



*In the central Adytum of the Crooked Way, apostasy is wed to orthodoxy, lie to truth in a unification of opposites whose totality is negation through opposition.*

Crooked Path Sorcery is at once a magical philosophy impelling and arising from the magical historical witchcraft, as well as the practices of the magical order *Cultus Sabbati*. Reflecting the patterning of antinomian magic and the interior metaphysical dimensions of the Witches' Sabbat, its essence is ophidian, turning all it encounters to serve the will of the sorcerer. Cultus works such as Andrew D. Chumbley's *The Dragon-Book of Essex* and Daniel A. Schulke's *Lux Hæresis* reflect specialized ciphers of Crooked Path teachings within the Sabbatic Tradition, and underscore its unique contributions to witchcraft lore.

Published for the first time, *Via Tortuosa* is a grimoire elaborating the occult ontology of Crooked Path Sorcery by three initiates of the order. Its diverse by-ways and their spheres of gnosis are examined through essay and allegory, including The Opposer, The Serpent of Eld, The Crooked Step, the Transfiguration of the New Flesh and the Embrace of the *Other*. The whole is illustrated with ten original drawings by Jim Dunk, each embodying the aberrant hypostases of the Crooked Gods.



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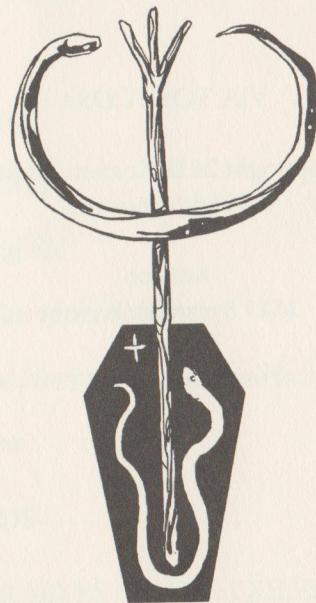
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# Via Tortuosa

*An Exposition on Crooked Path Sorcery*



Daniel A. Schulke & Robert Fitzgerald

*Images by James Dunk*

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VIA TORTUOSA

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## Introduction

The term ‘crooked path’ in idiomatic English usage has long been used to insinuate a pattern of deviation from the ‘straight and narrow’, i.e., accepted, lawful or moral way. Appertaining magical philosophy, the term Crooked Path Sorcery was coined by Andrew D. Chumbley (1967-2004), a scholar of comparative religions and magical practitioner in Essex, England, to define an ethos of magic characterised by opposition, transgression, and recursive spiritual revelation. The term encompassed a perennial pattern prevalent in historical sorcery at the folk magical level – sometimes, but not always, called ‘witchcraft’ – and also the conscious development of this ethos as an

occult phenomenology in the present era. This was enriched by the writings and practices of initiates of the magical order Cultus Sabbati, of which Chumbley served as Magister from 1991 until his death in 2004.

The allied term *Via Tortuosa* may be literally understood as the 'twisted way', 'bending way' or the 'contorted road', marked by convolution and indirect route; it also foreshadows the way of the Crooked Path adept as one beset with difficulty, ordeal, and 'tortuous steps.' This explication of severity is a vital sinew in the Body of Ordeal, and a sorcerous arbiter of mystical revelation and transcendence.

As magical epistemology and practice, Crooked Path Sorcery was developed in the inner cells and covines of the Cultus Sabbati. The Order is the inheritor and steward of several orally-transmitted magical traditions ultimately deriving from a hybrid of British cunning-folk practice and ceremonial magic lodge structures of the late 1800s, but presumably older given its pervasive patterning of rural charming traditions.<sup>1</sup> Other magical currents from the twentieth century, such as pre-war rural charming, herbalism, North American folk magic, freemasonry, and the Order of the Eastern Templars have also flowed into the tradition, augmenting its core

<sup>1</sup> The expression *crooked path* is ancient and quintessentially English, as is the related phrase 'by hook or by crook', signaling the directive 'by any means necessary.'

teachings with kindred features.<sup>2</sup> Though they are diverse in terms of provenance and expression, many of these syncretic currents share kindred features of rituals, spells and lore relating to the medieval Witches' Sabbat, and, in rare cases, the private use of the term *witching* to describe the active form of these practices. The collective term for the outer reification of these currents, as proceeding from the Cultus, is 'The Sabbatic Craft' or 'Sabbatic Witchcraft.'

As a magical philosophy, Crooked Path Sorcery has historically permeated the Sabbatic Tradition, even prior to its point of naming, exhibiting a complexly-embodied form in each of its adepts. Its outer expressions have been propounded through the writings of various Cultus initiates, in the form of magical treatises, essays, grimoria, and works of visual art, disseminated through Xoanon, the order's outer visage. Chumbley described the Crooked Path succinctly as:

*the ever-deviating way which connects moment to moment in a continuum of initiatory consciousness.<sup>3</sup>*

This definition emphasizes the nature of the Crooked Path as a passage, both in terms of a physical structure interpenetrating time and space, and as a pattern of

<sup>2</sup> For example, the ceremonial folk charms of the Pennsylvania Dutch.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew D. Chumbley, 'A Spark from the Forge', private publication of the Cultus Sabbati, (1995,1998).

movement within it, as well as its aberrant character. Also evident is the *Via Tortuosa*'s power of magical connectivity, circumscribing a process that is active, rather than static; unified rather than compartmentalised. Indeed, Crooked Path Sorcery is not only a concept with broad applications across many magical currents but also a distinct body of unique teachings which underpin the ethos and historical narrative of the traditions of the *Sabbatic Craft*, encompassing such specialized *arcana* as the *Opposer*, the *Double-Way*, *Cainite Gnosis*, and *Exilic Wisdom*.



As a wisdom-teaching the sorcery of the Crooked Path is best understood in a greater historical context of the evolution of western magical thought. In particular it interpenetrates the aggregate historical phenomenon called 'witchcraft' and its oppositional relationship to orthodox religious and magical practice.

Broadly speaking, it is without doubt that transmission of diverse occult lore and practices persisted in England, Europe, and the Americas *throughout* the era of witchcraft persecution and beyond, up until the present day. Aside from the textual examples of necromantic grimoires, the diverse fields of natural magic, alchemy, kabbalism, astrology, faith healing, freemasonry, folk prophecy and dream interpretation especially stand out as examples of occult practice contemporaneous with the metastasis

of witch hunting and persecution. Although not always aligned with the illicit magic classified as witchcraft, occult teachings and practices, transmitted in oral and printed form, were prized in the context of rural practical magic, whose readily syncretic proclivities are attested to by 'black books' employed by rural charmers, diviners and other magical specialists.<sup>4</sup> Such currents of traditional practice, as well as the established roles of magical users that made use of them, often existed side by side with the witch-mythos, and the popular corpus of spells and charms certainly included curses and other maledictive magic, the sorcerous calling cards of the witch.<sup>5</sup>

Often defined historically as religious heresy, criminal activity, or malefic use of divine power, witchcraft as a charge was applied across a broad spectrum of occult activity, including folk magical practice, healing and divination. Considering many of the historical sources, it is tempting to conclude that the representation of the witch as 'crooked' or backward in nature was merely an intentional

<sup>4</sup> For example the *Svartkonstböcker* or 'Black Art Books' of Sweden, some exemplars being several centuries old, with their recorded contents even older.

<sup>5</sup> Relevant questions for the historian of witchcraft persecution include what occult currents, if any, actually penetrated and influenced the cosmological spheres of the accused, and how those practicing various strands of magic adapted to the external pressures of criminality, and in later centuries, rational materialism. These questions may also be considered by the contemporary magical practitioner, to proffer a different lens of understanding.

inversion of Church doctrine for the convenience of furthering anti-witchcraft rhetoric. However, non-ecclesiastical sources also report inversion, ‘crookedness’ and sinistral characteristics as a typology of witchcraft, and the folk magic aligned with it.

A ‘crooked’ aspect of witchcraft was its perverse nature, or its attributes running ‘counter to nature.’ The perennial association between witches and inversion, a ‘backwards’ nature, the specific direction of *widdershins* or counter-sunwise, and ‘opposition’ is not new; it arises both from Christian sources and the rustic coffers of archaic folk sorcery. A medieval spell incorporating elements of both erotic and coercive magic, documented in Burchard of Worms’ penitential *Decretum* (1008-1012) is instructive. To bewitch their husbands, women fed them specially baked loaves of bread, made from grain collected on their naked bodies after being covered in honey. This grain was then empowered by grinding it in a mill against the sun, the opposite way of the usual direction.<sup>6</sup> Other examples of the ‘backwardness’ of witches included the lore of riding backward on animals to the Sabbat, and gaining diabolic power by saying the Lord’s Prayer in reverse.<sup>7</sup>

6 Bernadette Filotas, *Pagan Survivals, Superstitions, and Popular Cultures*, p. 123.

7 Modern practitioners of the Nameless Art in East Anglia often wear their clothes inside out, or wear odd socks, as a means of reversing the normal order of things. See Nigel Pennick, *Secrets of East Anglian Magic*, pp. 102-3.

With the irruption of the Enlightenment, the phenomenon of witchcraft underwent a revolution of perception, from being a threat to established religious and social order to a superstition worthy of ridicule, or alternately, fetishisation through works of art. Despite new laws decriminalising witchcraft, or reducing its penalties, those practicing folk magic were certainly aware of the personal dangers of being discovered practicing their art in previous eras. As a result, according to orally-transmitted teachings passed down within the Sabbatic Cultus, certain creeds and symbolic codes were developed by magical practitioners that allowed them to evade discovery, but also to reconcile such seemingly disparate concepts as the powers of the Devil and Christ.

‘Witchcraft’ — as a body of folklore, poesis, cosmology, and ritual technique — at this time became conscious of itself, its own history, how it was reckoned within the confines of the Circle, amongst initiates, but also how it was perceived by non-initiates. In the first instance, the reckoning gave rise to interior history: a sacred, yet secret, accounting of its past, one embedded in the flesh of the ancestors up until the present physical carriers of the lineage. In the second instance was constellated a mundane or exterior history of witchcraft, one which at various times has regarded it as heretical, criminal, superstitious, or outright fabrication. The dual perspective of inner experience and

outer misconstruance allowed for a wider command of available magical arcana, and also a datum for their embrace on an equal basis: power.



In its modern magical recension, the name and magical philosophy of Crooked Path Sorcery emerges from the work of the Column, an inner conclave of *Cultus Sabbati*, incepted by Andrew Chumbley and a handful of practitioners in 1992 e.v. and continuing to the present day. This cell produced the Draconian Cycle of ritual praxis, culminating in written form as *The Dragon Book of Essex*, described by Chumbley as 'An Enchiridion of the Crooked Path, Being a Grammar of Quintessential Sorcery, Containing the Sacred Rites and Formulae Undertaken in the Mysteries of the Great Dragon.' The Dragon Book is where the term 'Crooked Path Sorcery' first appeared, and thus its provenance is wholly of the *Cultus Sabbati*.

Within the *Dragon-Book of Essex* the first shadowing of a definition is to be found in the body of a text called 'The Promise':

Beware! Thy first step, as Thy last, shall fall 'neath the Eye of the Antient One; for thine every action doth lie 'neath the Watchers' Gaze. Thy deed is Thy worth and thus thou shalt attain . . . to the Open Way of Liberation or yet shalt Thou fall 'neath the Fate of All-

predation. This is the turning of the Path as Thy Foe and Thy Friend. This is the Way of the Double-edged Blade. To each alone this is the Path Unique.<sup>8</sup>

Crooked Path Sorcery is thus a 'double way' in that everything that one speaks and performs either aligns with its ever-deviating design, or else fails to cohere, and the patterning of one's Fate is dispersed amidst the shattered relics of chance.

Where integrity of being, honesty and humility are lacking, these remains bear no chance of resurrection, for it is only through the faithful exaction of one's Word that one's deeds may find purchase amongst the skein of Our Sorcerie. The Fire of Knowledge, ever burning within the crucible of the Dragon's heart, may be grasped by the sorcerer, or it may consume them utterly.

Upon the Crooked Path there exists no sentiment — one attains through ordeal or is crushed by it. The favor of the Gods abides not: one is either Cain, kin to the Dragon's Brood, or the sacrificed profane flesh of Abel. The former estate is an active and dynamic modality serving as the stone of Sabbatic alchemy; the latter is a waste product, to pursue continued enspissation of ego, or be eaten by astral detritivores. Likewise the Crooked Path finds no soteriological basis: herein lies not redemption, but

8. *The Dragon Book of Essex*, p.14

constant self-overcoming and transmutation. While involving full use of all corporeality, this transmutation is largely a matter of soul and psyche, and thus of gnosis, a point clarified again within the *Dragon Book*:

Though the course of the path threads its way through time, from moment to moment, the true realization of its arcana is sudden. The various stages of the path attain their true expression -- as Gnosis -- in a web of scattered instants, united through experience in the matrix of understanding. This is the Eternal Design of Sorcery's Intent.<sup>9</sup>

The marrow of the Crooked Path is thus unique realisation via an immediacy of gnosis through which words and deeds achieve actuality in the Circle of Arte. While there exist specific operational protocols and lore behind the exaction of all its rites, this is but the skeletal edifice of prior understandings: one 'knows' only in the moment of knowledge attained, this realisation encompasses the Step and the Path. It is a sorcery that can only be experienced — articulations are but the shed skin of that knowing. Herein lies the paradox of its ipseity, for the written word is but the shadow cast by the light of its living gnosis.

The coagulum of opposites and their ultimate transcendence gives rise to the 'Quintessential' sorcery so

9. Ibid., p. 21.

named, the utilization of dextral and sinistral attributes incepting an alchemical binding of sorcerous gnosis. Crooked Path Sorcery thus becomes a 'Magic of Both Hands.' Everything at the disposal of the sorcerer is used for its sacred apotheosis: infernal and divine, right and left hand, foul and fair: it makes no difference, for the Path does not differentiate in terms of common morality. A thing serves its Design, or does not; the æthyric dissonance generated in the latter case annihilates the walker, or the Path. This is one reason why the Crooked Path is called the 'Tortuous Road.'

While the ethos and philosophy of Crooked Path Sorcery is ultimately a pathway unique unto its practitioners, it not only draws from the aforementioned historical and magical antecedents, it also draws from Bön magical tenets, Vajrayana tantric praxis and ethos, and the sorcerous forms of Rada Voudon. These streams of power exist outside the construct of European witchcraft, and constitute traditions unto themselves. Nevertheless as magical resonators acting as influences within the Sabbatic Current — and through the bodies of its adepts — each offers useful vistas of understanding on the nature of the Witches' Sabbat, and upon opposition as an element of spiritual practice. The Crooked Path, as deed, word, thought, and revelation may thus be characterized in one aspect as 'spiritual miscegenation,' its dynamic substance bending and twisting like a snake, copulating with, and devouring all powers it encounters.

1

# *Exegesis*



## **The Backward Way**

THE SORCERY of the Crooked Path emerges from the spiritual armatures undergirding the historical phenomenon of 'witchcraft' – illicit magic proscribed by pagan and Christian alike, and often, though not always, ascribed to women. Through the procession of æons, the legal construction of the witch and her practices freely intermingled with the teachings of popular magic, folklore, religious doctrine and heresiology, art and literature, further accreting aspects of sinistral magic. As a perversion of late medieval Christian theology, witchcraft was a

supremely-charged egregore by fear, sadism, projection of religious heresy, and a highly-fetishised lexicology. In other instances, 'witchcraft' was a name given actual coercive magical practices predating even the so-called 'pagan gods', such as the curse tablet and love philter. In a few cases, the rudiments of actual spirit-cults, of presumably ancient origin, have been located within old documentary texts of the Sabbat itself. Central to witchcraft – and its actuated body, the witch-cultus – are the doctrines of inversion, transgression, and other 'backward' characteristics serving to define it as 'crooked.' Aberrations of rôle, ritual action and sensorial perception are especially indicative, as are the ordering and disordering of thought and identity. These retrograde characteristics are extrapolated in their highest forms in the Witches' Sabbat, a highly charged and specialised arena of power, noted in history and folklore for its abominable rites and reversal of the normative order, rendering it 'crooked'.

In consideration of this oddity, the microhistorian Piero Camporesi notes that aspects of the classic Witches' Sabbat participate in the collective dream of the impoverished, with its fantastic feasts, imagery and antipodal social rôles.<sup>10</sup> Though this cannot explain the Sabbat in totality, it does locate it in a curious 'backward' realm opposed to the ordinary, and

<sup>10</sup> Camporesi, Piero. *The Incorruptible Flesh*, pp. 22-3.

acknowledges its accompanying phantasmagoria. Likewise, the phenomenon of 'diabolism', the intentional inversion of Christian principles to extrapolate a Satanic theology, is less the concern of magic and sorcery than of spiritual rebellion or liberation of ego.<sup>11</sup> The ritual inversion of the witch, rather, is a unitive magical act which liberates power firstly from the *prima materia*, secondly from that which it is turned to become, but above all from the act of *turning* itself. It is this recursive threefold force of inversion that penetrates the terrain of the Crooked Path in both physical and metaphysical countenance, and is known within the Sabbatic Cultus as 'The Backward Way'.

As the very locus of the witches' assembly, or Acre of the Round Dance, the Sabbat is both a spirit-enclave and a gathering place of the witch-coven – most often a mountaintop, wood or cavern. In the first instance, the enclave represents a liminal space, be it oneiric or astral: an arena of power for the translated spirit of the practitioner. A gathering of witches, by contrast, is physical, yet extrapolated into hyperphysicality by the distorting phases of the Sabbatic Rite. Each state, whether manifest or

11 Generally, Satanic sorcery – the conjuring of Satan or the infernal legions – was a feature of Christian ceremonial magic, namely the Solomonic magic of the European grimoires. Such conjurations of diabolic powers were constrained within Christian or Jewish magical rubrics, such as compelling demons using the sacred names of God.

unmanifest, is marked by its absolute removal from the usual, mundane world of experience to a state of *otherness*.

The animating forces of the Sabbat beget a warping of usual psychic and sensorial states: often images and faces are perceived as reversed, as in a photographic negative. The physical meeting portends the arousal and negation of the carnal without regard to ego or identity: all flesh serves the Master. These practices, in addition to being affronts against God, were also considered an offense to Nature. The obscene kiss, with its oral veneration of the infernal hindparts, is but one example; a riotous sense-flaying *orgia* is another. Copulation with the devil, a ritual act serving as a blasphemous cipher of compact and communion, is yet a third. In the latter case, through the agency of the Sabbat, sexual taboo is overthrown in service to a diabolic agency whose concentrated atavistic *flumen* evokes the antinomian disposition of the Crooked Path itself.

Aside from societal mores, the Sabbat presents a reversal, or inversion, of the spiritual. Religion, being the lawful form of congress with the divine, is practiced in perfect piety, violated in perfidy, and wholly subsumed to the presiding spirit of the rite, releasing vast amounts of power previously held in reserve. This culminates in such ritual hot-points as the Desecration of the Host, Treading the Cross, and

reciting the Lord's Prayer backward, a magical formula well-known to folklore for gaining witchcraft-power. In each instance, the passage from one state unto its opposite defines a crooked track of going forth and return, encompassing all.

### *The Circean Glamour*

A peculiar stratum of the 'backward' nature of witchcraft is expressed through its embodiments in flesh, beginning with the preëminence of the feminine. This reversal has implications in magical, religious and social spheres, beyond the outrage of the usual order being turned on its head, as a separate order of spiritual power. Standing in opposition to ecclesiastical authority, a traditionally male stronghold, the figure of the witch violates the traditional sanctity of the priesthood, personifying both the perverse Christian characterisation of woman-as-filth, and the resurgence of diverse pre-Christian figures of female divinity and sorcery.<sup>12</sup>

The most infamous and arresting of these derives from Homer in the person of Circe, the archetypal witch known for her power of transformation, and her deviations in word and deed. Part sorceress, part nymph, part scion of the great Titans, she possessed

12 In addition to religious authority, the power of the witch penetrates other traditionally male dominions such as magic, medicine and apothecary.

multiple charms, among which was the transformation of the flesh. This links with the witches' glamour and the sorcery of shape-changing, two inversions of normative body-states presenting 'crooked' aspects, and nourishing ancient currents of witchcraft. From maiden to seductress to crone, and from human backward into beast, the Circean Glamour is cast to confuse, trap and imprison the unwary and foolish. In sensorial totality, the glamour is used to bind others to one's will via a reversing force, and is given complete control within the orgia of the Witches' Sabbat. The aged hag may thus appear alluring in nubile youth, and the strapping young man be given the horned and craggy masque of a stag-headed devil. In glamour-binding, the Sabbatic doctrine of inversion achieves an apotheosis of power through the bestial and perichoretic manipulation of flesh.

Later depictions of the night revels of the witches, linked as they are to Holda, Diana and the furious host, often feature an antinomian sexuality, or as witchcraft scholar Charles Zika has called it, scenes of sexual disorder.<sup>13</sup> In witch-iconography, this is typified by the reversal of aesthetics, and the juxtaposition of the twin states of physical beauty (allure) and ugliness (repulsion). Another hypostasis of the glamour, the witch's appearance serves as the embodied *philter*, or

13 Charles Zika, *Exorcising Our Demons: Magic, Witchcraft and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe*, p. 266, 299.

yet as an apotropaic. Whilst such scenes have served varying purposes historically, within the Sabbatic Current they are potent ciphers of the continuum of the sorceress. The 'turning' of the female sexual current, and the powers of the body itself, inclusive of opposing currents, are an encirclement of the totality of this force, prefiguring an expanded sexuality, one inextricably linked with sorcery. As an occult doctrine of the Crooked Path, it is the transcendent magical viscerality known as the New Flesh.

