A PICTORIAL RESPONSE TO CERTAIN WITCHCRAFT BELIEFS WITHIN NORTHERN SOTHO COMMUNITIES

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For Elizabeth

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INTRODUCTION

> Witches, as a category, are a veritable fifth column within the society. As such, they must be identified and eradicated as soon as possible. Their identification is the task of the diviner ... (Hammond-Tooke 1989: 81).

This study focuses on stories of witchcraft within the Batlokwa — a sub-group of the Northern Sotho community living in the northern Transvaal. Having grown up in this society where witchcraft beliefs are predominant, my fears, as a child, of witches were very real. In later life I have attempted to ignore these fears. However, I do not think they will ever disappear entirely, as I will never be able to extricate myself from my origins. This experience of the dangerous witch is one of the reasons that compelled me to respond pictorially to some of these perceptions for the purpose of highlighting the concerns of ordinary people and the extent to which they have been affected by belief in witchcraft. My paintings are a translation of real and unreal incidents fused together producing a visual narrative.

The written component of my MFA is not an explanatory account of stories about witches in detail, it is rather an attempt to assess the issues deriving from, or connected to, the themes informing my paintings. These range from perceptions that witches are able to turn the dead into zombies, the image of the *tikoloshe* and its symbolic function, and witch-orgies performed at night. Here special emphasis is placed on the pervasiveness of witchcraft throughout time, thus providing an opportunity to look at the subject both in a historical and contemporary context.

This document is not intended to give an in-depth anthropological study of this society. The visual component is to be seen as complementary to those of oral and written traditions. It is my belief that a comparative visual approach (visualised through painting) affords me a clearer understanding of aspects of the history, religion, ethics and morality of my community.

I. BATLOKWA

Witchcraft in Batlokwa society is still a burdensome nightmare that constantly drives people to consult the so-called witch-doctor for relief from their misfortunes. The abundance of divinatory institutions in the villages of the area is an indication of how endemic and widespread the practice has become in a society that, on the outside may appear to have abandoned its customs under the weight of the effects of the 'civilising' program of Western European colonisation. However in spite of these major structural changes, the practice of witchcraft remains positioned as a powerful traditional force that implicates the witch as the perpetrator of national and personal disasters. As a result, so-called witches are apprehended (witch-hunts), tortured, ostracised or killed by mobs who regard them as the enemy of the people. The employment of witchcraft by some people remains the only answer to resolving their social ills. Those in the "tradition of disbelief "(Bennett 1987: 91) dismiss this occult practice with lurid terms such as 'supernaturalism', 'ventriloquism' or 'atavism'adding that it was a delusion belonging only to "Peasants, children, and crazy people" (Freedberg; 1989: 283).

In the course of these contradictory viewpoints, the individual often finds himself or herself in a situation of real fear of forces, which cannot be conceptualised in any way other than within the supernatural, or the practice of witchcraft. It is fair, therefore, to regard this system as a fundamental explanation for disease and misfortune. Or as Crawford argues: "Wizardry provides a solution to the problem of causation" (Crawford 1967: 66).

Stories emanating from Batlokwa society serve as my inspiration. These stories may not be cut and dried with regard to their truthfulness or falsity. Sometimes one wonders if at all there is any validity in the stories because of their conjectural nature, yet at the same time one is shocked to hear eye-witnesses insisting on the reality of their experiences. This dilemma was critically debated during the last century when folklore was seen by rationalists as superstition. It is for this reason that oral tradition is recognised as a mechanism establishing the extent to which these stories could be regarded as real. It also became necessary to look at arguments relating to extra-sensory perception and the supernatural. These theories are complex and beyond the scope of this study, but they are taken into account for their often sweeping criticisms, intended to dismiss mysterious occurrences as mere figments of the imagination.

The choice of Batlokwa society as a framework within which this investigation was conducted, was not prompted by a reaction to the recent escalation of witch-hunts in the area,[1] nor is it based on what Hunter-Wilson suggests to be typical of "small-scale societies with inadequate control of their environment and dominated by personal relationships, societies in which people think in personal terms and seek personal causes for their own misfortunes" (Hunter-Wilson 1951: 313). The choice is, as mentioned earlier, rather based on lived experience and a personal and creative need to highlight these popular stories of witchcraft. As are most things that appear unusual or impossible in reality, these stories arouse emotions of horror, rapture and amazement. Witchcraft is also a subject of immense curiosity and study by those who are concerned about the underlying tensions, frustrations and fears of the rural masses in the countryside.

According to Batlokwa perceptions, no sufficiently consensual physiological description of a witch exists[2] A witch is said to be a lonely and unfriendly person who is capable of leaving his or her body behind during peregrinations. This is contrasted with some physical attributes of witches described in other parts of Africa. According to Evans-Pritchard, the Zande witches of Sudan are believed to have an abdominal condition or *mangu*. *Mangu* is "... probably the gall-bladder or the stomach itself in certain digestive periods" (Marwick 1970: 27-28). Hunter-Wilson discovered that the Nyakusa people of Tanzania (formerly Tanganyika) believe that witches contain pythons in their bellies and are examinable only by autopsy. However, she concluded that these associations are based primarily on "dreams, sex dreams being frequently interpreted in terms of witchcraft" (Hunter-Wilson 1951: 309). In both these cases the implication is that there is no real proof of real physical evidence in support of these beliefs. The lack of evidence leaves much room for a witch to assume any form imaginable, although descriptions are often subject to stereotypes established in European witchcraft. Apart from being dangerous, a sorcerer is described by Joshua Trachtenberg as a:

> ... night-riding witch, associate and consort of demons, revelling in lewd satanic orgies, blighting man and beast and herb with her evil glance and her fiendish spells, cannibalistic murderess of innocent infants ... (Trachtenberg 1970: 13).

This description is typical of witches described in both African and European mythology.

Unlike the Azande, Batlokwa society does not draw any specific distinction between witches and sorcerers and the two terms are used interchangeably. In fact, to distinguish witches from sorcerers is a matter of semantics defined only in a particular context. Assessing these two vocations from an historic and socio-political point of view, Paine defines a sorcerer as a black magician who practices evil sorcery for his or her personal gain, whereas a witch is believed to serve the will of the Devil, not his or her own. As for the difference between these two groups, Paine wrote: "All witches were, to some degree, sorcerers, but not all sorcerers were witches" (Paine 1971: 11). On account of this, witchcraft was seen as a Christian heresy in the European witch-craze of the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries. With regard to the argument as to whether or not the witch gets its psychic powers from God or the Devil, everything seems to boil down to a simple aphorism — "Witchcraft could only succeed where people believed that it could succeed" (Paine 1971 :13).

Witchcraft is, therefore, a state of mind.

II. ORAL TRADITION

The acquisition of suitable pictorial subject matter for this exploration would, under conventional circumstances, have demanded consultations with diviners and witches. My belief in Christianity mitigated against consultations with the former, whereas the latter were unwilling to talk about their nocturnal activities for fear of being victimised. Witchcraft is a secret practice and its practitioners do not share the chemistry with anyone outside the sect. The only method at my disposal was to listen to stories, some of which I had heard before in daily social discourse. Here one is able to examine the extent to which witchcraft has intimately woven itself into everyday thinking — to the extent that the existence of the witch is no longer doubted. So deep has it twisted itself into every corner and niche of Batlokwa social life, that the disturbances in relationships between persons, or the occurrence of misfortunes, are blamed on witchcraft. Evans-Pritchard in his study of witchcraft, initially projected a view, further substantiated by Gluckman, that:

> If a sociologist can find where charges of witchcraft in a particular society fall, he can almost reconstruct the social relationships of the society (Hammond-Tooke 1989: 86).

Over time narrators transform the shape and subsequently the historical content of an historical event; creating an oral tradition that displays features distinctly different from those of its literary or written counterpart. Oral tradition, in the view of Jan Vansina (Vansina 1985), accommodates all forms of knowledge transmitted by word of mouth including witchcraft stories, tales, legends, clichés and myths. These components need to be analysed in order to establish their validity as history.

In his book, *The African Past Speaks*, Miller defines history by distinguishing it from thehistorical. He wrote: "The issues become clearer if 'history' refers only to the discipline concerned with systematic examination of the evidential links between the present and the past" (Miller 1980: 49). When this history is expressed orally by narrators it becomes oral history, which when analysed could help in determining evidence of past events. Miller went on to explain that, by evidence, he referred to "those things that survive, either relatively unchanged as in the case of a document or altered in ways that can be determined, like memories expressed in narrative oral traditions" (Miller 1980: 49). Without going into detail as to how an actual event is transformed into a myth over the passage of time, emphasis has to be placed on the recognition of mechanisms through which these stories are assessed and authenticated as historical facts.

This idea has informed my approach which is extended to include the assumption that the process of recording oral history is not only confined to oral transmission or written literature, but is also contained in the production of art and artifacts. By providing a visual dimension for these stories, my paintings are useful to me in the reconstruction of aspects of Batlokwa history rooted in oral tradition. In this way, my pictorial representations provide visibility to what otherwise would remain only as mental images within an individual society. The use of oral history in this project emphasises the importance of obtaining information directly from informants and the need to find a method of presenting such information to the reader or viewer. The visual dimension, as provided at least in part by my work, is one method through which these narratives are expressed.

With regard to the validity of oral history, Vansina admits that sometimes testimonies could be distorted "thus making it no more than a mirage of reality" (Vansina 1965: 2). In the event of these distortions, oral tradition, according to Wilks, appeared to be "simply myths

invented to meet the demands of a particular — and usually political — situation" (Vansina 1965: 12). This view, according to Vansina, is not wholly acceptable to Evans-Pritchard who considers the significance of using oral traditions as "historical sources even if they are for the most part untrustworthy, since history always has a conjectural quality, and truthfulness in the construction of the past is always a matter of degree" (Vansina 1965: 13). The fact that oral history is unwritten, he argues, does not necessarily mean that it should be deprived of all validity as an historical source.

Batlokwa witchcraft stories are characterised by a quality of uncertainty regarding their sources. As a result, they assume the character of rumour or hearsay. This renders them nothing more than "a piece of 'news' that is only spread abroad by reason of its up-to-dateness, and that it is not a statement concerning the past" (Vansina 1965: 20). However, if the rumour lives long enough, it would reach a stage when it is transmitted as a testimony concerning the past — thus becoming oral tradition. It is therefore possible to regard these stories as historical facts provided they are analysed from within the framework of oral tradition.

The thrust of this project is placed on the need to extract something reasonable from a diversity of both actual and narrated supernatural events as expressed in witchcraft stories. They are isolated and disjointed and often lead nowhere. However, as everyday expressions, they provide us with a sense as to how the people of a Batlokwa village consider witchcraft.

