



INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF DECADENCE STUDIES

Volume 1, Issue 2

Winter 2018

The Magickal Body – Text and Image

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ISSN: 2515-0073

Date of Acceptance: 30 November 2018

Date of Publication: 21 December 2018

Citation: Geraldine Hudson, 'The Magickal Body – Text and Image', *Volupté: Interdisciplinary Journal of Decadence Studies*, 1.2 (2018), 138-41.

volupte.gold.ac.uk



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Artist's Statement – Topography of Myth

As a border walker I am continually exploring questions around the inherent meaning of fiction and myth, authority, power and cultural concepts of origin, using various methods in my practice as means to engage, wandering between installation, object, photography, printmaking and artists' books, the inherent materiality being essential. Significantly, the relationship between the permanence of the porcelain, with the vulnerability of paper, hair and other organic material.

Using a methodology of walking, whether drifting or purposefully revisiting certain places, I attempt to explore notions of *genius loci*, examining the topography of myth in order to map a forensics of transgressive happenings as essential to the human condition.

In combining concepts of the stratalogical unconscious with the lay of the land, my practice continues to focus on notions of heterotopia, interweaving the psychogeographic experience with elements of esoteric initiation while questioning the shifting relations between the sacred and the profane in both urban and rural environments.

My more recent work has furthermore engaged with feminist notions of the personal as political, taking the standpoint of an 'other' regarding the visceral experience of the witch in relation to nature and site, as interpreted through ritual performance.

June 2018

I work under the cover of night. The ground is cold, the air thin. I have to be fast and furtive; moving like a fugitive, these places on the edgelands of the city are not mine alone. The damp, musty earth and the October chill form a light covering on my skin. My breath and my heartbeat tattoo the rhythm to follow.

Fully naked inside a circle of candles, I unfurl from the floor, the watchers smothered by the sound of my heartbeat. Slowly and deliberately, I paint my bare flesh with the ash from before, clothe myself in my robe, and begin the working.

The circle is cast, consecrated to the dead time. The ancestors I feel are present. I dedicate to Hekate. Stop, breathe and pace and then incant. My once-chilled skin now flushed. I sweat, shake, and continue to circle, becoming more intent. I present my offerings ... my monthly bleed mixed with the fruit of the underworld. I continue to encircle, unaware of those who watch.

Through orgasmic energy I enter the liminal space, become another and reincarnate.

Once the circle is closed, withershins, I remove myself from the room. The watchers, no longer passive observers but participants in the working, stay seated, blanketed in my sound. They have become one with my body during this working.

The earth under my fingernails is a reminder of my contact. The dirt; the soiled body of the apparent fallen.

I relate to my ritual performance pieces as workings – being both an element of art practice and magickal praxis, they negate each other and form another reality. In these workings I attempt to communicate the inaudible and the unseen, to translate the visceral into a language, albeit an occulted, codified one. I explore the phenomenological experience of the body as a vehicle, intuitive and consciously unconscious.

The body when used in Ritual is not just a tool or empty vessel through which an energy can flow. I see this as a prescriptive way of viewing the female body, as a passive vessel. During Ritual, I am in control of my own subversion. It is my will and my body is fully conscious. The skin tissue, sinews, receptors, and muscles are wholly aware. Upon working like this, my intent is to subvert that which may be seen as profane and to become one with my other self within the ephemeral space which I inhabit.

This practice is psychogeographic, concerned as much with the lay of the land which I inhabit, as Witch, as with the topography of my own flesh. My performance, ‘Topography of the Witch’ is a ritualistic working and performance, part of an ongoing body of work, that investigates psychological topographies, otherness, and the visceral experience of the witch.

Beginning with basic rituals and moving towards a working at the end of October 2018, the culmination of my current research was a Samhain Ritual and self-initiation, as artist and witch. The site is mine at a given time, and I am familiar with the genius loci of the places I visit. When inhabiting a certain space, I become hypersensitive, relying on that which is innate and hereditary. This connecting thread, back to the ritualistic body of the Celtic Pagans, witches, and shamans is one, like the collective unconscious, that I relate to when regarding liminal spaces. Foucault’s heterotopia being a starting point in relation to the strata of the unconscious; when considering a liminal, dream or trance state this takes us full circle to the connection between my physical body and the lay of the land, the intersection being my state of mind/body and the liminal/physical space created: the sacred ground. As above, so below.

The final performance, which took place at the *Occulture* conference in Berlin on 16-18 November 2018, was built upon a series of layers. These included bodily observations during October, ritual praxis, recording of part of a Samhain Ritual, and further audio recordings at sites sacred to myself, together with first-hand observations of the female body, the affects psychologically and physically when in devotion, and the ritual and heterotopic space. Recorded sound was then mixed into a five-channel piece which incorporated my own heartbeat, breath, and orgasm during the ritual. This piece was present as part of my performance. Alongside the sounds recorded I made pictorial offerings to Hekate, lunar/vulva blots from my own menstrual blood collected a month earlier at the Hunter’s Moon, then combined with pomegranate juice (the fruit of the underworld) and ash collected from earlier workings.

I view my practice and research, not as academic study. Instead, my work attempts to subvert the, often male, gaze pertaining to the sacred feminine, particularly in its perception of the esoteric female as a passive vessel or medium. With a reminder that we still walk on treacherous precarious ground, and that the personal is always political, I choose to focus on the experience of myself as an integrated whole, a phenomenology of the female body in relation to land, ownership, and territory.

Images from 'Topography of the Witch', October 2018



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