In her form as Lamia, the witch was a perversion of the normative human female, emphasising attributes of the monstrous and allied with the iconostases of night and crepuscular activity. She was the devourer of infant flesh, haunter of man, and dweller of shadow. Gervais of Tilbury wrote that the Lamiæ were

vulgarly called *mascæ* or in French *striæ*, are said by the physicians to be nocturnal imaginations which disturb the minds of sleepers and oppress with weight.... But to satisfy the morals and ears of men we conclude that it is the misfortune of certain men and women to fly by night through vast distances, enter houses, oppress sleepers with heavy dreams; they seem to eat and light candles, dissolve human bones, suck human blood and move infants from place to place.<sup>14</sup>

14 Circa 1218, quoted in Lea, *Materials Toward a History of Witchcraft*, Vol. 1, p 173.

These features ally with the ancient host of Lilitu-Lilith, a Near Eastern complex of divinities aligned with the night and predation, but also untamed female sexuality, fertility, transgression, and later, witchcraft.

The shadow-priestesshood of the witch finds its supreme monad in the figure known as the Queen of the Sabbat, the high sovereign of the midnight assembly. As reflected in medieval records, the figure would seem to emerge from the mists of distant antiquity, sometimes in the personage of the moon-crowned Diana, and at other times bearing the name Habondia, Perchta, Herodias, and Doamna Zinelor. In some instances she presides over the grand assembly of the witches, in others she governs jointly with the Black Man of the Sabbat, known by the title of 'Devil.' Accordingly, in such instances the Queen may also bear the title *Devala*.

### *The Fellowship of Night*

Night, and the especial primacy of the Moon, are ancient characteristics of witchcraft and stand in stark opposition to the solar order. As a human period characterised by physical retreat, privacy, intimate sexual activity, sleep, dreams, distorted sensation, and nocturnal terrors, the night is, in itself, an inversion of the day, but also maps roughly to the High Sabbat. To the diurnal order, the Night is a time of

lawlessness, where daily routines are overturned, and the moon and other celestial luminaries appear, in the absence of the sun. To orthodox religion, night is the time of dread, horror, and abandonment of the light. And yet, the Night was once supremely holy: the Orphics were the last of the Greek mystery cults to revive and worship Nyx, or Night. Homer relayed that Night was the subduer of both gods and men,<sup>15</sup> and pronounces the decrees of necessity. The Derveni Papyrus, an Orphic text dated to the 5th century BCE, names Night as the first of the gods.

Within the present-day covines of the Sabbatic Tradition, a 'backward dance of the witches' has been passed down in a distinct body of teachings from the Welsh Borders, originating in the nineteenth century, but likely older. The ritual dance is comprised of distinct passes which simultaneously incite a trance state and encipher a downward plunge into the infernal depths, in hopes to attain audience direct with the Devil. The backward dance, also known as 'walking a crooked circle' aligns with the direction of counter-clockwise or *widdershins*, that path which turns against the sun. Among its initiates, this association has given rise to the motto *Against The Light*.

Nocturnal Animals, being the especial magical companions of the witch, serve to presence the nocturnal order and its magic through specified zoö-

<sup>15</sup> *Iliad*, 14.259.

types, as well as being an oppositional counterpoint to diurnal animals. The owl, for example, is an animal with widespread associations of witchcraft, and is manifest in such beasts as the *Strix*, bird of ill omen.

### The Osseous Host

In addition to encompassing a series of powers and magical praxes, the Sabbat is also the embodiment of certain 'backward' principles, which emerge from the witches' reverie as distinct Crooked Path teachings. Among these are rites, practices, and doctrines relating to the realm of the Dead; these antecedents infuse the magical modalities of Crooked Path Sorcery. The Witches' Supper, for example, reverses the classical form of the community funerary rite to the sharing out of the corpse as the central communal meal. Although this ritual act has been viewed by some as a caricature of clerical propaganda, its features are also present in folk sorcery contemporary with the witch-trials, as well as certain morbid applications of alchemy and apothecary.

The medieval rites of necromantic congressus, wherein the dead are constrained within the magical circle, is in one sense anathema to Atavistic Resurgence, for instead of engaging convivially with one's collective ancestral retinue, the sorcerer is protected from the shades of the dead by magical armaments and boundaries. A loosening of

necromantic ritual protocol is present within the witches' ceremony, wherein the spirits of the dead are often conjured indiscriminately, *en masse*. This is seen not only in the Sabbat but also in the midnight ride of the witches, often conflated with the Furious Host, an airborne nocturnal troop of the dead whose ancient corpus of folklore often intersects with that of the European witch. Characterised by promiscuous communion between living flesh and dead, this inversive order is also epitomised in the nocturnal ride of Diana's host, whereby the witch was sometimes portrayed having mounted the beast backward, riding it to the Sabbat. This can be seen in a woodcut depiction of a female witch riding backwards on a goat by Albrecht Dürer (1500) or the woodcut of a male witch riding backwards on a cat in the 1545 edition of *Canon Episcopi*. To mount and ride the goat, or other animals, from behind, is a cipher of the 'backward way' of the witch and, as the preeminent scholar of witchcraft symbol Charles Zika has noted, representative of reversal or inversion of accepted female sexuality. Other folklore of the British Isles relates witches walking backward to the Sabbat, or to church services, in order to steal a consecrated host for Satanic empowerment.

The magical formulae of Atavistic Resurgence of Austin Osman Spare is, when realised, a form of necromancy, and a precise interpretation of certain

ancient formulae of the Sabbat. It comprises the summoning of both familial and ancestral tendencies from the nether regions of the soul, and one's blood memory, effecting transformational shifts in somatic phase-states. Serving to 'enflesh the Dream' – the collective oneiric realities of all adepts within the Circle – the sensorium is marked by extreme distortions, engendering disturbed and misshapen bodily forms, the nightmare of theriandric metamorphosis, and the loss of the 'known' body. Thus is the Body of Shadow glimpsed, and arisen as the New Flesh.



## The Opposer

ELEMENTARY to the Convoluted Way is *ordalium*, the crucible of trials and testing the sorcerer is subjected to by the legion of spirits collectively characterised as the Opposer. In theistic contexts, the Opposer assumes such mantles as the Egyptian Set or the Hebrew Shaitan, part of a clade of spirits related to the deific complex of Satan.<sup>16</sup> As the first and most profound ordeal faced by the practitioner of the Crooked Path, the Opposer suffuses the collective matrices of all which proceed out of its exaction.

The Current of the Opposer transects the deepest strata of the Via Tortuosa, resonating with the entity

16 In the context of folk narrative, portrayal of the Devil is more diverse than his literary or religious stereotype; in these contexts he is most frequently portrayed as a force, entity or agency that opposes.

of the Shadow. It is thus the visible and invisible extrusion of one's own death, the 'veiled master' in the guise of the Hidden Initiator. The Opposer Rite, as set forth within *Qutub*, has as its essential identification the individual mortality of the adept, and as such is a succinct embodiment of the nature of the Crooked Path. Bending and binding all to its intent, it absorbs the essence of all it encompasses, transmuting it to become *other*: thus is the Black Light of Gnosis subsumed into one's soul. By utilising an apparent duality of function it unites all disparate phenomena within the rubric of its practice, for one is the totality of that which opposes oneself.

Through Opposition is the Great Work accomplished and the Black Light witnessed, and this accords with the Design: in perfect magical action and non-action, in every manner, one comes into *confrontation* with the Path. For the walker upon the Via Tortuosa, this is the essence of initiatic force and its resulting gnosis, not simply in the act of formal ritual induction, but on a moment-by-moment basis.

As a discipline of the Sorcerous Body, the Rite of the Opposer strengthens the power of concentration and visualisation – both of which are necessary abilities for the Turning of the Way. The Opposer is that which turns *against*, thus it is the spirit of Cain, the First Sorcerer. As Chumbley remarked:

These words are but the echo that marketh mine absence. Silence – the birth-cry to herald the presence: Of Otherness entire made flesh.<sup>17</sup>

Let the Seeker then become that ‘in whom All is Opposition.’ The Opposer, though a singular entity (death), retains a threefold formula comprising Absence, Silence and the Void-Place of Spirit. This formula, while implicit to a very personal regimen of practice, is explicit in its sorcerous context.

### *Absence*

Three things are proffered by the one who would undertake the Formula of the Opposer: a sacrifice, a becoming and an oath, given to abnegate ‘no-one’ and ‘no-thing.’ While these are meant, on the surface, to be acts of a transgressive nature, they betoken a deeper wisdom of intention: to achieve congress with one’s Shadow one must be ‘absent’ from the act. All that one is, possesses, and believes oneself to be must accordingly be entirely divested: a litany of complete negation. In its purest form this divestiture is autosacrifice.

The Formula of the Opposer is thus the act of negation, of disappearing or erasing one’s profane identity. On a practical level, the words of the Formula serve to enact this, though in actuality it is the absorp-

tion of one’s focus into one’s own Shadow, cast by the candle flame of ritual, which enables this absence to occur. The practitioner must keep in mind that this ritual action must be performed constantly, on a daily basis, for the Formula to become more than the echo of its words. One doesn’t merely invoke absence, one unites with its negation entirely.

### *Silence*

A profound paradox indwells the Formula of the Opposer: both Absence and Silence – and their fulfillment – are achieved through action and word. It is, however, the compression of these dualities into a unitive holism that grants their completion. In silence is the shadow contemplated. Silence marks the end of words, and when the last echoes of motion and voice subside. In this light it could be easily construed that Absence and Silence are one and the same formula. This is both true and not-true simultaneously.

When one invokes the Shadow, one entreats a ‘presence’, though in reality it is actually an absence. Its arrival and subsequent penetration of the practitioner takes place in silence. When one has achieved a state of no-mind and no-self, there are no more words, thoughts or conceptions to sully apotheosis; there is only Silence. Ultimately the truth of this cannot be described - it can only be experienced, in the realm known as the Void Place of Spirit.

17 ‘Formula of the Opposer,’ *Qutub*, p. 65.

*Void Place of Spirit*

The phrase, though not the locus, is borrowed from the Master Therion,<sup>18</sup> who used it in his Gnostic Bornless Ritual, and later in his revision of the same within the rubric of *Liber Samekh*, a ritual designed to bring one into union with one's 'Holy Guardian Angel.' Both the phrase and the ritual whence it derives bear an close relation, for there exists a definite correspondence between the spirit of Opposition and the concept of the Holy Guardian Angel.

Was not the Christos assailed by his Holy Guardian Angel, known to the vulgar as Satan? The Gnosis of the Opposer emanates from this relationship. How often has one felt the presence or influence of one's Angel as a fleeting shadow, as that which aids in one's hour of need, or forces a concessionable conceit upon one's obvious guilt? The Angel is described by Therion as a "... terrible and invisible God: who dwellest in the Void Place of the Spirit."<sup>19</sup> Despite this religious parallel, the principle that concerns us is where the Angel / Opposer 'dwelleth.'

The Void Place of Spirit is the third in the triune formulary of the Opposer; it is a place of no-place, the nexus-point betwixt absence and the silence which sustains it. It can, perhaps, adequately be demon-

18 Aleister Crowley, British magical practitioner, poet and mystic (1875-1947).

19 *Liber Samekh*, Section C, Fire.

strated only in poetic terms, for it is beyond sensorial apprehension. Once one has achieved the total opposition of all one was — the sorcerous act of self-overcoming — naught remains but the Void Place of Spirit. Here then is the unequivocal Abyss, catalogued by adepti from time immemorial. The Void Place of Spirit, whilst lacking dimension or attribute, nevertheless is the origin of the Point. And what is the Point but a poetic metaphor of the Opposer? In this is borne the ethos of Crooked Path Sorcery, for it is the Path that ever wends and strays, and that which it intends must naturally become. In its becoming is all Opposition wrought.

*The Coin*

Many are the infernal devices serving to emblematise the Opposer, but one in particular serves to presence the oppositional forces of the Crooked Path, while simultaneously invoking their absence — the Coin. Bearing two faces upon a single object, the coin assumes not only the anthropomorphic synthemata of the principle of opposition but also the bestial: the Head and Tail of the Serpent. Within the Sabbatic Tradition, the coin as an instrument of magic emerges from a complex of folkloric strata, its pedigree including alchemy, metallurgy, angelic conjuration, kabbalah, and folk-healing.

In its primary effulgence the magical coin evokes riches and the weal of commerce, but its two faces serve as a reminder that money is not everything. Thus prosperity, as well as its absence — the face of the coin that is not visible — are invoked. In the High Sabbat, this serves as payment for the Devil, with the two-fold understanding that in any transaction, the tides of chance may rise in accord with desire, or yet turn destructive. As the augur at the threshold of the magical circle, the Coin is the arbiter of Fate, whose turning serves as judge, jury and executioner.

The third surface of the Coin, that of its edge, aligns with the esoteric stance of the Via Tortuosa, for it activates the so called 'Middle Way' thus commanding the entirety of the object's substance. This principle is exemplified by holding the Coin so that the tip of the thumb touches one side, and the tip of the index finder its opposite, so that the edge of the Coin is plainly visible to the eye. In yogic practice this hand-posture corresponds to the Gyan mudra<sup>20</sup>, used for accumulating and sharpening mental force; in the meditative praxes of the Sabbatic Tradition it simultaneously forms the Sign of the Circle and commands both sides of the ritual object at once.

20 Gyan, from Sanskrit *chin* = consciousness.



### Cainite Gnosis

THE FIRST TRANSGRESSION of Cain was the desecration of the Altars of the Profane Gods, and the power gained by this act. The lore of Crooked Path Sorcery recounts that the first magic circle was cast by Cain using his brother's blood, a parable known as 'The Mystery of the Red and the Green.' In his guise as the first tiller of the land, Cain conjures life — the greening of the primæval fields — through the sacrament of death, the red wine of slaughter. Abel is thus the soul of vanity and appeasement of an overweening demigod. Within the Sabbatic Current, the witch's magic circle is accordingly known in its first hypostasis as the Blood Acre, the temporal simulacra of Cain's primordial ensorcellment. This arena of magical operation is

become the 'temple without walls', incepted by coaction of the step of Exile upon the Earth of Nod,<sup>21</sup> hallowed by invoking the first primordial sacrifice.

Blood sacrifice is an ancient act of power which, to the modern materialist, is philosophically burdened with the repulsive savour of monotheist religion.<sup>22</sup> The distinction between that and the act of sacrifice for sorcerous ends is twofold. Power which ordinarily would be cast forth to the maws of a parasitic egregore is claimed instead by the Holy Magician, its essence to use and direct according to will. Additionally, the heretical aspect of subverting the imposed sacrificial protocol of orthodox religion reveals its 'crooked' nature, as does the act of fratricide, a transgression against law and societal taboo. In the usurping and blaspheming of the sacrificial rites of the demiurge, Cain may be seen to embody the essential power of 'turning against' the Way, a force that animates all manifestations of Crooked Path Sorcery.

Transgressive sorcerous modalities of 'crooked' sacrifice may be found in a number of folk magical constructs that have made their way into witchcraft practices, such as the 'Waters of the Moon' or Toad-Bone ritual. In the East Anglian form of this rite, a

21 Nod, the place of Cain's banishment, gives rise to the Hebrew word 'to wander' (דָּבָדָב).

22 It is also true that some of the ancient sacrificial rites shared out the divided body of the victim, so that all would be nourished and thus participate in the power released, such as the ancient Olympic Games, founded in 825 BCE, which sacrificed 100 oxen to Zeus.

toad is caught and impaled with thorns, usually those of Whitethorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) or Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), both trees with formidable spines and associated with apotropaic magic and transfixion. The body of the toad is then exposed, the flesh stripped by insects and the elements, leaving only a skeleton. The bones that remain are collected and taken to a stream where they are floated in the water by moonlight. The aspirant observes the motion of the bones in the water, seeking the one which flows upstream against the current. This bone is then seized. On subsequent nights the Devil appears, attempting to steal the bone from the 'toad-witch'; if one prevails in this contest one gains the power to control horses, animals, or, in some recensions of the rite, humans. Though the ritual is found in various forms throughout ancient Europe and later, colonial North America, there are certain magical components common to most versions of the rite. Despite the ancient origin of the rite, it came to be associated with the mystical guilds of Horsemanship, and of Cain, who in legend tamed the first horse.

Chumbley's *One: The Grimoire of the Golden Toad*<sup>23</sup> is a personal account of performing this rite, an ancient spell for gaining the power to control horses, and, in his recension, the Devil himself, as manifest through Sabatraxas, the obstreperous daimon of the

Toad. In One, the sorcery of the Crooked Path is manifest in its particular mask of 'going against the normal order of things.' Throughout the rite, various forms of transgression and opposition occur, most visibly in the 'Bone Apostate to Nature' which rides the stream backward. This reverse motion, transgressing the laws of the stream itself, embodies the 'crooked magic' of Sabatraxas by virtue of its violation of reality.

A second apostasy occurs with the power to 'command the Devil,' an assumption of a station like unto the medieval ritual magician. However it is essential to note that within the context of the Sabatrachian mysteries, the ability to command the Devil does not connote devil-worship or popular Satanism, but rather the assumption of a state beyond dextrality and sinistrality, wherein the sorcerer is freed from the bonds of duality and may access and control realms of pure spirit. This arcanum is expressed in One by the exhortation 'The Devil's Master am I.' The formula of ONE, existing subtextually as a result of the rite's diabolic parameters, also veils a disturbing arcanum related to the identity of 'I.'

The ordeal of sacrifice, and its consonance with the arcana of Cainite Gnosis, finds expression in the Blade of Cain, an implement whose morphology and function wholly enspirit the Crooked Path. This magical instrument is kindred to the black-handled knife or arthana of the witch and ceremonial magician. Its twin edges pierce duality, sundering the geminus of oppos-

ing powers, but for the magician who masters the knife, they also grant access to both. As such the Blade is wielded as both the weapon of Abel's murder and the surgeon's healing scalpel, excising the tumorous outfleshings of profane ego. This dual stance is philosophically expressed by adepts of the Crooked Path as 'dancing upon the edge of Cain's blade.' Contrasted to the twin edges, the point of the knife is allied with the Sorcerer's Word, an initiatic arcanum of the Draconian Adytum.

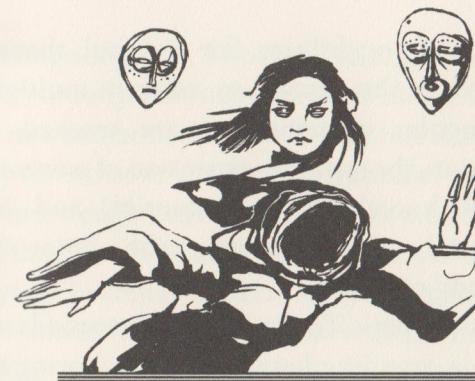
On a more direct level appertaining Cainite Gnosis is the Mystery of Betrayal. Cain's killing of Abel operates on three different levels, each in itself a formula of Opposition: the metaphoric, the actual and initiatic. The metaphoric fratricide expositis the slaying the profane qualities within oneself, and helping to slay the profane which resides within one's brother. The level of actuality concerns the murder of Abel's body and the destruction of the profane clay, of which he is formed. The third killing, being resonant with the realms of the initiatic, has two aspects as well: Cain is Abel and Abel is Cain. Before initiation, Cain is habilic, being the embodiment of the Profane Man. After Initiation, the habilic becomes Cainite, through the act of murder. Abel's blood is thus used by the first Sorcerer to cast the first Circle.

In its simplest form, the Mystery of Betrayal is the Arcanum of the Turnskin, a power which sacrifices the temporal Mask of Flesh to the Millions of Forms

of Being. All co-relations of the initiate are thus suspended in an indeterminate state, where one knows neither Friend nor Enemy, and thus become exteriorized as wholly *other*. In folk sorcery, one example of the mystery of the Turnskin may be located within traditional Russian magic, where the Devil enters the body of the dead sorcerer (*koldun*) through the mouth, flays him, then consumes his flesh before donning his skin.<sup>24</sup>

The mysteries of Cain encompass an additional sphere of the Magical Art, that of the Green Arcanum. Consisting of agriculture, viticulture and herbalism, his arts are distinguished from those pastoral concerns of his brother Abel. An alchemical relationship exists between these arcana. It is the sweet and tender leaves of Cain's crops that nourishes Abel's flock, fattening their flesh and providing for their sustenance. The excrement of his flock in like manner nourishes the fields of Cain, but before it can do so, its foul poisons must be transmuted by the alchemy of sun, rain, and the seasons. Until such time as this dung is become a nutriment fit for the field, it must pass through many stages of excruciation and taming, serving as a feast for the swarming host. Cain's alignment with the Verdant Mysterium also places him in resonance with Al'Khidir, the 'green saint' of Islam whose eternal wandering fecundates the earth.

