the phases of the moon and the turning of the tides. Such sensitivity would also facilitate the non-verbal, non-visible communications of lovers.

The very Thing that Horrified Oedipus

Sexual activity is the most powerful way we have of approaching the sacred through fully inhabiting our physical bodies. Redgrove does not attempt to transcend sex: it is a non-rational physical experience that itself raises consciousness and imparts knowledge. In Redgrove's sexual magic the method is a form of *karezza* in which the man withholds orgasm or, if he can, climaxes several times without ejaculation; meanwhile his partner orgasms several (ideally four) times. There should be a final simultaneous orgasm. A period of post-coital relaxation follows, during which the couple may share visions or have individual dreams, possibly obtaining answers to questions. The 'visions,' ideally, come through all the senses, especially touch and smell, by-passing logical thought and feeding back into the experience. Redgrove believed that there was a particular day in a woman's cycle upon which this visionary sex would be most effective.

This sexuality may be considered in alchemical terms. Reversing the Oedipus complex, Redgrove saw the union (King and Queen / brother and sister) as an expression or actualization of sexual union with the feminine principal as the Great Mother or Black Goddess. He has an obsession with water running through his poetry and this also is alchemical as 'this is certain, that all nature was in the beginning water, and through water all things were born and again through water all things must be destroyed.'[42] Dissolution, turning the body into water, is sometimes imaged as a regression to the pre-natal state. According to Paracelsus 'he who would enter the Kingdom of God must first enter with his body into his mother and there die' – as Redgrove felt himself to have done.[43] Some alchemists explicitly represent this in the form of incest with the mother:

> Michael Maier tells us that 'Delphinas, an anonymous philosopher, in his treatise *Secretus Maximus*, speaks very clearly of the mother who must, of natural necessity, unite herself with her son. ... But it is obvious that the 'mother' symbolises ... nature in her primordial state, the *prima materia* of the alchemists, and that the 'return to the mother' translates a spiritual experience corresponding to any other 'projection' outside Time ... The dissolution to the *prima materia* is also symbolised by a sexual union which is completed by disappearance into the uterus. In the *Rosarium Philosophorum* we read: 'Beya mounted Gabricus and enclosed him in her womb in such a fashion that nothing of him remained visible. She embraced him with so much love that she absorbed him entirely into her own nature.[44]

In a footnote to this passage Eliade notes that Beya was Gabricus's sister and his absorption into her womb 'retains the symbolic value of "philosophic incest."'[45]

For Redgrove this dissolution is the initiation through the Black Goddess and is achievable in a sexual act that makes us wholly one within the two bodies involved. This death is also the *nigredo* – the black stage of the alchemical transformation, a 'reintegration of cosmic night and pre-cosmological chaos ... In modern terminology, initiatory death abolishes Creation and History and delivers us from all failures and "sins." It delivers us from the ravages inseparable from the human condition.'[46]

Redgrove said that each individual had a 'central poem' which their lives should express. This concept is analogous to the Crowley's Thelemic True Will but there is a difference in nuance: 'being' rather than 'doing.' To return to the question of truth, one does not necessarily expect a poem to be true in some demonstrable, logical way, yet we feel that some are truer than others. To overcome the 'bifurcation of nature,' Redgrove suggests a Romantic solution that involves intuitive self-knowledge thus accessing the central poem. The symbolism of each individual will differ, but still be true.

In Redgrove's central poem the alchemical / sexual initiate achieves the very thing that so horrified Oedipus: union with the mother and a realization that everything is related, all having come from one womb. Scientific detachment is anathema. This union, Redgrove believed, would enable individuals to fulfil their greatest potential as humans in physical bodies in the present, by returning to Edenic consciousness and at-one-ment with the Cosmos as an un-dissected, feminine, whole.

Notes

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46. Eliade, *Forge*,156-157

A madwoman kept in a dusty jar
A vase of sad spiders
A finery of glass and gold
To adorn the venerable vegetables
preserved in astral brine
Hermetically sealed
behind the face of the mirror
A puddle for scrying
A slow-moving stream
clear as the marrow of the sky

On The Always-Wandering Way

Christopher Greenchild

The hedgerows are planted upside-down,
tilted and tethered to the tumbling heavens
By the whorls of your ears
I remember
the banished, angelic cliffs
Where we knelt and
dwelt as playmates
With dizzied planets on their sickbeds
Where we tended
eyeless lambs
Toppling, wind-struck,
in the castle of emanations
That ladder of ringing lights
only Death knows

Humbled by the voice that fled
before this world scraped itself here
The Firstborn, who left
before anything else began
Before anything could see it leave
The One who kissed our soft-closed-eyes
when we still were sleeping infants
in the wall-less womb of space
In the Great Room

Humbled, we remember
to thank the gyring stars,
the trickling springs,
the brimming sun,
and all green things
who serve as signposts
on our way back
to the End of All

We visit museums of absconding treasure:
A madwoman kept in vase
A shrunken mountain
in the belly of an ape
Fragments of the spiteful tower
The uncarved yolks of wooden eggs
A vial of quivering stones
A necklace of liminal colors
All bandaged
and blurred in broken sight

We read the Dreambook,
tracing calendars in clamshell grooves
From the rings of trees
to the trails of flying geese
We follow constellations
of those stars who shine between
space itself
and sow our acres in their glow

It's a library of spinning secrets
sealed within the loam
Leaning for a drink
from the brook along the Mother Path
Bowing at the edge
of ghostly carts and shrouded inns
Emblems of the Hidden Heart
on the Always-Wandering Way

Spells

Malgorzata Maj

She's Lost Control

Heather Tracy

In a world that frequently values the arts as a formulaic and profitable commodity, the roots of drama as a dangerous expression of the sacred can be obscured. After many years as an actor, it is only now that I am able to evaluate and utilise the effect of prolonged training and experience in relation to magical practice. Out of that process one concern takes centre stage. Control.

While technique and discipline are an actor's principal tools, the finer embroidery of the craft itself is more complex. The transformation of a body into a vessel for the brief channelling of another is engendered by word and made flesh by imagination. Some choose to answer Stanislavski's five questions, some score their scripts like a military campaign. Breathe here. Raise the inflection there. I never could obey the prescriptive, preferring madness over method. I discovered early on that my own personality was not so easily divided from its biology or environment, and I questioned the nature of the identities I was encouraged to create from the inside out as bastions of purity, responsive but fundamentally unaffected by externals. Such limitations contradicted the idea of interconnectivity that binds both my stagecraft and magical work.

I used to believe that the body never lies. But it does. We can trick it, rebel-rouse it, shift its kinetic centre. Shoes shape posture, clothes manipulate confidence, geography modifies dialect, accent alters the shape of the face, the weather one's mood, hormones one's personality. Drawing down my characters, I can control most of these choices. The process of creating Other, however, presents temptations for the ego to exert its power, for the embedded actor is desperate to be liked and lauded in equal parts. The genuine practitioner seeks truth, but too often there is a projection of natural insecurity that mitigates undesirable qualities and nudges the role towards acceptable elegance. This process reaches its apex during performances where everything meshes, group harmonics are perfect, cues, placement, resonances, responses seem to possess a unique and heightened energy. We come off-stage riding a smug, high-fiving unity only to make the devastating discovery that the audience has been left cold by our efforts.

Conversely, there are those performances where one feels out of joint, timings are askew, words emerge like a mouthful of mistakes, the body feels tense, struggling, gasping, and heavy meanings tumble to the floor as the audience sits in stony silence. We wrestle with control but it slips through our fingers like love. On those rare, miserable occasions, we are always astounded to find that everyone thought it the best performance ever. 'It was magic,' they say.

Self-consciousness is the ego at its most disingenuous and sheer indulgence of our own talents can obfuscate truth. Struggle against the self is uncomfortable but it is through this process that authenticity is dragged kicking and screaming into the light, captivating those who are privy to its painful and exceptional appearance.

In my early esoteric training, I expected to feel something tremendous during every ritual and exercise. It could be ecstasy or rage, but I wanted the strength of its purpose and colour to induce satisfaction that all the parameters of preparation had been met. Instead, the frequent blunders, confusion and lack of connectivity produced the gruel of sadness and a profound sense that I had been cheated out of my calculated joy. If all acts of love and pleasure are Her rituals, I made the assumption that its effects were lessened because I felt less.

I have rarely had much time for regularisation, either in Shakespeare or magic, but there does seem to be a creeping obsession with maintaining permanent states of happiness, as well as a belief that the relationship between mind and the material is weighted towards a psychological will wholly independent from its surroundings.

That spontaneous discomfort can be the midwife of magic presents difficult questions for both the solitary and group practitioner – why are we doing this, for whom, and how much control is good? Even ritualistic pain or lucid dreaming tend to be carefully managed, but if used constantly there is little space for the still, unexpected voice. Pulling over allows us to experience the thrill and requirement of heavy traffic. Falling over reminds us that the Earth exists outside of the abstract of shoes.

In order to create Other (however defined), we must subjugate the ego peeping through the curtains. In a group, that can take the shape of a deliberate, temporary conformity where the danger of singularisation, either through reticence or over-assertion, can destroy the corporate tonal unity. It is not always about ease and sweetness, but the minutiae of surrender creating overtones. Once the individual sinks into the work of the body (singular or several), once we can trust our craft and training to sustain us, a new voice crystallises. It is the gift to spirit. It is no longer ours.

That is my lightning flash, the cybernetic torque between will and relinquishment, a shifting segue of correspondences and my equally explosive and diverse range of responses to them. Sometimes the weave is too tight and the creation of beauty and ecstasy is pushed outwards at a personal price. To let go, to ride the storm of failure, not planning for the effects but struggling with them, is to finally surrender to the knowledge that mastery needs no fight. I seek not to know it, nor transcend it, but to live with it, feel it, and rejoice in its aberrations and miracles.

For sometimes, drowning in my own discomfort, my ego scattered and shattered like so many shards of glass, I am sure I can sense, from across the psychic landscape, the unanticipated, faint ripples of astounded applause.

Film still from *The Inhabitants of Nemirion*, TAGC © Adi Newton

Endless Shifting: A Feast of Images, Swallowed by Sound

Adi Newton of TAGC interviewed by Jack Sargeant

'To be a monster is first of all to be composite. ... But 'monster' has another meaning: something or someone whose extreme determinacy allows the indeterminate wholly to subsist. In this sense, thought itself is a monster.' – Gilles Deleuze

Influenced as a youth by Dada and Surrealism, Adi Newton gravitated to the arts but rejected fine art practice and painting in favour of multimedia, performance, film and music. His first experience in the mid-seventies was as part of what he has subsequently described as an 'anarchic drama group' funded by Sheffield Council. Immersed in the Yorkshire arts community he met numerous future luminaries of the Sheffield industrial and electronic music scene, including members of Cabaret Voltaire and The Human League. Influenced by Roxy Music, Brian Eno and German electronic pioneers Harmonium, Nue and Kraftwork, and the pleasure of creating tape loops on a number of found tape machines, Newton cofounded the group Clock DVA with S J Turner. The band released a number of albums including *White Souls in Black Suits* (Industrial Records, 1980) and *Thirst* (Fetish, 1980) and along with Cabaret Voltaire they contributed to the emergent industrial funk genre and later electro.

Simultaneously to Clock DVA, Newton devised The Anti Group (aka The Anti Group Communications aka TAGC), developing the concept with S J Turner. The project was temporarily sidelined by the success of Clock DVA, but was revived in the mid-eighties. With a fluctuating membership of collaborators – including his wife Jane Radion Newton, The Hafler Trio's Andrew McKenzie and Lustmord's Brian Williams – TAGC produced multimedia performances that combined films and music. These expanded cinema pieces included *The Delivery* (1985), a 16mm two-screen projection and *Burning Water* (1986). Described as the group's first meontological experiment, it combined waves of sound with endlessly mutable images of atavistic resurgence and 'sentient symbolic systems.' Both of these soundtracks were released as records, although the films have only been presented in a live context. TAGC also released two albums of sonic research: *Meontological Research Recording 1* (Sweatbox, 1987) and *Meontological Research Recording Record 2 Teste Tones* (Side Effects, 1988).

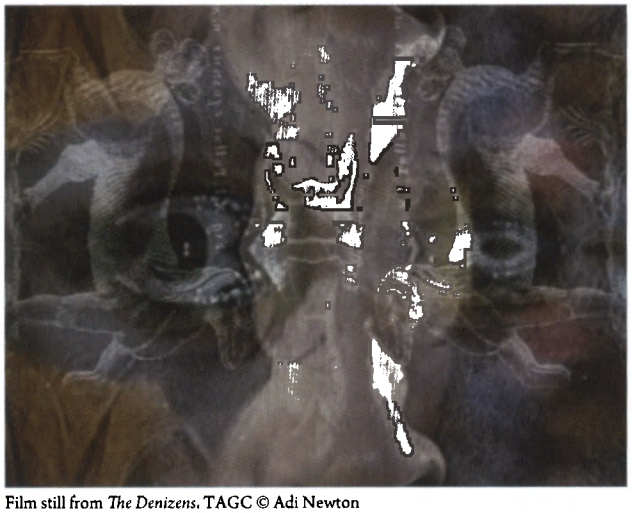
After a lengthy absence from live performances, TAGC returned to perform at The Equinox Festival in London in the summer of 2009. Here they presented a multi-screen projection and live soundtrack *Iso Erotic Calibration / An Experiment In Time and Burning Water*. Adi Newton is now poised to reissue both *Meontological Research Recording 1* and 2 in a combined version on his Anterior label, accompanied by an explanatory booklet.

The long-awaited third instalment is due for release in May 2011 and will include a DVD and a hardcover book, the project includes contributions from David Beth, Michael Bertiaux and Barry Hale. This meontological research projects draw upon numerous sources, including French occultist Abbe Joseph-Antoine Boullan, dissident Surrealists George Bataille and Hans Bellmer, Michael Bertiaux, Austin Osman Spare via H P Lovecraft and Hugo Ball. The films for *Meontological Research* 3 are protean experiments in which multiple images shift, merge and transform, creating a world in

which all is fluid and becomes endlessly multiple, open to limitless possibilities. Images transmute, becoming other. In *The Denizens* demonic forms drawn from the Swiss surrealism of H R Giger and ancient bestiaries transform, films of hands and eyes become morphological eruptions, faces laugh, and the camera appears to spin the viewers' perception. This gaze positions the audience in centre of a magical circle, while disjointed vices on the soundtrack talk of an 'empty chalice' and demand 'look at me.' In *Meontographical Cartography* swirling patterns and voudon sigils become medieval icons over a parade of luminescent coloured paintings. In the *Inhabitants of Nemirion,* pop culture iconography from 1930s–1940s science fiction/fantasy magazines is juxtaposed with multiple images that shift endlessly from neurological diagrams to mathematical shapes, stars, angels; all flow endlessly in all possible permutations. The music hums with a religious energy, and somewhere higher beings copulate with humans.

The following conversation about the roots and sources of TAGC's current practice took place on Monday 17th January, with subsequent discussion and clarification via email.

JS: Lets start with some history; you started doing The Anti Group in 1978.



Film still from *The Denizens*, TAGC © Adi Newton

AN: Originally we had the idea to do it then. We started to do things, like the PTI performance ideas, the live presentations and films and all kinds of things really. The initial idea was born in that time but was never fully developed; because of what we were doing with Clock DVA there was too much to do. But gradually over the years I've managed to do stuff, having a break from DVA then doing TAGC in the eighties, it gave me that space in order to work and develop on that. Then going back to DVA, and going back to do both of them.

JS: There's a mention in the book *England's Hidden Reverse* that cites the fanzine *Stabmental* that said there was at one time a dream line-up of The Anti Group featuring Genesis P-Orridge and John Balance.[1]

AN: Yeah. We always talked of doing things. Gen was always regarded as a kind of honorary member. Definitely. And Jhon is a definite honorary member.

JS: Were you looking at magic during this period, was that informing your world-view back in the late 1970s?

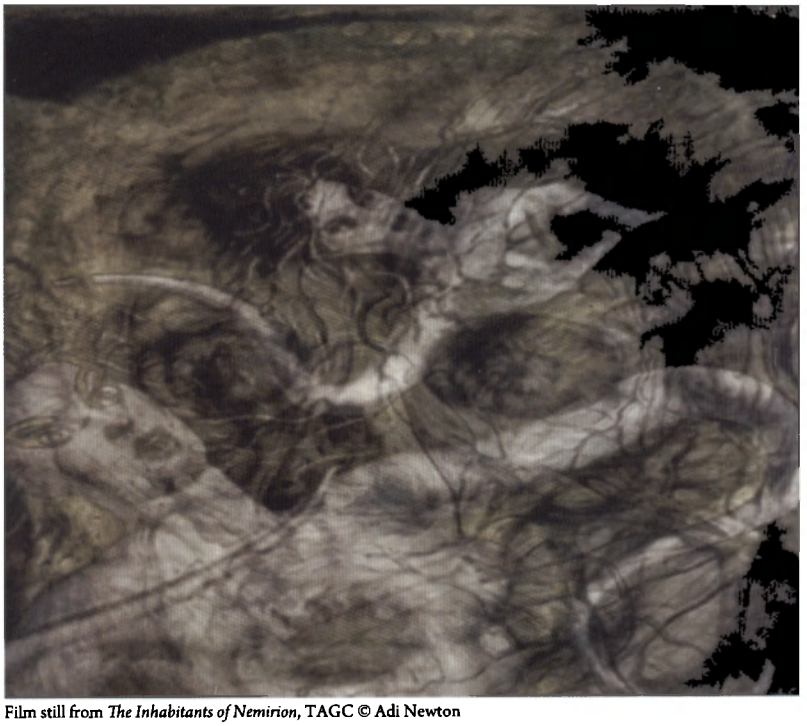
AN: We were definitely inspired by people like Crowley and so on, Austin Spare. There were a lot of different elements as well, it wasn't just occult influences, it was more the surrealism, alchemy. It was broader, I would say we were working with ideas and pulling them in from all kinds of sources. Like Artaud, if you look at Artaud there's a lot of occult influences in there already in his work, so by the fact that you are looking at somebody else that includes a magical element it becomes hard to divorce all these things into separate places.[2] You are pulling in all these different influences and ideas from different places, but underneath all of that there are all these connections. Like attracts like. It's like a kind of magnetism I guess.

JS: Where were you finding out about these things? People take it for granted now, that you just type-in a search online for 'weird stuff' and it's there, but

how did you find out about them when you were twenty-years old and living in Sheffield in the mid-seventies?

AN: That's absolutely true. Information was, to say the least, slim, [it was] hard to get hold of. But somehow we did get information, even if it were just fragmentary little pieces. We would be actively seeking things, trying to find out things from other things, Kenneth Grant's books were there, you could get hold of things like that, *The Hidden God*, *The Cult of The Shadow*, *Outside the Circles of Time* and things. So they were there and they were packed full of stuff anyway, lots of different elements in there, ideas and so on. And Crowley, you could always find Crowley stuff.

JS: I remember you could always find *Moonchild* and the Colin Wilson books and so on.[3]



Film still from *The Inhabitants of Nemirion*, TAGC © Adi Newton

AN: Yeah. There used to be a bookshop in Sheffield that would sell off books cheap, they used to buy end-of-stock off of some publishers, and stack them up and sell them, a hundred copies and when they'd gone they gone. They'd have things like Crowley *Magic in Theory and Practice*, really thick hardback books, pretty expensive now to buy and they'd have them for like a fiver or something. So you could buy them. I think they had, one time, *The Hidden God* and they were selling them for a couple of quid. And because we knew what we were looking for we found them. Or we were just lucky, we attracted them we were there when they were about, it's like thinking about something then it becomes real, thinking about something then the next day you find it. Kind of like a cognitive intuition.

