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From the Tower, Blooms the Abyss

by Nacht Hexe



Contribution Form:

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Abstract

> The killed object, from which I am separated through sacrifice, while it links me to God it also sets itself up, in the very act of being destroyed, as desirable, fascinating, and sacred. (Kristeva, Columbia Press, 1982, pp. 110-111)

The Tower, as the major arcana card in tarot, and in its capacity to represent those destructive life moments, are shown to me as interpretive performance autoethnographic turning point events, epiphanies that are remembered with exacting clarity, even if the surrounding trauma clouds a person's timeline of events. In 2018, I became the 'killed object', a catastrophic tower moment in which, in the very act of being destroyed, 'subdues me and brings me into subjection to what has been sacrificed' (ibid). It was a turning point event, a moment of change from which there was no coming back. In my efforts to survive, my existence as the killed object transmuted into the abject, a glimmer of hope reflected back to me as the potential liberation of moving from a signified object to a signifying subject through claiming my status as the abject, in post-factum ontology. The traumatic events discussed in this chapter, helped to translate my abjection, 'from which I am separated through abomination, if it guarantees a pure and holy law' (ibid) so that my abominate becomes the sacred. This multimedia submission offers a visual representation and an accompanying script of the tower card in that subjective momentary stasis point. You may read one with the other, or as separate entities, the choice is yours.

Keywords

feminism, witchcraft, Abyss, subjectivity

Transcript of the Audiovisual Contribution

The Tower

> The dissolution point – so vulnerable, so terrifying, so awe-full. Thus, we shore ourselves up with promises, and fidelity, and trust, but this is so much noise, for there can be no safety here […] the only guarantee of making it out is to throw oneself forward, topple headfirst into the Abyss.[1]

Not long ago, I fell upon the ruins of my tower moment, its fallen body of bricks and mortar cloistered at my bloody feet. There I stood, enveloped in the destruction wrought by others but carried by me. As I gazed across the gore-soaked battlefield that had once been my life, I knew I now stood at the edge of the Abyss, my slit and lacerated toes wrapped over Her wet rim, rocking against that needle-sharp precipice, feeling Her hot, black breath of the void-mouth waiting to devour me whole.

I let go…

The major arcana tarot card, The Tower, with all its obliterating, compelling force, exploded my life in 2018. This was my 'dissolution point', the moment where my *self* became the blasted sovereign subject.[2] The crenelations from my uppermost battlements crashed around me and I found myself to be a shadow in my own life. A new ontological and epistemological creature was born from the Abyss, under the new shining banner of 'disabled', my Kafkaesque metamorphosis, my transmutation, my transfiguration, my revolution. I exist now, having been retched back out by the Abyss, inside a paradox of the trans-state, fixed yet liminal, alive yet dead, fastened yet undone.

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[1] Georgia van Raalte, *Approaching Babalon: Essays on the Abyss.* Atlanta (GA: Temple of Our Lady of the Abyss, 2020), 57.

[2] Niall Stewart, "Black Confessions and Absu-lution". In N. Masciandaro (Ed.), *Hideous Gnosis* (Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2010), 127.

Georgia van Raalte suggests in her text *Approaching Babalon* that 'the apocalypse is inevitable', that "if you want to survive all this uncertainty, all this fearful waiting with your (in)sanity, you must learn the secrets of the tantrums in the graveyard, of mad dogs in the midday sun. Death and disease and desecration are sacred. These are not Bad Things, but sites of healing".[3] From Babalon's dark crucible that cradled me in all my hurt and trauma, I clawed my way out and found that I had become less woman, and more creature. I could have stayed there, nestled against her annihilating flesh but She urged, 'move', She said, 'move or become one with the void'. I suspect I experienced a mystical death, a psychotic catastrophe. As Walter Benjamin notes, "inundation by the Real in life is 'madness' and psychotic catastrophe, the corporeal substance overwhelming symbolic structure".[4] My corporeal substance was jettisoned from my symbolic order and, in my falling-through-grief, Babalon caught me.

van Raalte writes, "why not take joy in death? We have staved off death at every angle […] we must hold opposites in mind, constantly. We are all magicians now, and the scales that we hold are those of cruelty and kindness".[5] Having experienced more cruelty than kindness, I set out to know myself, in the depths of trauma, to see what I could discover, to see if I could take joy in my death through resurrecting my corporeality as a creaturely form, falling "into the body of pain for the salvation that lies at the heart of catastrophe".[6] Trauma negates language, you see, and I was unable to speak, struck dumb and bound by the catastrophe. Yet, "when communicative language is cut open, the 'creaturely appears'" and so my Benjaminian corporeal substance shifted and swelled into incandescent spears of phosphorescence, incising the sharp squall that enshrouded me, plucking at my remains.[7] I sat down on the parched earth, breathing deeply of her soil, and I knew I must manifest and transmute that pain through writing, composing, and painting.

