

~ Austin Osman Spare and the Zos Kia Cultus ~

from The Magickal Revival
by Kenneth Grant

H.P. Lovecraft, in one of his tales of terror, alludes to certain entities which have their being "not in the spaces known to us, but between them. They walk calm and primal, of no dimensions, and to us unseen."

This aptly describes Austin Osman Spare. The circumstances of his birth emphasize the element of ambivalence and inbetweenness which forms the theme of his magic. He told me he was not sure whether he was born on the last day of December 1888, or on New Year's Day, 1889; whether, as he put it, he was Janus backward-turning, or Janus forward-facing. But whichever aspect of the deity he more closely represented, it is a fact that his life was a curious blend of past and future. Despite his inability to remember quite when he was born, the place was certainly Snowhill, London: he was the only son of a City of London policeman.

When barely twenty years of age he began writing *The Book of Pleasure*, in which he used art and sex to explore the subconscious mind. *The Book of Pleasure* reeks of diabolism to such an extent that Mario Praz in *The Romantic Agony* (Oxford, 1933) refers to Spare as an English "satanic occultist", and he places him in the same category as Aleister Crowley.

Spare's intense interest in the more obscure aspects of sorcery sprang from his early friendship with an old colonial woman who claimed descent from a line of Salem witches that Cotton Mather had failed to exterminate. Spare always alluded to her as Mrs. Paterson, and called her his "second mother". She had an extremely limited vocabulary composed mainly of the fortune-teller's argot, yet she was able to define and explain the most abstract ideas much more clearly than could Spare with his large and unusual vocabulary.

Although penniless, she would accept no payment for her fortune-telling, but insisted on the odd symbolic coin traditionally exacted as a sacrifice fee. Apart from her skill in divining, she was the only person Spare ever met who could materialize thoughts to visible appearance. Aleister Crowley—who met and attracted all kinds of psychically active individuals—met two only in the course of his life who had this particular siddhi (Allan Bennett was one; the other, Crowley did not name).

Mrs. Paterson, when visited for purposes of fortune-telling, would read a person's character immediately as a matter of course before going into details about the future. If she prophesied an event she was unable to describe verbally, she would objectivize the event in a visual image and the querent would see, in some dark corner of her room, a clearly defined if fleeting image of the prophesied event. And this never failed to follow at the appointed time.

It was undoubtedly Mrs. Paterson's influence that stimulated Spare's innate interest in the occult, which, allied to his remarkable skill as a draughtsman enabled him to reproduce through his art the strange entities he encountered in transmundane spheres. He drew several portraits of Mrs. Paterson, one of which appeared in *The Focus of Life*, published by the Morland Press in 1921. Another drawing of her by Spare recently appeared (1971) in the part-work encyclopaedia *Man, Myth and Magic*, where she is shown after having "exteriorized" herself in the form of a nubile girl.

Spare too was able occasionally to conjure thought-forms to visible appearance, but whereas in the old witch's case it was an unfailing power, in his own case it was erratic and uncertain. On one occasion it worked only too effectively, as two unfortunate persons learnt to their cost. They were of the dilettante kind, mere dabblers in the occult. They wanted Spare to conjure an Elemental to visible appearance. They had seen materialized spirits of the dead in the seance room, but had never seen an Elemental. Spare tried to dissuade them,

explaining that such creatures were subconscious automata inhabiting the human psyche at levels normally inaccessible to the conscious mind. As they almost always embodied atavistic urges and propensities, it was an act of folly to evoke them as their intrusion into waking life could be extremely dangerous. But the smatterers did not take him seriously.

Using his own method of elemental evocation, Spare set to work. Nothing happened for some time, then a greenish vapour, resembling fluid seaweed, gradually invaded the room. Tenuous fingers of mist began to congeal into a definite, organized shape. It entered their midst, gaining more solidity with each successive moment. The atmosphere grew miasmic with its presence and an overpowering stench accompanied it; and in the massive cloud of horror that enveloped them, two pinpoints of fire glowed like eyes, blinking in an idiot face which suddenly seemed to fill all space. As it grew in size the couple panicked and implored Spare to drive the thing away. He banished it accordingly. It seemed to crinkle and diminish, then it fell apart like a blanket swiftly disintegrating. But while it had cohered and hung in the room like a cloud, it was virtually opaque and tangible; and it reeked of evil. Both the people concerned were fundamentally changed. Within weeks, one died of no apparent cause; the other had to be committed to an insane asylum.

Although Spare was convinced that an occult Intelligence frequently painted, drew, or wrote through him, he was unable to discover its identity. He was, however, in almost daily contact with a familiar, a spirit-guide, known as Black Eagle whom he had clearly seen and drawn on several occasions. But he was convinced that Black Eagle was not the sole source of his automatism. Spare had but to turn his head suddenly and he would sometimes catch a glimpse of the familiar spirits that constantly surrounded him. Several times he had "caught" one of them long enough to make a lightning-swift sketch.

Spare's frequent traffic with denizens of invisible realms led to his evolving a graphic means of conjoining all thoughts- past, present, and future- in the ever-fluid ether of Consciousness.

His graphic symbology represents a definite language designed to facilitate communication with the psychic and subliminal world.

It was Spare's opinion that for this language to be truly effective, each individual should evolve his own, creating his sigils from the material nearest to hand- his own subconscious. He gave as a reason for so much failure in divination the fact that, although the operator sometimes succeeded in annexing traditional symbols to his own subconscious awareness of their true values, many of the symbols eluded correct interpretation; they therefore failed of nexus and were consequently sterile.

Not only could Spare "tell fortunes" in the usually accepted sense, he could also use the cards for influencing the host of subtle entities which swarm in the astral light, and with their cooperation he accomplished much of his magic.

He designed and used a pack of cards which he called the "Arena of Anon", each card bearing a magical emblem which was a variation of one of the letters of the Alphabet of Desire. (The basis of this Alphabet, together with many early examples of the letters composing it, is given in Spare's 'The Book of Pleasure', on which he began working in 1909 and published privately on completion, in 1913.) When vividly visualized, the emblem or sigil mysteriously stirs the subconscious and a corresponding image, or set of images, arises in the mind. In proportion to the power of belief in the sigil, so is the clarity of the image which it evokes. If the sigil taps a layer of ancient or cosmic memory, some astonishing images surge into the mind and the skilful sorcerer is able to project them into the astral mind-stuff of other individuals, so that they imagine the image to be a palpable presence.

Spare could influence elemental phenomena as well as the minds of other people. Great danger lies in possession, and Spare wisely refrained from writing too openly about the processes he employed. What I know about his methods I learnt from personal contact with him.

Even as a child, Spare employed these curious sigils. One is reminded of Yeat's words in *The Trembling of the Veil*: "Mathers described how as a boy he had drawn over and over again some event that he longed for; and called those drawings an instinctive magic."

When he was seventeen Spare stayed at the home of the Rev. Robert Hugh Benson, author of *The Necromancers* and other occult novels. They went out for a walk one summer day; a serene and cloudless blue sky shone overhead. It had been fine all day, and Benson was curious to know whether Spare could, in such unlikely circumstances, produce rain by magical means. Spare said he could, proceeded to trace a sigil on the back of a used envelope, and, pausing in his tracks, concentrated all his attention upon it. Within ten minutes small clouds began to appear; they massed at a point immediately above their heads and discharged violently. Both Benson and Spare were drenched to the skin.

A year or two later, Benson introduced Spare to the Hon. Everard Feilding, Secretary of the Society of Psychic Research. At the time Feilding was associated with Frederick Bligh Bond, the President of the Archaeological Society who, by psychic means, had discovered the buried Edgar Chapel at Glastonbury Abbey. Like Benson, Feilding wanted proof of Spare's magical powers and, when the latter offered to oblige, proposed the following test: Spare was to materialize an object which Feilding mentally visualized without giving any clue as to its nature.

Spare drew one of his magical sigils, which, instead of being symbolic of the unknown desired object, was the ideograph of a familiar spirit whose services he frequently employed when any mind-reading was required.

After some time, Spare received a vivid impression of the object in Feilding's mind. He then drew a second sigil, told Feilding he need no longer concentrate, and proceeded to do so himself. These proceedings were interrupted by a knock on the door. Feilding tiptoed to the door, opened it, and was

amazed to find his valet proffering a pair of slippers. Feilding turned to Spare and asked him how he had done it!

An essential part of Spare's technique lay in deliberate forgetfulness, and this is the part which a novice finds extremely difficult. One is reminded of the king who lavished a fortune on an itinerant alchemist who had successfully manufactured the Philosopher's Stone. After giving the king lengthy and complicated instructions, which the king repeated by heart, the alchemist smiled and said approvingly: "Yes, your Highness has remembered every detail perfectly; there is just one further point to remember. For three minutes before the Alchemical Substance congeals, you must concentrate your mind upon its lustre as it seethes in the alembic, but during this time you should on no account let the thought of greenness cross you mind for even a moment." The king thanked the alchemist and prepared to make the Stone. Everything went according to plan until the last few minutes, when the mind of the king was invaded by an army of green objects which he was powerless to banish.

With Spare's sigils the case is somewhat similar. The reason he gives for forgetting the desire at the time of invoking it lies in the fact that for the operation to succeed the conscious mind must have no inkling of the transaction. Consciously formulated desires take time to materialize; subconscious desires can be made to materialize very swiftly. Consciousness of the desire vitiates the entire process, so a method had to be found of forgetting the desire during the period of magical evocation. Spare called the process "union through absent-mindedness" and advocated the yogic method of emptying the mind of all but the sigil. This is not always successful so as an alternative he suggests the sigillization of perennial desires, desires that are sure to arise periodically, as for instance the desire for beautiful women. Several such desires are then sigillized, scrambled together, and laid aside for several days. On reassembling the cards upon which they have been drawn, the operator is unable to remember precisely what sigillizes what! The rite is then comparatively easy to accomplish for it requires only concentrated thought.

Spare often supplemented the process by a sexual formula which endowed it with added efficacy. He derived most of his sex-magical formulae from a Delphic Pythoness who communed with him during sessions of automatic writing. This Delphic Oracle was probably the spirit of old Mrs. Paterson, guiding him from beyond.

One such formula enabled him to "give life to the autistic, by an earthenware virgin". In view of the present-day predilection for auto-erotic aids to ecstasy, the resuscitation of the dildo (At the time of writing, my attention has been drawn to "the first European sex paper" which reflects the current obsession with purely mechanistic aspects of self-love. Nevertheless, such methods employed in a magical manner may place the practitioner in direct contact with his daemon or genius.) and the widespread curiosity about the sorcery of sex, Spare's formula of the Earthenware Virgin is of particular interest, though for Spare it had an exclusively magical aim.

Until he received this formula he had, as he put it, "copulated merely with the atmosphere, or rode whores, witches and bitches of all kinds, there being few virgins".

In order to translate a specified desire from the level of subjective consciousness to the material or objective plane, the Pythoness instructed him to construct an urn in conformity with the dimensions of the erect penis. Sufficient space- but no more- was to be left at the end of the vessel in order to form a vacuum when the phallus was inserted. The cavity was to contain the sigillized wish, which was automatically consecrated at the moment of orgasm. The greatly enhanced pleasure induced by the suctional power of the vacuum increased the size of the penis and caused an unusually prolonged orgasm. At the critical moment, the desire was to be vividly visualized and held steadily in mind for as long as possible. When the mental image began to wane and disappear the urn was hermetically sealed and buried in a casket filled with earth, or in the ground itself.

Spare maintained that this was the formula used by the ancient Greek urnings; hence the designation. In one of his unpublished writings he give the following instructions: "Bury the urn at midnight, the moon being quartered. When the moon wanes, disinter the urn and- while repeating a suitable incantation- pour its contents as a libation on to the earth. Then re-bury it."

As the sperm would by that time have congealed, Spare advised a replenishment before the second "burial". He describes the Earthenware Virgin as "the most formidable formula known; it never fails and is dangerous. Hence, what is not written down must be guessed.

"From this formula was derived the legend of the genii of the brazen vessel associated with Solomon."

Whether this is so, I do not know, but there is a curious illustration in Payne Knight's celebrated Discourse on the Worship of Priapus (London, 1865) which is not satisfactorily explained in the text. It is in two parts and depicts a male figure with sexual organ erect; in his raised right hand he holds a vase-shaped sheath which he is about to clamp upon the phallus. The second part of the illustration shows the same image, but with penis drooping languidly after ejaculation, and the waist of the figure girdled with fruits symbolic of the rite's fulfilment. There are also one or two illustrations in Reinach's Repertoire des Vases Peints (Paris, 1899), which suggest a similar magical practice.

Spare could undoubtedly materialize atavisms from his own subconsciousness and clothe them fleetingly in the sexual ectoplasm (or astral semen) of his atmospheric copulations.

Occasionally, these entities actually achieved a degree of density sufficient to make them visible- and even palpable- to other people. He called them "elemental automata" or "intrusive familiars". They frequently copulated amongst themselves, engendering offspring simultaneously. Spare has depicted many of these creatures in their peculiar pursuits and has written several accounts of the Sabbath which he attended

in their company. Old Mrs. Paterson's influence is here very marked, for he used her likeness as the type of the ancient witch in many of his drawings.

One of Spare's constantly recurring themes concerns the transmogrification of age into youth. The first time Mrs. Paterson transformed herself before his eyes, the sorcery of it left a permanent impression which inspired many of his later works. One moment she was the lined and wizened old crone, then, in a flash, she appeared to him as a syren equipped with all the allurements of sex-appeal, an image that fulfilled his penchant for full voluptuous contours. How she projected such a glamour he was unable to discover, and although he never surprised her secret, he tried- with partial success- to emulate her example. This he did by a magical induction of ecstasy which enabled him to function at levels of high emotionalism. He was at such times creatively active for days on end, needing neither food nor sleep. Enhanced sexual activity accompanied this condition. On the few occasions when he did not sublimate this energy and direct it to artistic creation, he regretted it. Such was his hunger that in one night alone he coupled with eighteen women. He called these outbursts "Dionysiac spasms of pan-sexualism", in which he had a vision of "all things fornicating all the time".