JS: How did those interests sit with other people at the time? What was your relationship with other bands in Sheffield at the time in the late seventies / early eighties?

AN: We were very much a kind of outsiders in our own environment, we were always outsiders, we were trying to do things that were not typical. We would do these things like the PTI it was an abreaction, even in its own environment, it was against the contingent of people there, it was against the cult of those people, anti-stance in a way. We were confronting a hell of a lot of attitudes and mindsets and people didn't like it, it held up a mirror to them and they didn't want to see themselves. It's a bit like Otto Muehl – the use of bodily fluids, it's something people don't want to admit that we are all involved in it in someway.[4] It's inescapable. When people are confronted by this people don't want to admit to it, it's too close.

JS: Can you describe the performance?

AN: One of the performances we did we used animal entrails, all this stuff from slaughterhouses; lungs, spinal tracts... offal I guess.

JS: These were all on stage with you?

AN: The performer was coming through a series of tunnels, there were a lot of strobes, we were projecting pornographic films, the soundtrack was very immense industrial... really overpowering.

When all of that was unleased people didn't know what to expect in a way, they moved back. The smell... It was all-intense in a way; I don't think people could comprehend that. They'd never seen something like that.[5] I was on stage filming everything on super-8 [film] so we could use the films another project called *Genitals and Genesis*.

JS: I don't think people can comprehend that now. I don't think people really grasp how that industrial scene really challenged how people saw events. People seem so conservative now in what they think a performance should be. I think a lot of that radicalism has been lost.

AN: Absolutely. That's what we were doing, confronting the audience directly, with direct action. It was based on Muehl's Action Theatre, it was free of analysis of symbols and so on, but it was a direct confrontation with the audience. The reaction was typical in a sense; they didn't know what to do, how to take it, what to say. Maybe later it reflects what happens to their minds, I don't know. But for us it was necessary to confront audiences not just with PTI but with Clock DVA, it was all about really challenging perceptions in many ways. Doing things, utilizing things in a different way taking it further, exploring that other side of something.

JS: With Clock DVA you obviously did records with Industrial Records and Fetish Records, so how much were you around with the birth of Psychic TV and the Temple of Psychic Youth?[6]

AN: I was aware of that, yeah, but I wasn't involved in it. But I certainly was aware of it because Jhon Balance became very much a part of all of that.

JS: So why didn't you become involved in it?

AN: Well we were doing our own things anyway. I don't really particular follow any... I am not a follower of a cult or particular philosophy.

JS: It's interesting because obviously I was aware of the whole thing, but I would never join anything either. But I am intrigued because so many people went through that TOPY experience, especially people who became involved in avant-garde and experimental music subsequently.

AN: Yeah. I am not really interested in following anything really. What I am interested in is the individual. I am interested in unique individuals who have a passion about what they do and that could be in any subject area. Someone who is pushing the boundaries, looking at something in a different way, using something in a different way, making new meanings, challenging old meanings to bring out new ideas and so on. That's where my interest lies really.

That's why I like [Michael] Bertiaux – because Bertiaux has got this encyclopaedic knowledge of all of this information and he uses a lot of different things; he pulls in ideas from the occult, art, from Symbolism, from Surrealism, from pataphysics, and so on, a lot of different areas. I like that, I think that's interesting, because these connections are there, in science, in all kinds of different areas: in art, spiritualism and philosophy.

JS: In terms of magic, you are not particularly interested in going through initiation, the initiatory process of degrees and so on.

AN: What I feel for myself is that, to me, magic is something that's intuitively inside of someone, and you either have access to it or you don't. It's not a matter of learning; it's a question of knowing without learning, if you understand what I am saying. It's like being able to do something, but not knowing how to do it originally, but you do it because it's inside of you. You access an area, which you have intuitively; you do it by an intuitive reflex.

The Surrealists talked about pure psychic automatism and Crowley spoke of being a feeble transmitter for something much greater and vaster than himself. You just do these things or you think these things, it's not learnt, it's not something that

someone passes down to someone else. I mean I can understand those teaching a didactic method, systems to allow different degrees and stages of being able to pass through different states and to understand different states or concepts, I can understand that. If I got involved in ceremonial or ritual magick it would be for very specific reasons or desires , but I haven't felt the need to be exclusive in that sense just with occultism. I am more interested in the imagination, the tool of the imagination I guess, and that's a very magickal tool you know.

You look at [Kenneth] Grant or Bertiaux and they are all saying the same thing: the artist's imagination is a very magical tool, a very powerful tool, its like focusing and thinking and imagining and making these things, creating these worlds, and that's what magick is in a way. A way of explaining or showing other dimensions accessing them, interpreting their symbolism and meanings in order to raise our own consciousness. There is a certain state of consciousness characterised by a strange perichoresis in which the mundane senses, exalted and infused with the magically charged will, attract mysterious influences from Outside.[7] The interaction of the elements of this world with those of that other universe known as the Meon creates an ultradimensional reality to which the most sensitive artists (or magicians) alone are able creatively to respond.[8] Austin Spare demonstrated visually the value of reverberant nostalgias as a means of magical mimesis and dream control.

JS: It strikes me that the whole TAGC aim of expanding consciousness of exploring and engaging with magickal research strikes me as exactly what you are saying.

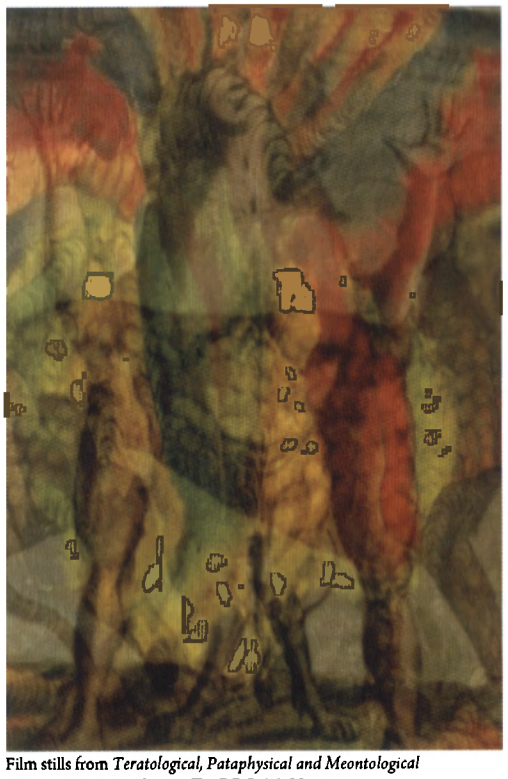
AN: Yeah. Definitely. Things we've done in the past, like the *Burning Water* [piece] is very much a way of opening up those psychic fields visually, the images almost create themselves in a way. It's like the Austin Spare idea that the absence of architecture creates an architecture, things form out of themselves, and that's what happens isn't it? In blackness there will be something. Like when you go into a flotation

Film still from *Meontographical Cartography*, TAGC © Adi Newton

tank and you are cut off from all senses, then the mind begins to work in itself and create incredible things because you are cut off from all of these senses, and it [the mind] starts to take over.

[Salvador] Dali refers to such magically charged fetish-forms as 'accommodations of desire,' which are visualised as shadowy voids, black emptinesses, each having the shape of the ghostly object which inhabits its latency, and which is only by virtue of the fact that it is not. This indicates that the origin of manifestation is non-manifestation, and it is plain to intuitive apprehension that the orgone of Reich, the Atmospheric 'I' of Spare, and the Dalínian delineations of the 'accommodations of desire' refer in each case to an identical Energy manifesting.

Really in a way we are not using all our senses because we get used to doing certain things, we get used to using certain things, and we loose things in that process. Like the whole Faust myth; if you exchange something for something else and you lose something in exchange as well. Like telephones, we lose that ability to telepathically pass information,



Film stills from *Teratological, Pataphysical and Meontological Experiment 1*, HPB Dyzan, TAGC © Adi Newton

maybe at one time human beings could do that, maybe they could communicate in different ways, more intuitive [means of] passing information on.

JS: I was reading recently that people used to navigate using the planet Venus in daylight, and that you still could see Venus in daylight, if you knew where to look, but people have lost that ability because they don't need to, it's a fantastic concept.

AN: Yeah. It's interesting, this whole idea of senses being gradually changed and modified over millennia, it's a fascinating sort of area really.
JS: When you are talking about consciousness how do you personally perceive the concept of consciousness, what's your understanding of it?

AN: How do I conceive of it? That's a difficult thing to answer. I think again that we are really still very much in an early stage I believe, In R. M. Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness* there is a scale of the levels of consciousness, our current state of consciousness is very much lower than the level of Cosmic Consciousness, so we are unable to understand how the whole thing works. Maybe that's kind of necessary in some sense; that we don't know how everything works. But, there're so many theoretical ideas now about how the brain works and they don't all correlate.

Some experiments have been done and they say they know particular regions in the brain where certain memories or functions are, or they say it's synaptic responses to electricity, but then there are these ideas of chemical changes, you know, or these ideas that it's a form of geometric construction like snowflakes that are happening all the time, changing patterns and that information in the brain is like that, a chemical thing, like blood and so on going through the body, so the brain is working with chemicals the whole time. And a chemical ingestion into the system will affect the brain. And we know this through psycho-botanical ingestion of drugs, that they have different effects. It's chemistry, and chemistry is an ancient form: alchemy [from] the Egyptian *al-kimiya*, the black and burning land.

It's known – it has been known for thousands of years – how drugs or how certain things ingested will effectively change our consciousness, will affect our bodies, everything we introduce affects us. Everything we take in affects us in some way, but – it's such a complex issue really – and I don't think we are nearer to finding an answer in some way, but we know it's something that affects us and has changed us culturally.

JS: In talking about consciousness, one of the things I find interesting is that in the west the culture is about a duality of consciousness there's just conscious and unconscious, expanded conscious is seen as being like being stoned, but there's no other sense of what expanding your conscious is. The dominant paradigm in the west is so conservative; that there is only conscious or unconscious – and the importance of dreams or notions of the collective unconscious or whatever are ignored – our framework as a culture seems to be closed in the west to either wakeful (and productive) or asleep.

AN: Yeah. Definitely. If you look at it the whole control of drugs is paramount in culture because they don't want people to be on a higher level, they don't want people to be aware of things. They want people on a certain level, so they don't look any further than that. They can keep them in a stasis where they produce things.[9]

JS: I love stuff like the Master Musicians of Joujouka, the idea ecstatic dancing and whirling dervishes and so on, and that idea of that as transforming...[10]

AN: Absolutely: the whirling dervishes, the spiral and dance and so on. It's a way of releasing the soul I guess, the spirit from man, by transcending or going outside though putting the body into another realm, yeah, definitely. Either through some kind of physical activity, which creates this ecstatic sensation, or through the ingestion of psycho-botanical plants.

Baudelaire suggested that extreme exacerbation of the senses may cause an ultimate refinement of feeling and vision leading to an adumbration of pure aesthesis. Rimbaud went further, and with a similar aim announced a formula of total derangement of the senses. Crowley later adopted this formula with diligence and Spare was another aesthetic alchemist of this order.

It's been there from the very beginning. The shamans, religion and everything else, is all tied up in it. All the symbols for religion are all harking back to these really ancient primal beliefs; Babylonian, Sumerian, you know. And all of those are kind of based on extraterrestrial ideas.

JS: That's interesting because that ties in with your recent work 'The Inhabitants of Nemirion' from *Meon 3 Transmission from the Trans-Yoggothian Broadcast Station*. In that whole piece you have got the multiple images of Tantra, the tunnels, the cross sections of the head, the mathematical symbols of consciousness, stars and so on. So you are kind of plugging into that whole thing in that video piece.

AN: Yeah. It's like a kind of energy. An external kind of energy that's used in our world, it's kind of influenced us a lot. We have always looked elsewhere to find ourselves in a way, to find our source of who we are. We have always looked beyond, and you can see that in lots of cultures, that kind of influence. And I think it's a very interesting idea, I mean no one has any kind of conclusive proof of it, I don't think, but it is there, there is so much of it. It's not one single thing. It's not like a single piece of evidence, it's many, many factors all added up. But the idea of physical interaction, the idea of actual sexual integration with praetor human consciousness is extant in numerous religious mythologies.

JS: What I enjoyed about that piece is that you combined high art things with scientific diagrams of the brain, with these 'low culture' 'pulp' magazine covers as well. You're finding these sources everywhere.

AN: Yeah, I mean look at the work of somebody like Clark Ashton Smith.[11] His ideas and stories are quite amazing, the thing we were talking about earlier, this idea of senses being changed, there was one particular story, I forgot which one it was called now, in which, somebody underwent a series of operations, [and it] changed their senses.[12] Because we have these limited senses.

I mean; our hearing is limited to so many cycles 8Hz or 20Khz max when we are really young, but gradually it diminishes. And the same with low level sounds and certainly ultrasonics, like megahertz and so on, then it's changing all together, that frequency range, that vibration. But things do tune into it, animals can tune into it, dogs can hear ultrasonic sounds. And whales use really low frequency sounds to communicate, and the medium of water carries low frequency waves forever, across vast distances and times. And we are only tuning into a minute wavelength of things. It's like particle physics.

We are only just beginning to realise that there are things that exist that don't have mass and don't have weight, that actually don't interact with us at all. Like this Black [aka Dark] Matter and we don't know how it works, but we know it is intrinsic and that it has to be there, but we don't know what it is. So how many other things are there?

I wrote the other day, to a friend of mine, who was asking me about this occult thing, and I was saying, 'I am not exclusive to the occult,' because she was saying, 'It's a bit weird. I don't really like this chaos, I don't like this darker stuff.' And I was saying, 'Well look, if we say that there is no end and beginning, as far as I can see, things don't end and don't stop, that is an impossibility, so it has got to be continuum, and it's infinite, then there has to be an infinite amount of possibilities.'

How can one say that this does not exist? If there is infinite possibility, we cannot even comprehend infinity because we don't understand what that is. They say the universe started with the Big Bang, matter from energy, well, you know, there was something else before that. There were an infinite amount of things going on, all simultaneously, and maybe a lot of them didn't even interact and didn't know about each other and they were all existing separately but yet together. There are so many possible things. We really are very limited in the sense we don't fully have the senses or the equipment to tune into those possible things, and so, inventions and science are sort of discovering ways, inroads, into those kinds of things. That's interesting you know.

JS: When you are working on a piece are you deliberately using certain kinds of sound, infrasound or ultrasound just to make the piece exist for hearing beyond the human aural range. Are you deliberately engaged with ideas of creating sounds for other beings and so on?

AN: Well not... it's creating sound which is... If you take certain frequencies away from certain sounds then you will notice, we may not be able to perceive very high frequencies but once they are engaged with a piece, if you remove them it has an effect. It has different kinds of effects because the way you perceive, interact so if you move your head you'll pick up on something else. Because of the way frequencies work and the physical impact on the hearing system. So it's really to put something else in there, something more, to give something to the atmosphere of it, it's not overt but it is there and has an effect. So like, in that piece, there's very high extreme frequency and a very low one, and they run concurrently, and inside of that there is a lot of other audio tonalities as well, these are sounds composed from different sources taking from areas of the subject area or suggested audio types of information I research the subject very carefully and search for information linked to audible connections.

There's another piece on *Meon* 3 'Transmission From The Trans Yoggothian Broadcast Station. BIOLOGICAL RADIO SIGNAL FROM WAVELENGTH 10 40 56' – which uses recordings of biological radio signals from Ursula Major, based on actual recordings made by L G Lawrence of the Ecola institute. Consisting of recordings of biolog-

ical transmission signals from the region of space known as Ursa Major which contains the Binary Star System Sirius A and Sirius B, encoded by Lawrence using specially developed receivers they are quite amazing, they are actual biological radio frequencies and it does sound like, it does have a voice like quality to it, a kind of undecipherable code that's voice like. And these are actual recordings, and that's what they sound like when we can decode them. As biological radio signals are the fastest thing we know about. As fast as light, in some sense they are instantaneous. And animal's can transmit them [and] plants. They can communicate with these biological radio signals.

JS: One of the things I noticed in the *Meontological Cartography* you are writing, in the texts around that piece, about Baron Carl Von Reichenbach and the idea of the odic force which to me reminds me of Wilhelm Reich's orgone energy.[13][14] And of course that's another example of what you are talking about now, like these biological signals. It's fascinating that you are crossing over these different discourses between science and the occult, for want of a better description, and your mixing of these things together is quite liberating.

AN: Yeah, that's the interest to me. There are these connections. Definitely Reich, I think [he] was absolutely brilliant. I've experienced orgone first hand, it's like an intense blue spark that just comes on for no apparent reason, whenever the circumstances are in the right position you have access to it. And I understand what he was saying about it, the energy and how it effects the body and everything else. You look at ancient science, tantric science, or Indian philosophy and you can see they knew incredible things that we are only just started to find out that actually are then true.

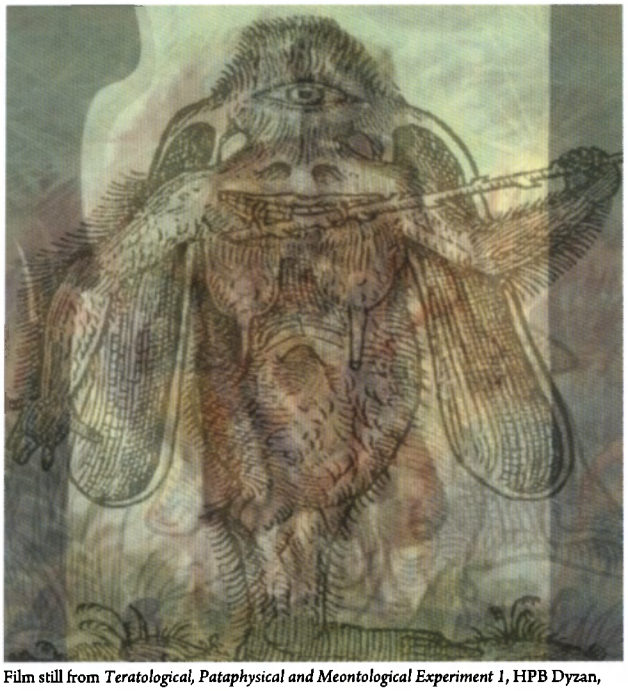
I did this thing called *Psychophysicist* with Andrew McKenzie, and it's an album of psychophysical sound.[15] And in the text there's a section talking about this guy Hans Jenning, a Swiss scientist. He did a lot of experiments with sound and visualisation, and he invented this machine, a way of recording and being able to make a visualisation of sound, lets say, similar to an oscilloscope in some sense, but not an oscilloscope but what he called a tonascope, it works with a different set of parameters and it results in more accurate patterns of sound, geometric and frequencies of wave lengths, and he did a series of experiments using sounds and correlating them with visual information, and he did one based on the Indian mantra Aum / Om, and the seed symbol for Aum / Om is like a series of triangles in a certain pattern. Well, he did that through this device and the image is virtually identical – this collection of triangles that form this shape of this seed mandala. So these Indian Tantrics were drawing these pictures of sound, four or five thousand years ago, without any technicality, without any technical things.

