

Excerpts from **Witchcraft and Demonology**

Prologue

In the Book of Enoch, there is Azazel,
war-bringer and Prometheus
appointing man the minister who would orchestrate
a marriage between iron and fire,
the innumerable divorces
between flesh and soul.
Tonight, as I lie naked by candlelight, I imagine
Azazel appearing to a stone-flint native
with ore in one hand, flame in the other, a demon
mistaken for a god, he is, in truth,
hierophant of metal, divine meddler
teaching man and woman the magic of war
and its many ancillaries—commerce, politics,
religion, marriage; the things that break
open our skins and make us bleed red and purple blood.

I.

When I was thirteen I read *The Encyclopedia of Witchcraft and Demonology*, cover-to-cover.

Some of the pages were glossy as water-soaked skin:

full-color photos of demons copulating with witches.

Azazel, Baphomet, Legion, Malphas, Ronove, Vassago, Ziminiar.

Female bodies wrenched into postures that defied the dictates of bone.

Many-armed lovers with manifold teeth. Beautiful as saints, but meatier.

Hell seemed a place where horned lovers with a thousand cocks would treat my soul
as if it were a body.

But I promised my mother I'd be gay, not queer.

No broomsticks, desecrated wafers,

or dancing naked under the moon.

Instead, monogamy and mortgages, friendship and four walls,

the only magic, the Catholic kind,
wine turned into blood on Sundays.

By day, witches work as dental assistants,
ordering the mouth's yellow-red chaos,
picking dirty talk from the teeth,
soothing gums scorched by spells,
scraping the tongue which is tired from pronouncing
the thousand Sumerian names for Satan.

II.

A telephone call, circa 2004. My brother tells me

"I know you're not like those freaks parading down 42nd Street."

My leather vest, chaps, and thong hang in the bedroom closet.
I've never worn them outside.

I watch the parade on the news, where queer is

feather boas and drag queens,

rubber and motorcycles,

advertisements for Tylenol, Budweiser, and SKYY,

the coverage crosscut

with marriage demonstrations outside churches, statehouses, court buildings.

Two white men speak as if at a chalkboard, plotting out points of comparison between
themselves and their heterosexual friends,

between Sundance, Zipcar, and New York Life.

Around them, like squiggly radii emanating from a central point, do-gooders with signs
pass out pamphlets on mathematical equality—

one man plus one man is equal to one man plus one woman,
is equal to Fuze, Delta, and Petco.

III.

I touch my cock as I peruse a book about magickal geometry, the world-bending power of
trapezoids, triangles-in-circles, the Pythagorean Theorem.

A neat party trick—the magic square,

a grid filled with integers. The sum of the integers in a given row, column, or diagonal all equals
the same number,

as in the matching donations of CUNY, Oraquick, and Puma.

Marriage is two equivalent right angles locking into place, like two tongues meeting
in the mouth's negative space.

Each tongue is tattooed with a grid of prime numbers. Add them any way you like,
and the outcome is always the same.

So they say.

I don't want to, but I keep picturing queers
as a single, bright, fuchsia line
on a piece of graph paper,

beginning at a low point on the y-axis and gradually curving
upwards—with a few hiccups—
before synchronizing with the high-flying
straight, black line which represents
the low end of the Kinsey scale.

The queer line resembles a snake which has forgotten
its snakesness. No scales, no tongue, no fangs
clenching an apple,
no venom, no hypnotic eyes,

instead

Wells Fargo/Wachovia, AOL, and Ford.

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VI.

The devil Baphomet,
born of the Greek words *baphe* and *metous*. Baptism and wisdom.

When I was fifteen I scribbled in notebooks crude drawings
of the goat-headed androgyne,
crafting, with the help of my Latin I textbook, invocations
to a being who sat with one arm raised, one arm lowered
as if to tell mankind—as Jesus did—that it’s through degradation
that we raise ourselves.

On the upraised arm, the word *SOLVE*—separate.

On the down-pointing one, *COAGULA*—join together.

While my parents were at work I lit candles, sacrificed an imaginary goat,
read my homemade incantations

to the demon with female breasts, leathery testicles.

Callow consumer, I sought benediction
on the cheap, the wisdom of millennia condensed
into one white phosphorous blast.

At the time I didn’t know that the wisdom of millennia

is not a nature-carved object like

a star

or a raspberry.

Nor is it a human contract like a marriage

or a demonic pact.

It is more like a roiling, purple ocean (though even this is not exact)

shapeless

ocean-shaped

flooding the banks,

folding in on itself

as it expands,

depths full of living and dead organisms

above which men sail

navigating with grid points

drawing straight black lines in the white foam

which are just as quickly

effaced,

drawn over

wisdom and ocean

a natural palimpsest.

VII.