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3 van Raalte, *Approaching Babalon*, 32.

4 Walter Benjamin, qtd. in Stewart, E. *Catastrophe and Survival: Walter Benjamin and Psychoanalysis.* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010), 137.

5 van Raalte, *Approaching Babalon*, 33.

6 Benjamin, qtd. in Stewart, *Catastrophe and Survival*, 136.

7 Benjamin, qtd. in Stewart, *Catastrophe and Survival*, 136.

I began a journey, a voyage, an odyssey through my own psyche, rifling through the sediments and bruised ghosts of what was left of me, after my Tower moment. I wanted to see what I could make of it. I became my own magician, my own witch, my own seer. From this crucible, a strange and otherworldly anatomy grew and rolled: from the cracking of each new bone, a creative ossein pierced my skin, carried on its own trajectory, a "combined mind and body [as] a category of its 'now', its momentary manifestation as an ephemeral yet immortal being".[8] I am now something other, something animal, some wild thing that exists outside the hegemonic control of the symbolic order that will not and cannot be controlled. To whom do I now belong? Am I of the earth? Of the Other? Of the Abyss? van Raalte writes:

> Woman has become the in-between, the Other that defies categorisation. She is the natural margin of mess, the excess, all that we cut when we codified culture. She is the undignified, the symbol without a centre, the emptiness in the grounds of being, the chasm where we expected a wand […] therefore we obsess over Her relationality, hence too we say that there is no true femininity, only performance—for performance itself, the recognition of the separation the thing and its perception, verily that Space is of Her.[9]

I feel this, deeply. I am of an unbelonging, a liminal space where I am displaced and dislocated, an othered creature that "defies categorisation". To which I say, good. I am glad I exist beyond the realms of socio-cultural designation, that I endure where others think I shouldn't have. Any sense of femininity I embodied died when my old self crumbled at the Tower's feet. That "Space is of Her" is where I now reside, with my oils and canvases, paint brushes and palette knives, signifying and revealing Her Space and my status as a wild thing through every colour of which I can conceive. A transmogrification of my trauma and my truth casts itself in my Vulva canvas series, the "total vitality of the life of the corporeal substance in its inevitable dissolution, fate as well as its appearance as truth content in works of art".[10]

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8 Benjamin, qtd. in Stewart, *Catastrophe and Survival*, 136.

9 van Raalte, Approaching Babalon, 34-35.

10 Benjamin qtd. in Stewart, *Catastrophe and Survival*, 137.

The Metempsychosis

What is the vision of my new material cultural reality? My paintings emerged as a direct response to "the vanity of the patriarchy [that] knows no end", represented by the Tower, now transmuted, and painted back to patriarchy through my vulva series in vivid colours and heavy textures.[11] My instincts met that hegemonic violence with the softness and terror of Her, an occultising process through which I finally picked up a paintbrush again, after a lapse of nearly thirty years. That is significant, and I have often wondered if these canvasses demonstrate my "post-catastrophic thinking"[12] and my desire to move beyond and through my "V.I.T.R.I.O.L. […] The Goddess is coming, The Goddess is coming".[13]

As a movement of revolt, encapsulated as a prism of vivid and vibrant colour, these paintings were born, all with their own names, each canvas whispering to me their matronymic legends as I furiously crafted. I am called.

I have chosen a selection of paintings from my vulva series. To see all of them, please visit nacht-hexe.com.

The Madonna

She is the first in the series and I used oils, charcoal, gold poster paint, glaze medium, and menstrual blood (fig. 1). She is my first and only work to make use of my own sacred blood as part of the creative process. In so doing, she becomes invested with an apophatic catechism or liturgy: 'this is my body, this is my blood'. As I am also a black metal musician, it feels appropriate to reference the apophatic nature of the music in relation to my art. Niall Scott writes:

[11] van Raalte, *Approaching Babalon*, 34.