JS: Intuitively.

AN: Intuitively: from their mind, from their feelings, from their inner source, and documenting it. It's incredible really when you consider something like that, to be able to have an insight like that. It's astonishing.

JS: Can you talk about the *Meon 3* project, which I know people are excited to hear is forthcoming.

AN: It's a hardback book and a DVD, and each track is a visual invocation of the subject area. The book is broken into chapters and each is a descriptor of the paradigms that the invocation is based around, so, *Meontographical Cartography* represents an official collaborative piece sanctioned by Bertiaux, and also includes Alfred Jarry's engravings from *L'Ymagier* (a publication which appeared in eight issues).[16] In 'The Inhabitants of Nemirion' the paradigm is based around the Nemirion, a term used by Michael Bertiaux to denote Boullanist Adepts of Rigel in the constellation of Orion. Bertiaux is able to apply, scientifically, a formula for reactivating primal phases of elemental consciousness. [To me] it is reminiscent of Austin Spare's formula of Atavistic Resurgence



Film still from *Teratological, Pataphysical and Meontological Experiment 1*, HPB Dyzan, TAGC

and it is significant that Bertiaux names Spare as a member of the Inner (i.e. Astral) Council of his magical cult. Another discarnate human spirit claimed by Bertiaux is the Abbé Boullan.

JS: I want to talk about the piece *Meontographical Cartography* a little more, because that was interesting to me because you are working with voodoo iconography, with medieval icons, and also Jarry and Bertiaux.

AN: Most of the paintings are Bertiaux's, all from his *Vudu Cartography*, and so they are the representation of that particular work, kind of an autobiographical thing I think, but what I liked when I was working on it was the colourations, because when I started putting it all together I started to notice it moved through this spectrum of colour. When I was reading some things from Bertiaux and I found this concept of perichoresis, this idea of matter and information forming a choreographed pattern and shape, and that being reflected in art and science and so on, and that was a fascinating idea, and really I tried to bring that out in that piece, because it moves in that way that brings all these images out. It's like a perichoresis. It's these shapes and patterns and images coming through, changing and evolving all the time its very visual, it's got a lot of symbolism in there.

The thing with Jarry I noticed was that there was a lot of similarity in some ways with Bertiaux's drawings in his [Bertiaux's] early kind of black and white images, the kind of symbols and so on, with snakes, magical images, alchemical images, were there in Jarry's things as well. Because Jarry was interested in that kind of symbolism: the Indian *Upanishads*, hermeticism, alchemical notions and teratology. He really had a hell of an insight into all of these things. An amazing amount of information that Jarry brought in, especially in *Faustroll*, he brings in. There's a massive amount of stuff, incredible things, and he postulates these ideas about different universes about different possibilities, the pataphysical notions are incredible expansions of knowledge in a way. They kind of throw our ideas up and make us think in a different way. And they are finding that actually, Jarry is probably right, there are these incredible weird, odd things in the universe: anti-matter (laughs).

JS: The way in which Jarry talks about pataphysics as the science of universes other than this one is fantastic.[17] Obviously you are drawing a parallel between this and meontology.

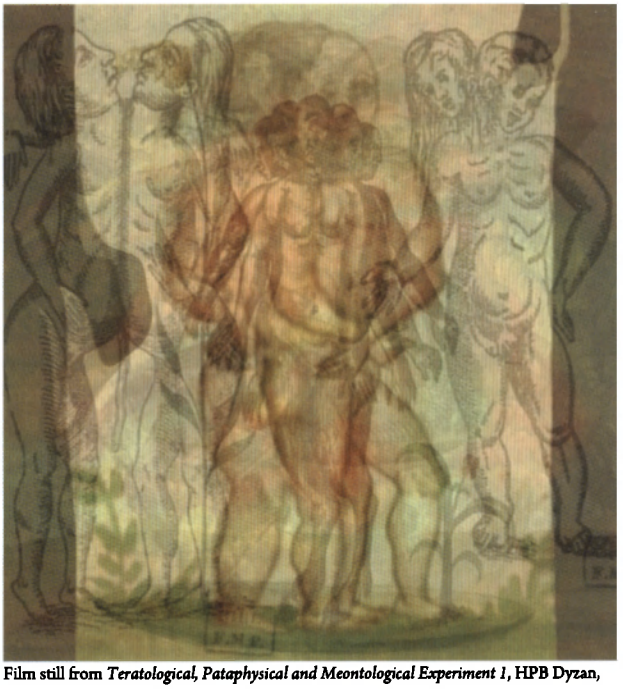
AN: Definitely. Bertiaux himself talks about pataphysics and so on, so he's aware of all that stuff. It's a very strong imaginative magic, that extreme individuals like Jarry were able to access, write about and create with. He had access to worlds that we didn't have at that time, he went in and documented it and made us aware of it, so yeah, in some sense, you can draw parallels between these kind of people that are accessing areas and pulling in information from different places and really re-focusing those things and bringing them out so that people can see them. I thought that they seemed to naturally work together for me. In a paradigm the content of each artist has a similarity, that's kind of intuitive and is there in the first instance.

JS: One thing I am interested in is that you have multiple images happening simultaneously, double exposures, playing over each other, what draws you to that doubling and tripling of layers of images?
AN: The way I have been working particularly with those pieces it is a kind of Chorozonic idea, in that you have got this mass of images. If you think of Choronzon as something that contains everything, Choronzon represents dispersion, and you are confronted with this immense thing which you can't comprehend and it is full of everything, and it is full of all the things, all of the images that we can possibly think of all coming out at the same time, it's like representing that in some ways. You have got this incredibly morphology of form that is continuously changing.

It's similar in some senses to the *Burning Water*, it's a kind of Rorschach Test but it's much more complex because it's always changing all the time. It's continuously morphing in different ways, so each time you see it you're going to see something else, you're going to see different things, you'll never see the same thing, not in *Burning Water*. I've watched it for fifteen years and I still don't know all of the things in it, because what I could do is make different stills of each one and they'd all be different. Even if I could take 24 frames from it, and do that all the way through for thousands and thousands of images, they'd all be different and changing all the time you watch it, it kind of overlaps so you can never get the same thing, and your mind as well – how it perceives it – is going to be different according to how you feel or your mental outlook that day. Or how you are thinking about something else. Or how you are feeling that day. Then that's going to affect it.

JS: So how long does it take to make one of these films, with all the layers of images, and programming and so on?

AN: A hell of a long time [*laughs*], it's a process and I have to go through this process of doing it. And it's just really time consuming and it's slow because I am having to take each thing and build it up, then



Film still from *Teratological, Pataphysical and Meontological Experiment 1*, HPB Dyzan, TAGC

build it up, then build it up, so each time it's getting more and more… I have to speed them up so I get the right kind of change and right kind of feel and flow because two less and its not enough and two many and it is too much.

JS: Yes, because the density of images you are working with is immense. Just watching how dense the iconography is and the references, it's a huge piece of work.

AN: It is. It's taken a long time. I wouldn't want to say how many hours. It's just a process that you need to do. It just takes that length of time to do, and you have to keep doing it in a way to get it to the level you want, it's very slow and methodological but you have to keep doing it, [you] feel things start to happen and you know you are on the right track, and you can develop it more. You might need to bring in more visuals, or it might suggest something else, or I might see something that needs to come in, there's a hell of a lot of images in there.

JS: To what extent are you practicing magical rituals and so on while you are creating the work?

AN: Practising magic? I suppose it is in a way, but in a individualistic way, the process of creation is more of a process of alchemical distillation, trying to get to what Rabelais described as the 'marrow' – that mysterious essence within the bone, you are using symbols or paintings, and they are all symbolic or have meanings either representational or abstracted images, so when you are working with those you are putting them together in a certain sequence or formulae and evoking an idea, evoking a certain image or feel, it is a magickal process. It's like working with sigils I guess. These are like sigils, like lots and lots and lots of them. Or talismans to consecrate, fulfil. Whatever you want to call them. All working together to create one huge invocation I guess. That's the intention certainly.

Notes

1. Genesis P-Orridge aka Genesis Breyer P-Orridge, co-founder of Coum Transmissions, Throbbing Gristle and Psychic TV, magickal artist, writer and theoretician. John Balance aka Jhon Balance, founder of Coil and member of the first line-up of Psychic TV. See David Keenan *England's Hidden Reverse* (London: SAF Publishing, 2003) 30.
2. Antonin Artaud, dissident surrealist author, devisor of the Theatre Of Cruelty and dramatist.
3. For example, Colin Wilson, *The Occult: A History* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971) and *Aleister Crowley: The Nature of the Beast* (Wellingborough: The Aquarian Press, 1987).
4. Otto Muehl (aka Otto Muhl) is best known as one of the artists associated with the Vienna Aktionists, whose works were notorious for their examinations of corporality, psychology, sexuality and transgression. Muehl's performances positioned the body as the centre of artistic experience. For more on Muhl's work see *Atlas Arkhive Seven Documents of the Avant-Garde: Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler Writings of the Vienna Actionists* (London: Atlas Press, 1999).
5. The PTI performance at the Leadmill combined a thematic fascination with De Sade, performance art and Thelema with the sensory overload of strobe lights, film and bags of offal, all scored by tape loops. Footage from the event is included in the excellent 2009 Sheffield music documentary *The Beat Is The Law Part 1* directed by Eve Wood.
6. For more on The Temple of Psychic Youth see Genesis P-Orridge, *Thee Psychick Bible* (Port Townsend: Feral House, 2010).
7. Newton subsequently expands on this, drawing attention to its etymology, observing that it is 'a word derived from Greek: *peri* 'around' + *choreio* 'dance.' For the Greeks 'dancing' wasn't the rhythmic body movements we associate with dance . It was more like a ballet. 'Choreography' is a lot closer to the idea – in which particular movements are carefully planned and executed.'
8. Newton writes via email: 'Meon (MAON=l66) in Arab myth was 'The Throne of Bel in the Heavens.' The word also signifies the vulva, which typifies, like the vesica piscis, the Gateway _ in this case the gate of ingress for alien forces. Its number, 166, denotes Caligo maxima, the deepest darkness (of Outer Space). The Beth-Baal-Meon, according to Inman, was 'a temple of lascivious rites,' which suggests the formula of Agape (93).'
9. In a subsequent email Newton draws attention to Brion Gysin's *Notes On Painting*, 'An artist who is interested in all the structural problems of sensation and who examines with great objectivity and curiosity the possibility of sensorial enrichment innate in the perceptive capacity of man. His search, in short, is parascientific; he ventures into very particular areas, not limiting himself to theoretical discussion, as the dadaists did, but going into an actual examination of the semantic links to which we entrust ourselves daily with our senses. Obsessive repetition, the upsetting of our relationships, unconventional stimuli etc., constitute the instruments that permit us to examine the novelty of the reflexes of our conscience, and therefore also the novelty of the ways that they reveal themselves.'
10. The Master Musicians of Joujouka are the Sufi musical group best known for their performance of ritual music during the ceremony of the Boujeloud, see my 'The Rites Of Boujeloud,' *Fortean Times*, (London: Denis Publishing, Nov 2006).
11. Clark Ashton Smith (1893-1961) was a science fiction author, best known for his contributions to *Weird Tales*, and similar publications, alongside HP Lovecraft and others. Part of Lovecraft's circle, Smith's work was influenced by Lovecraft's Cthulu mythos.
12. Almost certainly the short story 'A Star-Change' (1930) which details an operation to enable a man to experience the senses necessary for existence on a new world.
13. Adi Newton and Jane Radion Newton, 'The Denisens of Beyond.'
14. Carl (aka Karl) Ludwig von Reichbach (1788-1869), posited the Odic force as a universal force, parallels can also be drawn with Vedantic notion of prana.
15. Released as: *Psychophysicist Psychophysicists, Side Effects*, 1996.
16. Alfred Jarry, legendary play write and author of, amongst others, *Gestes et Opinions du Docteur Faustroll, Pataphysicien* (1911) and the notorious play *Ubu Roi* (1896).
17. The correct reference is 'Pataphysics will examine the laws governing exceptions, and will explain the universe supplementary to this one; or, less ambitiously, will describe a universe which can be – and perhaps should be – envisioned in the place of the traditional one...' cited in Roger Shattock and Simon Watson Taylor, eds, *Selected Works* (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd, 1980) 192.

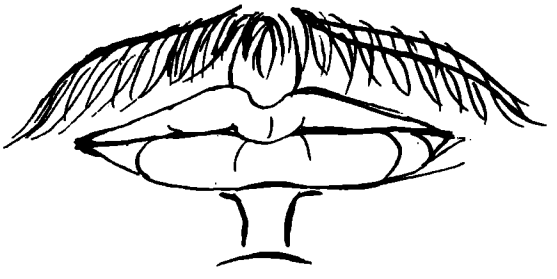
Burning Water and *The Delivery* DVD is available via: www.anteriorresearch.com

TAGC are scheduled to perform a special premier of *The Meontological Research Recordings Transmission from the Trans-Yoggothian Broadcast Station* on 10.06.2011 at the Pantheon/Kuppelhalle Leipzig, Germany.
Clock DVA will also perform at this event.

A six album vinyl box set and hardcover book exploring Clock DVA's pre-*White Souls* recordings is due for release in 2011.

The Habit of Perfection.

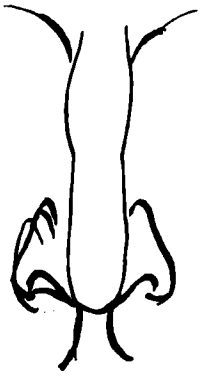
Elected silence, sing to me
And beat upon my whorled ear,
Pipe me to pastures still, and be
The music that I care to hear.



Shake nothing, lips; be lovely-dumb:
It is the shut, the curfew sent
From there where all surrenders come
Which only makes you eloquent.

Be shelled, eyes, with double dark
And find the uncreated light:
This ruck & reel which you remark
Coils, keeps, & teases simple sight.

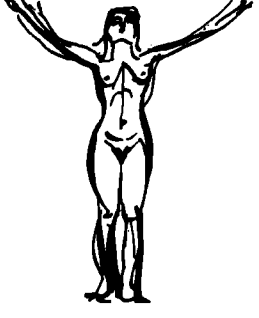
Palate, the hatch of tasty Lust,
Desire not to be rinsed with wine:
The can must be so sweet, the cost
So great that comes in taste divine!



Nostrils, your careless breath that spend
Upon the stir & Keep of pride,
What relish shall the censers send
Along the sanctuary side!

O Leaf-of-primrose hands, O feet
That want the yield of plushy sward,
But you shall tread the golden street,
And you inhouse & house the Lord.

And, Poverty, be thou the bride
And now the marriage feast begun,
And lily-colored clothes provide
Your spouse not eaglored at nor spun.



The Habit of Perfection

Ithell Colquhoun

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And beat upon my whorled ear
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Palate, the hatch of tasty lust,
Desire not to be rinsed with wine:
The can must be so sweet, the crust
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And you unhouse and house the hood

And, Poverty, be thou the bride
And now the marriage feast begun,
And lily-coloured clothes provide
Your spouse not labored-at nor spun

Holograph reproduced from an original sketchbook by the artist, c.1940.

Knowledge

T. Thorn Coyle

How does one speak
Of the crossing of that
Chasm of Birth and Knowing
When we think of it as Death,
And Death it is, yet Birth becoming?

There are no words for the rending
Of personality and soul.
There are no words for bliss and fear.
There are no words for patterns seen brand new.

The light descends again, and fills the darkness.

You risk everything: marriage, friendships, reputation, perhaps even your sanity. The tugging at your soul just won't let go, won't allow you to say 'no,' though your consciousness tells you that you still have a choice. Everything begins to change. Your practice increases, until that is practically all you do. Meditate, align, journey, journal, make ritual in the night. Oh, and work, eat, sleep, and sometimes talk to friends. But gone for now are the movies and concerts and anything extraneous. Maybe they'll come back some day (when you reach the other side, eventually, they do). One day, the Guardian descends. The Sahasrara chakra opens a permanent door. You are surrounded once again by light, the same light you glimpsed all those years before, near the trailhead of this journey.

And the fun begins. All those things you knew you were risking begin to shake themselves apart. Some will reform and others topple into rubble, never to be rebuilt or regained. This is terrible. This is hideous. This is glorious. Life moves through you in ways you never knew it could. Your whole being is suffused with power. But is it worth the price? There is a larger risk that can be taken here. Pain. How fully will you commit to the magic that rends, upends, and reshapes your body and your soul? Energy hums through your skin, from everywhere around you: cell phones, lamp posts, humans, sun, and trees. Food tastes like sand and ash. You lose weight at an alarming rate, paring down to aether. Friends and students grow concerned. Some fight you. You listen. You struggle. You spend hours in contemplation, trying to discern. Marriage gone. One friendship broken forever. You must move forward. There is nothing as important as this Light in Extension, this light that reveals every fissure in the universe and every crack in your heart.

All of your seeking – bookstore expeditions, late night reading, early morning chanting, teachers, practice – has led you to this place. Your ego is subdued by the sheer force of it all. Someone says to you, 'I need to tell you, I know what is happening. You are not crazy.' You step off a cliff, with a keening sound that rises from your throat...

You come back changed.

Every pattern of light on plastic is an opening. The clouds are invitations. The colors of the paintings, the sounds of honking horns, the scent and taste of food heating in a kitchen... everything is new. Everything is part of God Herself. Everything is You. Everything is in this Light. This luminosity. This liberation. You are become the Light in Extension. Not this. Not that. Floating. Spreading. Now.

At night, the Teachers come. You will relearn the paths of severity and mercy. You will relearn the deeper patterns they call love within the realm of beauty. You will cycle through again, and back to understanding. Sorrow and bliss become the openers of the way.

Nothing is different. Nothing will ever be the same. Each cell in your body is seeded now, with light.

I am the bell resounding in the sky. I am the liberation of each heart.

Giovanni Battista Della Porta. From *Magia Naturalis sive De Miraculis Rerum Naturalium*, Book II, Chapter XXVI (1558 AD)

WITCHES' OINTMENT

Despite their mixing it up with a good deal of superstition, it is clear to the observer that these things can occur as a result of Nature's own power. I shall repeat what I have been told by them.

By boiling baby's fat in a copper pot, they remove the water, condensing the remainder. They then store it, to later boil again before use.
With this substance, they mix in
- parsley (hemlock?)
- aconite, also called monk's hood
- poplar leaves
- soot

Or, alternatively
- water parsnip (water hemlock?)
- sweet myrtle, also called sweet flag or calamus
- cinquefoil
- bat's blood
- deadly nightshade
- and oil.

And if they mix in other various substances, they differ only a little.

Then they smear all their body parts, first rubbing them to redden and warm them, and to soften them, as they had been stiff with cold. When the flesh is relaxed and the pores opened up, they apply the fat (or the substituted oil) - so that the potency of the juices can penetrate all the better, and be stronger and more effective, I do not doubt.

And thus on a moonlit night they see themselves transported through the air to banquets, music, dances and to have sex with the beautiful youths they most long for.

LAMIARUM VNGUENTA

Quæ quanquam ipsæ superstitionis plurimum admiscent, naturali tamen vi euenire patet intuenti: quæque ab eis acceperim, referam.

Puerorum pinguedinem ahæno vase decoquendo ex aqua capiunt, inspissando quod ex elixatione vltimum, nouissimumque subsidet, inde condunt, continuoque inseruiunt vsui: cum hac immiscent eleoselinum, aconitum, frondes populneas, & fuliginem.

