

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Nik Sala

**After the Philosopher's Stone: Aesthetic
Interrogations and Navigations**

An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Fine Arts at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand 2017

Abstract

“One becomes two, two becomes three, and out of the third comes the One as the fourth.”

Maria Prophetessaⁱ

The axiom of Maria is an alchemical percept illustrating a processual procedure across time that accords with the Jungian concept of individuation (from undifferentiated unconsciousness to unique individualised wholeness). The process concerns transformations of materialities and psychological state as movement in time. My research project is situated at a nexus between three simultaneous aims and procedures which relate to this precept;

One: Art as magick, (magickal operations, in this case sigil constructions, aimed at altering psychological and material conditions under intentional application of imagination and will);

Two: Art as spiritual practice and religious devotion, (a devotional orientation through art practiced on a relational line of enquiry and association via ‘theophanic’ and ‘active’ imagination’);

Three: Art as a psychotherapeutic vehicle (oblique means for mending disturbed subjective conditions, generating processes and affects of integration and connectivity across an experiential and theorised fragmented subject terrain).

The ‘fourth’ here is what is brought to the moment of reception and reading by a given audience.

All concern alchemical transmutation as matter-mind relations; from an immersive, undifferentiated ‘one’ in relative unconsciousness, to compounding relational reflexivities of correspondence, doubling of associations, ‘two’, through to a ‘third that becomes a One as the fourth’, a ‘transcendent function’, as a held space weaving all of the varying threads and development together into a new unified configuration, co-ordinated but remaining unfixed as end and determination.

Each point in this axiomatic evolution is polymorphous, yet relates to origins and concerns guiding it at the outset. Drawings, objects, materialities, substances, space, become the axes and *in potentia* through which this metamorphic generation takes place and manifests in form.

Introduction: Negations, Negotiations, Navigations

I am not an artist.ⁱⁱ What I am engaged in is not an art practice strictly per se. It looks and feels and smells like *art*, is presented and moved through various art contexts (learnings in institutions, presentations in gallery spaces, occupations, internments in studio spaces, etc), but the *what* of what is being done nor the *why* isn't considered primarily from the point of view of art, its embodied and demonstrated practices. However it is the *how* that is operating, masquerading in some cases, as art; The regions and procedures of aesthetics have become appropriated to perform what are more akin to magical and psychological operations with a teleological aim.

Perhaps gardening, or building houses or cars, or maybe practising as some kind of therapist might have been a closer approximation to my aims and more affective mediums and roles in which to pursue this task? Perhaps focusing exclusively on the psychospiritual goals through themselves and taking on a teaching/learning role in that context may have been more appropriate? Instead art has been employed, through circumstance and availability, of action meeting certain criteria and categorisation. I make art but I am not an artist by self definition.

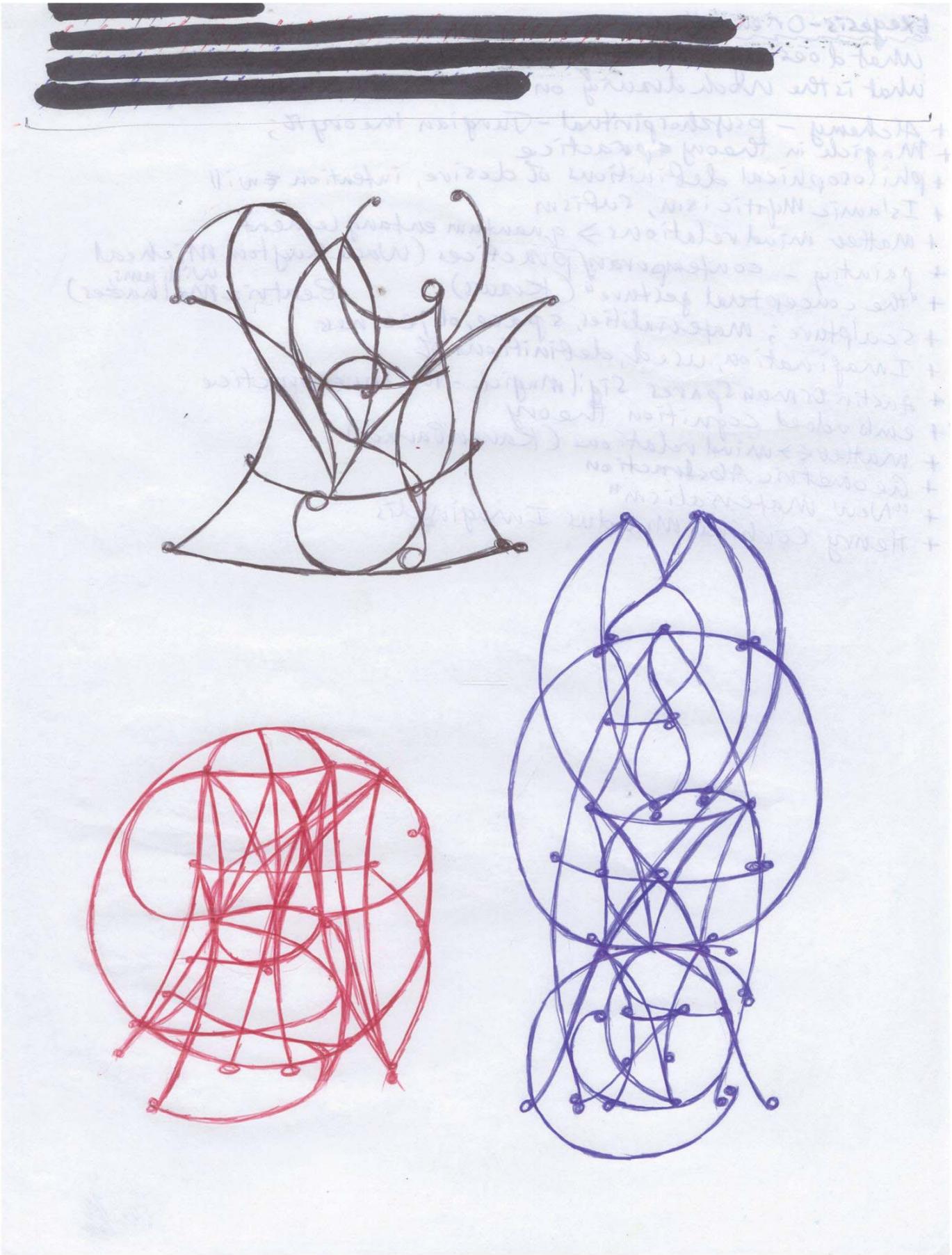
Nevertheless, the what of what I'm doing, assuming the guise of art, is something in particular, of and about certain kinds of materialities, in this case of and about images and objects being presented in spaces. To speak to this is to meet the accumulated and inherited criteria for appraisal and meaning-constructions present to art, its various reception and operations.

My art practice, in this sense, is situated at a nexus between a number of positions or fields of concern, not belonging or orienting wholly to any one of them in particular, while engaged in articulating threads of ideas associated with a series of experiential mystical cognitions that took place when I was youngerⁱⁱⁱ, as means of approach and speaking to the regions in which my practice is situated in an ongoing, processual, evolutionary and emergent process, taking form at certain junctures of presentation as objects and imagery situated in varying organised aesthetic spaces.

These nexuses can be grouped into a coalescence composed of three aims operating simultaneously; that is, art as magick^{iv}, art allied to concerns found in the occult (magickal operations through objects aimed at altering psychological and material conditions under intentional procedures of imagination and will. I will discuss the use of sigil magic, after artist and occultist Austin Osman Spare^v in particular, as a formal means for orienting practice), art as spiritual practice and/or religious devotion, after a religious-philosophical definition (devotional orientation, art, creativity, practiced on a relational line of enquiry and association via a 'theophanic' and 'active imagination'. Discussion concerning elements of the work of Islamic scholar Henry Corbin^{vi} and psychiatrist Carl Jung^{vii} will be considered principally), and art as a kind of psychotherapeutic vehicle (as oblique means for mending damaged or disturbed subjective conditions, generating processes and affects of linking and connectivity across an experiential and theorised fragmented subject terrain. The work of clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst Donald Kalsched^{viii} will be referenced primarily as bearings here).

In the following I will unpack and locate each of these identified concerns in an analysis and interrogation that provides some means of navigating these terrain.^{ix}

Because considerations of certain kinds of subjectivities are relevant to the perspective being developed here, before speaking to the constituents guiding and shaping the construction of art works, it is important to address regions of what informs and constitutes an embodied subjectivity in the terrain being addressed.



Sigil construction (untitled, ballpoint pen & felt pen on paper, 2017)

Subjectivities: Mystical cognitions and Trauma as topography and topology

I travel in the back of an open-backed small ute to a friends to help with a cleansing ritual in a new house, and the moving in of some furniture. I'm a little uneasy about participating in the ritual because of some misunderstandings generated out of early learning in a faith tradition I am affiliated with.

We all enter the house, walking down a sloped gravel path from the road and parked vehicle. The house is incomplete, wooden bare boards, uncarpeted, unfurnished, undecorated, not yet lived in. I go into a small room, along with my friend, his partner and a few others I've just met. My friend burns some sage in a metal bowl, says some words from a tradition I do not know, though these are in English, and we begin to follow him as he circulates through the house from room to room blowing the smoke of the burning sage throughout the house. I don't feel anything in particular from the ritual or the words, a mild tingling in my left shoulder back region, faint, and tension in my body, some social awkwardness. This activity takes a few minutes. We then pause and socialise a little over some tea.

After this a few of us trudge back up to the road side and parked vehicle to retrieve some of the household items. As we are walking up the path I can sense a subtle shift in my state occurring, something in my sense of mind and 'I' moves into a closer cohered association with the perceivable 'outside' world; my perception of both interiors and externals deepened in the sensing of this shift of usual parameters of self, opening into a profundity of significance in intimacy of apprehension, each moment of time taking on nuanced association with action and object linked in perception.

As I approach and lift a corner of a washing machine with some of the others present, returning with this to the house slowly, awkwardly, carefully down the wobbly slope, I am made aware in my mind and body that this activity is minutely but momentarily melded, inextricably connected to inner processes; the physical movement of the object is coterminous to, conjoined with, and affecting of subtle movement of some manner in my psyche. It is as if a 'knot' or blockage of some kind that existed psychologically was and is shifted in sync with the physical movement and shift of the physical mass, in a kind of causal, entwined relationship. I am left with a sense of openness and space within my mind that wasn't present before, a kind of unrecognised tension has dissipated, lifted. This condition lingers awhile, fading after we collectively have finished moving various items into the house and are on the return journey of dropping people off to their respective homes.

The preceding is an account of one of the aforementioned altered states that took place while living in a liminal set of conditions in my youth. It speaks to perceived phenomena wherein matter and mind as distinct categories of thought and experience merge and influence one another reciprocally, uncommon to conventionalised modes of perception and interaction, that in enacting something on the 'outside' one is in affect also accomplishing something of an imbricated psychological nature simultaneously (and, in the case above, this action affording the apparent removal or shifting of something obscuring or delimiting in awareness).

It also suggests a wholeness present to the entangled relations across what are usually designated in partial isolates, parts or things, objects amidst subjects or other objects in themselves in relation to other parts, objects or things but with no clearly established relation between them other than across material qualities accessible to perception, embodied senses, or at least in terms of thought and name linked to various paradigms, each thing in a given field of situatedness standing alone even while drawn in relation to other things in that same field. The entangled experience conveyed illumined how these objects, parts and 'things' are not so isolated and in fact are more deeply implicated in relations of cause-effect or merely relation, as into depths or heights^x.

What is curious though in this disclosure is the psychological context in which such an experience took place; the aggregate self of 'I' occupied then was comprised of fragments cohering as a rigid form of self, an adjustment after earlier, at that time, unconscious traumatic events in my personal history, as if frozen in regions of itself, stuck in loops of a defensive and reactive formation. The self as subject and subjectivity then had organised itself around other kinds of events which, in theory treating this terrain, are asserted as being linked to a formation of a theologising perspective and construction of meaning.

