

Twilights

By Ida Cecilie Meldgaard Fisker

The Illustrations in my thesis are based on my own drawings as well as an archive of illuminated esoteric and alchemical manuscripts. All these have been fed into an AI, where they have been layered and combined.

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Thesis of Ida Cecilie Meldgaard Fisker. Graduate of The Large Glass Department at The Gerrit Rietveld Academie 2024.



Twilights

The in between
The all around

Thank you to my Dad, Morten Fisker, for his unwavering patience with my long drafts and curly ideas.

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(It's teachers, technical staff, and students)
at The Gerrit Rietveld Academie.

Think of this text as a person. Let Text take you by the hand and bring you to a white sandy beach.

The receding water has left a long branch, salty and darkened. Text picks up the branch and proceeds to draw a form in the wet, cold sand. A pentagram, the five-pointed star within a circle.

“You recognise it?”

“Earth, water, air, fire, spirit” you say, as you trace the lines drawn in the sand. “Each point of the star has an element to itself, each line that moves from one to the other is a path of power, an attempt to transmute elements together that do not belong.”

“No” Text says “You draw the pentagram when you wish to change something, when you hunger for a transformation to take place.”

“Sometimes, yes” you mumble. You also draw it to protect and bless, but Text knows all this. It is full of your hopes and ideas and your anger.

“Well,” says Text “the power of transformation or transmutation lies within the middle” pointing to the empty space. As if it reads your mind. “It is not empty, this place that depends on all the categories and lines, but ultimately exists beyond them. This is the place that holds all categories and does not require them to be in categories to exist. This is where I came from, and where I live.”

“But you’re a text,” you say a bit confused.

“I am now because that’s what I needed to be, but I am also emotions, ideas, hopes and a hand someone can hold whilst they try to understand what happens inside. You live in a world of categories, so when I am part of your world, I am a text, but if you were to come with me into the middle of the pentagram, you would find that all the edges and borders blur and we become part of each other again, equal in form and intent.”

“But for now, you’re a text” you say, and close the pages. The sky is starting to leak gentle water, and you must go home, lest your book dissolve into moist wood and black running charcoal.

Chapter 1. Earth

Earth - Growth - Nourishment - Consumption.



The earth is where we live, it is a planet, it is our home.

The earth is also what we live off. We eat from its soil and burn its oil. The earth is what we came from. We are made up of particles from other people, coal, plastic and plants. When we die these particles are set free to join other entities.

The weight of the planet earth never changes. It remains the same. Everything on it stays on it. Every molecule has already existed and will continue to do so, binding in new ways to form new materials. And produce new lives. All this life made from star particles.

And everything has potential to create humans, by molecular transmission through intake or permeation of the skin.

A human is buried under a tree. Parts of the human decompose and nourish the soil and become part of the tree. The tree provides firewood for humans heating up food they consume. Small particles that once were part of the dead are now part of the living.

Or take something more ephemeral like a feeling, these circulate amongst animals and humans and are passed down through generations. They have a physical impact on our body. Electrical impulses traveling our nervous

system whilst pregnant have an impact on how the nervous system of the child gets wired.

Earth is our parent, sibling and child. If we looked at nature as our sibling or parent, as something we are inherently part of, we would not treat it with such neglect.

Many people express a longing for a stronger bond with nature, evident in pop culture and online quotes. The idea of working the land romantically appeals to many. A quote, from an unknown source, captures this sentiment:

“Our life was tiring for the body, but it was comfortable for the soul. Your life today is comfortable for the body but tiring for the soul.”

Interestingly, this quote reflects a generational yearning. It's noteworthy that algorithms consistently share it, though ironically on platforms contributing to the issue it describes. The quote is accompanied by romanticized paintings, depicting middle-class life in a feudal state with farmers, water deities, and idyllic European landscapes.