Vel ALITER sic: Sium, acorum vulgare, pentaphyllon, vespertilionis sanguinem, solanum somniferum, & oleum,

& si diuersa commiscent, ab iis non parum dissidebunt, simul conficiunt,

partes omnes perungunt, eas antea perfricando, ut rubescant, & reuocetur calor, rarumque fiat, quod erat frigore concretum: Vt relaxetur caro, aperiantur pori, adipem adiungunt, vel oleum ipsius vicem subiens, vt succorum vis intro descendat, & fiat potior, vegetiorque: id esse in causam non dubium reor.

Sic non illuni nocte per aera deferri videntur, conuiuia, sonos, tripudia, & formosorum iuuenum concubitus, quos maximè exoptant.

Commentary

One of the most famous recipes for witches' flying ointments was published by a 23 year old Italian scholar, Giovanni Battista Della Porta (c. 1538-1615), in his 1558 *Magia Naturalis*.

From his youthful publication of *Natural Magic*, Della Porta went on to a lifelong career exploring the science and magic of his day: cryptography, botany, chiromancy, astronomy, hydraulics, optics, alchemy, mathematics, mnemonics, physiognomy, and ballistics. In 1589, Della Porta issued a much expanded and developed version of *Magia Naturalis*, 31 years after the first edition. The flying ointment recipe presented here appears in the early, short version. Della Porta offers an entheogenic explanation of the witches' flight: the ointment, he says, creates hypnotic, hallucinogenic, dreams: the user believes she is flying physically, but is actually instead doing so in the sphere of the imagination. Such a view was held by a good number of others in that period, including the author of the *Sacred Book of Abramelin the Mage*. In 1558 the witch hunts were in full flow across Europe. Della Porta opposed them, seeing them as irrational frenzied attacks upon innocent, or deluded, or mentally unwell people. This recipe is part of that agenda, part of an argument that witches' flight was not the produce of demonic activity but rather of natural biochemical reactions. One fanatical witch-hunter, Jean Bodin, condemned Della Porta for publishing the recipe. In his highly influential witch-hunting manual, *Demonomanie des sorciers* (1580), Bodin claimed Della Porta, in publishing it, was promoting demonic pact-making witchcraft. Della Porta deleted the recipe from his later, expanded, 1589 edition. That hallucinogenic unguents were actually used in this period is not agreed: though Michael Harner argued in favour, a strong case is made against, as seen in the work of Roy Booth and Sarah Penicka-Smith. What is undisputed, however, is that some twentieth-century witches have made extensive research and production of flying ointments in private home laboratories, and tried them out on themselves to great effect.

Christina Oakley Harrington

Fossil Angels

Alan Moore

Regard the world of magic. A scattering of occult orders which, when not attempting to disprove each other's provenance, are either cryogenically suspended in their ritual rut, their game of Aiwaz Says, or else seem lost in some Dungeons & Dragons sprawl of channelled spam, off mapping some unfalsifiable and thus completely value/less new universe before they've demonstrated that they have so much as a black/lacquered fingernail's grip on the old one. Self/consciously weird transmissions from Tourette's/afflicted entities, from glossolalic Hammer horrors. Fritzed/out scrying bowls somehow receiving trailers from the Sci/Fi channel. Far too many secret chiefs, and, for that matter, far too many secret indians.

Beyond this, past the creaking gates of the illustrious societies, dilapidated fifty/year/old follies where they start out with the plans for a celestial palace but inevitably end up with the Bates Motel, outside this there extends the mob. The psyche pikeys. Incoherent roar of our hermetic home/crowd, the Akashic anoraks, the would/be wiccans and Temple uv Psychic Forty/Somethings queuing up with pre/teens for the latest franchised fairyland, realm of the irretrievably hobbituated. Pottersville.

Exactly how does this confirm an aeon of Horus, aeon of anything except more Skinner/box consumerism, gang/ster statecraft, mind/to/the/grindstone materialism? Is what seems almost universal knee/jerk acquiescence to conser/vative ideals truly a sign of rampant Theleme? Is Cthulhu coming back, like, anytime soon, or are the barbarous curses from the outer dark those of Illuminists trying to find their arses with a flashlight? Has contemporary western occultism accomplished anything that is measur/able outside the séance parlour? Is magic of any definable use to the human race other than offering an opportunity for dressing up? Tantric tarts and vicars at Thelemic theme nights. *Pentagrams In Their Eyes*. 'Tonight, Matthew, I will be the Logos of the Aeon.' Has magic demonstrated a purpose, justified its existence in the way that art or science or agriculture justify their own? In short, does anyone have the first clue what we are doing, or precisely why we're doing it?

Certainly, magic has not always been so seemingly divorced from all immediate human function. Its Palae/olithic origins in shamanism surely represented, at that time, the only human means of mediation with a largely hostile universe upon which we as yet exerted very little understanding or control. Within such circumstances it is easy to conceive of magic as originally representing a one/stop reality, a worldview in which all the other strands of our existence...hunting, procreation, dealing with the elements or cave/wall painting...were subsumed. A science of everything, its relevance to ordinary mammalian concerns both obvious and undeniable.

This role, that of an all/inclusive 'natural philosophy,' obtained throughout the rise of classical civilization and could still be seen, albeit in more furtive fashion, as late as the sixteenth century, when the occult and mundane sciences were not yet so distinguishable as they are today. It would be surprising, for example, if John Dee did not allow his knowledge of astrology to colour his invaluable contributions to the art of navigation, or vice/versa. Not until the Age of Reason gradually prevented our belief in and thus contact with the gods that had sustained our predecessors did our fledgling sense of rationality identify the supernatural as a mere vestigial organ in the human corpus, obsolete and possibly diseased, best excised quickly.

Science, grown out of magic, magic's gifted, pushy offspring, its most practical and thus materially profitable

application, very soon decided that the ritual and symbolic lumber of its alchemic parent-culture was redundant, an encumbrance and an embarrassment. Puffed up in its new white lab coat, ballpoints worn like medals at the breast, science came to be ashamed in case its mates (history, geography, P.E.) caught it out shopping with its mum, with all her mumbling and chanting. Her third nipple. Best that she be nutted off to some secure facility, some Fraggle Rock for elderly and distressed paradigms.

The rift this caused within the human family of ideas seemed irrevocable, with two parts of what had once been one organism sundered by reductionism, one inclusive 'science of everything' become two separate ways of seeing, each apparently in bitter, vicious opposition to the other. Science, in the process of this acrimonious divorce, might possibly be said to have lost contact with its ethical component, with the moral basis necessary to prevent it breeding monsters. Magic, on the other hand, lost all demonstrable utility and purpose, as with many parents once the kid's grown up and gone. How do you fill the void? The answer, whether we are talking about magic or of mundane, moping mums and dads with empty nests, is, in all likelihood, 'with ritual and nostalgia.'

The magical resurgence of the nineteenth century, with its retrospective and essentially romantic nature, would seem to have been blessed with both these factors in abundance. Whilst it's difficult to overstate the contributions made to magic as a field by, say, Eliphas Lévi or the various magicians of the Golden Dawn, it's just as hard to argue that these contributions were not overwhelmingly synthetic, in that they aspired to craft a synthesis of previously existing lore, to formalise the variegated wisdoms of the ancients.

It does not belittle this considerable accomplishment if we observe that magic, during those decades, was lacking in the purposeful immediacy, the pioneering rush characterising, for example, Dee and Kelly's work. In their development of the Enochian system, late Renaissance magic would seem typified as urgently creative and experimental, forward-looking. In comparison, the nineteenth century occultists seem almost to have shifted magic into a revered past tense, made it a rope-railed museum exhibit, an archive, with themselves as sole curators.

All the robes and the regalia, with their whiff of the historical re-enactment crowd, a seraphic Sealed Knot Society, only with fractionally less silly-looking gear. The worryingly right-wing consensus values and the number of concussed and stumbling casualties, upon the other hand, would probably have been identical. The rites of the exalted magic orders and the homicidal beered-up maulings of the Cromwell tribute-bands are also similar in that both gain in poignancy by being juxtaposed against the grim, relentless forward trundle of industrial reality. Beautifully painted wands, obsessively authentic pikes, held up against the bleak advance of chimney-stacks. How much of this might be most accurately described as compensatory fantasies of the machine age? Role-playing games which only serve to underline the brutal fact that these activities no longer have contemporary human relevance. A wistful recreation of long-gone erotic moments by the impotent.

Another clear distinction between the magicians of the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries lies in their relation to the fiction of their day. The brethren of the early Golden Dawn would seem to be inspired more by the sheer romance of magic than by any other aspect, with S.L. McGregor Mathers lured into the craft by his desire to live out Bulwer-Lytton's fantasy *Zanoni*. Encouraged Moina to refer to him as 'Zan,' allegedly. Woodford and Westcott, on the other hand, anxious to be within an order that had even more paraphernalia than Rosicrucian Masonry, somehow acquire a contact in the fabled (literally) ranks of the *Geltische Dammerung*, which means something like 'golden tea-time.' They are handed their diplomas from Narnia, straight out the back of the wardrobe. Or there's Alex Crowley, tiresomely attempting to persuade his school-chums to refer to him as Shelley's Alastor, like some self-conscious Goth from Nottingham called Dave insisting that his vampire name is Armand. Or, a short while later, there's all of the ancient witch-cults, all the blood-line covens springing up like children of the dragon's teeth wherever Gerald Gardner's writings were available. The occultists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries all seemed to want to be Aladdin's uncle in some never-ending pantomime. To live the dream.

John Dee, conversely, was perhaps more wilfully awake than any other person of his day. More focussed and more purposeful. He did not need to search for antecedents in the fictions and mythologies available to him, because John Dee was in no sense pretending, was not playing games.

He inspired, rather than was inspired by, the great magic fictions of his times. Shakespeare's Prospero. Marlowe's Faust. Ben Johnson's piss-taking *The Alchemist*. Dee's magic was a living and progressive force, entirely of its moment, rather than some stuffed and extinct specimen, no longer extant save in histories or fairytales. His was a fresh, rip-roaring chapter, written entirely in the present tense, of the ongoing magical adventure. By comparison, the occultists that followed some three centuries down the line were an elaborate appendix, or perhaps a bibliography, after the fact. A preservation league, lip-synching dead men's rituals. Cover versions. Sorcerous karaoke. Magic, having given up or had usurped its social function, having lost its *raison d'etre*, its crowd-pulling star turn, found itself with just the empty theatre, the mysterious curtains. Dusty hampers of forgotten frocks, unfathomable props from cancelled dramas. Lacking a defined role, grown uncertain of its motivations, magic seems to have had no recourse save sticking doggedly to the established script, enshrining each last cough and gesture, the by-now hollow performance freeze-dried, shrink-wrapped; artfully repackaging itself for English Heritage.

How unfortunate, then, that it was this moment in the history of magic, with content and function lost beneath an over-detailed ritual veneer, all mouth and trousers, which the later orders chose to crystallise about. Without a readily apparent aim or mission, no marketable commodity, the nineteenth century occultist would seem instead to lavish an inordinate amount of his attention on the fancy wrapping paper. Possibly unable to conceive of any group not structured in the hierarchical manner of the lodges that they were accustomed to, Mathers and Westcott dutifully imported all the old Masonic heirlooms when it came to furnishing their fledgling order. All the outfits, grades and implements. The mindset of a secret and elite society. Crowley, of course, took all this heavy and expensive-looking luggage with him when he jumped ship to create his O.T.O., and all orders since then, even purportedly iconoclastic enterprises such as, say, the I.O.T., would seem to have eventually adopted the same High Victorian template. Trappings of sufficient drama, theories intricate enough to draw attention from what the uncharitable might perceive as lack of any practical result, any effect upon the human situation.

The fourteenth (and perhaps final?) issue of the estimable Joel Biroco's *KAOS* magazine featured a reproduction of a painting, a surprisingly affecting and hauntingly beautiful work from the brush of Marjorie Cameron, scary redhead, Dennis Hopper and Dean Stockwell's housemate, putative Scarlet Woman, top Thelemic totty. Almost as intriguing as the work itself, however, is the title: *Fossil Angel*, with its contradictory conjurings of something marvellous, ineffable and transitory combined with that which is by definition dead, inert and petrified. Is there a metaphor available to us in this, both sobering and instructive? Could not all magical orders, with their doctrines and their dogmas, be interpreted as the unmoving calcified remains of something once intangible and full of grace, alive and mutable? As energies, as inspirations and ideas that danced from mind to mind, evolving as they went until at last the limestone drip of ritual and repetition froze them in their tracks, stopped them forever halfway through some reaching, uncompleted gesture? Trilobite illuminations. Fossil angels.

Something inchoate and ethereal once alighted briefly, skipping like a stone across the surface of our culture, leaving its faint, tenuous impression in the human clay, a footprint that we cast in concrete and apparently remain content to genuflect before for decades, centuries, millennia. Recite the soothing and familiar lullabies or incantations word for word, then carefully restage the old, beloved dramas, and perhaps something will happen, like it did before. Stick cotton-reels and tinfoil on that cardboard box, make it look vaguely like a radio and then maybe John Frumm, he come, bring helicopters back? The occult order, having made a fetish out of pageants that passed by or were rained off some half-a-century ago, sits like Miss Haversham and wonders if the beetles in the wedding cake in any way confirm *Liber Al vel Legis*.

Once again, none of this is intended to deny the contribution that the various orders and their works have made to magic as a field, but merely to observe that this admittedly considerable contribution is of, largely, a custodial nature in its preservation of past lore and ritual, or else that its elegant synthesis of disparate teachings is its principal (perhaps only) achievement. Beyond such accomplishments, however, the abiding legacy of nineteenth century occult culture would seem mostly antithetical to the continued health, proliferation and ongoing viability of magic, which, as a technology, has surely long outgrown

its ornate late-Victorian vase and is in dire need of transplanting. All of the faux-Masonic furniture and scaffolding imported by Westcott and Mathers, basically for want of being able to imagine any other valid structure, has, by our own period, become a limitation and impediment to magic's furtherance. Leftover hoodwinks, too-tight ceremonial sashes that constrain all growth, restrict all thought, limit the ways in which we conceive of, or can conceive of, magic. Mimicking the constructs of the past, thinking in terms that are today not necessarily applicable – perhaps they never really were – seems to have rendered modern occultism utterly incapable of visualizing any different method by which it might organise itself; unable to imagine any progress, any evolution, any *future*, which is probably a sure-fire means of guaranteeing that it doesn't have one.

If the Golden Dawn is often held up as a paragon, a radiant exemplar of the perfect and successful order, this is almost certainly because its ranks included many well-known writers of proven ability and worth whose membership loaned the society more credibility than it would ever, by return, afford to them. The luminous John Coulthart has suggested that the Golden Dawn might be most charitably regarded as a literary society, where slumming scribes searched for a magic that they might have found demonstrable and evident, already there alive and functioning in their own work, were they not blinded by the glare of all that ceremony, all of that fantastic kit.

One author who quite clearly contributed more that was of real magical value to the world through his own fiction than through any operations at the lodge was Arthur Machen. While admitting to his great delight at all the mystery and marvel of the order's secret ceremonies, Machen felt compelled to add when writing of the Golden Dawn in his autobiography, *Things Near and Far*, that 'as for anything vital in the secret order, for anything that mattered two straws to any reasonable being, there was nothing in it, and less than nothing ... the society as a society was pure foolishness concerned with impotent and imbecile Abracadabras. It knew nothing whatever about anything and concealed the fact under an impressive ritual and a sonorous phraseology.' Astutely, Machen notes the seemingly inverse relationship between genuine content and baroque, elaborate form characterizing orders of this nature, a critique as relevant today as it was then, in 1923.

The territory of magic, largely abandoned as too hazardous since Dee and Kelly's period, was staked out and reclaimed (when that was safe to do) by nineteenth century occult enthusiasts, by middle-class suburbanites who turned the sere, neglected turf into a series of exquisitely appointed ornamental gardens. Decorative features, statues and pagodas of great intricacy, were contrived in imitation of some over-actively imagined priesthood past. Terminal gods among the neat beds of azaleas.

The problem is that gardeners sometimes quarrel. Boundary disputes. Tenant vendettas and evictions, moonlight flits. Once-enviable properties are boarded up, are often squatted by new problem families, new cabals. Hang on to the old nameplate, keep the same address but let the place go, and allow its grounds to fall into a state of disrepair. Slugs in the moly, bindweed spreading out amongst twenty-two-petal roses. By the nineteen-nineties, magic's landscape garden was a poorly maintained sprawl of tired, low-yield allotments with bad drainage, paintwork peeling on the cod-Egyptian summer houses, now become mere sheds where paranoid Home Counties vigilantes sat awake all night, nursing their shotguns and expecting teenage vandals. There's no produce that's worth mentioning. The flowers are without perfume and no longer manage to enchant. Y'know, it were all fancy lamens and Enochian chess round here once, and now look at it. The straggly hedgerows with their Goetic topiary as parched as tinder, dry rot in that Rosicrucian-look gazebo's listing timbers. What this place could do with is a good insurance fire.

No, seriously. Scorched earth. It has a lot to recommend it. Think how it would look when all the robes and banners caught. Might even take out that whole *Mind, Body, and Spirit* eyesore if the wind were in the right direction. Loss of life and livelihood would of course be inevitable, some collateral damage in the business sector, but it sure would be real pretty. Temple beams collapsing in a gout of sparks. 'Forget me! Save the cipher manuscripts!' Amongst the countless Gnostic Masses, oaths and calls and banishings, whatever caused them to forget one lousy fire drill? Nobody's quite certain how they should evacuate the inner plane, don't even know how many might still be in there. Finally there emerge heart-wrenching tales of individual bravery. 'H-He went back in to rescue the LAM drawing, and we couldn't stop

him.' Afterwards, a time for tears, for counselling. Bury the dead, appoint successors. Crack open the seal on Hymenaeus Gamma. Cast a rueful eye across our blackened acres. Take it one day at a time, sweet Jesus. Blow our noses, pull ourselves together. Somehow we'll get through.

What then? Scorched earth, of course, is rich in nitrates and provides a basis for slash-and-burn agriculture. In charred dirt, the green shoots of recovery. Life boils up indiscriminately, churning from black soil. We could give all of these once-stately lawns and terraces back to the wilderness. Why not? Think of it as astral environmentalism, the reclaiming of a psychic greenbelt from beneath the cracked Victorian occult paving-slabs, as an encouragement to increased metaphysical biodiversity. Considered as an organizing principle for magic work, the complex and self-generating fractal structure of a jungle would seem every bit as viable as all the spurious imposed chessboard order of a tiled lodge floor; would seem, in fact, considerably more natural and vital. After all, the traffic of ideas that is the essence and lifeblood of magic is more usually transacted these days by bush telegraph of one kind or another, rather than as ritual secrets solemnly attained after long years of cramming, Hogwarts' CSEs. Hasn't this rainforest mode of interacting been, in fact, the default setting of practical western occultism for some time now? Why not come out and admit it, bulldoze all these lean-to clubhouses that are no longer any use nor ornament, embrace the logic of lianas? Dynamite the dams, ride out the flood, allow new life to flourish in the previously moribund endangered habitats.