III. IDENTIFICATION AND KILLING OF WITCHES

One is inclined to ask why certain individual people are accused of witchcraft without objective evidence. The Northern Sotho idiomatic phrase: *Moloi ga a na mmala* (a witch has no colour) illustrates clearly that a witch could be anyone. It also suggests that there is no such thing as a witch[3], therefore to name someone a witch is forbidden. The promulgation of the Witchcraft Act, 20, of 1895, made accusations of witchcraft and the practice thereof a criminal offense. Traditional healers were among the most affected by this Act.

In spite of this Act, witchcraft persists. More and more people continue to be accused as witches and burned alive. When these chosen

few are judged extra-judicially, one cannot but ask; are these people persecuted for a crime they committed, or was their public execution a morality play wherein the society or mob, rose up in righteous indignation against the attack on its integrity? Needless to say, most such alleged witches were targets of a premeditated, yet consensual meshing of public and private opinion. Normality is regained so long as someone is identified, and punished.

In Europe, witch-hunts were synonymous with burning. Witches were interrogated, tortured and then burned alive. It was Emperor Charles V, head of The Holy Roman Empire who promulgated a criminal code (The Carolina) for the Empire in 1532. Part of Witchcraft Article 109 read:

> When someone harms people or brings them trouble by witchcraft, one should punish him with death, and one should use the punishment of death by fire. When, however, someone uses witchcraft, and yet does no one any harm with it, he should be punished otherwise, according to the custom of the case; and the judges should take counsel as is described later regarding legal consultations (Midelfort 1990: 29).

This article was promulgated with the intention of bridging the differences between incentives contained in the book *Malleus Maleficarum* (1487) in which the "peculiarly savage misogyny, and its obsession with impotence", and demonology portrayed witchcraft "as a crime of female lust" (Midelfort 1990: 29).

Moved by hatred of the devil, executors of witches used fire as a means to destroy a witch completely. Since then, death by fire had been applied by witch-hunters as a traditional method for the destruction of a witch. The necklacing[4] nightmare, in the South African context, appears to be a contemporary upgrading of the conventional method of wood-fire. The use of the necklace method by executors is considered an efficient method and a relevant punishment for all the crimes a witch is supposed to have committed. It also acts as a deterrent to would-be witches, a vicious act of "moral indignation for the rest the society to see and from which to learn" (Ritchken 1988: 19). This intimidatory tactic came to play a major role in the advancement of the 'comrades'[5] political interests.

IV. THE ROLE OF THE DIVINER

The medicine-man or woman is commonly termed a 'witch-doctor'. This term has raised objections, particularly from anthropological circles, since it suggests that a person so called is mainly or exclusively involved in witchcraft activities, or is perhaps even a witch. As this is not necessarily the case, the term 'witch-doctor' will be replaced by the more acceptable term, traditional healer or diviner.

The traditional healer is a popular and respected figure in many African communities, equal in status to that accorded the shamans in other cultures. Both these functionaries are concerned with the well-being of the society. It is for this reason that they are consulted for a variety of purposes, ranging from preventive measures, healing diseases and detecting trouble-makers such as witches and other agents of evil forces. The traditional healer enjoys public respect within his or her society. It is therefore surprising to see what outsiders have generally made of their personality. Instead of being regarded as the genius of African societies, African colonial literature portrayed the medicine-person as a semi-allegorical figure portraying him or her as being in the way of civilisation and forces of colonial light by acting or posing as a "sinister figure of the witch-doctor, the epitome of evil, primeval cunning and the dark forces of barbarism" (Hammond-Tooke 1989: 103). Such misconceptions are also abundant in religious circles. In the earliest days of the Christian mission in Africa, the war between the Christian priest and the diviner was depicted in lurid terms. The outcome was that the traditional healer was charged as an agent of Satan because of his or her paganism. In matters of health, the traditional healer was portrayed by western writers as a quack. In his book, *Culture and Mental Illness*, Orley found this criticism unfair, suggesting that it did not make the western counterpart any better. He wrote:

> He may be unhygienic, unskilled and avaricious — so is the back-street abortionist of London and other cities. His ethos may differ but his role and place in society is not far removed from that of the Western priest; nor are his clients so very different in their intentions from the devout Christian seeking relief in the catechism, in penance and in the confessional. If we could be less Europe-centred or less Africa-centred, attention to such comparisons might well be a

> rewarding line of research in matters touching on human behaviour — more valuable perhaps than the heuristically sterile exercise so frequently indulged in of exclaiming at the witch-doctor, *genus Africanus,* as if such individuals comprise a separate, shabbily colourful dead end in human social evolution (Orley 1970: ix).

It is in the religio-cultural setting where the traditional healer assumes the duty of healing society. Colonial missionaries might have had misconceptions about this personality, but had they not been such an authority in society, Christianity would have not been accepted in African communities so easily. It is in the light of their stature that they are regarded as a catalyst for the process of reconciling traditional religions with Christianity. For Christ and his acknowledged human representatives — priests, prophets and ministers of faith — were conceived of in terms of people's ideas about the traditional medicine-person. In his article *Christ as the medicine-man and the medicine-man as Christ: a tentative history of African Christological thought*, Mathew Schoffeleers admits that "in the past missionaries took an extremely negative stand viz-a-viz *nganga*" (Lagerwerf 1987: 9). Schoffeleers admits that today's African theologians are no longer hostile to traditional healers. In fact, their attitude is so positive that some of them are suggesting that the diviner "might well be the African paradigmatic figure for the biblical Christ or the African prefiguration of Christ" (Lagerwerf 1987: 9).

The adoption of this positive stand by Christian churches (such as the *Zion Christian Church*, Moria), allows the engagement of both theologian, and traditional healer in the process of both spiritual and physical healing. This approach ensures that problems relating to ill health are no longer dealt with either by prayer or herbs, but a combination of the two.[6] The acceptance of the Christian faith by the traditional healer as a complementary means of healing the nation could be seen as a contribution in the transformative process, that is, "the de-westernisation both of theology and the ministerial role" (Lagerwerf 1987: 9).

As witchcraft beliefs and ancestral worship form a coherent system, the diviner therefore serves as a conduit between consultants and their ancestors. They are recognised as mediators between the living and the dead. They ensure that rituals are carried out according to their prescriptions formulated to the needs of the ancestors. The traditional healer is, in every sense, central to every activity concerning the society. Their knowledge of witchcraft activities makes them the main source of stories which become the topics of everyday

conversations, but which, however, in some cases are not taken seriously.

The traditional healer is also consulted about illness. By reading the bones, coupled with combinations of confidence, imagination and will, they are not only able to cure the illness, but also to establish whether its cause was natural or related to witchcraft. As most of the clients have witchcraft problems, they have become specialists at sniffing out witches within the community.

Changes in society, and work related pressures have rendered the activities of the traditional healer highly commercialised. It is in the process of divination or revelation that the traditional healer is most active. They claim to be in a position to reveal a witch unerringly, and at times of public executions, their authority is needed for the endorsement of such verdicts.

The need for money has in some cases affected their sincerity, so much so, that they can no longer reveal precisely what their bones say. This inconsistency is illustrated by the following story.

A herd-boy discovered four eggs in a nest. He did not know the species of bird to which they belonged. He took these four eggs home and placed them together with those of a hen. He did not inform his parents of this. When the eggs hatched, his mother was the first to notice the four strange chicks. Struck with awe, she called her husband to come and see for himself. The boy was not at home at that time. The feeling the couple had, was that something had gone wrong and were quick to suspect witchcraft. Indeed, they consulted the traditional healer. They were told what they had expected, that is, that their neighbour was intending to wipe the entire family from the face of the earth. The strange chicks were a sign that their son would be the first to die. They were to be the last to be eliminated. After prescriptions from the healer had been made, payment was settled with an ox. Like their son who did not tell them of the eggs he had placed in the hens nest, they did not tell him what was going on regarding the traditional healers reading of the situation.

Three days later, the boy discovered that his four eggs had hatched. The chicks clearly resembled young owls. With excitement, he called his mother and explained how the eggs came to be hatched in the hens nest. She was shocked. The father was horrified to learn

that the diviner had lied to them. A conflict ensued between the family and the healer who refused to return the ox. As to the relationship with their neighbour (blood relatives), the two families would not talk to each any more.

It is in the light of stories such as this one that the traditional healer's practice is not without quackery. However, the diviner still remains an indispensable personality in the community. As South Africa goes through a process of transformation, traditional healers are being officially recognised. No longer will their image appear devilish to those who looked at them from a distance; for they are doing more good than harm in the interest of their community.

V. THE TRUTH AND FALSITY IN WITCHCRAFT

Traditionally, witchcraft has always been the subject of a protracted dispute between "two opposed groups facing each other in mutual incomprehension — believers and sceptics" (Bennett 1987: 15). Believers, based on their personal encounters, see witchcraft and other folklore beliefs as real. However, sceptics and adherents to the tradition of disbelief, see nothing more in witchcraft than fantasy, or simply nonsense.

This sweeping dismissal created a habit of seeing the believing group as having a witchcraft/folklore "adhering to established traditional patterns of thought" (Bennett 1987: 15). This observation implies that sceptics are free from any belief in the unknown. But sceptics, according to Bennett, rely equally on received attitudes and standard responses that are culturally determined — they too have their own witchcraft/folklore. It is this belief that stands in their way of understanding the reality of witchcraft beliefs. As rationalists who insist on concrete and experimental evidence to prove the phenomenon, they fail to see that the objective or scientific approach has failed to be the appropriate basis (and therefore cannot be relied upon) in assessing the probability of witchcraft. There are, of course, numerous reasons why scientists prefer to exclude subjective knowledge from science, but Bennett gives an all-embracing reason: "because it is so far from their own ways of thinking that they simply do not see it" (Bennett 1987: 24).

It is also a fact that witchcraft, as a body of cultural theory, provides no logical or empirical evidence for the existence of a witch. It is precisely because of the lack of organised knowledge, that witchcraft is perceived as a form of superstition.

Several scientists have attempted in various ways, to define the term superstition. Heath proposed that:

> ... superstition, whether casual or not, can be treated on objective lines. It is a mathematical matter of the odds for or against. This provides a rough 'ready-reckoner' for assigning beliefs to their proper place on a scale stretching from mere superstition to reasonable expectation. The importance of this is that the method can be applied to religious beliefs in order to judge whether they are superstitions or not. If there is evidence for a belief, if its probabilities are calculable and of reasonable amount, then there is nothing irrational in taking a chance in believing it. But if the odds cannot be estimated, or if they are grossly weighted against what is believed, then the belief is a superstition (Jahoda 1969: 4).

