



VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Scholars Compass

Theses and Dissertations

Graduate School

2020

Spooky Stuff

Petra A. Szilagyi
Virginia Commonwealth University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Interdisciplinary Arts and Media Commons](#)

© Petra Szilagyi

Downloaded from

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/6342>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.

SPOOKY STUFF

Contents:

P2	I WAS BORN IN THE OCEAN
P5	THE PARANORMAL AND AESTHETICS OF RESISTANCE
P16	PARAPSYCHOLOGY
P20	PETRA AND PETE
P30	VAMPIRE ON STANDBY

Abstract

Guardian Angel as a Vampire

By Pete Szilagyi

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture + Extended Media at Virginia Commonwealth University

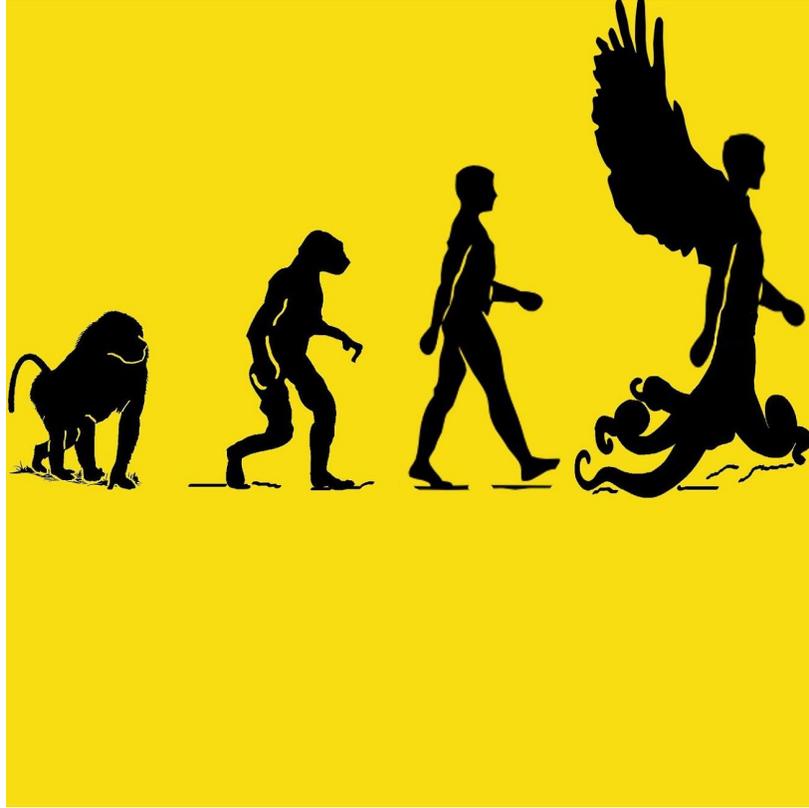
Virginia Commonwealth University, 2020

A written essay on the role of art in reclaiming the supernatural as a diasporan birthright, a few short stories and images of works made and collages of thoughts in progress.



I was born in the ocean, crawled out looking to take shape from a cold, wet, crying mass into something warm, entangled and more defined. I crawled across the sand, sometimes I was pulled, sometimes I caught a ride. A few times I was eaten, and passed...a bit worn, yet still intact, sometimes painfully born again. As I left the ocean, I carried my salt water along with me, it would have been easier to stay in the water, but I was so curious about what I didn't know existed on land. So I carried my water, leaked tears, drank from fresh and fetid sources, shared when I could with other beings in need. Now I'm here, resisting definition, trying to soften, become slippery, trying to find my way back to the water as often all allows. Trying desperately to remember what prompted me to leave initially.





MORMONISM AND TRANSHUMANISM



PENCA DE BALANGADAN

The Paranormal and the Aesthetics of Resistance



“I know things older than Freud, older than gender¹” are the words of Gloria Anzaldua in *Borderlands*. They ring not only backwards to a time before the suffocating imposition of the colonial scientific-industrial complex, but these words also ring deep into the body, calling out our DNA, reminding us of an embodied knowledge that predates language, logic and culture. She is suggesting a gnosis, an awareness of our surrounding cosmic fluid. Conversely, she suggests our propensity to forget as pervading cultural forces attempt to deny us our universality in favor of an exclusive commitment to nationality or religion. My own art, like Anzaldua’s, is a series of gestures that subvert the constraining aspects of our culturescape which impose by force left-brain concepts of ego and rationality, that encourage us to think of ourselves as discrete entities designed for a man-made existence. My art process speaks to a consciousness unconstrained by the limitations of ego, language and logic. My tools are my body, scavenged materials of organic and inorganic varieties and intuitive practices learned via research and personal observation including the field of contemporary parapsychology, Jungian active imagination, Buddhist meditation and Yoruba divination.

For the purposes of contextualizing and supporting my central point, that the supernatural is our birthright and it has been obstructed by centuries of colonio-cultural conditioning, I will be drawing from the writings of writer and poet Gloria Anzaldua, and the author Jason R. Young

¹ Gloria Anzaldua, *Borderlands*, 1987

who contributed supporting scholarship to *The Incantation of the Disquieting Muse: On Divinity, Supra-Realities or the Exorcisement of Witchery*, a performance program on speculative African futures dedicated to knowledge production particularly about witchery as a future practice². I will then attempt to explain the contents of my own art process, and I say ‘attempt’ to underscore that I value my magical creative practice for its ability to supersede language, wherein the mind- the language making machine- can only serve as a reducer of consciousness, the personal and universal body are able to relate in ways that bypass the contractive and reductive function of the ego/mind, and experience levels of connectivity and synchronicity that diverge from cultural norms to the extent that they are called ‘para-normal.’ Here I would love to give lip service to the gods of western empiricism, who currently guide my fate as I am a more or less complicit actor in the institutions of capital and ‘knowledge’ (rather than gnosis) production, but alas consciousness, even at the level of quantum observation has remained unquantifiable and even controversial within the field of science, however it expresses itself without a doubt within my own studio. That said, my work is deeply influenced by the works of comparative religion scholar Jeffrey Kripal and his writings on the relationships between the esoteric and the body, and the work of parapsychologist George P. Hansen who looks a supernatural and psi phenomena through the lens of anthropology and poststructuralism.