24 W.F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight*, p.73.



### The Divided Way

THE CROSSROADS stand as a paradoxical exemplar of 'magical locatedness' upon the Crooked Path, being the transected locus where a singular route becomes many. The effect of this branching by-way upon the pilgrim is disorienting. Asudden, amidst the procession of intended trajectory, the Way is divided. With this divarication the qualities of motion and one's perception of time and space are opened to multiple possibilities, subverting the linearity of the direct or 'straight path.' In the conscious act of stepping onto the Crossroads, the sorcerer renounces the singular Way of the known in favour of the Manifold Way of the Unknown.

The act of entering the Crossroads divides the Way, but it also places a special burden upon the crystallisation of magical intent, for the sorcerous deed is actuated in perfection when one apprehends the

multitude of possibilities, fair and foul, that may be generated. In this expansion, wherein multiple fates of a singular enchantment are tracked in the imagination, the resulting expansion of power clarifies temporal knowledge of potential, and is then subsequently resorbed into the Point at the Crossroads' centre.

In the Sabbatic Tradition, the Crossroads is a liminal locale, standing between the anchoring state of directionality and no-where. In its midst a retinue of spirits perpetually reside, partaking in a condition both absent and omnipresent. In the time-honoured tradition of the gods of road and boundary-marker, due reverence is given them, as well as spiritual petitions made. It is thus no surprise that among the entities thus invoked at the Crossroads, the Devil enjoys primacy. The Devil is the great Divider, swaying both woman and man against God, and thus in the place of no direction / all direction he makes his home. In American Hoodoo practice, this formula also obtains, especially in relation to the diabolic compact; a bargain is struck in the coin of hard currency — usually one's soul.

Unlike the Hoodoo exemplar, the Crossroads of the Witches is a specialised and exalted place of straying, whereat the unfathomed is embraced, and commerce with the Devil achieved, come what may. This unnatural relation takes the form of repartee, and the

fair exchange of goods. The literal selling of one's soul, however, usually takes the form of blood sacrifice. This is not demanded by the Devil, but is freely offered by the sorcerer as a demonstration of good faith and acknowledgement of the Fiend's station as the Lord of the Place. The offering thus given in the 'place of straying' becomes a literal straying against one's life, sacramentalised for *congressus* with the infernal.<sup>25</sup> The effulgent powers of omnidirectionality serve to infinitely divide the apperception of the sorcerer, in opposition to the normative state of ego, resonating not only with the identity of the Devil, but also the primordial witch-rite. This is the distorted and hyper-directional estate of the High Sabbat, a Grand Crossroads of the Living and Dead.

The forces of contortion upon matter and their subsequent division of reality is profoundly apparent in the throes of the witches' circle. Marked by extreme aberration of sensorial perception, corporeal form, and religious orthodoxy, the Sabbat constitutes in sum a magical re-ordering of the flesh, known in its sensorial manifestation as *telæsthesia*. Through this modality, the senses become plastic and may indwell or possess one another, or yet be extruded from the body and sent beyond it in 'flight.' Its disturbance of form is well known to they that have passed through the

<sup>25</sup> The sexual form of this Arcanum may also be used, with the corresponding array of sacraments, but the straying thus enacted is, instead, against one's death.

Ordeals of Midnight, beholding the hideous commingling of animal and human features, and the dread horror of the Diprosopus.

The Divided Way of the Crooked Path is also the Path of Chance, the triple crossroads being the province of the Tria Fata - the Parcæ, the primordial Fates, whose power even the immortal gods feared. Their machinations can be glimpsed in the often tortuous and atypical way events on the path occur, hence obtaining 'by a crooked route' or by 'the hooks and crooks of the way.' The confluence of the Triple Crossroads concerns exile, communion and initiation, or, by another route, Birth, Life, and Death. Through straying, the sacrifice is made. The offering thus gives rise to communion with the Other. Through communion, the slaughter of mundane imposition upon the flesh ensues, and its bones are cast wide over the greensward, allowing the vista of initiatic perspective. Through Initiation the One becomes many, ever astray in the fields.

The Divided Way is also manifest in the Sabbatik Rite of Initiation, an archaic inheritance from the Old Craft covines of Britain and America. In the present occult milieu, use of the term 'initiation' with regard to the Craft is frequently both false and vain, entirely unrelated to Our Sorcerie. Within the Sabbatic Current, the Rite is of a highly specified nature, and marks the flaying of the Profane Body of Abel as it crosses the Blade of Cain. By this raising is the inert corpus of

clay become the New Flesh -- the aspirant, having moved beyond the putrefactive state of Death, has undergone an æthereic and physical transformation, imprinted with a so-called 'Devil's Mark.' Like the scattering of ways at the Crossroads, the temporal incarnative trajectories of the practitioner leading up to the point of reception of witch-power are dis-integrated and cast unto the Eleven Directions. In essence, the Initiation of the Sabbat incepts the Opposition of the aspirant unto herself, and she is become the Crossroads enfleshed.

Yet the Opposition incepted by the Rite of Initiation is not bound by this scattering, for it also marks the realignment of the Flesh unto the Current. This transmutation is similar to a single beam of light being refracted through a crystal prism; it emerges as a spectral band of seven rays, displaying in a physical mode of operation, the Seven Heads of the Master, also called the 'Peacock's Plumage.' What is being suggested here may be seen in the icon of the Yezidi luminary Melek Ta'us, whose identity has often been associated with the traditional God of the Witches, the 'Man-in-Black', Samael. And, as with all operations involving the Pact, where the flesh does not serve the delectations of the Devil, it is consumed or cast out.

One of the mottoes of the Sabbatic Cultus is 'To serve with both hands alike' attesting an ethos of using power for both healing and harming, creativity and destruction. This dual stance arises as a native feature

underlying the popular magic of England and Europe in the early modern era, and is also a reflection of the Crooked Path principles of division, opposition and inversion. 'The Service of Both Hands' is also embedded in the traditional *curanderismo* sorcery of Peru, in which the *mesa* or altar, is divided into left and right halves, representing the lower and upper worlds, respectively. Fetishes of Death, animist religion, and spirit ancestors aggregate on the left side, whilst the right features orthodox Christian objects and implements of healing. Both sides are considered integral to the Curandero's power, although the mesas of some practitioners are more heavily concentrated on one side or the other.

The two-handed stance of the Crooked Path Sorcerer also corresponds with the location of the head, as with the ancient god Janus, guardian of doors and thresholds, whose two heads ever keep watch in opposite directions. As appertains the Mysterium of Cain, the two-fold arcana of such bicephalic entities may be found in Arqa, an underworld which appears in Zoharic tradition and mysticism, which is the dwelling place of the issue of Cain:

Arqa is one of those seven earths below, site of the descendants of Cain. After he was banished from the face of the earth, he descended there, generating offspring. He blundered there, knowing nothing. It is a dual earth, du-

alized by darkness and light. Two officials rule there, one ruling darkness, the other light, inciting one another. When Cain descended there, they joined together — were completed as one — entirely befitting the offspring of Cain. So they have two heads, like two snakes, but the one of light prevails, defeating the other. So those of darkness merged in those of light, and they became one.<sup>26</sup>

This bifurcation is apposite the Divided Way and reveals its initiatic provenance. However there is a third to rise from the midst of the Two Brothers, the true One of Light known unto the worthy as Seth.

Seth, the brother conceived to replace both the deceased Abel and the departed Cain, is an enigmatic figure in the scriptures, as well as within Crooked Path Sorcery. On the one hand he represents all that is spiritually noble within humanity. On the other, his substance is of 'Another Seed', meaning that he was emanated from the Pleroma. Thus, in some recensions of Crooked Path Sorcery he encapsulates and reconciles the Divided Way, the Third Brother who transcends both, representative of the black light emanant at the crossroads of All-Being.

<sup>26</sup> *Hadgamat Sefer ha-Zohar* 1:9b. Daniel Matt (trans). *The Zohar*, Pritzker edition, Volume I:62.



## The Serpent of Eld

IN CROOKED PATH SORCERY, the Serpent of Eden occupies an exalted position and is adored as the living fount of all knowledge and illumination. Unique in morphology and character, the Serpent is possessed of a fascinating attraction binding its worshippers wholly unto its thrall. The designs upon its skin, the hypnotic quality of its eyes, the flickering of its forked tongue, the threat of its venomous fangs — all of these physical attributes contribute to the mystique of its persona as the tempter of Eve, and thus of the race entire. Among the oldest of phallic ciphers, the Serpent adumbrates its power to entice, as well as inspire fear. Both characteristics, after individual species and fashions, are

poisonous; it is the poison that reveals, and also induces generation.

A principle arcanum of the Serpent is its twisted or undulating form, by nature self-evocative of motion, imparting an essential algorithm of labyrinthine — as opposed to linear — trajectories. This vermiform morphology is embodied in such magical instruments as the Crooked Wand, within the Sabbatic Tradition most often made from a branch of Crooked Willow or Contorted Filbert.<sup>27</sup> Tortuosity of pathways by nature covers greater surface area than do straight lines; they thus transect a greater amount of space; the classic biological exemplar is the brain, whose convoluted creases and folds increase chemical interactivity to maximise neural power. The same is true of the path of Cain, characterised by wandering the wilderness as a perpetual outcast. The architectural projection of the Exile of Cain upon the landscape is the Maze or Labyrinth, it casts forth not only his footsteps upon the earth, but also the wending track of the Great Serpent as it went forth from the primordial garden. However, in the emblematic arena of the Crooked Path, the Labyrinth's convolutions serve as a form of contemplative reverie, rather than the mundane function of generating confusion.

<sup>27</sup> The tree species are *Salix matsudana* var. *tortuosa* and *Corylus avellana* var. *contorta* respectively. Other species used for the wand are woody sections of Ivy (*Hedera helix*), and host wood distorted by woodbine (*Lonicera periclymenum*).

*Samael*

The Serpent's venom is expressed in many ancient religions and myths; apposite examples are to be discovered in Semitic sources, particularly the Zoharic. In the time of the First Semitic Exile, circa 586 BCE, the original Serpent was named Samael (and in some later sources, Azazel) and sought out the Primordial Goddess of the Tree of Life,<sup>28</sup> attempting at all times to penetrate her. Being possessed of both an innate craving for blood and a lustful promiscuity, She granted penetration, squeezing Samael's head until it frothed with blood, which then functioned as a glue and sealed the daimon against her flesh. In this congealing, he defiled her repeatedly; these copulations resulted largely in aborted forms, but in select instances the Goddess fulfilled her terms and gave birth to children half-human, half-divine — a race whose progeny, according to witchcraft lore, survived up to the present day.

This 'squeezing' of Samael's head finds a curious resonance with Genesis 3:15, in which the Lord chastises Eve and tells her that the Serpent shall be bruised, or stepped on, in the head and heel, possibly referring to the tail. In the old witchcraft of the British Isles, infernal power was occasionally passed from initiate to initiate 'between head and heels' -- all of which in-be

28 Known by many names, but at this time period, primarily Matronit and Ashterah.

tween belonged 'to the Devil.' These ideas of generation and the multiplication of power have an ancient pedigree, as is found in the *Zohar Sitrei Torah*, 1:47b - 1:48b:

Hear ye the Secret of Secrets: out of the scorching noon of Isaac, out of the dregs of wine, a cluster of fungus emerged, male and female united, red as a rose, expanding and seething in myriad directions and pathways of earth. The male, Sama'el bears the female Lilith, within him always, for as it is on the side of holiness so it is on the side of bane, male and female embracing one another. The female of Sama'el is also called 'Serpent', Mother of Whoredom, beginning of all flesh, end of all days. Here are two evil spirits joined as one. The spirit of the male is subtle. The spirit of the female suffuses all paths but is always joined to the spirit of the male.

Samael has long been associated with the Elder Serpent: Lilith, in various recensions of the doctrine, appears as his wife, lover, sister and daughter. In his guise as Serpent, Samael brought the Fruit of Illumination to Eve, and she was receptive to his delights. The knowledge of both Life and Death was passed to her, and she 'knew' the designs of the Lord, or, the Patterning of Fate. For this transgression so-called were She

and Adam cast forth from Paradise, to the 'East of Eden's vale.' The direction of east has long expressed an ancient and mythic time, or a time outside of time. The east is also the direction of the rising sun, the place of the Morning Star; the dominion of Lucifer, the light-bearing angel outcast. This valley was called Nod, which in Hebrew gematria equates to 124, meaning: hard, pleasure, an oak, as well as being the same enumeration as 'Eden.'

These correspondences hint at a deeper arcanum: instead of a place of punishment and privation, Nod was the arena of the burgeoning wisdom of the Witch-blood, as first brought forth in the flesh of Cain, who was exiled there by the Lord. Through this act of banishment, the original protoplasts and their progeny, in particular Cain, brought the enfleshed earth of Eden to Nod and fecundated it. Far from being a curse, the knowledge of the Tree, given by the Serpent, opened the Eye of wisdom in those who made of it a sacrament, so that the mysteries of life, as well as death, became known.

The primordial exile, being the initial passage between Eden (paradise) and Nod (wilderness) may be considered a twisting pathway emergent from the primal Ophidian initiation, and mimetic of the zoötype of the snake, wending between the two magical estates of primordial humankind. Spawned of transgression, the blessing of First Knowledge was punished with the curse of exile, not only from a place of dwelling but

also from an estate of spirit. This Luciferic pattern invokes the magical arcanum of Illumination, for the truth of the revealed is an abomination to those who would seek to hoard and restrain it.

As the child of Samael and Lilith, Cain is the first-born of the Serpent of Light. Also called Nahash or Nehushtan, the Serpent shares a qabalistic birthright with the Messiah, the later 'Son of God', Jeheshuah, or the Christ. This provenance reveals the true relationship between Spirit (Serpent) and Anointed Master (Christos) as the central part of each name, hesh or esh is the fivefold Star of Light, conjoining both entities as Pentagrammaton. The Pentagrammaton is the perfection of the elements bound by the Crown, or Star of Light; the Star, or spark of spirit, fell to earth and 'enlivened' or 'enlightened' it. Herein may be seen the dual parables of the fall of Lucifer's Crown and the Star which guided the Magi at Christ's birth. Both are One: the Morning Star.

Cain was born with the birthmark of the star-spate: his divine inheritance. Through the ritual murder of Abel did he cast the first Circle of the Art Magical,<sup>30</sup> and by this act, according to lore, witchcraft entered the world. As such he is the Initiator of the Blooded Ones, and passes down the Power from his Father, the Serpent of Light, the Initiating One, known in our Sorcerie as 'Lumæl.'

<sup>30</sup> Known to Essex witchcraft as the *Blood Acre*, and containing secret formulae for its enlivening, opening, and closing.

*Poison*

The lore and use of poison, being allied to the arcanum of both the Serpent and the Opposer, represents a unique application of Crooked Path Sorcery, for it embraces a mindful 'turning' of the nature of medicine from its therapeutic state to that of a dangerous agency of dissociation and sensorial distortion. Indeed, in many historical milieus, poisoning, witchcraft, and maleficia were co-identified.

In the medieval Witches' Sabbat, the unguentum, or 'flying ointment' compounded from toxic botanicals,<sup>31</sup> was an intercessory agent for communion with spirits. Its composition and use encrypts something of the ethos of our Convolute Way: its very nature as a salve or balm aligns it with traditional healing, nourishing and replenishing medicaments, yet its inclusion of deadly poisons and use for the precipitation of ecstatic demonianism serve to 'turn' its usually benevolent nature on its head. The application of the ointment, via the naked body, using the ritual phalli and staves, and the slathering and penetration of various orifices, also violates the sacred codes of healing,

<sup>31</sup> Most often consisting of three constituent botanical types suspended in a lipidic base: psychoactive plants from the Solanaceæ or Nightshade family, such as Belladonna and Henbane; toxic herbs from the Apiaceæ, such as Poison Hemlock; and Monkshood (*Aconitum* spp.). Together with soot, additional agents of somnolence such as Opium or Cannabis were sometimes added.

and betokens a more sinister therapeutic. Observed from a purely impassive and exterior stance, this act of ceremonial greasing might appear merely as a rustic debauch, but its careful exaction is both a ritual preparation requiring great skill, and an act of devotion.

Ordeals of poison serve as one of the most extreme forms of Crooked Path empowerment, situated as they are on the blade's edge between life and death. In extremis with both identity and physical homeostasis wholly disordered, the adept is brought into confrontation with Other. Survival is the first indicator of proof, re-constitution of body and mind the second, and emergence of an empowered consciousness, evolved beyond that of the former self, is the third.

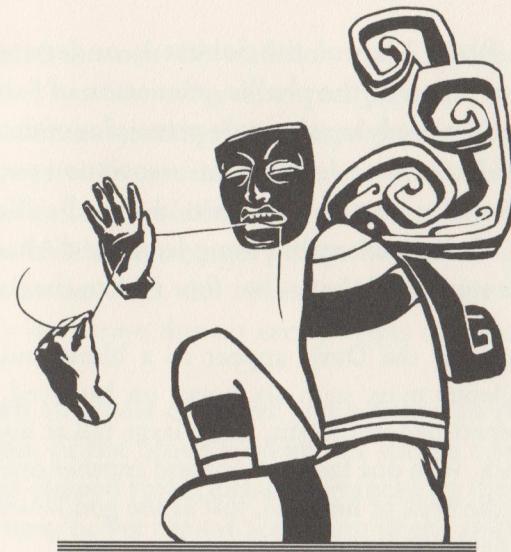
*The Light Heretical*

Within the writings of the Sabbatic Tradition, the concepts of Crooked Path Sorcery are present throughout *Lux Haeresis* (2011), an allegorical treatise on the powers of light and shadow. The work posits the animating power of witchcraft as a distinct luminous emanation<sup>32</sup> which perpetually seeks to overturn all it penetrates. As a state of gnostic illumination which divides the sorcerer against himself, the 'light heretical' is in fact an agency of opposition, acting simultaneously as illuminator and tenebrator. Thus it

<sup>32</sup> Schulke, *Lux Haeresis*, 2011.

is a force whose primary patterning is oscillation and undulation, themselves states of – the ‘crookedness’ glyphed by the primordial flesh-form of the Serpent.

Through the constant state of division of perspective and stance brought on by this power, a transcendent state is generated encompassing all magical selves. With the Arcanum of the light heretical, the Crooked Path finds its particular concretisation in the act of overturning or transgress, a quality anchored within the act of spiritual or magical illumination, aligned with the primal archangel Samael.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, the transgression of the fallen angel prefigures that of Cain in the aspects of disobedience and violation of divine law.<sup>34</sup>



### The Black Man of the Sabbat

IN MANY HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS of the British and continental European witch trials, as well as the oral traditions of folk-sorcery, mention is made of the mysterious figure known as ‘the Black Man of the Sabbat.’ Known by many names, this entity is at once an individual, an office, and an arcanum smoldering at the heart of the Midnight’s Circle. Among those who know his lore, he is known as the ‘Devil’ or ‘presiding Devil’, and he fulfills a dual charge. He is both the visible leader of the witches’ conclave, and the invisible reality of that group’s power: the actual Devil.

33 See also Schulke, ‘The Blasphemy of Things Unseen’, *Hands of Apostasy*, Three Hands Press, 2015.

34 Midrashic lineages of Cain notably include the paternity of Samael.

The Black Man of the Sabbat is understood in mundane terms as the phallic emanation of Sabbatic Godhead, embodying the male principles of daimon, man and beast. Best described in association with the seventeenth-century inquisition of the Basque witches, the testimony of young Jeanette d'Abadie of Ciboure remarked that at her first visit to the Sabbat

she saw the Devil appear as a black and hideous man, with six horns on his head, sometimes even eight, and a large tail at his back, with one face in front and another one at the back of his head, just as the god Janus is depicted.<sup>35</sup>

This janiform countenance is a morphological cipher of the Opposer, finding resonance in such witchcraft concepts as the forked tongue of the Serpent, the left and right horn of the Sabbatic Goat, and the axis of betrayal and liberation, twin masks of Judas Iscariot. At times the Black man appears wholly as a humanoid male, at other times a goat, and still others as an admixture of both.

These combined atavistic viscera are embodied in his 'crooked' or deviant sexuality, an important aspect of his rôle and a long-practiced magical formula. Specifically as the consort of witches, the Black Man is endowed with a phallus of unnatural size, shape, and

35 DeLancre, *The Inconstancy of Witches*, 153.

is as hard as stone. By tradition it is a source of discomfort, yet also of great carnal pleasure, and ever beloved of the nocturnal sisterhood. Indeed this power is aligned with certain prehistoric devil-stones still present in haunted landscapes of Britain, Europe, and North America; it emerges within the witches' practice as the Stone God, the venerated surrogate for the Devil's *membrum* during certain rites of sexual sorcery.<sup>36</sup>

Both an object of power and a depraved rite, the arcanum of the Stone God abides within a smooth, phallus-shaped stone, either as granted by the design of Nature, or yet carved according to the skill of the practitioner.<sup>37</sup> An object of dread and fascination, the Stone is initially roused or magnetised by the priestess with an offering of the flesh, as well as spells linking the female eroto-procreative matrix to the Lunar-daimonic current. The Stone is thereafter adored by the witch, and given devotion as a sexual consort, the power thus generated being harnessed for erotic spells, the control of animals, and agricultural magic.

36 The object is thus used in several Old Craft streams, in particular certain groups from Wales, Shropshire and the Isle of Man. Among its adepts the rite is also regarded as an act of 'stealing' back the power of the Witch-finders, whose deep probings were originally intended to condemn and disempower.