Spare wrote down his witch-guide's instructions and, over the years, worked them into several books which he illustrated by some of the best of his drawings. It was only towards the end of his life, however, that he concentrated the mass of Mrs. Paterson's teachings into definite form. This consisted of a series of aphorisms and a magical grimoire which he was working on at the time of his death in 1956. Both these works survive in manuscript. He intended calling the Grimoire *The Book of the Living Word of Zos*, the name Zos being his magical name in the Witch-Cult.

The Grimoire is not so much a resume of the Witch Tradition as a highly individualized system of sorcery reflecting his creative genius and aesthetic theories. He also developed and extended his magical alphabet, the Atavistic Alphabet about which he

had first written in *The Book of Pleasure* in 1913. Each letter represents a sex-principle potent to awaken remote atavistic strata of the psyche. Examples of its use are given in the *Grimoire*, where he allies it with Witchcraft. The following is a literal translation of one of his favourite spells:

O mighty Rehctaw! Thou who exists in all
erogenousness, We evoke Thee!
By the power of the meanings arising from these
forms I make. We evoke Thee!
By the Talismans that speak the secret leitmotif of
desire, We evoke Thee!
By the sacrifices, abstinences and transvaluations
we make, We evoke Thee!
By the sacred inbetweenness concepts Give us the
flesh!
By the quadriga sexualis Give us unvarying desire!
By the conquest of fatigue Give us eternal
resurgence!
By the most sacred Word-graph of Heaven We
invoke Thee!

This prayer or evocation embodies traditional Sabbatic concepts and might be described as the Alpha and Omega of Spare's doctrine.

Rehctaw (Watcher) is spelt backwards, not for the reason given in connection with Dee and Kelly's angelic communications but because the "backward" symbolism conceals the key to the reification of desire, the final absorption of the ego-current in its source- the Self. Hence Spare's emphasis on Self-love, or autotelic ecstasy. Rehctaw is the symbol of reaching backwards in time to infinite remoteness by the mechanism of intense nostalgia. Whether it is symbolized by the Moon presiding over the nocturnal orgies of the Sabbath, or by the back-to-back dance of the witches and warlocks (see de L'Ancre), or by the infamous kiss of the Sabbath which is applied to the anus of the Demon; all such symbols indicate an infinite regression which causes atavistic resurgence and the inversion of sex to Self-love.

"Shall I speak of that unique intensity without form? Know ye the ecstasy within? The pleasure between ego and self? At that time of ecstasy there is no thought of others; there is no thought." (The Anathema of Zos, by A.O. Spare; London, 1927)

The opening line of the evocation resumes the method employed at the Sabbath for conscious wish-fulfilment through self-pleasure, and it is glossed by the words: "Except in the sensuous impact of flesh on flesh there are no meanings." The Self lives in, permeates, and is identical with, Reality- the enduring and ever present Consciousness- the living flesh compact of endlessly reifying dream.

The second part of the evocation refers to the sigils and letters of the sacred alphabet wherewith Zos (i.e. the body considered as a whole) produces its subtle spells by projecting its Self on the mists of matter, without. In other words, the language of desire and its meanings penetrate the silent regions of consciously forgotten experiences, evoking by its rebverberant power the ineluctable memories that abide perpetually in subconsciousness.

"The Talismans that speak the leitmotif of desire" are, primarily, the two major magical instruments of Spare's system- the Hand and Eye of which the phallus and the kteis are the secret symbols. They are both used, as in Crowley's Cult, for evoking or provoking "consciousness in touch; ecstasy in vision".

The fourth clause of the Sabbatic Prayer refers to the occult maxim that great achievements proceed upon total exhaustion of energy in one great burst of release, after a period- long or short- of sacrifice or abstention, during which time the necessary energy is accumulated and intensified. "The Sabbath is always secret, communal and periodic; an enforced consummation for almost unlimited wish-fulfilment."

"Prolonged voluntary abstinence, repression and sacrifice, is released in mass sexual congress and sublimated to one end: the exteriorization of a wish, which is thus achieved by a great

saving and a total spending." (From an unpublished manuscript, Formula of the Witch's Sabbath as first told me by a Witch, by A.O.S.)

The "transvaluations" are effected by the sloughing of conventional ideas and beliefs, and by the absorption of the energy thus liberated. Spare terms such energy "free belief". It is this aimless energy that is seized upon at the Sabbath and directed to given ends.

The fifth clause of the Prayer introduces one of the most important aspects of Spare's magic, that of inbetweenness.

In everyday life one craze or "belief" follows another. By a process of not-believing, of emptying the craze, or obsession, of its content, we can surprise the tendency of belief to appear as one thing rather than another, or as one thing after another. We can in this way break through into that ecstasy of communion with the Atmospheric "I" which Spare calls the Kia, the state of inbetweenness, or Neither-Neither.

The primordial belief is "Self", "God", or Kia (it does not matter what we call it). It is the only belief that is self-evident because it is experienced by each one of us at every moment of our existence. It is also the only belief that is truly free of belief, because to be is to be-live it- as Spare aptly expresses it. It is void of necessity to become anything else, for it is all things all the time and can only and always be itself. If we can realize this we shall not fall into the error of conceptual thought, which constantly breeds other thoughts with which we temporarily identify ourselves: the Buddhist cycle of birth, death and rebirth.

In a few words, Spare states the crux of the doctrine: "By hindering belief and semen from conception, they become simple and cosmic." Only when desire has become cosmic can the total ecstasy, which characterizes Kia, dawn in the individual consciousness, because it is then no longer limited or personalized consciousness, but cosmic in scope and free to enjoy itself eternally.

In other words, one must enlarge belief or desire until it embraces all things; Spare urges us to will "insatiety of desire, brave self-indulgence and primaeval sexualism" (The Focus of Life, by Austin O. Spare. The Morland Press, London, 1921.), for belief freed from conception merges desire with the Infinite, creates a unity of Self-Knowing (which is also supreme Self-Love) and transcends the two poles of objectivity and subjectivity, discovering in between the two, the Real Self, Kia, the Atmospheric "I".

After the Oath which constitutes the fifth stage of evocation, the refrain changes from "We evoke Thee!" to a demand to the hidden Watcher to 'Give us the flesh!' The petition is for the material medium whereby the desire will actually substantiate itself.

From certain historical accounts of Witchcraft we learn that the roasted flesh or children and animals was sometimes sacrificed to the infernal powers as a sacrifice potent to achieve realization of the desires of the celebrants at the Sabbath. The literal performance of this sacrifice was a degeneration of the original magical act of transubstantiation effected by the sorcerer when he "sacrificed" the child of his loins, i.e. when he consumed or burnt up his sigillized wish in the fire of forgetfulness.

The next stage of the rite evokes the "quadriga sexualis" (the four horseman or powers of sex) which adumbrates the various mystical attitudes (forms of congress, postures) employed at the Sabbath. Although these are numerous, there are four main kinds. Firstly, the gesture of constant congress; secondly, the gesture of abstract creating (a masturbatory gesture) involving the Hand, the Eye, and the Atmosphere; thirdly, the gesture of simulation or astral reflection, symbolized by the Formula of the Divine Ape; and fourthly, the gesture typical of the Witch Cult which involves the sodomitical use of the female organism.

Comparisons with Crowley's Cult of Sexual Magick will spring to mind, but Spare elaborates these four great gestures as

follows:

In the first instance he interprets "constant congress" as the perpetual interplay of the Will (symbolized by the Hand) and the Imagination (symbolized by the Eye), for it is Will and Imagination that cause things to appear. The Tibetan Yab-yum is the Oriental mode of representing this constant interplay of the active and passive potencies. The gesture of constant congress, therefore, resumes the prime function of the Sabbatic Rite, which is "ex-creation", or evolving from our "innerness" through living contact with "all otherness"- typified by the world without.

The second gesture- that of abstract creating- is performed by a special kind of mantric vibration, and the Mouth is the symbol of the magical implement which performs it. Reverberant evocation, prayer, adoration through song, incantation or mantra, conveys the energy of desire by tonal nuance to the necessary stratum of the subconsciousness. The technique of making the utterance effective, of resounding the depths of cosmic memory and making the "sacred alignments" is a major arcanum of the Zos Kia Cultus. "What sounds the depths and conjoins Will and Belief? Some inarticulate hieroglyph, or sigil, wrought from nascent Desire and rhythmized by unbounded Ego." (From The Grimoire of Zos.)

The second gesture therefore resumes the formulation of the Great Wish on the astral plane, prior to its "excreation", projection, and subsequent embodiment.

The third gesture of the "quadriga sexualis", the concept of simulation, reveals the means of reifying the Great Wish. The archetype of all such simulatory techniques is the state of total vacuity which Spare named the Death Posture. By feint, the means of reification is concentrated through a simulation of death or annihilation. This posture is explained in the next chapter.

The fourth and final gesture, that of re-organization, re-arrangement, or "abortive congress", implies a magical formula

deriving from the ancient Draconian Cults of Egypt. Either Moon Magic is implied, or the Formula of Gomorrah, both of which appear in the Crowley Cult as aspects of the IX! and XII!, O.T.O., respectively. The re-organization of magical power within the human organism involves consolidation of the reified wish until it exhausts itself through "non-necessity". Hence the gesture of the "quadriga sexualis" impregnates the glamour already projected on the astral plane, endowing it with the energy of the sorcerer himself so that it becomes a living entity, capable of reverberant copulations through "increative" congress.

Spare explains the Sabbath as "an inverse-reversion for self-seduction; an undoing for a divertive conation. Sex is used as the technique and medium of a magical act. It is not only erotic satisfaction; the sensualist is made detached, controlled, until final sublimation. His whole training is designed to render him submissive and obedient [to the Witch] until he can control, transmute, and direct his magical energy wherever desired, by cold and amoral passion." (From an unpublished manuscript entitled *The Zoetic Grimoire of Zos.*)

Following upon the appeal to the "quadriga sexualis" are the words "Give us unvarying desire!" Desire, without variation of any kind, undifferentiated and undifferentiating, leads to the consummation of an unvarying bliss which is free from all concept, and therefore habitually infinite. "Ecstasy is our outspan, touching reality: a potent generative instant; its surplus may be used abstractly [i.e. by mantric vibration; see the Second Gesture] to incarnate another wish," and so on, endlessly. This is what is meant by "reverberant evocation".

The seventh stage of the rite concerns "the conquest of fatigue" which is essential to effective Sabbatic functioning; it is (or should be) sustained somatic, cerebral and psycho-magical energy insuring intense ecstasy when the Great Exhaustion makes possible the voidness necessary to the projection of the sigil; the voidness that is the chalice containing the Great Wish. This recalls Crowley's innumerable sex-magical operations for "Sex-Force and Attraction". (See *The Magical Record of the*

Beast 666, edited by John Symonds and Kenneth Grant.)

The penultimate petition, "Give us eternal resurgence", is a plea for the constant return of the primaevally remembered rapture, until a continuum of bliss is established wherein the Kia is seen, felt, and known to be the background of all possibility, the source of creation and the aim of all pleasure. It is the doctrine of atavistic resurgence.

The Sabbatic prayer concludes with an invocation of "the most sacred Word-graph of Heaven". The Word-graph of Heaven is a glyph of the Goddess, and it conceals the true purpose of the Sabbath. It is a secret glyph of Zos Kia Cultus; it invokes the Goddess, whereas the preceding stages of the rite evoked Her. Invocation is a call to the Spirit to appear subjectively; evocation is a calling forth of the Spirit to objective appearance. The hidden Rehctaw is evoked to visible manifestation "by the power of meanings arising from these forms I make".

According to Spare, the witch presiding at the Sabbatic rite is "usually old, grotesque, worldly, and libidiously learned; and is as sexually attractive as a corpse. Yet she becomes the supreme vehicle of consummation. This is necessary for the transmutation of the sorcerer's personal aesthetic culture, which is thereby destroyed. Perversion is used to overcome moral prejudice or conformity. By persistence, the mind and desire become amoral, focused, and entirely acceptive, and the life-force of the Id (the Great Desire) is free of inhibitions prior to final control.

"Thus, ultimately, the Sabbath becomes a deliberate sex orgy for the purpose of exteriorization, thus giving reality to the autistic thought by transference. Sex is for full use, and he who injures none, himself does not injure."

Spare believed that the personal aesthetic culture (that is, the individual's idea of what constitutes beauty and ugliness) when exalted as the criterion of value in itself, has destroyed more affective affinity than any other "belief". "But he who

transmutes the traditionally ugly into another aesthetic value has new pleasures beyond fear."

In Liber Aleph, Crowley enunciated a similar thesis. The magical ecstasy liberated by union with grotesque or hideous images usually associated with aversion, repulsion, or horror, is super-abundant compared with that released by the union of (usually accepted) opposites. One is reminded of Salvador Dali's observation that the wished-for treasure islands may lie precisely in those images of horror and dread that are naturally repellent to the conscious mind. Such a transformation of values, a rebours, improves health and leads to self-control, tolerance, understanding and compassion. Not only an adjunct to the rite, it accelerates the fulfilment of the Great Desire.

"Nothing is attained merely by 'wanting'; epistemology, even eschatology will not help, not Gods; but- spake Zos- the 'as if' simulations have been prolific as objective realities. Sublimation of all 'reason' to the 'blind' life-force is the whole of wisdom." (From The Grimoire of Zos.)

Spare's drawings were always inspired by the New Aesthetic, the New Sexuality. They amount almost to masturbation in line; the line coils and curls upon itself and mounts the steep incline of ecstasy as the amazing sigils are woven into a complex web of dream. To follow closely the line of some of his Sabbatic drawings is to leave earth and dive obliquely between those spaces that Lovecraft celebrated in his nightmare tales. Such drawings are themselves the gateway to the Sabbath; one is drawn into a vortex and whirled down the funnel of consciousness which explodes into unknown worlds. Spare would not reveal the magical graphs that unsealed the cells of these eldritch dimensions.