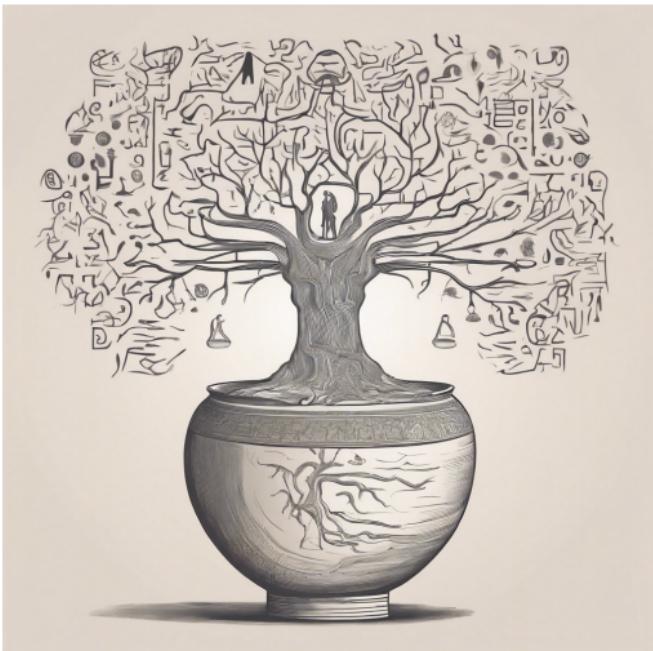
Intention setting is an age-old practice under many names. One name is prayer, another is wishful thinking. But by naming what we want, our minds build roads for unconscious thoughts. Wishful thinking is likely to change our habits. When we continuously tell ourselves something, the synapse connection between our neurones become stronger and more likely to repeat itself.

So here is a little intention setting: I want to live in nature. I want to plant things, see them grow and harvest them. I want to build my own fires. I want my attention to be focused or idle away at my leisure, not subjugated to the endless clutter of countless screens.

But since screens are unlikely to go anywhere, I look to Solarpunk—an interdisciplinary movement that blends art, left-wing politics, and transhumanist ideas. It envisions a future where technology and nature coexist harmoniously, challenging the damaging consequences of capitalism and techno-feudalism, where economic growth determines a nations value and success.

A Solar punk world where humanity transcends the pervasive influence of profit-driven anxieties and animosity. Envision a reality where the birth of each child is joined by the planting and growing of a home. A society that values emotional education and self-determination. No longer determined by the dualistic structures in place to separate human and nature.

I put forth my hand
outstretched to all creation
I ask to be received



From this chapter on earth, this point of the pentagram Text gives you the power to see yourself and others as part of the earth. You can refuse the dualistic view of human and nature and shun the idea of economic growth as being the only worthwhile measure of success. Consider the power of your engagement especially online, who is benefiting from your attention and how is it separating you from others. Go out into the world, touch the trees, talk to the people.

Chapter 2. Air

Air- Breath- Speech



Air, that invisible go between, ever transmuted ever translucent, ever present.

It carries our words through the world, it gives us life.
It takes life as it erodes our cells over time, we split into particles and are carried by it.

Language is materially our breath, moulded and shaped by muscular contraction from inside us. Our breath, the very essence of life, shapes our words and articulates our thoughts. Even when words are absent, breathing remains a constant part of our existence.

Numerous spiritual traditions emphasize the significance of breath awareness, recognizing its pivotal role in harmony. It is fascinating how these practices, rooted in the essence of breath, influence diverse art forms like installation art. The immersive experience weaves together these elemental components evoking a profound sense of calm and introspection.

Consider Jeppe Hein's installation "The Only Way Out Is In" (2018, Copenhagen) Upon entering, one confronts pitch darkness. Then a blazing fire like a dragon's flame pounds towards a half sphere crafted from beaten copper, towering above the observer.

The warmth, the synchronized five-second breath forms an integral part of the experience, setting the tempo for the rest of the piece.

The installation's foundation is our breath thus mirroring the reality of life. This constant time- keeper is foundational to our categorisation of time, and also our selfhood as it shapes our speech.

"Language is a virus from outer space"

- William s Burroughs

The beautiful strangeness of language. Its ability to create images and empathy. Consider the idea that the human body functions as a host to this virus that has a life of its own. A virus that is spread through contact, is out of our control. We are the hosts of this virus, language. It carries beauty, intention and personality. We use it to define our selfhood and to care for others.

A great analogy for the magical properties of language is part of the world building in Rebecca F. Kuang's book Babel: or, The necessity of violence : an arcane history of the Oxford Translators' Revolution

In her fictional universe we are at the dawn of the British empire with technological development depending on silver bars engraved with translations. These translations have to be made from words that do not have a direct translation but are close enough in essence to still be of similar meaning. The “in-between untranslatable meaning” of these two words or expressions engraved on silver blocks produces a physical effect on the world, Magic. The beautiful catch is that as the British empire expands, and English becomes more widespread and also takes in words from other languages the muddier and less potent the difference in translation becomes and therefore the magic weakens.