At first sight, this statement appears convincing and indeed a solution to the problem of differentiation. Exactly what is defined as superstition differs immensely from viewpoint to viewpoint. As they say, one person's belief is another person's superstition or, one man's ignorance is another man's wisdom. Heath's hypothesis, that if probabilities are not calculable, the belief is superstition, can only be considered under certain circumstances. In witchcraft beliefs, the elements of truth co-exist with those of falsehood. What these postulations point to is the fact that no one has a valid claim to absolute or objective knowledge; that both evidence and counter-evidence about the supernatural world co-exist. Nowhere else is this apparent contradiction demonstrated more clearly than in the case of the Loch Ness monster, which is regarded by rationalists as a mere superstition. Believers, given so called material evidence in the form of a film, accept the animal as real.

Such arguments are also raised in denouncing the witch's ability, as many people believe, to fly. Edward Clodd, a nineteenth century rationalist, had strong objections to these perceptions. On levitation, for instance, he argued:

> I should want the levitation repeated many times before many witnesses. I would not trust my eyes in the matter. I cannot forget that man's senses have been his arch-deceivers, and his preconceptions their abettors, throughout human history: that advance has been possible only as he has escaped through the discipline of the intellect from the illusive impression about phenomena which the senses convey (Bennett 1987: 100).

Falsity is always relative to a given state of knowledge, just as superstition is a term relative to time and place. Therefore, the argument as to whether witchcraft beliefs, in the context of this document, or as represented in the paintings are true or false, cannot be adequately substantiated. As indicated above, the answer depends upon personal viewpoint and experience. When one hears or reads about the Loch Ness monster in Scotland, there are always conflicting ideas as to whether the monster really exists or not. Again, those who encountered this experience personally, insist on having seen something in the water and believe it. Yet, in spite of first-hand accounts accompanied with what appear to be visual evidence, the story remains unbelievable and subsequently is dismissed as superstition.

Esther Harding, the author of the book, *Woman's Mysteries,* laments the fact that science, as a branch of organised knowledge, dissociated itself from other disciplines by concentrating exclusively on the objective realm in the search for truth. By choosing the objective viewpoint, the psychical world was automatically excluded. Subsequently, the subjective or non-material world was viewed by scientists as worthless because it did not yield concrete or provable results able to contribute directly to objective knowledge. The exclusion of subjective material from objective thinking implied that it was non-existent, but Harding argues in contradiction:

> This inner or subjective aspect of experience is not nonsense nor is it only superstition. Material science, it is true, has disregarded it, but it remains a potent factor in human life. Indeed the discarded element contains that subjective or psychical factor which constitutes spirit (Harding 1989: 5).

Her argument is that these issues, namely the objective 'fact' and the subjective 'superstition', cannot be differentiated and need to be clarified. She uses the example of colour-blindness[7] to illustrate the difference between these thought processes and how a view gener-

ally held by the majority of people as true, could be proved as superstition. Harding begins the first chapter entitled, ***Myth and the Modern Mind***, by emphasising that the feelings and moods of modern man, just like his predecessors, primitive man, are subject to particular experiences. She uses the example of a full moon rising above the sea. According to her view, the experience of the event could perhaps be regarded as more powerful than scientific knowledge acquired about the moon as material object. Indeed, the moon and the stars were known from ancient times not so much as objects:

> ... but rather as inner states or attitudes of mind which can be observed in inexplicable changes of feeling and mood not to be accounted for by the external situation, but which are often, nonetheless, referred to the state of the weather or to some other external 'variable' as though there were a direct relation of cause and effect between the two (Harding 1989: 4).

The point is that the notion of superstition came about as a consequence of science's inability to embrace subjective factors in its search for truth. By eliminating the subjective, scientists have generally created a prejudice against hidden phenomena such as witchcraft, myth and the occult.

However, when an incident such as that of the school-girl clinging on the wall [see Plate 3] happens, could it still, according to Heath's suggestion, be perceived as superstition? That witchcraft and related supernatural beliefs are not unfounded has been acknowledged in publications by psychologists who all emphasise the significant role the inner state of mind plays in determining people's belief systems. In *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, Carl Gustav Jung wrote:

> There are also universal reports of these post-mortem phenomena in the form of ghosts and hauntings. They are based in the main on psychic facts which cannot be dismissed out of hand. Very often the fear of superstition — which, strangely enough, is the concomitant of universal enlightenment — is responsible for the hasty suppression of extremely interesting factual reports which are thus lost to science (Jung 1960: 316).

This observation reinforces that of Harding as expressed by Jung in his introduction to Harding's book *Woman's Mysteries*. If what Jung says is accepted, there is no need for questioning the truth or falsity of witchcraft as an answer can never be found to which every one agrees.

Witchcraft is a belief system that is abstract and mystical. While it does not permit any objective definition as proposed by Heath, it also denies any empirical approach for analysis. It is in the light of this difficulty that Jeffrey Burton Russell, in his book *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages,* was led to remark: "To understand witchcraft, we must descend into the darkest of the deepest oceans of the mind" (Bradbury 1981: 74). Indeed, it is there where clarity on the truth or falsity in witchcraft could be made. Unfortunately, not everyone has access to this domain. After all, we are dealing with a set of beliefs which may have no reference at all to events in the real world, no matter how real these beliefs might be. It is fair, therefore, to concede that there is an element of truth in witchcraft stories amidst what appears to be a mirage of speculations. It is also clear that people believe in what they wish to be true. The question of belief in witchcraft is therefore a matter of semantics and relativity.

The reality of witchcraft, of course, is manifested in fear. In a moment of panic diviners are consulted, accusations ensue and witches are killed. On an individual basis, witchcraft can be a direct consequence of one's behaviour. But on a large scale, where the society as a whole is faced with unpredictable and catastrophic misfortunes, witchcraft becomes a scapegoat for explaining social disasters. This phenomenon is capable of adapting itself to any given situation. Attempts to eliminate it will remain futile as long as human beings retain that instinct of being born religious and therefore acquire the ability to hold a belief about forces beyond human comprehension.

MAJOR THEMES AND PRINCIPAL SUBJECTS

There is much which is undesirable regarding alleged practices by witches during their alleged nocturnal orgies. I have identified and selected those stories which characterise Batlokwa perceptions on the subject. Selection was to some extent based upon visual suitability for translation into paintings. These entail training sessions for baby-witches, an orgy described as "macabre conviviality"(Hammond-Tooke 1989: 74) — a gruesome festival where babies are flung against a wall repeatedly until they stick on to it [Plate 2]. Other stories include the magical turning of people into zombies [Plate 1], aspects of a *tikoloshe* both in the real and supernatural worlds [Plates 9, 10] and the incident of a girl clinging on to a school black-board like a bat [Plate 3].

I. THE *TIKOLOSHE*

A popular belief held by the majority of Batlokwa people is that concerning creatures kept by witches. One of these is the *tikoloshe*[8], a familiar described by Hunter as:

> a small hairy being, having the form of a man, but so small that he only reaches to a man's knee. He has hair all over his face and coming out of his ears, and his face is squashed up like a baboon. The penis of the male is so long that he carries it over his shoulder, and he has only one buttock (Hunter 1936: 275-6).

It is a creature that symbolises sexual lust sustained by allegations that this creature is mostly present around female compounds. Niehaus in his paper *Witches of the Lowveld and their Familiars: An Essay on Power, Duality and the Person*, portrays a *tikoloshe* as a sexual object sent by witches "to sexually molest and rape one's neighbours" (Niehaus 1992: 8). With its elastic penis, stretchable to any size, the *tikoloshe* uses it to feel if it is safe to enter a home. "You can never see the *tokolose*", he was told by one informant, "You can only feel it" (Niehaus 1992: 8). "Women knew there was a *tokolose* if they experienced wetness between the thighs"... or found that

... their husbands lay far apart from them the following morning — as if they were pushed from the bed" (Niehaus 1992: 8).

The association of the *tikoloshe* with sexual desire is wide spread. Hunter-Wilson (1951) interprets the Pondo's belief in the *tikoloshe* as relating to women's illicit and repressed desires. She puts this in the context of the social setting marked by tribal rules of clan exogamy, which excludes large numbers of otherwise potential mates from eligibility for marriage. Subsequently, this fabulous animal became a symbol of sexual lust. In a more complex account advanced by Hammond-Tooke, according to Niehaus (1992), the *tikoloshe* explains men's perceptions of inter-sexual relations. In Batlokwa society, men are uncomfortably aware of women's deprivation. Women are generally regarded as "perpetual minors" (Niehaus 1992: 17) and could easily be pointed out as witches because of the society's inability to understand their behavioural pattern. The view of women as potential witches is a product of sexual antagonism which Hunter indirectly acknowledged when she wrote:

> A woman *igqwira* (witch) who has a *Thikoloshe* always has a male, and she has sexual relations with him. Some say that men have female *Thikoloshe,* with whom they cohabit, others say that *Thikoloshe* are only possessed by women. The accusations of possessing *Thikoloshe* are usually against women (Hunter 1936: 277).

However, she gives no description of the female *tikoloshe* or mentions if, at all, it exists in Pondo society.[9]

Gelfand accounts for this tension between sexes in terms of physiological and emotional differences:

> Man is more trustful, more easily provoked, more powerful and therefore he tends only to be the accuser, whereas the woman is more receptive, weaker, less easily roused to temper and therefore becomes a victim, especially as there sometimes seems to be a sexual connotation or Freudian mechanism operating at the time of accusation (Gelfand 1967: 71).

In terms of European witchcraft, woman's subservient position is rationalised in terms of the Devil – the male superwitch presiding over a congregation of witches who not only offer him candles which burn in blue flames, but also "kiss him on his shameful parts behind. Some kiss him on the shoulder; and at other times he holds up a black image which he requires the witches to kiss ..." (Boguet 1929: 55). Such attitudes were common in medieval times when women were regarded as "practitioners of symbolical crime (harmful spells) rather than real delinquency (homicide)" (Ladurie 1987: 7). However, Ladurie sees this criminal activity of witches as complementary to that of men who took particular interest, not so much in the black arts, as in "the good old masculine specialities: murder, robbery" (Ladurie 1987: 7). The stereotype that a woman had a "two-fold image, being at once seductive and dangerous — Eve, Judith or Herodias, even Pandora" (Ladurie 1987: 7) is justified by the view that "witches are usually females and often elderly" (Sullivan 1989: 80). Sullivan attributes the assumption of women's excessive participation in witchcraft activities to what he describes as "similarities that go beyond the possibility of coincidence or cultural diffusion" (Sullivan 1989: 80). According to Russell, "the most likely explanation is that such ideas have an archetypal ground in the psychic inheritance shared by all humanity" (Sullivan 1989: 80). It should be realised however, that these sentiments, more than anything else, were a testimony of a patriarchal world where witchcraft was used as an instrument of oppression against women. The suggestion that more women are involved in acts of witchcraft remains a generally adopted view. During the European witch-craze more than seventy-five per cent of victims were women. Women form about half of any population group and are even in a majority in certain cases, yet are continually subjected to domination by men.