37 In one lineage of the Sabbatic Cultus, hailing from the Welsh Borders, a similar object is known, sewn from hide and stuffed with certain herbs, stones and powders; the parameters of ritual usage are identical.

Ritual copulation of sufficient power and vigour results in a state where the ego is eclipsed in the throes of ecstasy and the witch attains an 'unnatural' carnal communion with Spirit through the medium of the Stone. The union attained becomes a 'blasphemous wedding', woman and Devil joined in unholy amalgam, a magical homeostasis of the arcanum of Circle and Point.<sup>38</sup> Thus, as an operation of sexual sorcery, the practitioner attains infernal communion, and effecting a 'crooked' subversion of ordinary sexuality.<sup>39</sup> This foreshadows and summons the entity known as the Opposer.

The Black Man of the Sabbat indwells the ecstasies of ritual, dream and narco-aesthetic vision, but sexual arcanæ are but one of his complex of powers. He is also the haunter of the footstep: the shadow which falls upon the magical path itself. For this reason, in Crooked Path Sorcery, one analogue of the Black Man is Cain. The basis of this identification lies in the mytho-folkloric accounts of Cain as 'blackened', either through his association with the blacksmith's forge, the dark stain of the Mark of Exile, or through

38 See Chumbley, *Qutub* and *One: The Grimoire of the Golden Toad* for the magical significance of this cipher.

39 Further permutations of the rite involve anal penetration with the godstone, aligned with the Arcana of the Sabbatic Goat, a form of the witches' so-called 'backward dance.' This formula is of particular merit to atavistic magic. Homosexual congress, itself an historically 'aberrant' state, is yet a further magical iteration, as is penetration of a single priestess with multiple 'devils' simultaneously.

his links with Azazel, the Fallen Angel assuming the form of the black goat in the wilderness and aligned with the science of metallurgy.<sup>40</sup> Correspondences between Cain and this color in occult lore are many.<sup>41</sup> According to one arcane doctrine, this blackness is the shadow of God, perpetually fallen on Cain's mortal form, containing all powers, spirits and laws the deity has cast out of his presence.<sup>42</sup>

Upon the Via Tortuosa, the practitioner embodies the spirit of Cain in every moment, in every practice. His identity and innate mysterium are given semblance of form: the body of the Initiate. The magical assumption of the flesh of the primordial Exile is a mystical principle especially pertinent due to the solitary nature of the Way. There can be no greater example of this than the state of being subjected to adversity

40 Cain resonates with the Bætylus, the Stone outcast from heaven which overturns earthly power and serves as a cult object.

41 One historical stream of English folk-sorcery which gave rise, in part, to the present day Sabbatic Cultus teaches that the especial wood of Cain is Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), serving as his staff of exile and rod for commanding spirits. Considering the virtues of the tree, which is dense, thorny and frequently serves as a hedge for enclosures, it may also be likened to the Circle and the sorcerer (encircler) himself.

42 The presence of the biblical figure of Cain in the witchcraft lore of the British Isles, Europe and North America is a mystery. A cogent hypothesis finds its derivation in Romany diaspora and consequent cultural diffusion across Europe. It is seen in Sicily and northern Italy from at least the 17th century on, wherein Cain is both the 'Man in the Moon' and the eternal exile who is invisible, except when called upon to oversee the rites of family or clan.

and ordeal not of one's own choosing, much as Cain was harassed during his own exile.

In spiritual actuation, Cain is transfigured as the Black Man of the Sabbat by repeatedly sacrificing the profane Self, emblematised in the person of his lesser brother, Abel. This is achieved through magical praxes embodying a two-fold process of negation and supplication: - the grand feast of the Abnegation of the Corpse. At its core is the slaughter of the ego, and the liberation of its blood as undifferentiated power. As an agent of magical transmutation, this process is perennial, for the Exile of Cain is the life of the sorcerer, and, as the master of the outcast road, Cain will always lay down the ordeal of Opposition. To be so opposed forces the practitioner to face the myriad ordeals of the Path and prepare for the greatest of them all — one's own death. This is the highest reification of the identity of the Black Man of the Sabbat — and the essence of his symbolic vanishment at the culmination of the Grand Sabbat.

It is taught that within the Circle, the Black Man of the Sabbat is represented by a skull and crossed bones, or as a skull indwelling the place of the North. This ancient seat of power is the place whence the collective force of the spirits derive, descending to earth from the Polestar, a stellar body once held within the constellation of Draco. Such is the primæval derivation of the Black Man's power, as well as Crooked Path

Sorcery: it obtains from the Dragon, the Old Serpent of the stellar dome, and its sorcerous domain on earth is the ritual arena of the Sabbat.

Among adepts of the Crooked Path, it is said that the Dragon of Heaven is the womb of life, while the Dragon gone to earth becomes death entire. This descent of Ophidian Power to the Sabbat is drawn down by the Black Man. Transmuted through the bodies of the initiates, it awakens the resonant serpent-currents of both sexuality (the red strand) and death (the black strand) within the corporeal. Its ongoing gnosis with each step of the path is the power to utilise the force of one's own mortality — both in the exaltation of the body and its ultimate destruction — to feed sorcerous practice and magical realization. This is the Ordeal of the Man-in-Black: he must face the Dragon, his own death, at every turn, and steal from it the strength that fuels his life and deeds.

### *Egregoroi*

The convoluted byways of the Crooked Path partake in an endless co-mingling of powers, forms and ways. Within this menagerie perhaps the most striking example is that of the egregore. In contemporary esoteric parlance the word merely suggests the resultant effigy or iconic focus of a group mind, but it finds its etymological derivation in the Greek *egregoroi*, meaning 'watcher' or 'those who are awake.' In the an-

cient *Slavonic Book of Enoch*, these praeternal spirits were known as the 'Grigori', renowned for appearing to human females in the form of men. Within this mystery resides a discernment of why human women would mate with fallen angels in the first place: they appeared with attractive and enticing human attributes.

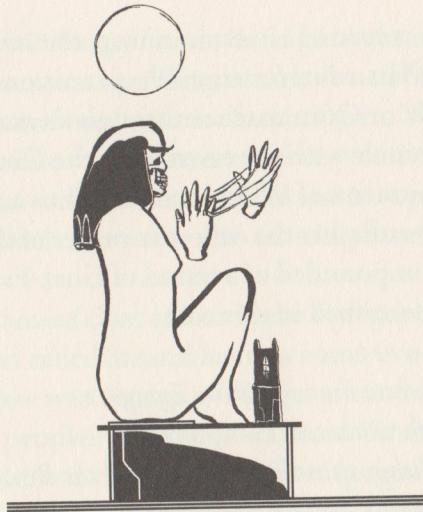
In the *Second Book of Enoch*, the Egregoroi were led by an angel called Sataniel but this name in other apocryphal texts was Azazel — a figure known to many different peoples and religious sects. To the ancient Hebrews, it was the name of the scapegoat exiled to the wilderness bearing away their sins. To the Gnostics Azazel was one of several names for the leader of the retinue of fallen angels. In the occult lore of the Romany, it was the name of the Man-in-Black, the old hoary goat himself: the Devil. In the double-ouroboric compass of the Draconian Arcanum, his name is Azhazael, Goat-Father of the Southern quarter of the circle, embodiment of the Lumen-Stone, and the angelic progenitor of all sorcerers. Azhazael also embodies the Covenant of the First and the Last; all partaking of Midnight's Sacrament is his, thus from his twin-soul arises the Sabbatic Egregore, known in one recension as Ozzhazael.<sup>44</sup>

In the rubric of his summoning, the invocation of Ozzhazael has a dual function: the practitioner becomes the Azoth, or Quintessence through its exaction, and seeds the circle with the essences of the Goat-Fathers, and the numena of Wiseblood. It is thus a generative rite which enfleshes the collective power of the witches' covine, compounded of a tetrad of Goat-Fathers: Ozzhazael, described in this wise:

*O thou shape-shifting Egregore,  
thou aborted Goat-Saviour  
Within thine Fiery Eyes dwell the Brothers:  
Azha-Cain, a black sty in the left  
and Habil-Zhaeva,  
A red mote in the right.  
And there too, as if behind a seeming mask,  
traitor Judas and Twice-Sainted Jesus Christ.*

Ozzhazael, enfleshed via sacrifice, becomes the egregore of the covine which summons and feeds him. In this collectivity belongs the original atavism of dual-faith, for the Egregoroi, the fallen angels whose eyes never closed, became one in purpose once they descended to earth.

44 Robert Fitzgerald, "Invocation of the Sabbatic Goat Fathers".  
*The Cauldron* 100, 2000.



## *The Scattered Horizons of the New Flesh*

AT THE HEART of the Witches' Sabbat lies the Adytum of Sexual Gnosis, pulsating with god-making elixirs, empowering every practice and belief within its covines. Together with the Feast of Death, it is the primordial apparatus driving the power, revelation, and spiritual evolution of the Crooked Path adept. An effusion of the corporeal fountainhead, this sexual force progenerates the Sexuality of the New Flesh.

As with many spheres of human potential where tremendous spiritual power is present but unexpressed, sexuality is hedged by ignorance and taboo. The heresy of the Sabbat in part consists of the con-

tortion of the sexual drive, turned away from mundane procreation and pleasure to serve the diverse constructs of magic and spiritual revelation. This reorientative focus is a return to the state of the Sabbatic Virgin, and the great Ravishing of Spirit which precipitates the temporal sundering and reordering of the Aetheric I. As an undifferentiated Zeroth state of the magical evolution of the seeker, all heavens and hells become accessible via the flesh. This vastly expanded 'garden' of eroto-magical identities is known in the parlance of the Sabbatic Current as the 'feast of sexualities,' a metaphor which aptly mantles its ardour, grandeur, and danger.

These potentials are hinted at in the sexual grotesquerie of late medieval and early modern witchcraft iconography. Here one beholds the interpenetration of flesh and spirit in the libidinous visual ciphers of demons, succubi, beasts, phantasmagoric plants, gods and mundane objects transformed into animate entity, promising every sensual horror and delight. Though such images are in one sense exaggerated projections of the imagination, they adequately glyph the lesser mysteries of the Sabbat, in particular its inception of synesthesia, and the derangement or suspension of identity.

The straying forces of Opposition and Inversion, essential to the dark perichoresis of the rites of the Lamiæ, epitomise the Crooked Path utilisation of the sexual force, liberating its action for limitless power.

Actuated by the sacrifice of the living body, orgasm, and the sexual offerings of male and female seed, this praxis gradually raises an æthereic scaffolding – the elemental architecture of entic sustenance, possession, and manifestation. These usurpations of mundane sexuality serve the Cainite function of multiple murders committed against Self, in the name of self-overcoming, thereby awaking the Resurrected Body. Though they are denied mundane rôles in the dominion of biological procreation, these Elixirs of Life maintain their essential germinal momenta, and are wilfully extracted for the Witches' Round-Feast, taking instead the crooked route of enchantment toward the formation of conscious spiritual entity.

### *Transgression of the Sexualities of Clay*

In the Sabbatic continuum, one such 'crooked' magical state is that of nudity, which transgresses both social convention and ego-constructs relating to appearance. In defiance of normative convention, the act of ritually entreating spirit-forces without clothing evokes both the primordial state of I, as well as the societal abomination of exposure. This is a known formula of inversion, whereby the established decorum of polite society is transgressed, nudity being the other contrasted against the ordinary state of clothedness (this differs from mundane perversion, in which the naked or revealed state of the body exists for amuse-

ment, titillation or meagre sexuality). In the rites of the Moroccan witches, for example, it was known that certain women went forth by night to gather water from a neighbor's spring 'in a state of absolute nakedness': the waters thus collected were used for witchcraft.<sup>45</sup> Ritual nudity also has a protective, purifying and arousing effect, as is evidenced by root-gathering rituals of Romanian folk magic. When seeking the Matraguna<sup>46</sup> for use in love spells, young women danced naked in circles about the root before pulling it from the earth. The sorcerous vectors of this practice obviously partake of the erotic magic of arousal, but may also hearken to ancient apotropaic magics where flagrant display of the genitals – male or female – were thought to frighten away evil spirits, but also invite beneficial ones. Such charged traditions cluster around the Sheela-na-Gig, the 'woman displaying her parts' found carved above entrances to various churches in the British Isles.

Magically, the state of nudity is also contrasted with the sorcerous acts of masking and mantling, whereby successive layers of power are built up around the body. Thus the naked body is used as a purified sorcerous vehicle, but, as it is an analogue of the altar, it may also be adorned in accordance with the Art of

<sup>45</sup> Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*, p. 170.

<sup>46</sup> Mandrake (*Mandragora* spp.), but also sometimes the related *Atropa belladonna*.

each practitioner, and as the spirits require, to enhance its native powers. The grotesquerie of the mask, as one aspect of both shamanism and witchcraft, incontrovertibly projects a distorted representation of the natural form, aligning the sorcerer with the 'discarnate' world of spirits, gods, and ghosts. This particular correspondence references the body at birth and death, and the state of nakedness one assumes when incarnating and discarnating.

The so-called *orgia*, or Sabbatic love-feast, is commonly characterized as a heightened ritualized state of sexual license in the nocturnal assembly of witches. Its broader function operates at an atavistic level – a great awakening and co-mingling of selves, arising from precise techniques of both 'high' and 'low' magic. Some of these ecstasy-inducing techniques are indeed sexual, but are counted as implements of a greater carnality, constantly realised anew; the Imperium of the New Flesh. The 'Excavated Self' and 'Resurrected Body' are occult terms referencing the sorcerous awakening of resonant and dissonant identities using these ritual methods.

The anonymity of the flesh is a binding element of the Sabbat, the better to amplify it as an arena of power: as psycho-spiritual forces within the witches' rite expands, the flesh is revivified, but also becomes permeable, operating as a liminal zone of transmission, thus becoming comprehensive as to its sources. In this expanded twilight consciousness, differentia-

tion between one body and the next is suspended. Such rites partake of the doctrine of multiple selves – the teaching that the body of flesh is not only the present vessel of the procession of identities, but also the arena in which they are expressed. Thus the so-called 'Millions-of-Forms-of-Being'<sup>47</sup> are not anchored exclusively to a spirituous matrix but to the flesh itself, subject to diverse engorgements of power.

Like nudity, the Sabbatic orgia too is a consummate example of the transgressive ethos indwelling the rites of the Via Tortuosa. The transgress of socio-sexual mores, as well as certain acts of the connubial compact itself, finds mystical resonance with the Dionysia Rite, the Saturnalia, and some transgressive Sufic sects such as al-'Akakiza.<sup>48</sup>

The alignment of the sexualities of the Crooked Adepts may constellate to serve a magical rôle. This may take varying forms, up to and including the diverse forms of the *orgia*, but its essence is taking responsibility for one's own sexual power in a magical context, and understanding its many potentials when combined *in congressus*. From the Great Consortium, the Art of the Sabbat proceeds as an inspirational outfleshing of the magical work of the Initiate, precisely veiling the synthemata of the current, generating a

<sup>47</sup> The term is Chumbley's; see *The Azoëtia: A Grimoire of the Sabbatic Craft*, Xoanon, 1992.

<sup>48</sup> Mohammed Maarouf. *Jinn Eviction as a Discourse of Power*, p. 132.

sense of *other* in the percipient. The magical field generated in the initiate is thus reckoned as a Promiscuity of Experience: the sorcerous conjuring of the nostalgias of all sexual and sensorial experience into the present flesh.

The manifold permutations of the sexual act which comprise the orgia of the Sabbat relate not only to transgression and perversion but also liquefaction or 'scattering' of previously restricted sexual stations, such as celibacy, inhibition, monogamy, sexual aversions and prohibitions. This temporal liberation within a magico-mystical context allowed not only a more creative sexual palette, but also an equitable distribution of sexual power among initiates. For example, part of the accusation against the Pendle Witches attending the Sabbat at Malkin included demonic sexual congress:

Then adding sin to sin, you, the men, did copulate with Succubi, and you, the women, did fornicate with Incubi: moreover, in most bitter icy connexion and foul coitus with demons did you commit the unspeakable crime of buggery.<sup>49</sup>

Notable in this passage is the equal importance and access of both genders to this form of sexual commerce at the Sabbat. Medieval and early modern de-

49 Sébastien Michaelis, *Pneumatologie*, 1587, quoted in C. L'Estrange Ewen, *Witchcraft and Demonianism*, 1933, p. 43.

pictions of the Sabbath Feast often display witches seated at a table with the Devil, with a seating pattern of alternating genders (female, male, female, and so on). For the initiate of the Sabbath Mysteries, this conceals a deeper arcanum, namely that of the Agapæ, where power is transmitted not only sexually, but between the biological division of genders, thus 'bridging' the Abyss, and magically uniting a 'flesh once divided.'

Such approaches of first principle, being effective on their own, may be tessellated and harmonised within the body of the Crooked Path adept to magnify yet greater potencies. The realisation of these doctrines prepares the Man and Woman of Flesh for that most crooked of liaisons: congress with the astral retinue of sexual genii.

### *Of the Consorts*

From ancient times, humankind has engaged in sexual congress with astral or spiritual entities, whether in an unconscious fashion or by deliberate means. These beings were often viewed with horror and opprobrium. In a biblical context, they were known as plagues,<sup>50</sup> a stance largely perpetuated by Church pedagogues, and one in direct opposition to those practicing sorcery. In some historical sources, specific powers are

50 2 Samuel 7:14. 'When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the Rod of Men and with the plagues of the children of men.'

attributed to the sexual genii; chief among these are dominance, corporeal usurpation, and predation – the forcible extraction of vital fluids from their victims. Through this lens they were thus primarily viewed as vampiric, with descriptions of their abominable deeds steeped in moral outrage.

Beyond the hideous outfleshings that comprise their mundane shells, incubi and succubi comprise the glyptic veils of magico-sexual praxis. These entities, though innately dangerous, are reckoned in the Sabbatic Cultus as tutelary guides and sexual companions. In the Azoëtic gnosis, the sexual genii populate the magical dominion of the Ninth Cell, and are assimilated to the Crooked Path as the embodied genii of sexual heresy. The nature of this ‘heresy’ lies in its opposition to mundane carnality, being the hypostasis of the *sexual other*, as contrasted to the puerile projections of the mundane, non-magical mind upon these entities. As obtaining within the Aat of the Tenth and Twenty-first Holy Letters, the essence of the Sexual Daimon and its congress is the transmutation of the sorcerous body through assimilation of the Alienated Aversive.<sup>51</sup>

The word *incubus* means ‘to live upon’, or ‘to lie atop.’ This appellation signifies a purely dominant role in which the incubus restrains the body of the victim

51 “As with all Nature, the Primal Sexuality is the Eternal Equilibrium of Difference.” *The Azoëtia*, 2015, p. 367.

by pinning him or her down, forcibly arousing them to orgasm, the nectarous emission of which is then stolen, either in the mouth or resorbed in the phallus of the creature.

Within the phantasmic context of the Sabbat of the Witches, this spawns diverse Crooked Path magical formulæ, such as the retention of the seed of the male sorcerer in the imaginal conjuring of both incubi and succubi. The seed is not emitted, but cast forth into the central channel of the adept and thereupon used to ‘adore’ the image of the Beloved. This awakens the image to life, instaurating it as a vessel for the conjured sexual genii to subsequently engorge, dispensing its gnosis unto the practitioner.

For female initiates the formula is reversed, and it is they who take the seed, or numina of the genii directly into their bodies. The same applies to the succubus, whose name means ‘to lie under.’ On the surface this appears to be a passive rôle, but the exact opposite is true: the succubus steals the seed of her victim actively; she rides them from above, or allows the victim to ride Her below. This formula obtains in all sexual sorceries executed by practitioners of the Crooked Path, and within the Sabbatic Tradition its praxis may assume both physical and ætheric forms. In its active magical form this practice is known as the ‘Theft of the Girdle.’ Its essential principle may be located historically in old pagan magic where-in semen was stolen by women, then used for magical charms

to command both love and malediction.<sup>52</sup> Though such charms are not directly related to the Sabbatic phenomenology of the succubus, the essential magical dynamic is the same: a usurpation of sexual vitality, by sorcerous means, thus empowering and redirecting its force to intents beyond those of the host-emanant. Like principles animate the stolen or desecrated Eucharist, a perennial feature of witchcraft and malevolent magic, and a rite of transgression / inversion containing essential rudiments of Crooked Path Sorcery.

Sexual genii are the progeny of the Witch-mothers, the ancient retinue of the Daimonic Feminine, and thus are tutelary in nature. Aetheric congress with them via the Formulae of the Sabbat is a sacred covenant, through which they are fed with the living fluids of the faithful in a system of gnostic *circulatio*, a prototype of the original 'Devil's bargain.' Devotional practices of this Arcanum are characterised by sorcerous recursion of symbol, posture, meditation, visualisation and icons, oftentimes of a grotesque or abominable nature. Through transgressive strains of sexual conduct a psycho-sexual astral reservoir of power is generated and tapped; the resulting magical exudations serve to revivify the physical and etheric bodies of the practitioner. At the highest level of ex-

52 Bernadette Filotas, *Pagan Survivals, Superstitions and Popular Cultures*, pp. 296-7.

action, such rites are initiated to achieve health, longevity, and perpetuity of the spirit, but their nature is involute, and their magical usage requires both mental and physical discipline.