In college, I dated a man whose room was a perfect square.

I lay on the bed and mentally subdivided the room into nine smaller squares while he fucked me.

I wanted to kiss him once	in each subdivision	so that the sum
of our affection would radiate	equidistantly	from the center
of the room	and creep	up the corners.
I wanted to	marry him,	make it square.

Square, the magickal symbol
for order,
based around the number four.

Ancient civilizations saw

On my wedding day the compass spun and refused to settle on any one point.

As if preparing for guests, the spirits who lived in our house bustled about,
flinging electromagnetic pulses which upset the crockery.

My leather tingled on the hangar.

We were married in a tier-garden. Bowman's root, Campanula, Asclepiadaceae, Hoya
Cummingiana.

The Justice of the Peace extracted promises from the narrow, painful spaces between our teeth.

We bled for weeks afterwards, and the blood stained the bristles of our toothbrushes.

Every time we spoke, it was as if our mouths were full of raspberries.

X.

The boulder raspberry (*rubus deliciosus*) produces a white, star-shaped flower.

At the heart of the blossom, the juice-swollen raspberry coalesces, pucker-pink as tissue.

If *rubus deliciosus* were a Chinese board game, the raspberry would be the star point.

If it were a Ouija board, the raspberry would be the word "Yes."

The distance from the raspberry to the edge of a given petal is about four centimeters.

Though sweet, the raspberry is hardy, invasive.
Warm evenings it plots, extending
its basal shoots through the midnight soil,
laying roots and doubts, establishing new canes
which will choke the quiet wisdom
of the potato tuber, the green pepper's subtle passion,
the tomato's overall usefulness.

Like the untended raspberry bush I grow

beyond plot
beyond gender
beyond faith,
Azazel, Tommy Hilfiger,
Viacom, and Microsoft.

stiff cane unfurling beneath the coal dust-
colored earth, stretching through the brown under-
soil, curling about its neighbors.

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XIII.

In the myths, raspberries grow on Mt. Ida;
the gods go searching for a new flavor and delight in their find.

I like to imagine them with red lips and fingertips, austere Aphrodite laughing
as she pinches a berry, squirts her hated husband, lame Hephaestus, in the eyes.

Hephaestus howls, rubs the spots where his beloved stung him,
while she and Hermes disappear behind a bush.

One year after we were married, I met Hermes, stout and golden-haired,
a man who had never been bound in deceptive rope,
strangled by the slithering cane.

A messenger-god with a two-snake staff.

“Snakes don’t respect borders and neither do we”

he exhorted, taking me up on his shoulders.

He stained his feet in purple juice, strode across the purple ocean,
needed no bridge.

His body was the bridge.

XIV.

Another version of the myth—

Mount Ida shrinks, grows shapelier, becomes *Miss Ida*, Zeus’s nursemaid.

In this version, the raspberry starts out white.

She plucks one from a bush, feeds it to the infant god, plucks another.

He who will one day be king of the gods burbles and waves his small hands,
as white as the fruit.

Distracted by the young thunder-thrower’s baby eyes and smile, Ida pricks her finger,
staining the white raspberry red.

Since then, we have been consuming her blood, and the blood descendants of her blood.

XV.

There's always at least two versions

in the same way that there's always at least two marriages:

the red one and the white one.

I had two choices—stay married to the crippled god of flint and hearth,

or pursue empurpled Hermes, become his travel companion, his fellow border-walker,
his fuck-boy, his equal in all things but sex.

In another place, reachable only with serious witchcraft,

the stars are different,

Orion's bright body is made of more than four points,

raspberries are still white,

and I stayed with Hephaestus.

This is happening right now, in another place, distant,

yet the distance still divisible by four.

As for the myths, both are true.

After all of Ida's blood had drained, she became a stone,

which became a mountain.

The infant Zeus crawled to the summit, where Altair, the star-eagle,
picked him up,
carried him to Olympus.

Though an infant, he must've remembered something about the berries

that brought him back, years later.

Either that or Ida's blood sang to him,

a remembered lullaby, guiding him

to sweetness.

Me, I found the blood raspberry bitter,
so I went with Hermes, who promised we would find
a different kind of berry, a purple one,
flavor unknown to man or god.

XVI.

I reject those gods
who profit from the spilled blood of nursemaids.

I reject the fixed arrangement of stars
and the history that is scrawled into Orion's belt.

I reject the corporate
and its colonization of the body.

I reject all pink
except the pink of the body's interior.

I reject marriage
and its alliance with the corporate.

I reject the rope and the ring
encircling our bodies.

I reject the illusion of knots and circles
as symbols for eternity, limitless potential.

I reject the rules of a game
which calls on its players to form boxes around each other.

I reject a limit
on the number of spirits that can occupy a body.