² Norbert Spitz and Lien Heidenreich-Seleme, "Preface" *The Incantation of the Disquieting Muse*, 2017

Frantz Fanon in *Wretched of the Earth*³ describes the perverse logic by which colonialism not only destroys the present and future of oppressed people, but distorts, disfigures and destroys their past: erasing origin stories, systems of knowledge and mythologies dating back millenia, and forcing people to destroy their deities while forbidding them from practicing the religions that evolved alongside and within their DNA. With the imposition of Abrahamic religions on colonized peoples and the subjugation of black, brown, Asian and ‘barbaric’ (white) bodies around the world, systems of power operated in tandem with the church to obliterate personal power (which may be expressed through a personal connection with the divine or universal consciousness), and consolidate subjugated bodies into a mass of production and consumption to be exploited by ruling classes. Meanwhile questions of the existential, of one’s entitlement to access of the universal and divine were to be meditated only by the church, or designated heretical and subject to exile, torture, or execution.

The church also served to subjugate the body, under a model of Christian patriarchy that was distinctly male homoerotic wherein subjects were told to worship, emulate and give themselves bodily (erotically) exclusively to a deity who refused to reproduce or commune sexually with women, and the only available female model of divinity was valued above all for her virginity⁴. Sex was deemed sinful when explored for any means other than capitalist or nationalist reproduction. It should further be noted that this suppression of the personal erotic by the church coincides neatly with prevailing indigenous (and even Christian) notions of the erotic nature of divine connection. Within systems such as tantra⁵, kabbalah⁶, and Yoruba (where the Elegua, god of magic, is also held responsible for erotic dreams), the sexual impulse is revered as one of the most direct ways to connect with universal consciousness, for its ability to bypass the ego/mind and generate the feelings of ecstasy that come with reclaiming one’s connection to greater cosmic beingness. Across the globe mythologies of the divine and the living shamanic figures who speak to them have complex lineages of psychosexual rituals and conduct, for this reason the church’s suppression of sexuality in colonized and wage-enclaved peoples while is noteworthy as a tactic of mystical suppression.

³ Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 1961

⁴ Jeffrey Kripal, *Secret Body: Erotic and Esoteric Currents in the History of Religions*, 2017

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ http://www.kabalacenter.com/kabbalah_and_sex.html

The church and other colonial forces outright banned native spiritual practices, and subsequently employed “secular creators”⁷ to whitewash cultures and erase ancient systems of knowledge via science and racist anthropology. Despite huge losses to language and culture, magical and spiritual practices of the diaspora survived not only as talismanic cultural and personal practices, but also as a means for actively combating oppression. As Jason R. Young states in his essay ‘Chant Down Babylon: Modernity Meets the Muse’:

Though conjure was itself a widely diverse practice (including herbal remedies, divination, poisoning, and curses), one of its principal cohesive elements was its political relationship to the masterclass. Conjure functioned as a form of spiritual resistance that not only challenged slavery, but also established an independent realm of criminality, justice and punishment outside the immediate authority of whites. Witchery granted its practitioners and adherents an avenue to influence, power, health and retribution over which the masterclass had little influence. It constructed a singular universe of spirits, graveyard dirt, shaved hair, animal claws, skin, teeth, and bones. Even as the bodies of slaves were bound under the constraints of slavery, their spirits and minds acknowledged an authority beyond the plantation.⁸

Magic and witchcraft, paranormal activity and the trickster have always been embodied by a quality of marginality, subversion and a blurring of boundaries. It is for this reason that it has so often been employed by oppressed peoples, especially femme individuals, to seek spiritual liberation as well as combat oppressors when one’s physical conditions are constrained. It is also for this reason that the phenomena of mysticism and the paranormal not only in native peoples, but even today amongst largely female and minority based ‘New Age’ movements find that their loudest antagonists are and have always been ‘typified by large male-dominated, status conscious, hierarchical institutions.’⁹

⁷ Jason R. Young, *Incantation of the Disquieting Muse* “Chant Down Babylon: Modernity Meets the Muse”

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ George P Hansen, *The Trickster and the Paranormal*, 2001



In *Borderlands* Anzaldua writes of her reclaiming her ancestral mythologies, not simply by incorporating them into a theoretical framework as is often done by turning them into secular symbolic archetypes (a process that I can't help but consider as a sort of cultural-spiritual female genital mutilation), but by honoring her own psycho-spiritual experiences with *la vibora*, the serpent who winds her way through a canon of erotically empowered life/death deities, and *la facultad*, the ability to perceive deeper connection and alternate realities via interpretation of our own surface reality. It has been colonialism's insidious sleight of hand to equate indigenous spiritual beliefs and magical practices with a "primitive superstitious"¹⁰ impulse, in an attempt to debase and nullify systems of knowledge borne from millenia of studied observation and inquiry, a 'science' all its own. I hesitate as I part of me, ever the compliant western left-brainer, is eager to produce the western scientific data that conducts double blind studies in support of evidence toward indigenous spiritual phenomena such as prayer, consciousness, the effects of blessing and telekinesis, but that's not really my point here. You can refer to Dr. Dean Radin's scientific research on those subjects¹¹ via the Center of Noetic Research. I am making my point here in

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 1913

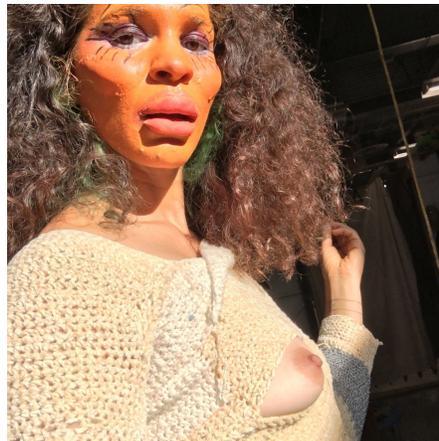
¹¹ Dean Radin, *Real Magic: Ancient Wisdom, Modern Science, and a Guide to the Secret Power of the Universe*, 2018

spite of science. Not because I don't find science to be an extremely valuable tool that has saved and improved the lives of billions, because I believe that my work with the spirit, magic, and the parapsychological by its own chaotic anti material nature must first take place in a space free of the constraints of scientific empiricism, or even the censorship of philosophy. What comes from my art/magic work is subsequently free to interpretation by whatever epistemic methods people care to use, but what I am actively engaged in in my studio requires distinction from methods of proof and scientific method and I must emphasize to myself above all their necessary separation.