Of the Sabbath itself he said that it was always secret, communal and periodic; a concentrated consummation for unlimited wish-fulfilment:

The hyper-eroticism induced by this grand scale hysteria or saturnalia has no essentially sado-

masochistic basis; simulation can and often does replace it. Before the ceremony, each participant plays his or her allotted part which usually develops into chaotic promiscuity. The initiates are trained in their parts individually; they play a passive role, while the witches take the active part; thus the symbolic levitation by besom handle.

There is a secret meeting-place and an elaborate ceremony which is an extensive hypnotic to overwhelm all psychological resistances; thus, the sense of smell, hearing and sight are seduced by incense, mantric incantation and ritual, while taste and touch are made more sensitive by the stimuli of wine and oral sexual acts. After total sexual satiation by every conceivable means, an affectivity becomes, an exteriorized hallucination of the predetermined wish which is magical in its reality. No one can say whether certain things happen or not; each individual may have very different and equally vivid experiences; but some form of levitation seems common to all. My own experience of many Sabbaths is that there is consummate exteriorization [of latent potencies] and that subsequent memories are of reality.

All excessively sadistic acts are mainly symbolized by the witches, and what simulation there is follows closely the patterns of all erotic love rites. The whole ceremony is based mainly on an inversion of orthodox religious services.

In another writing (also unpublished), Spare declared that "Sorcery is a deliberate act of causing metamorphoses by the employment of elementals. It forges a link with the powers of middle nature, (i.e. The astral plane, between the spiritual and physical realms.) or the ether, the astrals of great trees and of animals of every kind. Will is our medium, Belief is the vehicle, and Desire is the force combining with the elemental.

Cryptograms are our talismans and protectors."

The will, or nervous energy, must be suppressed in order to create tension, and released only at the psychological moment. "At that time, gaze into and beyond the immediate vista, into the Aeon- the spaciousness beyond your meannesses, beyond your borrowed precepts, dogmas and beliefs- until you vibrate in spacious unity. Indraw your breath until the body quivers and then give a mighty suspiration, releasing all your nervous energy into the focal point of your wish; and as your urgent desire merges into the ever present procreative sea, you will feel a tremendous insurge, a self-transformation. And the Devil himself shall not prevent your will materializing."

~ The Sorceries of Zos ~

from Cults of the Shadow
by Kenneth Grant

Sorcery and witchcraft are the degenerate offspring of occult traditions coeval with those described in the second chapter. The popular conception of witchcraft, shaped by the anti-Christian manifestations that occurred in the Middle Ages is so distorted and so inadequate that to try and interpret the symbols of its mysteries, perverted and debased as they are, without reference to the vastly ancient systems from which they derive is like mistaking the tip of an iceberg for its total mass.

It has been suggested by some authorities that the original witches sprang from a race of Mongol origin of which the Lapps are the sole surviving remnants. This may or may not be so, but these 'mongols' were not human. They were degenerate survivals of a pre-human phase of our planet's history generally- though mistakenly- classified as Atlantean. The characteristic that distinguished them from the others of their kind was the ability to project consciousness into animal forms, and the power they possessed of reifying thought-forms. The bestiaries of all the races of the earth are littered with the results of their sorceries.

They were non-human entities; that is to say they pre-dated the human life-wave on this planet, and their powers- which would today appear unearthly-derived from extra-spatial dimensions. They impregnated the aura of the earth with the magical seed from which the human foetus was ultimately generated.

Arthur Machen was, perhaps, near the truth of the matter when he suggested that the fairies and little people of folklore were decorous devices concealing processes of non-human sorcery repellent to mankind.¹

Machen, Blackwood, Crowley, Lovecraft, Fortune, and others, frequently used as a theme for their writings the influx of extra-terrestrial powers which have been moulding the history of our planet since time began; that is, since time began for us, for we are only too prone to suppose that we were here first and that we alone are here now, whereas the most ancient occult traditions affirm that we were neither the first nor are we the only ones to people the earth; the Great Old Ones and the Elder Gods find echoes in the myths and legends of all peoples.

Austin Spare claimed to have had direct experience of the existence of extra-terrestrial intelligences, and Crowley- as his autobiography makes abundantly clear- devoted a lifetime to proving that extra-terrestrial and

superhuman consciousness can and does exist independently of the human organism.²

As explained in Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare,³ Spare was initiated into the vital current of ancient and creative sorcery by an aged woman named Paterson, who claimed decent form a line of Salem witches. The formation of Spare's Cult of the Zos and the Kia⁴ owes much to his contact with Witch Paterson who provides the model for many of his 'sabbatic' drawings and paintings. Much of the occult lore that she transmitted to him suffuses two of his books- The Book of Pleasure and the Focus of Life.⁵ In the last years of his life he embodied further esoteric researches in a grimoire⁶ which he had intended publishing as a sequel to his two other books. Although death prevented its publication, the manuscript survives, and the substance of the grimoire forms the basis of this chapter.

Spare concentrated the theme of his doctrine in the following Affirmation Creed of Zos vel Thanatos.

I believe in the flesh 'as now' and forever . . . for I am the Light, the Truth, the Law, the Way, and none shall come unto anything except through his flesh. Did I not show you the eclectic path between ecstasies; that precarious funambulatory way But you had no courage, were tired, and feared. THEN AWAKE! De-hypnotize yourselves from the poor reality you be-live and be-lie. For the great Noon- tide is here, the great bell has struck Let others await involuntary immolation, the forced redemption so certain for many apostates to Life. Now, in this day, I ask you to search your memories, for great unities are near. The Inceptor of all memory is your Soul. Life is desire, Death is reformation . . . I am the resurrection . . . I, who transcend ecstasy by ecstasy, meditating Need Not Be in Self-love . . .

This creed, informed by the dynamism of Spare's will and his great ability as an artist, created a Cult on the astral plane that attracted to itself all the elements naturally orientated to it. He referred to it as Zos Kia Cultus, and its votaries claimed affinity on the following terms:

Our Sacred Book : The Book of Pleasure.
Our Path : The eclectic path between

ecstasies; the precarious
funambulatory way.

Our Deity : The All-Prevailing Woman.
('And I strayed with her, into the
path direct'.)

Our Creed : The Living Flesh. (Zos):
('Again I say : This is your great
moment of
reality- the living flesh').

Our Sacrament : The Sacred Inbetweenness Concepts.

Our Word : Does Not Matter-Need Not Be.

Our Eternal Abode : The mystic state of Neither-
Neither.

The Atomospheric 'I'. (Kia).

Our Law : To Trespass all Laws.

The Zos and the Kia are represented by the Hand and the Eye, the instruments of sentiency and vision. They form the foundation of the New Sexuality, which Spare evolved by combining them to form a magical art- the art of visualizing sensation, of 'becoming one with all sensation', and of transcending the dual polarities of existence by the annihilation of separate identity through the mechanics of the Death Posture.⁷ Long ago, a Persian poet described in a few words the object of Spare's New Sexuality.

*The kingdom of I and We forsake, and your home in annihilation
make.*

The New Sexuality, in the sense that Spare conceived it, is the sexuality not of positive dualities but of the Great Void, the Negative, the Ain: The Eye of Infinite Potential. The New Sexuality is, simply, the manifestation of non-manifestation, or of Universe 'B', as Bertiaux would have it, which is equivalent to Spare's Neither-Neither concept. Universe 'B' represents the absolute difference of that world of 'all otherness' to anything pertaining to the known world, or Universe 'A'. Its gateway is Daath, sentinelled by the Demon Choronzon. Spare describes this concept as 'the gateway of all inbetweenness'. In terms of Voodoo, this idea is implicit in the Petro rites with their emphasis upon the spaces between the cardinal points of the compass: the off-beat rhythms of the drums that summon the loa from beyond the Veil and formulate the laws of their manifestation.⁸ Spare's system of sorcery, as expressed in Zos Kia Cultus, continues in a straight line not only the Petro tradition of Voodoo, but also the Vama Marg of Tantra, with its eight directions of space typified by the Yantra of the Black Goddess, Kali: the Cross of the Four Quarters plus the inbetweenness concepts that together compose the eightfold Cross, the eight-petalled Lotus, a synthetic symbol of the Goddess of the Seven Stars plus her son, Set or Sirius.⁹

The mechanics of the New Sexuality are based upon the dynamics of the Death Posture, a formula evolved by Spare for the purpose of reifying the negative potential in terms of positive power. In ancient Egypt the mummy was the type of this formula, and the simulation by the Adept of the state of death¹⁰- in Tantric practice- involves also the total stilling of the psychosomatic functions. The formula has been used by Adepts not necessarily working with specifically tantric or magical formulae, notably by the celebrated Advaitin Rishi, Bhagavan Shri Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai,¹¹ who attained Supreme Enlightenment by simulating the process of death; and also by the Bengal Vaishnavite, Thakur Haranath, who was taken for dead and actually prepared for burial after a 'death trance' which lasted several hours and from which he emerged with a totally new consciousness that transformed even his bodily constitution and appearance.¹² It is possible that Shri Meher Baba, of Poona, during the period of amnesia that afflicted him in early life, also experienced a form of death from which he emerged with power to enlighten others and to lead a large movement in his name.

The theory of the Death Posture, first described in *The Book of Pleasure*, was developed independently of the experiences of the above mentioned Masters about whom nothing was published in any European language at that time.¹³

The Rosicrucian mystique of the pastos containing the corpse of Christian Rosencreutz- dramatized by MacGregor Mathers in the 5_i=6_ú Ceremony of the Golden Dawn- resumes the mystery of this essentially Egyptian formula of the mummified Osiris. Spare was acquainted with this version of the Mystery. He became a member of Crowley's A.[^].A.[^]., for a brief period, in 1910, and the Golden Dawn rituals- published shortly afterwards in *The Equinox*¹⁴- may have been available to him.

The concepts of death and sexuality are inextricably connected. Saturn, death, and Venus, life, are twin aspects of the Goddess. That they are, in a mystical sense, one idea is evidenced by the nature of the sexual act. The dynamic activity connected with the drive to know, to penetrate, to illumine, culminates in a stillness, a silence, a cessation of all effort which itself dissolves in the tranquillity of total negation. The identity of these concepts is explicit in the ancient Chinese equation 0=2, where naught symbolizes the negative, unmanifest potential of creation, and the two the two polarities involved in its realization. The Goddess represents the negative phase: the atmospheric 'I' symbolized by that all-seeing Eye with all its ayin symbolism;¹⁵ and the twins- Set-Horus- represent the phase of 2, or duality. The lightning-swift alternations of these terminals, active-passive, are positive emanations of the Void, i.e. the manifestation of the Unmanifest, and the Hand is the symbol of this creative, power-manifesting

duality.¹⁶

The supreme symbol of Zos Kia Cultus therefore resumes that of the Scarlet Woman, and is reminiscent of Crowley's Cult of Love under Will. The Scarlet Woman embodies the Fire Snake, control of which causes 'change to occur in conformity with will'.¹⁷ The energized enthusiasm of the Will is the key to Crowley's Cult, and it is analogous to the technique of magically induced obsession which Spare uses to reify the 'inherent dream'.¹⁸

One of the foremost magicians of our time- Salvador Dali- developed a system of magical reification at about the same time that Crowley and Spare were elaborating their doctrines. Dali's system of 'paranoiac-critical activity' evokes echoes of resurgent atavisms that are reflected into the concrete world of images by a process of obsession similar to that induced by the Death Posture.

Dali's birth in 1904- the year in which Crowley received The Book of the Law- makes him, literally, a child of the New Aeon; one of the first! His creative genius adumbrates at every stage of its flight the flowering of the essential germ that has made him a living embodiment of New Aeon consciousness, and of the 'Kingly Man' described in AL.

Dali's objects are reflected in the fluid and ever-shifting luminosity of the Astral Light. They resolve themselves and melt continually into the 'next step',¹⁹ the next phase of consciousness expanding into the further image of Becoming.

Spare had already succeeded in isolating and concentrating desire in a symbol which became sentient and therefore potentially creative through the lightnings of the magnetized will. Dali, it seems, has taken the process a step further. His formula of 'paranoiac-critical activity' is a development of the primal (African) concept of the fetish, and it is instructive to compare Spare's theory of 'visualized sensation' with Dali's definition of painting as 'hand don colour photography of concret irrationality'. Sensation is essentially irrational, and its delineation in graphic form ('hand done colour photography') is identical with Spare's method of 'visualized sensation'.

These magicians utilized human embodiments of power (shakti) which appeared- usually- in feminine form. Each book that Crowley produced had its corresponding shakti. The Rites of Eleusis (1910) were powered, largely, by Leila Waddell. Book Four, Parts I & II (1913) came through Soror Virakam (Mary d'Este). Liber Aleph- The Book of Wisdom or Folly (1918)- was inspired by Soror Hilarion (Jane Foster). His great work, Magick in Theory and Practice, was written mainly in 1920 in Cefalu, where Alostrael (Leah Hirsig) supplied the magical impetus; and so on, up to the New Aeon interpretation of the Tarot (The Book of Thoth), which he produced in collaboration with

Frieda Harris in 1944. Dali's shakti- Gala- was the channel through which the inspiring creative current was fixed or visualized in some of the greatest paintings the world has seen. And in the case of Austin Osman Spare, the Fire Snake assumed the form of Mrs. Paterson, a self-confessed witch who embodied the sorceries of a cult so ancient that it was old in Egypt's infancy.

Spare's grimoire is a concentration of the entire body of his work. It comprises, in a sense, everything of magical or creative value that he ever thought or imagined. Thus, if you possess a picture by Zos, and that picture contains some of his sigillized spells, you possess the whole grimoire, and you stand a great chance of being swept up and attuned to the vibrations of Zos Kia Cultus.