We are also captives of language. Language has a tendency to draw seemingly straight lines.

The lines drawn by language wiggle like worms and draws on our previous knowledge, biases and expectations.

The nature of language is thus that it can be veiled like a sword to cut down enemies. It can be a needle patching broken skin. Left unchecked it can be an orchid, intriguing, but deadly to certain trees. The language bores into our brains and creates pathways that effect our behaviour and thoughts.

But just like their words hold power, so does ours, yours and mine.

As a prayer or incantation, speech is the most accessible of creative tools.

It can be spoken anywhere. Speaking an incantation or a prayer has weight and commitment. The words flow out of you and connect to everything else around you. It is no longer your private thought. It is part of the world.

You that flows

You that brings

Let all I say be worth to carry

Air you are

Breath you give



From this chapter on air, this point of the pentagram Texts gives you the awareness of the power of speech. The alienation or unification it can cause. Text reminds you that even when left unattended it still has power. And your breath matters, so use it to grow your sensitivity and empathy.

Chapter 3. Fire

Fire- Illumination



Fire has always been symbolic of transformation. It is the first tool an alchemist uses to melt down a metal. It is the conductor of heat that allows us to shape glass into vessels. Fire is the great destroyer, a potent symbol of our generation's anxiety of climate catastrophes.

Fire is also the illuminator, the element that through its power of changing other elements creates light not just physically but also spiritually.

"Is it the gods who set this fire in our hearts, or do we each make our fierce desire into a god?"

Ursula K. Le Guin, Lavinia

This quote mirrors a principle within the Kybalion (an occult work of significance within neo spiritualism) encapsulating its second law: 'as above, so below.' This foundational doctrine finds its resonance across various esoteric and religious texts, portraying the belief that the universe mirrors the omnipotent mind, and vice versa. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of all existence, wherein the entity encompasses both the world and itself.

Many prominent figures in occult scholarship and practice share a common goal: to unveil hidden truths and reshape the human mind and society. While some occultists have made significant changes in societal structures through their political work, such as members of the Theosophical Society like Annie Besant, Gandhi, and Hernández Martínez, others have influenced art history. Figures like Georgiana Houghton and Hilma af Klint were once marginalized but are now acknowledged, though often overshadowed by their male counterparts, receiving less recognition in both art and occult history. Moreover, even if one aims to create a new world order or a strong movement, this cannot be achieved without scrutinizing the biases and challenges present in the current society. This holds true for individuals in the past as well as those in the present.

In the exploration of witchcraft and Western spiritualism, there is a concept that continuously shows up: The left-hand path and The right-hand path and The left hand path is prominent in modern spirituality, representing a road to self dieification and a striving for power through spirit and total freedom. Its counterpart, the right-hand path, embodies a moralistic approach to magik, often associated with serving a higher deity or moral code.

While contemporary practitioners often emphasize the shared objectives of the left-hand and right-hand paths, the former tends to be popularly associated with things such as rebellion and sexual freedom, as seen in some of the hedonistic leaning practices within satanism and chaos magik. These aspects often attract individuals seeking a non-oppressive spiritual route. For example, Satanism and chaos magik are often misunderstood and practiced in a way that promotes hyper individualised ethics and the commodification of magik, which erodes any actual freedom one might have been able to gain. When practiced without the examination of injustice and the responsibility that comes with self-determination it (magik and occultism) often leads to deriving freedom from external perceptions of personal identity and ego.

This alignment with consumer culture and individualism creates a facade of freedom based on others' perceptions. Conditional freedom packaged as achievable through various guides or lifestyle choices. This form of freedom remains exclusive to a select group, undermining its true essence.

There exists a prevalent misconception of spiritual freedom coexisting within oppressive societal frameworks. It's crucial to recognize that genuine spiritual liberation cannot thrive under systemic oppression.

Critical imagination is a crucial tool in the development of art as a way to engage with and confront with injustice.

*“Light is the left hand of darkness
and darkness the right hand of light.
Two are one, life and death, lying
together like lovers in kemmer,
like hands joined together,
like the end and the way.”*

- Ursula K. Le Guin, The Left Hand of Darkness

The left hand of darkness offers valuable tools to comprehend the dynamics inherent in our heteronormative society, we are presented with an alternate world where our notions of sex are seen as strange and absurd. I find that Ursula K. Le Guins writings hold the key to more empathy. By reframing our approach from a binary to a polar viewpoint, we progress beyond the confines of oppressive systemic perspectives, and can access understanding on a boarder spectrum.