Clinical Psychologist and psychoanalyst Donald Kalsched, in a 2004 lecture^{xi} characterises early developmental trauma as

“By definition, an experience that causes the child unbearable psychic pain, and by unbearable pain we mean pain that is so severe that it cannot be processed by the psyche’s symbolic and integrative capacities”, Kalsched explaining further that “this is simply because of the ego’s immaturity, and because of the power of the affect, and, probably, because the relational environment breaks down. The extent of trauma depends on many of these factors, the extent of the injury, the resources available to the ego, the reparative capacities of the child, the reparative capacities of the environment, these are many intangibles. But, when we’re talking about unbearable experience, we’re really talking about *experience that cannot be symbolised*.^{xii}Winnicott’s classic way of saying that is that ‘it cannot be organised within the orbit of the child’s omnipotence’; can’t be symbolised.”^{xiii}

Relatedly in contrast, elsewhere, Kalsched says

“what dreams reveal and what recent clinical research has shown are that when trauma strikes the developing psyche of a child, a fragmentation of consciousness occurs in which different “pieces” (Jung called them splinter-psyches or complexes) organize themselves according to certain archaic and typical (archetypal) patterns, most commonly dyads or *szygies* made up of personified “beings”^{xiv}

The self who comes into existence in this case is informed by both a of splitting apart of the developing unifying self into a series of varyingly repressed, disavowed pieces, this in turn generating a series of gaps or blank spaces of unsymbolised content, and paradoxically a peopling of the psyche with archetypal patterns, forces personified in symbolic manner as forms of defence, the psyche “making use of “historical layers” of the unconscious in order to give form to or “outpicture” otherwise unbearable suffering – suffering that had [has] “no expression except in mythopoetic form”^{xv}

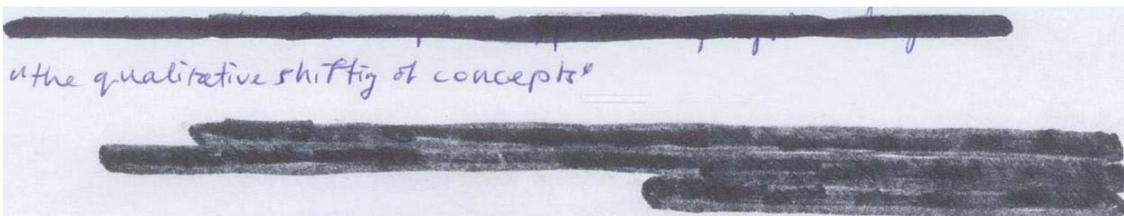
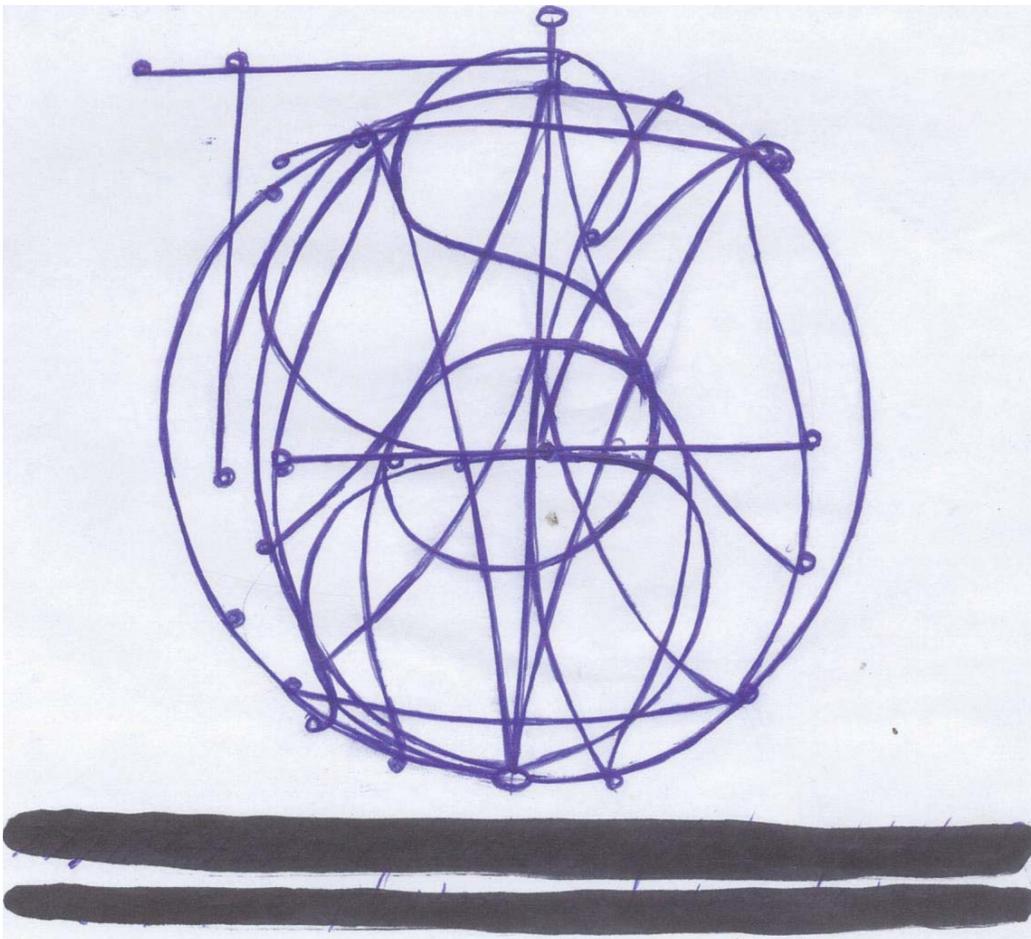
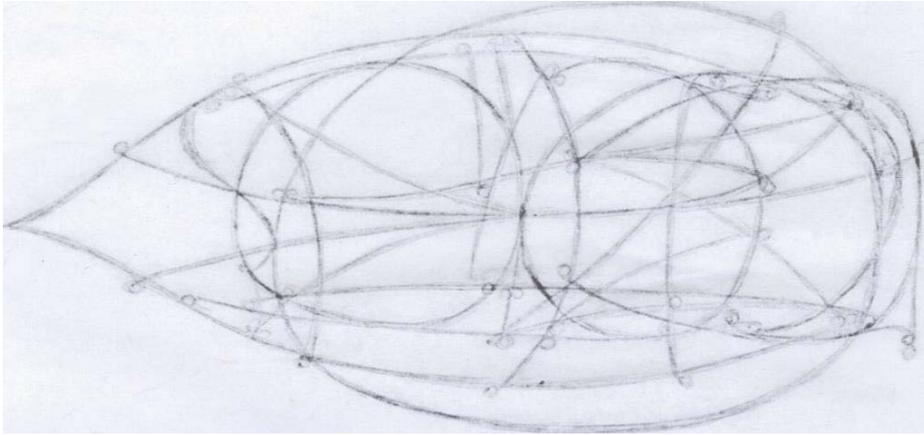
Kalsched goes on to link this splitting, fragmenting process and a theologizing tendency of the psyche by discussing the work of another author, Greg Morgenson^{xvi}

“Whatever we cannot inhabit psychologically, we propitiate with religious responses. It’s not just that God is unknowable and unimaginable; it is that we reach for “God” most earnestly when imagination fails us...to stand before an event for which we have no metaphors is to stand in the tabernacle of the lord.”^{xvii}

Further,

“Overwhelming events, events which cannot be incorporated into the life we have imagined for ourselves, cause the soul to bend back on itself, to commit “incest” with itself, and to revert to the heretical modes of the primary principle. Like the festering process which removes the sliver from a wound, the traumatized imagination works and re-works its metaphors until the events which have ‘pierced’ it can be viewed in a more benign fashion. The Traumatized soul is a theologizing soul.”^{xviii}

The psyche and person here attempts a reconciliation and integrative process through transforming the original trauma into a theologized and archetypal form, reworking this metaphorically until the event is able to be reclaimed in a less maleficent manner.



Sigil construction (untitled, ball point pen & felt pen on paper, 2017)

Orientations: Of Will, Desire, the Theophanic and Active Imagination

“Perception cannot be separated from imagining. Both mental acts are driven by intentionality.”^{xix}

“In aesthetics, the faculty of imagination refers not only to the capacity to represent (imag-in-e) the world inside oneself and to the power to bring what is temporally and spatially absent into the present, but also the possibility of restructuring existing systems and producing the new.”^{xx}

“The concept of “imagination” is perhaps the most important key to understanding the opus.”^{xxi}

In Occult philosophy, imagination is “a creative faculty in the fullest sense of the term: it *creates* and *substantiates* as it goes, and all things are possible to it”^{xxii}, a faculty employed and attuned to a way of knowing, an epistemology, that, in magickal philosophies is often associated with the Hermetic model^{xxiii} of a layered cosmology of existence, constituted by multiple worlds, hierarchies of dimensions and entities, a cosmic macrocosm that embraces and transcends but includes this realm, an envisaged, extended microcosm, expressed succinctly in the formulaic axiom : As Above, So below”^{xxiv}. This cosmology situates human persons universally in a middle zone of extended relations vertically and horizontally, within and without, crossing or prior to, binaries, socialised, commodified partitions and stratification, capture, territorialization^{xxv} and dimensions of perception, phenomena and conceptualisation.

^{xxvi} The imagination similarly, because it is influenced by, is known through, and *is* imagery, by affect, by ‘irrationality’, can be envisaged as situated as a somewhere in-between in its operations, somewhere between the world of physically perceived matter and its ‘reasonable’ forms, its objects and materialities acted upon and informed by various deterministic forces attributed to regions of scientific or ‘rational’ judgement, values and taxonomies, and the imagistic qualities of its own nature.^{xxvii}

Although imagination has a long consideration and treatment in philosophy and the arts^{xxviii} in praxis I am concerned primarily with religiophilosophical and mythopoetic psychological approaches to it, how the use of imagination engenders the transformational aims being worked with and through in my research, and how these converge in this instance on regions of the art being produced.^{xxix} In addition, notions of will and desire^{xxx}, both also having an extensive index to their formulations and treatment in philosophical terms.

In the religiophilosophical terms being discussed here, will and desire are as ‘servants’ to the imagination. And in terms of magic taking aesthetic shape, they are the tools working in tandem with imagination to generate form; without desire nothing becomes willed into imaginative existence.

In Islamic scholar Henry Corbin’s text on the Sufi mystic Ibn Arabi, Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi^{xxxi}, he describes an elaborate cosmology of a ‘theophanic imagination’ extending from and associated with relationally, an occulted self-created, divine Ipseity, who wants to be known by the reflective and self-aware sentience of its own projected creations, a reflexive if not reciprocal relationship^{xxxii}, who, in an act of creative imagination, imagines creation into existence, thus enacting the theophanic imaginary act or event establishing an archetype, a model from which all other events of like nature correspond as after the Hermetic axiom of relations.

Corbin’s writing in its own manner is dense, complexly detailed, and, as after its Islamic cultural context, is couched in terms that are not immediately familiar. To convey what I’m orienting towards in a like manner of thought and praxis I will quote from him at length:

“The same theophanic imagination of the Creator who has revealed the worlds, renews the Creation from moment to moment in the human being whom He has revealed as His perfect image and who, in the mirror that this Image is, shows himself Him whose image he is. That is why man’s Active Imagination cannot be a vain fiction, since it is this same theophanic imagination which, in and by the human being, continues to reveal what it showed itself by first imagining it.

“This imagination can be termed “illusory” only when it becomes opaque and loses its transparency. But when it is true to the divine reality it reveals, it liberates, provided that we recognize the function with which Ibn ‘Arabī endowed it and which it alone can perform; namely, the function of effecting a *Coincidentia*

Oppositorum (*jam' bayna'l-naqīdayn*). This term is an allusion to the words of Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz, a celebrated Sūfī master. "Whereby do you know God?" he was asked. And he replied: "By the fact that He is the *Coincidentia Oppositorum*." For the entire universe of worlds is at once He and not-He (*huwa lā huwa*).

