

*Ashgate Controversial New Religions Series*



# Contemporary Religious Satanism

A Critical Anthology



Edited by

**JESPER AAGAARD PETERSEN**

## CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS SATANISM

The Church of Satan was founded by Anton LaVey on April 30, 1966. In his hands, Satan became a provocative symbol for indulgence, vital existence, natural wisdom and the human being's true animal nature. At present, religious Satanism exists primarily as a decentralized subculture with a strong internet presence within a larger Satanic milieu in Western culture. Though most are inspired by LaVey, the majority of contemporary Satanists are not members of the Church of Satan. The various expressions of modern Satanism all navigate in today's detraditionalized religious market through the creative appropriation of popular culture, philosophy, literature and religion. The concrete solutions are varied; but they all understand the power of transgression allying oneself with a most powerful symbol of resistance, namely Satan. Thus, contemporary religious Satanism could be understood as a complex negotiation of atheism, secularism, esotericism and self: A "self-religion" in the modern age.

Despite the fascinating nature of religious Satanism, it has attracted little scholarship until relatively recently. This book brings together a group of international scholars to produce the first serious book-length study of religious Satanism, presenting a collection that will have wide appeal to specialists and non-specialists alike. The [first part](#) contains broader studies of influential groups and important aspects of the Satanic milieu, especially regarding historical developments, the construction of tradition and issues of legitimacy. The [second part](#) narrows the view to regional variations, especially with studies on Northern and Eastern Europe. The [third part](#) consists of primary documents selected for their representational and informational value.

# CONTROVERSIAL NEW RELIGIONS

*Series Editors:*

James R. Lewis, Lecturer in Religious Studies,  
University of Wisconsin, USA

George D. Chryssides, Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies,  
University of Wolverhampton, UK

This new series on New Religious Movements focuses particularly on controversial new religions. The popularity and significance of the New Religious Movements field is reflected in the explosion of related books and articles now being published. This Ashgate series of anthologies will offer a valuable resource and lasting contribution to the field.

*Other titles in the series:*

*The Order of the Solar Temple*

*The Temple of Death*

Edited by James R. Lewis

*The New Generation Witches*

*Teenage Witchcraft in Contemporary Culture*

Edited by Hannah E. Johnston and Peg Aloï

# Contemporary Religious Satanism

A Critical Anthology

*Edited by*

JESPER AAGAARD PETERSEN

*Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway*

 **Routledge**  
Taylor & Francis Group  
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2009 by Ashgate Publishing

Published 2016 by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

Copyright © Jesper Aagaard Petersen 2009

Jesper Aagaard Petersen has asserted his moral right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the editor of this work.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notice:

Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

Contemporary religious Satanism: a critical anthology. – (Controversial new religions)

1. Satanism

I. Petersen, Jesper Aagaard

299

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Petersen, Jesper Aagaard.

Contemporary religious Satanism : a critical anthology / Jesper Aagaard Petersen.

p. cm. – (Controversial new religions)

Includes index.

ISBN 978-0-7546-5286-1 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Satanism. I. Title.

BL480.P39 2008

299–dc22

2008024648

ISBN 9780754652861 (hbk)

# Contents

<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
1 Introduction: Embracing Satan <i>Jesper Aagaard Petersen</i>	1
<b>PART I Broader Studies: History, Tradition, Legitimacy</b>	
2 Satanism: Performing Alterity and Othering <i>Graham Harvey</i>	27
3 Infernal Legitimacy <i>James R. Lewis</i>	41
4 Darkness Within: Satanism as a Self-Religion <i>Asbjørn Dyrendal</i>	59
5 Self-Conscious Routinization and the Post-Charismatic Fate of the Church of Satan from 1997 to the Present <i>Maxwell Davies</i>	75
6 Embracing Others than Satan: The Multiple Princes of Darkness in the Left-Hand Path Milieu <i>Kennet Granholm</i>	85
7 The Devil's Down in Dixie: Studying Satanism in South Georgia <i>Kathleen Lowney</i>	103
<b>PART II REGIONAL STUDIES</b>	
8 The Peculiarities of Lithuanian Satanism: Between Crime and Atheism in Cyberspace <i>Milda Alisauskiene</i>	121
9 Satanism in Estonia <i>Ringo Ringvee</i>	129