The continuing male domination had been a burden to women for a long time. So heavy is this burden that Batlokwa women today can no longer wait for their freedom; they are demanding their rights and inclusion in all social activities. It is in the light of women's struggles that men's discriminatory manipulations, are finally exposed.

II. THE ZOMBIE AND ITS SYMBOLISM

According to Batlokwa beliefs, snakes, owls, hyenas, *tikoloshe*s and a host of other domestic animals could belong to witches. The acquisition of a human being or *setlotlwane* (zombie) is achieved by the witch through a process of 'zombification'. This self-coined

term is used to describe the process of turning people into zombies. A detailed account of the process is given in the section describing the iconography used in the painting entitled *Protestation of Zombies after Eating Salted Food,* [Plate 4].

In her book, *Witchcraft*, Lucy Mair briefly mentions zombies as "dead men brought back from the grave" (Mair 1969: 236). This belief is held by voodoo worshippers as well as the Ndembu people of Zambia. Conversely, a Batlokwa zombie is acquired by the witch before burial, not after. Although believed to be dead and buried, Zombies 'live' under the care of a witch. This belief creates tensions within communities. Mysterious disappearances, sudden illness and death, are all linked to the magic of 'zombification'. Unlike a *tikoloshe*, zombies have been 'seen' wondering about as normal persons by some people. Zombies are said to have their tongues cut off to retard speech.[10]

It is through its symbolism — not its domestic chores, that a zombie becomes significant in real life. It is an objectification of a master/mistress slave relationship that Niehaus found to be expressive of the "ambivalent qualities of domination, authority and control. It objectifies both the desire to dominate and the fear of being dominated" (Niehaus: 1992: 20).

Within Batlokwa society, the lack of acceptance of an individual's success is often rationalised by the feeling that such achievements have been attained with the aid of zombies. This often promotes a desire to destroy the successful individual by utilising witchcraft.

III. WITCHCRAFT AND APARTHEID — SOME TENTATIVE LINKS

I take implicit social knowledge to be essentially dependent on social relationships. In trying to understand the way that history and memory interact in constituting this knowledge, in the context of witchcraft in contemporary South Africa, the affect of the power of colonialism and racism is not ignored. Although apartheid legislation is no longer on the statute books and free and fair elections for all have been secured, the legacy of apartheid history and behaviour cannot be eliminated overnight.

During the course of this study, the witch/zombie relationship has come to resonate strongly, for me, with the effects of apartheid. Maybe the conventional image of a witch as someone out there in the middle of the night on a diabolic mission to harm innocent people, has been transformed into the image of a political sorcerer; an informer, a puppet, or technically, a candidate for necklacing. While witchcraft and politics as a theme are not central to my field of study, the witchcraft/apartheid analogy is in some way relevant as the witch-hunts currently taking place in the northern Transvaal are justified on political grounds.

The so-called 'lost generation'[11] or 'comrades' (politicised youth movements) are products of the systematic destruction of black people's imagination and sensitivity by the system of apartheid. This process laid the ground whereby comrades appropriated and re-fashioned witchcraft into a powerful political tool to be used for their political advancement. The witch-hunts in Lebowa since the early 1980s have been generally described by Ritchken as "an intimidatory tactic" (Stadler 1992: 1) while Niehaus sees this "as a strategy for obtaining political legitimacy" (Stadler 1992: 1). Stadler suggests that "the youth use the ideology of witchcraft as a resource to contest generational authority" (Stadler 1992: 1). It is for this reason that anti-witchcraft movements were formed under the auspices of comrades. This was to be followed by witch-hunts all over the northern Transvaal area from the 1980s untill the 1990s.

In the Batlokwa village, witch-hunts were triggered by the presence of a woman diviner or sangoma employed to inspect the land in order to overturn the 1984 drought. She claimed that there were too many witches making it impossible for rain to fall. She insisted witches were to be hunted from house to house and removed. The first group of accused women were bundled into a large room, forced to undress (before the curious eyes of youngsters) and instructed to sing witches songs. Those insisting on their innocence, attempted to sing Christian hymns but were stopped. The poor women were then locked inside a dark room and ordered to come out in the manner of witches entering homes while people are asleep. Everything was inconclusive. The community was outraged by the shocking news of elderly women being humiliated. Soon, the drama of sniffing out witches was halted, at least temporarily, after one of the chief's wives was sniffed out. Instead of being burnt, the alleged witches were ostracised from the village. Finally, the actual cause of the drought was put down to the villagers abandonment of their traditional custom of keeping three earthenware pots in a cave.[12] The cause of this abandonment of tradition, is to be found in the history of forced removals perpetrated by the apartheid government. In

the early ninteen-sixties, the community was removed from their well watered ancestral land to a less fertile area nearby. This displacement led to the loss of cattle, sheep and established dwellings. But more importantly, ritual and custom became dispersed, and in some cases lost.

Meanwhile, in the Mapulaneng area, a district of Lebowa, comrades bought sjamboks to beat women who belonged to a notorious gang, identified as the *Big Five*. These women were apprehended and beaten up until they "confessed to making zombies of their victims, to causing lightning to strike and to cause children to be born lame" (Ritchken 1988: 2). This violence against witches led those women, who were accused, to leave their homes and stay in the mountains or take refuge in local police stations.

In what was the Republic of Venda, too, witch-hunts were unleashed, characterised by mysterious disappearances of children. In the publication *The Killing of Witches in Venda,* the authors project the uncertainty about the motives of the youth for killing the so-called witches. However, they acknowledge that there was an increase in witch-burnings which they attribute to the release of prominent political figures from prison.

> The release of Mandela in February 1990 apparently had great impact, as the greatest number of cases of witchcraft allegations against both men and women (up to ten times more than the average) were reported in March and April of 1990 (Payze, et al.1992: 12).

Coupled to these events, and equally important, is the phenomenon of ritual murder, that is, the killing of a person in order to obtain body parts for use as *muti*. The perception exists that parts of the human body were used to secure favourable prospects for business. The general feeling was that a prosperous business depended on magic concoctions produced from human remains (usually a head buried at the entrance of a business complex). As a result, businesses were looted and burnt down as a means of forcing their owners to account for the people they murdered. This situation improved once the then Venda military government of Ramushwana stepped up the search for the youths who had been involved in witch-burnings.

It is in the light of these upheavals, that it is not surprising apartheid is blamed. The extent to which its machinery has systematically

destroyed respect for human life, is demonstrated by the indulgence by comrades in the ritual of necklacing those who were considered undesirable elements, or the enemies of the people. Yet they clearly expressed by their terror and intimidation tactics, are the communities real enemies. By dramatising the ordeal of zombification and the terror of necklacing, I am commenting on the current violence expressed in witch-burnings as representative of a pathology — an infectious disease that plagues our young people — whose antagonism against respect and good manners manifests itself in violence. Apartheid has created a lost generation who, metaphorically, have been 'zombified' and turned into veritable *Imbunches.*[13]

Clearly, violence is an integral component of South African culture as it is in many other cultures. By unpacking this analogy between apartheid and witchcraft, we can begin to understand the social processes within our own communities.

ARTISTS ON THE SUBJECT OF WITCHCRAFT

It is often said that art comes from life. This process is for me, to some extent, equatable with the production of visual records by artists who have illustrated Greek and Roman mythological subjects and European witchcraft mythology. It has therefore been helpful to examine similar representations within the pictorial method and style of some artists of the late Renaissance.

It is acknowledged that the translation of stories, legends or myths into visual representations is not a new thing. Renaissance painters excelled in making the invisible visible when translating Greek and Roman mythological subjects into paint. Masterpieces by Sandro Botticelli, Nicolas Poussin, Titian, Leonardo da Vinci, Peter Paul Rubens, Francisco Goya and many others, bear evidence to this creative process. Many of these artists concerned themselves with the predominant theme of mythology at that time, whereas their German counterparts found their subjects in the mythology of witchcraft.

The European witch-craze was the main force that drove German Lucas Cranach (the Younger), Hans Baldung Grien, Matthias Grünewald and Hieronymous Bosch to represent visually, what was popularly known as melancholia.[14]

During the sixteenth century, Northern German artists were preoccupied with melancholy — the attitude or disposition of a Saturnine person. It was Lucas Cranach who linked witchcraft with melancholy in his panel entitled *Melancholy* [fig. 1] of 1528. The painting shows Melancholy staring at four Italianate putti playing with a dog, an activity familiar to a contemporary young German woman. She is dressed in the fashionable style of burgermaster taste and seated in an airy surrounding, suggestive of comfort and security. This otherwise tranquil atmosphere is overshadowed by a horrible apparition emerging from a dark cloud. This is the Prince of Darkness, the Devil, who is sabbath-bound accompanied by a host of naked witches. Through *Melancholy*, Cranach reveals the mentality of his class and age which had a hostile feeling towards people deemed to be witches. Hoak explains this attitude as a "cultural assumption of the

sober burgermaster's world, that the behaviour or disposition of some persons, especially some women, suggested 'melancholia' and therefore a suspicious connection with the devilish and occult" (Hoak 1981: 23). Certainly, there were doubts about the certainty of women existing as physical melancholics, but on account of the compositional skills and artistic imagination of this painting, Cranach affirmed "some melancholics to be females inherently capable of practicing witchcraft and sorcery" (Hoak 1981: 23).

Hans Baldung Grien was also preoccupied by such beliefs. In one of his woodcuts of four witches, entitled *Witches* dated 1510 [fig. 2], Grien basically designed a visual form for the popular stereotype of a witch already well developed in the interrogations by lay and ecclesiastical interrogators. In its written form, the stereotype fused elements of quite distinct systems of belief:

> ... the supernatural, damage-doing powers of the pre-Christian *strix*; the night-flying capabilities of certain female folk spirits and the orgiastic, cannibalistic infanticide allegedly practiced by sects of devil worshipping heretics (Hoak 1981: 23).

Grien's print emphasises two sensational aspects of the developed stereotypes — the supposedly unrestricted sexual appetites of witches and the flight-inducing power of their magical potions. Pictorially, the backward-flying, leg-kicking, erotic abandon of the airborne witch, and the nudity of all four, reinforces stock assumptions of pre-Reformation misogynist writers:

> ... that a woman's sexual nature pushed her reflexively towards sin. Because she was base, inferior, of lesser nature than the male, she was considered to be less able to resist temptation, especially the temptations of the flesh, and because her desires were thought to be insatiable, she became, in Tertulian's oft-quoted phrase, 'the Devil's gateway' (Hoak 1981: 24).