In occult culture's terms, new life equates to new ideas. Fresh-hatched and wriggling, possibly poisonous conceptual pollywogs, these brightly-coloured pests must be coaxed into our new immaterial eco-system if it is to flourish and remain in health. Let us attract the small ideas that flutter, neon-bright but frail, and the much tougher, more resilient big ideas that eat them. If we're fortunate, the feeding frenzy might draw the attention of huge raptor paradigms that trample everything and shake the earth. Ferocious notions, from the most bacterially tiny to the staggeringly big and ugly, all locked into an unsupervised glorious and bloody struggle for survival, a spectacular Darwinian clusterfuck.

Lame doctrines find themselves unable to outrun the sleek and toothy killer argument. Mastodon dogmas, elderly and slipping down the food-chain, buckling and collapsing under their own weight to make a meal for carrion memorabilia salesmen, somewhere for that droning buzz of chat-room flies to lay their eggs. Memetic truffles grown up from a mulch of decomposing Aeons. Vivid revelations sprung like London Rocket from the wild, untended bombsite sprawl. Panic Arcadia, horny, murderous and teeming. Supernatural selection. The strongest, best-adapted theorems are allowed to thrive and propagate, the weak are sushi. Surely this is hardcore Theleme in action, as well as representing a productive and authentic old-skool Chaos that should warm the heart of any Thanateroid. From such vigorous application of the evolutionary process, it is difficult to see how magic as a field of knowledge could do otherwise than benefit.

For one thing, by accepting a less cultivated, less refined milieu where competition might be fierce and noisy, magic would be doing no more than exposing itself to the same conditions that pertain to its more socially-accepted kinfolk, science and art. Put forward a new theory to explain the universe's missing mass, submit some difficult conceptual installation for the Turner Prize and be in no doubt that your offering will be subjected to the most intensive scrutiny, much of it hostile and originating from some rival camp. Each particle of thought that played a role in the construction of your statement will be disassembled and examined. Only if no flaw is found will your work be received into the cultural canon. In all likelihood, sooner or later your pet project, your pet theory, will end up as scattered down and claret decorating the stained walls of these old, merciless public arenas. This is how it should be. Your ideas are possibly turned into road-kill, but the field itself is strengthened and improved by this incessant testing. It progresses and mutates. If our objective truly is advancement of the magic worldview (rather than advancement of ourselves as its instructors), how could anyone object to such a process?

Unless, of course, advancement of this nature is not truly our objective, which returns us to our opening questions: what exactly are we doing and why are we doing it? No doubt some of us are engaged in the legitimate pursuit of understanding, but this begs the question as to why. Do we intend to use this information in some manner, or was it accumulated solely for its own sake, for our private satisfaction? Did we wish, perhaps, to be thought wise, or to

enhance lacklustre personalities with hints of secret knowledge? Was it rank we sought, some standing that might be achieved more readily by a pursuit like occultism where there are, conveniently, no measurable standards that we might be judged by? Or did we align ourselves with Crowley's definition of the magic arts as bringing about change according to one's will, which is to say achieving some measure of power over reality?

This last would, at a guess, provide the motive that is currently most popular. The rise of Chaos magic in the 1980s centred on a raft of campaign promises, most notable amongst these the delivery of a results-based magic system that was practical and user-friendly. Austin Spare's unique and highly personal development of sigil magic, we were told, could be adapted to near-universal application, would provide a simple, sure-fire means by which the heart's desire of anyone could be both easily and instantly accomplished. Putting to one side the question 'Is this true?' (and the attendant query 'If it is, then why are all its advocates still holding down a day-job, in a world grown surely further from the heart's desire of anyone with every passing week?'), we should perhaps ask whether the pursuit of this pragmatic, causal attitude to occult work is actually a worthy use of magic.

If we're honest, most of causal sorcery as it is practiced probably is done so in the hope of realizing some desired change in our gross, material circumstances. In real terms, this probably involves requests for money (even Dee and Kelly weren't above tapping the angels for a fiver every now and then), requests for some form of emotional or sexual gratification, or perhaps on some occasions a request that those we feel have slighted or offended us be punished. In these instances, even in a less cynical scenario where the purpose of the magic is to, say, assist a friend in their recovery from illness, might we not accomplish our objectives far more certainly and honestly by simply taking care of these things on a non-divine material plane?

If, for instance, it is money we require then why not emulate the true example set by Austin Spare (almost unique amongst magicians in that he apparently saw using magic to attract mere wealth as an anathema) regarding such concerns? If we want money, then why don't we magically get off of our fat arses, magically perform some work for once in our sedentary magic lives, and see if the requested coins don't magically turn up some time thereafter in our bank accounts? If it's the affections of some unrequited love-object that we are seeking, the solution is more simple still: slip roofies in her Babycham, then rape her. After all, the moral wretchedness of what you've done will be no worse, and at the very least you won't have dragged the transcendental into things by asking that the spirits hold her down for you. Or if there's someone whom you genuinely feel to be deserving of some awful retribution, then put down that lesser clavicle of Solomon and get straight on the dog and bone to Frankie Razors or Big Stan. The hired goon represents the ethical decision of choice when compared with using fallen angels for one's dirty work (this is assuming that just going round to the guy's house oneself, or maybe even, you know, getting over it and moving on, are not viable options). Even the sick friend example cited earlier: just go and visit them. Support them with your time, your love, your money or your conversation. Christ, send them a card with a sad-looking cartoon bunny on the front. You'll both feel better for it. Purposive and causal magic would too often seem to be about achieving some quite ordinary end without doing the ordinary work associated with it. We might well do better to affirm, with Crowley, that our best and purest actions are those carried out 'without lust of result.'

Perhaps his other famous maxim, where he advocates that we seek 'the aim of religion' utilising 'the method of science,' however well intentioned, might have led the magical community (such as it is) into these fundamental errors. After all, religion's aim, if we examine the word's Latin origins in *religare* (a root shared with other words like 'ligament' and 'ligature'), would seem to imply that it's best if everyone is 'bound in one belief.' This impulse to evangelism and conversion must, in any real-world application, reach a point where those bound by one ligament come up against those tied together by another. At this point, inevitably and historically, both factions will pursue their programmed urge to bind the other in their one and only true belief. So then we massacre the taigs, the prods, the goys, the yids, the kuffirs and the ragheads. And when this historically and inevitably doesn't work, we sit and think about things for a century or two, we leave a decent interval, and then we do it all again, same as before. The aim of religion, while clearly benign, would seem to be off by a mile or two, thrown by the recoil. The target, the thing they were aiming for, stands there unscathed, and

the only things hit are Omagh or Kabul, Hebron, Gaza, Manhattan, Baghdad, Kashmir, Deansgate, and so on, and so on, and so on, forever.

The notion of binding together that lies at the etymological root of religion is also, revealingly, found in the symbolic cluster of bound sticks, the *fasces*, that gives us the later term fascism. Fascism, based upon mystical concepts such as blood and 'volk,' is more properly seen as religion than as a political stance, politics being based upon some form of reason, however misguided and brutal. The shared idea of being bound in one faith, one belief; that in unity (thus, unavoidably, in uniformity) there lies strength, would seem antithetical to magic, which, if anything, is surely personal, subjective and pertaining to the individual, to the responsibility for every sentient creature to reach its own understanding of – and thus make its own peace with – God, the universe and everything. So, if religion can be said to find a close political equivalent in fascism, might magic not be said to have more natural sympathy with anarchy, fascism's opposite (deriving from *an-archon* or 'no leader')? Which of course returns us to the burned-down temples, dispossessed and homeless order heads, the scorched earth and the naturally anarchic wilderness approach to magic, as suggested earlier.

The other half of Crowley's maxim, wherein he promotes the methodology of science would also seem to have its flaws, again, however well intentioned. Being based upon material results, science is perhaps the model that has led the magic arts into their causal cul-de-sac, described above. Further to this, if we accept the ways of science as a procedural ideal to which our magic workings might aspire, aren't we in danger of also adopting a materialist and scientific mindset with regard to the quite different forces that preoccupy the occultist? A scientist who works with electricity, as an example, will quite justifiably regard the energy as value-neutral, mindless power that can as easily be used to run a hospital, or warm a lava-lamp, or fry a black guy with a mental age of nine in Texas. Magic on the other hand, from personal experience, does not seem to be neutral in its moral nature, nor does it seem mindless. On the contrary, it would seem, as a medium, to be aware and actively intelligent, alive rather than live in the third rail sense. Unlike electricity, there is the intimation of a complex personality with almost-human traits, such as, for instance, an apparent sense of humour. Just as well, perhaps, when one considers the parade of prancing ninnies that the field has entertained and tolerated down the centuries. Magic, in short, does not seem to be there merely to power up sigils that are astral versions of the labour saving gadget or appliance. Unlike electricity, it might be thought to have its own agenda.

Quite apart from all this, there are other sound, compelling reasons why it limits us to think of magic as a science. Firstly and most glaringly, it isn't. Magic, after it relinquished any and all practical or worldly application following the twilight of the alchemists, can no more be considered as a true science than can, say, psychoanalysis. However much Freud might have wished it otherwise, however he deplored Jung dragging his purported scientific method down into the black and squirming mud of occultism and magic, psychoanalysis cannot, by definition, ever be allowed a place amongst the sciences. Both deal almost entirely with phenomena of consciousness, phenomena that cannot be repeated in laboratory conditions and which thus exist outside the reach of science, concerned only with things that may be measured and observed, proven empirically. Since consciousness itself cannot be shown to provably exist in scientific terms, then our assertions that said consciousness is plagued either by penis envy or by demons of the Qlippoth must remain forever past the boundary limits of what may be ascertained by rational scrutiny. Frankly, it must be said that magic, when considered as a science, rates somewhere just above that of selecting numbers for the lottery by using loved ones' birthdays.

This would seem to be the crux: magic, if it is a science, clearly isn't a particularly well-developed one. Where, for example, are the magical equivalents of Einstein's General, or even Special theories of Relativity, let alone that of Bohr's Copenhagen Interpretation? Come to that, where are our analogues for laws of gravity, thermodynamics and the rest? Eratosthenes once measured the circumference of the Earth using geometry and shadows. When did we last manage anything as useful or as neat as that? Has there been anything even resembling a general theory since the Emerald Tablet? Once again, perhaps magic's preoccupation with cause and effect has played a part in this. Our axioms seem mostly on the level of 'if we do A then B will happen.' If we say these words or call these names then certain visions will appear to us. As to *how* they do so, well,

who cares? As long as we get a result, the thinking seems to run, why does it matter how this outcome was obtained? If we bang these two flints together for a while they'll make a spark and set all that dry grass on fire. And have you ever noticed how, if you make sure to sacrifice a pig during eclipses, then the sun always returns? Magic is, at best, Palaeolithic science. It really had best put aside that Nobel Prize acceptance speech until it's shaved its forehead.

Where exactly, one might reasonably enquire, does all this leave us? Having recklessly discarded our time-honoured orders or traditions and torn up our statement of intent; having said that magic *should* not be Religion and *can* not be Science, have we taken this Year-Zero Khmer Rouge approach too far, cut our own jugulars with Occam's razor? Now we've pulled down the landmarks and reduced our territory to an undifferentiated wilderness, was this the best time to suggest we also throw away our compass? Now, as night falls on the jungle, we've decided we are neither missionaries nor botanists, but what, then, are we? Prey? Brief squeals in pitch dark? If the aims and methods of science or religion are inevitably futile, ultimately mere dead ends, what other role for magic could conceivably exist? And please don't say it's anything too difficult, because for all the black robes and the spooky oaths, we tend to frighten easily.

If what we do cannot be properly considered as science or religion, would it be provocative to tender the suggestion that we think of magic as an art? Or even The Art, if you like? It's not as if the notion were entirely without precedent. It might even be seen as a return to our shamanic origins, when magic was expressed in masques and mimes and marks on walls, the pictograms that gave us written language so that language could in turn allow us consciousness. Music, performance, painting, song, dance, poetry and pantomime could all be easily imagined as having originated in the shaman's repertoire of mind-transforming magic tricks. Sculpture evolving out of fetish dolls, Willendorf Venus morphing into Henry Moore. Costume design and catwalk fashion, Erté and Yves St. Laurent, arising out of firelit stomps in furs and beads and antlers, throwing shapes designed to startle and arouse. Baroness Thatcher, in her baby-eating prime, suggested that society once more embrace 'Victorian values,' an idea that certainly would seem to have caught on within the magical fraternity. This clearly goes nowhere near far enough, however. Let us call instead for a return towards Cro-Magnon values: more creative and robust, with better hair.

Of course, we need not journey so far back into admittedly speculative antiquity for evidence of the uniquely close relationship enjoyed by art and magic. From the cave-wall paintings at Lascaux, on through Greek statuary and friezes to the Flemish masters, on to William Blake, to the Pre-Raphaelites, the Symbolists and the Surrealists, it is only with increasing rarity that we encounter artists of real stature, be they painter, writer or musician, who have not at some point had recourse to occult thinking, whether that be through the agency of their alleged involvement with some occult or Masonic order, as with Mozart, or through some personally cultivated vision, as with Elgar. Opera has its origins, apparently, in alchemy, originated by its early pioneers like Monteverdi as an art-form that included all the other arts within it (music, words, performance, costumes, painted sets) with the intent of passing on alchemical ideas in their most comprehensively artistic and thus most celestial form.

Likewise, with the visual arts we need not invoke obvious examples of an occult influence such as Duchamp, Max Ernst or Dali, when there are more surprising names such as Picasso (with his youth spent saturated in hashish and mysticism, with his later work preoccupied with then-occult ideas pertaining to the fourth dimension), or the measured squares and rectangles of Mondrian, created to express the notions woken in him by his study of Theosophy. In fact, the greater part of abstract painting can be traced to famed Blavatsky-booster Annie Besant, and the publication of her theory that the rarefied essential energies of Theosophy's rays and currents and vibrations could be represented by intuited and formless swirls of colour, an idea that many artists of a fashionably mystic inclination seized on eagerly.

Literature, meanwhile, is so intrinsically involved with magic's very substance that the two may be effectively considered as the same thing. Spells and spelling, Bardic incantations, grimoires, grammars, magic a 'disease of language' as Aleister Crowley so insightfully described it. Odin, Thoth and Hermes, magic-gods and scribe-gods. Magic's terminology, its symbolism, conjuring and evocation, near-identical to that of poetry. In the beginning was the Word. With magic almost wholly a linguistic

construct, it would seem unnecessary to recite a role-call of the occult's many literary practitioners. In writing, as in painting or in music, an intense and intimate connection to the world of magic is both evident and obvious, appears entirely natural. Certainly, the arts have always treated magic with more sympathy and more respect than science (which, historically, has always sought to prove that occultists are fraudulent or else deluded) and religion (which, historically, has always sought to prove that occultists are flammable). While it shares the social standing and widespread respect afforded to the church or the laboratory, art as a field does not seek to exclude, nor is it governed by a doctrine that's inimical to magic, such as might be said of its two fellow indicators of humanity's cultural progress. After all, while magic has, in relatively recent times, produced few mighty theologians of much note and even fewer scientists, it has produced a wealth of inspired and inspiring painters, poets and musicians. Maybe we should stick with what we know we're good at?

The advantages of treating magic as an art seem at first glance to be considerable. For one thing, there are no entrenched and vested interests capable of mounting an objection to magic's inclusion in the canon, even if they entertained objections in the first place, which is hardly likely. This is patently far from the case with either science or religion, which are by their very natures almost honour-bound to see that magic is reviled and ridiculed, marginalised and left to rust there on history's scrap-heap with the Flat Earth, water-memory and phlogiston. Art, as a category, represents a fertile and hospitable environment where magic's energy could be directed to its growth and progress as a field, rather than channelled into futile struggles for acceptance, or burned uselessly away by marking time to the repeated rituals of a previous century. Another benefit, of course, lies in art's numinosity, its very lack of hard-edged definition and therefore its flexibility. The questions 'what exactly are we doing and why are doing it,' questions of 'method' and of 'aim,' take on a different light when asked in terms of art. Art's only aim can be to lucidly express the human mind and heart and soul in all their countless variations, thus to further human culture's artful understanding of the universe and of itself, its growth towards the light. Art's method is whatever can be even distantly imagined. These parameters of purpose and procedure are sufficiently elastic, surely, to allow inclusion of magic's most radical or most conservative agendas? Vital and progressive occultism, beautifully expressed, that has no obligation to explain or justify itself. Each thought, each line, each image made exquisite for no other purpose than that they be offerings worthy of the gods, of art, of magic itself. The Art for The Art's sake.

Paradoxically, even those occultists enamoured of a scientific view of magic would have cause for celebration at this shift in emphasis. As argued above, magic can never be a science as science is currently defined, which is to say as being wholly based upon repeatable results within the measurable and material world. However, by confining its pursuits entirely to the world of the material, science automatically disqualifies itself from speaking of the inner, immaterial world that is in fact the greater part of our human experience. Science is perhaps the most effective tool that human consciousness has yet developed with which to explore the outer universe, and yet this polished and sophisticated instrument of scrutiny is hindered by one glaring blind-spot in that it cannot examine consciousness itself. Since the late 1990s the most rapidly expanding field of scientific interest is apparently consciousness studies, with two major schools of thought-on-thought thus far emerging, each contending with the other. One maintains that consciousness is an illusion of biology, mere automatic and behaviourist cerebral processes that are dependent on the squirt of glands, the seep of enzymes. While this does not seem an adequate description of the many wonders to be found within the human mind, its advocates are almost certainly backing a winner, having realised that their blunt, materialistic theory is the only one that stands a chance of proving itself in the terms of blunt material science. In the other camp, described as more transpersonal in their approach, the current reigning theorem is that consciousness is some peculiar 'stuff' pervading the known universe, of which each sentient being is a tiny, temporary reservoir. This viewpoint, while it probably elicits greater sympathy from those of occult inclinations, is quite clearly doomed in terms of garnering eventual scientific credibility. Science cannot even properly discuss the personal, so the transpersonal has no chance. These are matters of the inner world, and science cannot go there. This is why it wisely leaves the exploration of mankind's interior to a sophisticated tool that is specifically developed for that usage, namely art.

If magic were regarded as an art it would have culturally valid access to the infrascape, the endless immaterial territories that are ignored by and invisible to Science, that are to scientific reason inaccessible, and thus comprise magic's most natural terrain. Turning its efforts to creative exploration of humanity's interior space might also be of massive human use, might possibly restore to magic all the relevance and purpose, the demonstrable utility that it has lacked so woefully, and for so long. Seen as an art, the field could still produce the reams of speculative theory that it is so fond of (after all, philosophy and rhetoric may be as easily considered arts as sciences), just so long as it were written beautifully or interestingly. While, for example, *The Book of the Law* may be debatable in value when considered purely as prophetic text describing actual occurrences or states of mind to come, it cannot be denied that it's a shit-hot piece of writing, which deserves to be revered as such. The point is that if magic were to drop its unfulfilable pretensions as a science and come out of the closet as an art, it would ironically enough obtain the freedom to pursue its scientific aspirations, maybe even sneak up on some unified field theorem of the supernatural, all in terms acceptable to modern culture. Marcel Duchamp's *magnum opus*, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors*, is more likely to be thought of seriously as genuine alchemy than is the work of whichever poor bastard last suggested that there might be something to cold fusion. Art is clearly a more comfortable environment for magic thinking than is science, with a more relaxing decor, and much better-looking furniture.