This is a *Coincidentia Oppositorum* of paradox on a cosmological, metaphysical plane^{xxxiii}, a self created and generative Mystery, from which everything originates and can become known through the productions of its own emanative imaginative exercise in a reflexive perceptual process, while, simultaneously It is never in and of any of its productions, instead being so Other as if to be off the same circuit in which exists all of its emanated creations.

"The God manifested in forms is at once Himself and other than Himself, for since He is manifested, He is the limited which has no limit, the visible which cannot be seen. This manifestation is neither perceptible nor verifiable by the sensory faculties; *discursive reason rejects it. It is perceptible only by the Active Imagination* (*Ḥaḍrat al-Khayāl*, the imaginative "Presence" or "Dignity," the Imaginatrix) at times when it dominates man's sense perceptions, in dreams or better still in the waking state (in the state characteristic of the gnostic when he departs from the consciousness of sensuous things). In short, a mystic perception (*dhawq*) is required. To perceive all forms as epiphanic forms (*maẓāhir*), that is, to perceive through the figures which they manifest and which are the eternal hexeities, that they are other than the Creator and nevertheless that they are He, is precisely to effect the encounter, the coincidence, between God's descent toward the creature and the creature's ascent toward the Creator."^{xxxiv}

Corbin proceeds describing the imagination as an "intermediary, a mediatrix", naming the imagination as "active", locating the "place" of this encounter", not outside the Creator-Creature totality, but...the area within it which corresponds specifically to the Active Imagination, in the manner of a bridge joining the two banks of a river. The crossing itself is essentially a hermeneutics of symbols (*ta'wīl, ta'bīr*), a method of understanding which transmutes sensory data and rational concepts into symbols (*maẓāhir*) by making them effect this crossing."^{xxxv}

"Because the world is theophanic Imagination, it consists of "apparitions" which demand to be interpreted and transcended. And for that very reason it is only through the Active Imagination that consciousness, awakened to the true nature of the world as "apparition," can transcend its data and thereby render itself capable of new theophanies, that is, of a continuous ascent. The initial imaginative operation is to typify (*tamthīl*) the immaterial and spiritual realities in external or sensuous forms, which then become "ciphers" for what they manifest. After that the Imagination remains the motive force of the *ta'wīl* which is the continuous ascent of the soul.

In short, because there is Imagination, there is *ta'wīl*; because there is *ta'wīl*, there is symbolism; and because there is symbolism, beings have two dimensions."^{xxxvi}

Corbin, elaborating on Ibn Arabī's theosophy further, makes note that throughout Arabī's work are paired opposites, binaries of relation in concept and meaning, that find their own apotheosis, or epiphany, in a third realised condition, through their unity as *a/the coincidentia oppositorum*;

"This apperception reappears in all the pairs of terms that characterize the theosophy of Ibn 'Arabī: Creator and Creature (*Ḥaqq and Khalq*), divinity and humanity (*lāhūt and nāsūt*), Lord and vassal (*Rabb and 'Abd*). Each pair of terms typifies a union for which we have suggested the term *unio sympathetica*. The union of the two terms of each pair constitutes a *Coincidentia Oppositorum*, a simultaneity not of contradictories but of complementary opposites, and we have seen above that it is the specific function of the Active Imagination to effect this union which, according to the great Sūfī Abū Sa'īd al-Kharrāz, defines our knowledge of the Godhead. But the essential here is that the mysterium coniunctionis which unites the two terms is a theophanic union (seen from the standpoint of the Creator) or a theopathic union (seen from the standpoint of the creature); in no event is it a "hypostatic union."^{xxxvii}

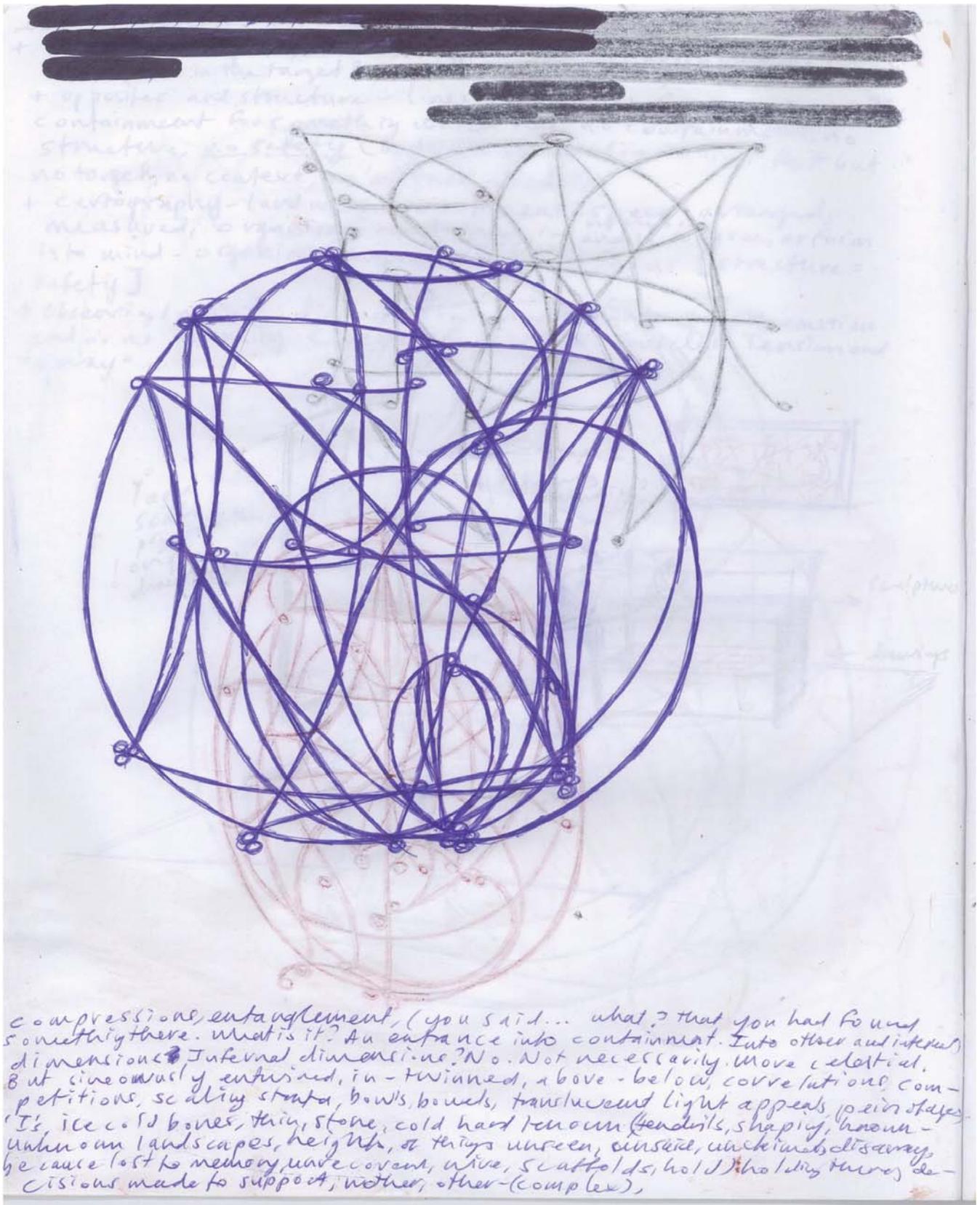
Corbin speaks to a doubling that occurs in this relation between a given self, a believer or practitioner of this way, and the Divine Ipseity, an unimaginable Ineffable^{xxxviii}, disclosing Itself through the means of the theophanic imagination as encounter with ones own entity^{xxxix}

“These ideas are strictly related: When you create, it is not you who create, and that is why your creation is true. It is true because each creature has a twofold dimension: the Creator-creature typifies the *coincidentia oppositorum*. From the first this *coincidentia* is present to Creation, because Creation is not ex nihilo but a theophany. As such, it is Imagination. The Creative Imagination is theophanic Imagination, and the Creator is one with the imagining Creature because each Creative Imagination is a theophany, a recurrence of the Creation. Psychology is indistinguishable from cosmology; the theophanic Imagination joins them into a psycho-cosmology.”^{xi}

A correspondence can be perceived existing here, between Corbin’s explication of the *Coincidentia Oppositorum*^{xli} and Carl Jung’s conception of a ‘transcendent function’^{xlii}, that is both a method embracing the ‘tension of opposites’, the definition of the *Coincidentia Oppositorum* that Jung employs, and a faculty serving a psychological process (‘individuation’^{xliiii}), both of disentanglement of unconsciously constellated elements, feeling-toned ‘complexes’^{xliiv}, of ones potential Self from the Collective Unconscious and a re-unifying, a forging together in a new condition which establishes a *mysterium coniunctious*^{xliv}, bringing about the condition and realisation of the Philosopher’s Stone^{xlvi}, the difference being though that Corbin posits the origins of this ‘theophanic imagination’ on planes elsewhere^{xlvii}, so a supposed transcendence, of dimensions and consciousness ‘above’ and beyond, is introduced, bringing these to bear through the mystic in terms of the imaginative capacity of the individual.^{xlviii} In Jung these terms are psychologised^{xlix}, so what may sound similar or suggest a kinship is located ‘below’ or ‘within’, arising from the ‘depths’ of a Collective Unconscious^l, even if still transcendent, i.e., ‘beyond’ the conscious horizon of a given individual.

Continuing to take up these ideas as ‘true and real’^{li}, and extending, via imagination employed in aesthetic techniques and forms, desire as teleologically oriented via active and theophanic imagination is married increasingly to will, directed in accord with the notions of bearings mentioned briefly above, symbolically, aesthetically or via spiritual practices^{lii}, while coterminously generating the ‘new’ in subjectivity alongside or through the art works.

“The *imaginatio*, or the act of imagining, is thus a physical activity that can be fitted into the cycle of material changes, that brings these about and is brought about by them in its turn. In this way the alchemist not only related himself to the unconscious but directly to the very substance which he hoped to transform through the power of imagination.”^{liii}



Sigil construction (untitled, ball point pen & felt pen on paper, 2017)

Of method: Sigil Charting and Constructions

“THE PROCESS OF SIGIL CONSTRUCTION ITSELF IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ITS GRAPHIC RESULT!” Of course, we do need the finished sigil, ie., the graphic end result, for otherwise we could not charge or activate it. ...the above mentioned mnemonic is little more than a rephrasing of an exhortation which you will frequently hear from Zen masters –“the way is the goal” ...”^{liv}

Sigils and their construction are a form of symbolic construction associated with magic. They have a long history, stretching back into antiquity and an affinity aesthetically with kinds of symbolic language, such as asemic writing, religious iconography, talismans and amulets, and secret coded languages.^{lv}

Austin Osman Spare was a 19th century and early to mid-Twentieth Century artist and occultist^{lvi}, who, drawing on the then nascent psychological concept of the unconscious^{lvii}, developed a form of magical practice employing drawn symbolic figures, use of imagination and directed will, as primary components towards ‘hacking’^{lviii} ones personal psychological and material reality, altering conditions in accordance with ones own desired intent.^{lix}

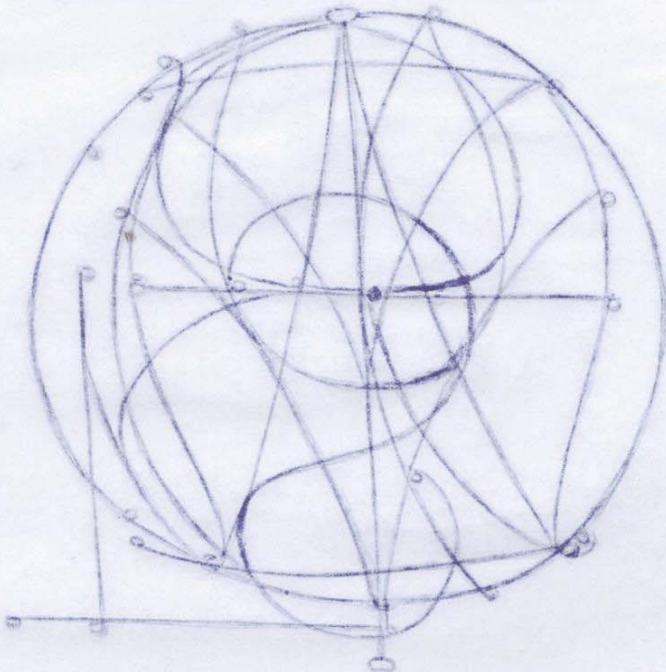
The basic procedure of sigil construction, following the ‘classic’^{lx} instruction, involves writing out a self-created invocation or affirmation, a desired quality or outcome of a given situation, in a positive form in its language^{lxi}, progressively cancelling out the vowels and repeating letters, ending up with a group of nonsensical, unassociated letters and mashing and manipulating these visually, constructing them into an aesthetic form.^{lxii}

Following this an altered state, a form of trance or hypnosis, is induced^{lxiii}, called ‘gnosis’^{lxiv} in Chaos magick^{lxv}, and the sigil is ‘charged’ or ‘activated’, by staring at it intensely, instilling it into ones perceptual field, instigating it as a kind of command in ones unconscious, through a heightened form of concentration intended to bypass ones conscious mind.^{lxvi} The idea being that what manifests as phenomenal reality ‘around’ us is propelled and brought into experiential encounter more predominantly through the unconscious mind rather than the conscious will, and to work consciously with ones unconscious mind is a more affective transformational and manipulative tool.