[12] Stewart, *Catastrophe and Survival*, 140.

[13] van Raalte, *Approaching Babalon*, 38-39.

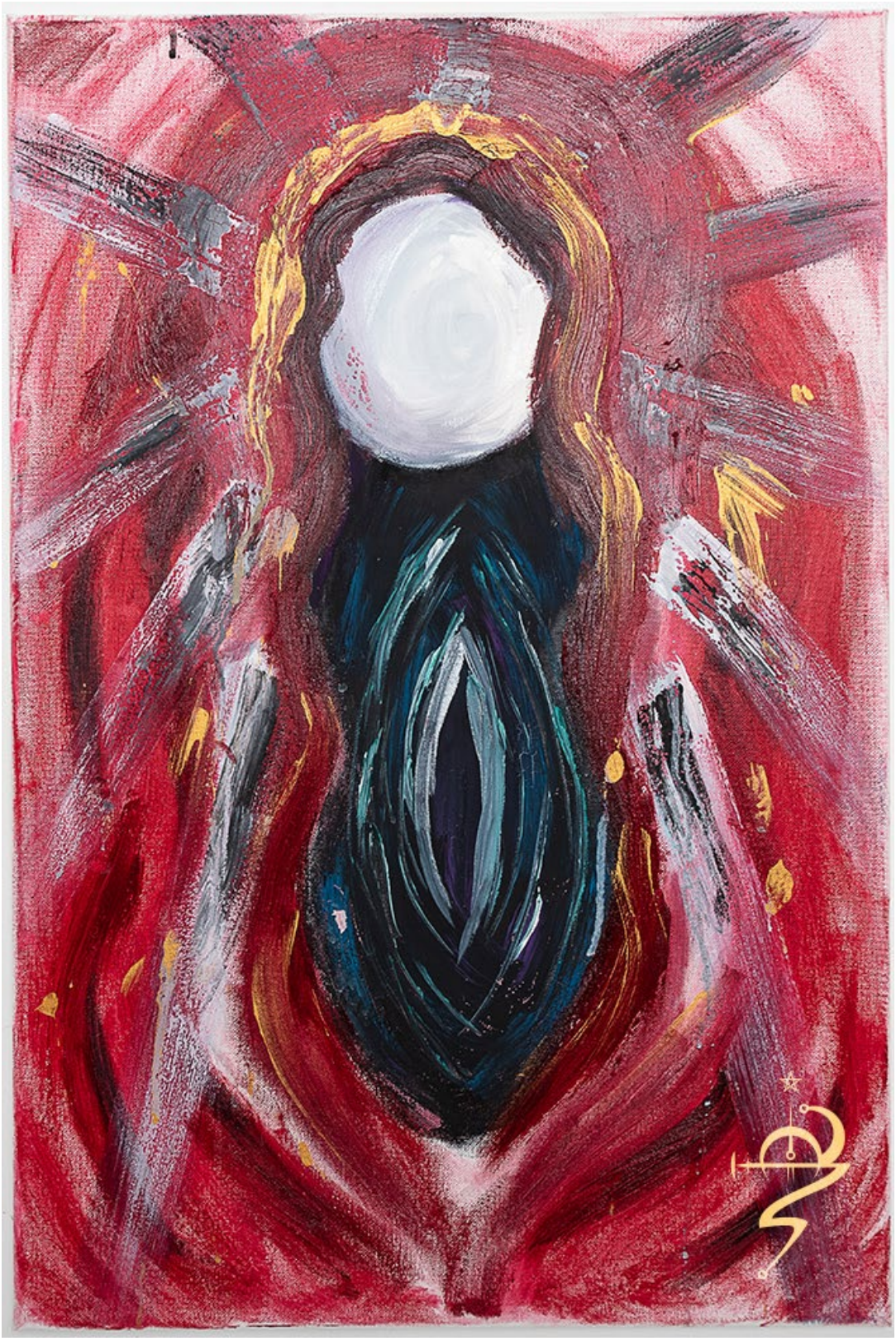


Figure 1 – Nacht Hexe, *The Madonna*, 2020.