10	Cyber-Satanism and Imagined Satanism: Dark Symptoms of Late Modernity <i>Rafal Smoczynski</i>	141
11	Social Democratic Satanism? Some Examples of Satanism in Scandinavia <i>Didrik Söderlind and Asbjørn Dyrendal</i>	153
12	“With my Art I am the Fist in the Face of god”: On Old-School Black Metal <i>Gry Mørk</i>	171
13	Italian Martyrs of “Satanism”: Sister Maria Laura Mainetti and Father Giorgio Govoni <i>Andrea Menegotto</i>	199
14	Speculating on the Point 003 Percent? Some Remarks on the Chaotic Satanic Minorities in the UK <i>Dave Evans</i>	211

### **PART III PRIMARY DOCUMENTS**

15	Reflections on Satanism <i>Vexen Crabtree</i>	231
16	Excerpt from Lords of the Left-Hand Path: A History of Spiritual Dissent <i>Stephen E. Flowers</i>	239
17	Dark Doctrines: Two Examples <i>Tani Jantsang</i>	247
18	The Satanic Politic <i>Nathan Wardinski</i>	255
19	The Culture Cult <i>Ole Wolf</i>	259
	<i>Index</i>	267

# Notes on Contributors

## *Milda Alisauskiene*

PhD candidate, Department of Sociology, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania.

[m.alisauskiene@smf.vdu.lt](mailto:m.alisauskiene@smf.vdu.lt)

## *Vexen Crabtree*

A British Satanist who has been active on-line since the late nineties on discussion forums and with numerous websites. A member of the Church of Satan.

[www.vexen.co.uk](http://www.vexen.co.uk)

## *Maxwell Davies*

Graduate of Religious Studies, University of Wisconsin Oskosh, USA, freelance writer, journalist and a guest lecturer on Satanism.

[chessshoggoth@yahoo.com](mailto:chessshoggoth@yahoo.com)

## *Asbjørn Dyrendal*

PhD, Associate Professor, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway.

[asbjorn.dyrendal@hf.ntnu.no](mailto:asbjorn.dyrendal@hf.ntnu.no)

## *Dave Evans*

PhD, University of Bristol, UK. Independent scholar.

[www.occultebooks.com](http://www.occultebooks.com)

## *Stephen E. Flowers*

Stephen Edred Flowers, PhD, also known under the name Edred Thorsson, has been active in various esoteric organizations since the early seventies, most notably the Temple of Set, the Rune-Gild and the Ring of Troth.

[www.xeper.org](http://www.xeper.org), [www.runaraven.com](http://www.runaraven.com), [www.runegild.org](http://www.runegild.org)

## *Kennet Granholm*

PhD, Visiting Researcher at the Centre for the History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

[kennet.granholm@gmail.com](mailto:kennet.granholm@gmail.com)

## *Graham Harvey*

PhD, Reader in Religious Studies, Open University, UK.

[g.harvey@open.ac.uk](mailto:g.harvey@open.ac.uk)



*Tani Jantsang*

Active in various esoteric and occult groups since the seventies, but became well known as an advocate of the Dark Doctrines in the late eighties and one of the founders of the Satanic Reds in 1997.

[www.geocities.com/satanicreds](http://www.geocities.com/satanicreds)

*James R. Lewis*

PhD, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, USA.

[jimlewis@uwm.edu](mailto:jimlewis@uwm.edu)

*Kathleen Lowney*

Professor, PhD, Sociology/Anthropology/Criminal Justice Program, Valdosta State University, Georgia, USA.

[klowney@valdosta.edu](mailto:klowney@valdosta.edu)

*Andrea Menegotto*

Milan Branch Manager, Centre for the Study of New Religions (CESNUR), Italy.