A little known aspect of Spare, an aspect that links up with his friendship with Thomas Burke,²⁰ reveals the fact that a curious Chinese occult society-known as the Cult of the Ku- flourished in London in the nineteen-twenties. Its headquarters may have been in Peking, Spare did not say, perhaps he did not know; but its London offshoot was not in Limehouse as one might have expected, but in Stockwell, not far from a studio-flat that Spare shared with a friend. A secret session of the cult of the Ku was witnessed by Spare, who seems to have been the only European ever to have gained admittance. He does, in fact, seem to have been the only European apart from Burke who had so much as heard of the Cult. Spare's experience is of exceptional interest by reason of its close approximation to a form of dream-control into which he was initiated many years earlier by Witch Paterson.

The word Ku has several meanings in Chinese, but in this particular case it denotes a peculiar form of sorcery involving elements which Spare had already incorporated in his conception of the New Sexuality. The Adepts of Ku worshipped a serpent goddess in the form of a woman dedicated to the Cult. During an elaborate ritual she would become possessed, with the result that she threw off, or emanated, multiple forms of the goddess as sentient shadows endowed with all the charms possessed by her human representative. These shadow-women, impelled by some subtle law of attraction, gravitated to one or other of the devotees who sat in a drowsy condition around the entranced priestess. Sexual congress with these shadows then occurred and it was the beginning of a sinister form of dream-control involving journeys and encounters in infernal regions.

The Ku would seem to be a form of the Fire Snake exteriorized astrally as a shadow-woman or succubus, congress with which enabled the devotee to reify his 'inherent dream'. She was known as the 'whore of hell' and her function was analogous to that of the Scarlet Woman of Crowley's Cult, the Suvasini of the Tantric Kaula Circle, and the Fiendess of the Cult of the Black Snake. The Chinese Ku, or harlot of hell, is a shadowy embodiment of subconscious desires²¹ concentrated in the alluringly sensuous form of the

Serpent of Shadow Goddess.

The mechanics of dream control are in many ways similar to those which effect conscious astral projection. My own system of dream control derives from two sources: the formula of Eroto-Comatose Lucidity discovered by Ida Nellidoff and adapted by Crowley to his sex-magical techniques,²² and Spare's system of Sentient Sigils explained below.

Sleep should be preceded by some form of Karezza²³ during which a specially chosen sigil symbolizing the desired object is vividly visualized. In this manner the libido is baulked of its natural fantasies and seeks satisfaction in the dream world. When the knack is acquired the dream will be extremely intense and dominated by a succube, or shadow-woman, with whom sexual intercourse occurs spontaneously. If the dreamer has acquired even a moderate degree of proficiency in this technique he will be aware of the continued presence of the sigil. This he should bind upon the form of the succube in a place that is within range of his vision during copulation, e.g., as a pendant suspended from her neck; as ear-drops; or as the diadem in a circlet about her brow. Its locus should be determined by the magician with respect to the position he adopts during coitus. The act will then assume all the characteristics of a Ninth Degree Working,²⁴ because the presence of the Shadow-Woman will be experienced with a vivid intensity of sensation and clarity of vision. The sigil thus becomes sentient and in due course the object of the Working materializes on the physical plane. This object is, of course, determined by the desire embodied in and represented by the sigil.

The important innovation in this system of dream control lies in the transference of the Sigil from the waking to the dream state of consciousness, and the evocation, in the latter state, of the Shadow-woman. This process transforms an Eighth Degree Rite²⁵ into the similitude of the sexual act as used in Ninth Degree Workings.

Briefly, the formula has three stages:

1. Karezza, or unculminating sexual activity, with visualization of the Sigil until sleep supervenes.
2. Sexual congress in the dream-state with the Shadow-woman evoked by Stage I. The Sigil should appear automatically at this second stage; if it does not, the practice must be repeated at another time. If it does, then the desired result will reify in Stage.
3. after awakening (i.e. in the mundane world of everyday phenomena).

A word of explanation is, perhaps, necessary concerning the term Karezza as used in the present context. Retention of semen is a concept of central importance in certain Tantric practices, the idea being that the bindu (seed)

then breeds astrally, not physically. In other words, an entity of some sort is brought to birth at astral levels of consciousness. This, and analogous techniques, have given rise to the impression- quite erroneous- that celibacy is a sine qua non of magical success; but such celibacy is of a purely local character and confined to the physical plane, or waking state, alone. Celibacy, as commonly understood, is therefore a meaningless parody or travesty of the true formula. Such is the initiated rationale of Tantric celibacy, and some such interpretation undoubtedly applies also to other forms of religious asceticism. The 'temptations' of the saints occurred on the astral plane precisely because the physical channels had been deliberately blocked. The state of drowsiness noted in the votaries of the Ku suggests that the ensuing shadow-play was evoked after a fashion similar to that obtained by a species of dream control.

Gerald Massey, Aleister Crowley, Austin Spare, Dion Fortune, have- each in their way- demonstrated the bio-chemical basis of the Mysteries. They achieved in the sphere of the 'occult' that which Wilhelm Reich achieved for psychology, and established it on a sure bio-chemical basis.

Spare's 'sentient symbols' and 'alphabet of desire',²⁶ correlating as they do the marmas of the body with the specific sex-principles, anticipated in several ways the work of Reich who discovered- between 1936 and 1939- the vehicle of psycho-sexual energy, which he named the orgone. Reich's singular contribution to psychology and, incidentally, to Western occultism, lies in the fact that he successfully isolated the libido and demonstrated its existence as a tangible, biological energy. This energy, the actual substance of Freud's purely hypothetical concepts- libido and id- was measured by Reich, lifted out of the category of hypothesis, and reified. He was, however, wrong in supposing that the orgone was the ultimate energy. It is one of the more important kalas but not the Supreme Kala (Mahakala), although it may become such by virtue of a process not unknown to Tantrics of the Varma Marg. Until comparatively recent times it was known- in the West- to the Arab alchemists, and the entire body of alchemical literature, with its tortuous terminology and hieroglyphic style, reveals- if it reveals anything- a deliberate device on the part of Initiates to veil the true process of distilling the Mahakala.

Reich's discovery is significant because he was probably the first scientist to place psychology on a solid biological basis, and the first to demonstrate under laboratory conditions the existence of a tangible magical energy at last measurable and therefore strictly scientific. Whether this energy is termed the astral light (Levi), the elan vital (Bergson), the Odic Force (Reichenbach), the libido (Freud), Reich was the first- with the possible exception of Reichenbach²⁷- actually to isolate it and demonstrate its properties.

Austin Spare suspected, as early as 1913, that some such energy was the basic factor in the re-activation of primal atavisms, and he treated it accordingly as cosmic energy (the 'Atmospheric I') responsive to subconscious suggestion through the medium of Sentient Symbols, and through the application of the body (Zos) in such a way that it could reify remote atavisms and all possible future forms.

During the time that he was preoccupied with these themes Spare dreamed repeatedly of fantastic buildings whose alignments he found quite impossible to note down on waking. He supposed them to be adumbrations of a future geometry of space-time bearing no known relation to present-day forms of architecture. Eliphaz Levi claimed a similar power of reification for the 'Astral Light', but he failed to show the precise manner of its manipulation. It was to this end that Spare evolved his Alphabet of Desire 'each letter of which relates to a sex-principle'.²⁸ That is to say he noted certain correspondences between the inner movements of the sexual impulse and the outer form of its manifestation in symbols, sigils, or letters rendered sentient by being charged with its energy. Dali refers to such magically charged fetish-forms as 'accommodations of desire'²⁹ which are visualized as shadowy voids, black emptinesses, each having the shape of the ghostly object which inhabits its latency, and which IS only by virtue of the fact that it is NOT. This indicates that the origin of manifestation is non-manifestation, and it is plain to intuitive apprehension that the orgone of Reich, the Atmospheric 'I' of Austin Spare, and the Dalinian delineations of the 'accommodations of desire' refer in each case to an identical Energy manifesting through the mechanics of desire. Desire, Energized Will, and Obsession, are the keys to unlimited manifestation, for all form and all power is latent in the Void, and its god-form is the Death Posture.

These theories have their roots in very ancient practices, some of which- in distorted form- provided the basis of the mediaeval Witch Cult, covens of which flourished in New England at the time of the Salem Witch Trials at the end of the 17th century. The subsequent persecutions apparently obliterated all outer manifestations both of the genuine cult and its debased counterfeits.

The principal symbols of the original cult have survived the passage of aeon-long cycles of time.³⁰ They all suggest the Backward Way:³¹ The Sabbath sacred to Sevekh or Sebt, the number Seven, the Moon, the Cat, Jackal, Hyaena, Pig, Black Snake, and other animals considered unclean by later traditions; the Widdershins and Back-to-Back dance, the Anal Kiss, the number Thirteen, the Witch mounted on the besom handle, the Bat, and other forms of webbed or winged nocturnal creature; the Batrachia generally, of which the Toad, Frog, or Hekt³² was preeminent. These and similar symbols originally typified the Draconian Tradition which was degraded by the pseudo witch-cults during centuries of Christian

persecution. The Mysteries were profaned and the sacred rites were condemned as anti-Christian. The Cult thus became the repository of inverted and perverted religious rites and symbols having no inner meaning; mere affirmations of the witches' total commitment to anti-Christian doctrine whereas- originally- they were living emblems, sentient symbols, of ante- Christian faith.

When the occult significance of primal symbols is fathomed at the Draconian level, the system of sorcery which Spare evolved through contact with 'Witch' Paterson becomes explicable, and all magical circles, sorceries, and cults, are seen as manifestations of the Shadow.

footnotes

(1) See *The White People, The Shining Pyramid, and other stories*. This theme is a frequent one with Machen. The hideous atavisms described by Lovecraft in many of his tales evoke even more potently the atmosphere of cosmic horror and 'evil' peculiar to the influx of extra-terrestrial powers.

(2) See *The Confessions, Moonchild, Magick Without Tears, and other works by Crowley*.

(3) Frederick Muller, 1975.

(4) 'The body considered as a whole I call Zos' (*The Book of Pleasure*, p.45). The Kia is the 'Atmospheric I'. The 'I' and the 'Eye', being interchangeable, the entire range of 'eye' symbolism- to which repeated reference has been made- is here applicable.

(5) First published in 1913 and 1921 respectively. There has been a recent republication of *The Book of Pleasure*, with an introduction by Kenneth Grant. (Montreal, 1975).

(6) This was to have been divided into two parts: *The Book of the Living Word of Zos* and *The Zoetic Grimoire of Zos*; in the present chapter it is referred to simply as the grimoire.

(7) *Vide infra*.

(8) See previous chapter.

(9) The significance of the number eight as the height, or ultimate One, is explained in *Aleister Crowley & the Hidden*

God.

(10) *i.e. the assumption of the 'god-form' of death.*

(11) *See Arthur Osborne: Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self Knowledge, London, 1954.*

(12) *See Shri Haranath: His Play and Precepts, Bombay, 1954.*

(13) *i.e. 1913.*

(14) *The 5j=6ú Ritual was published in Volume I, No.3. in 1910.*

(15) *See Chapter I.*

(16) *By qabalah, Hand=Yod=10; Eye=Ayin=70. The total, 80=Pe (Mouth), the Goddess, Uterus, or Utterer of the Word.*

(17) *Crowley's definition of magick. See Magick, p.131.*

(18) *i.e. the True Will.*

(19) *Crowley defined the Great Work in terms of the 'Next Step', implying that the Great Work is not a remote and mysterious thing, unattainable by humans, but the realization of the 'here and now', and attention to immediate reality. Both Spare and Crowley castigated the prevaricators who, scared of the idea of work, look to the 'future life' and the unattainable, instead of seizing reality and living NOW. 'O Babblers, Prattlers, Loquacious Ones, . . . learn first what is work! and the Great Work is not so far beyond' (The Book of Lies, Chapter 52).*

(20) *1886-1945.*

(21) *Hell is the type of the concealed place symbolic of the subconsciousness; the 'infernal' region.*

(22) *See Chapter 10.*

(23) *Vide, infra, p.204.*

(25) *i.e. a solitary sex act.*

(26) *Described in The Book of Pleasure (A.O. Spare), republished 1975.*

(27) See *Letters on Od and Magnetism*; Karl von Reichenbach, London, 1926.

(28) *The Book of Pleasure*, p.56.

(29) See *The Secret Life of Salvador Dali*, New York, 1942.

(30) They were carried over from the Draconian or Typhonian Traditions of pre- dynastic Egypt. See *The Magical Revival*, Chapter 3.

(31) *The Way of Resurgent Atavisms*.

(32) Hecate, the witch or transformer from dark to light, as the tadpole of the waters to the frog of dry land, as the dark and baleful moon of witchcraft to the full bright orb of magical radiance and enchantment exemplified for Spare by 'Witch' Paterson who changed from the hag to the virgin before his eyes. See *Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare*, 1975.

~ Artist and Familiar ~

by Joseph Nechvatal

"The predominant element in the pleasure to be obtained from overthrowing Power, from becoming a master without slaves, and from rectifying the past, is the subjectivity of each individual. The cause of free self-realization must always embrace subjectivity - and thus cease to be a cause. Only from this starting point can we accede to those vertiginous heights where every gratification falls within the grasp of each." ~ *Raoul Vaneigem, The Revolution of Everyday Life*

I

Austin Osman Spare is an artist in whom we cannot be satisfied. Among the many complexities that have transpired in today's society primarily due to the delirious effects of information-communication proliferation, is the changing nature of artistic definition. Recently contemporary thought has been concerned with the poststructuralist deliberation on the notion of the subject; in order to question its traditionally privileged epistemological status. Particularly in respect to the artist, there has been a sustained effort to question the role of the artist/subject as the intending and knowing autonomous creator of art - as its coherent originator. For me, the semi-automatic drawings of A. O. Spare from the 1920s have become emblematic of the rigorous scrutiny of what Jacques Derrida has described of as logocentrism: the once held distinctions between subjectivity and objectivity; between public and private; between fantasy and reality; between the subconscious and the conscious realm.