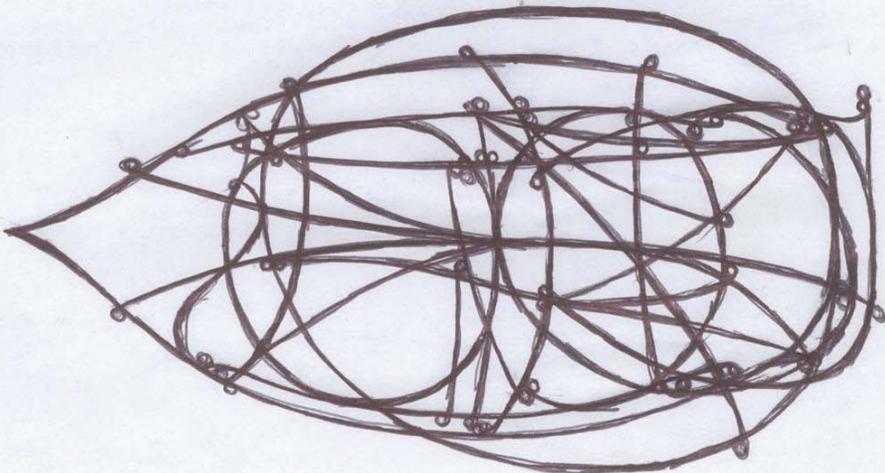
The final step is to ‘banish’ the conscious minds grasp of the associated symbol and command, a suggested technique for this to be to laugh or to engage in some banal and profane activity, like watching some television, basically a conscious switch of attention via employment of distraction.

Once activated and forgotten the sigil is purported to go to work in ones unconscious, being picked up on by the mechanisms of will and manifestation that reside unconsciously in ones system^{lxvii}

IN NO OUT, ON



the qualitative thing of concepts



Containers; vessel; refort - form
Maps <-> mapping - image
(navigation <-> orientation) } topography

legitimate morphologies?
Aligned mutations?

3d
space
planar, > sticks

Sigil construction (untitled, ball point pen & felt pen on paper, 2017)

It is at this point that I'm taking the form of the sigils being produced in my own life as a psychological (and/or magick and religious) tool and extending them, inclusive of the required forgetting, forgetfulness as to their specific purpose and meaning other than being a of form of invocation, into an aesthetic domain where they transform into art, become objects, arte-fictions. The idea becomes further removed, disremembered (because it is becoming more distant from its original purpose), and reformed into something else. This 'something-else' transliteration and transmutation process is simultaneously a reversal of forgetting, forwards again on the same cycle or circuit though, as an isomorphism, into a kind of remembering, what in Islamic mysticism is called Dhikr^{lxviii}, or after a kind of remembering bearing resemblance to the Platonic notion of anamnesis^{lxix}

These concerns, of transformation and a transliteration into another substance and form, from 2d drawings to 3d structures or forms in varying configurations of space, cross regions of alchemy and psychological processes, renewal or rebirth, transformation, and linking's of mind and bodily distributed affect, structure or process.

Relating these operations and processes to magick, Author Wilson Leigh, asserts

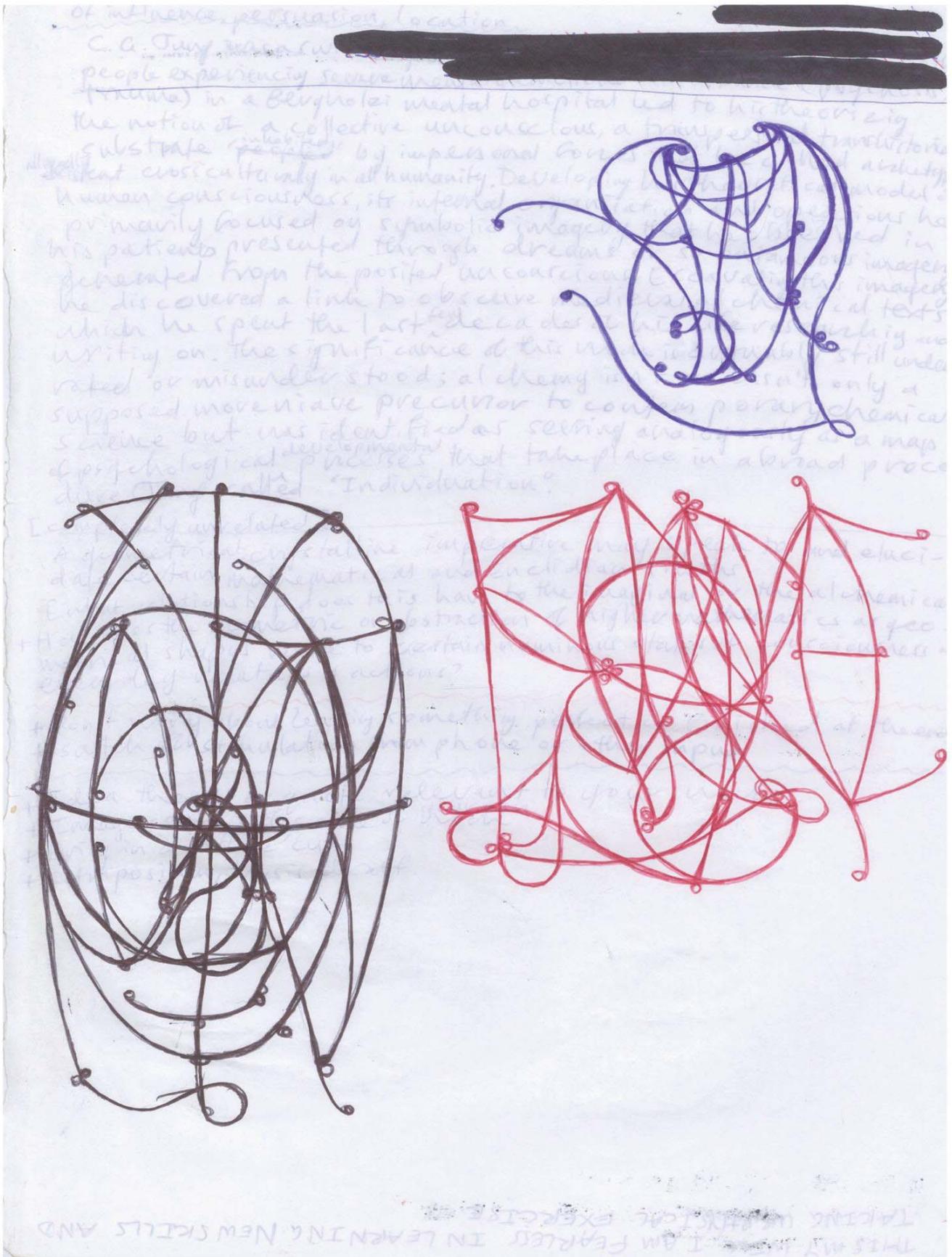
"Magic concerns itself with the material world and is crucially about actions; the magical act works through harnessing the vital materiality of world,"^{lxx}

Connecting the material world concerns here with the imaginative faculty Frater U.D. further observes "Occidental magic is known to rest on two main pillars, namely on *will* and on *imagination*. Connected with these are analogous thinking and symbolic images."^{lxxi}

Refining this, regarding a strangeness, and another doubling of character and function in relation to magickal objects, Leigh comments,

"the strangeness of the magical objects of non-western peoples, a strangeness that attests not to their 'otherness' and 'savagery', but to the strangeness of mimetic practices as such, practices in which, of course, 'we' are imbricated or of which 'we' are a part" are situated in a signified/signifier relation, a "relation between mimesis and magic", a relation wherein the mimetic is also 'magic' through a "signifier acting as if it were the real. Mimetic self-awareness resides in the impossible place where the signifier is real and not real at the same time".^{lxxii}

This relation, its attendant awareness, the process that is generated and entertained, and the art works produced, is the consanguinity being both investigated and adopted as-if-real in the moments of drawing a sigil on the basis of desire (of a *something* intended; a quality or an affect desired, a 'wound' to be transformed, or an event to bring about for instance), both entertained and entered as creative act(ion), and extended through polymorphisms across both art works (in their performative dimensions as both acts of 'workings' in the magical sense and acts of worship, as after a theophanic imaginative location and aim) and the interiorised, private and invisible but affectually and perceptually *real* phenomenally, that takes place in creating the art work. The sigilisation is extended^{lxxiii} as are the further aesthetic morphisms following and additional to certain practices that serve similar aims.^{lxxiv}



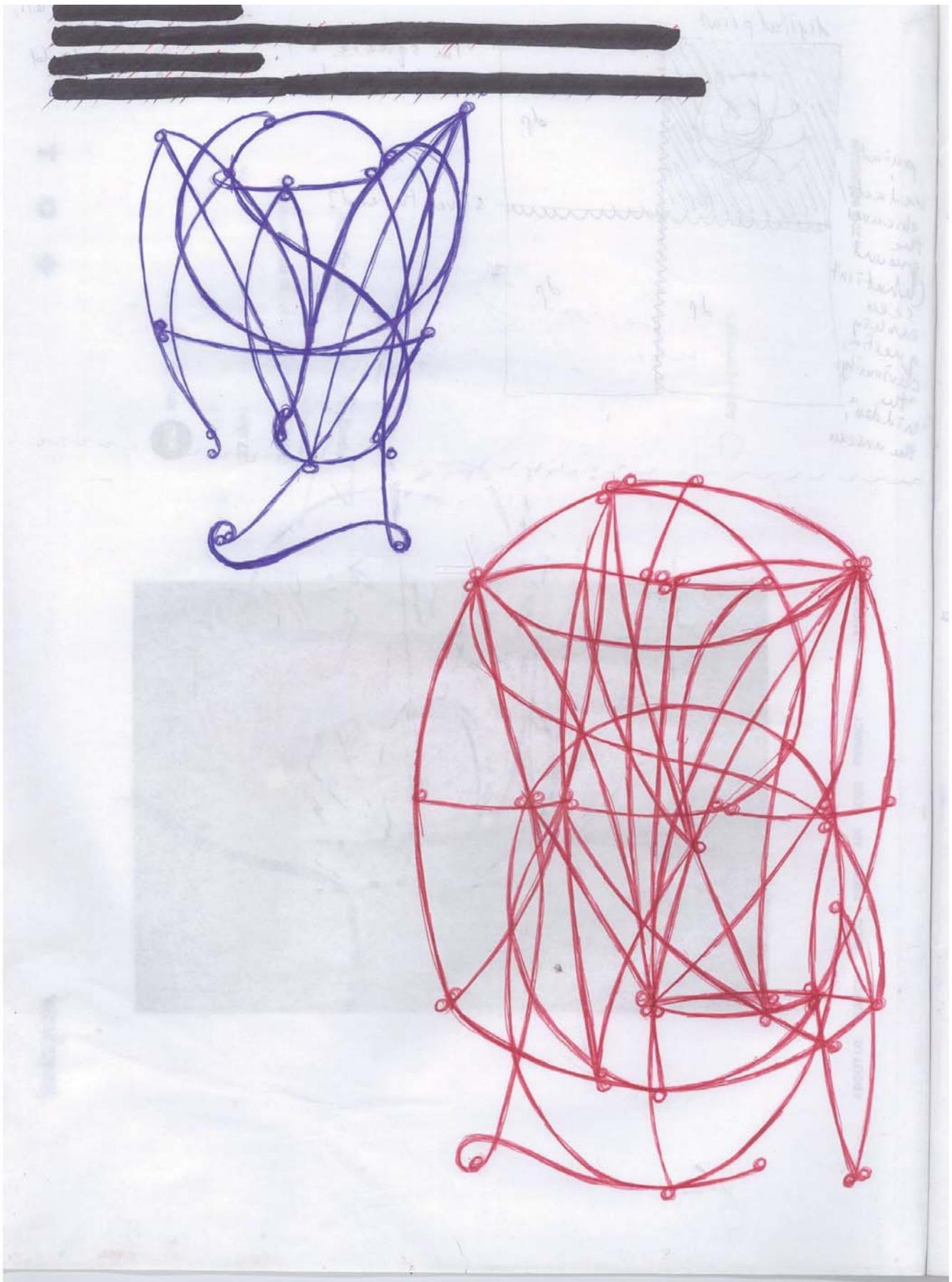
Sigil construction (untitled, ball point pen & felt pen on paper, 2017)