[Andrea.menegotto@libero.it](mailto:Andrea.menegotto@libero.it)

*Gry Mørk*

M. Phil. Independent scholar.

[grybmoerk@yahoo.no](mailto:grybmoerk@yahoo.no)

*Jesper Aagaard Petersen*

Research Fellow, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway.

[jesper.petersen@hf.ntnu.no](mailto:jesper.petersen@hf.ntnu.no)

*Ringo Ringvee*

Advisor, Department of Religious Affairs, Ministry of the Interior, Estonia.

[ringo.ringvee@siseministeerium.ee](mailto:ringo.ringvee@siseministeerium.ee)

*Rafal Smoczyński*

PhD, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences, Poland.

[rafalsmoczyński@yahoo.com](mailto:rafalsmoczyński@yahoo.com)

*Didrik Söderlind*

Research Journalist, Consultant to the Norwegian Humanist Association.

[soderlind@human.no](mailto:soderlind@human.no)

*Nathan Wardinski*

American Satanist. A member of the Obsidian Enlightenment.

[www.uwosh.edu/obsidian](http://www.uwosh.edu/obsidian)

*Ole Wolf*

A Danish Satanist, active in Satanic groups since the early nineties, most notably Satanisk Forum, an independent Danish organization created in 2001.

[www.sataniskforum.dk](http://www.sataniskforum.dk)



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# Acknowledgements

**Chapter 1** incorporates sections that have been reworked from the article “Satanists and Nuts: The Role of Schism in Modern Satanism,” to be published in James R. Lewis (ed.): *Sacred Schisms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Chapter 2** is a revised version of “Satanism: Performing Alterity and Othering,” first published in *SYZYGY: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture* vol. 11 (2002), pp. 53–68. Used with permission.

**Chapter 3** is a revised version of “Diabolical Authority: Anton LaVey, The Satanic Bible and the Satanist ‘Tradition’,” first published in *Marburg Journal of Religion*, Volume 7 (2002), Number 1. Used with permission.

**Chapter 8** incorporates material from the article “Manifestations of Satanism in Catholic Lithuania: the case of www.satan.lt,” first published in *SYZYGY: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture* vol. 11 (2002), pp. 105–111. Used with permission.

**Chapter 9** is a substantial revision of the presentation “Satanists in Estonia” at the CESNUR 2004 conference *Religious Movements, Conflict, and Democracy: International Perspectives*, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, June 17–20, 2004.

**Chapter 10** incorporates sections that have been reworked from the article “Polish Cyber Satanism: A Group in Statu Nascendi,” first published in *SYZYGY: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture* vol. 11 (2002), pp. 111–119, and from a paper presented at the conference “American Orders and Disorders” organized by the Polish Association of American Studies, University of Warsaw, October 2004. Used with permission.

**Chapter 13** is a substantial revision of the presentation “Italian Martyrs of Satanism: Sister Maria Mainetti and Father Giorgio Govoni” at the CESNUR 2003 conference *Religion and Democracy: An Exchange of Experiences Between East and West*, Vilnius, Lithuania, April 9–12, 2003.

Regarding Part III: Primary documents:

The material in **Chapter 15** is available online at <http://www.dpjs.co.uk/>. Used with permission.

The material in [Chapter 16](#) is taken from Stephen E. Flowers: *Lords of the Left-Hand Path: A History of Spiritual Dissent*. Second edition. Smithville, TX: Runa-Raven Press 1997, pp. 1–5. Used with permission.

The material in [Chapter 17](#) is available online at <http://www.geocities.com/satanicreds/art-dt.html>. Used with permission.

The material in [Chapter 19](#) is a translation of “Kulturkulten,” *Satanisk Bulletin* nr. 10 (2003), pp. 7–13. Also available online at <http://www.sataniskforum.dk/content/view/31/38/>. Used with permission.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction: Embracing Satan<sup>1</sup>

Jesper Aagaard Petersen

The harmony of soul and body – how much that is! We in our madness have separated the two, and have invented a realism that is vulgar, an ideality that is void.