Even those damaged souls so institutionalised by membership of magic orders that they can't imagine any kind of lifestyle that does not involve belonging to some secretive, elite cabal need not despair at finding themselves homeless and alone in our proposed new wilderness. Art has no orders, but it does have movements, schools and cliques with all the furtiveness, the snottyness and the elitism that anyone could wish for. Better yet, since differing schools of art are not so energetically competing with each other for the same ground as are magic orders (how can William Holman Hunt, for instance, be said to compete with Miro, or Vermeer?), this should obviate the need for differing schools of occult thought to feud, or snipe, or generally go on like a bunch of sorry Criswell-out-of-*Plan 9*-looking bitches.

Just as there is no need to entirely do without fraternities, then similarly there is no necessity for those who've grown attached to such things to discard their ritual trappings or, indeed, their rituals. The sole requirement is that they approach these matters with a greater creativity, and with a more discerning eye and ear for that which is profound; that which is beautiful, original or powerful. Make wands and seals and lamens fit to stand in exhibitions of outsider art (How hard can that be? Even mental patients qualify), make every ritual a piece of stunning and intense theatre. Whether one considers magic to be art or not, these things should surely scarcely need be said. Who are our private rituals and adornments meant to please, if not the gods? When did they ever give us the impression they'd be pleased by that which was not suitably exquisite or original? Gods, if they're anything at all, are known to be notoriously partial to creation, and may therefore be presumed to be appreciative of human creativity, the closest thing that we've developed to a god-game and our most sublime achievement. To be once more thought of as an art would allow magic to retain all that is best about the field it was, while at the same time offering the opportunity for it to flourish and progress into a future where it might accomplish so much more.

How would this mooted change of premise impact, then, upon our methodology? What shifts of emphasis might be entailed, and could such changes be to the advantage of both magic as a field and us as individuals? If we seriously mean to reinvent the occult as The Art, one basic alteration to our working methods that might yield considerable benefit would be if we resolved to crystallise whatever insights, truths or visions our magical sorties had afforded us into some artefact, something that everybody else could see as well, just for a change. The nature of the artefact, be it a film, a *haiku*, an expressive pencil-drawing or a lush theatrical extravaganza, is completely unimportant. All that matters is that it be art, and that it remain true to its inspiration. Were it adopted, at a stroke, a relatively minor tweak of process such as this might utterly transform the world of magic. Rather than be personally-motivated, crudely causal workings of both dubious intent and doubtful outcome, hand-job magic ended usually in scant gratification, our transactions with the hidden world would be made procreative, generating issue in the form of tangible results that everyone might judge the worth of

for themselves. In purely evangelic terms, as propaganda for a more enlightened magic worldview, art must surely represent our most compelling 'evidence' of other states and planes of being. While the thoughts of Austin Spare are undeniably of interest when expressed in written form as theory, it is without doubt his talents as an artist that provide the sense of entities and other worlds actually witnessed and recorded, the immediate authenticity which has bestowed on Spare much of his reputation as a great magician. More importantly, work such as Spare's provides a window on the occult world, allowing those outside a clearer and perhaps more eloquent expression of what magic is about than any arcane tract, offering them a worthwhile reason to approach the occult in the first place.

In our wilderness scenario for magic, with the fierce and fair Darwinian competition between ideas that's implied, treating the occult as an art would also lend a means of dealing with (or carrying out) any disputes that might arise. Art has a way of sorting out such squabbles for itself, inarguably, without resorting to lame processes like, for example, violent conflict resolution, litigation, or, much worse, girly democracy. With art, the strongest vision will prevail, even if it takes decades, centuries to do so, as with William Blake. There is no need to even take a vote upon which is the strongest vision: that would be the one just sitting quietly in its undisputed corner of our culture, nonchalantly picking its teeth with the sternums of its rivals. Mozart brings down Salieri, sleeps for two days after feasting, during which time the savannah can relax. Lunging out suddenly from tower-block shadows, J.G. Ballard takes out Kingsley Amis, while Jean Cocteau be all over D.W. Griffiths' scrawny Imperial Cyclops ass like a motherfucker. An artistic natural selection, bloody-minded but balanced, seems a far more even-handed way of settling affairs than arbitrary and unanswerable rulings handed down by heads of orders, such as Moina Mathers telling Violet Firth her aura lacked the proper symbols.

Also, if the vicious struggle for survival is enacted purely in the terms of whose idea is the most potent and most beautiful in its expression, then bystanders at the cockfight are more likely to end up spattered with gorgeous metaphors than with dripping, still-warm innards. Even our most pointless and incestuous feuds might thereby have a product that enriches the world in some small measure, rather than no outcome save that magic seem still more a bickering and inane children's playground than everyone thought it was already. Judged on its merits, such a jungle-logic attitude to magic, with its predatory aesthetics and ideas competing in a wilderness that's fertilised by their exquisite cultural droppings, would appear to offer the occult a win-win situation. How could anyone object, except for those whose ideas might be seen as plump, slow-moving, flightless and a handy source of protein; those well-qualified as primary prey who are perhaps beginning to suspect that this is all a tiger's argument for open-plan safari parks?

Upon consideration, these last-mentioned doubts and fears, while surely trivial within a context of magic's well-being as a field, are likely to be the most serious obstacles to any wide acceptance of a primal swampland ethic such as is proposed.

However, if we accept that the sole alternatives to jungle are a circus or a zoo, the notion is perhaps more thinkable. And if our precious ideas should be clawed to pieces when they're scarcely out the nest, then while this is of course distressing, it's no more of an ordeal than that endured by any spotty schoolboy poet or Sunday painter who exposes their perhaps ungainly effort to another's scrutiny. Why should fear of ridicule or criticism, fear that the most lowly karaoke drunk is seemingly quite capable of overcoming, trouble occultists who've vowed to stand unflinching at the gates of Hell itself? In fact, shouldn't the overcoming of such simple phobias be a prerequisite for anyone who wants to style his or her self as a magician? If we regarded magic as an art and art as magic, if like ancient shamans we perceived a gift for poetry as magic power, magically bestowed, wouldn't we finally have some comeback when the ordinary person in the street asked us, quite reasonably, to demonstrate some magic, then, if we think we're so thaumaturgical?

How empowering it would be for occultists to steadily accumulate, through sheer hard work, genuine magical abilities that can be provably displayed. Talents the ordinarily intelligent and rational person can quite readily accept as being truly magical in origin; readily engage with in a way that current occultism, with its often wilful and unnecessary obscurantism, cannot manage. Urgently expressed and heartfelt though most modern grimoires most assuredly may be, a skim through Borges' *Fictions*, or

a glimpse of Escher, or a side or two of Captain Beefheart would be much more likely to persuade the ordinary reader to a magically receptive point of view. If conscious-ness itself, with its existence in the natural world being beyond the power of science to confirm, is therefore super-natural and occult, surely art is one of the most obvious and spectacular means by which that supernatural realm of mind and soul reveals itself, makes itself manifest upon a gross material plane.

Art's power is immediate and irrefutable, immense. It shifts the consciousness, noticeably, of both the artist and her audience. It can change men's lives and thence change history, society itself. It can inspire us unto wonders or else horrors. It can offer supple, young, expanding minds new spaces to inhabit or can offer comfort to the dying. It can make you fall in love, or cut some idol's reputation into ribbons at a glance and leave them maimed before their worshippers, dead to posterity. It conjures Goya devils and Rossetti angels into visible appearance. It is both the bane and most beloved tool of tyrants. It transforms the world which we inhabit, changes how we see the universe, or those about us, or ourselves. What has been claimed of sorcery that art has not already undeniably achieved? It's led a billion into light and slain a billion more. If the accretion of occult ability and power is our objective, we could have no more productive, potent means or medium than art whereby this is to be accomplished. Art may not make that whisk-broom come to life and multiply and strut round cleaning up your crib – but nor does magic, for that matter – yet simply dreaming up the image must have surely earned Walt Disney enough money so he could pay somebody to come by and take care of that stuff *for* him. And still have enough change to get his head put in this massive hieroglyphic-chiselled ice cube somewhere underneath the Magic Kingdom. There, surely to God, is all of the implacable Satanic influence that anybody, sane or otherwise, could ever ask for.

In reclaiming magic as The Art, amok and naked in a Rousseau wilderness devoid of lodges, it is probable that those made most uneasy by the proposition would be those who felt themselves unprivileged by such a move, those who suspected that they had no art to offer which might be sufficient to its task. Such trepidations, while they may be understandable, surely cannot sit well with the heroic, fearless image one imagines many occultists to have confected for themselves; seem somehow craven. Is there truly nothing, neither craft nor art, which they can fashion to an implement of magic? Do they have no talent that may be employed creatively and magically, be it for mathe-matics, dancing, dreaming, drumming, stand-up comedy, striptease, graffiti, handling snakes, scientific demonstra-tion, cutting perfectly good cows in half or sculpting scarily realistic busts of European monarchy from their own faeces? Or, like, anything? Even if such abilities are not at present plentiful or evident, cannot these timorous souls imagine that by application and some honest labour talents may be first acquired then honed down to a useful edge? Hard work should not be a completely foreign concept to the Magus. This is not even The Great Work that we're necessarily discussing here, it's just the Good-But-Not-Great Work. Much more achievable. If that still sounds too difficult and time-consuming, you could always make the acquisition of profound artistic talent and success your heart's desire and simply spadge over a sigil. Never fails, apparently. So what excuse could anybody have for not embracing art as magic, magic as The Art? If you are truly, for whatever reason, now and for all time incapable of any creativity, then are you sure that magic is the field to which you are most eminently suited? After all, the fast-food chains are always hiring. Ten years and you could be a branch manager.

By understanding art as magic, by conceiving pen or brush as wand, we thus return to the magician his or her original shamanic powers and social import, give back to the occult both a product and a purpose. Who knows? It might turn out that by implementing such a shift we have removed the need for all our personally-motivated causal charms and curses, our hedge-magic. If we were accom-plished and prolific in our art, perhaps the gods might be prepared to send substantial weekly postal orders, all without us even asking. In the sex and romance stakes, as artists we'd all make out like Picasso. Women, men and animals would offer themselves naked at our feet, even in Woolworth's. As for the destruction of our enemies, we simply wouldn't bother to invite them to our launch-parties and openings, and they'd just *die*.

This re-imagining of magic as The Art could clearly benefit the occult world in general and the individual magician in particular, but let's not overlook the fact that it might also benefit the arts. It must be said that modern

mainstream culture, for the greater part and from most civilised perspectives, is a Tupperware container full of sick. The artists of the age (admittedly, with a few notable exceptions) seem intent upon reflecting the balloon-like hollowness and consequent obsession with mere surface that we find amongst our era's governments and leaders. Just a year or two ago, the old Tate Gallery's Blake retrospective drew from critics sharp comparisons with the Brit-artists currently inhabiting Blake's Soho stamping ground, observing that the modern crop of tunnel-visionaries pale when held up to Blake's Lambeth light. The studied and self-conscious 'craziness' of Tracey Emin is made tame beside his holy tyger madness, all accomplished within howling-range of Bedlam. Damien Hirst is shocking in a superficial manner, but not shocking to the point where he has loyalty oaths, vigilante lynch-mobs and sedition trials to deal with. Jake and Dinos Chapman's contributions to *Apocalypse* (the exhibition, not the situation with Iraq) are not in any sense a revelation. William Blake could pull a far superior apocalypse from *The Red Dragon*'s sculpted crimson butt without a second thought. The modern art world deals now in high-concept items, much like the related (through Charles Saatchi) field of advertising. It appears to be bereft of vision, or indeed of the capacity for such, and offers little in the way of nourishment to its surrounding culture, which could use a decent and sustaining meal right about now. Couldn't a reaffirmation of the magical as art provide the inspiration, lend the vision and the substance that are all so manifestly lacking in the world of art today? Wouldn't such a soul-infusion allow art to live up to its purpose, to its mission, to insist that the interior and subjective human voice be heard in culture, heard in government, heard on the stained Grand Guignol stages of the world? Or should we just sit back and wait for praeter-human intellects from Sirius, or Disney's walking whisk-brooms, or the Aeon of Horus to arrive and sort this mess out for us?

A productive union, a synthesis of art and magic propagated in a culture, an environment, a magic landscape lacking temple walls and heirloom furnishings that everyone tripped over anyway. Staged amidst the gemming ferns and purpled steam-heat of a re-established occult biosphere, this passionate conjunction of two human faculties would surely constitute a Chemic Wedding which, if we were lucky and things got completely out of hand at the Chemic Reception, might precipitate a Chemic Orgy, an indecent, riotous explosion of suppressed creative urges, astral couplings of ideas resulting in multiple births of *chimerae* and radiant monsters. Fierce conceptual centaurs with their legs of perfume and their heads of music. Mermaid notions, flickering silent movies that are architecture from the waist down. Genre sphinxes and style manticores. Unheard of and undreamed mutations, novel art-forms breeding and adapting fast enough to keep up with the world and its momentum, acting more like life-forms, more like fauna, more like flora to proliferate in our projected magic wilderness. The possible release of fusion energy made suddenly available when these two heavy cultural elements, magic and art, are brought into dynamic close proximity might fairy-light our jungle, might even help to illuminate the mainstream social mulch that it, and we, are rooted in.

Nothing prevents us throwing off the callipers and the restraints, the training wheels that have retarded magic's forward progress for so long that moss obliterates its railway tracks and branch-line sidings both. Nothing can stop us, if we have the will, from redefining magic as an art, as something vital and progressive. Something which in its ability to deal with the interior human world has a demonstrable utility, can be of actual use to ordinary people, with their inner worlds increasingly encroached upon by a tyrannical, colonialist exterior that's intent on strip-mining them of any dreams or joy or self-determination. If we so resolved we could restore to magic a potential and a potency, a purpose it has barely caught a glimpse of in the last four hundred years. Were we prepared to take on the responsibility for this endeavour then the world might see again the grand and terrible magicians that, outside of bland and inoffensive children's books or big-screen and obscenely-budgeted extravagances, it has all but managed to forget. It might be argued that at this nerve-wracking juncture of our human situation, magical perspectives are not merely relevant but are an indispensable necessity if we are to survive with minds and personalities intact. By redefining the term magic we could once again confront the world's iniquities and murk in our preferred, time-honoured method: with a word.

Make the word magic mean something again, something worthy of the name, something which, as a definition of the magical, would have delighted you when you

were six; when you were seventy. If we accomplish this, if we can reinvent our scary, wild and fabulous art for these scary, wild and fabulous new times that we are moving through, then we could offer the occult a future far more glorious and brimming with adventure than we ever thought or wished its fabled past had been. Humanity, locked in this penitentiary of a material world that we have been constructing for ourselves for centuries now, has perhaps never needed more the key, the cake-with-file-in, the last-minute pardon from the governor that magic represents. With its nonce-case religions and their jaw-droppingly demented fundamentalists, with its bedroom-farce royalties, and with its demagogues more casually shameless in their vile ambitions than they've been in living memory, society at present, whether in the east or west, would seem to lack a spiritual and moral centre, would indeed appear to lack even the flimsiest pretence at such a thing. The science which sustains society, increasingly, at its most far-flung quantum edges finds it must resort to terminology from the kabbala or from Sufi literature to adequately state what it now knows about our cosmic origins. In all its many areas and compartments, all its scattered fields, the world would seem to be practically crying out for the numinous to come and rescue it from this berserk material culture that has all but eaten it entire and shat it through a colander. And where is magic, while all this is going on?

It's trying to force our boyfriend to come back to us. It's scraping cash together to fend off the black hole in our plastic, trying to give that prick that our ex-wife ran off with something terminal. It's making sure that Teen Witch slumber parties go successfully. It's putting wispy New Age people into contact with their wispy New Age angels, and they're all, like, 'No way,' and the angels are all, like, 'Whatever.' It's attending all of our repeated rituals with the enthusiasm of a patron come to see The Mouse Trap for the seven hundredth time. It spends its weekends trying to read our crappy sigils under their obscuring glaze of jiz, and in retaliation only puts us into contact with outpatient entities, community-care Elohim that rant like wino scientologists and never make a lick of sense. It's at the trademarks office, registering magic seals. It's handling an introductions agency that represents our only chance of ever meeting any strange Goth pussy. It's off getting us a better deal on that new Renault, helping to prolong the wretched life of our incontinent and blind pet spaniel Gandalf, networking like crazy to secure those Harry Potter Hogwart's Tarot rights. It's still attempting to sort out the traffic jam resulting from the Aeon of Horus having jack-knifed through the central reservation and into the southbound carriageway, hit head-on by the Aeon of Maat, which spilled its cargo of black feathers onto the hard shoulder. It's not sure the ketamine was such a good idea. It's sitting looking nervous on a thousand book-shelves between lifestyle interviews with necrophiles and fashion retrospectives on the Manson family. It's hanging out at neo-nazi jamborees near Dusseldorf. It's wondering if it should introduce a 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy regarding the 11th Degree. It's advising Cherie Blair on acupuncture studs, the whole of Islington upon Feng Shui. It's pierced its cock in an attempt to shock its middle-class Home Counties parents, who've been dead for ten years, anyway. It wishes it were David Blaine. It wishes it were Buffy. Or, quite frankly, anyone.

We could, if we desired it, have things otherwise. Rather than magic that's in thrall to a fondly imagined golden past, or else to some luridly-fantasised Elder God theme-park affair of a future, we could try instead a magic adequate and relevant to its own extraordinary times. We could, were we to so decide, ensure that current occultism be remembered in the history of magic as a fanfare peak rather than as a fading sigh; as an embarrassed, dying mumble; not even a whimper. We could make this parched terrain a teeming paradise, a tropic where each thought might blossom into art. Under the altar lies the studio, the beach. We could insist upon it, were we truly what we say we are. We could achieve it not by scrawling sigils but by crafting stories, paintings, symphonies. We could allow our art to spread its holy psychedelic scarab wings across society once more, perhaps in doing so allow some light or grace to fall upon that pained, benighted organism. We could be made afresh in our fresh under-growth, stand reinvented at a true dawn of our Craft within a morning world, our paint still wet, just-hatched and gummy-eyed in Eden. Newborn in Creation.

To End Uneasy Dreams

Peter Dubé

A gathered mass of metal starts the spell. With smoothness of motion and a tender close, amass the lustrous accumulation of condemned and sharpened edges failed in use: the rusted nails, these blasted ends of glass, those broken screws that languish now in jars or battered boxes, pins and needles, tweezers, scissors, sharps of every kind. The scraps of tin, the files, filings, bring all of it together on the bench, where, with a sweep of your left arm, consign it to the stained and shredded hollow of a long forgotten garment worn with much anticipated pleasure on a holiday that sputtered out its final days in cold or awkward company. Whereon, take up, take fast and take the gathered weight outside to walk the block on which your home has stood and place your metal, piece-by-piece at every access point. At the first corner, bury you a shattered corkscrew, bent beyond repair, in the edge of an adjoining lawn, and at the next a ruined pair of scissors, reduced in scale for cuticles and weekend manicures. And so the next, a broken bottle from some wine chosen to mark fair, a new beginning in your life. Assail all four before returning to the building where you dwell and there secret some long-dulled blades, some broken tools in spaces between paving stones to ward the path from sidewalk to front door. At last, upon return take up the smallest scraps of all, the finishing nails, the tacks and rusted pins and seise them, press them into frames of door, back entrance, every window sill that lines your home – their flattened heads will now assail the turbulent world outside. Array your tired, remaindered bits of martial domesticity against the visitations you deny. Seal up the cracks; leave nothing unattended too, with each and every blow recall to memory your solemn purpose and your readiness to sleep. Return to chambers and to rest in your familiarities and wait. As easily as long before.