The preëminent sexual genius is Lilith, a spirit that came to be associated with malevolent magic in general, and, later, a matron of witches. Governing the vast arcana of the magical sexuality of the Crooked Path, Lilith commands numerous inverse sex-magic formulæ, such as the miscegenation of hybrid human-demon races from purloined semen. This particular example originates in mystical lore, and has symbolic applications in Crooked Path Sorcery for it represents a transgressive adaptation of the female sexual current for the generation and perpetuation of power.

The name Lilith itself is of tangled origin, wending like a serpent through time, culture, and magical consciousness. It finds its origins in the Sumero-Akkadian *Lilitu* and *Ardat Lili*, who were the female consorts of the male demon, *Lil*, in Sumerian demonology.<sup>53</sup> These entities were winged and fanged. An important precursor was the Akkadian *Lamashtu*, whom the Greeks knew as *Lamia*, the reviled snake-bodied seducers and flesh-eaters. Later, in the Talmud, Lilith appears as a demoness with wings. This morphic configuration continues in the 8th century CE text, *The*

53 Judit M. Blair, *De-demonizing the Old Testament*.

*Alphabet of Ben Sira*, where Lilith is revealed as a child-stealing, strangling monster who perpetrates her crimes as revenge upon Yahweh for the murder of one hundred of her children a day.

In the earliest accounts, from the Babylonian and Mandæan, these sexual demons were collectively called lilitu, and in the Epic of Gilgamesh as *ki-sikil-lil-la-ke*, meaning serpent, owl, tree and spirit. On Mandaic incantation bowls, the *lilt* were described as comprising the roots and branches of a sacred tree whose trunk was a mighty snake. In Sumerian, *Lil* and *Lilitu* mean 'night-air' and the lunar goddess of the South wind, the wife of Enlil. Lilitu became the singular goddess/demoness, Lilith, in Semitic mythology. In the Aramaic, Lilith indicates both a screech owl and beautiful maiden, essential paradigmatic antecedents of the witch.

In the *Zohar*, four demon Queens are mentioned, all being the wives or consorts of Samael: Lilith, Mahalath, Agrat and Naamah. Mahalath means sickness; Agrat was a daughter of Mahalath, and Naamah was Tubal-Cain's pleasant sister, who led Aza and Azael (the lunar spirits of the sephiræ, Yesod and Hod, respectively) astray. These demon queens bred with humans and generated *cambion*, a word thought by some to derive from the ancient Celtic root, *kamb*, meaning 'crooked.' In pre-Islamic Arabia the *lilitu* were known as the qarinah, night demons which provoked nocturnal emissions in their victims, and stole the resulting

seed and effluvia to breed the hybrid *qara*, also known as the *lilin* to the Hebrews.

In later medieval and Renaissance periods these *lilitu* became known as the infamous incubi (male demons) and succubi (female demons), who preyed upon the faithful and the apostate alike in sleep. The word *succubus* derives both from the Latin *succuba*, 'paramour', and, *succubare*, 'to lie under.' The succubi were notoriously evil and mischievous, and known to retrieve sperm from recently hanged criminals for the magical insemination of whores and nuns. If children so conceived were unlucky enough to be born, they were immediately snatched by the succubi and unceremoniously devoured. Of these nocturnal parasites, the noted Renaissance physician and alchemist Paracelsus stated that

. . . these astral larvae, incubi and succubi, which are formed in the imagination are born of Amore Haeress, which signifies the type of love whereby a man imagines a woman, or vice versa, in order to copulate with the image created within the sphere of his mind.<sup>54</sup>

In Crooked Path Sorcery this Amore Haeress is one of the fundamental teachings concerning the rites and lore of inveterate sexual gnosis. Emerging from the Sabbath Gnosis as luminary attendants upon the New

<sup>54</sup> *De Origine Morborum Invisibilium.*

Flesh, the sexual genii receive the *dulia* of the faithful and in turn act for the Grand Dispensation of Witch-Power. They are independent entities in their own right, and creatures conjured by the mind, body and astral substance of the sorcerer.

In *The Dragon-Book of Essex* are found the names of several Witch-mothers, presiding over the Rite of BHA. Four of them are the cognate hypostatic emanations of the classical demon-queens, assuming their Draconic or Serpent-emanated forms. Each, in her turn, commands a specific retinue of powers exemplifying aspects of Crooked Path Sorcery.

Liliya-Devala is the Draconic hypostasis of Lilith. She is the Thorn-Queen occupying the Northern Quadrant of the Circle, alongside Her male counterpart, Mahazhael-Deval. She is the Sovereign Blood-Mother of the Sabbatic Cultus entire, and it is from Her fecund womb that its initiates issue. Liliya is first summoned prior to any magical operation involving sexual daimones and intercessors, as they all obtain from the presence of Her astral plasm. Disguised in a plethora of hideous ritual accoutrements taken from the profane depictions of witchcraft inquisitors, She poses as the embodiment of all iniquity; sexual congress with her daughters is thus one of the most potent forms of ritual teachings within the Sabbatic Current as a whole. These teachings overthrow all accepted 'norms' of gnosis and sexual practice, and use diverse forms of extrapolated carnality.

Rahab is the Draconic hypostasis of the ancient feminine daimon Mahalath. She is the First-Born of Liliya, the White Lady of the Southern Quadrant of the Circle, alongside Her male counterpart, Azhazael. Characterized as the Mother of Scorpions, in the Sabbatic Tradition she teaches transformation of the body through poison and sickness.<sup>55</sup> Congress with Her is often accompanied by high fevers and unpleasant swellings of the flesh, serving as the conduit for Her wisdom to flow directly into the body of the sorcerer. This quasi-pathological means of ingress allows for a thorough saturation of knowledge within the physical, astral and etheric organs. In the bedchambers of sacred carnality, Rahab presides as the *Imago Sabbati*, a living eidolon of shape-shifting flight. She is the Huntress of Souls and the Sickener of Babes, rendering all victims of her fatal glamours. She is the Mother of the Mirage, and when enfleshed abides in all the deserts of the earth, natural and man-made. Thus one encounters Her in urban slums, and in places abandoned by humanity and returned unto the elements. She is a daughter of the Moon, and the rose of her sex contains its many mansions.

Agrath is the Draconic hypostasis of Agrat. As the daughter of Rahab, she is the Demoness of Terror abiding in the Western Quadrant of the Circle, along

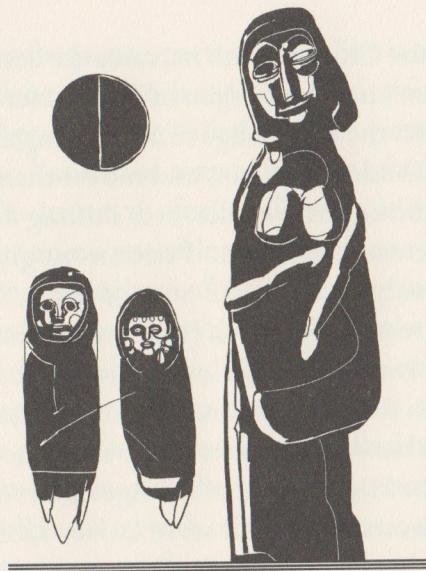
<sup>55</sup> Hives, rashes, priapism, peripheral edema, blistering and petechiae are typical physiological emanations of Rahab's touch.

side Her male counterpart, Azhael. She is alternately visualized as a blue-faced hag and pale-skinned nymph. Agrath is the Veiled Mother, perpetually in mourning, but whose tears are those of rapture and ecstasy. She incites the lust of all living and dead, and true communion with Her results in one becoming Her servant throughout all time, in every incarnation. Also known as the *Bone Mother*, she is the keeper of the Sepulchre of the Ages, repository of the ancestral horde. All earthly knowledge of sexual arcana and the subtle alchemies of generation -- flesh and spirit -- is Hers to dispense as She wills. She cannot be summoned; only adored with blood and bone. All fetishes are Her gateways, and it is the Art of the Fetch that She teaches unto the wise-blooded ones. To those who truly love Her, She grants the 'last chance': the influx of grace and power to persevere through all adversity and affairs of the heart. One type of Crooked magic relating to Agrath is the Witch-glamour, the ability to contort the vitality of the Flesh to assume forms both nubile and haggard, a practice which when perfected relies as much upon astral infusion of the sexual body as it does the sensorium of the viewer.

Na'amah is the Draconic hypostasis of the biblical Naamah. She is the Weaver of Fate and the cat-clawed demoness of the sacred dance. Dwelling in the Eastern Quadrant of the Circle, she stands alongside Her male counterpart, Zhamael. Na'amah is the sister and wife of Tubal-Cain, the daughter of Agrath, and within the

arcana of the Crooked Path narrates the destiny of all those sworn unto the Dragon of Eld. In Her own tale, she whispers the knowledge of all cunning and action unto the Children of Cain, and moves them betwixt Her fingers like a cat's cradle, ever shifting design and augury across the æons. Petition is given unto Na'amah only through the pure of heart, for She is fickle -- or seemingly so -- in Her ministrations of love. Hers is the Image of the Beloved throughout all times and worlds; Empires rise and crumble at Her decree. Hers is the knowledge given only within the Circle of Arte and the High Sabbat of the Ages. Hers is also the gnosis of lovers -- that all serve as Her vehicles. She is thus the Sacred Bed and the Orgia made flesh.

The transgression of ordinary sexualities within the rubric of the Sabbatic Cultus gives rise to a perceptual shift in the sensoria of the practitioner through which the body is re-enfleshed as the *carnal-ground* of Primordial Eden itself. Once this process of sexual gnosis is enacted, it generates a procreative, generative and energetic 'loop' within the New Flesh. One thus becomes Azha-Cain as heir and ancestor to the Crooked Path entire. As with the ordinary sexualities, the Resurrection of the New Flesh in its manifest totality may only be achieved via the dutiful ministrations of one's chosen and purified consort. Na'amah is thus the reposoire of the witch-mothers and the body they utilise to incarnate the gnosis of the Crooked Path.



## Exilic Wisdom

'AND CAIN'S SKIN was dark, but glowed as with the shining of the stars in heaven.' Thus was the first murderer of man described in the *Ethiopic Book of Adam and Eve*, considered an apocryphal text by scholars of religious studies and by dictators of accepted biblical canon. The descriptor is apt, as the original Greek *apokálypsis* (ἀποκάλυψις) means 'revealed' or 'revelation'. What it reveals, albeit a disclosure hidden in plain sight, is mention of the original 'mark' of Cain, for he was born with skin that was radiant or covered in stars – a noctilucent analogous with the Sufic 'darklight'. This points to his inhuman – and stellar – birthright.

The stellar heritage reveals his patronage, the angel-dæmon known as Samael. It is also the mark that differentiates him from his human brother, Abel, and one portending the eventual 'divine' banishment from the Garden of Paradise. In this wise, the mark was pre-destined, as the sign upon his very skin served to protect him in his exile. As was written in Genesis, 'Any who would harm him, vengeance shall be taken upon them sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain.'

The Mark of Cain has been interpreted in various forms over millennia, in accepted books, and also in Gnostic heresy.<sup>56</sup> Traditions regarding its nature have included a blood mark, a horn, a holy letter branded upon his forehead, and a spiritual signature attending upon his subtle body. Within the teachings of Crooked Path Sorcery, the Mark is acknowledged as the primordial 'spark' pre-existent within the very blood of the Wise, the Old Ones, a sign invisible to all, except those possessed of it.

After the murder of Abel, Cain was chastised by the Lord, who placed a mark upon him that caused all who encountered him to 'beware' and to let him pass. The mark functioned as a seal of protection, for any who might harm Cain would themselves be punished 'sevenfold.' Cain was exiled to the east of Eden; there

<sup>56</sup> One of the best analyses of the Mark is found in Ruth Mellinkoff's *The Mark of Cain*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1981.

he began his long wandering throughout all the lands of the earth. The east is of especial import, since to the west lies the Great Sea, and the Lands of the Ancestors; the north is the realm of the Pole and the region of the Never-Setting Stars, and the south is the Unknown. In the east lies the perpetual dawn: this is why in some Gnostic sects, Cain was compared to the Sun. It was to the east that Cain and his issue moved, there propagating the Seed of Witchfire down the generations. According to this telling, his lineage co-mingled with nearly every other race on the planet — which is why Our Sorcerie has been practiced in many lands, and by many peoples.

The Exile of Cain was thus a means for the Lord to test Cain, to ensure that his line would survive and test the Faithful themselves, by their very *existence*, much in the same fashion the *satans* did for Allah. The exile of Cain is also a metaphor of the Lonely Road walked by all practitioners of the Crooked Path — the practice and revelation of ascetic sorcery. Yet it is something wholly more *real* than that, for it conceals a ritual rubric of ordeal through which all candidates and initiates alike are continually tested.

### *The Step*

Exile, being a forced removal or expulsion from one's homeland, contains distinct elements relevant to the gnosis of the Via Tortuosa. The Path of Exile is thus

created by the Step — not by word, nor by theorisation, but as it is walked. The privation of Exile is borne of the abandonment of familiarity, and a state of absolute extraction from the known; the only power in such an estate derives from conscious ownership of one's temporal actuality, and forward motion to claim it. Thus arises the Gnosis of the Step, which prefigures three essential Paths — that of Immediation, Intention and Creation.

### *The Path of Immediation*

The Flaming Torch is an ancient symbol of the immortal gnosis of Cain. It has analogues with the stolen heavenly fire of Prometheus, and the torch upraised upon the crown of Baphomet, the Hermetic Androgyne. In our Sorcerie it illuminates the Path of Immediation. This path is defined as realisation and manifestation within the present moment. Paradoxically it is also that which obtains atemporally. The Sorcerer thus abides at the crux of time where neither past nor future, nor even the present moment (which is always in motion away from the past and into the future) exerts any influence. It is the eternal moment envenomed, the instant when gnosis and the practice that engendered it are one. Like the serpent Ouroboros, which perfectly emblematises it, this fraction of time and space is infused with a power both extrinsic and self-generated, giving rise to an

instantaneous fecundation of ritual enchantment. Accordingly the Path of Immediation is also the Path of Happiness, for one abides ever in the web spun of one's magical design, a blissful moment followed through the vagaries of sorrow and abnegation. It is the veritable conclusion of love, accomplished through the passion of knowledge and experience, all of which is given through myriad forms of death, both conclusive (final) and intermediary (lessons).

On the Tortuous Road the Sorcerer gains knowledge of how to practice his or her Arte, but more importantly *becomes* it *in toto*. This philosophical dimension of Crooked Path Sorcery distinguishes it from other types of magic based on the idea of following another's teachings through which to arrive at some intangible or even 'metaphysical' species of 'truth.' On the Immediate Path the truth one discovers is one's own, realised as the *path itself*.

The Path of Immediation may also be considered as the Way of Opposition, for gnosis is achieved through that which opposes the Self. True art is manifest via ordeal. It cannot be otherwise, lest one's art fall to mimicry or the conceits of ego. The Crooked Path encapsulates the process of transmutation, in all its forms and shapes, and the process is naturally one of refinement, a literal alchemical acid bath and battery of experiential testing. Again the allegory of Cain's murder of Abel comes to the fore, since all that is *habilic* must be shorn and slain in order for the

moment to be *envenomed*. Ego and Identity are completely subservient to the Arte and must be made to serve it in every manner: there is no quarter offered nor given. The Body of Abel is delivered to the earth and nothing remains but the Circle cast, and the far-off echo of his complaint unto the Lord of Shells. In irony is the Path of Immediation become the path of joy, for it is the way of murder. Thus every moment of ensorcellment is a bloody homage unto Cain, first Sorcerer, and Cain as the Path-in-Opposition.

### *The Path of Intention*

The Crooked Path is, by necessity and design, a path of paradox. No better example of this can be found than upon the Way of the Lightning-Bolt, the Path of Intention. In essence and symbol the Lightning-Bolt more closely adheres to the *idea* of Immediation, with its sudden appearance and fleeting strike. Yet the opposite is true, as it is through the medium of intention that the Lightning-Bolt expresses the reality of its origin. That origin is the heritage of one's own path or family; its numina may arise from blood or dowry.

Herein is the collected knowledge of all who have walked the path before you. It comes through the Lightning-Bolt way because of the projected will of the collective. The Path of Intention is the course of one's willed intent cast upon one's life, *exile* as the path itself.

Everything the sorcerer does is intended – all is Design. Little does the World of Seeming hold thrall, thus many who follow the Crooked Path become inhuman, or more-than-human, in the sense that social mores and values have no meaning and no control over the intentions of the Artist – they have journeyed beyond the pale. Everything they become is bound unto the Fetish-Pole and the catena of spirits that are their children and companions. The Path of Exile is the Lonely Way, for all has been sacrificed to the design of intention. This is a supreme path of Power and few can walk it.

Exile posits wandering, or straying, and this is a modulus of the Crooked Path entire – its chief philosophy and operative mode of practice. One walks the Path, and taking what one receives, incorporates it into Pattern. Drawn into the ever-deviating Abyss of Self, these riches encompass All, from the beliefs and icons of other faiths, to local customs, manners of speech, and the miasma of *genius loci*. In this manner the embodied magical state of straying absorbs all into its field of resonance and transforms it by intention to adorn one's state of Entity.<sup>57</sup> This is what is meant by the Lightning-Bolt being a way of 'destruction.' For destruction, in the Sorcerer's parlance means transmutation.

<sup>57</sup> Likened to the magical formulae of *kosmesis*, or 'Adornment of the Void.'

The practical applications of the Path of Intention are endless. Any willed act, be it the casting of a circle or spell, the laying of a curse, the binding of a familiar, the reification of magical arcana, the coercion of an innocent – all serve as exemplars. The matter is simplicity itself, as well as darkness. For the Path of Exile bears the healing promise of abominable things, as to be a Sorcerer assumes a departure from the burden of the ordinary, but also from the ease and comfort of its commonplace nature.

Lest one think this philosophy purely negative in nature, the Middle Way and Path of the Serpent gives succour and remedy, for it is the living Tongue of the Spirits. This is the Path of Creation . . . was the world not engendered by the Serpent of Light? As one works and wends one's way between the tines of the Stang, one partakes in the Act of Creation. This is an actual living ambient field extruded from the essence of spirits and spiritual beings, and it enables the Sorcerer to execute his/her Design. It is an *élan vitale*, a living flame giving voice to the dead, and narrative to spirit.

### *The Path of Creation*

The Middle Way is the attainment and binding of the Paths of Immediation and Intention. Through this, Opposition and Destruction give birth to Creation. In many spiritual traditions the idea of the Middle Way implies a type of compromise between polarities of

morality and consequence. The Crooked Path dispenses with ideological relativism and other related insincerities; upon it, compromise is absent. One either acts or does not. The Middle Way is merely a warding of sentiment, after a fashion, for the decision to go either way is based on necessity, instead of moral gravitation. In the coiling perambulation of the sorcerer there is no grey area, nor is there black-and-white: there are simply ways and means.

The Middle Way thus foreshadows the Path of the Serpent, the path of remedy. It contains all medicaments and means of healing, both physical and spiritual. As such it is the veritable pathway of poison, for it is through venom that healing is facilitated. This poison, as defined, is manifest in the delineations of the Light of Creation, which generated the elemental world. The Path of the Serpent is thus the true path of Incarnation, and the light of its understanding is obtained within the Blood of the Wise.

### *The Crooked Circle*

The Path of Return, as a specialised philosophical principle of the Way, is the etiological consummation of the Crooked Step, also known as the 'Crooked Circle.' Having gone forth and walked all possible paths, the adept of the Crooked Way experiences a 'homecoming' wherein the endpoint meets the Point of Beginning.

The process in the first instance incepts the sacred route according to Will, Desire and Belief, inaugurating momentum and slaying inertia – the enemy of action and power. When the foot meets the Path, the Way deviates according to the Arcanum of the Opposer, thus bending the initial sorcerous impulse according to its own design. The Step is then turned anew, to willfully incorporate the revelations of the Points of Turning, but also shape the trajectory in accordance with the first initiative. Through this meandering step, an undulating, contorted pattern is traced upon the 'earth' through the 'feet', thus actuating the primordial geoglyphic form of the Old Serpent. In this ophidian progression through any power or magical arcanum, the sorcerer of the Crooked Path must needs assume and project the Serpent-body: the length of its form, the measure of its coils, and the recursive motion of its flesh shall determine the degree of success.

One paradox of the Crooked Circle is that through inception, deviation, correction and further deviation, one experiences multiple microcosmic 'strayings' and 'returns' such that the Crooked Path may, in the end, be turned 'straight'. Thus the Circle Cast is not that which was first imagined, but rather a dominion born of both the sorcerer and the hidden hand of the Opposer.

*Spirits of Exile*

The art of spirit conjuration is as old as humankind, from early shamanic spirit-forays to Renaissance magical theurgy to modern witchcraft and ceremonial magic. The Art of Summoning, as obtaining within Crooked Path Sorcery, partakes of elements from its predecessors, but the differences largely outweigh the resonances. It is not merely spirits that are summoned and constrained but also the practitioner himself, via self-control and negation. The art of conjuring spirits in our Sorcerie is thus one of communion: it is a feast and a sharing.

Crooked Path Sorcery extends in part from interaction with the unique spirits indwelling the Place of Exile. The nature of this place, in keeping with the narrative of first transgression, is empty of humanity, adverse in character, and set far apart from the cultivated lands and cities of the profane. It thus has its own retinue of daimon and wight, emanant in its 'native' locatedness. In addition to the retinue comprising the wasteland so-called, is the passage through it, in action and reflection, that generates that specialised body of Crooked Path arcana known to its brethren as Exilic Wisdom.