> In Black Metal in contrast to the Christian confession and absolution, there is no soul to be atoned, no restoration to God needed; instead, it is an incantation into the void. The black metal event is a confession without the need for absolution, redemption, it is a venting, a bloodletting with no prospect of consuming blood. […] This is the Black Confession and the absence in black absolution. […] It is a move from the sin consumption and its loss to the stranger-void, from a worshipful liturgy of enslavement to a discourse, through a return of the sin. […] The Black Metal event is a stranger returning from the void to collect and consume the misery of mankind.[14]

There is no God here. Only Her. A stranger-void represented as The Madonna, written in blood. Gold is her headdress as she looks to the east, a bloodletting in black absolution. A shining pearl atop a swirling vortex that tells us to stop looking without for validation: you must look within.

Krone

The original study (fig. 2) is only a small canvas, but she is a powerful one. Using oils, charcoal, and glaze medium, her red lips are angry, spitting forth her rage and fury at those crushing Tower events. Aligned down her centre rests the natural discharge of her corporeal substance, cleansing and harmonious, maintaining balance and equilibrium whilst the storm rages about her. The midnight blue and sickly greens that surround her show the infection that tries to take her over, trauma attempting colonisation. Yet, she resists. Through her ferocity, she defends against the creeping defilement. van Raalte states,

> You think She comes with kindness; you think She leaves with love? […] She is not this fetish of the blood, and painted lips, and lascivious fountains, and bodacious flesh. This is a Fetish, for the truth is too terrible for human eyes. Once Babalon is seen She is not unseen. You, you have torn and tattered her precious silk with the teeth of dogs. You think your paws have enough ingenuity to sew the tiny pieces back together again?[15]

[14] Scott, "Black Confessions and Absu-lution," 227-229.

[15] van Raalte, *Approaching Babalon*, 79.



Figure 2 – Nacht Hexe, *Krone*, 2020.

No, you don't. You cannot. This is the Krone, and she does not forgive. You may even get on your knees and plead with her, but you had your chance. She plucks you from your balustrade and hurls you into the deep.

Salomé

Salomé (fig. 3) is her name, and she casts a long shadow. With acknowledgement of her historical legacy, here she stands firm and victorious. I used charcoal, oils, glaze medium, gold poster paint and candlewax. Her shining pearl is riven with a lavender hue, ringed in black with her whole aura encased in gold. The candlewax down the centre forges a rocky landscape, its movement flowing upwards to a sharp collar that sits either side of her head/clitoris. She is a sharp continent, comprised of uncomfortable ridges and brackish lagoons. She is not your home.

A circular vibration moves outwards from her in blues, black and white and is drenched in glaze medium so the original canvas shines when the light catches it. Her essence reminds me of a more villainous woman, one who was cast as evil by the patriarchy but is in fact far more than they could ever conceive. She is not smooth, contained, or well-behaved. She is vicious, all-knowing and could rend the flesh from your bones. I feel she is worthy of van Raalte's 'Hymn to Our Mother of Abominations'. She writes,

> Let me scalp you,
> As though you were some
> Ancient coloniser;
> Let me wear your starry aureole
> As a crown or as a visor;
> Warm blood clotting in my eyes,
> My mouth,
> Oh, my Great Divider.[16]

[16] van Raalte, *Approaching Babalon*, 81.



Figure 3 – Nacht Hexe, *Salomé*, 2020.

Salomé will cut that head from the festering body and throw it to the ravens and wolves. She cares not for social graces, for doing as she is supposed to. She is the true heart of the anarchist, and I wish I could be more like her.

Here lay three examples from my vulva series, all independent of each other, yet they speak from the same space. From the void, from Babalon, these paintings have come, and they represent a revolt against, a painting back to patriarchy and its wretched Tower, and it has bestowed upon me empowerment and retribution.

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Figure 2. Nacht Hexe. *Krone*. 2020. Oils on canvas, 8 x 12 inches. Vulva series.

Figure 3. Nacht Hexe. *Salomé*. 2020. Gouache, charcoal, glaze Medium and candle wax on canvas, 20 x 24 inches. Vulva series.

Credits

Background audio – Introduction from *Denigrata's Missa Defunctorum: Requiem Mass in A Minor* (2015); Intro track by Tasimengiyi.

Canvas paintings and transcript – Nacht Hexe.

Monochrome artwork and video – Arcaan Ritual.

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