Other allied assumptions Grien responded to, included the myth of feminine evil through which witches transformed themselves into beasts.

Like Grien, Grünewald explored the legend of St. Anthony in his *Isenheim Altarpiece* [fig. 3] completed in 1515. The theme was depicted earlier by Hieronymous Bosch in a triptych called *The Devil Queen*, completed in 1500. In both paintings, St.Anthony is portrayed as a saint suffering at the hands of "devils which had beat him so much that he had lost his voice and hearing" (Hoak 1981: 24).

In Cranach's painting, a woman is also the product of an artistic tradition that is not "independent of society. Art is both a product and indicator of social and cultural change" (Hoak 1981: 26). Unlike stereotyped witches of the imagined Sabbath, as in Grien's painting, this woman could actually represent many of the impoverished women who were accused of witchcraft in early modern Europe.

> In this sense, the image of her allows us to look at both a mentality and a society, the mentality of those who discovered witches among women of a particular social class. Such images therefore constitute unusual 'pieces of history': they preserve a visual record of the social and intellectual origins of the great European witch-hunts (Hoak 1981: 26).

The projected violent nature of witches echoes atrocities committed by King Ferdinand's soldiers in Spain as witnessed by Francisco Goya during his career as a court painter. Although he produced religious paintings acceptable to his patrons, he also made a series of graphic works entitled *The Disasters of War, Caprichos, Tauromaquia* and the *Black Paintings*. It is the latter series which could be linked with the Saturnine world of melancholics, of witches and of dreams. These *Quinta del Sordo* murals dealt with mute "terror of cruelty begotten of fear" (Licht 1980: 165). Goya's famous painting, *Saturn Devouring One Of His Sons* (1820-1823) [fig. 4] is "convulsive" and shows the artist's capability to deal with "pervasive, incomprehensible malevolence" (Licht 1980: 166). Through these paintings the Greek legend found expression in madness and ferocity — an interpretation different from that of his predecessor Peter Paul Rubens [fig. 5], dated 1636-1637. The multiplicity of Goya's intent is so deep and varied that one feels authorised in looking beyond the titles[15] of his paintings for more sources of inspiration. From these accounts, witchcraft as a subject has an historical value in the field of visual arts.

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COMMENTARY ON INDIVIDUAL PAINTINGS

In each of the following paintings, an attempt is made to interpret witchcraft perceptions within pictorial narratives. By integrating various pieces of information obtained from different sources, it was possible to produce visual images that serve as a personal interpretation of these stories. Because of their conjectural quality, they contain aspects of satire and humour

Plate 1. *WHAT A HORROR!*

Plate 1. *WHAT A HORROR!*

The first version of this painting, now hanging outside the director's office at Canberra School of Art, was executed during my four-month visit to Australia in 1992. The following newspaper excerpt refers to it: "*What a Horror!* is a riot in a graveyard. A funeral proceeds while demons dance and mad-men wield axes over the heads of a terrified crowd scrambling to safety. A bursting calamity that represents all death, all the fear and agony of not one but many such riots that perhaps Baholo has first-hand experience of" (*Canberra Times,* June 18, 1992).

I assume, had the writer known that this painting was about the ordeal of 'zombification', the article would have been written differently. The description was informed by the conventional South African political context as illustrated by the media at that time.

Both versions of *What a Horror!* depicts a story that is commonly believed within the Batlokwa community. From the viewpoint of Mr. Molelengwane Machaka, who once practiced as a diviner, people routinely consult diviners or traditional healers whenever someone dies. The purpose is to enquire as to the cause of death and whether witchcraft was evident. The diviner proceeds with the divinatory process whereby bones are spread, recited to and begged to reveal the truth. In the end, a bone is pointed to as the one that seems to reveal the nature of death. As could be expected, the witch comes out as the culprit. The motive being that the witch intended to turn the supposedly dead person into a zombie so that it would work for him or her. A warning is then given to the family not to proceed with the burial, but to perform a weird ordeal which may be described as the magic of 'zombification'. It entails testing whether the dead person has actually died or alternatively turned into a zombie by the witch. With the assistance of the diviner, the closest relative of the diseased, usually a male, is ordered to strike the dead body with an axe on the forehead. As soon as he strikes, what appears to be a human body, would instantaneously change into a log of wood. In this way, it is demonstrated that the person the family thought had died had in fact been zombified by the witch. However, if nothing occurs when the axe hits the head, it would prove that the death had nothing to do with witchcraft.

The belief that a dead person has been turned into a zombie creates much anxiety within a bereaved family. In some cases, more than one diviner is consulted and the truth is established by consensus. The process whereby a witch transforms a person into a zombie remains a mystery. What is known though, is that a witch has mystical powers which are used to capture the spirit or shadow of a person moments before death. This means that the witch manipulates the time of death, or was responsible for the persons death. The magic is done in such a way, as to cause no suspicion in the minds of the relatives. They therefore proceed with burial arrangements without consulting the traditional healer, or diviner. The only time they realise that something is amiss, is when the supposedly dead person returns home after freeing himself from the witch's captivity. It is then that the family realises that it had buried something else. The next step would be to consult diviners to identify the witch involved and also ways in which the zombie could be normalised. Whether this aim of dezombifying a zombie can ever be realised, remained a mystery.

It might appear more logical, in treating a narrative such as this, to do so in the form of a triptych that would provide a more suitable pictorial plane for the story to unfold. Sub-themes of the story could be depicted on the smaller wings, while the main theme represented in the central panel. However, since this mechanism, at that time remained uninvestigated by me, I resorted to a single, large picture plane which not only led to crowding the canvas with figures, but also led to superimposing layers of meaning as part of the narrative structure.

What A Horror! gains its title because of the horror this ordeal entails. It captures a heightened stage where the corpse, laid across the grave, is to be struck with an axe. With the supervision of the diviner, care is taken for the axe-wielding man to strike exactly on the forehead. For this reason, the diviner is holding the corpse in position. The cheerfulness and curiosity reflected on the face of the striking man contrasts sharply with the appearance of the dead body together with the general mood of the mourners. As the diviner counts down for the first strike, the rest of the mourners are so terrified that each one is running away or scrambling to safety. This horror is demonstrated by several figures shown in different poses; some of whom jump high enough to denote the impact of fear for the unknown while others are tossing on the ground. The situation is confused.

Of particular importance is the figure of a woman who stands unfrightened, holding a book in one hand while raising the other to con-

demn the ritual ordeal as inhuman. She is a woman preacher, a servant of God and a peacemaker. In her intervention, she symbolises the reconciliation between Christianity and traditional beliefs. The figure of the woman is also associated with the emancipation of women from theological suppression.

Another symbol is to be found in the scarf around the dead figure across the grave. This is a Tlokwa symbol of death. The colour red is used to emphasise the absence of life and the sad feeling of mourners who gathered to pay their last respect. The use of turquoise heightens the significance of the dead body as the object of experimentation. Alongside is the diviner, the African genius, who holds his bones in a dish. He, too, could be seen as symbolising the African tradition which resists any contamination by its western counterpart.

What a Horror! is a pictorial interpretation of what I imagine to have happened in times of suspicion and tension caused by mysterious deaths. The main theme is centred on four figures, namely the axe-wielding man, the corpse, the woman priest and the healer. They could have been located in the centre of the picture plane to emphasise their importance, but were placed centre-right in order to provide space for secondary figures which occupy the rest of the format. The representation of the dead body caused difficulties that eventually made me resort to a compromise. There was a need to show the corpse in such a way that the viewer is provided with a clue as to what it was before, and after, the blow of the axe. By showing the corpse only as a whole human body, there would be no indication of what it was going to change into once struck. Similarly, there still would be no clue as to what it was before, had it only been represented as a log of wood. As a result, an improvisation was made by combining both the human body and the wood. In this way, it was possible to show the woman's torso, transforming itself into a log of wood.

What a Horror! also alludes to several issues related to witchcraft practices. One of them is the perpetual conflict between traditional beliefs and Christianity. Missionaries have been in conflict with traditional healers for many centuries. They regarded themselves as forces of light whilst the traditional healer was the force of darkness. The juxtaposition of these rival religions in one painting is a suggestion of the indispensable relationship between the two. Indeed, the notion of equating Jesus Christ with the medicine-man, the diviner, is not surprising as it indicates the vital role the traditional healer plays in African society.

Plate 2. *BABY-WITCH TRAINING.*

Plate 2. *BABY-WITCH TRAINING*

Baby-Witch Training also represents a common story about Batlokwa witches. Witches are thought to congregate regularly at a particular spot in the middle of the night where they perform a series of orgies. One of them is the orgy of training babies to become witches. Every witch is said to donate her baby to be the object of violent bouncing against the wall. This is done in order to make these babies cling onto the wall — a sign of having received the gift of witchcraft. The more violent the throw, the more chance there is for the baby to cling onto the wall like a bat. In the ensuing celebrations, qualifiers are congratulated for their success. However, those babies that failed to cling on the wall, are regarded as having rejected the training and subsequently made to fall into the pool at the bottom of the wall in which they drown. Their bodies become part of the meal for the night.

The baby-training orgy is a special occasion for witches because it is a congratulatory celebration for new members to the sect. It is a gruesome festivity celebrated in singing witchcraft songs, drum beating and dancing; all culminating in a frenzy of excitement. Most witches have no children. This is attributed to the donation of their babies to the witch's sect as a token of dedication. It is not yet known why witches are willing to sacrifice their babies in this way. It could be speculated that, as a sect, witches have an obligation of teaching their children the practice of witchcraft so that they are already in possession of mystical powers when they come of age, thus making it difficult for them to quit.

The painting, *Baby-Witch Training*, depicts a group of strong and robust women, swinging and violently throwing their babies in extreme excitement. Each mother makes a throw and monitors it closely to see if the baby clings. If not, it bounces back to be thrown again and again. The witch whose baby sticks first is praised for being experienced. As the painting shows, the floating babies pass each other, sometimes colliding as they cry helplessly, yet no one feels pity for them. Instead, they are flung even harder with the hope that they would stick on the wall. These babies acquire various poses, most of which evoke a sense of tension caused by the force with which they are flung. This tension is further aggravated by the splashing of water as the baby plunges into the pool. Equally disturbing,

is the manner in which the mother-witch holds her baby by the neck, wielding it before flinging it. Undoubtedly, to her, the baby is nothing but an object with which anything could be done. Those babies that happened to land beyond the wall, are also called back to be thrown again until they also stick on the wall.

This painting also comments on the method of throwing. With the exception of one, all witches are throwing babies as they face the direction of the wall. The witch on the right, separated from the group, faces the viewer as she tosses the baby overhead. Next to her is a huge baboon-like animal, at the bottom right corner.

The painting is vitalised by a colourful sky painted in ultra-marine blue with the green mountain forming a backdrop.