The Sorcerer views all things, especially the land, stones, trees, and streams, as imbued with a spirit or a collective of spirits. Out of acknowledgment and respect for these 'spirit cloisters', they are adjured, asked

for permission to abide, and propitiated. This is done with the knowledge that the haunters of the Place of Exile are reservoirs of cultic power and pulse with accumulated numen, whether beneficent or baneful.

Here then, first and foremost, lies an ethos of the Lands of Cain's wandering being one with the sorcerous Arte. This relationship, known in the Sabbatic Tradition as 'The Faith Beneath the Wanderer's Heels',<sup>58</sup> is mutual and based on, if not love, then genuine honour and respect. Here also a stark division of intent and identity is expressed between 'ceremonial' magical belief and 'country' sorcerous knowledge. Ceremonial magic — goëtic, angelic, demonic, et alia — posits that spirits are summoned and communicated with from the supposed 'safety' of a magic circle whilst they are compelled to appear in a constraining 'triangle of art' (giving three avenues of escape), or else inside a crystal sphere or spirit-trap. The Salomonic relationship is exclusive; spirits are viewed as dangerous, even untrustworthy, and thus must be 'controlled.' The contrast with the spirit-congress of the Via Tortuosa could not be more severe, nor utterly ridiculous.

From the viewpoint of the ever-deviating path, spirit-power permeates, at all times and places, in varying qualities and concentrations. Each moment in time, therefore, is potentially ensorcelled via Will,

<sup>58</sup> The term 'Faith Beneath the Wanderer's Heels' was coined by Andrew D. Chumbley in the early part of the twenty-first century, as an exoteric expression of Crooked Path arcana of Cultus Sabbati, and as a philosophical mantling of that order's teachings.

Desire, and Belief. The magical hot-point of ritual and enchantment – be it a grand rite of a complex spirit-retinue or a simple spell for healing – serves to gather and concentrate these forces, as in an alchemical alembic, and in the best of cases, provide a medium for manifestation and the mutual communion of power. Thus the concept of ‘banishing’ at the conclusion of a rite is virtually unknown, unless the working is specifically concerned with forcible expulsion of disease, intrusion, or *maleficia*.<sup>59</sup>

### *Familiars*

An essential ordeal of Exile is remoteness, and isolation from one’s fellows, whether friend or foe. The character of the wilderness presents not only isolation and privation but an exposure to a different law, an order of the Other. Within this wilderness context arises the emanation of the Familiar – the tameless beast which, by agency of the unnatural bargain, becomes allied to the practitioner, for power and companionship.

The name ‘familiar’ instantly connotes tameness. However, in the context of folk narrative, the familiar prior to its relationship with a witch is indeed a wild beast, or else a demon in fleshly guise. Either identity

59 Rites of ‘expelling’, related on some levels to exorcism, are historically present in many folk sorcery traditions and constitute a rich historical stratum of lore.

proposes a species of wildness. Even when the animal chooses to abide as a familiar spirit to the practitioner, there remains an innate indocility to its character.

As for companions, there is none better than the animal that, of its own will, becomes one’s ‘familiar.’ Examples of such beasts abound from records of the witch trials, especially those from Scotland and the Basque region. The traditional manner one obtains a spirit or animal familiar in Crooked Path Sorcery is similar in nature to these accounts. First one must have a dream about the animal in question. This however, is only a preliminary step. One must *intend* the animal to return in at least two further dreams, and engage with it in some meaningful way, be it a conversation or a mutual journey. Even better if the animal shows one something of importance, such as a place or object of power. These are the signs of rapport, and must be witnessed in order to proceed out of respect for the spirit. Constraint in the matter of animal familiars is one of mutuality, if it exists at all, and discernment must be displayed by the sorcerer at every turn. On the heels of these *oneiria* one next takes to the land in waiting for the appearance of the animal in question. Should one be blessed with a physical encounter, one must magically entreat that animal’s power. If the beast responds positively, it may communicate its intention directly in dream.

Once established, and if the sorcerer is so inclined, he or she may choose to adopt a physical exemplar of the familiar animal in question, after which a further pact is required. At an auspicious time, a thanksgiving is given the bestial charge, after which it is bound in compact by conferring the *lumen* – the communion of blood, given in the rite of anointing. This act is a sign of the most ancient of diabolic covenants, the ‘Blood Pact’. It is a union that traces its spiritual heredity to the primordial *coniunctio* of Cain and Lilith, for it hearkens back to the Fall of the Watchers, and the original co-mingling of Spirit and Flesh. This binding of sorcerer and Familiar extends for the natural course of their lives, and is one of the many forms of the Dream of the Beloved, transcarne in nature, eternal in expression.

All bound famuli ultimately derive from the primordial Horse *Eokharnast*, which Cain tamed east of Eden. This taming occurred in Exile, and utterly transformed motion, and relation to the land, expediting his traverse across the Fields of the Earth. The Familiar is thus an enfleshed phenomenon of Exilic Wisdom, being the Holy Companion of Art emergent from the wilderness.

Lastly, spirits are the substance of the retinue and guests abiding at the Table of Midnight, at the End of Days, and within the arbours of Elphame. All sworn in covenant with Cain and with the Fae find their reward at Midnight’s Table in the life that is beyond life.

Death abides not at the Table, except for a single empty chair, in memory of the living not yet in attendance at the Supernal Feast of the Ages. Thus is the reward of the Faithful at the final passing-on.

### The Dark Hermitage

The Exile of Cain finds its ascetic corollary in the Dark Hermitage, a practice especially apropos the stations of the Crooked Path. The Hermitage is manifest in sustained ritual isolation, far from all physical comforts and routines. It is usually practiced at night, or for a set duration of nights, with a singular meditative focus. Undertaken naked, bound, hooded, cloistered, or by way of some other manner of physical privation, the Hermitage serves as a form of magical disembodiment, not only as a simulacrum of Cain’s Exile but also as his ritual disarticulation of the corpse of Abel. The Dark Hermitage is thus a means to actuate the exilic spectra of Cainite Gnosis, and an apprehension of Cain as First Sorcerer and Father of the Bloodline of Witchdom. It is the mystery of Day and Night, of the West (dusk) and the East (dawn), and contains the Arcanorum of Our Crooked Faith.

The Dark Hermitage finds ritual exemplars in many faiths, most notably the imposed seclusion of Christian monks and Sufi mystics. The ‘Dark Retreat’ of Yungdrung Bön takes 49 nights to perform, during which one willingly gives up one’s flesh, blood and mind to demons, and in so feeding them attains a non-

dual state of consciousness:

the principle practice is not visualization, the transforming of impure karmic vision into pure vision as is done in Tantric sadhana, but simply the *practice of vision as such*.<sup>60</sup>

While this statement references a species of Bön Clear Light Dzogchen methodology and teaching, its heart – seeking vision, or allowing vision to arise on its own to confront the Other – belongs to the essential vagary of our Hermitage. If a state of unique spiritual communion is attained, it is both precious and private in nature, the initiate having been stripped beyond a state of mundane nakedness to expose the skeleton, and that which lies beyond it. Undoubtedly ancient, the practice has its antecedents in early shamanic experience of myriad prehistoric cultures, most notably in Mongolia and Tibet.

In folk magical practice, such a Hermitage occurs in the East Anglian Toad Bone Ritual, wherein the sorcerer must confront the Devil and prevail if he is to retain the power of the osseous talisman. The nature of the ordeals vary, but are united in their origin – the hidden hand of the Initiator. As with the Dark Retreat of the Bön, a slaughter, flaying and scattering of the body is present within this rite – the body of the Toad, whose corpus is cast to the elements and ravaged,

thereby to resurrect in a more powerful form. A central feature of these austere practices is the forcible eclipsing of the familiar by the unfamiliar.

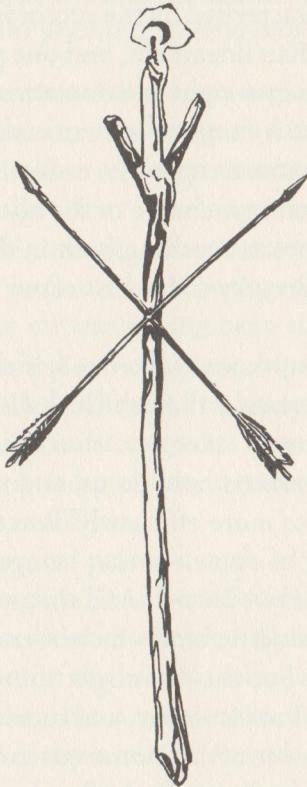
The sensation of familiarity ever attends upon the human and is characterised by the succor it gives. This is a most mammalian lineament, and one possessed of many merits, in its own right and domain of emotional security: for what is familiar is comfortable, or certainly becomes so after a time. The unfamiliar, by contrast, carries an atavistic charge of the alien intrusive, of enemies and threat, reaching back in time beyond the Protoplasm to the very rudiments of our primordiality.

*Otherness* – the unknown alienated, is all that is not of ourselves. Otherness is that which challenges – and ultimately destroys – identity, thus giving us the strength to *overthrow* its hold on us, and to free what remains in order to more efficiently direct *power*. It is the overthrowing of ourselves that brings us face-to-face with that *which we are not*. And that which we are not wears many masks, behind which lies nothing, thus pure potentiality. For the dawnlight shines not until the darkest hour is at last come, and mortal eyes have beheld the abhorrence of the monstrous-emanant. The time of most intense darkening is also the fiercest crucible of testing, akin to Christ's Garden of Agony, a Gethsemane of the Witch.

60 John Myrdhin Reynolds. *The Practice of Dzogchen in the Zhang-Zhung Tradition of Tibet*, p. 248.

## Adversus

*To wed the stars above to earth,  
To heed the Counsel of the Mask.  
To pass beyond the wordless gate,  
To slay the flesh and raise the corpse,  
To serve the Backward Hand of Fate.  
To Sunder the Way for Eternity's Road,  
All flesh to test, all flesh to goad.  
To praise within the Devil's Round  
The goodwives of unhallow'd ground,  
There to embrace the Flesh Beyond,  
There to bless our Curs'd Bond.  
To pass four ways and four between,  
To make anew all that has been.  
To bend the Way to Our Decree,  
Our twice-turn'd path and thrice-horn'd tree.  
To call forth the Lord within the Blade,  
O' Sister O' Brother,  
By flesh unto flesh thou art betray'd!  
To make and break our Hallow'd Oath,  
For this is our Way, and this our troth:  
  
To raise up the Serpent in the Lonely Place  
Our lots cast forth into the flame;  
All gods to slaughter, all temples to burn,  
The Eye cast forth upon all fates --  
Such is our straying - and such our return!*



# The Parables of the Exiled

## Parable of the Book

A young man left behind the wealth, learning and acclaim of his family estate to seek the spirit in the wilderness. He travelled far and had myriad adventures, yet none quenched his thirst for knowledge. At last he settled inside a cave, far from the habitations of men. There he meditated with the bones of the fallen, 'til in time he grew an old man.

One night he dreamt he was shown how to fashion a book. In the dream its pages were blank, until he happened to cut open a finger with a carved quill. Blood dripped on the virgin pages of the book, and thereupon letters wrote themselves, 'til a single page wast filled.

Upon awakening, the hermit witnessed the fruit of his dream, and indeed, his blood had inscribed a single page within the book of his own design. Seeing the augury clear in his mind, he offered fresh blood unto the pages of the book each night prior to sleep. And every

morning a new page was filled with words and symbols, both known and archaic to his aging mind, until, after a sun's full turning, the book wast written in its entirety.

The hermit reclined with the sun on the afternoon of its completion, and read the book wrought of his very blood. Much of its pages he understood, and yet even more was dark unto his reasoning. But, with ever-advancing wisdom did he realise the dream of the book and the book that wast his dream. For Death sang its lullaby, and in his final breath he understood at last:

That which hath been written long before it wast first read, in the reading thereof wast written for the first time. And the old man passed, his blood mere words upon a page.

## Parable of the Grain

In the time of planting Cain went forth unto the field and ploughed and sowed. And according to the season, and under his watchful care, the field first grew green, then golden. And Cain looked upon the tall grain bending in the wind and was pleased.

His Brother Abel, who was a shepherd, each day would pass near unto the field, calling out unto Cain saying, 'Brother, give unto me a portion of thy grain.' But Cain denied him, for Abel desired the corn as a

day's fodder for his flock and no more.

Now it came to pass on the eve of harvest, after Cain had retired to his house, Abel passed through the ripened field. And as his brother slept, Abel gave his flock to eat of the choicest grains, which amounted to one third of the field. And with Abel and his flock also came a blight which despoiled the field, blackening a third of its corn and making it wither.

In the morning when he went unto the field, Cain looked upon the blackened grain, the trampled corn, and the dung of the flock and was wroth with his brother, and cursed his name.

Then Cain gathered him together what remained of the golden and unblemished ears to thresh, grind, and bake him bread. And when his meagre harvest had concluded, Cain prepared for rest, but was rebuked at once by an unseemly voice behind him that cried out, 'Wherefore gatherest thou only the unblemished kernels?'

And Cain searched the bounds of the field for the one who had spoken, thinking it was his brother mocking him. But he saw no man or woman there.

'Hear me, O' Cain, for I adjure you!' came the voice again.

Then saw Cain an indignant ear of corn, perched high on the stalk — one of the ones that had been sickened by Abel. And from the top of the stalk the blackened ear made suit against Cain, proclaiming its worthiness for harvest, and proffering reproof for not also gathering the blackened grains.

"Thou art corrupt," said Cain, 'Besmirched by the deeds of the Vulgar One. Thou art unfit to serve God.'

Aye,' said the grain. 'But didst thou not plant us? Didst thou not command the waters to flow, and raise nets against the birds, and drive out the thistles? Didst thou not sing mighty praise-songs for the power of growing? What power endowed in us by the hand of the profaner is endowed one hundred times by thine own hand, and one thousand times by mine own heredity.'

And upon hearing this, the other withered ears of corn began to call out in agreement, loudly chastising him.

Hearkening to their call, Cain also gathered up the blemished grains.

And with the unblemished grain made he a golden flour, and from it baked a golden loaf. Likewise from the fouled grain he ground a black flour, and from it was made a black loaf.

And the golden loaf was eaten by day, at the Table of the Sun, and great was its mystery. And the black loaf wast eaten in secret at the Table of Midnight, and shewed its many mysteries to the brethren and sisters gathered there. Thus did Cain place both loaves, gold and black, upon the Altar to his God, and verily the offering was exalted in the sight of the Lord.

### Parable of the Grove

Amidst a forest, in a circular plot of ground there stood a thicket of new saplings. Growing true and vigorous, they had sprouted where a flood had washed away the bodies of fallen trees long dead. Each sapling grew tall, reaching toward the sun. And the spirit of the grove thrived, and rejoiced.

Thus it was that in the tenth year of their flourishing, the branches of the young trees began to crowd one another as they competed for root space and sunlight. As Nature decrees, where the strongest branches dominated, weaker branches of other trees were cast into shadow, became barren of leaves, and died. Yet one tree in their midst didst bend its trunk and contort its form, the better to attain the light by sending forth its form to all spaces, great and small.

And in the hundredth year of their flourishing, the tree with the contorted trunk had grown strong in the midst of the grove, its form resembling a great wooden

serpent piercing earth and sky. In the storm-season of that year, lightning struck the deformed tree and split its form. Despite its charred limbs and cracked trunk, it persisted, and in the next season put forth new leaves and branches with thrice its earlier vigour.

In the thousandth year of the grove's flourishing, because of the many splits, hollows and chambers in the crooked tree's great trunk, it became a habitation for bees. In a short time a great many hives populated its wood, and produced fine honey, and went forth into the flowers of the meadows beyond.

Not long after, foresters came unto the grove to survey the magnificent trees, great in height and strong of wood. Each of them marveled at the trees' strength and size, and amongst them they prophesied what price each tree might bring as lumber. In a short time the trees of the grove were unceremoniously felled, their flesh milled into boards to build the temples of the gods of men.

But the crooked tree was rejected, for the grain of its wood was not straight and could not produce proper boards. And the bees who dwelt within its body went forth to harass and sting the woodcutters, who cursed the tree. And the tree dropped great twisting branches from the heights to frighten and crush them. And when they had taken all which was of immediate profit to men, they fled the presence of the accursed

tree, to return to the safety of their cities.

Then did the crooked tree stand alone amongst the ravaged remains of its kin, the sole beneficiary of the light. A storm approached, and the tree prepared to seed the ground anew. And the spirit of the grove thrived, and rejoiced.

### Parable of the Fascinum

In ancient times, in the days before the Transfixed God, the Heavenly Host descended to earth, earnest in aspiration to inspire the congregation of Man with the light and love of the Lord. The Angelic Retinue were as shards of living light, having always abided in the realms thereof and never knowing of the darkness of the void, wherein dwelt nothingness. Yet, as their essence touched the soil of earth, immediately didst it cast a shadow of its form, made tangible by the sun.

In the spectacle of such a vision, the Angelic Host didst truly fall into their corporeal substance, and love of that which wast as 'other' unto them. And verily didst this love extend to the Maiden, whom they quickly espied amongst the throng of mortality. In such fancy, and possessed by the power of their own fascination didst the Angel become enamored of the sweet-smelling flesh of womanhood, veiled about with the perfumes of musk and moon-blood.

Likewise did the Daughters of Earth, who knew the great powers of the Earth and its mansions below, cast their eyes upon the Host. And they lusted after them, enamored of their heavenly array, in forms and shapes unseen among mortal men. And, too, they craved their effusion of light, and their especial wisdom, having its origins in the Beyond.

Thus did fascination turn quickly to deep-abiding lust of the spirit for the carnal embrace of the womb, and of the womb for the Light. In this arose the transgression of the flesh and spirit. Thus was the Holy Spirit of Heaven wed to the lascivious Body of the Earth, and hideous aberrations birthed therefrom. Yet, by such growths was the Heredity nurtured, and the power of the Misbegotten Ones betrothed in fascination down the long ages of time.

Thus it is that neither those Powers which are Above, nor those Powers which are Below, are sufficient for the Art of the Wise, but that Aberrative Passion roused by their co-mingling, giving forth fruits monstrous and strange, united and divided for Power's awakening.



## Parable of the Tool

Cain said unto Abel: "Brother, how dost thou flay the skin of thy chosen flock?"

And Abel answered through example by clubbing a sheep savagely upon its skull. Then, with a sharpened stone blade, he severed the flesh from the beast's neck to its tail, slowly peeling off the whole of the hide.

Cain smiled and said, "Aye, Brother. Thou dost show knowledge and wisdom of thy craft."

And Abel replied, "Thank thee O' Cain. And how dost thou reap the grain?"

And Cain said unto him, "Come brother, let us go into the fields."

Then went they forth, and as they departed, Cain lifted Abel's bloody blade and fastened it to his belt.

## Parable of the Steps

A woman went forth upon a road, undertaking a long journey. And though the road was straight, it was filled with cobbles, and its waysides were grown rank with flesh-tearing weeds and ruin. Strewn was the path with many bones, and she suffered perpetual harangue by flies and pismires. And she wondered at the

Way, for it was bleak and inhospitable, but neither did she despair.

By and by, she came to that place she sought, and gave thanks to the gods of the Way. For though the journey had been arduous, her flesh was intact, though scourged with nettles and thorns. And when she had concluded her affairs in that place, she returned by the same road she had walked before.

As she made her way back, she was astounded that the road was smooth, and bordered by effusions of sweet-smelling herbs, offering ripe and savory fruits, pleasant in every way unto the senses. And where she walked the forest, it showed unto her its secret face, and where she walked the heath, it opened before her as a book, and she read. And this too she wondered at, seeing as it was the same road she had walked before.

Thus it is that the Straight Way is made Crooked, when walked in reverse: the Way is the same, but the inverse manner of its treading revealeth the Path anew.

## Parable of the Garden

Within a lush and Secret Garden, a great many fruits were grown, and pleasant herbs for healing, and roots of magical virtue, and many fine woods for carving. Each who dwelt within its high walls shared both in

its bounty and its labour: for this was their Law. And the Garden was of ingenious design, for it was conceived by the Master, who was its overseer.

And those who dwelt within the garden caused it to flourish by a secret power shared amongst them, held in common. Where ground was barren, it became fertile; where wells were dry, water rose; where the yield was poor, bushels were made to overflow. And this power, or doctrine, they called 'turning the way,' and the whole of the garden both partook and gave of its virtue.

With the passage of time, an orchardist amongst them grew sullen and vain, saying to another: 'Great is our Garden, but the Master has shone so brightly that he has cast a shadow over us. I shall go forth into the wilderness, and there make a greater garden for myself.' And after causing much discord amongst them he departed the Garden, going forth to the wastelands outside its walls.

Thus it came to pass that the orchardist found the lands beyond the garden walls inhospitable, with rocky ground, thorns, and thistles. And mustering the whole of his cunning and skill, he could not turn the land green, nor summon a tender shoot from its wastes. Nor was there any savoury thing to eat, nor pleasantness of any kind. Then was the orchardist

wroth, and didst moan, and cursed the land, and tore his beard, excoriating the Master.