Polarity, unlike binary frameworks, accommodates the existence of intermediate and transformative states more effectively. This framework allows for a richer comprehension of diverse identities and experiences, fostering inclusivity and understanding within societal discourse.

Burn bright

Burn long~ embers glow

Sparks they fall

Show me the lives not reached

Where truths dwell



From this chapter on fire, this point of the pentagram Text gives you the ability to see the transformative stages as holding the greatest value. Anyone or anything you encounter that you cannot fit in your world or fully comprehend will be like a flame, illuminating existence even further.

Chapter 4. Water

Water- immersion- healing



Viewed from space, Earth is blue. Primarily of water. It surrounds us, combines us and confines us. It is part of the air we breathe. It lies saturated beneath our feet. It pounds like a colossal heartbeat on our shores.

Water is a prerequisite for all life on earth: from the driest desert to the lushest rainforest, from the smallest reptile to the largest mammals. No one can live without it. Some 60-70 percent of what is you and me is water.

Since the Great Bombardment, the amount of water on Earth has not changed significantly. However, the composition of the water is changing. Today, approximately 60 percent of the world's fresh water is stored in the ice in Antarctica alone. If all this ice melted at once, the world's oceans would rise by 60 meters, less salty but still undrinkable.

When searching for life on other planets or for new hospitable homes for our species, scientists are looking for water. Author and philosopher Umberto Eco has already found it.

“And on the Moon there is surely water...And up there, if water exists, and air, then so does life.”

Umberto Eco, The Island of the Day Before, xxx

Within Umberto Eco's literary works, the persistent theme of divergent realities and the potency of the human imagination remains ever-present. This is what art offers, what art can do.

Consider then our museums and institutes, fundamental parts of our culture, constructed and adorned with the primary aim of imparting societal norms and etiquettes. As visitors, our observations are not solitary; we're under the watchful eyes of guards, curators and other visitors, influencing how we respond and behave. No nose-picking, no loud voices. This emphasis on decorum diminishes the space for immersion; there's little allowance for raw emotion—no sobbing or laughter—and an aversion to letting the outside world filter in through open windows.

This is not what art wants, what art could be.

In “The lesser key of Solomon”, Alister Crowley (known as the father of modern satanism and a prominent figure in the Theosophic movement and modern Chaos magik) dwells with the activation of the five senses essential in ritual magik. His depiction essentially portrays an intriguing installation, setting aside the notion of evoking a spirit by spelling out its name with scents associated with Qabalah.

What remains is a method to convey a message or ignite an individual's inner will, whether through magik or, why not, an impactful installation piece. Such a piece holds an intention, a desire to communicate something profound to the experiencer—be it an emotion, a point of view or a fusion of both—achieved through sensory stimulation. A meticulously crafted artwork possesses the potential for magik (in a literal sense, as it holds the power to enact change).

Certain installations intentionally incorporate elements reminiscent of rituals. They might include repetitive motions, rhythmic sounds, or symbolic gestures that echo ceremonial practices. Visitors may find themselves engaging in actions that mirror ritualistic behaviour—walking in specific patterns, touching designated objects, or following a prescribed sequence of interactions, creating a sense of ritual enactment. Immersion into the inner landscape of the art, becoming a part of it ...

Artist Candice Lin's expansive installations serve as a means to deconstruct the linear narrative of colonial and imperial history.

Take her work “System of a stain” from 2016:

As you enter the room, a moist atmosphere closes around you. The space presents an eclectic mix of items, evoking a scene reminiscent of a scientific experiment.

The air carries a peculiar mix of decay and aromatic oils. Amidst the auditory backdrop of a rhythmic dripping, your attention is drawn to an intricately constructed platform resembling stairs. On it, an array of vessels and containers housing various seeds, insects and liquids, interconnected by a network of plastic tubes. At the room’s heart, an aged copper boiler stands prominently, elevated as the centre piece. This environment blurs the line between a home-like setting and a laboratory, leaving you to question the dominant force at play—whether nature has been harnessed by human culture, or culture itself has succumbed to the whims of nature, a meeting place where the lines blur.

At the core of this installation lies a pool containing reddish water, the water has been dyed by the cochineal beetle, this insect has dyed almost every commercial food item red for decades and was taken from the Aztec empire by the Spanish colonialists to Europe, today the colour is known as Carmine red. From this dark basin a slender tube extends, snaking its way across the room, its path leading to the processing and eventual seepage of the water onto a surface resembling marble.