Oscar Wilde: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1908 (1890) (pp. 19–20)

This is *not* a book about Satanic ritual abuse. It is not even a book about the Satanic Panic spanning the eighties and nineties – even though that moral panic still affects us both locally and globally. No children or animals were harmed during the research for this volume and no pacts, orgies or blood rituals performed. So what is it about?

This is a book about contemporary religious Satanism. Let me explain these concepts in turn. The subject is *contemporary* or *modern* in the sense that Satanism manifests itself in loose collectivities around the same time that counter-cultural, proto-New Age, eastern and human potential movements bloom in the West – the sixties and early seventies. As with all these related phenomena, Satanism draws upon reinterpretations of self-contained, complex, and much older traditions and various elements of rejected knowledge within the “cultic milieu” of the West (Campbell 1972); thus it is a sub-stream within that milieu, a dark or sinister *bricolage* within western “occulture” (Partridge 2004, 2005).

It is *religious* in the sense that contemporary Satanism is a substantial and functional equivalent to religion in the classical sense. *Substantially*, some groups within the sub-stream are easily identifiable as religions, with doctrine, practice, community and organization (Lincoln 2003: [chapter 1](#)); others are more on the mystical, spiritual or philosophical side, a loose network or carnal brotherhood of like or very *un-like* minds (Campbell 1978). Both provide for the same *functions*, such as meaning, community and identity, for their adherents. Correspondingly, most formulations could be understood through the category of “self-religion” or “Life spirituality” as explored by Paul Heelas:

In sum, New Age spiritualities of life are all about realizing one’s inner, true life. Such spiritualities are (albeit to varying degrees) *detraditionalized* ... . Ultimately,

---

<sup>1</sup> The author would like to acknowledge that sections of this chapter have been reworked from the article “Satanists and Nuts: The Role of Schism in Modern Satanism” to be published in James R. Lewis (ed.): *Sacred Schisms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

life can only be experienced through one's own inner-directed life. One has to be able to live one's life, express one's own life, experience the wisdom inherent in one's life. Traditions, with their supra-self, externally sustained frames of reference and injunction, can have little or no role to play. (Heelas 2002: 362)

Although modern Satanism is very different from New Age spirituality on many accounts, the basic focus on socialization as repression of an essential nature and the transformation or self-realization through detraditionalized techniques are comparable (Partridge 2004: 81; see Asbjørn Dyrendal's contribution in the present volume for an illuminating discussion).<sup>2</sup>

As such, contemporary religious Satanism spans the field from full-blown religion with tradition, rituals, communitarian ethos and hierarchy to austere, individualistic philosophy, a "humanism with horns" (Dyrendal 2007: 25), "atheistic, skeptical Epicurea[nism]" (e.g. Gilmore 1999 and Walls 2007), "atheistic, self-centric philosophy" with "a-theology" or "cult of opposition" (Partridge 2005: 222–23) or even "an un-religion" (e.g. Crabtree 2002, Paradise 2007: 150). Anton LaVey, the most significant spokesperson of the substream, has described his interpretation of Satanism (which of course is Satanism *as such*) as "Ayn Rand with trappings" (Klein 1970: 20, Fritscher 2004 [1973]: 181). To paraphrase Stephen Flowers, Satanism comprises immanent, materialistic as well as transcendent, idealistic views of the Self (Flowers 1997: 5), and, one could add, atheistic and theistic views of Satan. However, most if not all, contemporary groups link Satan and self explicitly and interpret Satan as a symbol, archetype or force of nature. As mentioned above, they are markedly *detraditionalized* and thus supportive of the sacralization of the self and secular trends of modern society. They manifest epistemological individualism (Partridge 2004: 32–33) and syncretism or eclecticism (Campbell 1972, Partridge 2004, Hammer 2001a, 2001b) that is symptomatic of self-religion and the ideology of seekership in the cultic milieu. I will return to that shortly.