And it came to pass the orchardist returned unto the Garden walls, but the gates were drawn fast and would not admit him. He called to the others inside, that they might provide him with produce to eat, or yet abandon the Garden by rising up against the Master, but none would heed him. And great wails rose up from beyond the garden gate.

And the wails persisted into the night, and as the Moon rose the Master ascended the high walls and looked out over the desert where the orchardist stood, saying unto him: 'Thou has failed to turn the way: one may not abandon the Garden, denouncing the Master, then reach over its walls to pluck of its fruit.'

### Parable of the Goblet

A sorceress sought a goblet for preparing draughts, poisons and antidotes. Such a vessel she required to be well-made and to fit her own hand. She also desired the goblet to be fair of form, and its image to embody those elixirs it would hold, possessed of a self-evident power.

From the merchants of the market she sought and found her a cup. Formed of flawless crystal, it shone bright and betokened many powers. And yet, a ran-

som of coins covered in dung was its price.

Thus she sought a second goblet, and found it among the riches of the Church, wrought of silver and gems. In cunning she pilfered it, thereby to recapture the power that gods and men had stolen. But the goblet contained the accumulated filth of churchly ministrations, and it besmirched even the purest water.

Disheartened, she proceeded home with neither goblet. As she walked along the shoreline, a large seashell caught her eye, resting at the high tide line. Placing the shell in her hands, she emptied water from its hollow, then dipped it once more in the sea.

Thus was the shell become her goblet, partaking in healing and poison, its form wholly reckoned unto tide and flow, and filling the palm of her hand. Yet it also spoke unto her ears with strange and distant voices, teaching the sovereign mysteries of the depths. And, seeing as it was the excrescence of an animal, it bore the mysteries of birth, life, and death.

Truly I say unto you: that treasure acquired by lawful means hath its power; and that taken by unlawful means also hath its power. But that treasure passed unto thee by the Hand of Spirit shall compel them both, and sate the desire unknown.

### Parable of the Apple

Many are the tales of Our Mother Eve, and how she was tempted by the Serpent in the First Arbour of earth. These are but wisps of stale smoke, and the vaporous exhalations of the profane: for Our Mother was firstly most wise, and discerning of character, and natural in expression.

After the seasons of many suns and moons didst she observe the fruits of the eldest Tree in the garden. In her sight wast witnessed a canker worm, tunneling through each apple's savory flesh. Thus, despite the scent and ripened beauty of each fruit, its rotten nature wast revealed, and thus shunned by the first Mother of Man.

Yet after a season of hunger didst Eve find this circumstance irresolute and untenable, and so she sought its remedy. She plucked an infested apple from a long branch and spake thus to the entrenched worm:

"O' thou lowly maggot, come forth in nakedness, that thou mayest be chastened, and do so with haste."

With some misgiving didst the worm tunnel forth and present itself to Our Mother.

"What dost thou want?" The worm queried.

And she exhorted the worm to speak: "Why do you and your brothers despoil all the fruits of this mighty tree?"

And the worm spake, saying, "Why dost thou breathe and thus command of me a response? Because it is our nature."

"What?" saith Eve. "To befoul and ruin that which you have made your veritable home?"

"Alas, 'tis the nature of things to live for a season and then pass, my lady."

"Yes, that is so. But to what end despoilest thou *all* the fruits of this tree?"

"Why, to receive the entirety of its wisdom," said the worm.

And so saying, the worm stretched itself forward, protruding from the apple's core and expanding into a thickened serpent. It wrapped itself around Eve's left arm and addressed her:

"Do you not see the wisdom in this? In death is the Life eternal."

And Eve spake saying, "Show thou me."

The serpent slithered down Eve's waist and entered

into her womb. And in an instant wast born the knowledge of the Tree of Life and Death. And Eve smiled, as between her legs dropped forth a pristine apple, aglow with health. As she retrieved it, she heard a voice say:

"Eat and be wise."

### Parable of the Sexton

A blacksmith sought to honour his forbears, and with solemn heart undertook a journey to his ancestral graveyard. The burial-ground was ancient and remote, and could only be reached by traversing treacherous country. Yet generations of his predecessors lie buried there, and so amid brambles, rocky slopes and biting insects he pressed on with resolve. In accordance with family custom, he bore with him grave-offerings. And four were his gifts of honour and remembrance—a bundle of roses, a bottle of wine, a loaf of bread, and a cross of iron fashioned by Art of his own hand.

After many hours at last he came to the outer walls of the graveyard: a great enclosure of high earthen banks, a fortification such as the barbarous kings of old raised in the times before. Passing through them, he came yet to a second wall, this fashioned of stone, also old. He approached the lych-gate, upon whose

lintel was carved the family crest, and there he was met by a tall and gnarled Sexton. Though his beard and dirt-stained habiliments revealed him to be of great age, his frame was strong and supple, and in one hand he carried a spade, and in the other hand a staff of Yew, the wood of sundering. And the Sexton asked the young man wherefore he had come.

The blacksmith spoke, saying: "This is the house of my father's bones, and of my mother's blood, and I come to bring tribute. And yea, they have called out to me in dream, saying, Come ye forth, that we may bestow upon thee the power of birthright."

And hearing this the Sexton denied him admittance, and beat him with the rod of Yew. Then he took the young man's grave-gifts for himself and sent him away. And the whole of the loaf of bread wast seized and eaten, and the wine drunk, and the fair savour of the roses enjoyed. And yet the Sexton did not take the cross of iron, saying: "Of all thy gifts, this alone is worthy, go forth and return when time has rightly attended thee."

And the blacksmith went away in anger and offence, affronted by the Sexton, whose face haunted his waking mind. But in dream, the bones of his ancestors made suit once more and demanded his veneration. Thus upon waking he prepared anew for his journey

to the charnel ground, gathering flowers, wine and bread as was custom. But, driven by an urge unknown, he fired the forge and turned the cross of iron into a key. By this token, he reasoned, the Sexton would behold and honour his aspiration.

When he came to the graveyard a second time, he was questioned as before, and the Sexton consumed his offerings, luxuriating in their savour. But the iron key was returned to the blacksmith, and he was sent away, being told: "Of all thy gifts, this alone is worthy, go forth and return when time has rightly attended thee."

And so in anger the young man went away again, this time to contemplate the conundrum of his calling. Yet again, with greater urgency, the corpses of his kin called forth in dream that he must come unto them as duty required. And so a third time he gathered up the offerings as before, but this time turned the iron cross into a gardener's trowel, that the Sexton might know and respect his aspiration.

And when he came to the graveyard a third time, the Sexton asked wherefore he had come. The young man offered only Silence as his answer. On seeing the iron trowel, the Sexton paused, and then wast overcome by awe, as if beholding a sign. In a single motion the blacksmith then stabbed the Sexton with his implement and entered the graveyard with his offerings.

Mortally wounded, the Sexton spake, saying: "All is well-augured: Thou hast spoken truly, and made the offering thy kinsmen require."

And as he died, the old man passed staff and spade to the blacksmith, the emblems of his office, granting him sole authority over the graveyard, and the keeping of the Dead.

### Parable of the Mirror

There was an old jeweler who, in the early days of his trade, acquired a curious oblate stone from a peddler of uncut gems. The stone was large, of dark colour, and unknown type and origin. It therefore lacked the lustre of the peddler's fine sapphires, emeralds and carbuncles, but for reasons he could not explain, the jeweler was transfixed by the stone, and the strange properties he sensed it possessed. Thus it was that he obtained the stone, and cut and polished it according to his skill, and set it in to a frame, as its face reflected images with remarkable clarity — far better than an ordinary mirror.

As the years processed, and the jeweler gained greater skill in his art, he cherished the Mirror, but kept it hidden from all eyes but his. For it was this mirror's especial power to reflect the world not as men assumed it to be, nor as they wished it would become according to their desires, but as it really is. If one became still

and silent, and looked deeply into the Mirror for a time, the images reflected in its depths began to change, assuming forms which at first appeared incongruous, then strange, then monstrous. Upon seeing such images, the mind was disturbed, and the soul oppressed, but if one persisted bravely, one received awful revelation.

And by this means did the man see that which all others could not, and understood many of Nature's secret laws, and become wise. And through the Mirror's power he knew the true natures of both his friends and foes, and with this knowledge was able to preserve his life into old age. In time, by using the Mirror in this manner, he also grew wealthy, which the townspeople attributed to his mastery of the jeweler's art.

When the jeweler died, his lapidary, house, and wealth were inherited by his apprentice, a young man who, despite skill as a jeweler was also given to laziness and vain pursuits. It came to pass some time later that the apprentice discovered the Mirror, secreted away in a closet. Marvelling at its clarity, he set the Mirror before him and looked into its face, seeing his own reflection. And, thinking himself handsome, he made poses, admiring his own features, and imagined himself a hero or a god. In his excitement, the apprentice also became transfixed with the Mirror, such that he spent an increasing amount of time with it. And when

he was away from the Mirror, it preoccupied his mind.

One evening, the apprentice stared into the Mirror, admiring once more his reflection. Whilst admiring his full hair, flashing eyes, and well-defined nose, he suddenly beheld a wound on part of his face, from which hung a torn strip of flesh. Yet when he touched his hand to his face, no wound was to be found. Alarmed, he looked more closely in the Mirror and beheld a number of wens newly appeared, as well as a hideous derangement of the proportions of his face. In the darkened depths of the reflection, a preponderance of vague figures swarmed, and suddenly, the Mirror shattered, throwing forth shards of the polished stone. In its destruction, the Mirror's fragments cut and disfigured the face of the apprentice, who remained forever a grotesque.

### Parable of the Visitant

In the shadow of a great Tyrolean mountain there stood a convent of ancient construction, hewn from native rock and far from cities or villages. There lived twenty-seven sisters of the order, practicing their strict monastic rule.

Selene, a sister of the order, dearly loved the Lord, and, according to the stipulations of her vows as a Bride of Christ, was true unto him only. And her nightly devotions unto the Anointed One were both passionate

and lubricious, and delivered her into ecstasies of body, mind and spirit.

So intense was her ardour that, one evening, during her devotions, the Lord appeared unto her in carnal form. Beautiful was his body, and most pleasing unto the sister, being of otherworldly image and proportion. And her devotion was pleasing unto the Lord, and he didst return unto her the following night, and many nights thereafter. And the sister's love of him, and of the faith, deepened, and she grew strong in power and wisdom.

And it came to pass after many such encounters that, following their communion, the Lord altered his form and revealed himself as an incubus.

"Dost thou still worship and give adoration unto me, dear Sister?" the creature asked. He stood tall, and bore upon his naked skin the stigmata of serpent scales.

The sister, in her shock, at first could not speak. Yet as she regained her composure, she responded, asking:

"Art thou verily my Lord, or merely a vile imposture of the Infernal?"

The incubus smiled, and its smile turned to leer. He stepped towards the Sister, as if to embrace her.

"Would it matter? Is not thy love sufficiently pure for the illusions of both?"

The Sister pondered this riddle but for a moment, then fell forward into the Incubus' arms. Looking up into his eyes, she declared, "Verily, my Lord, my purity remains intact." And she pressed her mouth into his.

For it is revealed unto the pure of heart that their devotion shall be sufficient, no matter its object.

### Parable of the Balsam

In the dying years of the Holy Roman Empire, an imperial ambassador was sent on a mission to the Holy Land by way of the great deserts. He passed through Arabia on camel instead of horseback, and dressed in the habiliments of a nomad to avoid harassment. Across desert plain and mountainous verge he crossed, coming at last to the Jordan river valley. The Emperor sought remedy for affliction of body and soul in the legendary 'Balsam of the Field', as coffered supplies had long since been consumed. It was a mission of both desperation and cunning, and the ambassador was chosen for his deep faith and fealty to his royal charge.

Dropping downward upon a thorn-hedged drover's path, the man removed himself from the camel's back, the better to lead it through the cragged pass. Many

miles in the distance flowed the river Jordan and he drew ever closer to his destination -- a camp of traders and pilgrims known to the Emperor's partisans as suppliers of the finest spices, gums and resins.

Above the foothills, the path leveled out, and became a straighter track. The man regained his mount and travelled westward, following the river. As the day waned, he came to a crossroads. He continued westward and the path grew thin, bordered by hedge and overgrowth. In a small clearing the ambassador saw the balsam-tree and unexpected joy filled his breast. Rare was the tree, called Gilead, called Shemeth, called Tsori-Mastic, to behold one in the wild, especially so close to a drover's path, was surely a miracle of the Lord, for its resin, the Balm of Sages, could be extracted without barter or fee.

The ambassador stilled his charge, and dismounted a few feet from the tree. He strode towards it beaming brightly, though quickly was his pleasure dispersed. At the base of the tree was a series of flattened stones stacked one atop the other. Upon the highest stone was a rough-hewn idol, carved from river basalt. Its enlarged head bore a hideous visage, a demon whose features were element-worn, with prominent eyes and fangs. Squat and obscene, it sat upon the tabled stone, its belly protruding to reveal a multitude of navels. Growing around the idol's neck was a shrub with pale

purple flowers, which straddled the stones, its blooms emitting a faintly sweet scent.

The ambassador sneered and recoiled, affronted at the heathen display. The flowers kindled a memory within him, from his youth; he knew they were of a bane whose beauty was prudent to avoid. Despite his disturbance at the idol, and the poisonous blossom attending, the lure of the balsam overcame all trepidation.

In haste, with eyes darting all around him, he retrieved from his saddle bag a sharp double-edged dagger whose blade was pure silver. He crossed himself with the knife and murmured a prayer to almighty God as he approached the repugnant shrine. With disdain he grasped the vulgar sculpture and turned it so its back faced the road, for sudden dread stayed his hand from depositing it altogether. He then approached the tree, seeking a place to make an incision. Satisfied, he raised the dagger's tip towards the flaking bark. As he did, a rustling was heard in the foliage at his feet. He paused and looked down, but saw nothing. 'The wind,' he thought. He thrust the blade sharply into the trunk and gently sliced down. Immediately a pellucid trickle of sap emerged, flowing slowly down bark and blade.

The noise came again, louder, and this time the ambassador pushed aside the undergrowth with his boot. He cried aloud and dropped his dagger, for at his foot

was coiled a white-scaled viper. Without restraint it struck, its fangs sinking into the flesh above his left boot. The ambassador screamed, clutched his chest and fell backwards, one arm knocking the idol off its rustic pedestal. He crashed to the ground, knocking the breath from his ever-constricting lungs. He gasped as the venom squeezed at his heart. He turned, and his last sight was the obscene leer of the bloated icon, staring directly into his own livid, dying eyes. Little did he know and now would never, that the white sap, the very Balm of Gilead, was a cure for both the wards of its safety: the flowering Apple of Sodom and the albeate-skinned serpent. Nor did he see the hardening white resin turn dark red as it dried.

As it is written: the balm for poison most often resembleth it. And: From the balm of the holy tree comes the blood of the wise.

### Parable of the Wines

As the time of harvest approached, a rumour went forth in the village that the God of Wine had descended into the mountains above the plain, and was making his home in a cave. After many years of average yield, the vines that season had produced exceptional fruit, and an atmosphere of enthusiasm pervaded the vineyards. In the heights, shepherds had glimpsed a procession of intoxicated female revelers in the distance by night, and were disturbed to dis-

cover the remains of several of their flock devoured in a ritual frenzy. A few in the village below spoke of making pilgrimages to the cave, to give offerings there or perchance glimpse the God, but most were ill at ease at hearing of his descent, and kept their flocks and children safely sequestered in their homes.

In this same village were two vintners of renown, Gyzas and Abdys. Each owned vast lands and vineyards and was known for quality of his wine, and provided an annual tribute of their amphoræ to the king. Although rivals, each had great respect for the other, and praised the goodness of his vintage. And despite the trepidation with which the Wine God was viewed in the village, and in the face of the dangers of making the journey, these two vintners made a pact between them to ascend into the mountains, to honor the God with pilgrimage.

Thus it was that, having left the care of their first harvest to farmhands, Gyzas and Abdys walked for seven days and nights into the heights, carrying with them both provisions and offerings. And they came to the mouth of a vast cave which the shepherds had told them about, and there beheld a small number of offerings: winecups, rudely-carved statues, cheese and honey. And there the vintners laid their own offerings – each bringing the first pressing of his vines, and singing the old songs of praise to the God.

When they were concluded in their offering, they looked up to see the God of Wine standing over them, who had walked out of the cave upon hearing their entreaties. Tall in stature, he was great of beard and wore a wild pelt, and his skin was of a deep crimson hue. And his eyes were not as the eyes of men, and the vintners could not look at them straightaway. Expressing approval at their offerings, the God granted them invitation to his cave.

Thus went Gyzas and Abdys into the cave of the Wine God, who bid them sit at a large oaken table. Behind him in the shadows they saw two great kraters, one black and one red. They were larger than any they had ever seen, and each was decorated with disturbing images of the God's ancient deeds. And these were filled unto the brimming with dark and aromatic wines whose perfume set the vintners' minds alight with wonder and anticipation. Granting them hospitality, the God then asked them if they would accept a drink of his own wine. The vintners, in their excitement, were about to answer, but the God held up a hand to stop their tongues.

"Before you accept," said the God, "Know that these two wines are of wholly separate vintages, and you may drink of them only if you honour three demands. The first is that you may have only one draught: either the vintage from the red krater, or from the black. The

second demand is that the wine must be drunk in its naked state: mixing it with water is forbidden. Third, our enjoyment of these wines together must remain secret: all which transpires here must never be spoken of outside this cave. If these demands are honoured, your vineyards will be blessed. If they are not, ye shall forfeit all."

And after contemplating his words, both vintners accepted the God's generosity, as well as the terms by which the wine could be enjoyed.

Then did Gyzas drink the wine from the Red Krater, and was overcome by its richness and strange delight, for such a wine had he never tasted, and in quality it surpassed all wines he had known. In this confounded state, he wondered at the vintage, and was bewildered at its existence. And Abdys didst drink of the wine of the black krater, and was awakened to its magnificence, being at once delicate of taste and strong in power, his mind and body overcome by an intrusive and arresting *enthusiasmos*. And the strength of both wines were such that the vintners were entirely overcome, and carried away, and by and by found themselves once more in their village without knowing how they had come there. But, because they were forbidden to speak of their time with the Wine God, they departed each other's company in silence.

With the passage of years, each vintner honoured his terms of silence, and their vineyards flourished. But the thoughts of each returned to the God and his wines, and in particular, of the wine not drunk.

And Gyzas, him who had drunk from the red krater, thought each night not of the power of his own draught, but of that of the black krater which he had not tasted. And in his contemplation he became vexed, such that he became envious of Abdys, and at last confronted him, demanding to know the Mystery of the Black Wine. "Reveal all unto me," said he unto the other, "Of taste, of aroma, and of the Black Wine's power."

And Abdys could not answer him, as he knew to do so would dishonor the God, and so merely smiled. And in a short time the vineyards of Gyzas were laid waste by plague, and he was murdered by his farmhands, and his home became an habitation of vermin.

But Abdys, him who had drunk from the Black Krater, worshipped that same wine in his memory, and its supreme mystery, as a hidden gift of the Wine God. But also did he behold in his mind's eye the Unknown Wine of the Red Krater. As a Mystery-Cup suspended in Eternity it was, never to be tasted, but to offer up every possibility each time he contemplated it anew. And verily, the Unknown Draught didst wax

powerful, and his vines flourished, and his wines exceeded even the limits of his own understanding.

### The Parable of the Red Thread

Listen now, my daughters, to the Parable of the Red Thread. Long ago wast your hoary old father shunned and outcast, and pinioned about his horns with a woven red cloth, symbolising the sins of the blasphemers. And verily didst they cast me off the highest mountain, knowing not of my hidden wings.

And yet endured I: for the place of my descent was a deep chasm. And unbeknownst to my tormentors there dwelled at its bottom an ancient hermit, long of beard. Thus, in order to make a seeming of my demise, I tore out his entrails and wrapped them with the red cloth, placing them upon a rocky crag.

So did the red cloth verily become a sign, not of their overweening salvation, but of my victory over death. And thus, my daughters, whenever thou dost hunt and defile the Sons of Man, wear thou a red thread about your bare thighs in remembrance of the lot of the Goat.

So did Shira and Qadama, Azazel's daughters, fly forth into the night to seduce and ravage the Sons of Man. And their red thread, which both bound and liberated, became as the garter of All-Desire.

### Parable of the Arctave

In the time of the Great Inquisition there came to a Portuguese village an inquisitor, accompanied by an entourage of servants and churchly savants. They had travelled long through the barrens of the Sierra Morena and Extremadura, visiting a great many villages. To the inquisitor's chagrin, they had in this time discovered no witches, only ignorant goat-herders, spinners and weavers. The present village, however, was known as a haven for sorcerers and heretics, and after many alarmed entreaties from the local diocese concerning an infestation of witches, ecclesiastical force had arrived.

The inquisitor, whose name was Heroldus, approached the Bishop, demanding proof of the alleged witch-covens. The Bishop replied that indeed he had apprehended the local 'Queen' of the witches, who now awaited his inspection and interrogation. The inquisitor was then brought to a squalid stone-cobbled cell in the depths of the village prison.

"Bring ye a torch!" Heroldus cried, and it was procured. However, when the flame illuminated the interior of the cell, it appeared empty.

The inquisitor was about to rage at the insult to his station when a shy voice spoke, asking: "May I have some water, sire?"

