

**FEMALE BODIES AS TEXT: DISOBEDIENT REPRESENTATIONS OF THE WITCH**

**BY**

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**A written explication of thesis production Hex submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Theatre-making.**

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**This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this explication from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.**

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**Date**

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*8 January 2001*

**60 Pages to follow**

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## ABSTRACT

This paper is an exploration and explication of the ideas and theories that served to fire the journey of my thesis production, Hex, from conception through to performance. As a Masters student in Theatre-making with a leaning towards performance, my particular area of focus is the physical: female bodies as text. To delineate this further, I concentrate on disobedient representations of the witch: what are these; what do they mean and effect in our world and within women themselves?

Since as Theatre-maker I variously switched mode from director (in the initial conceptual stages) to designer, writer and actor within the process, this written explication will similarly switch perspective as I weave through the issues at hand in the creation of Hex.

I begin the paper with an introduction to the figure of the witch. A selection of examples of stage and screen portrayals of witches is given. I then describe the salient features of the witch's journey as represented from past to present, in order to shed light on the choice of witch characters which eventually formed the collage of Hex. This is followed by an exploration of the goddess / witch dichotomy, with specific reference to the presence or absence of her physical form as theatrically manifested in Hex. I delineate, define and exemplify the concepts of obedience and disobedience in witch representations. This leads to an in-depth look at the physiognomic / gestural language of the witch's body in performance, noting in particular its relation to a male gaze. The third and final section of the paper centres on the marginalisation of various witch figures. This serves to explicate the presence and meaning of certain key figures

that appeared in various forms in Hex, such as the absent crone-wise-woman, and the happy childless mother.

I conclude with a statement of my personal position in relation to the topic that inspired the explorative journey of Hex. The purpose of Hex was to imaginatively crack open the realm of the witch for the audience. For it is out of such pinholes that truth has a tendency to loom out, in her infinite number of gorgeous and appalling forms that, together, dance the jig of Life.

## INTRODUCTION

A major area of exploration for my Masters has been the marriage of mind-body-emotion-spirit in the creation and performance of theatre. Connected to this is a concern with the representation of women in performance, and an interest in myth as truth. In the ensuing pages, I will show how all of these found concrete and metaphorical expression in Hex.

The initial inspiration to stage a play about witches came from director Heike Gehring's desire to dramatise certain short stories from the collection written by Riana Scheepers entitled Feeks. This, together with our mutual passion for the subject matter provided the fuel to embark on the journey into Hex.

Certain central questions spurred my investigation into the figure of the witch and in turn sparked the urge to bring to life the collage of witch characters within Hex.

Do current representations of the witch feature a figure that is male authored and constructed? Is she merely another reflection of the goddess figure that flowed from pens and paintbrushes of so many males throughout history? What defines a goddess figure as located in a matriarchal social system of antiquity? What is the contrast between this and a male-authored modern witch or goddess figure located in a patriarchal social system? Finally, how do these compare to a female-authored goddess or witch figure, created with a feminist perspective in mind, and also located in a patriarchal social system? So as to ground this enquiry firmly in the task of creating a piece of theatre, the questions informed the notion of the female body as text: what do these figures represent on a physical level? What is the underlying

system of signals transmitted to an audience as these figures move and flicker across stages and screens in the world? Finally, how does this physiognomic / gestural language with its accompaniment of diverse theatre or film director's agendas impact on the witch's relationship to a male and female gaze?

This paper deals with prototypes of the witch from a Western perspective; however, Hex is without a doubt a South African piece of theatre created out of our collective cultural and theatrical contexts. We consciously wanted to texture the work with a multiplicity of cultural strands and their respective voices. This supported our intent to influence how the audience viewed the witch, and so determined how the play took form. The physical female forms featured and characters portrayed onstage contrasted each other: White / Black / Cape Coloured; the languages that make up the text similarly differ: English / Afrikaans / Xhosa. The subject of witches itself immediately introduces the realm of the taboo or the marginalized. While there is no detailed exploration of the African witch figure – Witch / Igqwirha or Healer / Igqirha / Sangoma, the diversity of cultural textures deliberately casts the shadow of the witch further, and explodes witch myths with a bigger bang.

I have drawn heavily on two academic sources in writing this paper: The Rotting Goddess: The Origin of the Witch in Classical Antiquity's Demonization of Fertility Religion by Jacob Rabinowitz (1998), and The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-century Representations by Diane Purkiss (1996). Although Rabinowitz's text omits a focus on an African perspective of witches, I nevertheless found it to be the most all-embracing factual account of the demise of the witch figure from Goddess status to that of witch. Purkiss's writing was useful to me in its steady flow



of questions and comments so pertinent to a creator of witch representations today, particularly one such as myself who wishes, through the focus on the female body as text, to create a vision that challenges rather than conforms.

## REPRESENTATION OF THE WITCH: PAST TO PRESENT

### The Journey from Past to Present

How have different historical perspectives on the figure of the witch worked to produce the current variety of clichéd and other representations we see on stage and screen today? These characters usually fit into the mould of femme fatale, ugly old crone, or a woman capable of mass destruction. In film, the most immediate representation of the witch for an audience is probably the animated witch, the most famous of these being Walt Disney versions of her. With reference to live representations, examples of a select few on stage and screen include the three witches from Macbeth as prototypical evil old crones, with bodies that speak of ugly, stooped sinister power. The frightening green-skinned Wicked Witch of the West from The Wizard of Oz (1939) is a later variation on the crone figure. In the light of opposing archetypes in film, Vivienne Leigh in the role of Scarlet O'Hara in Gone With The Wind (1939) depicts a femme fatale who loves selfishly. She paints a picture of striking female beauty that hides a bitch of note beneath, the latter aspect unleashed in pouting temper tantrums. In the later role of Blanche Du Bois in A Streetcar Named Desire (1951) she portrays a multi-levelled witch figure – ageing temptress, pathological liar, mad woman, hysteric and victim – this time her image is an eerie and lurid one of withered laurels and tarnished honour. More recently, Michelle Pfeiffer, Susan Sarandon and Cher in The Witches of Eastwick (1987) fashioned a new variation of the three-witches stereotype, depicting a homier, more new-age take on what concludes as a harem of Devil-women living with their master,

the Devil, played by Jack Nicholson. All three actresses ultimately exhibit Hollywood-styled femme fatales.

With her portrayal of Carrie, Sissy Spacek in Carrie (1976) begins to approach a more rounded, human character, showing the vulnerability of a young girl with supernatural powers. After being marginalized and taunted as a witch for these powers through the film, the finale sees her resulting rage fly out of control, and she ends as initiator of mass destruction. Her plain, unassuming looks render the climax that much more ominous. Most recently the protagonist in Boys Don't Cry (1999), Brandon Teena, played by Hilary Swank, depicts what I feel is the closest approximation to a disobedient representation of a witch on screen. She plays two major taboos on screen: a gay woman and a transsexual, the second of these being an ultimate fraud figure in society and threat to its moral fibre. Despite the marginalisation and persecution she is subjected to by certain characters in the film, Brandon embodies a woman who incorporates both male and female characteristics in a positive way, and is, ultimately, the heroine of the story. Her beautiful boyish looks overlay an appealing combination of passionate-male and sensual-female sexuality.

Historically the witch figure can be traced back to Hekate from pre-classical Greek mythology. I will now outline how Hekate, originally a queen amongst goddesses, became the witch: epitome of all that is undivine.

Rabinowitz describes the original mythological figure of Hekate as 'an intermediary between the world of gods and that of men'. Her functions lay in 'fertility and multi-realm access ...[the range of which spanned]... Heaven, Earth [and] Under-Earth'.

She was described as 'gate-guardian, holder of the keys that open the realms'. Her 'depiction as Sacred Pole, Tree of Life and World Axis ... constitutes a complete departure from traditional scholarly interpretation', which would be far closer to the hellhag or femme fatale figure as exemplified above. As Tree of Life, however, she is cast as sentient being with roots in earth and humanity, and branches reaching up to the heavens and spirit, a body that reflects an entire universe. An 'ever-present element' in ancient representations of her is 'the central column', sometimes in the form of a pillar or pole. A lasting dichotomy and ambiguity exists through her juxtaposed and simultaneous characterisations as Queen of Heaven and Queen of Hell, as 'fostering all-mother ... benign birth-helper' and underworld chief, 'ghost-queen'. 'The symbol associated with her, the hekateion with its triple figures ... [echoes] the crossroads ... the place where the three roads meet'. This mirrors her as a symbol of the triple clusters such as birth, life, and death, or virgin, mother and crone. 'Originally a goddess who supervised a cycle of organic growth, decay & rebirth', her 'association went from Growth to Change to Destiny, ending with Doom' (Rabinowitz 1998: 22-54).

Looking again at certain variations on the classical Hekatian figure, the early immortal character Medea is an obvious candidate. She is depicted as aggressive, erotic inspirer; later versions switch to showing her as a love struck victim of passion (ibid.: 74). This particular portrayal has stuck fast over the ages, as is the case with the many witch-vixen characters on screen and stage becoming rageful due to some form of unrequited love. Abigail Williams in The Crucible (1952), is a young temptress-type who, when her passion for the upright John Proctor is unreturned, uses black magic to punish him and his wife. Glenn Close in Fatal Attraction (1987) as Alex

Forrest embarks on a series of calculated measures from stalking to attempted murder to lash out at the object of her unrequited love, a married man with whom she had an affair.

Euripides dramatises Medea as possessing 'divinity and sensuality', as well as being 'fully and complexly *human*' (Rabinowitz 1998: 74). Later versions, for example by Sophocles and Pindar, portray her as 'something closer to the animal or the elemental than human ... [a being] ruled *by* her passions' (ibid.: 75). In hellenistic witches, inconsistent accounts show Medea to be 'part innocent girl, part ... brutish woman ... demurely described as a priestess ... of Hekate', but a Hekate who is 'ghastly'.

Further witch depictions maintain this: 'the witch is variously old and hideous or young and attractive'. This 'schizophrenic depiction ... [shows] young witches who radiate the sensual splendor of a fertility goddess, and the crones ... like a horrid Gnostic emblem of the price of generated existence, age and death' (ibid.). Still today a witch character in a film will often initially deceptively appear as a beautiful woman, and later show their true form as hellhag, such as the seductive assistants of the Devil (played by Al Pacino) in The Devil's Advocate (1997). This puts out the message that a witch cannot really be beautiful, unless by means of illusory manipulation; she will always end up looking despicable.

Moving on from the afore-mentioned hellenistic witches, the Roman witches who follow are 'lust-crazed hags and living dead sex-cannibals' - extreme amalgamations of the evil crone and lewd temptress. 'Alongside the aging witch we find a paradoxical young and lovely one, but this is marginal to the overall trend, and [they] are described as cruel and sadistic: a deceptively attractive variant on the same

degenerating image' (Rabinowitz 1998: 81). Inferences of lesbianism are also present. The followers of Hekate become known as witches and 'effectively displace and fully represent her by the end of antiquity [;as they] ... finally attain god-like powers', Hekate steadily wanes.