Finally, contemporary religious Satanism is *satanic* in the sense that all groups and individuals relate to the figure of Satan, as mentioned above, as a force, model, symbol or expression of self. In this sense and that alone modern Satanism could be called a "cult of opposition" (Partridge 2004: 222) that "... cannot be understood apart from the Christian culture that provided the context for their foundation ..." (La Fontaine 1999: 81). As James R. Lewis remarks, Satan has "become an ambivalent symbol" in the West as he has come to "embody some very attractive attributes" (Lewis 2003: 107) through a re-reading of the Christian tradition: He is associated with sex, pride, non-conformity, rebellion and individualism. But it is a very large misunderstanding to stop here, with the anti-Christian, inversionist sentiments of the substream. As will be discussed in greater length in the section on the "how" of Satanism below, certain historical processes of reinterpretation

---

<sup>2</sup> See Heelas 1996, 2002 on self-religion, and Harvey 1995, 2002, Dyrendal 2004, Petersen 2005 on Satanism as a self-religion.

have freed the concept of Satan from a theological and Christian context, driven by a complex wave of romantic and modernist interests. Modern Satanism is better understood as post-Christian and as part of the Left-Hand Path traditions (see Kennet Granholm's chapter in the present volume for a critical assessment).

As should be clear by now, most formulations of satanic discourse and practice have a positive as well as a negative side. The *positive* side is the self-religious, focusing on empowerment, self-realization, actualization, assertion or development, whether it manifests itself as a rational self-interest, gnosis, or development of natural potentials. Satan has attractive attributes and is symbolically equated with the self. However, as could be seen with Paul Heelas' definition above, this project cannot be understood apart from a *negative* distancing or even destructive attitude towards external authorities, a subversion of established traditions and herd mentality. The self project is a project of non-conformity. But this element of non-conformity and de-conditioning is *not* tied to Christianity alone; it is a general opposition to all traditional and modern institutions of authority. Christianity is understood as the prime example of a totalitarian, oppressive moral force – other enemies are capitalist society's dictum of consumerism and passive entertainment; "liberal" society's "universal" human rights and bland equality; puritanical morals of sexual repression; the welfare state; and the blind obedience and irrationality of the herd in all religions (Flowers 1997: 195f). Satan is the Adversary or ultimate rebel and is thus symbolically a stance one takes in the pursuit of self interest and self development. All in all, the Satan of Satanism is heavily detraditionalized and, while nominally tied to Christianity, cannot be understood in a strictly Christian sense. Thus modern Satanism is *not* a Christian sect, inverted Christianity or a Christian hermeneutics.<sup>3</sup>

My argument is parallel to the position taken by the anonymous author of the *Wikipedia* entry on "Satanism"

Common misuse of the word generally refers to "the worship of Satan or the practice of ritual magic." However, by the actual adherents, the suffix *-ism* is often used suggesting the definition as an act or practice (e.g. the word heroism), as opposed to the oft-assumed definition as the doctrine or philosophy *behind* an act or practice." (Wikipedia, "Satanism")

While I would not disband substantive definitions of Satanism, I would certainly expand the world-view-analysis with its' focus on *belief* in Satan and resulting practices, an inherently theological and psychological approach, with a discursive approach, where the declaration "I am a Satanist" is a *speech-act* (Austin 1962), a declaration of intent: Satanism is thus *also* the act of *declaring* and *practicing* an adversarial stance. This is a much more dynamic conception of ideology, where

---

<sup>3</sup> A parallel could be drawn to Friederich Nietzsche, who is often understood as purely nihilistic with his will to power, theory of the Übermensch and radical anti-Christianity, but which on a closer look advocates a positive rebuilding of values after the necessary destruction.



the concrete practices influence the system of beliefs and practices while also being influenced by the same system.<sup>4</sup>

Let us now examine these elements in greater depth. After some preliminary remarks on the satanic milieu, groups within it and the cohesiveness of the field, I will examine the “what”, the substantial side of modern Satanism through a typology and discussion of common traits in discourse, practice and imagery, focused on the elements found attractive in formulations of satanic positions by important spokespersons. Then I will turn to the “how”, the performative and constructive side, to illustrate the divergence and complexities within the field. These positions are of course intertwined and only separated analytically. Finally, I will briefly address the “why”, the functional side of Satanism and its appeal in western societies, and conclude with a summary of the chapters and primary material found between the covers.