Occulture: The Dark Arts^{lxxv} – A critical review

Occulture: The Dark Arts is a recent, and as of writing, continuing exhibition (12 August – 19 November) presented by the Wellington City Art Gallery, curated by Aaron Lister. It locates a cultural phenomenon, coined as ‘Occulture’ by British academic Christopher Partridge, as a social moment and response to a simultaneous secularising (away from traditional religion) and resacralising process, wherein the space of the ostensible lack of the sacred is repopulated with forms of the occult (‘hidden knowledge’), esoteric and spiritualist practices that are alleged to have always been present in contemporary societies but absent in popular cultural discourse (thus their occulted nature). Lister, in the accompanying exhibition catalogue, makes the observation that occulture, “is fuelled by many things, including political disenfranchisement and the rejection of existing power structures, systems and binary identities. It’s propelled by cyberculture’s access to alternative worlds, as well as to sources of knowledge long hidden”^{lxxvi}, and makes, crucially, the observation, that “what was once sacred, blasphemous, or countercultural is now commodified and marketed back to us.”^{lxxvii} It is this aspect of the content of occulture that highlights what I think are problematics in this particular exhibition.

In the show, Lister organises 18 artists works, both national and international, with multifarious practices and work ranging across traditional media, of sculpture, paintings and published materials alongside video and audio works, gathered together under the rubric of ‘occulture’. There are significant works included, representation of infamous and highly influential British occultist Aleister Crowley’s paintings are present and there is a repeated showing of Kenneth Anger’s film, his “magnum Opus”, *Lucifer Rising* (1970-81), and some of the individual artists, of note Mikala Dwyer, Yin Ju-Chen and New Zealand artist Fiona Pardington in particular, present striking and affectual work.^{lxxviii}

However, it pains to be clear that the show is culturally important and aspects of its work, as a whole it is let down, by not being precise enough with the selection of work under its own parameters of ‘Occulture’^{lxxix}. Work that looks ‘spooky’ and ‘dark’ or rooted in mytho-poetic literature or psychological reverie does not mean it automatically bears an immediate relation to esoteric knowledges and practices that could be considered occult. There can be demonstrated a difference in the work of those who are themselves practitioners of methods that sit in the knowledge systems and history of the occult and those who are using it as a vehicle, or approaching it peripherally, without this working knowledge or even belief in what they are dealing with. Elements of scepticism, uncertainty, outright ignorance or spectacularising colonialisms are problematically evident, and, rather unhelpfully, undermine aspects of the exhibition.^{lxxx}



Sigil construction (untitled, ball point pen and felt pen on paper, 2017)

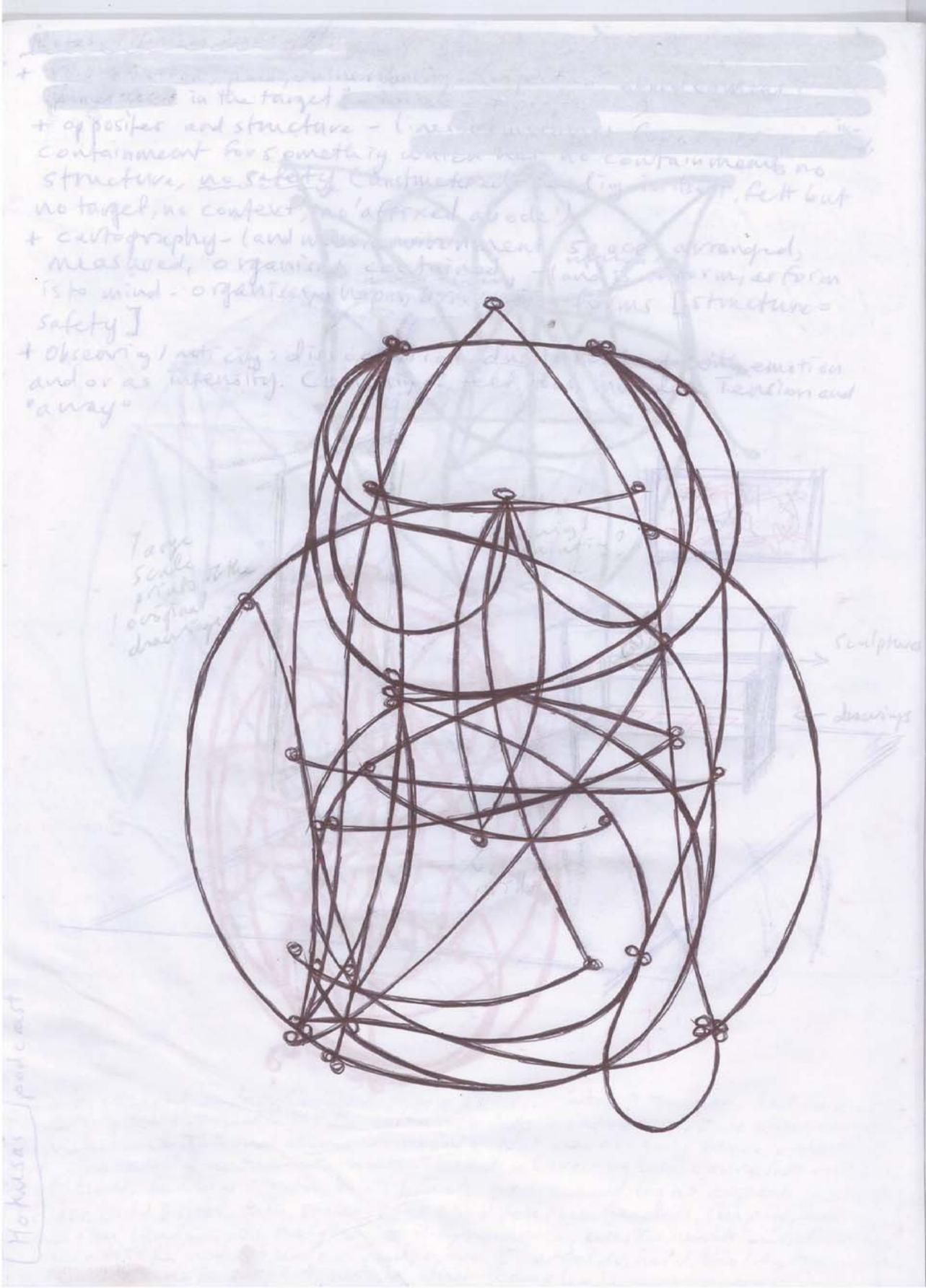
(in) Conclusion

To bring all of the previous to a conclusion is to admit that some of the terrain being traversed is either incommensurable in nature (because of dealing with domains and paradigms that don't have an obvious correspondence of meaning, the ontologies and language being parsed and moved through existing in forms that are disparate as to find no relational connect, abstractly or more concretely), or remains in eddies of uncertainty because the implications raised are revealed as too complex at this juncture to address sufficiently, surpassing the range of this survey and attempt at location, while also requiring more time and depth of research to fully pull out useful and clarifying material.

However, what has been discussed and raised here can be illustrated to illuminate a coherence across the relations established as to draw close to a notion of achieving the aim of the ongoing research project; that is, a case has been established of a certain pursuit of the 'Philosophers Stone' as to some of the nature that this comprises in my own situation, and how this is being navigated through theory and practice.

From discussion of subjectivities cast across extremes (mystical cognitions intimating exalted, rarified conditions of wholeness and entanglement of matter and mind, to precursor developmental states that are existent as an opposite, constituted by discontinuities and fragmentation), through situating those subjectivities as a psychologised, both interiorised and outwardly navigated and expressed psychospiritual politic, to discussing a method being used to bring about desired change, increased cohesion across body mind states, and aesthetic possibility (sigil magick), through to locating the use of will and imagination in this process, linking imagination to a divinising process, relation and cosmology, a relationship to the Divine via a theophanic and active imagination, a brief discussion of other artists working in this field contemporaneously and pithy encounter with some of the problematics operative in this terrain, a picture of a series of movements and relations towards a desired aim (transformation/s) is being developed.

This juncture, this exegesis, is but a moment in a broader process of exploration and construction being undertaken. Any conclusion can only reside in a point or site of crossing situated as if a nexus in relation to a series of deepening and expanding trajectories of varying enquiry; this nexus, can be envisaged in a circular shape perhaps akin to the ouroboros of alchemy^{lxxxi} taking us back to the beginning of our discussion; the end is in the beginning, and vice versa.



Sigil construction (untitled, ball point pen on paper, 2017)

ⁱ C.G.Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy, Collected Works* 12, par.209. Attributed to 3rd Century alchemist Maria Prophetessa.

ⁱⁱ That is, as after an assertion locating self identity and a declaration of intent. I understand myself and what I do as situated more broadly in a process concerned with a radical reorientation of consciousness akin to the mystics of earlier Islam and Christianity, or the Alchemists and Gnostics of antiquity. This is being traversed presently in part through a psychotherapeutic paradigm and process, and partly through an ongoing aesthetic series of projects and research.

ⁱⁱⁱ A succession of ruptures and alterations in consciousness occurred as a series of mystical experiences from ages 19-25. Circa 1990, these started when I lived on an Island in Auckland's Hauraki Gulf, dropped-out from society seeking something vague as to addressing a sense of deep self-discomfort and non-fit in relation to society. At the time I pursued various spiritual methodologies towards some then unidentified and uncertain formulated notion of change.

Varying accounts of a number of these experiences can be found in a subreddit I keep on the social media platform reddit, this subreddit acting as both a micro database of multifarious intersecting subject content and terrain and an index to my praxis.

https://www.reddit.com/r/ByTheBookofThySelf/comments/69grea/numinous_mystical_religious_experiences_after/

^{iv} An excerpted definition of magick follows, in the Thelemapedia ("the free encyclopedia of Thelema". Thelema is the religion English Occultist Aleister Crowley invented). Though I agree in general with the definition here I do not self identify as a Thelemite (a follower and practitioner of Crowley's system of magick).

In the broadest sense, Magick is any act designed to cause intentional change. This term is often spelled with a terminal "k" to differentiate it from other practices, such as "stage magic". Magick is not capable of producing "miracles" or violating the physical laws of the universe (i.e. it cannot cause a solar eclipse), although "it is theoretically possible to cause in any object any change of which that object is capable by nature" (Book 4). Aleister Crowley saw magick as the essential method for a person to reach true understanding of the self and to act according to one's True Will. <http://www.thelemapedia.org/index.php/Magick>. Retrieved 4/10/17.

^v Austin Osman Spare, 30 December 1886 – 15 May 1956, was an English artist and occultist who worked as a draughtsman and painter. He is credited with establishing a pictorial, symbolic form of 'pragmatic' magick called sigil magick.