'Nowhere in the extant classical literature does Hekate even speak a word' (Rabinowitz 1998: 115). One of the aims of *Hex* was to give as many different aspects of the witch a voice, and to give life to the female-authored Hekate.

Rabinowitz proposes that the reason for the steady demonization of Hekate and witches 'is the working out of a deep conflict between cultural strata' in Greece (ibid.: 118), namely, between 'indigenous-Mediterranean and Indo-Aryan invader cultures ... [or] chthonic popular worship ...[and] the aristocratic-ouranian cultus' (ibid.: 116). Aristocratic Greek taboos 'were concerned with physical uncleanness, reproduction and death', by definition the prime areas of a fertility goddess such as Hekate, 'deeply involved in birth and death ... and ... explicitly in charge of dirt and impurity ... the very embodiment of earthy concerns ... central to chthonic religiosity ... her worsening would represent a methodical attempt to reject her, or at least, profound unease at her presence' (ibid.: 118).

[The degeneration of the Greek witch] should now appear not as a singular and cryptic phenomenon, but as the predictable outcome of a particular kind of culture-clash. The special importance and influence of the Greek witch-mythology is due to ... its being the crystallisation and symbol of Classical culture's relationship, not only to an earlier culture, but to what that culture's sacred goddess represented: sexually generated material existence ... The development of the dark goddess is not merely a degeneration and demonization of an

originally benign being, but the ... unfolding of the implications and depth of one of her basic aspects. (ibid.: 120-2)

Rabinowitz's argument has helped to fuel the questions that have spurred the creation of Hex. That he pins the demonisation of the witch on some aristocratic preference put into action does not, in my opinion, place enough weight on the fact that that imperious dogma about women would have been hatched by, as well as driven home by, men. In my opinion, it would be in the interests of patriarchal systems to keep the image of a fertility goddess clean, light-humoured and above all, fuckable. This holds a woman in her place in the system; in the awkward margins of inappropriateness if she should ever live the power implied in the whole woman that she is.

Furthermore, as aforementioned, Hekate's function of providing multi-realm access might be viewed as a potentially drastic threat to the general stability of society. In my experience, any phenomenon that encourages people to look beyond the confines of their everyday lives and beliefs is invariably marked as dangerous in some way. I propose that a particularly disturbing concept for patriarchy would be, for example, to open the possibility of contact with off-planet beings or energies without the aid of traditional scientific tools. To elaborate: those entities could possibly convey to us information about ourselves and our purpose on this planet that may be viewed as a potential source of destabilisation of existence as is so neatly and categorically set out by hegemonic structures on this planet. If this were the case, the female body would have become a living, walking tool for toppling the hegemonies that corset her in. The 'figure of woman becomes a sign of all that cannot be grasped by civilisation' (Rabinowitz 1998: 36). I offer that that which cannot be grasped becomes that which is most feared, and in turn most attacked.

Possibly as a reaction to the former cloak of invisibility worn by witches in the past, the currently favoured new-age image of modern witchcraft is one of 'a story of ahistorical survival, intact transmission, and the recovery of decontextualised truths' (Purkiss 1996: 37). This view implies that we as contemporary women have fully recovered an entire truth - the story of the witch and her practice of witchcraft - that before was hidden. It also hints at the fact that this is the end of the search for the roots of the witch and her meaning in our world - she has been found again. This is, in my opinion, by no means an accurate assumption. If anything, this image encourages 'the general notion of witchcraft as a secret buried letter, a concealed truth...the vehicle for [which] both concealment and revelation is a woman...[who]...represents both mystery to be probed by the male investigator, and also disclosure of mystery. As always, femininity is associated with the secret, the precivilised, the mysterious' (ibid.: 37-8). What it does not encourage is a view of witches as living, breathing women with bodies that were and are constantly changing and evolving. The above three paragraphs are an example of what partly constitutes for me a male gaze.

Like other histories ... radical feminist histories of witches and witchcraft remember the past according to a variety of myths, ideas and political needs, and they often refer explicitly to the needs and desires which brought them into being ... [These histories also, at times,] seek to erase the traces of their own historicity, in the interests of offering themselves as a means of access to a transparent, unmediated past ... However, feminist histories of witchcraft are not finished artefacts, but stages in a complicated, conflictual series of processes within the public sphere, processes which involve both writing of women's past and the rewriting of their present and future. (ibid.: 10)



## Hex as a Piece of the Present

Hex was, in form, what could be called a piece of collage theatre. This is a collection of seemingly disconnected theatre fragments or scenes, which, viewed as a whole, form an integral unit with a common over-arching objective. Hex was ultimately dominated by a collection of monologues. Although with many of these monologue scenes we were dealing with a narrative structure, we chose to perform rounded, realist characterisations with this text. Thus, instead of simply having a narrator tell a story, we wove the action of what was being narrated into and out of the telling of it. Characters would variously tell, act out and reflect upon their stories using a number of different performance styles to do so, and with the accompaniment of a number of different characters played by the other two actors on stage.

In representational choices of the witch in Hex, the virgin-mother-crone trinity is a major theme. In my writing, *The Birth, want dit sny nie*, and *The Nun*, I structured the three monologues to form an inner trinity of women within the play, each embodying a particular element in order to create dramatic contrast and to inform the dynamic of performance. These were Anath (the mother) – the element of fire, Sylvia (with the wisdom of the crone) – the element of water, initially in the form of ice, later melting into liquid in the dream, and the Nun (the virgin) – the element of air.

The play begins with the woman in the airport in the scene entitled *Heks*. She is representative of the suspicious neighbour, fearful and jealous of the beautiful powerful woman next door. The only way that she can cope with these feelings is to persecute that which she is so exasperated by. The spasmodic movements of her body

are used to show the restrictiveness inherent in her beliefs and fears. Anath in *The Birth* depicts a sensual, pregnant, maternal figure that burns willingly at the stake in celebration of her power. She happily sacrifices her material form, her body and the baby in it, for the greater spiritual power within it. This piece was to be a clear inversion of what a conventional male gaze would have called for: a pregnant mother clinging to the salvation of her life with her husband and child, terrified and heart-broken at the prospect of being burnt.

The character in *Dis Hulle Storie* is the one male in the play, and is a rapist. We intended with this piece to show the ingrained quality of superstition, a form of witchcraft that so many cultures exhibit in one way or another. The piece turns a sense of taboo on its head because it proposes a belief system that legitimates rape. The female body in this piece is portraying Coloured boy, potentially an AIDS carrier, and a rapist, setting off issues of marginalisation, and causing the audience to look further at their own personal concept of witch. Here, the female body helps to subvert responses to these issues, and might open the audience more to the mitigating circumstances of the rape. In *Wildeckind, Koponderstebo* we chose a piece that featured a gay woman to bring to the fore the marginalisation that gay or bisexual women undergo worldwide. As part of a particular group, they are only too quickly cast as witch. Through her story of the transition between innocence and experience, the female body of Nadia in this piece showed a boy-girl, man-woman figure who is content with and proud of her sexuality.

In *want dit sny nie* Sylvia was chosen as a non-maternal figure depicting a positive version of the death or crone aspect of the witch. The female body in this piece

appears clothed in clinical doctor whites, an asexual yet emotional image, emotional yet detached. The subversion inherent in these paradoxes shall be taken up in more detail later in this paper. *Mother of None* depicts a traditional African female figure of strength in the face of village persecution as witch. The female body here is shown as fertile yet barren, a woman who gives birth to stillborn children / death. Lastly, *The Nun* is a Virgin Mary representative with a twist, who sparkles with inner laughter at the humour of it all. The female body here is shown, in her unfinished nun's habit, to be half-covered by conventionality, but peeking knowingly out the sides of it.

## THE WITCH / GODDESS DICHOTOMY: HER BODY IN PRESENCE AND ABSENCE

In this section I begin a deeper exploration of what the distinction between the concept of witch and goddess is. In my opinion, the gap between the two is in fact non-existent, but is created by belief structures and fears. This feeds an examination of what an obedient as opposed to disobedient representation of a witch is. Finally I endeavour to illustrate my suspicion that the gulf, in turn, between goddess and woman is also potentially non-existent, or, if anything, can become far smaller than currently seems possible.

I propose a broad definition of an obedient representation of a witch to be a woman of power who has some negative trait or look or flaw in her character. This flaw could be portrayed as some form of masculinity that sits inappropriately in relation to her persona of woman within a patriarchal system. This character would not be able to incorporate her feminine aspects into that persona simultaneously. The most likely representation of a witch is as an old, ugly, evil crone, or a vampiric femme fatale.

An obedient representation is also likely to be a male-authored one or one that is complicit with a male gaze. In order to explain the concept of a male gaze, I refer to one of my earlier papers entitled Representation of Gay / Bisexual Women in Performance: Feminine / Feminist Dichotomies in "Chasing Amy" and "High Art". Although this paper centred on females in film, the principle converts easily to a theatre context.

The origin of the Lacanian Mirror effect is located in the moment that a person begins to mis/recognise themselves as a subject whose interior and exterior worlds are unified, and, following from this, whose particular sex (in the biological/physical sense) and gender are one and the same thing ... In the medium of film the Lacanian Mirror is substituted by the screen, and instead of misrecognising herself in her own image, the spectator, through a process of voluntary identification with the female protagonist projected onto the screen, suppresses the split between herself and subject of drama even as it has been created, and mistakenly takes the representation on screen to be a reflection of herself. So the way opens up for mass internalisation of an ideologically based system of value judgements geared towards maintaining the status quo of a patriarchal perception of women, and for these projected representations to be interpreted as 'natural' and 'ideal'. For this process to occur / succeed, however, the illusion of filmic image as mirror of reality must necessarily be sustained. There are many elements that will encourage this, such as linear time frame within a narrative that has a beginning, middle and end, where closure marks a return to a previously subverted harmonious reality that smacks of hegemonic "normality", particularly with regard to gender relations. (Berk 1999: 2-3)

I surmise that representations and perceptions of witch or goddess figures are affected by a number of factors, one of which would be the outer world of the person concerned. This would include their conditioning, learnt gender performativities, and societal or cultural or ethnic-specific norms. A second important factor would be the inner world of the person, including their psychological landscape and its influences. Their religious or non-religious subject position would, I imagine, also hold weight, and the extent to which they have internalised the various dogma or not. A further aspect of influence would be their own sense of self-propelled intuitive ability, and to what extent this is fostered in the individual or curbed. Openness or a closed attitude to the unknown would similarly affect how an individual perceived or represented a witch or goddess figure. I believe that dominant philosophies, forms of spirituality,

and the myriad forms of resultant practises influence the inner workings and psychology around the notion of witch. In my opinion the relationship between the inner and outer worlds of a human being plays a crucial role in all this. The two are, I would suggest, practically inseparable.

I propose that the power structure that witch representations are largely obedient to is the machine of patriarchy and all its ramifications and stations. These may be institutional, economic, political, domestic, or any other of its covert or overt manifestations. An obedient representation will play into traditional good-girl and bad-girl stereotypes to the full, with their respective accompanying images of the female body.