Today these distinctions are breaking down under the pressure of our speeding and omnipresent computer communications technologies. We are now part of a technologically hallucinogenic culture that functions along the lines of a dream, free from the strictures of time and space; free from

some of our traditional earthly limits which have been broken down by the instantaneous nature of electronic communications. The modernist existential concept of the singular individual has been supplanted by the media-reproduced individual, in a way liberated from what used to be thought of as historical time, vaporously existing in a technologically stored eternity (simulacrum-hyperreality). This quality of phantasmagorical and perverse displacement has formulated a new vision of existence which Baudrillard has called pornographic and what Deleuze & Guattari call schizoid. Teleologically, both of these descriptions apply aptly to the drawings of A.O. Spare in a collection of ways which I will make apparent shortly. For those, and they are numerous, who are not familiar with the work of Spare, let me first provide some rudimentary background on him.

Austin Osman Spare (1888? - 1956) was born the son of a London policeman. Doom loomed large in Fin de Siècle England as Spare came to age; and thus his development into what can now be recognized as a late-decadent, perversely ornamental, graphic dandy in the manner of Felicien Rops and/or Aubrey Beardsley can be contextualized. As a young man he was for a brief period of time a member of the "Silver Star"; Alister Crowley's magical order. Spare's lifelong interest in the theory and practice of sorcery was initiated, he recounted, by his sexual relationship at a very young age with an elderly woman named Paterson. To perform sorcery, for Spare, was a practice meant to ensorcel, to encircle, and to ensnare spirits. It is not quite the same thing as practicing magic, which is the art of casting spells or glamours. For Spare, as well as for Crowley, Tantriquesque sex held the means of access to their magical systems. However it is in Spare's conception of radical and total freedom, consisting in the unrestricted expression of what he held to be the "inherent dream", where we first detect the seditious and chaotic philosophy which drove a prong between himself and Crowley and every other esoteric system but his own brand of chaos magic. In 1905, at the tender age of 19, Spare self-published his first collection of drawings in a book of aphorisms entitled EARTH INFERNO . In it, he lamented the death of the "universal women lying barren on the parapet of

the subconscious's", and he called for a revival of the "primitive women", castigating what he called the "inferno of the normal". EARTH INFERNO disparages the world of humdrum banality in favor of an exotic orb which Spare began to reveal in a spate of awesome drawings somewhat reminiscent of the decadent artists previously mentioned.

In 1907, Spare self-published a second collection of drawings in a publication named THE BOOK OF SATYRS which contained acute insights into the social order of his day. In 1909, Spare began work on a third book of drawings entitled THE BOOK OF PLEASURES on which he worked for four years. In 1914 he held his first one-person exhibition at the Baillie Gallery in London. It included many of the semi-automatic sketches he drew while half asleep or in a self-induced trance. Most of Spare's semi-automatic work from 1910 onward were produced in self-induced trances which he claimed were sometimes controlled by intrusive occult intelligence's working through him. He considered his best accomplishments those which he said were produced through him rather than by him, often by the hand of the revenant spirits of Blake, da Vinci, Holbein, and Durer. Not bad virtual company. Spare quite wildly would declare that his was the automatic hand utilized by these deceased masters. Through this automatic and delirious technique he claimed to be able to draw upon "...the profoundest depths of memory.." and to "...tap into the springs of instinct." It is in this highly extravagant practice of openness and swank self-denial that Spare's relevance to the post structuralist - post internet conceptions of the decentered subject are found with his obvious bearing on the antisocial aspects of collective on-line self-permutation. By participating whole-heartedly in his insertion (and semi-faux disappearance) into the transpersonal symbolic economy of the sign through the assumed equivalence of life and death (in what perhaps can be imagined for us as digitized-stored existence after personal death)

Spare remains truly individual if not altogether alone. Such a radical egoless gesture (at the same time, what a bogus collaboration) he fabricated - creating an imposing egotistical conception of a collective and collected self - is a view which

counters the long-standing Western Metaphysical phallogocentric heroic portrayal of male-selfhood which we all know too well. And yet, doesn't this view of a compiled self, akin to the essence of the death of the subject, offer just a sort of resistance to the structures of logocentric civilization that simulationist theory claimed was impossible? Spare's quite early conception of the illusory coherence of the "I", renders everyone and everything equally phantasmatical (as fabula) akin to the way the electronic-computer-media network can do. In effect his "I" exists only as the passive construct of a system of forces which act through him on the creation of an occult synergistic complex image. This synergistic compounding of the mnemonic threshold encapsulates our current postpostmodern-networked predicament in that the fabulated digital-self today feels sublimated and eclipsed but also freed up by the mammoth computer-media-web. Phantom information bits flow continuously around and through us in a vague endless whirl of unverifiability. This questionable (and perhaps imaginary) data proliferation forms slowly, imperceptibly, bit by bit, into an extensive hypothetical aggregate somewhere deep in the abstruse recesses of our collected digital subconscious, awaiting discharge and reformation.

Perhaps Spare can be understood then as an expression of this eternal verity, recording as he does, vis-a-vis the disinterested trance, this releasing of disembodied fabula. His remarkable magical method suggests a resurgent atavism based on obsession and ecstasy. The subconscious is impregnated by a sustained desire that becomes energized by the supposition that deep memory, the void, responds to longings and can relive original obsessions. Each era has its circumlocutions, its compliances; yet Spare felt it his privilege, even his obligation to sally forth, and to be inordinate in his openness to past representations; but not in any placating or merely plausible way, as often the meager appropriatists and samplers do do. For Spare, only excess may be recompensed. Only opulence which borders on the decadent can offer us this kind of examination of the illusory self, as it arises out of the present day climate of technological and information abundance. Only

ideas of multiple selves can adequately represent artists as social communicators anymore. Only transformative notions of the self can accurately reflect the massive transformational effect of webbed high-technology.

II

It is extremely relevant then to consider Spare's means of becoming courageously individual through this kind of frenzied tranced-grouping of the Superego - a transgression of (and by!) his artistic "Masters". The internet is the collective Superego now. In one of Spare's artistic statements he wrote, "Speed is the criterion of the genuine automatic. In the ecstatic condition of revelation from the sub-memory strata, the mind elevates the sexual or inherited powers and depresses the intellectual qualities. So a new atavistic responsibility is attained by daring to believe - to possess one's own beliefs - without attempting to rationalize spurious ideas from prejudiced and tainted intellectual sources! Art becomes, by this illuminism or ecstatic power, a functional activity expressing in a symbolic language the desire towards joy."

In terms of the exact copy's importance to our electronic era's conception of information as simulation, Spare's claim to meta-individuality in his production seems prophetic. If a substanceless collectively reverberates internally in each of us, if in each of our computers a Superego beyond propensity and will exists and dominates us, than an inner magical detoxification of authority indeed seems futile. We can only act with what authority has passed down to us. But if the search is more simply directed towards not repeating what has been taught, and if what we have learned can be cracked open and drained and transfigured through disinterested trance, then novel panoramas and multiple personalities do have room to emerge. What happens, for example, when our fast paced dumbness and reactionary media codes are problematized by a shift in speed - a slowing down - a halting? Would a new phase in consciousness come when all our previous attachments to speed have been obliterated? What about light? For example, Spare would first exhaust himself before beginning to draw in a

somber candle lit room and in a slight trance with no particular idea in mind, thereby reaching deeper and more remote layers of memory, while all the time continuously abhorring the accepted values and maudlin conceits of his day.

The fact that Spare was an occultist and quite possibly a Satanist should not misdirect our appreciation of his endeavor. The logic of the postmodernism internet and of the entire electronic media society is satiated with a parallel overindulgence and counter fusion. One must go all the way through the information society and emerge from out the dark rim of telepresence. It has been said that the hyper-overproduction of simulated perversion is the only site of contestation left today; the only virtual space from which to launch a theoretical attack on the reification of consciousness. I tend to agree. Spare is a metaphor for a viral attack on the whole system. He is the big bang which sucks the virtual economy into the throbbing digital black-hole which awaits to unite and compress and explode.

The ineffable spell of Spare's semiautomatic drawings, with their multifarious and allusive search for something antithetical to the established norm, and with their morbid deviation and subversion of the concept of individuality and authorship, play well upon today's desire to egregiously delimit signification through art and magic. Their form enmeshes and contravenes, alters and disrupts the mundanity of communications in an inexorable, unrecognizable and chimerical way. Like all modes of decadent artistic practice (i.e. Hellenistic, High Gothic, Mannerist, Rococo, Fin de Siècle, Postmodernism) they oppose a dogmatically imposed paradigm with a hyper-logic. Today it is in the endlessly duplicable digital image where we can probe, much as Spare did, for a private occult expression. With Spare the abolition of time was made possible and the barriers between the deceased and living abolished through trance. The extremity of the internet is non-time, is non-death, is repetition, is trance.

A.O. Spare tended to reject what is given him in the world in favor of magick, metaphysics and mise en scene. In his own

fashion he created a sphere where deep-memory threatens the common order and questions originality and supplied social codes. His artfulness subverts the Modernistic conception of production- with its emphasis on origin, author and finality - but without merely accepting the artificial, the copy, the simulation, the model. His conjunction of these elements lives with the abstraction of our technomediocratic society but deploys the effects of trance to transcend its limitations. He does not allow the reproductive technology to defeat or negate his arts spiritual significance because he has abandoned the Enlightenment baggage of authorizing categories. Spare explicitly eschewed categorization and instead sought to problematize the authority of the category. He sought to compel us to take notice of the various ways artistic conventions have molded our responses and regulated discursive meaning. The possibilities of a complex entangled erotic configuration springing forth from the Id, in opposition to the judging Superego, made up of mercurial symbols and concepts in opposition to recycled representations - provides an interesting insight into the way Spare's art (with its convoluted compositions made up of vague confiscations) directs us towards the conception of the transformative possibilities of techno-magic.

The hope that Austin Spare's art will show us a way to resist computer software reification is a fragile hope indeed in our electronically-homogenized cyberspace. Such a hope may be less than we deserve, but it also may be more than we usually allow ourselves to envision. Computer-networked storage makes up a massive electronic subconscious mind, this epitome, this subtle and infinite compendium of all cultural memories which through the use of autism holds the potential of penetrating reification to the level of automatic instinct where "...the I becomes atmospheric". When belief detaches itself from the accessories of convention, desire stands revealed as the ecstasis of the self, ungoverned by its simulated forms. "For I am all sex. What I am not is moral thought, simulating and separating." (Spare)

To not dismiss A. O. Spare (and his concept of the tranced

collective self which for us can be reconceived as techno-magical thought) as dilettante folly is to become aware of the fact that underlying everything is the web of connections upon which we can exert more manipulative pressure than we are normally led to believe by the computer-media society of the spectacle.

Books by Austin Osman Spare

EARTH INFERO, 1905

A BOOK OF SATYRS, 1907

THE BOOK OF PLEASURES (SELF LOVE):

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ECSTASY, 1913

THE FOCUS OF LIFE: THE MUTTERINGS OF AAOS, 1921

HYPOCRITES, 1927

A BOOK OF AUTOMATIC DRAWINGS, 1925

(Posthumously published by the Catalpa Press, London, 1972)

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Thanks to T.O.P.Y. for making available
information on A.O. Spare

~ Live Like a Tree Walking! ~

by Kzwleh Elagabalus

"Thought is the negation of knowledge.

Be thy busyness with action only.

Purge thyself of belief:

live like a tree walking!

Take no thought of good or evil.

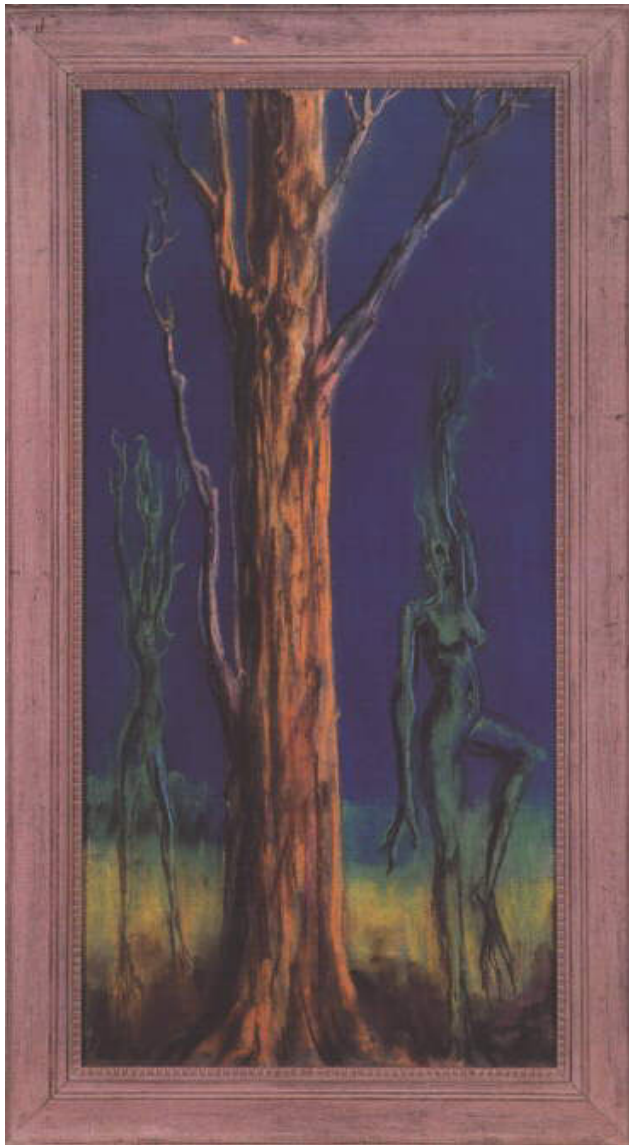
Become self-active causality by Unity of thine, I and Self."