^{viii} Henry Corbin, 14 April 1903 – 7 October 1978, was a philosopher, theologian, Iranologist and professor of Islamic Studies at the École pratique des hautes études in Paris, France.

^{vii} Carl Gustav Jung, 26 July 1875 – 6 June 1961, was a Swiss psychiatrist. A pupil and friend of Sigmund Freud's Jung eventually broke away from Psychoanalysis to form his own school of theory and methodology, primarily dealing with the imagistic phenomena of a posited unconscious to affect cure. Jung coined the term and concept of the Collective Unconscious and Archetypes in their contemporary sense.

^{viii} Donald Kalsched, Ph.D. is a Clinical Psychologist and Jungian Psychoanalyst. He has written a number of books dealing with trauma, in particular early developmental trauma and its attendant phenomena, specifically archetypally.

^{ix} Although desired this is not intended as a comprehensive nor exhaustive exposition, providing instead, like a legend key on a map, with reference to alleged ontologies alongside symbolic topographies, some features towards meaning and locating understanding.

^x This is difficult to clarify. Was I in that case 'seeing into' relations of depth, so into more microscopic levels of exchange and interrelatedness, where a causal relation between matter-psyche was more demonstrable, or instead into some kind of transcendent relational exchange, which, through language as through the act of perception in this instance, is suggestive of a horizon of perspective 'above' what passes as normal? It may

have even been something else entirely, of non-causal relations. In the event cited it wasn't obvious, and my position of perspective appeared to exist co-relationally across a horizontal series of affinities.

^{xi} Early Trauma and Dreams: Archetypal Defenses of the Personal Spirit, with Donald Kalsched, Ph.D. <http://jungchicago.org/blog/?p=257> (© 2004 Donald Kalsched). Retrieved 29/9/17

^{xii} My emphasis.

^{xiii} Start: 12:00ms. End: 13:08ms. <http://jungchicago.org/blog/?p=257>

^{xiv} Kalsched, Donald, The Inner World of Trauma: Archetypal Defences of the Personal Spirit, 1996, p.3

^{xv} Ibid.

^{xvi} In a text called God is a Trauma: Vicarious Religion and Soul Making, 1989.

^{xvii} Morgenson, God is a Trauma, 1989, p.7. Cited in Kalsched, The Inner World of Trauma, 1996, p.77

^{xviii} Ibid.

^{xix} Dynamics and Performativity of Imagination: The Image between the Visible and the Invisible, Bernd Huppauf and Christoph Wulf, p.13

^{xx} Ibid., p.21

^{xxi} Carl Jung, Psychology and Alchemy, Paragraph 395, p.279. Jung here is referring to the 'Magnum Opus' of the alchemical work in his psychologised interpretation and paradigm, of achieving a refined state of unified consciousness metaphorically called the 'Philosophers Stone'.

^{xxii} Gibbons, B.J., Spirituality and the Occult: From the Renaissance to the Modern Age, 2001, p.95

^{xxiii} This isn't always the case, imagination has a history before and beyond Hermeticism, and Hermeticism doesn't have the last word on spiritual cosmologies, but they are often imbricated.

^{xxiv} "As above, so below; as below, so above."—The Kybalion, p.10. Similarly, an extended variation thereof; "That which is Below corresponds to that which is Above, and that which is Above, corresponds to that which is Below, to accomplish the miracles of the One Thing." In the Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistus. "(occultism) What happens on one level of reality also happens on every other level; the microcosm and macrocosm behave alike." https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/as_above,_so_below. Retrieved 4/10/17.

^{xxv} Even while in its designations obviously stakes a claim for territory of its own, prior to what we might assume when we come to investigate such notions for ourselves. The assumption in such philosophies is that the models they map out are transhistorical and an accurate reflection of some kind of metaphysical arrangement that pre-exists time and human social, economic, psychological and developmental existence prior to these as emergent qualities and forces; the territory claimed and colonised is already territorialised before we arrive there to find out what it indeed is that presumes to priorly 'claim' us.

^{xxvi} This notion is discussed in regards to embodiment in Gibbon's Spirituality and the Occult. To quote at length, identifying some of the problematics of this, and how this kind of territory corresponds to the kinds of questions influential in my praxis, Gibbons writes;

"Self hood is thus constituted not by its freedom but by its contingency. It exists only in opposition to the Other, an otherness which limits and restrains. But this opposition is not a simple, clear-cut binary opposition. When the world fell out of man, man also fell partly out of himself. The self confronts an invasive otherness which has taken hold of part of its own being: the body. On the one hand, the body is a precondition of 'the

category of the person', inextricably bound up with our sense of ourselves. Yet it is through the body that the otherness invades our being. We experience the body both as an integral part of ourselves and as an object somehow 'out there'. The very language that we use to express our embodiment tends to reify it. Annie Mignard has argued that 'One does not *have* a body, one *is* a body'. Perhaps so: but the awkwardness of this phrasing is surely more than grammatical. 'How', Helmut Schneider asks, 'can we ever be at unity with our body and with ourselves; how can we even speak about our body without removing ourselves from it, turning it into an external thinglike object?', p.56

^{xxvii} To separate these out is difficult to parse - what is the world and matter, and what is indeed mind and/or imagination? This question, among others, underpins my present research project, and, in light of the mystical cognitions informing my own positioning, to be so precise as to generate severance of categories and form in this instance is to perform an operation that is perhaps inimical to the task being attempted to be undertaken in formulating or discovering, if that is what is being done, increasing understanding of the nature of the world and its contents through scientific enterprise or philosophical explication and creation. If the world really does cohere in such an intimate embrace as was disclosed through the recorded mystical experience what is being done to that same world, inclusive of the human agent present to that task, in efforts to separate those relations out into isolates of determined fixity?

^{xxviii} The entries in the online Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy for both imagination:

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/imagination/>, and, relatedly, mental imagery

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mental-imagery/>, are both extensive and yet not comprehensive.

In the overview for imagination it is stated, "There is a general consensus among those who work on the topic that the term *imagination* is used too broadly to permit simple taxonomy." And, "In the opening chapter of *Mimesis as Make-Believe*—perhaps the most influential contemporary book-length treatment of imagination—Kendall Walton (1990) throws up his hands at the prospect of delineating the notion precisely. After enumerating and distinguishing a number of paradigmatic instances of imagining, he asks:

"What is it to imagine? We have examined a number of dimensions along which imaginings can vary; shouldn't we now spell out what they have in common?—Yes, if we can. But I can't." (Walton 1990, 19)."

The subject is immense. For my own concerns my purview of interest is very narrow, for specific reasons, that the concepts and paradigms being employed speak to regions wherein the mystical and/or the supernatural may be acceptable categories of taxonomy and knowledge, and how the theories and philosophy employed correspond to regions of personal experiential phenomena.

^{xxix} "The imagination also plays an important role in various other 20th-century forms of esotericism, but all of them seem to be individual variations on the basic approaches that emerged from the 19th century Romantic, mesmerist and occultist contexts, and their "para-paracelsian" and Christian-theosophical backgrounds. One example is Carl Gustav Jung's concept of the "active imagination", which plays an important role in his psychotherapeutic system. Another is Rudolf Steiner's system for "attaining knowledge of higher worlds", where the imagination is the lowest in a series of three spiritual faculties (followed by inspiration and intuition). And finally, Henry Corbin – with primary reference to Islamic esotericism, especially Ibn Arabi (Corbin 1969) – introduced a theory that has become highly influential not only in various esoteric currents, but has also left its mark on scholars of Western esotericism of a "religionist" orientation. The imagination, according to Corbin, is both a means of knowledge and a modality of being, and as such it constitutes a *mundus imaginalis*, a "mesocosm" or intermediary reality between the intelligible sphere and the realm of the senses. Corbin coined the term "imaginal" to distinguish his concept from the merely "imaginary" (yet another variation on Paracelsus' and Coleridge's distinction between fantasy and imagination), but its ontological status is predictably ambiguous: the imaginal is neither a place nor a non-place, but although Corbin insists on its "reality", he remains elusive in referring to it by terms such as 'le pays du non-où' (the land of no-where; see Berger 1986, 146)."

Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism, 2006, Wouter J. Hanegraaff, ed., p. 615

^{xxx} Desire, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/desire/>, free will, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/freewill/>.

Both of these have a close relationship to intention, also employed in a magickal, psychological and

religiophilosophical sense, to bring about desired change through their use. There is an active, imaginative and creative, emergent quality being associated with these attributes in my use of these terms.

^{xxxi} Henry Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, (1969), 2008

^{xxxii} As after the Quranic hadith, "I was a Hidden Treasure and loved to be known. Therefore I created the Creation that I might be known.". There are numerous translations from the Arabic, as also references to its interpretation, mentioned in the following: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Hidden_Treasure.

^{xxxiii} In contradistinction, at this point, to the kind of *Coincidentia Oppositorum* we find being discussed in Carl Jung's work, where the domain and concept of the 'tension of opposites' is psychologised, and played out in phenomenological regions of a persons bodily, emotional and mental awareness and operations. Corbin introduces this ecology and psychology also, albeit in religiopoetic vocabulary and conceptions, the site of any resolve and the phenomena linking humans to the Divine being the imaginative faculty but not psychologised as in Jung's use and terminology. It remains in question whether they were talking of the same phenomena, only couched in different terms and paradigms.

^{xxxiv} Corbin, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi*, p.223

^{xxxv} *Ibid.*, pp.223-224

^{xxxvi} *Ibid.*, p.246-247

^{xxxvii} *Ibid.*, p.247

^{xxxviii} The paradox, and absurdity, of language guised in propositional clause and claws is apparent in these moments; we have to speak of a something but that something always escapes mention and nomenclature without falling into traps of historically loaded terms that suggest a foreclosure of kinds supposedly dispensed with through inherited sophisticated cultural developments in philosophical and psychological understanding. The notion of 'God is dead', as formulated famously by Nietzsche, still resounds. What is God then, in such conditions? It is partly towards reframing and re-discovering this that my praxis revolves and orients.

^{xxxix} The soul in other words. This again is another loaded and problematised term, because it is not immediately apparent to a contemporary mind as an existent something, nor admitted to the horizons of science. To enter a discussion of this notion at this time would be too lengthy even though it underpins some of what I am concerned with in my research .

A dictionary definition and its etymology will have to suffice presently:

Soul: noun

1. the principle of life, feeling, thought, and action in humans, regarded as a distinct entity separate from the body, and commonly held to be separable in existence from the body; the spiritual part of humans as distinct from the physical part.

2. the spiritual part of humans regarded in its moral aspect, or as believed to survive death and be subject to happiness or misery in a life to come.. 3. the disembodied spirit of a deceased person..,

<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/soul?s=t>. Retrieved 20/9/17.

^{xl} Corbin, *Creative Imagination*, p.254

^{xlxi} A Latin term, coined by Nicholas of Cusa (also known as Nicholas of Cusanus) 1401–1464, a German polymath, theologian, philosopher, and jurist, in his text, *De Docta Ignorantia* (On learned Ignorance), 1440. This term has been used by both Carl Jung and Henry Corbin, though their usage in its emphasis and location in their models differ slightly. It concerns a paradox, a sustained 'both/and' condition of opposing tendencies in varying modes of apprehension and being.

^{xlii} Transcendent function: a mode of experiential understanding that, mediated by the archetypes, unites the opposing aspects of the *psyche*, thereby forcing their energy into a common channel. The opposites melt

together alchemically; archetypes guide the transformation, helping cook the instinct-food over the fire. Opposites coming together releases the energy that was in their tension and looks like a cyclone. Left alone, two opposites will form the "third thing" at least partly in consciousness.