Forming a big red stain. Visitors are faced with the stain of colonial history. Do you step in the blood red puddle or do you reverently avoid sliding in it. A temple for questions and examinations beyond the scientific, yet hauntingly real. How do we deal with our history. The red water is expertly dyed but only selectively controlled.

The domestication of water and the route it travels is often taken for granted.

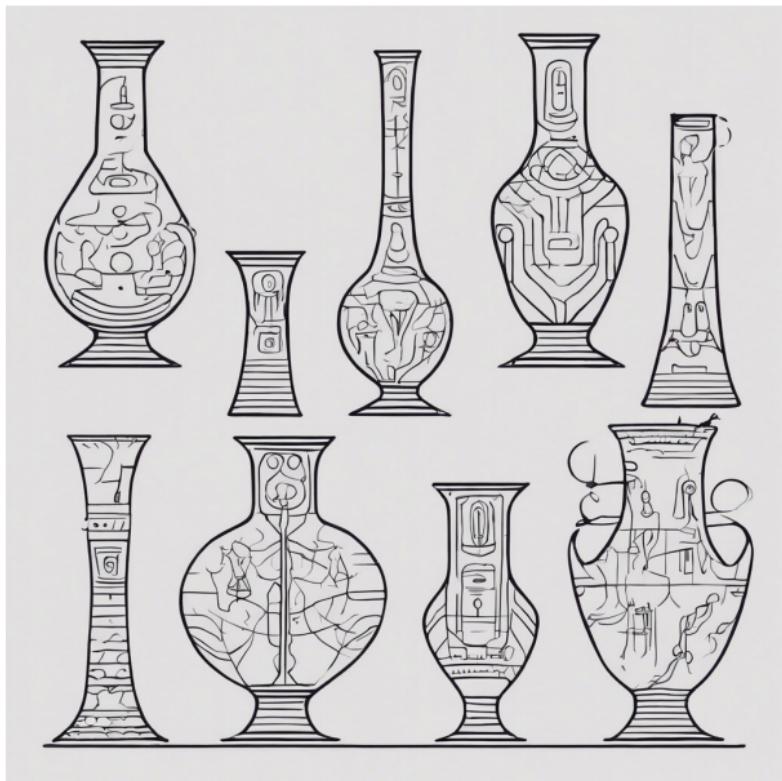
Water in the form of oceans, lakes and rivers are forces of nature, grand and intimidating. The water we drink is domesticated and unthreatening, it comes out of our taps at a small gesture. at least in this part of the world. In other parts not so.

Water can be a slow killer and a great healer. When suspended in water, we are in the womb again. Coming back home. The water's surface is like a soft membrane engulfing another world.

The way of water, this sort of capability to flow and trespass most obstacles in a calm way, is sited in many a mantra. But do not forget that water could have memory, water can crush, water can drown, water can be isolated, but whenever brought together with other bodies of water; these merge seemingly perfectly together. Not always good for humans, it can make previously drinkable water undrinkable. Water is the single most life creating and life destroying element. It holds all the potential. Yet it does not care. Water is living its own life.

Womb of water

Life here after.



From this chapter on water, this point of the pentagram Text gives you the reverence and respect for things not fully understood. That yet are essential to our lives. I give you art as a similar force. It can be honed and walled in, yet it is out of our control. It ebbs and flows over people on its own. Text gives you the power to receive and be received.

Chapter 5. Spirit æter

Spirit -realms- knowing



“Every atom of me and every atom of you... We'll live in birds and flowers and dragonflies and pine trees and in clouds and in those little specks of light you see floating in sunbeams... And when they use our atoms to make new lives, they won't just be able to take one, they'll have to take two, one of you and one of me, we'll be joined so tight...”

Phillip Pullman, The Amber Spyglass

Consider a rhizome. It doesn't have a fixed structure unless someone imposes a hierarchy on it. For instance, Deleuze and Guattari, in 'A Thousand Plateaus,' talk about using the idea of a rhizome in research. They contrast it with a tree-like structure that organizes things in a strict order. The rhizome is more about flexible connections between ideas, while the tree-like structure is all about clear, vertical power structures.

Thinking of knowledge like a rhizome is useful. It helps us see knowledge not just as separate ideas presented in separate documents but as connected groups, giving us a better way to understand how things fit together.