-Austin Osman Spare: Aphorism I; The Focus of Life

In 1890, James George Frazer, an English Sociologist and Anthropologist, published "The Golden Bough", an anthropological investigation on the links between Magic, Folklore, Religion and Science in different cultures from all continents. Although the book had the typical rationalist point of view that most positivist English scientists of the time had, it contained an invaluable description of many magical practices in several different cultures, and it became a must read for every occultist at the beginning of the 20th century. So it's possible to assume that Austin Spare read it.

"The Golden Bough" contains a chapter about the Arboreal Cults which offers several insights about the ideas which predominate in all rites devoted to the trees. In some cultures the predominating conception about Arboreal Spirits is that the Spirit is incorporated in the tree: it animates the tree and dies when the tree dies; although some other cultures consider that the tree is not the body of the Spirit, but its residence and the Spirit can enter and leave the tree according to its own will. After this introduction, Frazer deepens in the Arboreal Cults and concludes that these Spirits have regency on the weather, the rain, the reproduction of the cattle, the fertility of the harvests, human procreation; that is to say: they have regency on procreation. Therefore, the Spirits of the trees have a transcendental role in several rites which are practiced to guarantee the abundance of human, animal or vegetal procreation.

There are several cases in which the Arboreal Spirit is simultaneously symbolized under a vegetal and a human form, one placed next to the other, expressing a continuum between them, as if one was the explanation of the other. In fact, most Arboreal Cultures represent the Spirit of the tree under a human form; and each Spring Solstice a procession headed by a person dressed as a tree (i.e: covered with leaves and branches) is made. This person receives the name of the tree during the ceremony, there's no distinction between the person and the tree. The tree-man or the tree-woman doesn't represent the tree, but they are the tree during the procession, and therefore their Spirit is the Arboreal Spirit, the producer of all fertility and procreation. This "walking tree" generally crosses the village and receives different gifts from its inhabitants and these offerings are related to the entities in which procreation should be manifested.



The Zos Kia Cultus, as it was defined by AOS, is a cult devoted to the body as a whole, or Zos, this Total body includes both the physical and the mental aspects of the body (i.e, the mind itself); on the other hand, it's a cult to the Kia, the name which AOS used arbitrarily [\(1\)](#) to define the "Atmospheric I", that which is *neither one thing - nor another one* (the "Neither-Neither"), or as AOS said: "*the absolute freedom which being free is mighty enough to be reality*". Zos is the active aspect, that which can also be called the Will; Kia is the passive aspect, the imagination where all

dreams and possibilities reside.

Nevertheless the Zos Kia Cultus is not a dual system, but a system based on an extreme monism; Zos and Kia are united by means of the New Sexuality, that is called "New" because it remains always identical to itself, without ever mutating. The New Sexuality is not the immutable law, but the absolute absence of law, the great emptiness. It's not a dual sexuality, but the monism of the great emptiness of that which is neither-neither.

The New Sexuality is the encounter of Zos and Kia, an encounter which is manifested in the Death Posture; the state of supreme union in which all dualism is transcended. The transcendence of all dualism doesn't happen by means of uniting opposites, but by its negation, the emptiness. If we

remember another phrase of AOS: "*There is neither thou nor I nor a third person - loosing this consciousness by unity of I and Self; there would be no limit to consciousness in sexuality. Isolation in ecstasy, the final inducement, is enough -But, procreate thou alone!*" (2), then it's not hard to understand why Austin Spare felt inspired by the Arboreal Cult and the rites of the "man-tree" or the "tree walking".

Returning for a second to Frazer's Golden Bough, we'll remember the three examples that the book offers about how the Cult to the trees is manifested:

- a) an animism in which trees are inhabited by a Spirit whose function is to induce/guarantee procreation.
- b) a reciprocity in which a man placed next to a tree serves so that each one explains reciprocally the other.
- c) like rites of fertility in which a disguised man transforms himself into a tree and his Spirit becomes the Arboreal Spirit, producer of fertility. And thus he walks across the village to scatter procreation.

Of course, these three cases never occur in an isolated way, in all Arboreal Cults the three forms are present in a greater or smaller way. A tree exists in a constant Death Posture, in permanent contact with the Arboreal Spirit, the Kia; it's the perfect symbol for the New Sexuality. It's possible to say that the body of a tree (its trunk, branches, leaves, etc) is Zos and the Arboreal Spirit is Kia: a Spirit that although "inhabits" the tree, also exceeds it -if that was not the case, it wouldn't make sense to invoke it to induce the procreation of anything different from the tree itself. Indeed, the Arboreal Spirit is the "Atmospheric I" of the tree, which is and is not in the tree... or more precisely, is neither within, nor without the tree.

Now it's easier to understand those words from The Focus of Life: "*Live like a tree walking!*" and "*Procreate thou alone!*". Those "men-tree", possessed by the Arboreal Spirit (the "Atmospheric I") walking across the village in order to cast

procreation among all things are a perfect allegory for the Zos
Kia Cultus: the ecstatic satisfaction of the ecstasy which is cast
upon all things as procreation.

Kzwleh Elagabalus - 11/06/00

NOTES:

(1) Some authors consider that "Kia" is not an arbitrary name,
but a transliteration of Qoph Yod Aleph, which equals 111

(2) Aphorism I, The Focus of Life

~ Zos Kia: Unparalleled Focus of Magickial Will ~

By Michael W. Ford

"I have not met tragedy, no, not in this life! Yet, whether I have spewed their doctrines upon the tables of the Law or into the troughs, at least I have not cast away the flesh of dream!"

-ANATHEMA OF ZOS-THE SERMON TO THE HYPOCRITE-

There has been much talk and focus on the English Artist and Sorcerer Austin Osman Spare (1886-1956) and his Zos Kia cultus. Austin, the son of a Police Officer, grew up in South London near Kennington. His interest in art began at a very early age and luckily, was supported by his mother who aided in his creative awakening. As teenager, Spare came into contact with Mrs. Paterson, a witch who claimed descent from a line of Salem Witches. Her powers, among what seemed to be many, were based on hypnotism, divinity and spell working. Mrs. Paterson fascinated young Austin and a close friendship developed which lasted until her time of death. Mrs. Paterson had demonstrated to Austin her power to project thought forms. She, at least on one occasion cast upon the image of a beautiful young woman, which brought forth a significant sexual intensity which would later aid in the influence of his magickial awakenings. It was through this that Mrs. Paterson passed on the "power" and allowed AOS to become properly initiated into the magickial current which would drive him the rest of his earthly life.

Austin's first publication, "Earth Inferno," was privately published in 1905 and "set in stone" what was to be his path. The images of sexuality, the macabre and of death provided an intense aura of mystery and sensuality.

Spare had expanded more into the inspired and powerful web of interlocking his art with magick, and how so were both intertwined! Around the year 1906, AOS had begun signing his

paintings and drawings in what was to become a Sigil, which is described as a *"Representation of Will, delimiting Belief and rendering it transvaluative through Desire"* (Zos Kia An Introductory Essay on the Art and Sorcery of Austin Osman Spare, by Gavin Semple, FLUGUR LIMITED, Oct. 31, 1995) for which much of the latent experience of Belief can be absorbed into an Eros-Thanatos combination of life making elementals. The publication, "A Book of Satyrs" was published and further demonstrated Austin's talent for the hidden and truth - devoured reality beyond the watchful and often passed eye.

Austin Osman Spare signed the Oath of a Probationer in the presence of Aleister Crowley in 1909, assuming the magickial name of YIHOVEAUM, which SPare would later have a slight falling out with Crowley, thus never reaching beyond the Probationer initiation of the A:A. Spare continued to develop and tap into what is to be loosely called the Sabbatic Craft, based on the dreaming aspects of witchcraft and working with extraterrestrial spirits. His development of the Zos Kia system came to an awakening with the publication of the grimoire, "The Book of Pleasure" in 1913 which described Kia as: *"The Absolute freedom which being free is mighty enough to be 'reality' at any time. Therefore is not potential or manifest (except as its instant possibility) by ideas of freedom or 'means,' but by the Ego being free to receive it, by being free of ideas about it and not believing. The less said of it (Kia) the less obscure it is."* Zos was described as the realization of the self as entity, belief in flesh of which *"The body of the whole"* described each method of focus and realization.

Beyond this time, AOS created into day side reality the Alphabet of Desire, a system of point of congress and otherness, a grammar unspeakable yes exceptionally understood in the points of creation and vision. *Inspiration against all costs*. This system would allow a union of Zos and Kia and behold a view and vision of strength and wonder.

Sigils would be designed in a fashion which would describe and encode the actual sigil with the desire of the sorcerer. Once the sigil is designed, one would concentrate it with focusing upon it

with a developed gnosis contributed to what Spare termed the "death posture," of which one loses all connection with Zos through extreme discomfort and possibly a black out. The result would be the absorption of the sigil until it was forgot by the conscious. The subconscious can not operate towards the sigil's goal and purpose until all was forgot by the conscious. This would prove rather difficult for the beginner and only encrypted in Spare's writings of which the acquainted student could understand and learn from this system.

A description of the "death posture" was detailed in "The Book of Pleasure":

"Lying on your back lazily, the body expressing the emotion of yawning, suspiring while conceiving by smiling, that is the idea of the posture. Forgetting time with those things which were essential reflecting their meaninglessness, the moment beyond time and its virtue has happened. Standing on tip-toe, with arms rigid, bound behind by the hands, clasped and straining the utmost, the neck stretched - breathing deeply and spasmodically, till giddy and sensation comes in gusts, give exhaustion and capacity for the former. Gazing at your reflection till it is blurred and you know not the gazer, close your eyes (this usually happens involuntarily) and visualize.

The light (always an X in curious evolutions) that is seen should be held on to, never letting go, till the effort is forgotten. This gives a feeling of immensity (which sees a small form), whose limit you cannot reach. This should be practiced before experiencing and foregoing. The emotion that is felt if the knowledge which tells you why."

Austin Spare also was later adept in the practice of dream control and assuming various god forms thereof. The most significant forms were of Thanatos and a building association with the Black Eagle. It was by this that Spare was present in the Astral Witches Sabbat, a conclave of desired astrals joined

in a blissful union of their belief. Much continues in this latent form beyond this time.

Austin Spare's work with Atavistic resurgence has proved well linked with the Zos Kia cultus. Atavisms are a resurgence of characteristics which have elapsed many generations. It is also possible to connect with pre-human embodiments through such elementals. Atavisms exist in the deepest recesses of the mind and often are characterized as half beast, half man. Such creatures do not emerge spontaneously, however can be invoked through several methods of automatic "shamanism" and focus pathworkings.

An article by **Kenneth Grant** published in *Cavendish's "Man, Myth and Magic"* further delves into examples of AOS and his magickial abilities. "Spare's 'formula of atavistic resurgence' was based on the use of symbolic pictures, which gave a visible form to various atavistic urges and desires deep within the mind. He claimed that he had only to visualize one of these pictures for the atavistic impulse to surge up. An example which he gave was an occasion when he needed to move a heavy load of timber, with no one to help him. Spare closed his eyes for a while and visualized a picture which symbolized a wish for the strength of tigers. Almost immediately he sensed an inner response. He then felt a tremendous upsurge of energy sweep through his body. For a moment he felt like a sapling bent by the onslaught of a mighty wind. With a great effort of will, he steadied himself and directed the force to its proper object. A great calm descended, and he found himself able to carry the load easily.

On another occasion, two people pressed Spare to conjure up an atavistic spirit in visible form. He warned them of the dangers involved, explaining what these creatures exist within the mind at levels not normally in communion with the conscious mind; that it was foolish to evoke them because they embodied the atavistic urges and desires of those who would behold them. But the couple insisted. Spare again used the symbolic picture method. He closed his eyes and waited. It was not long before a green substance like tenuous seaweed began

to invade the room, particularly obscuring the objects it contained. It resembled a coiling mass of vapour, which slowly congealed in a definite shape. It gained more and more substance with each successive moment until the terrified dabblers panicked and begged Spare to banish it. Before it faded, however, they saw a vast face peering out of the mist; the eyes of it were like pools of black and burning oil.

Spare died in 1956, in a basement flat in Brixton, in poverty and obscurity.

The essence of sorcery through this method draws lines of mental danger to those who normally should be of sound and strong mind, for even an obsession weakness, if preyed upon by such elementals, could aid to madness and failure.

The emphasis of Shamanistic magick is present, coinciding with the parallel system of Crowley's Thelema, meaning WILL in Greek. Focus and difference being not of dual aspects. However, always present in its need of balance. Spare's system still requires much attention and focus, not just for the sake of study, but to build a stronger Alphabet of Desire for the aspiring sorcerer who will always be apt to transverse the spheres of both light and shadow, the angelic and the demonic.

Further reading:

The Witches Sabbat (Fulgur Limited)

From Inferno to Zos (Fulgur Limited)

Zos Speaks by Kenneth and Steffi Grant (Fulgur Limited)

Cults of Shadow by Kenneth Grant (Skoob)

Nightside of Eden by Kenneth Grant (Skoob)

Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God by Kenneth Grant (Skoob)

Contact: FULGUR/BCM FULGUR/LONDON/WC1N 3XX/UK

~ An Interview with Gavin Semple ~

February 2001 c.e.

1. Zos Kia was a significant introduction to Zos and his works; how much preparation went into this particular title? The reproduction of the paintings seems quite beautiful, was it difficult getting the collectors to have such images photographed?