As process, the *unconscious* produces compensations; as method, we realize them consciously. The transcendent function (don't confuse with the four orienting *functions* of the *ego*) is what makes *individuation* possible. This function takes place between the superior and inferior *functions*--so an overdeveloped superior *function* can interfere. Creative expression and meaning supplement one another to form the transcendent function. <http://www.terrapsych.com/jungdefs.html>. Retrieved 19/9/17

^{xliii} "the process by which a person integrates unconscious contents into consciousness, thereby becoming a psychologically whole individual. Self-realization. Release from *persona* and *identification* with the collective *unconscious*. An ongoing dialog between *ego* and *Self* in which the *ego* is relativized. Individuation can only unfold in the context of a relationship with others. ..." <http://www.terrapsych.com/jungdefs.html>. Retrieved 4/10/17

^{xliv} "...a cluster of emotionally charged associations, usually unconscious and gathered around an archetypal center (and so a blend of environment and disposition). Repressed emotional themes.. Complexes are the contents of the personal *unconscious*, whereas *archetypes*, their foundations, are those of the collective *unconscious*. Complexes, found in healthy as well as troubled people, are always either the cause or the effect of a conflict. The complex arises from the clash between the need to adapt and constitutional inability to meet the challenge. They originate in childhood, and their first form is the parental complex." <http://www.terrapsych.com/jungdefs.html>. Retrieved 4/10/17

^{xlv} ("mysterious conjunction"): the final alchemical synthesis (for Jung, of *ego* and *unconscious*, matter and spirit, male and female) that brings forth the *Philosopher's Stone* (the *Self*). Its highest aspect, as for alchemist Gerard Dorn, was the *unus mundus*, a unification of the Stone with body, soul, and spirit. <http://www.terrapsych.com/jungdefs.html>. Retrieved 19/9/17

^{xlvi} *Lapis Philosophorum*: Also known as the ultima materia, aqua permanens (=its *libido* aspect), rubedo tinctura, filius macrocosmi or philosophorum, quinta essentia, panacea, medicina catholica, rotundrum, elixir vitae, lapis exilis (stone of no worth), everlasting food): the Philosopher's Stone, prized goal of *alchemy*. According to legend, the Stone, a freed form of the spirit of *Mercurius* trapped within the *prima materia* or initially unprocessed raw material, grants immortality, heals all disease, and transforms base metals into gold. Jung saw it as a *Self* symbol--one compensating Christ--and the goal of *individuation*.

Mercurius: an unconscious, earthy compensation for the Trinity. He's a triad because of his inorganic, organic, and spiritual manifestations. <http://www.terrapsych.com/jungdefs.html>. Retrieved 19/9/17

^{xlvii} A cosmology of worlds as elaborated in Sufi imaginal maps of extradimensional layerings based on phenomenological, experiential disclosure. A similar cosmological map is ratified in Baha'i theology. The worlds as listed in these 'maps' are five in number: Hahut, Lahut, Jabarut, Malakut, Nasut. Only the last two worlds pertain to humans, being of the soul and the earthly located body respectively. The other three are purely metaphysical worlds.

^{xlviii} These kinds of ideas in turn, being both teleological and reliant on notions of transcendent 'other' worlds and forces beyond and outside this plane, are problematic and unproven beyond personal experiential disclosure. They have been critiqued and moved away from in contemporary forms of philosophy. I'm thinking here in particular in the case of Gilles Deleuze and his dissuasion of any form of transcendence, developing instead a Spinozist notion of a 'plane of immanence' into which all opposites and relations of transcendence are folded. The problematic remains as an incommensurability in light of these kinds of critique even if the ideas are being treated 'as-if-real', and worked with functionally as explanatory terms. In relation to the sciences they currently have no standing of any kind of truth claim.

^{xlix} Albeit this is in the language of depth psychology, which is not conventional, nor cognitive-behavioural in its conceptions and paradigm. Jungian psychology is a phenomenological psychology, its empiricism and ‘facts’ arising through experiential disclosure and testing.

ⁱ “Whereas the personal unconscious consists for the most part of "complexes", the content of the collective unconscious is made up essentially of "archetypes". The concept of the archetype, which is an indispensable correlate of the idea of the collective unconscious, indicates the existence of definite forms in the psyche which seem to be present always and everywhere. Mythological research calls them 'motifs'; in the psychology of primitives they correspond to Levy-Bruhl's concept of "representations collectives," and in the field of comparative religion they have been defined by Hubert and Mauss as 'categories of the imagination'... My thesis, then, is as follows: In addition to our immediate consciousness, which is of a thoroughly personal nature and which we believe to be the only empirical psyche (even if we tack on the personal unconscious as an appendix), there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals.” Carl Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, 1959, p. 42-43

ⁱⁱ To reiterate these ideas as ontologies can be verified experientially but it is difficult, nigh on impossible, to convey them as real or true beyond ones own sphere of perception.

ⁱⁱⁱ Expanding out from the ‘circle’ of the specific aesthetic constructions, these other spiritual practices concern prayer and meditation practices primarily, but also pertain to acts of service and an orientation to theistic notions of worship relationally situated in work place contexts and daily life, that is, concerns oriented towards notions of love and compassion in extended relations. There is no smooth or clear affiliation, precisely mapped, yet established across these differing regions of practice. What is taking place in aesthetic undertakings, other than aesthetic ‘workings’ and developments, sigil construction for instance and their evolution into other art works are an extension explicitly, deliberately, employing will, desire, embodied relations with particular materialities, physical exertion and so on understood as operating in something resembling the cosmological and psychological paradigm discussed above (that is resembling it as imagined and enacted as-if-it-were-real), as well as performing and bringing about psychological pressures and processes that generate desired outcomes of change (this, in alignment with intention, with will, becomes what can be understood as magick in practice). The entanglement of various co-existent domains of affect and effect are the drivers and structured means of this change. Who is to say outside of myself though as to the outcome of the desired change or not? And what is changing, as much as how? These are questions that persist, retaining a presence in the margins as likely avenues for the continuance of research.

ⁱⁱⁱⁱ Carl Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, para.394, p.278. My emphasis.

^{liv} Frater U.D., *Practical Sigil Magic: Creating Personal Symbols for Success*, 2012, p.27. Frater U.D., is a pen name for German occultist and author Ralph Tegtmeier. ‘Frater U.D. is an abbreviation for *Ubique Daemon Ubique Deus*, "Demon (is) in all, God (is) in all"'. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Tegtmeier. Retrieved 27/9/17.

^{lv} “Language is the basic tool of the magician”, Gibbons, *Spirituality and the Occult*, p.12. There is a deep and complex history here in relation to language, symbols, use of these in magical formulas and development of magical languages. For example, in a section on amulets in the *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* it mentions,

“Important precursors to the written or “lettered” type of amulet in the magical papyri can be identified in extant ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern sources. The texts of the papyri, although combining elements from Egyptian, Babylonian (Persian), Greek, Jewish, and Roman beliefs, remain largely sui generis. Although any taxonomy is wrought with difficulties, extant magical texts, with few exceptions, can be readily identified as belonging to that class of text commonly referred to as “GraecoEgyptian”, p.62. Due to delimitations this cannot be sufficiently explored, but it is important to acknowledge that sigilisation, as after Austin Osman Spare's personal philosophy and practice, sits in relation to such a recondite history.

^{lvi} Austin Osman Spare, as aforementioned, was a British occultist and artist.

“In an occult capacity, he developed idiosyncratic magical techniques including automatic writing, automatic drawing and sigilisation based on his theories of the relationship between the conscious and unconscious self.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Austin_Osman_Spare. Retrieved 4/10/17

^{lvii} a topographical term for the unknown process of the *psyche*. The unconscious is unconscious only to the *ego*--we don't know if it is actually that way.

The deeper you go, the more collective its contents. The unconscious divides into two layers:

1. Personal (subjective) unconscious: the layer containing subliminal impressions and repressed contents. Filled only with personal life-experiences. Includes the *shadow* and the inferior *function*.
2. Collective (impersonal, transpersonal, objective) unconscious: an immensely old *psyche* at the basis of ours, filled with nonpersonal, species-wide, inherited, and permanently unconscious *complexes* called *archetypes* and with *instincts*. Nature doesn't build from scratch each time (see Koestler). Energy in solid forms from old, like coal mines, but that pours out into active images. The *psyche*'s equivalent of those (living!) remnants of previous evolutionary stages we carry in our bodies (going all the way back to the earliest organic forms) and so a potential system of adapted functioning. It's the biological, prehistoric, and unconscious development in archaic man. (Just as human bodies have two eyes, our brains have features in common.) At bottom this *psychoid* layer fuses with physical processes and (includes) the sympathetic nervous system, which experiences from within as opposed to the cerebrospinal system, which senses outer things and maintains the *ego*. In fact, Jung thought the sympathetic system a deeper, wider, and more embracing *psyche* than the cerebrum's cortical fields and less exposed to the endocrine system. The highest differentiation of the collective unconscious is the *ego*, a relatively new combination of ancient elements.
<http://www.terrapsych.com/jungdefs.html>

^{lviii} After a dictionary use of the term, that is: verb (used with object)

1. to cut, notch, slice, chop, or sever (something) with or as with heavy, irregular blows (often followed by up or down):
to hack meat; to hack down trees.
2. to break up the surface of (the ground).
3. to clear (a road, path, etc.) by cutting away vines, trees, brush, or the like:
They hacked a trail through the jungle.
<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/hacking?s=t>

The object in this context is one's own mind in a psychological sense (this is inclusive of embodied affect and structures, ie. physiological, sensual and sensorimotor, etc).

^{lix} Spare, extending his sigil construction methodologies, formulated an 'Alphabet of Desire', an 'artificial ritual language', of which author Frater U.D, comments, as also in relation to Spare's corpus in general, "Spare's writings are very ambiguous and difficult to follow, and his exposition of the Alphabet of Desire is no exception. Even concerning his original comments we can only rely on Kenneth Grant, who seems intent on concealing more than he wants to divulge". Practical Sigil magic, p.63. Further, Frater U.D., clarifies that Spare conceived of this 'alphabet' as a system of 22 glyphs all expressing "aspects of sexuality". However, "in none of his writings published to date do we find all of these "letters" fully listed, let alone explained." (Ibid.). Although there is obscurity here, and complexity that will necessarily involve more study to grasp fully, this alphabet needs to be acknowledged in relation to how I'm approaching the issue of reconstruction of a subjectivity inclusive of a reformulating and shaping of will and desire. Notwithstanding, the kind of 'desire' I am intending in usage is not primarily sexual or related to sexuality. I conceive of this in broader terms, more akin to Jung's notion of Libido as the energetic expression of psyche, both conscious and unconscious, "Libido: psychological energy...that is finalistic and founded not on substances but their relations and movements. Always in advance of consciousness, calling us into new activity." <http://www.terrapsych.com/jungdefs.html>

^{lx} As Gordon White refers to it as in his text, Chaos Protocols, "Classic" is meant in the loosest possible sense, of course. What it really means is "post-Spare:

"There is no better introduction to classical sigil construction and chaos magic in general than Grant Morrison's late nineties gem, "Pop Magic."

Gordon White, The Chaos Protocols, ebook, Retrieved 1/10/17.

(Grant Morrison's Pop Magic, <http://disinfo.com/2014/10/pop-magic-grant-morrison/>)

^{lxi} The unconscious mind employed in this context apparently reads the negative in an affirmative 'tone' and meaning. A negative command or suggestion can operate in such a manner as to actively oppose or cancel out other configurations of desire within the invocation. The sentences have to be worded as both positive affirming notions and *as if the desired result has already taken place* in manifestation in the physical world.

^{lxii} I follow a slight variant of this procedure, leaving the vowels in, but more or less applying the same steps. The method I have learned and apply is discussed in Frater U.D.'s Practical Sigil Magic. As Frater U.D., states: "In Spare's system there are no "correct" or "incorrect" sigils; neither is there a list of ready-made symbols. It is of no import whether a sigil is the "correct" one or not, but it *is* crucial that it has been created by the magician and is meaningful to him/her. Because s/he has constructed it for personal use, the sigil easily becomes a catalyst of his/her magickal desire, and sometimes it will even waken this desire in the first place.", pp.5-6. In the text the author makes a distinction between a system of assumed meaning, which prescribes specific qualities and powers to symbols inherited from tradition, "here the adept is expected to grow into a ready-made system instead of fashioning one", and what he calls 'pragmatic magick', where the system employed, its symbols and means, is a creative invention of ones own.

