

THE MOTHER AT THE SABBATH

COME, child of wonder! it is Sabbath Night,
The speckled twilight and the sombre singing!
Listen and come: the owl's disastrous flight
Points out the road! Hail, O propitious sight!
See! the black gibbet and the murderer swinging!

Come, child of wonder and the innocent eyes!
Come where the toad his stealthy way is taking.
Flaps the bat's wing upon thy cheek? How wise,
How wicked are those faces! And the skies
Are muffled, and the firmament is quaking.

Spectres of cats misshapen nestle close,
And rub their phantom sides against our dresses.
Come, child of wonder! in these souls morose
Keen joys may shudder—how the daylight goes!—
Night shall betray thee to the cold caresses!

Yes; it is night the hour of subtlety
And strange looks meaning more than Hell can utter:—
Come, child of wonder! watch the woman's eye
Who lurks towards us through the stagnant sky.
Hark to the words her serpents hiss or mutter!

Close we are come; before us is the Cross
To trample and defile: the bones shall shudder
Of many a self-slain darling. From the moss
Swamp-adders greet us. How the dancers toss
The frantic limb, the unreluctant udder!

See, how their frenzy peoples all the ground!
Strange demon-shapes take up the unholy measure,

Strange beast and worm and crab: the uncouth sound
Of the unheard-of-kisses: the profound
Gasps of the maniac, the devouring pleasure!

A curse of God is on them!—ha! the curse,
The curse that locks them in obscene embraces!
See how love mocks the melancholy hearse
Dressed as an altar: is she nun or nurse,
The priestess chosen of the half-formed faces?

Abbess, child of the unsullied eyes!
Why? To blaspheme! Sweet child, the dance grows
madder.
O I am faint with pleasure! Ah! be wise;
One measure more, and then—the sacrifice?
What victim? Guess—a woman or an adder?

Nay, fear not, baby! In your mother's hand
You must be safe? You trust the womb that bare you!
Who comes towards us? Why, our God, the Grand!
Our Baphomet! Come, baby, to the band:
Our God may kiss you—yes, he will not spare you!

Fall down, my baby; worship him with me.
There, go; I give you to his monster kisses!
Take her, my God, my God, my infamy,
My love, my master! take the fruit of me!
—Shrieks every soul and every demon hisses!

Out! out! the ghastly torches of the feast!
Let darkness hide us and the night discover
The shameless mysteries of God grown beast,
The nameless blasphemy, the slimed East—
Sin incarnated with a leprous lover!

“Hoc est enim”—the victim! ah! my womb,
My womb has borne the victim! Now I queen it
To-night upon the damned—thy love makes room,
My goat-head godhead, for my hecatomb!
I am thy mistress, and thy slaves have seen it!

Even as thy cold devouring kisses roll
Over my corpse; I hear its death-cry thrill me!
Thine!—O my god! I render thee the whole,
My broken body and my accursed soul!
Come, come, come, come! Ah! conquer me and
kill me!