Well, the text itself was written fairly quickly, even partly 'automatically'; I'd reached a stage in my research where certain ideas needed to be brought firmly together, for myself initially, and so it really welled-up and out of me. An outburst of years of furious obsession and marvel. It was intended as a brief resumé which would extend the interest of those familiar with AOS, and provide a point of ingress for others to whom he was just a name. Obviously it doesn't go in 'at ground level', but as the basic information about Spare was, and is, available elsewhere I don't think it needed to. Some people have said it's difficult to read because of that, but I think it's a text you can return to and read new things into - at least I do, so I'm still very fond of it. I sometimes wish I'd written it, but the spirits took possession of it somewhere along the line! There are a lot of references which are significant, but aren't stressed - the Platonic influence, and the Tao, or Taliesin for instance; they were all put in for canny readers to spot and follow up if they so desired. They'll be developed in future books. Again, the book is written on three levels - though I didn't realize that at the time - which means there are any number of ways to jump across and between ideas, make different connections; it's quite densely packed in that respect, for all its brevity. There's often a poetic turn of phrase, which was necessary to encompass several ideas in one- and there are some deliberately buried treasures which I expect no-one will ever find., though I'll be delighted if they do! Mainly I wanted to find a way to reconcile the rather austere yet joyful (in the Nietzschean style), mystical philosophy we find in The Book of Pleasure with the image of the

skulduggerous sorcerer which emerges in the works of Kenneth Grant. Sigils for practical ends on the one hand - rather low magic - and on the other the sublime heights of the Shunyavata, the doctrine of the Void, presented in his psychology of the Kia. Spare demonstrates this close interlocking, of course, within the pages of *The Book of Pleasure*, but I thought it would be useful to explore these themes through later periods of his life, and see if they would still dovetail so exquisitely - and of course they do. I wanted to broaden the readers' perspectives, instead of endlessly reiterating the so-called 'witchcraft' aspect, which, as we can now see was something of a masque he assumed in dealings with certain occultists in the 1950s, just as in the 'thirties he had proclaimed himself a Surrealist - with tongue firmly in cheek. Since the publication of *Zos Speaks!* the fallacy of subsuming Spare the magician within some 'tradition' becomes clear; look at the texts - where is the witchcraft, exactly? Even the text of 'Witches' Sabbath' refers explicitly to 'Ehr', which is Li Ehr, otherwise known as Lao Tzu, the Taoist sage. And how would you square Plotinus with any kind of witchery? I hope it all forces a long-overdue rethink in some quarters. I suppose the fact that he also drew African tribesmen means that he spent some time getting initiated in the Congo? In fact Spare was able to create masterful glamours that have protected and preserved his work, and will continue to carry it forward - and that's a very stylish and slick work of sorcery!

The colour illustrations of *Zos-Kia* are beautifully done; this was largely due to the skill of a remarkable photographer named Alex Brattell, who did a marvelous job, and to the repro house that printed them. We have many kind and loyal friends among collectors of Spare's work, and they have all been incredibly generous and supportive in every way. Those pictures have become very popular on the internet, I notice. In a way it's absurd to publish fine limited edition books in the era of the Web; but that's one of the virtues of Fulgur, I think - we are permanently out of step, which gives us a lot of independence in our field. We're alone in it, in other words! Compared with the ethos of the website, which is a thing that doesn't actually exist except as tiny electrical impulses and people's interpretations of them, our books are virtually hand-made. In the same way

we applied artisan values to all aspects of the production - which in the case of Zos-Kia involved me cutting and hand-stamping several hundred talismans to be inserted in the books. Many happy hours we have whiled away tying ribbons on talismans, and Robert and Hayley have personally overseen the production of the books, standing over the printers at work to make sure they don't fuck up. It is important to give all the books a visual and tactile resonance - they should be fondle able and ogle able - stimulating to the body as well as the mind. The colours and typography are chosen for specific reasons. Witches' Sabbath would have smelled of goats but we didn't have time to perfect a method of perfuming them. We also paid close attention to creating a cohesion between pictures and text, which had never been done before in books on Spare; if you're going to mention Spare working in his flat, or Spare in the pub, then let's see him there as well. Death Posture? - here's a drawing of him doing it. It works, and it's been one way of utilizing the fruits of our research, rather than saving it all up for the biography.

2. Any plans on a Fulgur reprint of the essay? I noticed recently it was going for £80 a copy (December, 2000).

Yes, the prices for secondhand copies have suddenly spiraled haven't they? We made about 650 copies and they sold out in a year - six years on the value has increased sevenfold or more. Is it because people want to read it, or just to own it because it's a rare thing?: it's impossible to tell - one hopes the former - but no, we don't plan to reprint it. It encapsulates a particular period, a moment - one of those things that was right at the time, but our intention is always to move on to the next project, and not to retrace our steps.

3. The biography - which is our major and long-term project - covers Spare's entire life of course, but we considered publishing the 1909-1913 section as a comprehensive introduction to our reprint of *The Book of Pleasure*. In the event we decided to concentrate on unpublished material rather than reissuing Spare's own books. That didn't seem to be much of a challenge. It was really a question of weaving together the

strands of information from various sources and drawing useful conclusions - which suggest some intriguing speculations. Those years were pivotal in several ways for AOS; for one, he was in contact, and ultimately in conflict, with Aleister Crowley. As Crowley is one of the yardsticks of modern occultism it's fascinating to watch the interplay between AC's work and Spare's, at the time that the artist was fully realizing his own mythos, his approach to creative magic - immersing himself in his vision. At the same time he was reaching the high point of his material success, his standing in the London art scene - and he got married, so it's really a time when we can see Austin seizing opportunities, and dealing with all sorts of responsibilities and pressures, mundane and other-worldly. It's a balancing counterpoint to the AOS we know from the 1950s - it reveals the contrasts which he lived, gives insight into the man through his response to situations, and illuminates the continuing threads even more clearly. It'll be published in due time.

4. Do you foresee an advancement in the recognition of AOS in the art world? In America, it seems that many just dabble with the concepts and art of Spare, viewing him as an oddity and running head first into Chaos Magick. All of the while missing the point entirely. Do you think that with the quality publishing groups like 93 Publishing in the 70s and Fulgur in the 90s it can combat the ignorance of so many would-be sorcerers in the scene? How many volumes before a weary eye is opened to discover their own doctrine?

There's certainly been a continued advancement of Spare's status if that's to be judged by the prices his work can command. The collection of his friend Frank Letchford is being sold at present (at www.occultartgallery.co.uk), and a number of sketchbook drawings from the 'forties and 'fifties are being sold as separate items; I think that speaks volumes about the appreciation of Spare's art, that these are now valued as pieces in their own right, worthy of being framed and hung, and enjoyed. But I don't believe AOS will ever take a place beside 'the greats' (so-called) in the view of the art world, and I don't think he'd want to - he put a lot of effort into rejecting all that

while he was alive, he carved himself a very unique niche, and that's where he is likely to stay. Though he likes to gatecrash the party now and again. Astrid Bauer reckons he'll end up like Van Gogh, and it may very well be. But the art world runs on money, pure and simple - it's about investment, returns and consumption - and if you look at the rubbish that sells for millions, even by living artists, it becomes very obvious that the whole scheme is another racket; the artworks themselves only exist as tokens in the game of buying and selling, and profiteering. There is a certain amount of hustling amongst dealers in the Spare world, but with the prices reckoned in hundreds or a few thousand at the most it's definitely the cheap end of the market. When your pictures fetch a million, that's when people sit up and take notice. Spare's work carries something very different and very special within it, and it seems to attract certain people, and perhaps even deter others - as if his own personality and intent radiate through the pictures. Lots of people have noticed that - often those who aren't magically-minded at all. Apart from this he's very difficult to categorize; he was always out of step with movements in the art scene - too late for the 'nineties, too early for Surrealism and so on - and art people - both dealers and academics - like to think in shoebox terms; where can an artist be fitted in? Spare doesn't fit, he doesn't want to fit, and that's one of the strengths of his work - its brazen individuality. Dr. William Wallace published his ground-breaking study of Spare's books (cite ref.) which has put a foot in the door of the academic world at least, and there are now one or two scholars who have turned their attention to AOS in their university theses. The more attention from any side, the better, I think. It would be a shame if he was left closetted with occult enthusiasts, to the detriment of his reputation in the broader scheme. Spare's popularity seems to rise and fall in waves in America; the atmosphere of his work - particularly the writings - can often be somehow terribly English, and I don't know how well that transfers to the States. I get the impression that Americans can be very adept at swift assimilation, of objects, of information - naturally, for a society that encourages consumption, competition, free-trade - and that works pretty well when dealing with Crowley - I mean, you can set up a church and get tax-exemption, sell baseball hats, t-shirts and '93 bumper-

stickers! With Spare you really have to go a lot deeper - he hasn't made it that easy for anyone, on any level, even down to his use of syntax and outlandish words - so perhaps that's why a lot of people have just grabbed at the Chaos Magick end of the thing and not tried to penetrate any further. Chaos Magick is virtually extinct in the U.K., but at least the trend helped to put Spare's name forward, albeit on a superficial level. As a movement in modern occultism Chaos did quite a similar job to Punk Rock in Britain - people were beginning to realize that the conventions of their magic were often indefensibly silly, and that there was a whole generation of budding magicians who simply wouldn't accept the old regime; they weren't going to jump through hoops for years learning their prayers before they could do some really exciting experiments in demonology and go a bit mad. It was useful at a certain time for clearing out dead wood - although, tragically but perhaps inevitably, it ended up bogged down in the hierarchy game, just like its predecessors whom it hoped to lampoon. 'Battle ye not with monsters...' It was good for the AOS propaganda campaign, nevertheless, so we should remember it fondly for that at least. Anything that keeps Spare's name forward is to the good, I feel. I did spend some time manouvering around the London magical scene from about 1988 to 1991, and it became clear at a certain point that virtually everyone I met who claimed to be interested in Spare actually knew fuck all and didn't really care - the subject seemed to be another cipher in the game of impressing people and commanding attention. The perspectives were very narrow: 'Spare was a shaman!' was the typical opinion - in spite of the fact that the shaman is a professional magician who is expected to avoid innovation in his craft, with a specialized role, a servant of the community; while Spare deliberately sought out social contexts in which he could remain a misfit, an outlaw, did his best to flout convention at every turn, and continually introduced innovations into his art. He didn't have a drum either. Moreover, none of the frontline Chaos magicians had any real interest in art - with one honourable exception, Chrys Livings, who is a very talented illustrator - and this absence of aesthetic sensibility seemed to me to run counter to the whole of Spare's effort. That was a bit of a disappointment. So part of our aim with Fulgur was, I confess, to spring AOS from the Chaos

trap, after it had become revealed as such, and put the whole thing on a new footing - to give more than another dull take on 'how to do sigils' mixed with tedious in-jokes and ill-digested particle physics, which was all that was on offer at that time. I think that's been accomplished. My feeling on encountering Spare's work in 1983 was that here was someone who was prepared to cut through all the nonsense in magic and say 'Here's how I do it - how are you going to do it?'; I thought he made it blindingly obvious that he was forging a totally personal path to realization, to vision and imagination, and that he expected the rest of us to do the same. But my influences had mostly been artists, writers, musicians out of the subculture - from the Decadents onwards - not magicians at all, so perhaps I had a fresher eye when I came to study magic. And it was probably sheer luck that AOS beckoned to me at that time - or maybe not. I reckon any dedicated magician will gradually formulate their own system once they've experimented with a range of methods, and most do - but AOS, certainly with his Book of Pleasure thesis, tends to favour the short path of antinomianism - challenge everything, kick over the traces, and see what happens and what is left when you've demolished the idols - in other words, confront all your conditioning head-on and ask 'How do I believe what I believe?' - look from angles which allow you to observe the process of your believing, instead of just exchanging one set of beliefs for another. So in a way his motivation is very much in the tradition of the early Gnostics - particularly the Cainites and their ilk - and therefore his approach lies much closer to the early traditions of Western magic, really quite divorced from the type of ceremonial psychodramatics that had developed by the beginning of the twentieth century, and the kind that's familiar to us after the 1960 and 70s revival. But there are cycles and parallels, inasmuch as Spare took the step on from Golden Dawn-style magic that others would later take when that old material became freely available again in the 1970s. 'How many volumes before a weary eye is opened?' you ask; well, I think you either get the point or you don't - it's probably always been that way - and it's the same when dealing with any creative individual. You can get hung up on someone's painting technique, or a writing style, and be oblivious to the motivation behind it, and the intention and outcome of that particular process. Now the

fashion for 'occult artists' is to embellish their pictures with distinctly Sparesque sigils; it's probably just a phase, but let's be honest, what value would Surrealism have if they'd all painted soggy watches? Who ever produced anything of lasting interest from cut-ups apart from Burroughs? Spare's work opens the doors to a vast range of possibilities which people can capitalize on, or they can let themselves get stuck in another form of idolatry, another set of conditionings - the choice is up to the individual. Does that partly answer your question?

5. How did Zos Speaks! manage to sell? Is this edition still available? I am sure the price of distribution must have been enormous; will anything as extensive be issued again by Fulgur?

ZoS Speaks! is still available, though it is selling very quickly. It was quite a step for us to do the book, as it's very large and copiously illustrated; quite a change from printing small editions of short books - almost stepping over into mainstream publishing territory, in fact. It is, and will remain, the authoritative book on AOS, so we feel privileged to have been given that opportunity - although, who else could have done it? Robert Ansell and Hayley Tong made an incredible job of the production, but I do not envisage that we will want to publish anything as ambitious again. Robert's shrewd financial sensibilities made it possible - even with the cost of distribution and so on, it's an astonishingly low-priced book, considering its format and content. If you don't know anything about AOS the book will tell you a lot; if you already know a lot, you'll be amazed all over again. I like to look at the pictures and dribble.