Plate 3. *THE GIRL-WITCH ON THE WALL*

Plate 3. *THE GIRL-WITCH ON THE WALL*

According to Mr. Elias T. Maake of Maupa Village, Bolobedu, one morning in 1985 a standard eight girl is said to have stripped herself naked in a classroom. She then walked straight to the chalk-board and jumped up to it with her back against the board. She remained stuck there, motionless, with her legs outstretched until her sister was called from another class to come and talk to her. She scolded her, saying that she was a disgrace to the entire family. She then ordered her to come down, put on her clothes and go home.

The girl apparently intended to bewitch one of her classmates only to find out that the intended victim was well-protected and therefore unassailable. The result was that she revealed herself by clinging on to the wall naked. The philosophy of witchcraft behind this self-exposure is that the witchcraft spell must work once unleashed, otherwise it turns against the witch herself. The North Sotho term: *Go swarega* means to be caught, or to be trapped. In a case like this, the caught girl-witch needed to be spoken to by the supposed victim as this could easily set her free. In a classroom situation, it could not easily be established who was targeted and this is the reason why she remained stuck on the wall until her sister came to her rescue. When a witch is trapped and the victim wishes to take revenge right away, it must be done silently. According to one informant, a typical punishment involved piercing the witch's naked body with red-hot metal spikes several times. Thereafter, she would be ordered to go away. She would mysteriously go back to her home where she would become convulsed with pain, as her paraphernalia having been cleansed, offered no protection. She would ultimately die.

This painting *Girl-witch on the Wall*, is a response to the incident of the trapped girl-witch on the wall. It is a literal depiction of a classroom situation where pupils are alarmed by the girl on the wall. Each one reacts in a way that reflects disapproval and embarrassment. By spreading hands while others are curiously watching her nakedness, the witch becomes a subject of derision. This is clearly shown by the boy standing in the middle row who seems to be attracted by what stands before him. To him the girl must be doing a stupid thing, but she would not care, as she would not have been aware of the extra-ordinary powers she possessed until the moment of exposure.

The pupils, who were supposed to be in their uniforms are casually dressed, in clothes of different colours. As in the other paintings, emphasis is placed on form, drawing and colour. In order to provide space for the main figure, the girl, only a few pupils are represented. Her prominence was further reinforced by the use of viridian green to convey a mood of relaxation in opposition to the rather confused classroom situation.

te 4. *PROTESTATION OF ZOMBIES AFTER EATING SALTED FOOD*

Plate 4. PROTESTATION OF ZOMBIES AFTER EATING SALTED FOOD

In the painting, *What a Horror!*, the story about the process of turning supposedly dead people into zombies was discussed. Witches, it is believed, by the Batlokwa, cannot live happily without keeping zombies to serve as their slaves. It is unclear how these creatures look even though accounts of them being seen in the open are abundant.

The story of zombies and salted food emphasises the ritual significance of salt as a domestic commodity. According to one story; a certain witch kept zombies in a little hut. There were so many that she had to cook for them more than once a day. This became a daunting task. If she spent no time away from home, her creatures would starve to death. She therefore sought a maidservant to cook for them. The instruction given her was to cook the porridge and place it at the entrance of the little hut. The zombies, having ensured that no one saw them, pulled the dishes into the hut and started eating. Once they had finished, the dishes were put back where they were collected by the cook to clean for later use. The maidservant was strongly warned not to put salt into the food she prepared. One day she forgot and put salt into the porridge. The result was a wild protest orchestrated by the taste of the salt. These familiars started ejecting themselves from the hut into open space, and tired themselves by jumping, tossing and somersaulting in what seems to be a state of confusion. In this dramatic activity, only the witch could hear them noisily shouting: *tswaai tswaai* — (salt salt).[16]

This story is interpreted in my painting as a mental experience of the witch. As soon as she heard sounds of *tswaai! tswaai*! she collapsed. Such a story would not be different from the one related to Isak Niehaus by an informant who said: "an old woman instructed her daughter-in-law to prepare large quantities of soft porridge every day. She then had to cool the porridge and place it in a secret room which nobody was allowed to enter. One day the daughter-in-law forgot to cool the porridge. The old woman's zombies were greedy, they jumped into the pot and burnt to death" (Niehaus 1992: 15).

In this story, the *Protestation of Zombies after Eating Salted Food*, a similar error of forgetfulness was made by the maidservant. By

putting salt into the zombie's food when she was not supposed to, she caused the zombies to go on a rampage. It cannot be established precisely what drives them mad, but on account of the way the story was related, the salt certainly had extraordinary effects on the zombies.

As the painting demonstrates, the human-like beings are placed in the foreground, all overwhelmed by the power of salt that causes them to scream while tossing and somersaulting in a state of desperation. Like actors on a theatrical stage, each zombie adopts a particular pose as they struggle for relief. The power of salt has been so forceful that it caused some zombies to fart and defecate as they stumble over one another. In the middleground, a group of church people are desperately praying for the revival, unbeknown to them, of the owner of these creatures, whom they are unable to see or hear.

Compositionally, *The Protestation of Zombies after Eating Salted Food* is a window of some sorts, permitting the viewer to follow the movement of figures as they relate to one another through overlapping, interlocking and colouration. In this way, they are unified as one group of figures. The application of colour, for instance, enhances this unity in several ways. The use of alizarin crimson for a group of figures at the bottom left is contrasted with another painted in bright greens and yellows. Through glazing techniques, the application of colour heightens the drama in the painting. Also rendering of clouds with bright colours illuminates the sky and therefore complements activities on the ground.

Plate 5. ***THE PUNISHMENT OF WITCHES.***

Plate 5. *THE PUNISHMENT OF WITCHES*

This painting demonstrates the brutal treatment meted out to alleged witches in times of witchcraft accusations. A witch is usually held accountable for all social ills in the community. Witch-hunts currently taking place in the northern Transvaal are evidence of this fact. This tension ceases once the witch is killed or expelled from the society.

This painting is presented in the form of a triptych, a painting convention enabling the artist to illustrate different stages of the story. The episode of beating and stoning unfolds from the central canvas to the two wings on either side. In the first wing on the left, a woman who is eventually stoned to death, in the main canvas, is being assisted after losing consciousness in front of the pulpit. She has been actively involved in the church, yet she is accused of witchcraft. The other wing illustrates the process of divination whereby the diviner excels in manipulating people's ideas by stating what he thinks his consultants want to hear. In most cases, consultation with the diviner is a matter of convenience as the culprit's name is already on everyone's lips. In this painting the consultants are the parents of the stoned woman and they seek to know who could have been the first person to spread the rumour that their daughter was a witch.

The main panel depicts the action of stoning the female witch while her male counterpart is being tied to a tree trunk and beaten before the verdict is passed. The desire to kill is demonstrated by the manner in which big stones are being lifted and thrown to crush the evil. The standing figure, the third form on the left, is reminiscent of El Greco's figures in the way it is treated. Similarly, the frenzy of beating up the helpless male witch tied to the tree, is marked by the jumping youth who feels challenged that perhaps his strokes are not severe enough to cause the man to scream. The presence of pain and death is symbolised by a group of skulls, haphazardly arranged among red-brown stones. It is common knowledge that the killers are in a position to use anything in sight to inflict pain on their victims. Stones and batons, knobkerries and whips are all tools used in this drama. The central figure of a youngster, patiently waits, bending over a car tyre which he is going to set alight on the dead bodies of the witches. Not far from him, a tractor tyre is placed

which symbolises the magnitude of the crimes such witches are alleged to have committed. In the background, huts are ablaze with the smoke billowing into the sky adding tension to the already volatile situation. The figure wielding a whip demonstrates brutality. He is so forceful that he jumps as he beats his victim. Similarly, the stoning of the woman is so cruel that it continues even after she is dead.

There is a significant reduction in the number of figures used in this painting as compared to others. The purpose was to focus attention on the landscape which gives the figures a heightened existence in a particular setting. This painting illustrates the brutality of witch hunters and their hatred of witches.

FIG. 6. WITCHES AS CANNIBALS.

Plate 6. *WITCHES AS CANNIBALS*

The popular perception exists within Batlokwa society that witches live on human flesh. They frequently visit graveyards where they exhume newly-buried bodies and eat them.

The consequences of this belief led to a new development in burial practice in which mourners ensure the safety of the grave by building cement and concrete walls to close the grave. This is done on the same day of the burial. It is said that, in the past, a seven-day night vigil was held by families at the cemeteries. The aim was to ward off witches who wanted to dig out the body. It was also believed that the body decomposed within a period of seven days and witches would therefore not be able to eat it.

In this painting, witches are sharing the body of a recently buried child. That the human flesh is a delicacy is shown by the selfishness of the witch in the foreground which tries to devour the whole body alone. However, other witches would not let her do this and they push one another in order to receive their share. It is a drama in a graveyard where witches are having a special meal. Brightly painted in what generally appears to be a dull environment, the four figures in the back row are arranged in such a way that they form a curve echoed by the dark cloud hanging overhead. Likewise, the vertical positioning of figures on the right is reinforced by the verticality of the lifeless tree trunks with their number corresponding to that of the witches. By giving the figure in the front a different colour, an attempt is made to isolate it from the rest as a means of showing the act of gluttony.

Witches as Cannibals draws its inspiration from paintings by the Great Masters. Francisco Goya, like his predecessor Peter Paul Rubens, demonstrated the attitude of witches towards human flesh, showing them in acts of viciously disintegrating the body, followed by gluttonous consumption of their victims. In *Witches as Cannibals*, the same greed is illustrated in the gloomy and lifeless surrounding of the graveyard.

Plate 7. *THE SASSWOOD MIXTURE*

Plate 7. *THE SASSWOOD MIXTURE*

This painting depicts a trial. Witches are being administered a potion of sasswood, a poisonous herb that kills within a few days after swallowing. The use of this mixture in this trial is to comply with the wish of the public who want the witch to take the blame for their social problems.

According to this story, people who are suspected of being witches are rounded up, taken to a spot where they are made to drink a poisonous mixture. Those who vomit are regarded as guilty because they are thought to have a condition in their stomach that rejects the substance. They are subsequently killed. However, those who did not vomit, are given a warning to stop the practice of witchcraft.

This is a controversial trial planned to ensure that none of the accused escapes death. In actual fact, those women who vomited, are the innocent ones because the stomach could not accept such a strange substance. Still, they were executed. It is not clear whether the women who did not vomit, are innocent or not. However, their inability to vomit means that they have a few days left, before they die of the poisonous sasswood mixture. Eventually, all the suspects are killed, which is what the public expect.