My studio functions as an anti-structure space, where rationality can be suspended, where magic can take over either in the form of playful deception, spiritual reverence, supernatural activity, or simply ambiguity. My interests and my media shapeshift from performative psychology and consciousness, to folkloric fiberwork, to an object or scenario imbued with my own prayers and blessings that it may create magic for its audience. I am influenced by the lore of the trickster: the transgressions, the deception, the buffoonery, the ability to heal and reveal. I am captivated by magic's call to create altered states of perception and use material things to create immaterial results that ripple through the broader cosmic fabric. I want to play with the unknowable, I want to stretch spacetime in directions that defy linearity.

I am fascinated by retrocausality, or backwards causation, and the role it may have in my own creative process. I have long worked with the trope of the trickster, and have a mask of Elegua, the Yoruba god of crossroads and trickery, on my wall. I have also had a growing admiration for mud. I recently found myself compelled to create some works with mud. I covered myself in mud, in order to channel its essence, to let it speak through me as a fleshy vessel. I collected mud, and smoothed it into the corners of buildings, to create a smooth transition the ground and the wall, creating a primal betwixt and between moment in an industrial landscape. I also felt called to cover some bright yellow traffic pillars in mud, this impulse being the least rational. Doing research for this paper, however, I learned that the symbol for Elegua is the mud pillar. Perhaps it was a coincidence, perhaps the mask called me to do it in a language that bypassed my conscious mind, perhaps the me that sits and writes this now reached back and time and made the suggestion that I cover these pillars in mud. I can't speak to the explanation, I can only appreciate the synchronicity. It's these synchronicities that

are the gold of an alchemical process in the studio, my raw material being consciousness and experience.



Other practices serve as a magical fertilizer, priming minds to seek or experience extra-sensory activity. I have conducted guided meditations as trickster personalities defined by contradictory identity traits such as the insightful charlatan self-help guru, the institutional development administrator with a special penchant for impermanence and destruction of ego, or a transracial yoga teacher cum civil rights activist caught between racial identities and modes of

expression. Each character leads the audience through a unique meditation scenario designed to thoughtfully destabilize the Apollonian vice grip on rationality without devolving completely into a liquid pool of Dionysian insanity. It is these in between places, interstitial sweet spots that I am aiming for, where the audience and I can levitate just enough to make contact with the divine cosmos without swirling off into a black hole.

More trickery takes place in UrBag, the neo-animist school of citizen science, biohacking and ecology that I run with Umico Niwa. True to the pedagogy of the trickster, all participants are asked to leave their human exceptionalism at the gate and listen for the more subtle forms of communication that take place all around us. Workshops have included lessons in magical geography where participants were asked to suspend the notion of the Cartesian 'I' to seek a sense of self that exists in active relationship between the self and everything else around it, ie. how does that flower experience me, and I it, and how are we both affected by that tin can? Another workshop included a meditation at a cemetery where participants were asked to imagine their body dead, decaying and nourishing species across the kingdoms of life, we then made physical vermiculture compost bins for participants to take home.



One particularly special evening of transgression was our Poop Potluck, an evening of poop-themed stories and meal sharing, complete with a twenty pound replica of a turd filled with food scraps that participants were invited to pick through to figure out what the shitter of this behemoth turd had eaten. Be it by intuition or sweet retrocausality, I must have subconsciously known then what I recently learned via literature: ritual clowns and mystics have a long standing tradition of eating feces. This inversion of opposites, food and excrement, has long been a staple

in ritual for cross dressing shamans from India to South America, figured prominently into the writing of Western esoteric tricksters Georges Bataille and Aleister Crowley, and by Baltimore's very own high priestess of filth: Divine. While we didn't eat any feces at the UrBag poop potluck, Chinese yellow soup (ancient fecal microbiota insemination method) was on the menu for discussion, and participants were encouraged to bring foods that stimulate healthy bowel movements, and a blessing was conducted over the foods that all who consume them should have healthy digestion.

I'd prefer not to bring this paper to a neat and rational conclusion where I sum up all the aforementioned points, remind you of my critical insights and reposition you to finish this paper feeling like you took away what the author had intended. Take what you will and leave the rest. All I ask is that you hold space for the uncertain, the liminal, the destabilized, the ambiguous, the androgenous, the sexual, the transgressive. Hold space for those things and see if they don't lead you to moments of divine synchronicity. And I conclude with this missive from ichingonline.net in response to the prompt 'how do I end this paper?':

No matter what you do, the fruit of your labors never seems to ripen.

Your reward remains just out of reach.

Men have gone mad from such anticipation.

Don't lose your balance lunging for the brass ring.

While the Fates continue to restrain you, go them one better and display a self-generated restraint and grace.

Look for the humor in the situation.¹²

¹² <https://www.ichingonline.net/read3.php>

MUSICAL BREAK





A DIAGRAM OF PSYCHIC PHENOMENA, 2020



FLATLANDS AS AN ANALOGY FOR INTERDIMENSIONAL EXPERIENCE



par·a·psy·chol·o·gy

/ˌperəˈsɪkələʒi/

noun

noun: **parapsychology**

the study of mental phenomena which are excluded from or inexplicable by orthodox scientific psychology (such as hypnosis, telepathy, etc.).