### **The Prison and the Song**

Our super objective for Hex read as: Exploding out of the Witch's Cave into the Power of Laughter.

The witch's cave refers to the mould or category of witch that one is placed in by other people or oneself. The latter case may be under the influence of other's opinions, or guided by your own intuition. The witch's cave can be a negative or positive location, dependent on the beliefs held by the person in it. Therefore the term witch's cave can be interpreted at a metaphorical or physical level. For example, the wicked stepmother's hut in *Indaba* was literally her witch's cave in that it was her fort of power from where she could exert total control over her world (the environment of the hut) and Nomehlonkomo. The irony here is that the ultimate witch's cave in any

one person's life, in my opinion, is the structure of the self, in other words, the body. Thus as fond as humans are of giving orders to, and attempting to control what transpires in, that cauldron, it is to no avail; for the body will only and always reflect back the truth of the inner emotional state, which will not always be according to plan.

In *want dit sny nie* Sylvia is presented as placing herself in the metaphorical witch's cave of murderer instead of abortionist, as a result of conditioning and repeated stigmatisation. This contrasts Anath in *The Birth*: gladly in a witch's cave that she has made for herself, and using the physical one that society has placed her in – a sentence of fire – to her own ends. Thus the witch's cave, where perceived of as negative, immediately becomes a prison of some kind, escape from which is only possible through a process of inner subversion; by changing how one views oneself, by accepting who you are without judgement and recognising your source of power within.

*Indaba*, with its images of birds and feathers and spirit being transferred by song and the flight of the soul made possible through that, enabled us to incorporate a very powerful image of a birdcage as representing the witch's cave. Nomehlo, who is ultimately empowered by the birds, is initially caged. The cage represents the cage people construct for themselves when conforming to societal prescriptions for behaviour; how people are imprisoned by other people's beliefs about themselves and the world: the great trap. A second version of this appears in *Indaba* as an extension of the cave or hut – the wicked stepmother wishes to trap and kill the soul connection of Nomehlo, as embodied in the birds. This story embodies the idea that, were people

to look at those things that they are conditioned to suppress or kill for 'feathers and meat' (Hex 2000: 5), they might discover that those very things may have the ability to sing, and so empower them. *Indaba* was also included to suggest the strength of the oral as opposed to the written word in conveying the power of spirit; inner momentum as a source for power in the external world.

Hex seeks to disown and disempower the negative witch figure as she has been constructed in a patriarchal system. The lesson that is taught to us again and again in a patriarchal hegemony in the very immediate form of live physical image, is that a woman who knows how to harness her power is cursed with the karmic pay-off of an ugly face and body, a hoarse voice, and a malevolent or lewd demeanour. She is condemned to a complete lack of love, either within herself or of herself, apart from a self-serving egotistical narcissism. She is similarly lacking love initiated from anyone else in her world, apart from the blind, spellbound adoration of her followers. Regardless, she is never shown as capable of returning that love in any healthy, giving way.

There are many infrastructures within a person – conscious, subconscious, or unconscious, that ensure obedience to a design of blindfolded fear: I suggest they consist of a multi-faceted arrangement of ideals, ethics, value judgements, moral codes, rationalisations, linguistic schema, essentialising language and so forth.

'Witchcraft is therefore culturally constructed in a specific sense, for it depends on certain views about the natural world and the ways it operates' (Briggs 1996: 4-5).



'Religion, magic and witchcraft have been inextricably linked throughout human history' (Briggs 1996: 4). It seems that persecution of and, indeed, blind belief in the typified evil witch occurred at a time when belief structures supported a general faith in the binary ideological opposites of good and evil. These dualities were fed credibility through established religions, which were based on, driven by, and functioned through the assumption that there were such entities as God and the Devil, the men of our universe whose existence qualified all.

### **The Laughter of Power**

The revival of witchcraft as a religion and the related revival of identification with the witch arose at precisely the point when *fin-de-siecle* poetry, fiction and art had begun to glamorise the witch and turn her into the much more alluring figure of the sorceress .... [In contrast to] early modern crones ... [a sorceress was carved] whose wildness and unconventionality might be cognates of evil, but were also signifiers of freedom. Such images were supposed to be partially admonitory, showing the peril of female desire while warning about female beauty as species of inescapable and emasculating magic. However, by 'breaking the rules' of interpretation, the New Woman could appropriate at least some of the mystery and voluptuousness of such figures ... [More women began to use] the materials of male fantasy to construct selves which resisted an easy appropriation in return. (Purkiss 1996: 38-9)

What is a disobedient representation of a witch? What are its criteria, its limits?

Broadly speaking, it could simply be affirmations of positive witch figures: women who show a harnessing of their inner powers of blood and mind - in whatever way appropriate to their individual life perspective - and who are sculpted in a healthy and balanced light. More specifically, a disobedient representation could be described as a

modern witch-goddess figure that reflects a female-authored, feminist-located perspective.

The disobedience of representations of witches in Hex is located primarily in the act of 'exploding out of the witch's cave into the power of laughter'. That laughter may take many forms. It may be the laughter of joyful release; it may be the laughter of tears; it may simply be an ironic chuckle. What makes it powerful is the ability to see the prisons of life for what they are: illusions that can be transcended. It is the recognition of the witch's cave for what it is and, if it is positive, using it to unleash a positive inner power; and if it is negative, laughing it away without bitterness until it disintegrates. We converted this into theatrical form by setting up a particular energetic motif to run through the play. In every scene, one or more characters would explode out of some prison, and another or others would crumble to a position of relative weakness and awe as a result of this. The one exception to this is the Nun, who has already experienced her explosion and is now patterning the pieces of laughter into a formation of power, from which she is in a position to cause explosions in other women. Her disobedience lies partly in her method of maintaining her inner integrity through outward deception – playing the system at its own game.

This explosion-crumbling rhythm mirrored the essential energetic movement of rebellion against a prison of stasis, and the transformation that follows into a newly discovered territory that is constantly expanding or moving. Without the belief of the proponents in the various witch's caves, those structures have nothing to hold them up, their cornerstones are obliterated.

One of the major differences between our witch representations and those of the past was that those portrayed in Hex were not victims. On the contrary, some of them willingly partook in whatever activity it was that had caused them to be labelled as witches, e.g., *The Birth*, *Wildeckind*, and *want dit sny nie*. To elaborate on the first of these: Anath stands bound at the top of the tree-platform, taunted by the two persecutor characters beneath. As Anath begins to express her inner power - symbolised later in a stylised inner section of the monologue where her hands come free and move - so the persecutors beneath freeze and slow their movements down, now lacking in the brash confidence they poked and jumped at her with earlier.

A collage theatre structure proposes a disobedience of sorts in its opposition to a conventional linear story-plot with a certain number of characters that remain intact until the end of the play. With the collage form, we wanted to throw out the many faces of the witch, and allow them to reflect and refract one another. This way, the audience receives not a conveniently smooth journey of a few characters, but a journey of many which now flows, now jars. This, we felt, was also closer to a veritable depiction of the witches journey through time. We specifically placed the conventionally climactic scene – *The Birth* - right at beginning of Hex to subvert usual linear progression of plot. The collage format afforded us the perfect architecture to show as many of the various aspects of the witch as possible at a time when there has hardly been any free platform for such characters to speak their particular truths. Time and space and dimensional shifts on stage were also dealt with in a non-traditional theatrical way. For example, as the adult Nadia in *Wildeckind* moves into the memory of her childhood, she takes on the physicality of the little girl that she was. While she does this, however, she still speaks the text of herself as adult

looking back. This deepens the contrast between innocence and experience, the central theme in that piece.

An express desire within our conceptualisation of Hex was to combine the slick with the rough and the finished with the raw in our production. One of the ways in which this was realised was through the juxtaposition of rounded, realist characters moving on stage against the film clips of the classic, stereotypical fragments of Walt Disney witches projected onto the white circle on the stage floor. This served to further affirm the wedding of death and life, cleanness and impurity, the virgin and the crone.

The costuming of the play captured our decision to show the under-side of witches, that which is not normally revealed. As actors, we wore costumes that would normally imply some form of allurement - to men particularly - if looked at from a conventional perspective. At times we actually played into that function of the costume to a degree, but would promptly invert that by showing the indiscreet body. Therefore we chose how much of the body would be revealed when in the play, and why. In *Heks*, a woman located in an airport speaks indignantly of an exhibitionist witch, however she, as actor on stage, wears only underwear, showing an indiscreet body. *The Nun* embodies a further example of this: as she half-dresses her physical body, so she reveals her disguise of spirituality. Her incomplete, impertinent habit alongside her serene demeanour shows her to be a woman under the mask of binding in her very own state of grace.

Purkiss writes of

modern witches as both restorers and inventors of a lost tradition ... The story of idyll, decline and active recovery of a lost and more desirable past has become associated with both fascism and conservatism ... [both] kindly, nature-loving witches to spinsters on bicycles ... [or] would-be utopias embody ideas of natural order and organic wholeness in the feminine.... the modern witch is only too easily understood in essentialist and heritage-industry terms; when understood as an active subject, she seems much more liberated & liberating. (1996: 42)

Thus this 'heritage-industry' witch is the newest obedient representation, even though originally viewed as a subversion of obedience. This image of a modern witch is an all-positive being whose place is the domestic sphere, and whose life is centred on growing and administering healing herbs and practising positive magic. This depiction is, I believe, limiting in its narrow new-age perspective of a witch, and, in fact, places the female body firmly back in the kitchen, rather than the public working world.

The meanings ... [produced by the historical narrative of modern witchcraft] about past golden ages are a refusal of modernity which owes more to Romanticism than feminism. The myth of a lost matriarchy is disabling rather than enabling for women. To relegate female power in politics or religion to a lost past, to associate it with the absence of civilisation, technology and modernity, is to write women out of the picture. To confine female power to the marginal space of a reinvented religion which rejects any vestige of mainstream power is to reify women's exclusion from the public sphere. (Purkiss 1996: 42)

Other limited representations of witch figures are exemplified by those depicted as persecuted during the witch-hunts. Purkiss points out that the 'myth of the Burning

Times is not politically helpful. It might seriously be doubted whether a myth that portrays women as nothing but the helpless victims of patriarchy, and the female body as nothing but a site of torture and death is enabling' (1996: 16). She writes also of how history 'indeed becomes hysteria when the unspeaking body is the only site which can be recollected and when events become reduced to occasions for extended fantasies about other people's traumas' (Purkiss 1996: 15). In *Hex* I as writer wanted to carve some depth, albeit totally fictitious, into the 'unspeaking body', expressing creatively what feminist historians have written of. The character Anath in *The Birth* is a useful example of a disobedient witch image, in that she burns with passion, as well as fire. She is anything but an innocent victim. She does not give in to the pain or fear, indeed, her death is a celebration of the birth of the witch: death as life. A central irony within this piece is the fact that, through the act of persecution and execution of witches, the energy around the phenomenon of witchcraft was in fact being amplified rather than stifled, as was intended by those that condemned it. *The Birth* showed an extreme possibility of this scenario, in that Anath, through her express intent to explode herself and her unborn out of the witch's cave of her condemned life in to the power of unity and trinity with Hekate through death, would consciously have effected a great release of energy with specific intent into the universe - one of the most powerful ways to accelerate and shift consciousness. The persecutors of witches could unknowingly have been feeding the power of the very force they so wished to quell.