The dominant action that this picture attempts to convey, is the act of vomiting. *The Sasswood Mixture* is about helpless women, standing in file for their turn to drink the mixture that not only guarantees their death in a few days time, but also intoxicates them, resulting in a trance that resembles spirit-possession. In that state of mind, such a person can easily admit to having bewitched someone; something that she was unable to say before taking a dose of sasswood mixture. The second type of activity is concentrated on men who are being bundled up on wooden poles and beaten with knobkerries. The use of a knobkerrie is rather symbolic. It is a special weapon used for protecting the household. Like a gun, it is used under extreme circumstances. It has become known within Batlokwa society as *thoka ya motse* (knobkerrie of the house).

The Sasswood Mixture basically comments on the public attitude to witches and how desperate is the need for them to die without any chance of escaping. The painting also shows the brutality with which witches are treated.

Plate 8. *THE INCISION RITUAL OF THE CHILD.*

Plate 8. *THE INCISION RITUAL OF THE CHILD*

It is a traditional belief and practice that a person should not remain an easy target for bewitchment. The need for protection has always been a matter of urgency once the baby is born. This protective measure involves the ritual process of incision in which an elderly woman, if not the traditional healer, is requested to make small cuts with a razor-blade on various parts of the body. An ointment is rubbed into the wound.

Compositionally, the painting comprises three people; the baby, the mother and the grandmother. The father is also included, but his significance has been reduced to a shadowy figure in the background. The painting captures a moment when an old lady thrusts a razor-blade into the delicate skin of a small child. The severe pain of the child and blood coming out of the wounds gives the mother an unpleasant feeling. She does not look at the crying baby and focuses her attention on something beyond the picture plane. Once the cutting is completed, a substance, consisting mainly of graphite obtained from a dry battery cell, is rubbed in the cuts increasing the pain. This is to stop incessant bleeding and to quicken the healing process. The crying baby must be held firmly so as to make proper incisions without hurting the child unnecessarily. Incisions are also done on wrists, the back of the neck, ankles and sometimes on the forehead. The Lobedu people, in the Modjadji area, are in the custom of making long incisions on their cheeks for the purpose of curing aching eyes. When healed, these incisions leave both large and tiny marks on the skin, thus forming an aesthetic feature which is a landmark of ethnic identity for the Lobedu of the Rain-Queen, Modjadji.

The painting is designed in the Renaissance style. Attention is placed on the figures by the application of bright colours. The green background and the grayish dress of the old woman and the mother's sky-blue head-cloth all harmonise in bringing out the presence of the ritual. The outward looking woman, hardly concentrating on the actual process, maintains her presence by occupying the centre of the painting.

In the case of healing elderly people, the incision process is preceded by the ritual of inhaling hot steam and sweating. Here the diviner or any experienced person, boils water while heating stones. The patient is then covered with a heavy blanket and made to bend over a washing dish half filled with boiled water. Each time a red-hot stone is dropped into the dish the patient is thrust down so as to inhale more steam. In the end, the patient is uncovered and allowed to cool down before the incisions take place. The stones are then discarded in the middle of the road to loose their potency when exposed to the air. They are not to be touched as the disease of the patient might pass on to an individual who touches the stones. These cooked stones are called *makgoma* (untouchable).

Plate 9. *THE MYSTERIOUS SEXUAL ACT WITH THE TIKOLOSHE.*

Plate 9. *THE MYSTERIOUS SEXUAL ACT WITH THE TIKOLOSHE*

This is a literal interpretation of the mysterious sexual experience involving the *tikoloshe*. Witches are known to send familiars such as *tikoloshe*s to sexually assault their victims. This creature is known for its prominent feature, a long and stretchable penis used to rape women and cause infertility.

According to popular perceptions, a woman whose husband is away at work dreams of having relationships with him. The dream continues until the time when she awakens and notices that she had spent the night alone. She also notices that she is wet. Upon consulting the diviner she learns that she had been raped by a *tikoloshe*. The reason for sending this animal stems from the witch's jealousy. As this commonly happens to a recently married woman it becomes obvious that the ultimate intention is to cause infertility. The end result is that the woman is expelled by her in-laws for not conceiving. The witch would have triumphed in his or her long-term mission. Even in the situation where the bewitchment of making a woman barren is unsuccessful, the witch would not stop, and would try to kill the children.

Although no formal description of the *tikoloshe* exists, rumours about it being seen near female residences are abundant. However, it is not so much its appearance that matters, but its symbolic function. It is therefore necessary to view the *tikoloshe* in terms of its mystical existence and those who had experienced it.

Far form being erotic, *The Mysterous Sexual Act with the Tikoloshe* highlights the sexual violence the *tikoloshe* precipitates in the struggle with the victim. By the nature of its long and screw-like penis, stretched long enough to reach the woman's vagina, the *tikoloshe* represents all forms of sexual abuse and violence and its configuration as a hybrid between dog and goat also emphasises this fact. He is relaxed and administers his long penis while the woman lies hypnotised by the sensation, making her lift up her right leg. This sexual pleasure will turn into disappointment as soon as she notices that the *tikoloshe* or small man has disappeared. Niehaus' explanation for

the use of a *tikoloshe* to sexually harass women is noteworthy. He wrote: "The major reason for using a tokoloshe was to sexually molest and rape one's neighbours. Sexual intercourse with a tokolose is opposed to fertility and procreation. It causes women to abort or give birth to small horrible creatures. It sucks men's blood and makes them impotent "(Niehaus 1992: 8).

In interpreting this incident, I was urged to be as direct as possible and not worry about those viewers who would feel insulted by what appears to be an erotic subject. For example, the treatment of the penis gives the idea about the screwing movement from erection to penetration. As can be seen, the stretchable penis is narrow from its base and grows bigger during erection. This is to convey the sense of violence inherent in all encounters with this creature. However, this painting emphasises the positive side of the mystical intercourse where no violence takes place. The reclining figure of the woman appears to be dreaming as the *tikoloshe*'s penis finds its way through screwing movements into her vagina.

Plate 10. *THE TIKOLOSHE.*

Plate 10. *THE TIKOLOSHE*

The *tikoloshe* is portrayed here as a sexual object and carries his large penis over his shoulder. He has the combined physical attributes of a dog and goat and is of a cheerful disposition.

The *tikoloshe*, as a witch familiar, provides comments on the personhood and significant features of the social world of country folk. It provokes thought about the safety of lonely women whose husbands have been displaced by labour migration and are living in cities as migrant labourers. Such women, if they are witches, will use the *tikoloshe* as a replacement for their husbands. Similarly, those who are not witches, live with the fear of being assaulted by this creature. Their safety is therefore in question. The *tikoloshe* is also a symbol of domination and control.


NECKLACING

Plate 11. *NECKLACING*

In a situation where political rivalry is intense, all forms of atrocities and brutality occur. These are organisational and intimidatory imperatives adopted by interest groups in order to persuade members to act in conformity with their aims. When such aims prove futile, mobs of young people resort to the tactic of intimidation manifested in the necklacing nightmare, thereby creating a state where contractual means give way to force and terror. Here, individual persons are accused of being informers, puppets or ***mpimpi*** for the racist regime and are therefore candidates for necklacing. As political witches exist in contemporary South Africa, they too are subjected to the brutality of necklacing by comrades. As the painting illustrates, the victim, a woman, has been apprehended by a mob of young people who have bound her hands and feet together with ropes in order to put a car tyre over her shoulders. The climax of this process is reached when executioners dowse the victim with petrol before setting her alight.

The drama begins when the victim's husband is forced to set her alight. If he is unable to burn her, she is going to burn him. As in the painting *What a Horror!*, the woman in the blue dress intervenes by denouncing the killing as banditry and evil. She finds the extra-judicial execution inhuman and a violation of human rights based on the principle from the Holy Bible which forbids killing. In the background another victim is being dragged by two men to the flames on the left.

This painting demonstrates the extent to which apartheid has robbed young people of their respect for life and property. They do as they wish. One has to only to listen to their statements and observe their actions to realise how perverted they have become. So-called enemies of the people are killed on the spur of the moment. Some would even argue about choosing the size of the tyre in relation to the kind of crime the victim is accused of. The standard tyre is for common accusations, but a truck or tractor tyre is for notorious witches. In this case, the necklacing tactic became not only a method of getting rid of undesirable elements in the community, but also an effective weapon to generate their popularity in the political scene. Today the word comrade has acquired a sinister meaning, other than that of a friend. It implies an intimidator, a witch-hunter or murderer. Through intimidatory executions of witches, comrades have

also undermined tribal institutions such as chieftainship, disrupted learning processes and colluded with other groups to enforce consumer boycotts. Observing this, Stadler suggested in his paper, *Elders, Youth and Witches*, the youth had used "the ideology of witchcraft accusations as a resource to contest generational authority" (Stadler 1992: 1).

The composition of this painting echoes a triangular shape whose sides simultaneously begin at the feet of the figures on the left and the squatting figure on the right, culminating in the floating figure overhead. This is a compositional mechanism Mannerist artists applied in order to accommodate figures that would otherwise be obscured and thus denied their significance in the picture. In this way, figures are intertwined and the viewer's eye is directed from one action to another about the central figure. In this manner, the balance of the composition of the painting is maintained.

Plate 12. *ONE CHOICE 2. PEACE.*

Plate 12. *ONE CHOICE — PEACE*

War-talks in the pre-elections days predicted chaos and turmoil that would turn South Africa into another Yugoslavia. Thanks to the peace campaigns, whose vital contribution brought the country back from the brink of ethnic conflict, war did not transpire.

One Choice — Peace is an allegory about peace and its significance to the South African nation. The April election was not only a choice for peace, but also an end to the iron-fisted rule of the apartheid regime. Most importantly, the choice diminished the prospects for war which would have had disastrous consequences for this country. However, it is in the representation of this allegory that this story is narrated.

The painting shows a lofty interior similar to classical buildings with high ceilings. Inside, the female Electoral Officer, is painted in a blue dress and relates harmoniously with the airy surroundings. Figures on the right are actively involved in deciding what they want. As she makes a request to choose between peace and war or between the dove and the barrel of a gun, they choose peace. But, there is a controversial element shown by the snake hidden under the table. It symbolises the dark forces that are against change. Hiding itself under the table, the snake prefers not to be seen. But the woman in the white dress notices it and she attempts to draw the attention of others to what she sees. Like a witch, the snake waits for the opportune time to subvert any peaceful accomplishment. However, through democratic elections last April, such an opportunity never arose and war-mongers have been denied the opportunity to create a situation of racial conflict.

Melancholy. **Lucas Cranach, 1528.**

Figure 1. Wineboes, Hans Baldung Grien, 1510.

Figure 3. *Isenheim Altarpiece*. Matthias Grünewald, 1515.

