Brandon R. Schrand

NINE BOOKS ON THE DIVINING ROD

BOOK I
Imagine Moses, wild eyed, his heart battering in disbelief as he drove his staff twice into that most ordinary stone, and how his jaw must have slackened when the waters poured forth clarifying the way of things.

BOOK II
At the meeting of the Augustinian Order in Heidelberg, only months after posting his theses, Martin Luther stood, scanned the room, cleared his throat, and declared that the virgula divina violated the First Commandment.

BOOK III
In 1556, Georgius Agricola inched his way deep into the throated gold mines of Bohemia, sweeping his torch back and forth, until his light caught the men tracing a vein in a subterranean rib, with forked twigs cut from hazel shrubs, their sticks scratching out a map of impossible fortune.

BOOK IV
Twelve years later, upon an offering of land for a convent, Saint Teresa of Spain refused the ground noting its absence of water.

Friar Antonio appeared before her in the wooded grove clutching a twig; he then signed a cross and divined a gushing well.
BOOK V

The Baroness de Beusoleil discovered hundreds of lost mines in ancient France and oceanic caverns of water all under the tip of her rod. But in 1642, she admitted divining, and alchemy too. Charged with sorcery, she was imprisoned in a Parisian dungeon until her end.

BOOK VI

Someone among the throng of those dour stone-eyed Puritans packed among their buckled shoes, chamber pots, and linen a curious thing for the New World: Y-shaped, a snake's tongue, a devil's arm, an instrument so wicked it could, in the hands of a witch, summon the fluids of the earth.

BOOK VII

*The American Journal of Science* lent its leaves in 1821 to the singular debate of the divining rod, wherein the Reverend Ralph Emerson claimed its virtues, had seen with his very eyes water surface under the spell of the stick despite what he thought he knew.

BOOK VIII

Meanwhile, self-proclaimed Mormon Prophet Joseph Smith prowled the backwoods of Palmyra, New York, forked willow branch in hand, soaked in fever sweat divining the maddening promise of treasure. Later, Mormon farmers would teach the Navajo how to witch for water in the desert wash of Ramah, New Mexico.

BOOK IX

Before we raised the drill rig's tower, before we sunk a single gleaming bit into the earth, we waited in that sagebrush draw for Alma Bassett to slam his truck door, light a smoke, and fish out a bronze rod; for it to pull him forth into the wind, for its end to dip, and for Alma to stop, kneel, and whisper, “water.”