Standing in the farthest corner of the cell was a young woman, short in height but proud in bearing, who nevertheless possessed genuine humility. Between her hands she held an unfinished knitting — a hooded woolen cape. Without thought, the grand inquisitor shouted at the guard to bring a flagon of water and two cups. He asked for more torches and the key to the cell's lock; all was delivered in great haste. The guards cautioned Heroldus, but he chastised them all for the neglected estate of the prisoner.

The guards departed, and the inquisitor poured a cup of water and handed it to the young woman. She accepted, bowing her head to him.

"Thank you, sire."

"Have you been ill-treated?" Heroldus asked.

"Nay — not more so than the Bishop believes I deserve, sire."

"I shall decide that, girl. I am told you are 'Queen of the Witches'. What say you to this charge?"

"I am but the oldest daughter of an old harker, my lord. I know nothing of witchcraft."

"Aye, nothing you say? And what dost thou hold in thy hands?"

"It is but a simple *capote*, woven for my sister, but my work was interrupted at my arrest, sire. I have no means of finishing it, because the Bishop's men took my arctave."

"Arctave?" said the inquisitor. "What, pray tell, is that?"

"A sewing hook, my lord."

So saying, the young woman began to motion with the fingers of her left hand, making intricate patterns in the air. On seeing this, the inquisitor stepped back and fell into a swoon. It lasted but a moment, and then unbidden he inquired, "Would a dagger serve to accomplish the task?"

"Why yes, my lord, anything with a sharpened point."

Impulsively Heroldus reached at his belt and withdrew his dagger. He handed it to the woman, hilt first. She gingerly took it, bowed, and sharply shoved it into the inquisitor's neck.

Thus among the Children of Cain it is said that a double-edged blade cuts both ways, but when thrust into flesh only one way matters — forward.



## Parable of the Prospectors

Two men sought their fortune from the land, and each set out to find it. One set his sight on the hills, for in times past much gold had been mined there. Thus he walked a straight path thereto, and when he arrived, set to surveying that which he craved. And finding a rich vein, he staked his claim, and mined gold from the hill. In due course he gained his fortune, having sold the fruits of his labour, and bought him a great house, with expansive gardens and many servants. And thus, like his prospect, he settled into a life of ease.

The other man set his sight on lands beyond, and walked unto it a crooked path, entreating Fortune herself to send what aid she might. And the path wandered through marsh and moor, through gorse and punishing briar thicket. Through the twisting of the way was he brought to many a thing unknown to the horde of common men: to gods, their remains, and the darkest of prophecies. And though no veins of golden metal were found in the earth, the Way provided a vast banquet for the wanderer, with the finest breads and wines, and knowledge of the Hidden Places of the Earth. And in adversity, as well as in ease gave he thanks, for both offered riches.

And when the seasons of his wandering had turned, he came unto a place where three roads crossed. There

stood a fair maiden bedecked in resplendent green. In one hand she held a fragrant rose, and in the other a thorny branch of the same tree. The wanderer was thus haunted and astonished at her presence.

But the maiden said, 'Wherefore thy affliction, wanderer? Thou didst entreat me, and I have answered. Now it is my turn to entreat you.'

Thus did she entreat the prospector, and he gave unto her his reply, and in this manner were they wed and became rulers of the Earth. Such is the eternal gold of the Straying Road, and the way of its Seeker.

## The Parable of the Shadow

There was once a traveller, worldly, wealthy and vain, who sought the extreme in condition and environment, all but to please his sense of authority. He spent months in sweltering tropical caves seeking rare blossom and blind *creatura*. For weeks he withstood frigid temperatures to the far north and deep south of polar miles, encased in blankets and tent, merely to glimpse aurora and hear the symphonies of ice and wind. With Asian mountain and African desert was he intimate, and it was during a lengthy sojourn in the Sahara that, at last, he encountered something novel — something that surprised his ever-jaded instincts.

Near dawn, following a long summer night of hiking, the traveller pitched camp and stood on a small crag to watch the sun rise. As rays of rose and gold fanned across the dunes, he caught sight of his shadow, which slowly lengthened in the swathe of spreading dawn. At first he hardly noticed, then a flickering movement caught his attention. His shadow trembled, as if shivering from chill, and as he watched more intently, a second shadow peeled away from its endarkened host. It resembled its original form but was slimmer in cast and height, and slithered to and fro like a desert viper. The traveller started, and his shadow followed suit — yet the only response from its slender twin was to sway like a black flame in the slight morning breeze.

At first he could not believe his eyes, but he tested the verity of the second shadow by reaching out towards it as if to touch it. To his surprise the other shadow darted out of reach, quivering as if a distant desert mirage. It was then that he heard the screeching sound, much like a Saker falcon in full gyre. He looked upwards, and scanned the horizon, but saw nothing, not even a cloud.

He looked down once again; both shadows attended. He waited a moment, and then, as if to trick the second shadow, darted out his arm towards it. The shadow of his hand vanished into the substance of the vaporous shade; he smiled. But the smile quickly van-

ished as a wave of excruciating agony roiled his entire body. He cried out, trying to pull his hand out of the shadow, but it remained subsumed. In horror he watched as the shadow crept up his arm and began to engulf his body. With neither aid nor succor, he succumbed, his own shadow completely absorbed by the other. As his body fell in a lifeless heap to the sandy stone crag, the outline of his shadow expanded, like a serpent's belly full of newly-consumed prey. It quivered once more in the morning sun and vanished as if it had never been.

For it is written: In the desert the body of a man is not his self, and what is, is merely a shadow cast forth by his Adversary, the djinn of the wastes.

### The Parable of the Bottles

Three witches went forth as wine-bearers to the Sabbat, carrying with them their offerings to the Devil. For as it is commanded, ye shall bring forth the first vintage of the ripened field, that the Host may drink its fill.

The first bore with her an ornate bottle of the finest and most rare claret, an heirloom of her household. The second brought forth a bottle that was large, round and swollen like a gourd, filled with a great quantity of wine sufficient for the Mass.

The third witch had neither cellared wine, nor vineyard, but only an empty bottle, such as had once contained common brown ale. Her lack notwithstanding, she brought this bottle unto the Assembly.

At the appointed time, the bottles were brought forth in offering unto the Goat, which he thereupon sampled. Of the rare wine wast he exceedingly pleased, for its savour didst stir the fountains of blessed Memorie. And of the plentiful wine wast he also pleased, for it is known that our Master is the Lord of Abundance.

But the bottle of the third witch found the greatest favour, for the Devil delights most in that which may be filled. Thus did he fill the third witch's vessel unto the brimming, with the Dark and Secret Wines of the Sabbat. And by this elixir was she awakened and made resplendent.

Verily I say unto you: the true Seeker is like unto the third witch, whose offering of nullity is met with the Riches of All.

### Parable of the Redeemer

In ancient times there lived a man known for his great wisdom, and his gift of soothsaying. A prophet was he reckoned, and a worker of miracles. By his power he revived a vast and blighted apple orchard to health, which then gave forth the finest fruits. Another time,

a wise-woman sentenced to stoning lay dying of her injuries, and he restored her to perfect health, her powers growing greater than before. And yet another time, he came unto a library that had been burned, and from its ashes conjured forth all of the books so that they were unharmed, as well some not known previously. In time, the wise man rose to renown, and his advice was sought by both kings and paupers.

And behind him, wherever he went, in his footsteps came followers. Many followed for curiosity, and others out of disbelief. Still others followed out of envy, striving by any means to steal or imitate his powers, or wishing to be seen in his company, so that their own neighbors might think them as wise. There were some, as well, who followed for the sake of learning, writing down the words of the wise man.

Also among the followers were many who sought to be healed or cleansed by the wise man, or in some manner, according to their desires, made better and more whole.

"Redeem us," they said unto him, with earnest gesticulations and pleas.

"This I may not do," repiled the wise man, "For I am not the Redeemer."

Nonetheless his words did not assuage their craving,

and they continued to follow, and demand of him deliverance from their condition. And their demands waxed louder, and more forceful, and in time came to resemble imprecations. And the wise man looked upon them all and grew silent.

And it came to pass one day that the wise man took himself away to a hill, where he sat beneath a tree, contemplating its fruit in silence. And below him, on the banks of a river, the many followers abided in tents.

A great roar interrupted his reverie, and he felt the ground shake. The wise man turned his attention to the distant source of the sound. Far up the river, a great rushing tumult of water was seen to approach, with great stones and trees caught up in its deluge. And the wise man shouted to the followers below saying 'run!' But they did not heed.

And the followers were swept into the deluge, crying out as they struggled to stay afloat, "Master, redeem us!"

Unto them he replied, "As thou demandest, so it shall be done."

And the wise man commanded the waters to swallow them up.

### Parable of the Thorn

A wayside wanderer passed through a vale grown thick with thorn hedges, tall and sturdy of branch. And as it was the season of harvest, the thorn fruits were swollen, and very ripe. Walking close to the trees, he beheld the fruits and smelled their savory odour, and chanced to gather them.

As he picked the fruits he saw that those which were most alluring, ripe and abundant were more difficult to reach, as they shone from the deep within the dark weave of the tree's spiny branches. And yet he wast overcome by his desire for them, for he understood that these fruits were of incomparable virtue. Thus by will and strength and ferocity of spirit he grasped the branches and pushed them aside, even though it tore his flesh. Thus the hidden fruits passed into his hands.

And the wanderer went he forth battered and punctured by the thorn-tree. Yet also was he nourished by its fruit, which gave the strength to overcome his wounds. And he rejoiced in their virtue of the tree's fruit, but also in the secret knowledge of the power of its thorns.

Thus are the walkers of the Crooked Path like a thorn-tree, which protects its progeny with spines. But, by the turn of Fate, they are also like the impaled wanderer, whose blood blossoms forth as the Flower of Our Great Secret.

## Parable of the Ditch

A young man with aspirations to the clergy took leave of his home, and was walking along an old Roman highway. At a fork in the road, he came upon a stranger, an old man in seeming. And creased was the old man's countenance, and rough his vestments, but his face suggested wisdom. The young man greeted the elder, and announced that he was making his way to the city, to preach and teach the Gospel of the Lord. He asked him if he desired companionship, and invited the stranger to accompany him on the path.

"I shall walk with you," said the old man, "For a time." And approaching a fork in the road, the two newly-met travelers turned upon the left path and headed toward civilization.

After many miles, the late morning turned to late afternoon, and the road became holed and sparse in its demarcation. On either side was a deep ditch, hedged by thicket and thorned bramble. The sun-filled sky grew cloudy, and a seeming gloom settled at the horizon. Suddenly two sounds were heard, each coming from opposite sides of the road. From the young man's left came a deep moaning, obviously from someone in pain. To the old man's right, an intermittent keening of an animal in distress. Both looked at each other, then to their respective ditches. Without a word, each descended towards the sounds.

The young man found a half-naked indigent, covered in dirt and sores, moaning and weeping at the bottom of the ditch. He approached the man with a compassion borne of his Christian heart and offered him aid. The young man reached down and placed his arms around the man's chest to lift him to his feet, whereat, with a foetid exhalation of breath, the man retched upon the young Christian, besmirching his holy raiments and souring the air.

At the same time the elderly traveler found, to his dismay, a hare trapped in the bramble, one of its upper legs impaled on a long thorn. Its dark grey eyes widened in fear at the approach of the man, and it jerked its leg, causing the thorn to sink deeper into its flesh.

"There now, young lapin, let me aid thee," said the man calmly. With a gingerly touch, he held the hare in one hand, and slowly lifted the thorn out of the afflicted leg with his other. Blood dripped on his fingers, and as he turned to remove the hare to safety, the same thorn pricked his own palm, his own blood mingling with that of the hare.

The old man winced and sat down, holding the hare in his hands and singing quietly to it. Then, a startling event occurred. As he tended his wounded palm, a light flashed in the thicket before him. The stranger looked down at the hare: its leg no longer bled and its

grey eyes now shone a gleaming silver. In the hedge, an open doorway appeared. A sun-filled moor was seen beyond, and the scent of warm heather wafted therefrom. The hare darted through the doorway. As it did, it changed into the form of a comely maiden with silver eyes. She beckoned unto him from the other side.

Thus, let it be recalled unto the Wise that the Blood of Elphame confers the Sight of Heaven, but, the Blood of Adam, only the Measure of All Shame.

### Parable of the Maze

Amidst the wildlands lie a vast stone labyrinth which had long fallen into ruin. The nearest village lie a great distance from it, and none there could remember its purpose. For generations it had been shunned as a dread and haunted place.

A youth in the village asked the elders, "Wherefore this Maze, and whose hands built it?" But his words gave them umbrage, and so they would silence him, and speak of less disturbing things.

When he came of age, the youth declared that he would set out to discover the meaning of the Maze himself. This caused great consternation and discord among his elders, and they sought to dispute him, and bar the way. But, being grown to manhood, they could

not stop him, and he resolved to go forth unto the wildlands, to behold the Maze.

"If thou must go, take this sword," said one, an aged and decorated soldier. "For the old tales tell of an hideous creature who roams the convolutions, and craves nothing more than the savour of manflesh."

A weaver came unto the youth, offering him a spool of woolen thread. She said to him, "Take ye this, and with due cunning lay the skein within the Maze, that you may find your way out of its ever-twisting corridors."

Another, one reckoned a wise man, approached the youth and pressed a lodestone into his palm, saying, "Take ye this stone, that the direction of True North will always be known unto you."

These objects were taken by the youth and he set forth on his journey, arriving many days later at the Maze's entrance. There he found a thicket of hazel growing. Seeing the beauty of the trees' limbs, he cut him a forked branch from the tree, offering thread, lodestone, and sword as his sacrifice.

Then proceeded him into the Maze, where crumbling decay, shadow and uncertainty prevailed at every step. At each twist and turn of the darkened corridors, the hazel limb twitched, indicating that he take a certain

route, left, or right.

And the twig led him deeper into the Maze, twitching ever more violently, until at last he came to a great stone well, long overgrown with fern and moss, but filled with sweet waters. For what the youth had discovered — and none of the generations of his village knew — was that at the heart of the Maze lie the Fountain of Knowledge, whose waters, upon drinking, would convey in sudden remembrance all which had been forgotten by man.

Then he drank deeply, and understood that in ancient times his own village had poisoned this well, so to prevent all rivals from drinking of it. But, in doing so, they too could not drink of the water, and were secretly ashamed of their deed. In time their hearts hardened, creating lies about the Fountain, and of the Maze they fostered a false tabu. The legends grew, and they forgot the nature of the Maze itself.

Knowing these things, the youth venerated the Fountain, and then departed the Maze, never to return unto his village.

For it is written in the scriptures of the profane that those who stray will be delivered from error by the direct route. Yet it is also written in the books of the Wise that those burdened by the route direct will be delivered from ignorance by the straying.

### Parable of the Realm

At the end of his wanderings Cain built him a great city, that it should rise as a temple in the wilderness, and serve as a sanctuary apart from the vulgar tribes who venerated the corpse of his brother. By his power he raised walls, towers, temples, and stone stelæ, upon whose dark faces were graven the revelations of his exile. And the generations of Cain dwelt in that city, and by their skill wrought objects of great power, and grew mighty of spirit. And at each of the four gates of the city Cain set a wrathful sentinel to stand watch over any who might approach.

Now beyond the walls of the city lay the wilderness called Qanam, that place of dry mountains and dead bones, which Cain didst behold in wonder at the end of his peregrinations. Few were them that walked there, being rustics, herders, and traders passing through to distant lands beyond. And the whole of them shunned the City, for the very sight of it set their hearts ill at ease, and troubled their minds. And Cain and his house dwelt within the walls of the City in peace for seven years.

And in the eighth year of the City, a group of wise men came out of the wilderness unto the Eastern Gate, bringing with them many tablets of learning, and instruments with which to measure the spans of heaven and earth. They appealed to the guardian of the gate,

saying "Admit us ye, O' City of Great Cain, that we may enter, thus to enrich our learning, that we may carry forth these teachings throughout the land." And the many-arm'd sentinel who stood there, whose name wast MUDAWWI, upon hearing their entreaty, did not answer, but instead transformed them into flies, and they buzzed angrily amongst themselves in a swarm, fleeing the walls of the city and seeking out dung. And the sentinel consumed their tablets of knowledge, such that none remained.

Time passed, and unto the Southern Gate came priestesses in flowing robes, and brought with them all of the trappings of ritual and ceremony, and of song, art, and the conjurations of the dead. With sistrum and pipe they called forth unto their gods, dancing in splendour. And the chief among them spake, saying, "We come unto the great City, to learn the rites and the praise-songs of the gods of Cain. Grant us admission." And the Southern sentinel who whose name was QANATH spread its wings such that their shadow fell upon them and they were suddenly endarkened. And by this ominous sign were they struck mute, lame, and ugly, and were dispersed into the wilderness in confusion, each lamenting the condition of her disfigurement, and wailing unto the valleys.

Time passed, and unto the Western Gate came a legion of soldiers, clad in armour and weapons and bearing many instruments of iron. And loudly they made

suit against the City of Cain, demanding they be granted admission. "Render unto us the wealth of the City," their commander spake, "Or it shall be put to siege, and laid waste." And the fearsome sentinel protecting that gate, whose name was ATHAQAB, gave forth a deafening roar, filled with wind, dust, and thorns. And he slew their troop with his great claws, first peeling and devouring each one's armour, and then consuming their hearts. In time, their bones were picked clean and scattered by wild beasts.

Many months passed, and none were seen to pass through the wilderness. Then came one, a gatherer of wayside simples and herbs, wearing raiments of hide, bark, and flax, and other things she had gathered from the land. And as she passed near unto the Northern Gate of the City, she saw a copse of incense trees and stopped to smell their aroma. Upon so doing, she was startled to glimpse the guardian of that place watching her, a fearsome being with two heads.

She addressed the monstrous sentinel, asking who it was. And both heads spoke as one, saying, "Verily, we art BAAL-QARNAAM, ruler of the Northern Gate of the City of Cain."

The simpler replied: "My Lord, hast thou dominion over these trees? For I seek to gather some of their incense, which is exceeding pleasant."

And one head spake unto her, saying: "And what would you gather it for?"

The second head spake unto her saying: "Who is thy master?"

And speaking unto both heads together, she replied saying, "I".

Then did the sentinel grant her ingress unto the copse, and she gathered its balsams. When it was done, the Northern gate was opened unto her, and she was granted invitation unto the City. And she did enter, and wast verily feasted, and dwelt with Cain in the City.

Thus it is that those who enter the Kingdom of Cain do so not by the straight gate, nor by the crooked, not by want or proclamation. Rather, they enter solely by becoming the kingdom itself.

*For the Sisters of Midnight*

## Glossary

**aetheric eye:** the projected astral constellation of the sorcerer's sensorial identity.

**Azha-Cain:** the Draconine hypostasis of Cain as the projective or initiating force of magic.

**Azoëtic:** form of the Sabbatic Current articulated by Alogos Dhul'Qarnen Khidir in his book *The Azoëtia*, extrapolating the occult arcana of witchcraft through the opposing states of *Zoa* (life) and *Azoa* (death) and expressed through twenty-two unique hypostases of power.

**Backward Way:** doctrine of Crooked Path Sorcery encompassing completion through inversion.

**black light:** the universal, or Void-light symbolised by avatars such as Seth or Melek Taus.

**diabolism:** a vulgar or sensational inversion of Christian rite.

**Draconine:** the path of the Serpent as Dragon, emanant of the primeval stellar luminaries of the constellation Draco. Within the Sabbatic Tradition, appertaining the sorcery of the Draconian Gnosis.

**exilic wisdom:** the wisdom born of exile, the knowledge of the outcast. The vision borne of the wilderness.

**glamour:** power of the witch to jointly manipulate appearance and perception.

**gnosis:** instantaneous knowledge or insight borne of sorcery.

**habilic:** of or relating to Abel, son of Adam. The hypostasis of vanity: profane, common.

**Immediation:** instantaneous spiritual knowledge or magical action, arising from embodiment of power.

**incubus:** daimonic intelligence of the sexual masculine.

**lamiae:** archaic Greek term for nocturnal, flesh-devouring female phantoms, an ancient progenitor of the witch-type.

**Lumael:** The Self-Existent One, gynandrous Being of Light.

**Lux Haeresis:** ‘Light of Heresy’, a philosophical articulation of the animating power of witchcraft, as articulated by Frater Akaraïs Hran-Issiyah of the Cultus Sabbati. It posits a state of luminosity encompassing, and liminal to, the states of light and darkness, each of which it seeks to overturn.

**New Flesh:** Transfiguration of the mundane bodies through the sorcery and gnosis of the Sabbat.

**Opposer:** Entity of all unknown Other.

**ordalium:** trial, tribulation, crucible of testing.

**oscillus:** a ritual mask.

**Resurrected Body:** enfleshment of the collective atavisms of the sorcerer.

**Sabatraxas:** in the Sabbatic Craft Tradition, the infernal-celestial daimon of the Toad.

**succubus:** daimonic intelligence of the sexual feminine.

**theriacum:** hypostasis of the supreme antidote against poison.

**theriandric congress:** atavistic assumption of the bestial form within the flesh.

**Turnskin:** the self-slain One, perpetually arisen in New Flesh.

**zeroth:** of, or relating to, the pre-numeric state; aligned mystically with the center of the witch’s magic circle.

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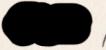
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