F[illegible]*ns.* **Francisco Goya, 1820-1823.**

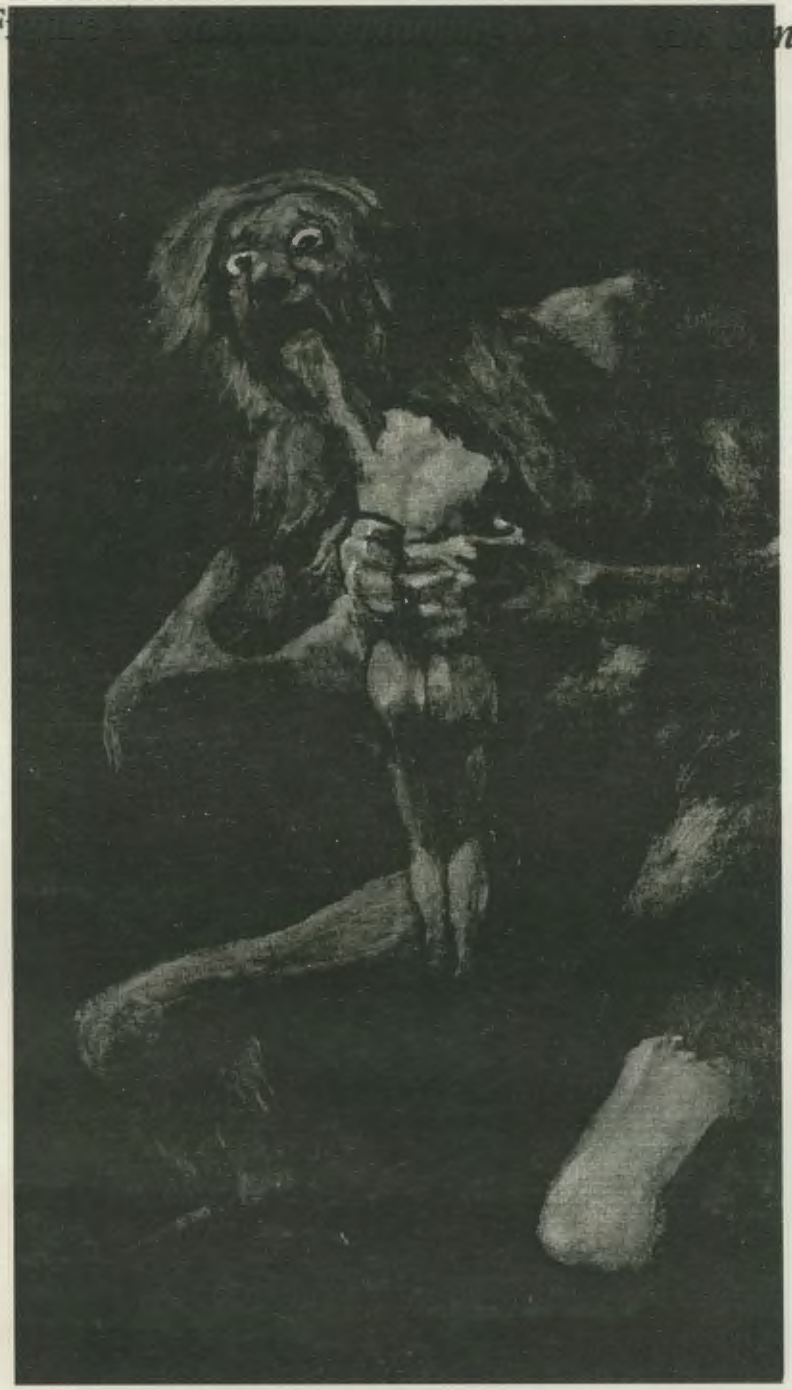

Figure 5. *Saturn Devouring One Of His Sons.* **Peter Paul Rubens, 1636-1637.**

FIGURES

1. *Melancholy*. Lucas Cranach, 1528.

2. *Witches*. Hans Baldung Grien, 1510.

3. *Isenheim Altarpiece*. Grünewald, 1515.

4. *Saturn Devouring One of His Sons.* Fransico Goya, 1820-1823.

5. *Saturn Devouring One of His Sons.* Peter Paul Rubens, 1636-1637.

NOTES

1. Reports from Weekly Mail & Guardian (June 10 - 16 1994) remark that the grisly sequence of events in Nobody, in the northern Transvaal, was one incident in an orgy of witch-hunting that led to the burning of over 70 people. In Nobody, 15km from Pietersburg, a small business contractor's wife Sinna Mankwane, was seized by the mob. They beat her and hung three petrol-filled tyres around her neck. Her husband, Johannes (who was to be killed the next day), was called out and given a box of matches. In full view of his son and daughter, he was forced to burn his wife alive. Other areas affected by witch-hunts included Bochum, Seshego, Moletjie, and Matlala. In each cycle of witch-hunts, victims were killed, expelled from villages and their houses burnt down. As most had nowhere to go where it is safe, they took refuge at police stations in the area. This situation in the northern Transvaal was recently highlighted in the presentation of a documentary program on Carte Blanche on M-Net television on September 17, 1994.

2. A witch, it is said, is a human being of flesh and blood who exists in the daylight, but changes form once on a mission in the darkest hour of the night. As a spirit, a witch cannot be seen or caught. Its presence would only be noticed by the victim in the form of some physical evidence, such as bruises or incisions under the foot. This was related to me by Mrs. Maponya, a church-minister's wife. Mrs. Maponya lives in the village of Mamaila, near Giyani.

3. One important associative aspect of witchcraft belief involves an inquiry into the witch's consciousness, that is, whether witches are aware or not of their activities. The view that anyone can be a witch implies that a Batlokwa witch can never be aware of their activities until caught. This point is illustrated by Evans-Pritchard in his classic distinction between witchcraft and sorcery: "Azande believe that some people are witches and can injure them in virtue of an inherent quality. A witch performs no rite, utters no spell, and possesses no medicines. An act of witchcraft is a psychic act" (Marwick 1970: 41).

4. Death by necklacing is death by fire. This entails placing a car tyre (necklace) around the neck of the victim, pouring petrol over him or her and setting the victim alight. The size of the tyre is determined by the crime the witch is alleged to have committed. The bigger the crime, the larger the necklace. In cases where a tractor tyre is recommended, the witch must be notorious. When the mob is all fired up, a close relative of the victim is given a box of matches and ordered to set the victim alight. Should the order be ignored, such a person will be the next victim of necklacing. As the victim struggles for life, the youth or comrades *toyi-toyi*, engaging in spirited chanting of political songs.

5. Highly politicised militant youth movements.

6. A report appeared in the Argus newspaper, of March 25, 1993. The title of the article read: *Saved from witches?: KTC woman preacher 'brings man back to life'*. The woman-preacher used prayer and African herbs to bring back to life a mentally sick young man who had been thought to be dead according to confirmations from the Salt River mortuary. She claimed the man had not died but was kept as a zombie by members of his family. Like other zombies, he was found with two needles pinned on either side of his protruding tongue.

7. Harding gives an illustration of colour-blindness as a form of superstition. When red and green are differentiated, it is so because the majority of people with normal sight see the difference between the two colours. However, in a case where a person cannot see any difference between red and green, they are said to be suffering from 'red-green blindness'. "What he sees in the external world gives information about himself, which is correct even while his observation of the object is false, as judged by the consensus of people with normal sight" (Harding 1989: 5). Harding maintains that "this observation gives information about those people who see red and green as different". However, "if the colour-blind people were in the majority, the tables would be turned and the ability to differentiate red and green would be considered an abnormality, which would in turn be used as a test of the subject, not of the object. It is our unconsciousness which makes us say 'but the cloth is red,' that is to say, it is our superstition" (Harding 1989: 5).

8. The word *tikoloshe* is spelt in various forms — subject to place and pronunciation.

9. While it is acceptable that a *tikoloshe* cannot be seen under normal circumstances, the evidence given to me by a church minister about how he lost his right arm suggests it is something real which cannot be simply dismissed. During a Sunday service, a minister related his encounter with the *tikoloshe* on a factory floor one evening which led to the loss of his arm. This creature just surfaced and a struggle ensued until he leaned his right arm on a running metal-cutting blade and his hand was cut off. Instantaneously the *tikoloshe* disappeared from the fighting scene. According to his explanation, he used to consult traditional healers frequently from where he received muti's (medicines) that were to be applied according to the healer's prescription as a form of personal protection. The very same traditional healers were also visited by people who were his enemies, without his knowledge. The muti's obtained from the same diviner had common properties that often interfere with each other when they are in close proximity — this is similar to the interference between a running car-engine and a radio or television. The minister had since repented and converted to the Christian faith. The theme of his sermon was not only to discourage people from consulting traditional healers, but also to encourage people to read the Bible everyday in as much as he puts on his artificial arm everyday when he goes to work.

10. In the transformation process of 'zombification' zombies have their tongues cut short to retard speech in case they free themselves

from the witch's captivity. This is to ensure that they are not able to express themselves properly. The difficulty in pronouncing the word *letswai* (salt) as a cry of protest is owed to this inhibition. One of Niehaus's informants claimed to have met a zombie and said: "I myself saw the boy and gave him five cents. His tongue was cut right at the back" (Niehaus 1992: 15).

11. A term coined to refer to workless and uneducated black youth who are products of the failed Bantu Education program.

12. It was customary for the Batlokwa chief to hire a custodian for three large clay pots placed in caves which contained sludges obtained from river-beds. This consisted of algae, tiny marine animals, small plants and water. These pots were to be stirred in order to precipitate fumes which attracted rain to come. However, since forced removals, this practice had been forgotten. Instead, the blame was placed on witches for chasing the rain away, hence the need to eradicate them. My informant in this case was Mr. Chepape Baholo, a relative.

13. Chilean people believe that an *Imbunche* is a familiar kept by witches. According to Taussig (Taussig 1987), witches abduct the child and break his bones and sew the body parts together in an abnormal way so that the head is turned around forcing them to walk backwards. In the context of Chilean politics, the military junta under Pinochet had done everything in its power to make every Chilean and Chile itself into an Imbunche. Similarly, the successive racist governments of South Africa had done their best to turn black people into veritable zombies.

14. The planet Saturn was associated with melancholy. Those born under its sign included conjurers, magicians, witches and sorcerers. Since all harmful magic belonged to Saturn, the black arts of witchcraft and sorcery were assigned to this planet's spell.

15. We must remember that the titles of all the paintings in this cycle were invented not by the artist but by critics long after Goya's death (Licht 1980: 168).

16. As a commodity, salt is used for various purposes ranging from sprinkling it on fresh human faeces in public areas to stop the continuation of defecation to doctoring soccer-boots and balls when playing against stronger teams. In many cases, to ask for salt at night is taboo. The Bible too, regards the salt as an important commodity. It is in this context that salt is seen to be having extra powers which can affect zombies wildly.

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