Translate parapsychology to

Choose language ▼

Use over time for: parapsychology



Definitions from Oxford Languages

[Feedback](#)

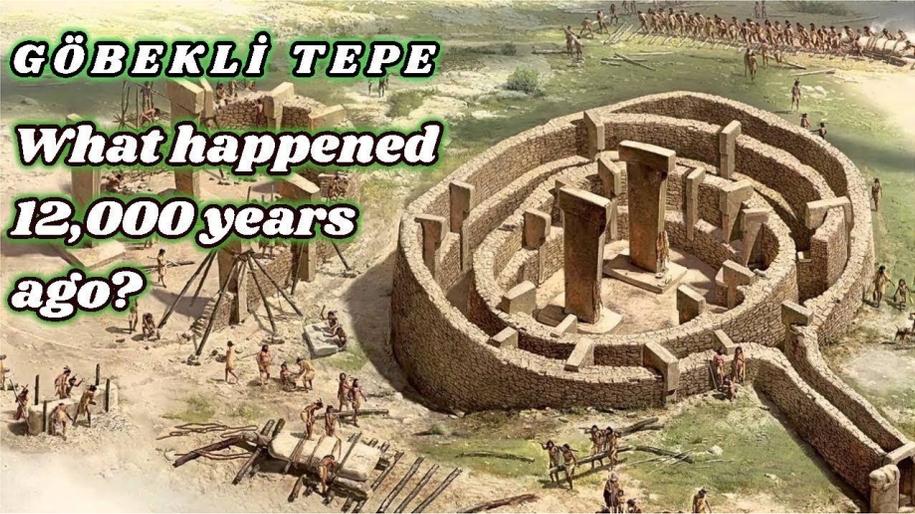
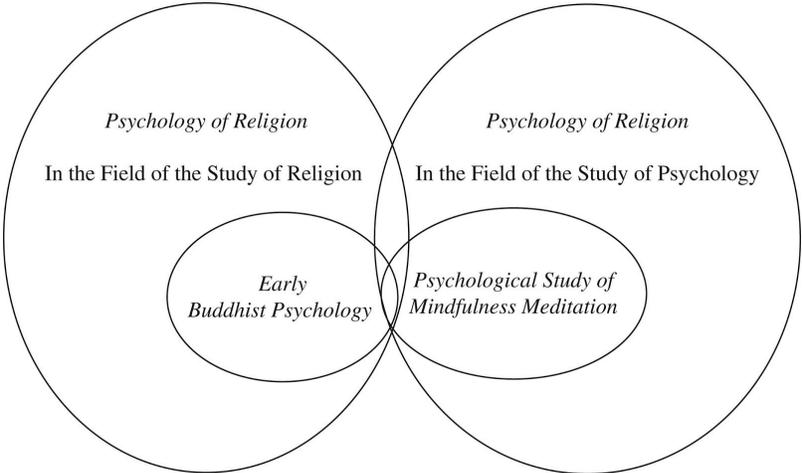
At once fringe and academic the field of parapsychology is located at a rich nexus of physics, psychology, computer science and the broader humanities including anthropology, comparative religions and the arts. Using the tools of science, parapsychology attempts to quantify phenomena that have transcendental qualities and spiritual attributes often described as religious in nature. These spiritual attributes often relate to mystical forces be they of a benevolent or demonic persuasion. Contemporary scientific dogma would have all transcendent experiences attributed to psychological states: experiences and genetics triggering chemicals in the brain and to a lesser degree the body. While there have been numerous studies conducted that suggest with high probability that the mind can indeed act non-locally by perceiving things across distances or backwards and forwards in time, there are no specific bio-chemical mechanisms to which these occurrences can be attributed. Theories include analogies to the quantum observation principal, wormholes the mind can enter to penetrate linearly conceived space time, multidimensional theories of overlapping and potentially intersecting planes of existence, and models that suggest that below all subatomic structures our universe consists of a field of matter. Compelling as each theory may be, they remain theoretical. Science doesn't have a working understanding of these sorts of precognitive, synchronous and revelatory experiences, which all have a firm body of anecdotal evidence dating back as far as our oldest cultural remains. Maybe science can't explain

everything. Even Galileo the father of modern science seemed to think it had limitations, that science could understand the world of matter only so far, but that consciousness and the spirit could never be quantified and were best explored via arts and spiritual endeavors. This divide between the sciences and humanities, still very much in effect, feels dated. Anecdotal, historical and cultural information provide not only vital context for understanding phenomena, they might perhaps provide modes of understanding unto themselves, wormholes through fixed Newtonian notions of time space to other systems of knowledge such as the Dreamtime model of aboriginal Australia, a complex of meaning wherein the Dreaming, a sort of a-temporal, potentially ancestral and spiritual, throughway that gives rise to specific phenomena.

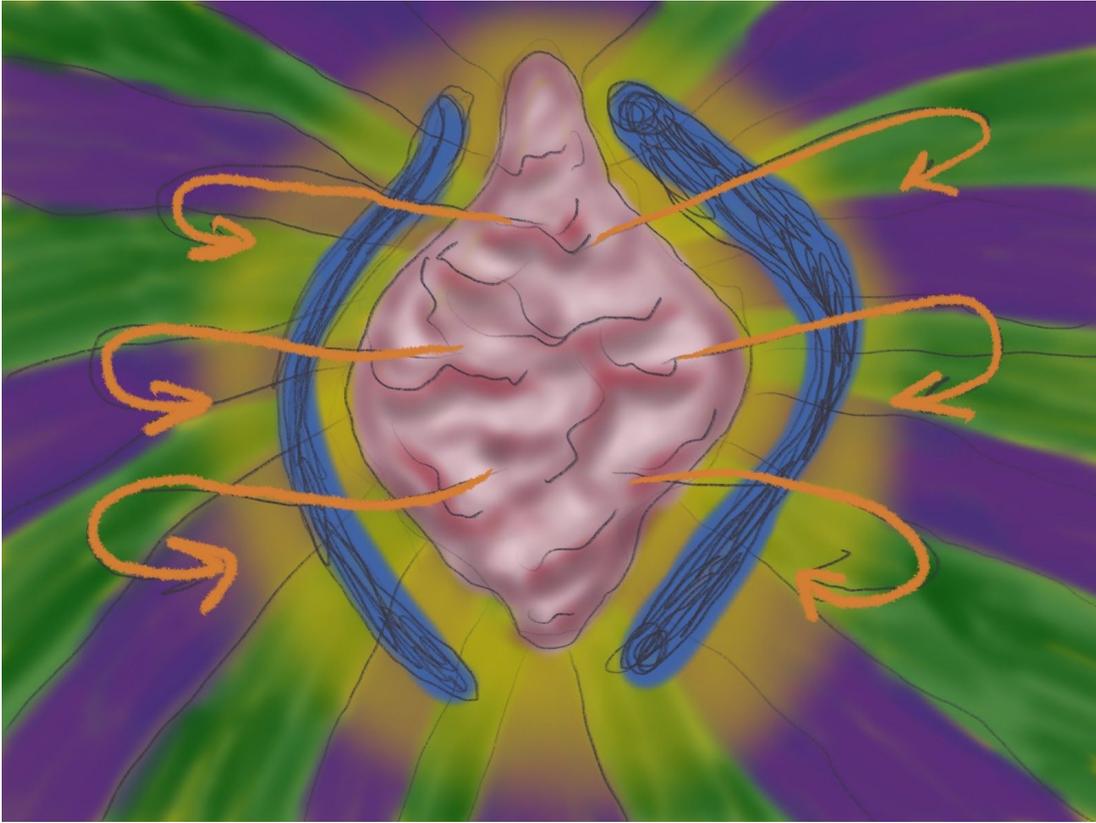
Science is accepted as a universal language, globally accessible without prejudice. While this has numerical, historical and methodological roots that are African, East and Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern, it's most dominant expression for the past 100 years has been thorough the practical principal of European post-enlightenment rational philosophy. This is an anthropocentric notion that all that exists can be reduced to a human-made equation. Today science stands as a multi-culti pillar of western society, replacing religion in its dictates of what is real, what is right and what is good. So what are we to make then of something like parapsychology, these anomalous phenomena of unquestionable existence to those who report experiencing them? While there is multi-millennia worth of anecdotal evidence, and statistical data supporting its existence to strong effect, there is no understanding of how it functions, no attributable mechanism that falls within a scientific framework. Those who seek to better understand the phenomena might glean the most not from an understanding of physics and neurobiology, but by looking through the lens of comparative religious scholarship and anthropology to seek alternate conceptions of Mind and consciousness as described by older or more culturally distant peoples.