### Drawing Boundaries

As stated above, modern Satanism can be conceived as a part of the cultic milieu proposed by Colin Campbell in his seminal article *The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization* (Campbell 1972). As such, Satanism is a bundle of ideas and practices related to other ideas and practices in the “cultural underground of society” (ibid.: 122). This heterogenous, but single “assortment of cultural items” (ibid.) is held together by common traits, mainly deviance, syncretism, overlapping communication structures and the ideology of seekership (ibid.: 122–24). The point is that new religious movements continuously crystallize from this cultural field. It works as both the substantive and functional context for group evolution – it is the cultic milieu and not the individual groups that are permanent (ibid.: 122).<sup>5</sup>

The cultic milieu is a “fuzzy category” (Taylor 1995: 38ff; Saler 2000: 202f). Its’ contents are arranged according to the Wittgensteinian notion of *family resemblance* in order to have the necessary cohesion (*not* coherence or consistence) without losing its’ heterogeneous character. Nevertheless some streams are closer related than others, as some concepts, practices and influential formulations work as magnets, making clusters of related items, and these could be categorized as the

---

<sup>4</sup> I am inspired by poststructuralist theories of discourse, ideology and power as structured practice. See Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Sahlins 1985, Fairclough 1992, Gubrium and Holstein 1997, Lincoln 2003 as well as the works of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault for theoretical signposts.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Partridge suggests the terms “occultic milieu” and “occulture” to replace Campbell’s “cultic milieu” (Partridge 2004: 66), but I find Campbell’s term adequate when dealing with the sociological entity producing NRM’s (the functional side of cult production). “Occulture” is excellent when speaking broadly of substantial issues (the rejected contents themselves), but when all is said and done the terms are interchangeable.

broad currents of a *very* complex field of rejected knowledge and communication. Campbell himself describes “cultic culture” as “falling in the property space bounded by a religion-science axis and an instrumental-expressive orientation axis, taking for granted the prior criterion of societal deviancy” (Campbell 1972: 124) and proceeds to mention four important streams: Two religious, namely mysticism and “pre-Christian pagan traditions”, and two pseudo-scientific, namely deviant science and underground technology (*ibid.*: 124–126). In a similar vein, Christopher Partridge isolates four such streams when discussing the contemporary spiritual climate of the West – The Western Mystery/Esoteric tradition, the alternative or paranormal, the New Age and the contemporary Pagan “occulture” – and includes Satanism in the fourth category (Partridge 2004: 71–84).

I would propose to isolate a “Satanic milieu”, an important discourse, sub-field, current or reservoir alongside for example the neo-Pagan, UFO related, New Age, Theosophical and Western Esoteric currents, as modern Satanism in its divergent forms is sufficiently distinctive to warrant this accentuation. The satanic milieu is in itself a polythetic category with fuzzy borders, and could be conceived of as a cult-producing substance of key terms and practices as well as the reservoir of ideas uniting the broad movement of modern Satanism, mirroring the larger cultic milieu in a fractal sense. Thus the satanic milieu is a trend in popular culture (Baddeley 2000, Dyrendal 2005, 2008, forthcoming), a collective style and identity within satanic neo-tribes (Lowney 1995, Hermonen 2002) and the reference points of the satanic subcultures that crystallize around distinct interpretations or manifestations of Satanism today (Dyrendal 2004, Petersen 2005).<sup>6</sup> Even though few modern, self-professed Satanists feel as a part of a grand movement or clearly definable subculture (and some even attack the very notion of community implied in these words), I would certainly state that from a historical and sociological point of view, they do belong to a diffuse “occultural” movement and, in the case of organized Satanists, belong to subcultures within it with common identity, history (both emic and etic), symbols, aesthetics, interpretations and practices; in short: Identity, commitment, consistent distinctiveness and autonomy.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> In the present volume, see the contributions in [Part II](#) for specific studies of satanic neo-tribes and subcultures.