**Physiognomic / Gestural Language of the Witch's Body in Performance:  
Relationship to the Male Gaze**

Purkiss claims that 'The Goddess ... envisaged by modern witchcraft is not ... female-authored ... but a male fantasy borrowed from men's writings ... [and] has been embraced by women ... attracted to some of her most problematic features' (1996: 32). She later exemplifies one such feature, viz. the 'insistence on an identity grounded in the maternal body', an image we consciously used in a subverted form in Hex. Purkiss goes on to say that although 'modern witches claim to be recovering a pure matriarchal vision from the remote past, such a claim cannot really be sustained once their borrowings from more recent texts and discourses have been traced' (ibid.: 33). In effect, the 'problem for witches who want to assert creativity and control is that witchcraft remains, on the whole, tied to an historical narrative which is well-nigh inescapable as a male fantasy about what femininity should be' (ibid.: 39).

A typical portrait on the other hand of the witch as evil crone is quoted from The Witch as a Frightening and Threatening Figure by Briggs in his book Witches and Neighbours as 'a creature with long, straight hair, a very sharp nose, and long slender fingers. She has a big mouth with pointed teeth. She dresses in black ... and she has a pointed black felt hat on her head. A witch usually sails through the air on a long broom and is always accompanied by a fierce-looking cat' (1996: 20). In order to contrast the usual black adornments, our basic costumes were comprised of crisp white cotton, the underwear aspect suggesting that we have nothing to hide. The one exception to this, the one character who did wear black, was the Nun – ironically the

one figure in society who usually represents the epitome of virginal chastity, the anti-witch herself.

In connection with the issue of chastity and sexuality, Purkiss quotes Barbra G. Walker as claiming that the 'reason for ecclesiastical hostility [to midwives] seems to have been the notion that midwives could help women control their own fate, learn secrets of sex and birth control, or procure abortions ...[all] considered women's own business, and not subject to male authority' (1996: 19). Purkiss herself goes on to write that the 'midwife simply is female sexual autonomy which the church cannot tolerate' (ibid.).

I will elaborate further shortly on the issue of female sexuality. I firstly need to explain the motif of the tree in Hex, as reflected in our set as having one of it's central focus points a tree made up of rough pieces of wood and various domestic objects. There were certain crucial points of connection between the various levels in this motif, and these are listed in a purely graphic form below, to be unpacked there-after:

Hekate = Goddess = Witch = Tree of Life = Human = Elements of Earth and Spirit  
 Combined = Body = Link Between Worlds = Liminal Space = Narrator = The Link  
 between different Realities / Dimensions = Body as the Key to Magic = Opportunity  
 to See / Face the Multidimensional Reality of this Universe

The tree represents the omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent multidimensional self that in my opinion is constantly present in an individual's life. It is the soul or spirit aspect of the self, which has its own agenda for this life and will find ways of creating



the experience of this lifetime. Conversely and simultaneously the body is present in the opposite manner. It is so manifest that its presence cannot be denied, although it is tempting to construct a myriad of ways to ignore its presence and importance in life. This is ultimately futile since, in my opinion, the soul has constructed the physical world in order to express and experience more.

In her book Earth: Pleiadian Keys to the Living Library, Barbra Marciniak writes:

What is the Tree of Life? Many think that the Tree of Life is something that grows a fruit. It is rumoured that through ingesting this fruit of the Tree of Life you can gain immortality. In ancient times it was understood that this fruit was the blood of the Goddess ... Think of your body and your nervous system as a tree. The stories are not talking about fruits on trees, but to the fruits of the body – the secretions and substances that are indeed gifts of the gods. For eons, the gods have been steering you away from this knowledge. (Marciniak 1995: 105)

She talks later of how the great number of social and religious taboos to do with the time of menstruation in a woman's cycle had been put in place precisely to navigate women away from the seat of their creative power: sexuality, and the densest form of wisdom in their bodies: blood and the bone from which it springs.

The figure of the narrator in Hex is synonymous, for us, with that of the tree as described above. This is because the narrator represents the liminal space between the characters and the physical world, and the unseen omniscient spirit world, in the story being told. The narrator speaks directly to the audience and is a physical actor on stage, yet represents the dimension of spirit that, unseen, observes and reflects upon the world of humans without judging it. Thus it is a mediator between worlds. This

figure was woven theatrically throughout the play in different forms, one of these being the old woman in *want dit sny nie*, never seen by the audience, only spoken of by Sylvia, who oversees the entire process of healing within the doctor / abortionist. Yet, on a level, the old woman is a self-created tool of Sylvia's. This was chosen to theatricalise the notion that everything in the world is self-invited in order to attain balance in some area of it; individuals create their own realities. The final image of the old woman is of her 'sitting relieved on a tree stump' (Hex 2000: 13) – Sylvia has exploded out of the witch's cave of self-judgement into power of self-acceptance. The tree stump here is illustrative of the pruning that has taken place in order that new life might be fostered - this evokes the old woman as a continuation of the tree, the narrator, the observer in a place of no judgement.

The dream world in *want dit sny nie* is a thing that Sylvia is sucked into on a figurative, subconscious level in her mind's journey, as well as at a stylistic and physical level through the strange slow motion inappropriate movements (more abstracted versions of the dream) during the scene. As these movements take place, the green light that would eventually colour the dream-forest on stage would be subtly swelled in. As Sylvia snapped out of the dream state, so the lights would snap back to the colder blue-white light that pervaded the parts of the scene depicted as reality. This dream world is itself representative of the liminal narrator or tree figure within Sylvia, the ever-present sub / unconscious that accounts for so many actions and emotions in a seemingly unidentified and carefully veiled way.

In my opinion, the essence of the witch is a simple message about trusting the sub / unconscious and the forces of intuition within the self, engaging consciously with all

the earthly powers which have been bestowed upon the human being, knowing that the ultimate power is that which is created within the self. In the universe of Hex we created an energetic support for this notion theatrically by frequently having silent but active characters on stage, for example, in the background of monologue scenes.

## ON THE MARGINS OF THIS DREAM

Marginalisation is and always has gone hand in hand with figures of witches in a number of ways. A short exploration follows of certain pertinent cases that are highlighted in Hex.

### **The Invisible Scarecrow**

Within the virgin-mother-crone trinity that goes to make up the entire figure of the witch, the crone is by far the most marginalised figure in our Western-influenced world. I use the principles of Traditional Chinese Medicine here in an attempt to suggest a possible reason for this. According to the cycle of the seasons, the crone represents the final part of physical life: winter, withering away, and death. In turn, according to the corresponding channels of energy within the body, she depicts the meridian of the lungs and large intestine, which in turn corresponds with the processes of letting go and grieving. These are things that, in my opinion, Western society has lost sight of how to do with ease. Now there are self-help books that must be read in order to come to grips with how to carry this out, instead of trusting the intuitive wise woman within who knows in her old bones exactly what the best way for each individual will be. The quintessential goddess in crone stage is embraced in the figure of Kali, the Hindu Destroyer Goddess who represents the 'culminating third of the original Holy Trinity of the Creating, Preserving, and Destroying Goddess who "giveth ... and taketh away.'" (Walker 1984: 223). In my opinion the female body of old age is alienated from society, looming like a spectre that haunts humans without even being seen. The fact that her wisdom is treated with such disdain is simply a

mask for the fear of what it could in fact unlock in younger women – a sense of great inner power.

‘Whether seen as fantasy or reality, witchcraft comes from a grandmother, not from a granddaughter. The witch is a vision from the past, for only in the past can an alternative to the modern world be imagined’ (Purkiss 1996: 41). Despite this, in my opinion this quote reflects a well-hidden marginalisation in our world: that of the wisdom of today’s daughter-children, who may well have more to teach us about lost values than figures from the past. This concept figured in Hex, as well as that of visions that come from the future – a future self – to give messages about changing the present, therefore affecting the future becoming.

### **The Happy Childless Mother and the Blossoming Corpse**

As the functions of dealing with death and impurity of the original Hekate figure proved to be the reason for her ousting, so these areas themselves have become progressively more and more marginalized in a Western world pathologically obsessed with chemical cleanliness.

‘The idea that the rise of manners affected the idea of the body, turning pollution into a different kind of problem from the one before, is canvassed by Freud too, who wrote that ‘many systems of civilisation – or epochs of it – possibly even the whole of humanity – have become “neurotic” under the pressure of civilising trends’ (Purkiss 1996: 83). As a result, the female body becomes the site of desire and pollution simultaneously, resulting in, I suggest, a kind of schizophrenic split in the enjoyment

of her as an object of the male gaze. The female body as site of desire is viewed as positive with all its promise of gratuitous sex and procreation. However, her form as site of pollution interferes with this, with all its secretions, flowings and uncontrollable oozings that might result from various states of being such as ovulation, menstruation and pregnancy. The mess of it all in the face of an idealistic squeaky-clean Virgin Mary is all but intolerable, and necessitates the relegation of these inconvenient substances to the category of waste. Considering the alleged sanctity, power and value awarded these essences during days of Goddess worship, this, in my opinion, goes to highlight the devaluation that women's bodies have undergone during the rise of patriarchy.

In *want dit sny nie* the celebration of tasks to do with death and impurity as opposed to their negation and marginalisation or denial was given form. Sylvia embodies as abortionist an archetypal witch figure, and simultaneously a pro-choice figure for female sexuality. We located a modern witch firmly in a mainstream power job, but not bowing to society's every whim and image of a witch. The non-maternal (abortionist) or childless (abortee) mother has no function in patriarchal society, since she is not fulfilling her purpose as proponent of healthy men; therefore she is negated in order to discourage behaviour of this kind from growing. Sylvia, as abortionist and surgeon, is fulfilling the function of the Goddess Kali, she who cuts that which must be cut, which wants to be cut. As a woman has the power within her to give life, so she has its inverse, the power to take life away.

A conventional patriarchal view of a woman who either cannot bear children as a result of some fertility disorder, or chooses not to have children for personal reasons,

would regard her as in some intrinsic way a witch of sorts. Exploding out of this norm, we wanted to show a woman happy in her work as one who facilitates other women being able to make the choice of childlessness for themselves. What is interesting is how a woman's body changes instantly in the eye of the spectator if that body is said to be barren or pregnant. The first, I propose, is often viewed as negative, the other, positive, if looked at purely from a life-death binary angle. In Hex, we wished to give theatrical form to the subversion of these norms. Thus we portrayed a maternal pregnant woman who is happy in the fact that her baby shall never be born into this physical reality in *The Birth*, the opposite of the normal happy pregnant woman excited to give birth to her baby; and a clinical abortionist who finds a peace and happiness in what she does and who she is.