This is an ongoing debate and makes the field a source of real richness, new approaches to understanding. Technology and art, intuitive art, that something else in art...the magic. Prayer,

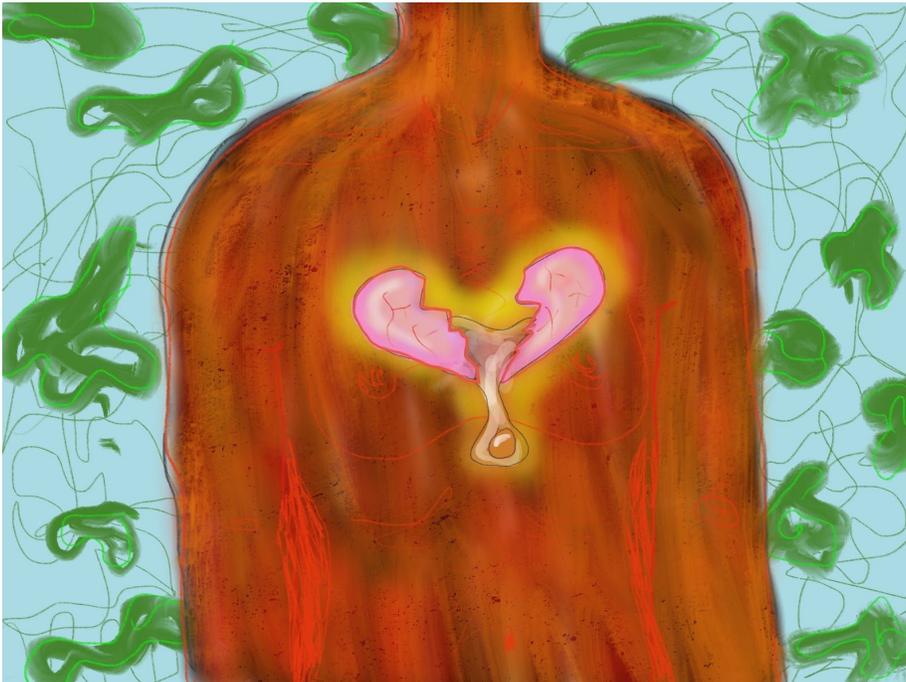
aliens, and messages from the unconscious are recurring themes in my work that find their research community within the field of parapsychology.



A HEART



A BROKEN HEART



May 2020

My eyes moved counterclockwise into the past to see myself with the heavy stone attached to a cord at my waist. I drag it around, I'm not sure why. It could be valuable for something, or it's a part of my identity. My eyes keep moving, into the light of the present and then into the future, where it's all erased.

My sacred place is described on its website like this:

a geologic wonder of the last ice age and a botanist's paradise. The park's natural features include rugged cliffs and rocky outcrops, woodland and meadow, a wetland and a glacial plunge basin lake in which the surface waters and bottom waters do not mix.

I go there to meet my other half, my gender inversion. I don't think such a polarity is possible, but here I am: a little girl and a little boy. We are wild haired, brown children running through this forest lovingly playing together. The girl runs ahead and the boy stays behind and plays in the woods, forever wild and free.



The girl runs ahead back into her life. It is wartime. Though only 7, she becomes a nurse as bombs drop for 18 years. She buries her own father after carrying him on her back for 100 miles.

Her superiors are all AWOL. Some enemy lines pull to her with a strong gravity she can't resist, and she smashes into them, gets all banged up. The war finally ends in 2015 with the Prozac peace treaty. By 2019 it is finally quiet enough to notice that she has been tight-gripping a big stone. The doctors remove it by cutting out her womb.