The way knowledge is often portrayed as a linear path of understanding, with a single entry point and a sole destination: becoming the absolute best in a field. This oversimplifies the concept of knowledge and limits those who seek it.

Two areas of knowledge that are deeply intertwined in my life is the spiritual-magikal and the digital realms. In art, these two spheres are typically kept apart due to their prescribed aesthetics. However, I'm noticing them blending more together as my generation comes into its own.

The amalgamation is influenced by anime, fantasy novels, teen witch shows, the environmental crisis, and the Internet. These influences can now be explored and contemplated in numbers so no one have to feel alone in their pursuit of slightly odd childhood interests. And they are becoming some of the main references I recognise in my co-conspirators' art. It is the zeitgeist.

Alchemy, a different generation's zeitgeist, and the precursor to modern chemistry and physics, utilized symbols and formulaic magik in the pursuit of absolute transformation, both in material and spirit. It was an endeavour marked by active imagination and creativity.

Beyond extensive experimentation, alchemists worked on numerous theoretical texts and developed a comprehensive Weltanschauung, a philosophy of life. What may now appear esoteric to us was a meticulously constructed mental framework designed to comprehend the world and, perhaps, their (the alchemists) own psyche.

While some, like Gerhard Dorn and Ibn Umayl, recognized the religious underpinnings of their personal experiments, not all might have grasped this aspect, and where mostly focused on the physical aspects of the practice, such as turning lead into gold.

I find it fascinating that science can serve as an allegory for the mind and soul. Philosophical materialism suggests that the conscious self and mind emerge solely as by-products of underlying processes—such as biochemistry in the brain and the nervous system.

Hormones and electronic impulses play a significant part in shaping our experience of ourselves and the world. However, there remain countless unmeasured aspects of our existence—dark energy and the enigmatic strings in string theory, beyond the scope of current human measurement.

My fascination persists with humanity's quest to comprehend consciousness, both our own and the divine that appears omnipresent in our surroundings. Thinking back on the fore mentioned Ursula Le Guin's quote "*Is it the gods who set this fire in our hearts, or do we each make our fierce desire into a god?*", it ponders on whether our passion stems from a divine source within us, or if we create the notion of the divine from that very passion.

My concern lies not in anyone's beliefs but rather in how those beliefs are imposed upon others, particularly their institutional implications. It's not the beliefs themselves that I take issue with but rather the manner in which they're exercised upon others.

I sense something akin to spirit strongly but vaguely, much like feeling my heart without knowledge of biology. Like a pulse emanating from all that's living—a certain 'wavelength,' perhaps, a continues humming rhythm.

In all

All in

Soul slime

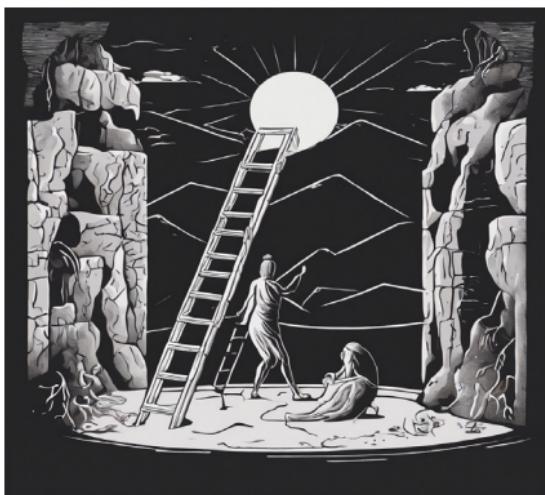
spirit glued together.



From this chapter on spirit, this last point of the pentagram Text gives you the knowledge that knowing and holding knowledge critically and imaginatively is a power in itself. Do not abide traditional routes of knowledge seeking. Try to know and feel that everything has spirit and let this inform your own spirit and soul.



Now you have been through Text and it has shown you the middle of the pentagram. A little trace of me is in you, and a little trace of you is in Text. Our thoughts have merged, brushed against each other. Carry this text with care and reverence, because it too has purpose.



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Anecdotal authors note: At home we have a human skull on the shelf. She is a bog creature who passed away in the early bronze age. At any birthday my grandad would do for me as he had done for my mother and tell the story of the girl who was sacrificed first through burning and then laid in a swamp by her community. The girl would be 8, 10, 11 and so on according to our age. This delighted me as a kid, I think besides the strange mythical feeling and sheer horror the story had about it. It denoted a lineage beyond family. The rest of her probably turned into fossil fuels.