The dream is a metaphorical operation into Sylvia's soul or psyche, opening it up to heal what needed healing, and moving out again. This ties in with the notion that the healing of souls takes place on many levels of consciousness. Particularly when it happens in a subconscious or unconscious state such as a dream, one is hardly even aware of exactly what transpired, however one is left with a sense that a weight has been lifted. The clinical hospital scene juxtaposed with the dream echoes the pairing of hushed white and shouting red; the gentle soul healing that occurs through dealing with the blood and bones of life, through listening to what the body is conveying in its beautiful myriad of ways.

The dream-vision-revelation in *want dit sny nie* came out of a desire to paint the ordinariness of angelic figures in our lives. This was spurred by a personal suspicion that these figures will not necessarily come with golden halos and wings, but may be

as small as a cricket or ugly as a frog. This idea blurs the line between vision and reality, between magic and realism. In my opinion soul is quite ingenious at appearing to us in varying and entertaining forms with a distinct flair for humour, which will invariably enhance a greater sense of perspective on the daily troubles of life. This sense of perspective is also, I would say, a place of no judgement, and is linked to 'the power of laughter' in our super objective.

Another layer of disobedience in the representation of Sylvia is the notion that to be a feminine nurse or doctor figure is to draw particularly on the caring, kind and compassionate aspect of that archetype. This notion is, in my opinion, quite obviously male-authored, and finds its inverse in Sylvia, an abortionist and surgeon whose hands touch death everyday. She is comfortable with it, like an old friend. It is because of the judgement of her by others through her life as not being emotional enough about slicing someone open that she has thought herself into a prison of self-judgement. However the kind, caring Florence Nightingale archetype resembles more a hankering after the ideal Virgin Mary, than a realistic Goddess Kali carrying out her task of cutting that which needs to be cut without accompanying the scene with the burgeoning emotion of generosity. I suggest that those doctors of clinical coldness may be more essentially feminine, and exude a type of grace that is as yet incomprehensible to many through the clutter of negative stereotypical belief prisons. Following from this, the Virgin Mary of the dream who holds out the ever-giving hand of mercy, compassion and forgiveness (or self-forgiveness) comes in the form of a woman aborted of her child, humming with energy.



## CONCLUSION

The creation of Hex confirmed a personal philosophy that connects representation of women on stage and screen, mind-body-emotion-spirit unity, and myth as truth. This set of ever-expanding beliefs will continue to inspire how I create work in the future

As women that have completed the first year of a new millennium, to what degree can we say that we see ourselves veritably represented on stage or screen, in all our million sprays of archetypal and idiosyncratic beauties? In order to answer that question, each woman needs first to look at her own subjective set of inner personae, be these delineated as icons, puppets, totems or effigies; endeavour to understand why and how that particular design transpired; and then begin to seek out those evocations of themselves that desire the act of reflection. If this venture proves fruitless, the signal has been given to create for themselves shouts for these hushed whispers.

Female bodies as text have undergone a giant array of warpings – soaring to high-heeled smiling-mask pedestals, and deforming down to salivating hellhag cesspits. The witch figure has clearly been a prime scapegoat for the preferred queerification of any particular time. It is, however, only the witch herself that can safely box her person up as ‘victim’ and let the dust of a thousand years choke her thin throat. Or she can choose to begin wading against the tides of fear and suspicion with unbiddableness and flair, and laughing as she goes.

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## HEX

Created by Anita Berk and Heike Gehring  
Assisted by Brenda Ngxoli and Coba-Maryn Wilsenach  
Based on works by Riana Scheepers and Anita Berk  
Directed by Heike Gehring  
Assisted by Anita Berk

### **Cast**

Anita Berk  
Brenda Ngxoli  
Coba-Maryn Wilsenach

### **Scenes in order of performance**

**Heks:** Riana Scheepers  
**The Birth:** Anita Berk  
**Indaba:** Riana Scheepers  
**Women World Peace:** The Cast  
**Dis Hulle Storie:** Riana Scheepers  
**My Liefste Vader:** Riana Scheepers  
**Wildekind, Koponderstebo:** Riana Scheepers  
**Women World Peace 2:** The Cast  
**want dit sny nie:** Anita Berk  
**Women World Peace 3:** The Cast  
**Mother of None:** Brenda Ngxoli  
**Die Vrou in die Kelder:** Riana Scheepers  
**The Nun:** Anita Berk

**Characters:** Three female actors, each of who will play a number of different characters during the action.

**Set:** This consists of a tree structure that serves a number of functions. It's base, which is situated up-stage-left is a cupboard that is built up to resemble a tree trunk with loose, rough planks of wood. The cupboard can be used to store props during the action. The tree has one large branch that extends from its base in the direction of stage-right, forming a platform that serves as an upper level from which the actors can perform. Other branches are flown at various points over-hanging the stage, giving the impression that the tree is floating outwards and upwards. Various domestic objects, many of them wooden, are positioned in and around the tree as though they form part of it, and are also hung off the free-floating branches. Some of the objects are well known symbols of witches, such as broomsticks. There is a swing of rope and wood situated down-stage-left. The center of the stage consists of a white circle painted onto the floor, onto which filmic images can be projected. Its up-stage-right rim touches the tree base.

**Costume:** The actors wear a basic costume of white cotton underwear, Actor 1 in a fifties-style, corset-type variation, Actor 2 in boy-style jockey shorts and an athletic-type vest, and Actor 3 in a contemporary underwire bra and full briefs. Various simple pieces of clothing are added during the action, most of which are pegged onto a washing line that extends across the bottom of the large branch of the tree structure.

### **Preplay**

(The actors, dressed in their basic costumes of white underwear, are on stage already, simulating domestic activities. One constantly wrings water out of a cloth into a bucket, making audible the sound of water on water. A second actor folds sheets. The third actor is scrubbing a part of the set clean, using a scrubbing brush. Music plays through this, and at a given point, the actors exit the stage as the lights fade to black.)

(In blackout an airport announcement is heard. A live female voice over a microphone can be used.)

Voice of airport official: Attention all passengers for flight 208 to Paris, this is your final call. Will all passengers travelling on flight 208 to Paris kindly board the aircraft through gate 9.

### **1. Heks**

**Actor 1:** (Actor 1 rushes on stage, addressing the audience. In the background one sees how actor 2 prods actor 3 with stick. Actor 3 is lead to the stake to be burned. This happens in slow motion and in the shadows so that they are only half visible. During the speech, actor 3 slowly climbs the steps that lead to the platform.)

Dit was die vrou se bos hare wat my opgeval het. Dit was aan die brand. Tussen al die mense op die besige lughawe, het ek haar raakgesien. Sy was in dieselfde rigting as ek oppad, na die lang ry toonbanke aan die noordekant van die vertreksaal. Soos almal wat gerieflik wil reis, was sy in jeans en stewels. Die res van haar was nie juis besonders nie. Oftewel, dit wat ek van haar kon sien waar sy voor my tussen die mensegemaal deurgeloopt het, was doodgewoon.

Maar haar hare, dit was n vlammeende wolk om haar. Met elke beweging van haar kop, het haar hare om haar skouers geknetter. Dit was nie dat dit skelrooi, wortelrooi of sproetrooi was nie, dit was die oordadige weligheid daarvan wat my na haar laat kyk het. Selfs oor n afstand heen kon ek sien dat dit haar natuurlike haarkleur was; n koringland waardeur die vuur trek, gesond, gloeind soos koperdraad, n sluier, n kudde waaigras tot in die klein holte van haar rug. Heks, het ek geamusseerd gedink.

Actor 1:

(Becomes part of the persecution scene)

Heks, as jy maar net kon, sou jy sekerlik jou hande smekend opgelig het....gebid het vir die verlossing wat van bo uit die hemel of dalk uit die hel moes kom....maar kyk, jy is vasgebind, jou haredos brand reeds, die vlamme begin jou verteer, die skare staan in verwondering en kyk....

## 2. The Birth

(Actor 3 as Anath reaches the center of the platform above actors 1 and 2, slowly lifts her head and shows her eyes. The other two clear the space and only look at her from where they stand in the dark.)

I am the one. It is I they want for their curling fires of flame. They have chosen me. They have chosen this beautiful body. These creamy thighs that will sizzle and split with screams so rich and fervorous. I want this. I am stilly preparing for the moment when I can throw my head up to the sky and give myself completely to my God.

I hear your questions. I hear them. They bite at my ears. Little rats little little rats. Quiet now! Know your place. Know that that your dreary lot of scampering whispers will all be answered...eventually. Until then, I hold you captive. I, the great Enigma of the ages. I, the old hobbling one. I, the tantalising dream of lust beyond your thoughts, beyond your piffling little life.

And this is not all that I am. I serve Hekate. She is my goddess of choice. It was through her might that I found salvation. That I found a way, simply, a way. A year of urging my womb, the stony lunar moor that was. A year of watering the howling treelessness for flower had left me cold. I did what I could. Fertility is Hekate's domain, and it has been my great honour that she showed me her face and showered some of her warm milk my way. The baby I carry is a capsule of perfection. She is so

brilliant with her moon-blue veins and fine skin that outlines the red blushing blood, always moving through her, moving through me. She is even more perfect that she will never leave my body, never to be pushed and examined by this outside, this world.

And so, if it is that they choose me for this deed that I did, this simple supplication to the heavens, then I say, so be it. For, if nothing else but to feed Hekate's beauty, her generosity, I will be glad of it. This is no execution. This is a sacrifice. When your ears are taken by the crack of a match on a flint, (fire gobo sets in) do not allow the flash and twinkle of flame to deceive you. It is merely a leaping story being presented that you might witness what swims beneath its surface of spitting wood and frilling flesh. This pedestal that I have been led to is not the pulpit of murder you think you see. With it's stakespire that alights before you like the spine of some crazy dancing animal of bright death with wings of heat. No, no, no, you have it all wrong. You are not vultures lining stalls, but the fortunate observers of an act of blessing.

So bind me to this spindle, place me on this ledge. I lie upon this altar in the crest of my maternal bloom. And all your beady envious eyes like so many salivating crows shall not slurp on the pleasure of my fear. For I shall shine with song and laughter, and the angel in me shall stretch and purr, just like a little cat. The smoke in my nostrils is timely. I welcome the knife at my throat. It cleanses me. I breathe in the fire of my redemption. The torching flames send my soul vaulting to the sky, up, up ,up like so many spirals of smoke and scent. I shall not even glance at your faces through the haze. I know my purpose. I feel only the soft pressure of steel on skin and its beautiful bursting of reds. Its smooth glide separates separations. It discerns what is, and what will become. It is unity. It is trinity. I, my unborn, and thee.

### Link 1

(Music, mirror scene from Snow White and the Seven Dwarves while actors set props.)

### **3. Indaba**

(Sound of birds twittering)

Nomehlo: Last night I had the most wonderful dream. I dreamt that I had wings and I was flying up in the sky with you...

Stepmother: Nomehlo, Nomehlo!!! Where are you, you wicked child? Nomehlo!