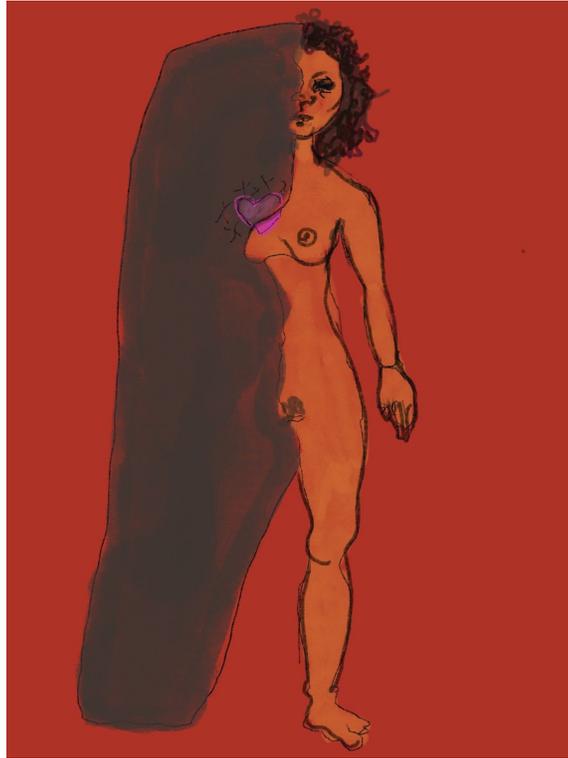
She washes back up on the shores of the sacred place and the boy, her other half finds her, chained, exhausted, bleeding from her stomach. He himself hasn't changed much, he's taller, but he's been here playing, mostly idle. But shit, the girl has taken on a life for two all by herself, and she's become twice her own age. He untangles and picks her up, absorbing some of the impacts on her body into his own. She's not quite dead, but she's light on life, her status is vague.

She needs to be left here on the shore, to rest or die, who knows. The boy can pick up where she left off. He's still vigorous although a bit dumb and immature. He's called Pete.

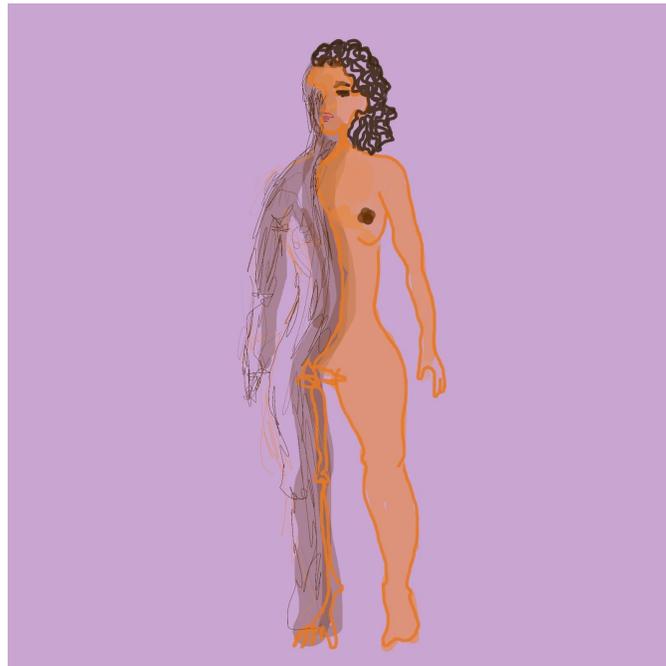


A PAINTING BY MY GRANDMOTHER KARA SHEPHERD

THE FIGURE ENCASED IN PROTECTIVE STONE



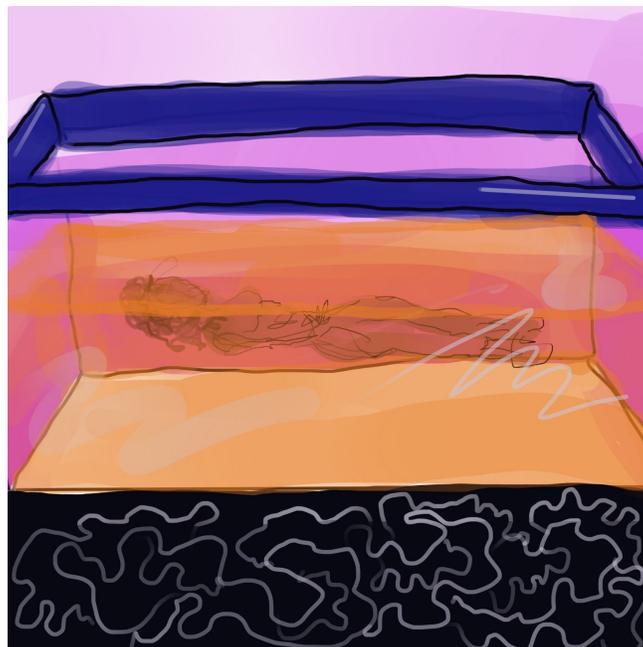
THE SHAPE OF THE SPIRIT AFTER LEAVING THE BODY