^{lxiii} It isn't clear what this translates as to specific brains waves in a neurophysiological context. For instance are these Alpha waves, in conditions of relaxed wakefulness, or Theta waves, associated with REM dream states, being generated? If they could be identified as such which is more conducive in the context of sigil charging? Does it matter?

^{lxiv} In Austin Osman Spares original method, the desired state was induced usually through orgasm, the sigil charged in a state of 'no-mind', at the peak of this spasmodic experience, ones conscious ego deemed to be virtually absent in this situation and the boundaries between conscious and unconscious minds less demarcated and increased in permeability, thus more conducive to 'programming' with a sigil. However in the time since Spare alternative methods, such as involving mantra, physical exhaustion through applied exercise, meditation states and so on relatedly have been employed for a similar result.

Phil Hine writes in more detail concerning this state, gnosis, "One of the keys to magical ability is the ability to enter Altered States of Consciousness at will. We tend to draw a distinct line between ordinary consciousness and altered states, where in fact we move between different states of consciousness - such as daydreams, autopilot (where we carry out actions without cognition) and varying degrees of attention, all the time. However, as far as magick is concerned, the willed entry into intense altered states can be divided into two poles of Physiological Gnosis - Inhibitory states, and Excitatory states. The former includes physically passive techniques such as meditation, yoga, scrying, contemplation and sensory deprivation while the latter includes chanting, drumming, dance, emotional and sexual arousal.", Condensed Chaos, p.16

In my own case a meditative state when a sigil is to be activated is employed that has grown out of practices I regularly perform that I've learned in a variety of clinical psychological or religious contexts over the years. This is then further extended, the original purpose having been forgotten by my conscious mind, in the making process of taking the drawn sigils into other aesthetic forms. In appearance these forms tend to resemble modernist abstraction as found in the disciplines of painting and sculpture of the twentieth Century in particular, though also correspond in appearance at times with Calabi-Yau manifolds or even stick maps of Melanesian origin. This process, of making links to other forms in other contexts bears a resemblance to the Jungian notion of amplification (an intensification of meaning beyond ones own personal frame of reference, in reference to traditional and mythological forms, archetypal correspondences, a kind of extended mapping-out of ones personal content into broader and deeper cultural contexts).

^{lxv} A particular anti-system 'system' of magick that developed in England in the late '70's strongly affiliated with the use of Austin Osman Spares sigil magic technique. Phil Hine in Condensed Chaos described its characteristics as follows:

“Unlike the variety of magical systems which are all based in some mythical or historically-derived past (such as Atlantis, Lemuria, Albion, etc), Chaos magic borrowed freely from Science Fiction, Quantum Physics, and anything else its practitioners chose to. Rather than trying to recover and maintain a tradition that links back to the past (and former glories), Chaos magic is an approach that enables the individual to use anything that s/he thinks is suitable as a temporary belief or symbol system. What matters is the *results* you get, not the authenticity of the system used. So Chaos magic then, is not a system - it utilises systems and encourages adherents to devise their own, giving magic a truly Postmodernist flavour.”, Hine, Phil, Condensed Chaos, p.9.

And, further, “The Chaos perspective, if nothing else, encourages an eclectic approach to development, and Chaos Magicians are free to choose from any available magical system, themes from literature, television, religions, cults, parapsychology, etc. This approach means that if you approach two chaos magicians and ask ‘em what they’re doing at any one moment, you’re rarely likely to find much of a consensus of approach. This makes Chaos difficult to pin down as one thing or another.”, Ibid., p.16.

It’s a system that encourages making up ones own system, at least as far as methods and symbols goes, “In other words, create your own system, like Austin Osman Spare did.”

Of course this can suggest a raft of problematics, from notions of actual affect on matters of matter and reality/realities, to irresponsible use of such ideas, none of which can be entered with any sustained or deep consideration at present.

A relationship in ethic and desired aims can be drawn here between Chaos magic, what Guattari discusses in Chaosmosis on the creative production of subjectivity (and in turn, Simon O’Sullivan in his essay, The Production of Subjectivity), the emancipatory, integrative aims of Jung’s methods and model, and what I’m doing in my own work and praxis. Fundamentally this research project is concerned with a liberatory ethos, notions of transformation of a given subjectivity within a psychospiritual orientation and context as its frame of reference, after an applied intention as will and desire. I don’t however personally identify as a Chaos magician or a ‘Chaote’, a term coined to identify a chaos magic practitioner.

^{lxvi} The kind of method I’m primarily using and addressing here is called the pictorial method. There are others including a method retaining the use of the words without transliterating these into a symbol, and a word or ‘mantrical’ method, that involves voice and word.

^{lxvii} To elaborate on how sigils are theorised to work could become another thesis in itself; it would have to include a sufficient model of consciousness, drawing on aspects of psychological theory and neuroscience perhaps, as well as take in the history of magick itself. It is too detailed and complex to address this particular curiosity at present. Needless to say, experientially, they do seem to work, as most other authors who write on the subject also attest to.

^{lxviii} Dhikr is an Islamic term pertaining to devotional acts in which short phrases or prayers are recited repeatedly silently in ones mind or out loud.

^{lxix} Though what is remembering and being remembered here isn’t necessarily the fixed forms of Platonic theory, and instead is unpredictable as to appearance and isomorphism in both an aesthetic sense and its psychological context. It is understood that what is being ‘tracked down’ and discovered is a recovery of something that already exists simultaneously ‘elsewhere’, in a Jungian sense the ‘Self’, but is being brought forth, through an immanent procedure or operation into this-plane existence in an embodied, psychological sense, and which may or may not involve varying degrees of subtle phenomena, the disclosure of which may or may not pertain to mysticism in itself as both a category of experience and a kind of knowledge.

^{lxx} Wilson, Modernism and Magic: Experiments with Spiritualism, Theosophy and the Occult, 2013, p. 16

^{lxxi} Frater U.D., Practical Sigil Magic, p. 9

^{lxxii} Wilson, *Modernism and Magic.*, p.16, examining in turn notions of mimesis in fellow author Michael Taussig's work *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (1993), and how these relate to definitions of magic in practice.

^{lxxiii} As an idea, as desire, into drawings, through into sculptural works, and further, performatively, aesthetically, conceptually.

^{lxxiv} Personal practices, specifically varying prayers revealed in a tradition, Baha'i, and a kind of meditation revealed by Gautama Buddha called Anapanasati based on its origins in a sutra, The *Ānāpānasati Sutta* ([Pāli](#)) or *Ānāpānasamṛti Sūtra* ([Sanskrit](#)), or "Breath-Mindfulness Discourse," a kind of somatic therapy that is engaged regularly, Bioenergetics, and Jung's method of 'active imagination', alongside a recording of and reflective process with dreams, are the main stay of these personal practices. These and the attendant phenomena that occur in their application in daily life inform varyingly and significantly what I do in praxis. However the practices are all distinct, originate in different paradigms and the forms taken in aesthetic reaches have little to do with the practices themselves except perhaps where certain associated symbols are employed as aesthetic content.

^{lxxv} Occulture: The Dark Arts is an exhibition held at Wellington City Gallery, 12 August – 19th November, 2017

^{lxxvi} Aaron Lister, 'Of the Devil's Party: Contemporary Art and Occulture', p.11, in , Occulture: The Dark Arts, exhibition catalogue, published in advent of the eponymous exhibition.

^{lxxvii} Ibid. Suggestively, evidence of Debord's notion of the 'Spectacle' at work, that is, a system of abstraction via 'imagery', inclusive of agents of technology and media, that comes to dominate and insert itself relationally between people and ideas in contemporary capitalist societies. Debord's theory hinges on the Marxian notion of kinds of alienation being inherently characteristic of capitalist societies. This has significant implications for the content and terrain presently under discussion but due to constraints cannot be developed.

^{lxxviii} A personal response. There are other works that are also impressive and curious in their affect included in the exhibition, along with elements within how they are presented or reconfigured in some cases that are awkward. For instance, I'm uncertain how affectively presented the reconfigured Dane Mitchell work is, subtle but important qualities of the individual pieces being obscured or lost due to other intruding or distracting characteristics related to light and physical siting of the individual components for example. Or how the video projections extend, or don't in this case, a reading alongside the charcoal drawings in Yin Ju-Chen's installation, which are impressive in their own right.

^{lxxix} My own work is situated in this terrain, which I haven't discussed openly here, the consideration being that the art works address their own value and function in themselves, in process and presentation. However I'm aware of other artists, as evidenced in this exhibition and at large, who are working with similar ideas or in similar territories.

^{lxxx} This undermining affect can be identified additionally in regards to how an institutional exhibition is tasked with a role and responsibility of, arguably, edifying the public as to what the content is being dealt with in any given presentation. Certain taxonomical parameters that should hold in this case as definite boundaries are treated with a confusing permeability here, remaining unidentified. This is not helpful from an audience point of view.

^{lxxx} The ouroboros is an ancient symbol usually depicting a serpent or dragon eating its own tail in a circular emblem. "Originating in Ancient Egyptian iconography, the ouroboros entered western tradition via Greek magical tradition and was adopted as a symbol in Gnosticism and Hermeticism, and most notably in alchemy. Via medieval alchemical tradition, the symbol entered Renaissance magic and modern symbolism, often taken to symbolize introspection, the eternal return or cyclicity, especially in the sense of something constantly re-creating itself. It also represents the infinite cycle of nature's endless creation and destruction, life and death." <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ouroboros>. Retrieved 5/10/17.

Bibliography and References

Corbin, Henry, *Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arab'i*, (1969), 2008, Routledge

Dukes, Ramsey, *SSTOBME: An Essay on Magic, Revised*, (1974), 1998, The Mouse That Spins

Gibbons, B.J., *Spirituality and the Occult: From the Renaissance to the Modern Age*, 2001, Routledge: London, New York

Grant, Kenneth, Steffi &, *Zos Speaks!: Encounters With Austin Osman Spare*, 1998, Holmes Pub Group Llc

Guattari, Felix, *Chaosmosis*, (1992), English translation, 1995, Power Institute, Paul Bains, and Julian Pefanis, Indiana University Press Bloomington & Indianapolis

Hannegraf, Wouter J., ed., *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*, 2006, Brill Academic Pub., Leiden

Huppauf, Bernd, and Wulf, Christoph, eds., *Dynamics and Performativity of Imagination: The Image between the Visible and the Invisible*, 2009, Routledge:New York

Hine, Phil, *Condensed Chaos*, 1995, New Falcon

Ingold, Jim, Bringing Things to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials, 2010, NCRM Working Paper Series, ESRC National Centre for Research Methods, Aberdeen University

Jung, C.G., The Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious (Collected Works of C.G. Jung Vol.9 Part 1), (1959),1990, Bollingen

Jung, C. G., Psychology and Alchemy, Collected Works, Volume 12, 1953, Routledge & Kegan, London

Jung, C. G., Mysterium Coniunctionis, Collected Works, Volume 14, (1963), 1970, Princeton University Press

Kalsched, Donald, Trauma and the Soul, 2013, Routledge, London and New York

Kalsched, Donald, The Inner World of Trauma: Archetypal Defenses of the Personal Spirit, 1996, Routledge: New York

Mogenson, Greg, God is a Trauma, 1989, Spring Publications

O'Sullivan, Simon, The Production of Subjectivity, Academy, pp. 238-44, ed. Irit Rogoff et al, Frankfurt: Revolver, 2006.

Three Initiates, The Kybalion: A study of the Hermetic Philosophy of Ancient Egypt and Greece, 1912, The Yogi Publication Society Masonic Temple Chicago, Ill.

U.D., Frater, Practical Sigil Magick: Creating Personal Symbols for Success, 2012, Llewellyn Publications

White, Gordon, The Chaos Protocols: Magical techniques for navigating the new economic reality, 2016, Llewellyn Publications

Wilson, Leigh, Modernism and Magic: Experiments with Spiritualism, Theosophy and the Occult, 2013, Edinburgh University Press Ltd

Index

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/land_of_nowhere/?hl=en

Pinterest: https://nz.pinterest.com/nadasadhana/na_koja_abad/

Reddit: <https://www.reddit.com/r/ByTheBookofThySelf/>