Narrator: OP N DAG WAS DAAR N MEISIE MET DIE NAAM NOMEHLONKOMO. NN, DIE MEISIE MET DIE SAGTE OE, HET N STIEFMOEDER GEHAD WAT NIKS VAN HAAR GEHOU HET NIE EN SY HET ELKE DAG VERSKEIE MOEILIKE TAKE AAN HAAR OPGEDRA.

NN: Here I am stepmother.

- Stepmother: Where is the water I asked you to fetch?
- NN: I was busy locking away the pigs, stepmother.
- Stepmother: Stop idling your day away and fetch me the water.
- NN: Yes, stepmother...
- Narrator: SY MOES WATER OOR N DUISEND HEUWELS  
AANDRA, SY MOES DIE IMPUNDULU, DIE  
SKRIKWEKKENDE WEERLIGVOEL, VERJAAG EN SY  
MOES MADUMBES UIT DIE GROND HAAL WAAR  
NIEMAND NOG OOI MADUMBES GEPLANT HET NIE.
- (We see NN go away and come back, clearly without having fulfilled her chores.)
- Narrator: DIKWELS KON SY NIE HAAR TAKE UITVOER NIE EN  
DAN MOES SY SONDER KOS GAAN SLAAP, OF SY IS  
GESLAAN TOT SY BLY LE HET. DIE MEISIE MET DIE  
SAGTE OE, NN, HET KALELANI GEWORD, DIE MEISIE  
WAT GEHUIL HET.
- Stepmother: Kalelani! Kalelani!
- Kalelani: Yes, stepmother.
- Stepmother: Take this (gives her a trap) and go to the forest to catch me  
birds. I want enough feathers to make myself a blanket for the  
coming winter and enough meat to prepare a feast for my  
friends. If you come home without the birds, you can stay in the  
forest and die.
- Narrator: (while Kalelani sings)
- KALELANI HET NA DIE WOULD GEGAAN EN DIE WIP  
GESTEL. SY WOU NIE SIEN WAT DAAR SOU GEBEUR  
NIE, DAAROM HET SY MET HAAR RUG NA DIE WIP  
TEEN N BOOMSTAM GAAN SIT EN DROEWIG BEGIN  
SING.
- Narrator: Pst, pst, Kalelani, Pst Kalelani
- Kalelani: Please don't stay here birds, you are in great danger. Fly, fly  
away, before I have to catch you. Go, shoo!!!
- Narrator: We see you Kalelani, and are grateful to you for not killing us  
for our feathers and our meat.
- Kalelani: But this will be my end, I cannot go home without it.



Narrator: No! Wait! Today we are going to give you something that will always be yours.

Kalelani: What?

Narrator: The notes of our singing.

(Narrator starts to sing while she drops feathers onto the ground next to Kalelani. Kalelani starts to sing with narrator and carries on singing the song while narration continues.)

Narrator: EN KALELANI HET HUIS TOE GEGAAN, SONDER DIE VERE EN SONDER DIE VLEIS, MAAR MET DIE NOTE VAN N HONDERD SANGVOELS IN HAAR KEEL. EN HAAR STIEFMA HET HAAR SIEN AANKOM, EN TOE SY SIEN SY HET NIKS IN HAAR HANDE NIE, HET SY RONDGESOEK NA N STOK OM HAAR DOOD TE SLAAN.

EN DIE STIEFMOEDER HET BAIE BANG GEWORD, WANT SY HET GEWEET DAT HAAR STIEFKIND DIE GESKENK VAN N 100 GEESTE GEKRY HET. SY HET OP DIE GROND NEERGEVAL EN HAAR OM VERGIFNIS GESMEEK. EN KALELANI HET WEER NN GEWORD.

(End scene with NN's song)

### Link 2

(Music.)

#### **4. Women World Peace: The Arrival**

(Three kugels-Afrikaans, Jewish and Xhosa-meet at a workshop in search of their third eye. They introduce themselves to the rest of the class.)

Debby: Hi, my name is Debby. I'm very excited and honoured to come into connection with my thirteenth eye. I'm a bit scared of all this develish stuff, not devil, but ish, like little devils.

Avril: Hi, my name is Avril! And I just want to thank each one of you straight away, for making all this possible. And Skylark I have heard so much about you. My intention for this workshop is to enhance the connection between my third eye and my coccyx. And I wish you all light through the workshop.

Nomatemba: (during the previous introductions she was speaking over her cellphone to somebody. She is still busy on the phone when Avril signals that she should introduce herself.)

Oh sorry, Darling, I was just finishing a very important phone call. My hairdresser. I'm Nomatemba. Where do I start? Well, my father is an MP in parliament, so you better watch out what you do and say to me. And I hope that this second, third, fourth eye business is going to worth my while. And by the way Sanna, woman to woman, you really need to upgrade, update your public image. I mean, do you actually score, have you got a man?

Debby: You must maar excuse.

Nom: No, I don't want to be excused. She can be excused. Besides, it's the New South Africa. The whites move for the blacks.

Debby: My husband did a lot for the blacks in this country. We have also suffered!

Nom: What, was it hard lifting all those guns to your shoulders? You white rabbit biltong!

Debby: Kaffir!

Avril: Ladies, let's take this opportunity to heal all the terrible hatred in this country!!

(Blackout.)

### Link 3

(Music. Film clip from The Little Mermaid. Ursula's make-up scene.)

## 5. Dis hulle storie

(Actor 2 wears a pair of hip-hanging worn-out jeans, a vest, and a faded baseball cap.)

Djissis ek was naar nadat ek dit gedoen het, ek mos nie n rapist of n ding nie. Maar dit moes. Daar is net een manier, het Boeta en die manne my gese. En ek glo hulle, dit is manne wat die lewe van onder af ken, hulle het hier in die guts en die gutters van die gutters grootgeword. Hulle het hard geleer. Sonder genade. Daarom weet hulle die dinge.

Nog nooit het die spul high-to -mighties in hul navy suits op die TV een dag se iets vir my en die mense hier van Plakkiesdorp gedoen nie. Van die NP tot dwarsdeur Mandela en sy fan club. Niks. Ek skuld hulle niks. So, as hulle begin skree oor rape

en crime en democracy en AIDS en die New South Africa, dan maak ek my oë en ore toe en ek fokkof . Dis hulle storie, nie myne nie.

n Virgin het Boeta gese. Dit moet n virgin wees. En ek het nog so by myself gedag: wat jy waar kry? En die manne het ook gelag, want hulle weet n virgin hou nie lank nie. Nie in hierdie valley van ons nie. Jy kan maar se die babies word gebore dan dra die pa's al hul krone, gerape voor die skollies hul kan kry.

Dit was nie maklik om te gaan na die mense in Kaapstad wat die toetse doen nie. Dit was nie maklik nie. Nie lekker nie. Maar daar gekom, het die lady sommer reguit gepraat. Oor privacy het sy nie geworry nie. Hoekom laat jy jou toets? "Is jy n risikogeval, is jy gay, spuit jy in?"

Wat moes ek vir haar se? Ek is nie n fokken moffie nie, dit weet ek vir myself, maar wat weet sy miskien van gang rapes as die bendes sie streate van Plakkiesdorp oorneem.

Hierdie plek van ons is vuil, die vuilgoed wat hier bly. Die enigste ding wat skoon is, is n virgin, as jy dit kan kry.

Maar toe dink ek, "Wat maak ek as sy vir my se: Mister Lucky, jy het dit. Dis mos net asof sy sal se, "Vat jou goete en maak jou klaar vir die graf. Dis finish en klaar met jou." Daarvoor het ek nie kans gesien nie. Daarom het ek geloop en nie weer teruggegaan nie.

Maar in die meantime, het ek alhoemeer beginne dink aan Boeta en wat hy gese het van die ding. Boeta sal weet. Hy't street university geloop. As daar te helpe is sal ek myself moet help.

En toe die kans kom, toe vat ek dit. Ek het eers gedag dis n klonkie wa by die keffie inkom, maar toe sien ek nee, dis n meisietjie. Virgin, het ek gedink.

Die res was eintlik maklik. Maar dit was nie maklik nie, die djirre weet. Ek het later maar haar bek toegedruk.

Die beste ding om te doen was om in n bus te klim en te fokkof Johies toe of waar ook al die einde is van die bus se pad. Ek het niks saamgevat nie, nie eens my paar stukke klere nie. Ek willie in Plakkiesdorp wees as hulle haar kry nie. Wat ek gaan doen as ek daar bo aankom, waar om n job te kry, geld, slaapplek, dit weet ek nie.

Ten minste is ek nou skoon. Van die kruiper in my bloed.

## 6. My Liefste Vader

(Actor 1 enters, her body bound in a long piece of red fabric.)

MY LIEFSTE VADER....N HONDERDDUISEND GOEIE NAGTE BID EK U TOE. ONSKULDIG HET EK IN DIE GEVANGENIS TEREKGEKOM, ONSKULDIG IS EK GEMARTEL, ONSKULDIG MOET EK STERF. WANT DIE EEN WAT IN DIE HEKSESEL BELAND, MOET N HEKS WORD OF GEMARTEL WORD

TOTDAT SY IETS VERSIN EN –GOD WEES MY GENADIG- IETS HAAR TE BINNE SKIET. SOOS U KAN SIEN AAN MY SKRIF, HET DIE BEUL DIE DUIMSKROEWE AAN BEIDE MY HANDE GESIT, TOTDAT DIE BLOED UIT MY NAELS GEDRUP HET, SODAT EK VIR DRIE WEKE LANK NIE MY HANDE KON GEBRUIK NIE...

MY LIEFSTE VADER , WEES ASSEBLIEF VERSIGTIG, WANT EK VERMOED DAT U OOK IN DOODSGEVAAR VERKEER. DIT HET TOT MY KENNIS GEKOM DAT DIE PERSOON WAT MY AANGEKLA HET, DIE EEN WAT EERSTE WAS OM TEEN MY TE GETUIG, DIE GELIEFDE PASTOOR VAN ONS KERK, PASTOOR S. IS. WAAK TOG DAARTEEN DAT U NIKS TEEN HOM SE NIE, ANDERS IS U OOK...

#### Link 4

(Music. Clip from Snow White and the Seven Dwarves: Witch and apple.)

### **7. Wildekind, Koponderstebo**

(As music plays, Actor 2 languidly opens the umbrellas, hanging from the tree. Actor 3 goes to sit on swing.)