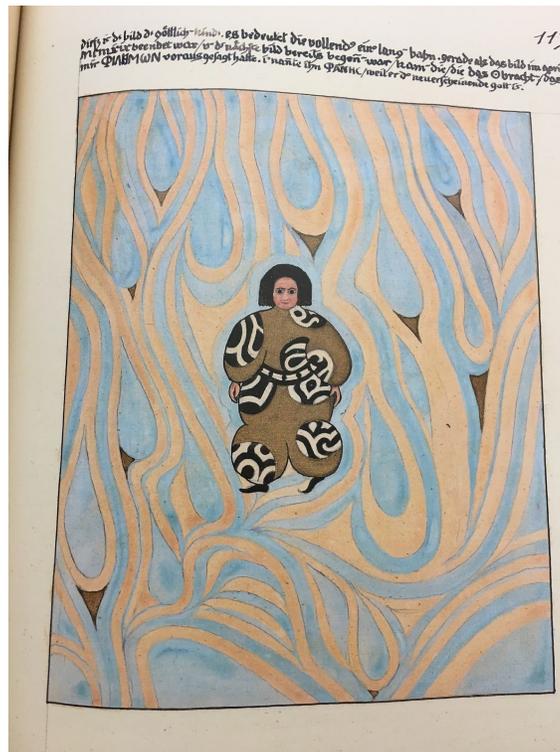
A DIAGRAM OF SUFFERING



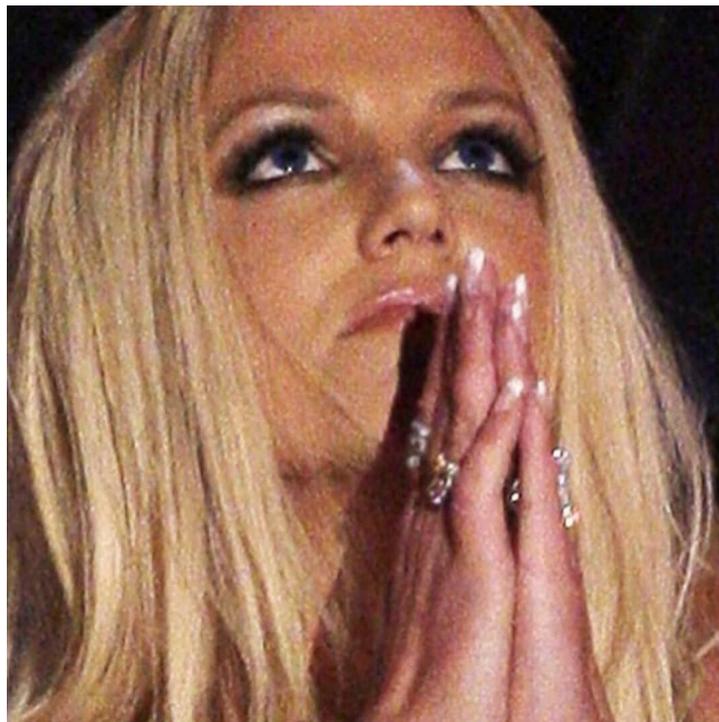
REGENERATIVE HONEY BATH IN HONEY TANK



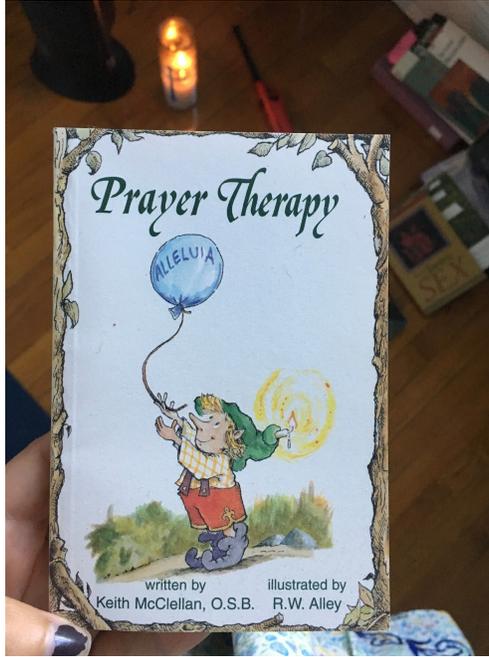
C. J. JUNG (FROM THE RED BOOK)



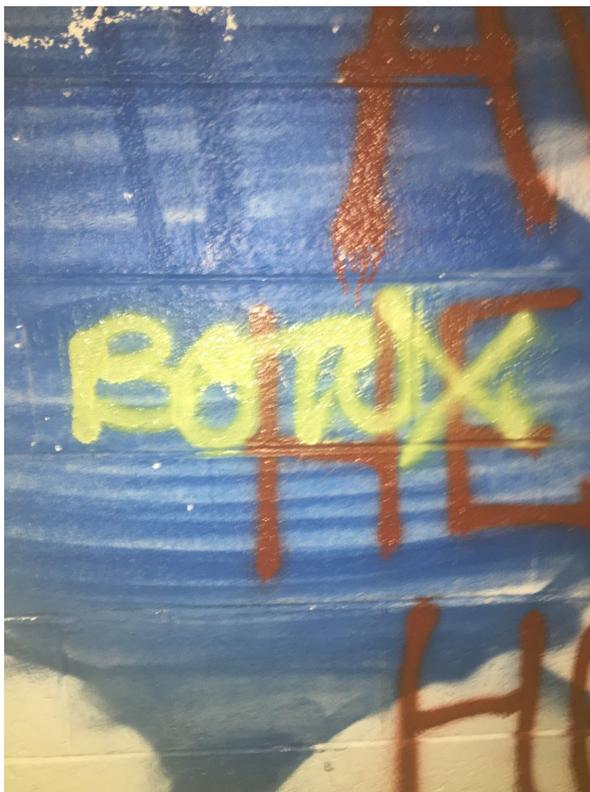
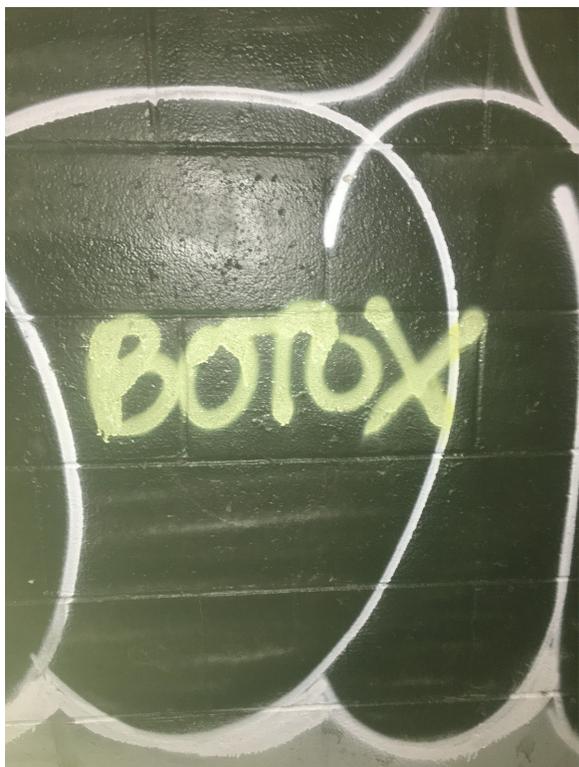
BRITTNEY (IN PRAYER)

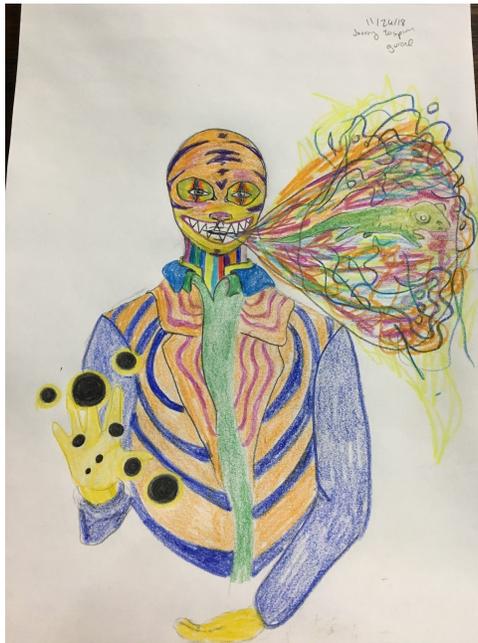






MUSICAL BREAK (II)





A SPIRIT GUIDE



ANOTHER SPIRIT GUIDE (SURFER SCARECROW)

VAMPIRE ON STANDBY

Last year I attended a weekend-long workshop, The Metaphysics of Desire. We were taken on an imaginal journey to meet a guardian angel. Mine was a rabbit with fangs. It wanted to suck my blood, but I gave it amethyst instead and it was satisfied.