Contributors

Talon Abraxas was born in South London, England in 1980. A self-taught artist, he is known for works that consist of a combination of traditional and digital images, creating surreal landscapes that have a believable dream-like quality. Inspiration is drawn from mystical artists and thinkers such as Austin Osman Spare, Jean Delville, Hieronymus Bosch, HR Giger, Beksinski, and Aleister Crowley. He considers himself a symbolist, painter, writer and occultist committed to spiritual esotericism. His vision is of the artist as a spontaneously developed initiate whose mission is to send light, spirituality and mysticism into the world.

Marcelo Bordese lives and works in Buenos Aires, Argentina. His images explore themes involving the flesh, sex, religion and despair. His style is reminscent of Bosch and Breughel, but Marcelo paints with acrylic, which he affirms '...like blood, dries quickly.' He has exhibited extensively since 1996, most recently at *Owners of the Crossroad: Aesthetics of Exú and Pomba Gira in Rio de la Plata*, Buenos Aires, 2009 and *Grito Íntimo: con sexo, corrupción y juegos*, Instituto Cervantes de Tokio, Tokyo, 2010. www.artebus.com.ar/bordese

John Clowder is an artist working primarily in the collage medium. His history would be familiar to anyone living in the average suburban town. Luckily, a devious and unstructured childhood prompted him towards imaginative play, an activity that brought experiments with artistic creativity. At a receptive age he chanced upon Max Ernst's oneiric collage novels and absorbed by their imagery, sought to replicate their effect. He lives in the American Midwest, but Surrealism is his chosen means of escape.

Ira Cohen (1935-2011) was an American poet, publisher, photographer and filmmaker. He travelled widely, most notably to Morocco where he published *GNAOUA*, a magazine devoted to exorcism, and later to Kathmandu, where he founded his Bardo Matrix imprint, issuing limited edition books printed on rice paper. His later years in NYC consolidated his role as one of the most important voices of American counter-culture. His contribution was unique and he will be greatly missed. www.iracohen.org

Ithell Colquhoun (1906-1988) was a British Surrealist painter and author. Her membership of the O.T.O. in the early 1950s presaged involvements with numerous esoteric groups throughout her life. A move to Cornwall inspired her book *The Living Stones: Cornwall* (1957), a pioneering study of Earth-energies, although she is best remembered for her biography of MacGregor Mathers, *The Sword of Wisdom* (1975).

T. Thorn Coyle is an internationally respected visionary and teacher of the magical and esoteric arts. The author of *Kissing the Limitless* (2009) and *Evolutionary Witchcraft* (2004), she is also featured in many anthologies, hosts the *Elemental Castings* podcast series, writes a popular weblog, *Know Thyself*, and has produced several CDs of sacred music. Pagan, mystic, and activist, she is founder and head of Solar Cross Temple and Morningstar Mystery School and lives by the glorious San Francisco Bay. www.thorncoyle.com.

Jon Crabb is a young art historian and writer who developed a mild obsession with the Beat writers in his teens, then graduated from the enthusiasm of Kerouac to the cynicism of Burroughs in his twenties. Having heard that William Burroughs once declared Brion Gysin 'the only man I have ever respected,' he was added to the personal syllabus and quickly became a chief fascination. His background is in 20th century art although his current research interests include book design, illustration and the juncture of word and image. He is also interested in the fin-de-siècle period, the cross-over between science and art, and the larger influence of the occult on Western art as a whole.

Peter Dubé is a novelist, short story writer, essayist and cultural critic. He is the author of the chapbook *Vortex Faction Manifesto* (2001), the novel *Hovering World* (2002), *At the Bottom of the Sky* (2007) a collection of linked short stories, and most recently, the novella *Subtle Bodies: a Fantasia on Voice, History and René Crevel* (2010). He is also the editor of the anthology *Madder Love: Queer Men and The Precincts of Surrealism* (2008). www.peterdube.com

Robert Fitzgerald is a long-time practitioner of the angelic evocation of John Dee and Edward Kelley, and is an initiate of Cultus Sabbati, a magical order of traditional witchcraft in Britain and North America. His written contributions have appeared in the British journal of folklore *The Cauldron*.

Edward Gauntlett is lifelong student of magic, and holds an MA in Literature, Religion and Philosophy. Currently he is working on a study of the Secret Tradition in late 19th and early 20th century supernatural horror fiction. He is editor of the Charles Williams Society.

Christopher Greenchild is a composer, musician, poet, writer, artist, designer and philosopher from Seattle. He is presently preparing the first releases from his archives and their parallel performance concepts. His music centres around an imaginal consciousness of memory and mystery that incorporates field recordings and electronic sound with classical, folk, alternative instrumentations, and vivid rhapsodic lyrics. He is also at work completing a three-part book series on his visionary account of dream awareness as a parallel mystical continuum in humanity and nature. His contribution to this journal was written in the spring of 2005. www.christophergreenchild.com

Allan Graubard lives in New York, with previous lives in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Paris, London, Washington DC, and other places lost to time and water – turns in the dance that sustains him. Through it all, body to body, shadow to shadow, he has sought and sometimes found the warm, transparent breadth of living completely. Recent works include *ROMA AMOR* (2010), *Revolting Women/Woman Bomb-Sade* (Theater Row, 42nd Street), and *And tell, tulip, the summer* (forthcoming). Happily, 2011 also saw the publication of *Invisible Heads: Surrealists in North America – An Untold Story*, which he edited with his friend, Thom Burns.

Amy Hale is an anthropologist on the academic staff of several universities. She is also a chaos magician, with interests in contemporary magical practice and culture in Britain, Europe and the United States.

Dan Harms is a librarian and author whose interests include Lovecraft, the Cthulhu Mythos, grimoires, the history of magic, and rôle-playing games. His books include *The Necronomicon Files* (1998, with John Wisdom Gonce III) and *The Cthulhu Mythos Encyclopedia* (2008). His articles have appeared in *Fortean Times, The Journal for the Academic Study of Magic, The Journal of Scholarly Publishing, Paranoia, Imelod, Le Bulletin de l'Université de Miskatonic, Worlds of Cthulhu, Cthuloide Welten*, and *The Unspeakable Oath*. His work has been translated into French, German, Spanish, and Japanese. He is currently preparing an annotated edition of *The Long-Lost Friend* for publication. He lives in upstate New York with his ball python, Yig. His blog may be found at: www.danharms.wordpress.com.

Desirée Isphording is a 25 year old artist living in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Her work has been featured in the magazines *Pentacle* and *SageWoman*, and has also graced the covers of *If...A Journal of Spiritual Exploration, PaganNet News* and *Harp, Pipe, and Symphony* (2006), a book by Paul DiFilippo. In addition, she has material included in *Gothic Art Now*, a compilation of darkly elegant artwork.

Grevel Lindop lives in Manchester, where he was formerly a Professor of English at the University and is now a freelance writer. He worked with the late Kathleen Raine as deputy editor of the journal *Temenos* and now chairs the academic board of the Temenos Academy. His edition of Robert Graves's *The White Goddess* (1997) is now the standard text. He has published six collections of poems, most recently *Playing With Fire* (2006), and *Selected Poems* (2001). His book exploring music and dance in Latin America, *Travels on the Dance Floor*, was a BBC Radio 4 Book of the Week and was short listed for Authors' Club Dolman Best Travel Book, 2009. He is currently working on the first full biography of the poet, novelist, theologian and occultist Charles Williams. He teaches Buddhist meditation under the auspices of the Samatha Trust, and has a wide range of esoteric interests. You can read his blog at: www.grevel.co.uk

Ian MacFadyen is an independent scholar and writer, based in London. He co-edited with Oliver Harris the book *NakedLunch@50: Anniversary Essays* (2009), to which he contributed six Dossiers. His libretto *Point of No Return*, on the life and death of Joan Burroughs, was performed at the University of London Institute in Paris in 2009 in collaboration with Radio Joy. His essay 'Machine Dreams: Optical Toys and Mechanical Boys' was published in the collection *Flickers of the Dreamachine* (1996) and his essay 'Ira Cohen: A Living Theatre' appeared in *Licking the Skull* (2000, republished 2006). He has written about the work of many writers and artists including Vladimir Nabokov, Georges Perec, and Yoko Ono. His articles and fictions have appeared in a number of journals and anthologies, including *Shamanic Warriors Now Poets* (2003).

Malgorzata Maj (Sarachmet) was born in 1980 and currently lives in Gliwice, Poland. In 2004 she graduated from Warmia-Masuria University in Olsztyn with an MA, specializing in traditional techniques including painting on silk. Since 2005 she has been an illustrator and photographer who fell in love with 19th century painting colours and themes, ghostly moods & dreamy visions. In March 2010 she contributed to the exhibition 'Phantasms' at Cabinet des Curieux, Paris, France.

Misior was born in 1976 in Poland and is a graphic designer, an illustrator and a surrealist painter. He regards art as a unique tool of cognition, limited neither by logic, nor the limits of consciousness. By sacralization of eroticism, he tries to overcome the Western dichotomy of the spiritual and corporeal nature of man. His artistic style has been influenced by the Renaissance, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, symbolists such as Gustave Moreau and Fernand Khnopff, Austin Spare, the surrealism of Max Ernst and Remedios Varo, the colors of Balthus and Hopper, along with Moebius and Manary's comic strips. He also records music under the pseudonym of Kriccagiya.

Alan Moore, writer, anarchist and magician. Living legend. www.dodgemlogic.com

Shani Oates lives in Derbyshire where she is a devoted practitioner of the true esoteric art. A mystic and pilgrim, she finds expression through her writing, visionary sketches, photography and therapeutic holism. Her essays and articles are included within: *Hecate: Her Sacred Fires* (2010) and various popular pagan, folklore and occult publications such as *The Cauldron*, *Pendragon*, *The White Dragon*, *Pentacle*, *The Goddess*, *The Hedge Wytch* and *The Wytch's Standard*. Her debut book, *Tubelo's Green Fire*, was released in 2010 and two more titles are due for release in 2011. She is current Maid of the people of Goda, of Clan of Tubal Cain. www.clanoftubalcain.org.uk

Edwin Pouncey was born in Leeds in 1961 and now lives in south London. Under the *nom de plume* 'Savage Pencil' his art has mauled and entertained a generation with a 'stinking psychedelic cesspit of corpse cluttered comix.' As a music journalist, his contributions are frequently seen in *The Wire*, and heard on his weekly radio show on Resonance FM. Once a member of the late 70s group The Art Attacks, he is currently a member of Pestrepeller, an 'improvising drone-rock noise band.' www.savagepencil.com

Peter Redgrove (1932-2003) was a prolific and widely respected British poet whose contribution spanned more than 40 years. His interest in mysticism and magic led was further inspired by a move to Cornwall towards the end of his life. His published work includes *The Black Goddess and the Sixth Sense* (1987) and *The Wise Wound* (1978), the first dedicated exploration of the mysteries of menstration, co-written with his second wife Penelope Shuttle.

Residue was born in 1964 in Halifax. He lives out his magical existance in Yorkshire. He is not part of any magical lineage, though is influenced by Kenneth Grant, Austin Spare and philosophical writings of Deleuze. He often dwells on magical mechanisms, machine.nature combinations, by creating magical si-fi maps or rituals. He also often makes parodies of 'awareness zones' or develop pastiches of the illusion of seperateness. These manifest through squiggles and robotic images, fetish voodoo rituals, pods, gadgets and shrines.

Jack Sargeant is the author of numerous books, essays and articles on underground film, outsider art and the more unusual aspects of culture, his books include *Deathtripping: The Extreme Underground* (2007) and *Naked Lens: Beat Cinema* (2009). He has contributed to numerous collections of essays, most recently *From The Arthouse To The Grindhouse* (2010) and *The End: An Electric Sheep Anthology* (2011). His writings have appeared in *Fortean Times*, *FilmInk*, *Real Time*, *The Wire* and many others. Since 2008 he has been the program director for the Revelation Perth International Film Festival. In 2010 he co-curated the Sydney Biennale film program, presenting film and video works themed around visionary magus Harry Smith, these included works exploring indigenous Australian spiritual beliefs, outsider art and music, and culminated in a performance by Noko. www.jacksargeant.blogspot.com

Lauren Simonutti lives in Baltimore. Her images are born entirely from traditional photographic techniques. Her work is represented in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC and the Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC. Since 1998, Lauren has produced a series of books in very limited editions exploring specific themes through her photographic work. She has exhibited extensively since 2001, and her work has been featured in *Silvershotz*, *Catchlight Magazine*, *Eyemazing*, *Descry Magazine*, *Soura*, and *La Négatif*. In early 2010 she had a solo exhibition at the Catherine Edelman Gallery, Chicago, who currently represent her: www.edelmangallery.com

Mark Titchner was born in Luton in 1973. He graduated from Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, London, in 1995. In 2006 he was nominated for the Turner Prize for a solo show at the Arnolfini, Bristol. In 2007 he was included in the 52nd Venice Biennale, exhibiting in the Ukraine Pavilion. His work is held in the permanent collections of the South London Gallery, the United Kingdom Government Art Collection and the Tate. He is represented by the Vilma Gold Gallery, London. www.marktitchnerstudio.com

Heather Tracy has been an actor and singer for twenty-seven years, working across a diverse range of genres and media from unrehearsed Shakespeare to comedy cabaret. She has had a long association with the Lions part, an eclectic company of professional performers who collaborate to create seasonal festivals incorporating stories, playtexts, music and folklore. She is currently forging a deeper understanding of theatre's ritual and shamanic legacy through experiential exploration of paradox, humour, neurological shock and the emotional interplay between voice, word and flesh. This work also informs her solitary magical practice and writing. www.heathertracy.co.uk

Doreen Valiente (1922-1999) was an influential English Wiccan who was involved in a number of different early traditions, including Gardnerianism, Cochrane's Craft and the Coven of Atho. Responsible for writing much of the early Gardnerian religious liturgy, in later years she also helped to play a big part in bringing Wicca to wider public attention. Her published work includes *Where Witchcraft Lives* (1964), *Witchcraft for Tomorrow* (1978) and the posthumous collection of poems *Charge of the Goddess* (2000).

Abraxas

International Journal of Esoteric Studies

Literary editor: Christina Oakley Harrington

Art editor: Robert Ansell

Abraxas is an independent journal of historical and contemporary occultism. Through its pages are manifest the voices of working occult experience and the visions of esoteric artists, alongside keen insights of original scholarly research. *Abraxas* offers the reader a rich resource of thought-provoking essays, vibrant art and poetic myth from some of the most inspirational thinkers, artists, writers, designers and practitioners working within the international occult community today. Here will be found perceptive articles, narratives of workings, mysterious photography, obscure magical text reprints, strange drawings and resonant lyric. *Abraxas* aims to be intellectually engaging, critically rigorous and visually inspiring. It will be a unique space where fresh insights emerge to feed the mind, imagination and soul.

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our thanks to the contributors and supporters who have generously given time, consent or original material that has helped to bring this project to fruition. Especial thanks go to Edwin Pouncey, Allan Graubard and Will Swofford for their enthusiasm and support, and for providing extraordinary original material from Ira Cohen's archive; to Ian MacFadyen for offering to substantially revise his essay 'A Living Theatre' for this issue, and for providing support in tracing the representatives of the estate of Brion Gysin; to Penelope Shuttle for kind permission to include 'Sorceress in Mauve' and to Professor Neil Roberts for the unpublished photograph of Peter Redgrove; to Julie and John Belham-Payne for kind permission to include 'Invocation to the Horned God'; to Jo Moore and Jeremy Pearson for consent to include 'The Habit of Perfection,' and to Pádraig Ó Méalóid and Caroline Wise for their timely support in gaining consent to include 'Fossil Angels.' We would also like to thank the staff and volunteers of Treadwell's, in particular Dianne Cardell, Kate McKnight, Zac Phoenix, Diana Granger-Taylor and Suzanne Corbie; their support, assistance and goodwill are deeply appreciated.

If you would like to contribute to *Abraxas* no.3, please visit our website for submission details: www.abraxas-journal.com

200 copies have been bound in cloth that include a signed, hand-numbered original silk-screen print by Barry William Hale titled *Regina Phasmatum*.

Credits

Upper cover: Mylar photograph by Ira Cohen, copyright © The Estate of Ira Cohen, 2011. Reproduced with kind permission.

Lower cover: 'Belief is the fall from the Absolute' by Mark Titchner, 2005, *Digital print on Dibond with carved wooden frame*, Private Collection, USA. Reproduced with kind permission.

Mark Titchner, 'Urban Sigils' – all images have been reproduced courtesy of the artist and the Vilma Gold Gallery, London.

Doreen Valiente, 'Invocation of the Horned God,' first appeared in *Witchcraft for Tomorrow* (London: Robert Hale, 1978).

Peter Redgrove, 'Sorceress in Mauve,' first appeared in *The Harper* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006).

Ira Cohen, 'Lost Words,' first appeared in *Whatever you Say may be Held Against you* (Kathmandu: Shivastan Publishing, 2003).

Alan Moore, 'Fossil Angels,' first appeared on Pádraig Ó Méalóid's Live Journal blog, www.glycon.livejournal.com.

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An Audio Supplement

tesserae

compiled by Gavin Semple

Arktau Eos
John Contreras
Cyclobe
English Heretic
High Mountain Tempel
Kallee
Philip Legard
Noko: Order 41
Okok Research Bureau
Orryelle Defenestrate-Bascule
The Psychogeographical Commission
Raagnagrok
TAGC

Introduction

Magic may rightly be called the Art that encompasses all other arts, indeed, given its role in human culture from the earliest times it can be seen as having engendered all other forms of art. Yet its affections have never been divided equally among its progeny; since its emergence magic has shown a marked favouritism towards its first-born, the prodigal child named 'Music'.

ABRAXAS is honoured to present *Tesserae* – a mosaic of thirteen tracks by specially invited artists from the global diaspora of musicians whose work is influenced, inspired or informed by a diversity of magical and visionary traditions. Collectively, their instruments are as varied as their methods, spanning the history of audio technology; from animal horn to analogue synth, VST plug-ins to violoncello, shamisen to shortwave static.

G.W.S. Spring 2011

Arktau Eos

Aot-Ro-Oot

Arktau Eos' potent visionary brew, distilled from raw elemental powers through the alembic of Art, is an unusual amalgam of artwork, performance, and music. Arktau Eos as an entity eludes definition, but for practical purposes the name denotes a Finnish duo formed in 2005. Their approach could be termed 'ethnography of the unknown': while eschewing haphazard syncretism, Arktau Eos reach towards a living web of symbols that ideally speaks to the shaman, houngan and ceremonial magician alike. Atavistic-totemic and oneiric root-shapes constrast with the serene, stellar formations typified by the dominant constellations of the northern firmament.

In the dim light of their temple-laboratory, located just a short leap of a *voltigeur* south of the Arctic Circle, Arktau Eos utilise obscure acoustic instruments and vintage equipment, often recording directly to old-fashioned magnetic tape. Field recordings are often incorporated. This hands-on approach extends to the presentation side as well and thus most of their material is of necessity released in strictly limited quantities.

In connection with the publishers of this CD, it may be of interest to note that at the climax of the sessions for the present song, a massive thunderstorm broke out, sending fulgurant serpents of electric violet streaking through the sky in all directions. This was captured on tape, and the attentive listener may hear the ensuing rain and the clatter of a hanging lantern in the wind.