- Nadia: Ek is nie bang nie. Hier woon ek, ek sluit nie my deure nie, my vensters is oop. As iemand iets wil steel, moet hy maar inkom en vat en weer loop, ek het oorgenoeg. Ek is nie bang nie. Vir niks nie. Ek het die deur die hele wereld gereis, ek koop wat vir my mooi is, my kas is vol klere van die allerbeste stowwe, ek maak liefde met die mooiste vroue. Daar is niks waarna ek hunker wat ek nie kry nie.
- Actor 2: Hoe het dit dan gebeur, Nadia?
- Tree: Die kind wat in die klam koelte onder die avokadoboom speel, hoor die geluide uit die oop venster van die kamer voor haar. Dit is vreemde geluide, en gedemp, maar sy kan wel haar pa se stem herken.
- Nadia: Ek was n meisie, n plaaskind en veertien jaar oud. Ek het my ma opgetel en huis toe gedra. n Kilometer ver , met kaal voete op n klipperige grondpad. Ek het dit gedoen. By die huis het ek haar in die bad gesit en haar hare gewas, en toe in die bed gesit. Omdat ek daardie nag geweet het dat ek n man is.
- Tree: Sy los die landgoed wat sy aant skep is, die opstal met sy roostuin, die landerye, die wingerde en die woud, vee haar modderige hande aan haar rok af, en staan op. Tussen haar en die venster is welige struik, sy kan nie inkyk of nader kruip nie. Die geluide uit die kamer het n dringendheid wat haar beangs, en nuuskierig, maak. Die kind swaai haar heen om die onderste knoets van die boom, trek haarself op teen die takke. Sy kyk in die kamer in. Sy sien hoe die vrou op die bed se oop geslag gul na haar pa se mond opgelig word, sy sien met hoeveel

genot hy sy kop oor haar laat sak. Lank kyk die kind vir haar pa. En die bure se huishulp.

En toe haar ma later tuis kom, kan sien dat haar ma weet. Almal weet, kom sy mettertyd agter, maar almal dink dat sy nie weet nie. Hoekom sal n kind van ses so iets verstaan en waarom haar met die kennis daarvan belas?

Die kind kyk dikwels vir haar pa uit die avokadoboom se mik. Sy sien die vroue en herken sommige van hulle as bure, vriende, die werksters van bure en vriende. Sy draai nie weg in walging nie, maar kyk en hoor, en voel n donker bruising in haar bloed as sy hulle sien.

Nadia: Met my veertienword, le ek snags en luister na die heftige gesprekke tussen my ma en my pa. Dit word al hoe meer en driftiger. My ma huil baie. Soggens gaan ek skool toe, loop die kilometer of wat na die stasie waar die oggendtrein my en die melkkanne oplaai. Smiddags kom ek terug na n bord kos, my ma en my pa. Na afwisselende stiltes en rusies. Ek klim nie meer in die boom nie, maar bly bewus van vreemde asemritmes in die huis. Soms is dit my pa. Soms weet ek nie waar dit vandaan kom nie, dit is deel van die dik, koel mure. En toe een nag...

Tree: Die meisie wat laatnag nog wakker le in haar bed, kyk op toe sy die skaduwee voor haar venster sien verbygaan. n Vlermuis, dink sy eers, en lig haar op haar elmboog. Nee, sien sy, nie n fladderende nagdier nie, maar iemand. Sy kom orent, kyk by die oop raam uit. Dit is haar ma wat die tuinhok oopdruk en die pad vat. Die kind staan haar n ruk en agternakkyk.

Nadia: Asof dit self aan my vertel is, weet ek waarheen my ma op pad is. Met nagklere en kaal voete, klim ek deur die venster, koes onder die laaghangende takke van die bome deur, en loop agter my ma aan, deur die hekkie wat oopstaan. Ongesiens volg ek my ma op die grondpad wat ek self elke dag twee keer loop. Ek sien dat my ma op haar horlosie kyk, kyk hoe lank dit nog sal wees voordat die nagtrein hier sal verbystoom, stad toe. En toe die eerste fluit deur die nag skeur, die trein se koplamp n wit vuur in die verte, sien ek dat ek reg was. My ma gaan op die spoorlyn le, op haar maag, met haar kop op die blink spoor, tussen haar arms toegevou. ( We hear sound of train coming from a distance)

Dit is nie die worsteling wat ek onthou nie. Of die rukwind van die trein en my ma se desperate angsgille en die skerp klippe in haar rug langs die spoorlyn terwyl ons hygend le en wag terwyl die trein by ons verbysnel.

Dit is die lang tog huis toe wat in my geheue gegrif is. En dat ek daardie dag besef het dat ek n man is.

Tree: (Naggeluide)  
 Die man wat in die bed le, kyk deur die oop venster na buite. Buite is dit laatsomer, die aarde swaar en vol na n geil somer. In die nagdonker kan hy hom verbeel dat dit die fluisterende plantegroei van Bali, die druipende oerwoude van Borneo is wat om die huis woeker. Hy kan die sagte molm van die aarde ruik: hy sien die kamferbome waarteen olifante skuur, roosbottels barstens toe vol granaat, saadknoppe soos juweeldosies waaruit hy die mooiste sierade kies, trosse volryp bessies waarvan hy die donkerstes pluk. Daar is n sagte geritsel tussen die blare. Blinde motte suig waansinnig aan heunigsap, sien hy, en in die boom reg voor die venster, n wilde kind met donker hare wat koponderstebo drink aan die oop kelke van soet nagblomme.

Link 5

(Music)

**8. Women World Peace: The Octopus**

(All three kugels are in the middle of a practical exercise for connecting with one's higher power.)

Nom: Hayi, Ladies, I feel fokkol. This white dukum magic does nothing for me.

Avril: Nomatemba, you need to uncross your legs, let the energy flow, root yourself so that the spirits can find your voice.

Debby: Root! Root!

Avril: Yes, try vocalizing it.

Debby: Wait, I'm seeing something. I see the moon. I see the waters.

Avril: And what are they saying to you, Debra?

Debby: They say...Hallo!

Avril: And what does your tribe have to say to you, Nomatemba?

Nom: My tribe says f...

Debby: Avril, I see a black octopus coming my way. It's spitting ink, Avril. Poisoning me with its blood. I'm drowning in the black blood!!!!

Avril: This is good, Debby. Come with me to the wall. Let's clear away this baggage that's been weighing you down all these years. Don't worry, Coeks, we're all here with you.

Nom: Fuck that shit. Speak for yourself, Sanna. What do I look like? A white rabbit support group?

Avril: Nomatamba, how can you be so disrespectful of a fellow third eye seekers' process?!

Debby: Avril, she is the octopus!

(Blackout.)

### Link 6

(Music. Film Clip: Revenge scene from The Little Mermaid.)

### **9. want dit sny nie**

(Actor 3 appears as Sylvia in a pair of clinical white slacks and goes to put a white doctor's coat on as she speaks.)

I drive. Move through passages of traffic that choke and open, sunlight streaking off carroofs like little blindings. I park. Move onto pavement into store. I do not not scan the people eating as I go in. If I do know someone sitting I'll feel it in my shoulder anyway. Into the main section. Someone at the counter is asking for ginseng in powder form. She's got a nice bag I think and head for the muffins. The woman who takes my money is laughing with the other assistant about something. They look so free in that sound they are making.

Driving again. I check my watch. Everything done and time to spare. Time to spare. Waiting to turn, an old woman walks past drawing her dog behind her. The woman looks tired. Her dog looks tired. She looks like a man and is wearing inappropriate clothing. Her gold stilettos creak under her heaviness, and her faded wide-brim sunhat clings to the group of five plastic flowers on its band. The dog is miniscule and very, very nervous. For a second the woman glances my way. Her face shouts three colours: black brows like little oil slicks, shiny blue eyelids like car-varnish, and red lips like the inside of a body. Our eyes meet. I know at once and for certain that she does not care who she sees. She hates this loathsome inelegant world that casts her out like some invisible scarecrow. She drags on her menthol cigarette, the ash like a long tunnel of death about to drop. She is happy.

A car hoots. I turn the corner and leave her and her strange colours flapping in the hot wind, contemplating the crossing of a road.

I pad down the hospital passage in my whites. My doctor coat with its bits of steel perching the pockets. I like the blankness of this uniform, its neutrality. I enter the operating theatre. The anaesthetised patient lies shrouded in starched hospital blues. Something about her face I think what is it? The attendants are laughing about something; they stop when they see me. I am the abortionist. They think perhaps I can't smile and do my job at the same time. I begin.

She is quite far into her pregnancy, the procedure takes longer than usual. I will remember her face later as I perform the next scheduled operation, the removal of three fingers on the left hand of a diabetic woman. As I begin the incision on the index finger, it comes to me. It was in my dream that she had appeared. The dream comes clear. (Sound of bird in forest)

I walk through a forest. Pine-needles beneath my feet are soft and prickly, muted by recent rain. Stillness is around me. One bird gives sound. A sweet note that cracks the crisp air but holds no opinion. It simply waits, and then tells again after some minutes. I pass trees and trees. I walk with purpose, without purpose. The sun behind thinner clouds warms the light on a clearing. And there she is. Dressed in hospital blues, her eyes open now and alive. They are like mirrors or balls of sea that keep changing. She holds out her hand to me. Her skin under mine is like an exposed wire, humming. She leads me to a tree, signals me to hide behind it.

The thing she is pointing at, the thing I look at unseen is a little girl. It is me of four years old. She is kneeling looking over a dead cat that must have been knocked over. Its side has been split open, exposing still warm inland like a shout of real amongst all this hushed pine. The girl has dug a small grave for the cat, her hands still coated with earth. She is placing tiny white and turquoise flowers in a pattern amongst muscle, bone, and organ. The tenderness with which she does this is not dramatic. She does what must be done, and takes joy in its completion. She places the blossoming corpse into the small hole, and begins rhythmically, almost musically throwing the dark brown sand over it.

I notice a figure settled on margins of this dream, sitting relieved on a tree stump. Her dog is sleeping in twitching starts now. The woman watches this burial like an interesting show. She ashes her cigarette on the pine-floor and takes deep restful draws on its coal of orange.

These three women of my dream form a somehow apt trinity: the pre-occupied burial girl, the vacuuated mother of electricity, and the contemplating old woman of gracelessness.

I remove my surgical gloves, watching the nurses resume their joke in the passage. Soap and cool water. The sound of safety. Hushed talking nurses talking. The operation is complete.

I drive my car. A man in front of me screeches a red light round the corner. His face looks like a mask of anger. I drive my car. I think of my day. I am happy.

#### Link 7

(Music.)



### 10. Women World Peace: Inner Fears

(The workshop is coming to a close. Participants talk in small groups about their experiences.)

Debby: Well, my greatest inner fear was just actually being here. You know, I grew up in the Karoo and my upbringing was very firm in the church - NG Kerk. And Dominee Beyers would frown if he saw me because I'm mos opening the doors for the devils here. But I said to myself, Debs, the world goes beyond the prayers of Dominee Beyers: Be brave!

Avril: You have my full support, Debby, and I cannot begin to tell you how much I relate to your situation. I couldn't do without Schul and Shabbat with my children, but honestly. Women at the top; men at the bottom - all this separation! Why doesn't anyone say or do anything? And just between you and me: I'm getting looks and I'm getting upset.

Debby: Yes, Avril, the church gave me freedom, but now they've taken me in that freed position and chained me, Avril.

Avril: Exactly, Debby. Are we treasured as women? Am I just a housewife to my husband?