I wasn't thrilled that a fanged rabid creation showed up as my guardian angel. I had hoped for something sweeter, more maternal or even psychedelic. Instead, I got this thing that could harm me if it's hunger wasn't directed elsewhere. "Whatever, fine whatever, I'll figure it out."

Taking the subway to the workshop the next morning, a man, clearly disturbed, was yelling and gesticulating violently. He was a combustive combination of male physicality and my mother's brutality and I was triggered. I stared him deep in the eyes, trying to hush him with daggers from my eyes engraved with the words 'You should be ashamed of yourself', my mouth twisted in disgust. He got up and walked over to me like a slingshot, a quick reversal of force. He showed that he was going to fucking kill me, putting his hands near my throat, threatening me, calling me a bitch. His face was inches from my face.

I looked away, my heart rate slowing as I patiently and calmly told him to stop, as if we were friends. "Stop.OK, Stop. Take a seat. Alright, that's enough....stop."

It was a packed car, silent except for what was going on between us. Eventually he sat back down, his hands on either side of his bowed head, cycling between apologies and threats. I stood there, trying to slow my racing pulse, thinking, "What should I do? Keep my composure for the well-being of those other riders in the car who hadn't done jack shit to intercede? Play myself off as strong and tough? Feel ashamed and embarrassed I hadn't known better than to get into an entanglement with a mentally ill person?"

I wanted to process this trauma. It was fucking frightening, I had feared for my safety. I could already feel my body trying to cope by shoving the whole thing deep into my tissues to be resolved later as chronic gnawing back pain and emotional irritation. Childhood all over again. Or something.

I was able to shut out my usual hypervigilance to the experience of everyone else in the car long enough to connect with my own feelings: fear, startle, vulnerability, confusion, shame, other stuff I probably can't even recognize. I stayed with those feelings for the rest of my ride, a sort of scanning and soothing with no concern for what showed on my face or in my posture: slackness, exhaustion, retreat.

When I got off at Union Square to catch a connecting subway someone stopped me in the tunnel. A good looking dandy of a person who I had noticed earlier in my car. "I was in the car with you, I'm so sorry that happened to you,." As they spoke I could see that they had two sets of fangs, four fanged teeth. A vampire. 'I don't know if it's OK to talk about what happened, I don't know if you're trying to forget about it and move on, I don't want to freak you out. I just wanted you to know that if it had gone any further I was ready to step in.'

'Oh, no!' I said. 'Thank you so much. I was totally freaked out and I'm still trying to process what happened to me, to, like, recover. I super appreciate you checking on me and acknowledging that it happened.'

The vampire had glittery purple eyeshadow, amethyst. Holy shit, haha.

We talked. I gave them my business card. At some point we realized that we were both magical practitioners and both recovering from experiences of childhood trauma. I didn't want to get too close. Was I afraid to sully the moment by making a narrative so resonant with my spirit guide journey too literal? Was this person my actual spirit guide? I didn't want to overstress the significance of the occurrence by seeking more.

I've not embellished this story. Not that it would matter or be any less true if I had. Within a culture epistemologically scrubbed of magic, this was a bizarrely synchronous occurrence.



CLOSE APPROXIMATION OF SUBWAY VAMPIRE

I returned to my workshop, tried to share what had happened an hour prior, but my story fell short.

Later, we did an ecstatic group dance. Guided by a carefully curated playlist, we moved and gyrated to massage an understanding of what we truly desire out of our bodies. I danced and listened to my body shoot colors, shapes and feeling around my inside and eventually received the message that what I most desire is human connection, meaningful joyful connection with others. Damn. Damn. Damn. That's not what I wanted to desire. I wanted to desire wealth, fame, conquest, innovation, mastery. But no, what my body most desired was to be more friendly, to indulge in deep luscious beautiful interaction with others. Not only did this feel like a completely pointless ambition, but utterly insane. I can't do that. People are scary, and I have so many

gorgeous and carefully erected walls, it would be a shame and extremely difficult and messy to take them down. And that encounter earlier.

The man I had triggered, who triggered me, who was willing to come to some irrational peace or agreement, who sat and de-escalated themselves erratically and with apology. That was so scary, I felt a child's powerlessness. But I'm not a child. Something was different, I was able to disengage, to resolve the situation for myself. In the face of one of the more frightening and intense interactions I had had with a human in the past few years, I came out OK. This feels meaningful: the ability to disengage, to respond to circumstances at hand seems like it might warrant the removal of a preemptive barrier or two between myself and humanity, barriers which might impede some otherwise scenic views or keep out wanted company.

And then there was the vampire. How tender. The care, restraint, attentive observation, compassion and four fangs. I can't think of who else I would rather have defending me on a subway than a vampire, the supernatural threat, the loyalty and the glamour. The Szilagyi clan does descend directly from Vlad III, Dracula himself.



VLAD III, THE IMPALER

And yet I didn't really need the help. Not in that moment. In that moment, we were able somehow to resolve the situation, the angry choke-handed man and myself.

So, I return to my ecstatic dance, and cry. Finally fucking cry, because I'm safe. I'm not a child, I can take care of myself, and should a situation arise that I myself can't handle, I have a fanged guardian angel.

THE WORKSHOP AT A TOP SECRET LOCATION IN HARLEM





(203) 999-0121

PETRA ANAÏS SZILAGYI
SHAPESHIFTER

PETRASZILAGYI.COM

PETRASZILLIONS@GMAIL.COM
@AUNTIEBOTOX