6. How would you define Zos Kia Cultus, and what do you see as its future and purpose?

It's a vexed question: on the one hand there are people who nurture the belief that 'ZKC' is a 'thing-in-itself' - some club or gang that you can be on nodding terms with, or even join and belong to. That's the t-shirt mentality at work - this urge to label and compartmentalize one's self. It can work for some people as a motivation for action, but ultimately it's a dead end. On the other there's the attitude that it's a convenient

nominalization, coined by Kenneth Grant in the 1950s, for the current of thought - or the impulse, wherever it comes from - that impelled Spare's work and, quite literally, exudes from it. I prefer that one, it allows for change and a continual development of the actual vehicle of the impulse - that is, the way each person receives it and passes it on. There were a lot of Dada and Surrealist artists, and a whole gang of 'Beat' writers, but some of them came to epitomize these terms and overshadowed the others. Perhaps 'Zos Kia Cultus' relates to Spare in the same way, except that there was only one of him to begin with! It's a name to conjure with though, isn't it? - and perhaps that is why Grant thought it up - he has a knack for creating glammers, weaving mystique for specific ends. His interpretation of the term has changed over the years, or at least he has been conscientious in presenting it from different perspectives - changing the mask, so to speak, just when people have got used to the last one. Andrew Chumbley and one or two others have taken up the idea that ZKC is, or should be, an elite coterie of artist-occultists, which is an interesting proposition - though I would suggest that, for an artist, such self-labelling undercuts the strident individualism that is crucial to the whole conception. These notions usually come from people who like to be in groups, and preferably in charge of them. It's not to my taste. And anyway, why restrict it to the visual arts? Dance, drama, poetry, music - the whole gamut of creativity - can be exploited as paths to knowledge and vision, the realization of will and imagination which is the essence of magic. As regards music, Coil have begun to use 'ZKC' as an explicit frame of reference, even projecting the words onscreen during their live performances - but then their kinship with Spare's creative methods, the fact that they share an instinct with him, has been implicit in their work from the start. They have exploited, in a very creative way, particular regions of consciousness which were obviously familiar to AOS - and that's exactly what he was urging people to do, from *The Book of Pleasure* right through to his *Logomachy* and other texts of the 1950s. Exploring, experimenting, drawing conclusions - and presenting them in the context of art. And there's a lot of bizarre humour in their work, which he no doubt appreciates. I'd see them as a prime exemplar of ZKC manifesting - though in reality there is a whole network of subcultural influences culminating in their work. Of

course, there are a number of others working along similar lines, but not so well-known. All power to them. (John Balance of Coil gave his views on the subject in Fortean Times ? www.forteantimes.com/artic/coil/coil.html) One would hope that if ZKC is anything, it exists in that moment of contact between Spare's work and the individual's mind, open to its subversive influence; and then in the fruit of that communion, an inspiration and a creative response. The moment remains - the transmission continues. After all, the world has been made such a bloody miserable place to live that the only way to go is into the imagination, and through that into - somewhere else. I'm probably paraphrasing Spare in saying that, but it's the way I feel about the future and purpose of anything - not just Zos Kia Cultus.

Spare as Tantrika

From: "Tzimon Yliaster" samadhi@xiqua.com

To: z-cluster@onelist.com

Date: Sun, 1 Nov 1998 11:38:40 -0800

>From: MarkWells@webtv.net (Stephen Cass)

>

>Tzi...I, for one, would like to hear your thoughts on

>Spare-as-Tantrika"!!! :-)

The most clear reflection of this is in some of his word choices... using "kia" for eye (in Sanskrit, the word's "khya"), "ikkha" for will (in Sanskrit, Iccha), etc. These terms are used in Tantra quite frequently... especially "khya", which is an unusual, almost fundamentally Tantric, use of the word.

Some of his workings also bring to mind Tantric works... such as having sex with 18 prostitutes in a single night which, in turn, unleashed a great burst of creativity. This is very commensurate with Tantric practice in general (using sexual energy to boost kundalini-shakti up the susumna), and in fact it's very nearly impossible to have sex 18 times in a single night if one ejaculates each, or even most, times (talk about *sore*, eh? :)

My suspicion, though it's never explicitly stated, is that he re-channeled the stored semen (bija or rasa in Tantra) into a "higher energy"... in this case, artistic creativity. Again, quite in keeping with Tantric practice generally.

Spare's great attraction to ugly, even deformed, women in the course of his work also reflects on Tantric involvement; in most forms of Tantra, one unites specifically with things that disgust one in order to overcome the limitations that such disgust imposes upon them. This is especially notable amongst Tantric groups like the Ahoras and Kapilikas, who were known for mutilating themselves and for dining on such delicacies as rotting human corpses and feces. In fact, this is a *major* element of the practice of such groups.

Spare makes reference to Kia as "the supreme bliss" in his work... considering that he was almost completely visually oriented, the eye was, to him, exactly that. And he does equate, in fact, Kia with the eye in his famous formula of "uniting the hand (ikkha/iccha) with the eye (kia/khia)". Look, especially, at "A Creed of Despair" in Spare's "Earth Inferno":

"My ambition is DEAD,

Died premature and with it the love of care,
Also the Jewel in the Lotus.
The morrow holds nought for me
Save Sin and Death.
I am even exempt from my own created PLEASURES ---
The barrenness of this life but remains.
Yet in despair we begin to see true light. AMEN.
In weakness we can become strong.

Revere the Kiâ and Your Mind will become TRANQUIL."

This piece could have been lifted DIRECTLY from any number of Tantric doctrines. Especially, note the peculiar way in which "kia" is spelled here... in exactly the way that translators at the time (and to this day) transliterate Sanskrit words, to indicate that the final "a" is pronounced.

And "the jewel in the lotus"... again, a Tantric (albeit Buddhist tantric) formula, which means "Om". The inclusion of "om" in every mantra is not a specifically Tantric theme; indeed, many Tantrics rebelled against it as being part of the very Brahminic tradition which Tantric was formulated *against*. And, also, Tantra advises withdrawal from the perceived obligations of this world and the eschewing of discursive thought revolving around pain and pleasure.

So, in reducing this formula, we get:

"I give up my drive for worldly things,
Though young, I care no longer for obligations of this world,
And I rebuke religion and priests.
Tomorrow is nothing
And the desire for it is corruption.
I no longer have pleasures, nor pains.
My body is but a shell, empty of meaning.
By renunciation, I perceive my truth... my vision of god.
By weakening my body (Spare was certainly an ascetic!), I strengthen my spirit.

Revere sight for sight's sake, without discrimination (Kiâ is not a discriminative function, and the eye is not a discriminative organ) and you will have peace."

All of this is quite in keeping with Tantric thought and practice!

Now, if you have Earth Inferno, take a look at the accompanying illustration entitled "The Despair"

Note the strange position of the woman in black, her arms crossed behind her back? The woman stretched out upon the altar? The little masked man squatting next to her? And note one more thing...

Spare was a *master* draughtsman, and yet there appears to be an error in the positioning of the figures... the woman in black's legs vanish through the floor or altar upon which the sacrifice is stretched.

The woman in black is a Tantric goddess... there is even, if you look closely, a snake crawling up her chest from between her cleavage. You can just see it's head peeking above the top of her low-cut dress, just between her breasts. That snake is Kundalini, and identifies the woman with Shakti herself. Note, too, that she stands **to the left** of the figure that (I think) is supposed to be Spare himself... that's *absolutely* typical Tantric iconography. Note, further, that the Woman in Black appears to need a shave!!!! And, oddly enough, so does the figure of Spare. In other words, they participate in one being... the woman is herself a part of Spare in a way... being his *own* kundalini-shakti. The use of *three* candles is significant in that one name by which this very goddess is known is Tripura... literally "three cities", the three cities being the three gunas (attributes) that, according to Tantric thought, make up all creation... *tamas* (darkness/matter), *rajas* (fire/passion) and *Sattva* (brilliant/divinity).

The Tantric elements in just this one illustration (drawn in *1905*) indicate strongly a Tantric connection... and considering Spare's magickal tutor was an old woman (I think, perhaps, a Yogini herself, though she's left no written record), I think that the Tantric element may have been the origin of *much* of Spare's work, both magically and artistically.

However, remember that secrecy is considered by most Tantric practitioners to be the very essence of Tantra... he's not going to come out and *tell* you that he's based much of his work on Tantra. However, I think Kenneth Grant knows about this connection. There are many other instances and examples of this tie-in as well, and I've even been offered anecdotal evidence in the past that Spare, in fact, actively studied Tantra at a later point in his life. But my fingers are getting tired...

The Perpetual Edge
The Later Years of Austin Osman Spare
by Jaq D. Hawkins

Note: It is presumed that readers of this essay will have some previous knowledge of the history of A. O. Spare. With that in mind, I will begin with a sparse outline of this history for the sake of context.

Austin Osman Spare was a well-known artist and magician of great talent. He was born the son of a London policeman on the last day of 1886, and by the age of 19 had made a name for himself as an artist in the West End of London. His first published work, 'Earth Inferno', was hailed as a collection of unusual graphic drawings. However, even in this early work, his commentaries showed a deep spiritual interest and a viewpoint of his fellow man that was uncommon to the average artist or collector. There are several comments in *Earth Inferno* depicting an attitude toward mainstream society that comes from a perspective outside of this mainstream. One such reads: "The perpetual youth of man arises, Draws aside the curtain-faith (a token of humanity's LIMITED knowledge), and exposes the inferno of THE NORMAL."

The Book Of Pleasure, published in 1913, is considered his most important magical work. Spare's art and magic were always intertwined, depicting varied aspects of himself. His published works were illustrated by his unique drawing style, whether they were meant as books on magic or as art collections.

In the mid 1920's, Spare had become disillusioned with the values of the day, especially among the self-absorbed smart set with whom his artistic successes had him dealing. In 1927 he published *The Anathema of Zos: A Sermon to the Hypocrites*. With this work Spare left his life of success behind. In his own words: "I turned my back on fame and continued unmolested my quests into the unknown realms, my natural stoicism supporting me in times of want."

The work contains only one drawing, a self-portrait in profile with a hand raised in the traditional gesture of excommunication. The text shows his disillusion with the values and attitudes of the people to whom it is addressed. After the publication of this work, he was shunned by former friends and fellow artists. There were a few more art exhibitions, but he did not publish any more books. He spent the remainder of his life living in obscurity, his companions being the lower class residents of the London pavements, including the prostitutes and other seedy characters that he used for models in those days. He occupied a run down basement apartment, making his living by selling his drawings for trifling sums of money in the local pub.

One may wonder why a man with the natural resource of Spare's obvious talent, as well as his past reputation as an artist, would 'settle' for such a life style when he may have been able to re-establish his artistic fame and fortune over time. Spare spent these years concentrating more on his magical philosophy and observing a different part of society than that from which he had turned away.

Spare was not blind to the faults of the lower classes either, but money did not hold much importance for him. He drew the people that he happened to see, and traded his talent for the price of a meal or a drink quite often. He squandered what little money he had on drink and women, finding value in

pleasures rather than material things.

Even Spare's closest friends can only speculate as to his motivations. To understand why a man would choose to live less well than he might, it is necessary to see the situation from his point of view. This, I think, requires the experience of living in a variety of circumstances and observing the effect of these circumstances on the people within the societies they create. It is the purpose of this essay to try to explain this point of view, by someone who has had a similar variety of inter-societal experiences.

As already stated, Spare began life in working class circumstances. He was the middle of five children and money was scarce for the family. Art school was a hardship for the family, and it is likely that Spare was able to appreciate the sacrifices that his family would have to have made to provide tuition and materials. With his artistic successes, Spare was drawn into a different part of society. Art patrons of the day were probably as varied as they are today, with the exception that the financial resources required to partake of this sort of diversion in those days were further removed from the middle classes than what is required today. This was before the days that a middle-class wage earner could produce a major credit card to invest in a promising work of art. In those days, an art collector was likely to be described as "rich and spoiled", at least by those less fortunate. In 1927, with the publication of 'Anathema Of Zos', a lot of built up frustration was released. The fair weather friendships and false smiles which are all too common among the privileged classes left less than a favorable impression on Spare. It is plain to see in all of his writings that Spare had an uncanny ability to see through to the real motivations of people. He was not fooled by the glamour and games of these people. He may have enjoyed the fame and recognition for a time, but in the long run was unable to stomach the lies and false promises.

Among the layabouts, the prostitutes and the other 'downtrodden', Spare found a sector of the population who did not follow the robotic life style into which the 'system' shuffles the average citizen. These were people who could get up in the morning and have no idea what they were going to do today, certainly not what they did yesterday. Each day holds a new adventure for these people of the streets. They can be found in any major city, any period of time. I am not referring to the homeless of today or the mentally ill people who have become recently publicized in the media. I am referring to people who, with the independence of their own spirit, choose not to 'take their place' in society. They choose to live in lesser financial circumstances than they might because in exchange they have freedom. There are no bills to pay beyond the rent, if that. They live by various means. Some trade some talent such as street performers; some sell some part of themselves, such as prostitutes; some simply beg on the streets. This can be more profitable than most people realize.

Life on the streets, surviving from one moment to the next, provides the right impetus for what Ray Sherwin in his book 'Theatre Of Magick' refers to as "living on the edge". This phrase has been used by many, but how many people who use it have ever truly experienced it? Sherwin uses situations of physical danger as examples in his book, but all that is required for the emotional state that we are discussing is a certain awareness that most people only experience in these times of danger. People of the streets live in this emotional state most of the time. Some of them are living slightly outside of the law, others are simply aware of the vulnerability that they face every day. Few of them would change their circumstances.

In *The Book Of Pleasure*, Spare tells us not to indulge in idle mummery and imitation, “You are alive!” He is referring to ritual, but he may just as well be talking about how the average person lives his or her life. We do what is expected, and despite some small rebellious behaviour on occasion we imitate what we are taught is the norm. Not so the street people. Spare said, “If you want the truth, ask a cockney!”

In this sector of society, Spare found the obscurity necessary to spend his time within his own mystical state, without the distractions of material acquisition or any reason to please society. Spare had his art and his spells to sell. He would not accept large amounts for either, to the confusion of many. He remained in simple circumstances for the remainder of his life. If he sometimes longed for the comforts of prosperity as he became older, still, he took no action to change his life. Thirty years is a long time. He was not idle; he left papers behind on his magical philosophies, and many drawings. He died in May of 1956, several months before I was born, but I am inclined to believe that he died a satisfied man.

References:

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Theatre Of Magick by Ray Sherwin

Excess Spare compiled by TOPY (a collection of articles by various authors by or about A. O. Spare)