Nom: Sanna, talking about those things we call our husbands. I'm here....I have.... I have a problem, Avril!!!! (Loses her kugel accent)  
My husband, Avril. The bitch next door. I've tried muti, love potions, Avril, Sangomas, black, white and astronomical ones. Everything, Avril. But that woman has sucked all his attention.

Debby: I think she's charmed him with her devil deeds, hey Avril?

Avril: He's a zombie.

Nom: Sanna, just last night I found a black cat in my bed. You know what. I boiled water. The minute it hit the cat, she screamed next door.

(Debby and Avril exchange meaningful glances)

Debby: Does she have a mole?

(Nom nods)

Avril: Does it have hairs?

(Nom nods. Debby and Avril look at each other)

Deb & Avril: Witch!!!!!!

(They go into position as if about to perform witch's ritual.)

All: BURN THE WITCH!!!!!!!!!!!!

(Last line expressed in each character's own respective language.)

Link 8

(Music. Film Clip: Wicked Stepmother transition from Snow White and the Seven Dwarves.)

**11. Mother of None**

(Actor 2 enters in blackout. Lights fade up as she speaks. She wears an African-style wrap and head-piece.)

The road which lies ahead is often dark and misty. Even though my eyes are open, it feels as though they are closed. I stretch my arms out in front of me, in search of something or someone to hold onto. I consciously reach out for an open ear or mind to listen to me. But I soon realize that I am alone. I soon realize that I have always been alone, even though there was light and there were people around me.

Suddenly there is a cold breeze, and it warms me up from inside. It is as though Mother Nature is responding to my silent cries. A dry tear crosses my face, and my heart beats three strokes per second. I start moving three paces forward, carefully placing one foot after another in a straight line. I stop, and try to think of something, but my mind is blank.

Visions of my childhood, my big wedding day, and the birth of my first stillborn child and nightmares of the death of the next nine children race back and forth in no coherent manner. How did I, Mamiya, eldest of the three most beautiful sisters in the village, and wife to the most arrogant and wanted man, become a stranger in her own home and country.

Now all I own is a whole lot of empty titles, like the woman who eats her children before they are even born, the traditional healer who sacrifices her own flesh and blood for the sake of healing powers. Inkuntsela nenkalanzinzi yegqwirha. Into engasoze iphumelele. Awu madoda, intliziyo yam iyaphalala njengegazi. Ingqondo yam ithatha ibeka inyuka isihla njengamanzi olwandle. Baphi na abantu xa umntu esifa zintlungu zokuba sisikhova.

I continue to walk. But this time my heart is filled with a sense of determination, hope, and energy to continue. This brings me joy. However, the joys of loss are less than the pain gained thereof.

Link 9

(Actors sing.)

## 12. Die Vrou in die Kelder

(Actor 3 as grandmother in rocking chair sings little nursery rhyme or Victorian song. Actor 2 as moon is positioned on platform. Actor 1 as Vrou cleans her house.)

- Maan: Dit het alles by die droom begin. Sy droom daar bly n vreemde vrou in haar kelder. Alles in die droom gebeur soos in die werklike lewe:
- Vrou: Ek verkoop my huis en verhuis na n ander dorp. Ek gaan bly in n kliphuis tussen bome en hoe berge. Op n dag staan ek in my groot gesellige kombuis. Alles is so helder in my droom.
- Maan: Sy kan selfs sien hoe die son teen die ragfyn drade van die antieke kantgordyn kaats en skaduwees fyn soos spinnekopwebbe teen die growwe kombuismure gooi. Sy staan nog en kyk na die pragtige patroon, toe sy skielik n kier in my klipmuur gewaar. Deur die skrefie sien sy n kelder onder haar huis, vol ou stowwerige meubels. Tussen al die meubels sit daar n ouerige vrou in n skommelstoel. Sy het haar rug na die skreef, sodat die vrou nie haar gesig kan sien nie.
- Vrou: Daar is iets bekends aan die ou mens in die stoel, maar ek kan nie haar gesig sien nie. Ek roep Ntinti nader om te kom kyk wie die vrou is, maar sy se sy sien niemand nie. "Is ek seker dat daar iemand is," wil sy by my weet. Na n ruk sien ek dat die ou vrou effe omgedraai het op haar stoel en toe sy sien dat sy dopgehou word, glimlag sy skalks en wieg verbete op haar stoel. Ek herken haar, maar ek kan nie onthou wie sy is nie. Terwyl ek droom weet ek dat dit n wonderbaarlike droom is. Vertrous met die wete slaap ek rustig tot die volgende oggend.
- Vrou: Is ek gek dat ek so baie aandag gee aan n droom? Dit pla my, want daar's die vae moontlikheid dat daar wel n vrou kan leef in die ruimte van die muwwerige kelder onder my huis. Dit pla my veral dat ek nie kan onthou waar ek tevore die vrou gesien het nie. Ek weet dat ek haar onmiddellik sal herken as ek haar net in die oe kan kyk. Dit was nie my ma se gesig of postuur nie, ook nie die van my ouma, wie se naam ek dra nie.
- Maan: In die dae wat volg, probeer sy orde skep in die chaos van n nuwe huis, maar sy bly deurgaans bewus van die teenwoordig van die ou vrou saam met haar in dieselfde woning. Sy begin selfs optree en reageer soos iemand wat bewus is van n ander persoon in die huis. Meer as een keer staan sy op die plek waar sy die skeurtjie in haar droom gesien het, maar die muur is elke keer heel. Sy begin n obsessie met die muur ontwikkel.
- Vrou: Met moeite onderdruk ek die impuls om harder met my naels teen die muur te kap, om n skilfer verf af te skraap, om n hamer en n spyker te gaan haal, en n kepie in die muur te kap. Ek soek buite om my huis na

n deur of n valluik wat dalk na n kelder kan ly, maar daar is geen teken van n kelder nie.

Snags gaan ek uitgeput in my eikehoutbed le, en net voordat ek aan die slaap raak, hoop ek om die droom met wilsrag te herhaal, sodat ek met haar kan praat en na haar kan kyk totdat ek weet wie sy is.

Maan: Dit is in *die* tyd dat die vrou begin wonder oor haar ouma, die ouma wie se naam sy dra.

Vrou: n Formidabele vrou, een vir wie almal n bietjie bang was omdat sy met die helm gebore is. Dit is sy wat my op swoel weerlignagte saam met haar op die voorstoep laat sit het om die spookligte en dwaalgeeste te sien. Totdat my oupa een aand gese het, “maar my jene oudier, die kind sal mos nagmerries kry vir res van haar lewe.”

“Dan is dit goed so,” het my ouma gese “n kind wil bang wees vir die dinge wat in die nag loop. n Kind moet bang gemaak word vir die dinge groter as onself. Hoe gaan sy anders leer om verwonderd te wees oor die lewe?”

En my ouma was reg.

Maan: Sy dink ook dikwels aan haar ma.

Vrou: Of sy met die helm gebore is weet ek nie, net dat n vroedvrou tydens die geboorte van een van ouma se kinders met gebede en ontsteltenis die nag ingevlug het, die baarmoedervlies wat oor die kind se kop tot by die skouers getrek was saam met die nageboorte in haar hande.

Maan: Toe gebeur dit. Die vrou word in die nanag wakker met geluide wat haar bangmaak.

Vrou: Ek is nie alleen nie. Daar is nog mense in hierdie huis, en hulle is nie hier met goeie bedoelings nie. Ek kan die weggemoffelde geluide hoor en weet dat daar gewerskaf word. Ek is magteloos. Ek kan net hier le en wag en hoop dat hulle sal weggaan sonder om boontoe te kom. Maar wat van die vrou in die kelder? Sy is in groter gevaar as ek.

Maan: En toe hoor sy die slag. Iets van glas wat teen die grond stukkend gesmyt word en die helse gil van iemand wat in doodsgevaar verkeer.

Vrou: Dit was die vrou in die kelder. Ek het n deur hoor toeklap, voetstappe wat met dringende haas teen die plaveisel van my oprit klap en wegsterf.

Maan: Sy stap stadig by die trappe af, haar arms styf teen haar lyf. Dis n vreemde toneel wat hom voor die vrou afspeel. Op die plek waar sy vir die eerste keer in haar droom gestaan het, is n bars breed genoeg om deur te kyk. Asof in n droom stap sy na die muur. Sy kyk deur die

gaping, af na die kelder onder haar huis. Ou stowwerige meubels staan in die vertrek. Die vrou sit tevrede en wieg op haar stoel, haar kop effens vooroor, en mompel deuntjies sonder woorde.

Vrou: En toe herken ek haar. Dit is my ouma, my ouma wie se naam ek dra. En dit is terselfdertyd ook my ma. Die ma wat van my weet. Maar dit is nog iemand. Met n oneindige gevoel van vertroosting herken ek haar.

### Link 10

(Music. Actor's 1 and 2 set out nun's outfit.)

### **13. The Nun**

(Actor 3 appears in blackout walking with a candle in a holder. She places it on a small wooden table. During the piece she dresses herself piece by piece into her habit.)

It is my habit that I love the most. Folding myself into its cotton creases. The cleanness of it. Like flour for bread. A prayer for each bit each dawn in my little room so sturdy I thank for my good fortune. And so easy, so easy when one does not carry the burden of actually believing in all this hocus pocus. When one does not have to struggle in sweaty torture about some little thought that may have betrayed some law, that may have offended Him.

I am blessed with detachment, purpose. It was not the rousing faith in Christ that, burning like a fire between my legs, called me to this cloister. It was rather a lack of faith in what surrounded me. Teeming women paired off like so many fish with terribly respectable husbands. I would watch those women with their gorgeous wit and darling skin and so thrilling laughter slowly crumble before my eyes. Bravado in the face of their fenced off lives would be the first thing to waver. Their sense of humour would follow, and lastly I would notice that the blood couldn't get to their cheeks anymore. Each quirk snipped off like a weedy growth until what was left was a collection of unenthusiasms held together with skin.

My father had always told me: "Money, albeit the root of evil, can, if used correctly, effect great good."

I took his advice and bought my way into freedom. It was a simple decision. I refused to take orders about my soul from any man, any man visible to the naked eye, that is. Invisible men hold so much more power it seems, and are so much more malleable in the hands of a good woman. The church is eternally grateful for generous donations, and accepted me without so much as a wink. Me. The shining thief stealing my way into the very heart of Christ. The actress heavenly beguiling God himself. He can't help but notice the slightly pretty one with the morning in her eye.

So, this is my habit. My fantastic performance. My life is lived in code and kept under the wraps of starched white and black. Who knows, perhaps I am destined to be the next Mother Superior, slipping elegantly into the next ascension. I will gather newcomers to my little bit of peace like a flock of angels. What an exquisite act this all is. I, a woman of discretion and chastity. A stow-away never found out. Do you believe in me? Can you?

(Lights fade. Actor 3 removes nun's habit while Actors 1 and 2 enter, laughing gently. They have initial preplay domestic props again. Music. All make their way up to top of platform. They play with the billowing white sheet, laughing. Fade to black.)