Arktau Eos have performed in Finland, the United Kingdom (including London's Equinox Festival in 2009) and the Russian Federation, in locations varying from clubs to a museum, and privately in a chapel and a haunted house. Their music has been used at The Alchemy Museum in Kutná Hora, Czech Republic. Arktau Eos' fourth album – TBA – is set to be released in late 2011 exclusively on vinyl.

myspace.com/arktaueos

John Contreras

Over the Treetops

Cello and ARP 2600 synthesizer.

When asked by Gavin and Robert to contribute some music for this magical journal, I wondered what aspect of magic could be the inspiration.

For whatever reason, a quote from an old book on the Salem witch trials came to mind. During the inquisition of one poor soul, she gave wild confessions about her demonic activity and use of witchcraft. The quote that resonated with me was about her flying, presumably on a broomstick, '...sometimes even above the treetops'.

So I focused on these words, to see where they might take me musically. What came out of that mantra was quite unexpected, to myself at least. Something in a major key for starters. Something about the soaring of the human spirit above adversity. Something about freedom and joy. Something I wanted to share.

johncontreras.com

Photo © Ruth Bayer

Cyclobe

The Unknowable Index (Extract from Sleeper)

Up copper steps. Up wooden steps.
Down iron steps.
Down steps of tusk and thick-split briar.
Through deserts alive with jewelled awakenings.
Through doorways dredged from locked dust rooms and worm-riddled wainscot he passes, eyes wide – a chrysalid made fugitive smoke,
wraith wound and giddy with night ride and midday snows.

Ossian Brown ✠ Stephen Thrower ✠ Thighpaulsandra

Recorded and mixed at Strange Hotel, South East coast of England, with additional recordings at Aerial Studios, Camarthen, South Wales, 2010. Mastered by Thighpaulsandra. From the album *Wounded Galaxies Tap at The Window* (Phantomcode NAOS01, 2010). Photograph by Ruth Bayer. Writing by Geoff Cox-Doree. © Cyclobe 2010.

cyclobe.com

Photo © Sarah Sparkes

English Heretic

240 Hours

For a while I have been planning a black plaque for Robert Cochrane, founder of the Clan of Tubal Cain. A tragic figure, Cochrane, attempted ritual self sacrifice on the 23rd July 1966. Taking a concoction of Librium and Belladonna, in his garden, Cochrane remained in a coma for 10 days, before passing to the 'Other Side'. In approaching this track, it struck me that Cochrane's desire to live out his myth, shared commonality with the suicide of Ian Curtis. Both were men of conflicting worlds, the mundane and the glamorous. When their life paths created a schism between the familiar and the exotic, they plunged into a psychic crisis, which they chose to resolve by self-deliverance.

The psychedelic pioneer John Lilly discusses lethal programs that can be activated by use of LSD: suicide being the ultimate example. Could it be that Cochrane was acting out an occult lethal program by choosing to perform self sacrifice at the Summer Solstice: a race memory of an ancient ritual, bathetically replayed in the depressing council overspill of a Slough housing estate?

The conceit behind the track for *Abraxas* centres around the 240 hours between Cochrane's attempted sacrifice and his death, the title, a play on the Joy Division song 'Twenty Four Hours'. 'Twenty Four Hours', I feel, is the most pointed portrayal of Curtis' emotional lability, torn apart by his emerging fame and the inevitable collateral damage to his past. The words on '240 hours' are gleaned from the writings of Robert Cochrane. It is an imagined pop song playing in Cochrane's head as he lay in a coma. For English Heretic on '240 Hours': Andy Sharp (voice, arrangements, guitar); Mark Pilkington (synthesisers); Leila Sayal (Accordion); Phil Legard (flute).

english-heretic.org.uk
englishheretic.blogspot.com

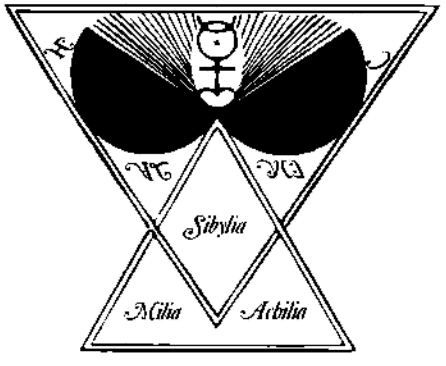
High Mountain Tempel

The Goddess (Slight Return)

Come climb the road to High Mountain Tempel
The road that never ends
The valleys are long and strewn with ash
The streams are broad and banked with manzanita and sage
Moss is slippery, though no rain has fallen;
Pines sigh, but it isn't the wind
Who can break from the snares of the world
And sit with us among the white clouds?

Beaming in on a wave of California Mythology, High Mountain Tempel is the tonal research project of Eric Nielsen and Keith Boyd. On this foray into the Aether they are joined by Charles Curtis; master cellist, member of La Monte Young's Just Alap Raga Ensemble and Lucier interpreter, as well as by author, visionary and Alpha-Crone of the Yod/Source Family, Isis Aquarian. For more information point your compass towards

highmountaintempel.com



Philip Legard

Bet Sant yn Diuant abet Allawr

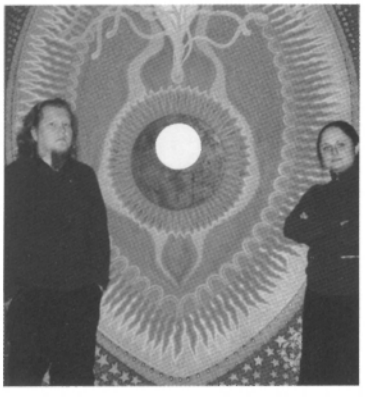
I vividly remember standing under the night sky after my first youthful encounter with Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy*. I marveled at the heavens: each star and planet with its own genius singing their parts in the great celestial hymn. For years my mind was directed only to the heavens.

An unexpected extrovertive mystical experience at a sacred site in 2001 brought me back to earth and a deeper appreciation of the link between above and below. Since then I have pursued conversation with the genius loci of the English countryside, chiefly through music: 'geomancy' is, after all, sister to astrology, and the laws of harmony rule both mundane sound and the cosmos.

This track is taken from the 2006 recording *A Prism for Annwn*. At this time I was exploring the old mines and caves of a particular area of Wharfedale noted for its connection with fairies, magic and hellhounds. After studying John Dee's epistle to Maximillian II and the *Propaedeumata Aphoristica* I had become fascinated by the possibility of using optics in magic. The prism was a particularly appealing device: its ability to make the unseen visible by splitting the light spectrum seemed like a fine metaphor for catoptromantic evocation. Along with a form that suggested a magical triangle, the deal was sealed and the prism became my constant companion.

This track takes its name from a line in the *Preiddeu Annwn*: 'How many saints in the void and how many on earth?' It was recorded on a high ridge over Wharfedale, whose name many Victorian chronographers associated with Simon Magus. As the sun rose beyond the cairns that cap the place, a vision unfolded of morning dew seeping between the stones to wash sanctified corpses beneath. I would later discover parallel imagery in the alchemical Parabola of Madathanus and explore it in relation to the genii of nocturnal and diurnal dew.'

larkfall.co.uk



Kallee

BesMass

Recorded and Mixed by Kallee in Choronzon Studio, Avalon Summer Solstice 2010 e.v.

Kallee is a musickal lunar sound project founded in 15.05.10 e.v.
Tantrick and magick transformation for musickal paintings...

Kallee is:
Karolina Kallee – Sound design
Mariusz Nantur Doering – chAOS sound

myspace.com/7kallee

Photo © Benjie Morris

Orryelle Defenestrate-Bascule ft. Orchestra-ted Chaos

She Shall Ride He

Orryelle – Words, vocals, violin, semi-conductor
Phil McLeod – Cello
Fingal Oakenleaf – Celtic Harp and Panpipes
Mugwort Lycanthrope – Piano accordion, piano discordian and random strange noises
Ben Dickson & James Lewis – Orchestral Percussion
Ground – Chanting, mearcs sdrawkcab
Revere – Didgeridoo, chanting
Khidir – Chanting, singing bowl, drum-breath
Dhanielle – saxophone, vocals

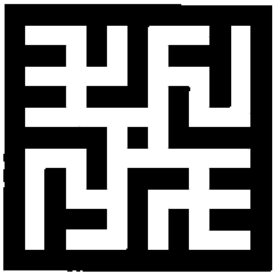
This is an extract of a recording of a live improvisational ensemble at an 'Angel Circus' multi-arts event in Melbourne Australia, 2004. Several of the musicians involved had not played together before and some had not even met before ascending the stage. Orryelle semi-conducted the proceedings. Players also responded to the progressive action in the simultaneous video projections from Metamorphic Ritual Theatre's 'Parzival' drama from their Feast of Valhalla production at Montsalvat.

The recordings from this Orchestra-ted Chaos are being incorporated back into the soundtrack of a feature film of *The Feast of Valhalla* that will eventually be completed.

crossroads.wild.net.au/valhalla.htm

A more extended version of this track will also feature on the forthcoming '156' CD, a project of The HermAphroditic ChAOrder of the Silver Dusk, wherein members of the ChAOrder have created tracks progressively by mailing CDs around the globe. The Orchestra-ted Chaos performance was synchronized with other participants worldwide also invoking Babalon and beginning their own tracks...

www.crossroads.wild.net.au/156.htm



NOKO: Order 41

The Fascinator (Abraxas mix)

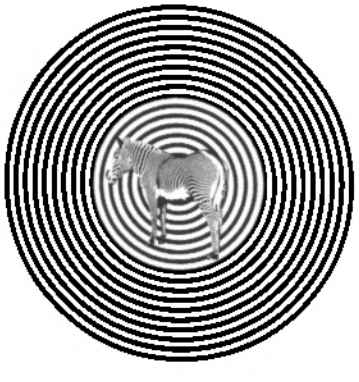
NOKO operate at the very fringes of expanded cinema, live performance, music and magick. Their rare public appearances – the last of which took place at the Equinox Festival in London in 2009 – see them engaging in esoteric rituals through abstracted experimental sound and visuals. These visuals mix animation, found footage, documentation of magickal practices and real-time image-capture to create a swirling sea of ever-changing images. Working in broadly the same occult traditions as Harry Smith, they manifest magick as art and their art as magick – for Noko there can be no separation.

Barry William Hale – Concepts and performance: Barry William Hale's lines of esoteric research provide the conceptual framework for the NOKO project. The NOKO performance and vocalization practices become creative avenues through which magical and occult technologies are explored and articulated.

Michael Strum – Visuals: Combines 2 and 3D animation, found archival footage, documentation of magical practices and real-time image capture to create a swirling sea of ever-changing images. Responding sensitively to the environment in a flickering magic lantern; fuelled by the energy of the ritual space.

Scott Barnes – Sound Realization: Created virtual machines that define potential phase spaces providing a variety of possible outcomes which he mines for raw material from the data sets. This is subsequently re-incorporated into the compositional process, creating new sonic possibilities.

myspace.com/noko2012



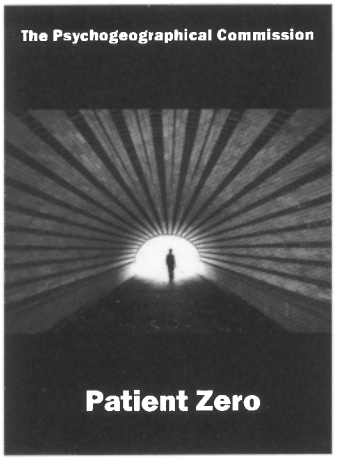
OKOK Research Bureau (Okok Society)

The Sinister Pearl

After a complex series of meaningful coincidences and an extended contact high with ultradimensionals, the OKOK Society was founded in the mid-1990s by the British eccentrics Mark Reeve and Liam Olan. Still going strong and now known as the OKOK Research Bureau, this unorthodox anarcho-gnostic experimental thinktank investigates the fascinating borderland where Art and Magic interpenetrate. The basic premise of the ORB is that the biggest restriction is the concept of restriction itself; and with the right utilisation of Imagination, Will and Persistence – especially when pushed to high obsessive, pro-psychotic levels – it is possible to reach a point where no idea enters your mind unless you allow it to enter. Then one can do anything.

Over the years ORB Editions, the imprint of this 'usually Luciferian elitist' cult, has been quietly publishing numerous print and audio works plus other peculiar ephemera, many of which are available for free from:

okok.org.uk



The Psychogeographical Commission

Gutterbright to the Starres

From the second Psychogeographical Commission album *Patient Zero* (Acro 006).

The Psychogeographical Commission was formed at the start of 2008 to explore the many interfaces between the built environment and the people who inhabit it through derive, magick and sonic experimentation. After a great deal of time wandering the back streets of London and other large cities looking for the spirits which now dwell within them, we came to the conclusion that the psychological make-up of cities is now at odds with the populations inherent rural based mythology. People aren't evolving to cope with cities fast enough to keep up with the constantly shifting cityscape. To start approaching a remedy for this we set about creating music which blurs the line between the real and imagined landscapes in order to allow individuals to revaluate their own mythologies and provide new ideas to bring them closer to harmony with their urban surroundings.

Patient Zero refers to the original source of an outbreak of a contagious illness within a population or to the most significant case within the population.

This album is an attempt to psychologically portray the mind of a Patient Zero as they wander through their Urban surroundings infected with a solar disease at the Summer Solstice and tracking the advancement of symptoms as the sun goes from the height of it's earthly power to it's astronomical nadir. Feelings of old are transformed as the autumn progresses, infecting others and feeding back into the shared experience, changing perceptions and projecting a new reality as signifiers take on different and separatemeanings.

Written throughout the six month period at times of lunar or solar significance, each song portrays a thought, experience or mood of the time and place of its conception. A true record of the Sun's dark passenger.

psychetecture.com

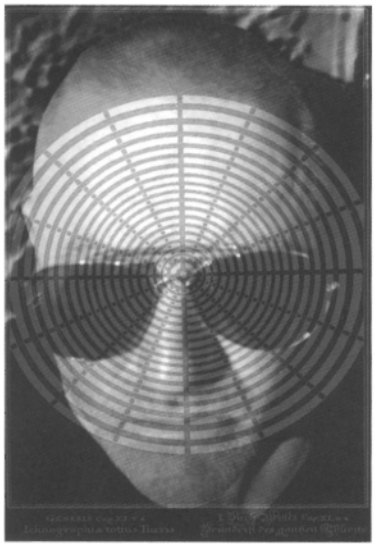
Raagnagrok

Quince Essence

In a desperate bid to break free from the prison-satellite studio Raagnagrok, locked in geostationary orbit around the M25 for the past five years, Solomon Kirchner and Otto Amon have been transmitting a sub-aether distress signal into the wider universe. To the uninitiated these signals sound like a free-psych gnosis-musick invoking previous transmissions from satellite residents Cluster, Heldon, Jan Hammer, Popol Vuh, Tangerine Dream and the Mahavishnu Orchestra. After over forty live performances in basements, galleries, bunkers, pubs, theatres and more ordinary music venues around Europe Raagnagrok plan to release an album in the near future; just don't ask whose future...

'Quince Essence' was edited down from a twenty-five minute improvisation recorded on July 7th 2010, five years to the day of Raagnagrok's first session, which produced the track '0707 Raagapax'. Solomon Kirchner plays electric guitar and electric sitar, Otto Amon plays synth and negotiates with MISTY (Modular Instrumentation for Space Time Yantra). Recorded and mixed at Watchtower Studio, London.

raagnagrok.co.uk



TAGC

The Inhabitants of Nemirion

From *Meontological Research Recording 3: Transmission from the Trans-Yoggithian Broadcast Station.*

TAGC are not affiliated to any one system of philosophy or epistemological paradigm or occult fraternity but are open more to individual systems and innovative thinkers Science, Art , Music Sonology ,Visual Arts, Literature, Research & Publication are its main areas of focus. Over the years ideas and occult philosophy of various individual practioners have been a focus of exploration and research within TAGC projects, but there is always connections to other areas of research within those projects in some our aim is to highlight and discover new connections and correspondences between systems of thought and the systems of technics, Similar to Bernard Stiegler's concept of technics which has emerged recently as an important contribution to studies of the relation between technology, time and the human spirit. by exploring the possibilities of the technology of spirit, to bring forth a new 'life of the mind'.

The original idea for the Anti Group was devised by A. Newton & S.J. Turner (R.I.P) as early as 1978, with the intention of the formation of a multi-dimensional research and development project active in many related areas. Strictly speaking TAGC are not a group, but a variable collection of individuals contributing under invitation and the directorship of Adi Newton, 'Music is more than an object of study: it is a way of perceiving the world. A tool of understanding. Today, no theorizing accomplished through language or mathematics can suffice any longer; it is incapable of accounting for what is essential in time – the qualitative and the fluid, threats and violence. In the face of the growing ambiguity of the signs being used and exchanged, the most well-established concepts are crumbling and every theory is wavering. It is necessary to imagine radically new theoretical forms, in order to speak to new realities. Music, the organization of noise, is one such form. It reflects the manufacture of society; it constitutes the audible waveband of the vibrations and signs that make up society.'

'An instrument of understanding, it prompts us to decipher a sound form of knowledge.'
– Jacques Attali

anteriorresearch.com

Track Listing

1. Raagnagrok – Quince Essence (6:32)
2. Kallee – BesMass (2:15)
3. Arktau Eos – Aot-Ro-Oot (6:27)
4. Orryelle Defenestrate-Bascule ft. Orchestra-ted Chaos – She Shall Ride He (6:40)
5. OKOK Research Bureau – The Sinister Pearl (2:58)
6. Philip Legard – Bet Sant yn Diuant abet Allawr (6:32)
7. High Mountain Tempel – The Goddess (Slight Return) (5:02)
8. NOKO: ORDER 41 – The Fascinator (Abraxas mix) (4:55)
9. John Contreras – Over the Treetops (4:18)
10. The Psychogeographical Commission – Gutterbright to the Starres (6:21)
11. English Heretic – 240 Hours (6:33)
12. TAGC – The Inhabitants of Nemirion (7:18)
13. Cyclobe – The Unknowable Index (Extract from Sleeper) (5:32)

The editors of Abraxas would like to thank those artists who have generously provided original and exclusive material for this audio supplement.

Tesserae 1.0 has been compiled, edited and proof-read by Gavin W. Semple, sequenced by Astrid Bauer, with technical insights kindly offered by Mark Pilkington. Manufactured by Alpha Duplication.

Treadwells

Founded in 2003, Treadwell's is a centre for western esotericism based in London's historic district of Bloomsbury. It is foremost a bookshop, but also has achieved renown for its lecture series, whose speakers have included both established and upcoming scholars doing original work on esoteric traditions.

It is unique in providing a convivial space where contemporary practitioners regularly meet academics to compare notes, share ideas, debate and, in that ancient occult tradition, drink red wine late into the night. It has become a popular venue for book launches, whose guests are as diverse as they are fascinating. Once inside its doors, a visitor might feasibly come across a voodoo priest earnestly conversing with a BBC journalist; a druid sharing a joke with an Oxford don; or a pharmacist comparing notes on the herbal compounds with a local hedge witch.

It has been featured in national newspapers, and the staff are regularly consulted by researchers in the media. In 2006 *The Independent* newspaper declared Treadwell's an important cultural centre.

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