<sup>7</sup> This is an interpretation of subculture inspired by Paul Hodkinson (Hodkinson 2002: [Chapter 2](#)). In his delimitation of the Goth subculture, he suggests “4 indicators of subcultural substance”: Identity, commitment, consistent distinctiveness and autonomy (*ibid.*: 28–33). He writes. “Rather than these four comprising a definitive blueprint, each of them should be regarded as a contributory feature which, taken cumulatively with the others, increases the appropriateness of the term ‘subculture’, in the relative degree to which each is applicable. The combination of this degree of malleability and with a set of specific criteria should maximize the potential for meaningful use of the concept at the same time as recognizing the greater relevance of alternative terminology – in the form of Maffesoli’s notion of neo-tribe perhaps – to describe more fleeting or superficial forms of affiliation” (*ibid.*: 30). Understood in this way a satanic subculture is a matter of more-or-less, not either-or.

Nevertheless, it is important to differentiate between specific individuals, tangible groups and the movement as a whole. These positions are angles or approaches of analysis, as are the delimitations I have made above. As such, etic categorization should not ignore the very pertinent assessments on the emic level. The same *aber dabei* could be stated with regard to sources: Are we looking at movement texts (Hammer 2001b: 37), online material (Petersen 2007), popular culture (Dyrendal 2008) or qualitative analysis of specific groups and individuals, and what are their relations with each other?

Consequently, we should not fall into the trap of reifying our analytical concepts so as to envision modern Satanism as a self-contained tradition “out there” with an inherent essence; one would do well to work along the same lines as Wouter Hanegraaff when he explicates Western Esotericism:

... an emphasis on the complexity of western culture as a pluralistic field of competing religious and ideological identities, and on western esotericism as an analytical concept (*not* a descriptive category) which brings that situation into focus by systematically highlighting religious and cultural dimensions that have traditionally been marginalized as “other.” (Hanegraaff 2007: 109)

In this sense, we participate in a closure of the satanic milieu itself, as we should understand it as a contested space that is given a temporary coherence, substance and community through discursive battles. These battles are fought with actors from within and from without: “Othering” from the mainstream (or cognitive majority), as when childcare workers or influential Christian groups define “Satanism” to de-legitimize it or academic scholars try to legitimize it, “Othering” from within when one group de-legitimizes another or the milieu as a whole, and the creative use of tradition and “alterity” to legitimize oneself within (Hjelm 2007. See also the contributions of Graham Harvey, James R. Lewis and Maxwell Davies in the present volume). I will return to these issues in “the how of Satanism” below; presently I will discuss a basic typology and some elements that do seem to be widespread in the milieu across discursive boundaries.

### **The “What” of Satanism**

Three broad categories or ideal types can be discerned within the satanic milieu: Rationalist, Esoteric and Reactive paradigmatically conform Satanism (Schmidt 2003 [1992]: 11ff, Dyrendal 2004: 48ff, Petersen 2005: 440ff). As they are analytical constructs, they are fuzzy as well; individuals and groups move from one to the other as the satanic milieu mutates and grows. The categories could be conceived of as points in a triangle, where Rationalist and Esoteric Satanism occupy the bi-polar manifestation of organized, stable and systematic discourses, with Reactive paradigmatically conform Satanism as a catch-all category of popular Satanism, inverted Christianity and symbolic rebellion. Thus *Reactive*

*paradigmatically conform Satanism* is reactive in the sense that it is in opposition to society, but in a way that reiterates central Christian concepts of evil, making it paradigmatically conform to a Christian context. *Satan* is the Christian Devil, and *Satanism* the adolescent or anti-social behaviour of transgressing boundaries and “living out” a mythical frame. It is usually highly eclectic and although often deeply meaningful, a temporary phase of identity construction. Thus, I will only discuss this type of Satanism where it is relevant as a sounding board for the developed self-religions found in the two other categories.

*Rationalist* Satanism is an atheistic, sceptical, epicurean materialism as formulated by Anton Szandor LaVey in *The Satanic Bible* and other writings, and then expounded upon by a host of spokespersons in the following years. Typical examples are the *Church of Satan* and the Danish *Satanic Forum*.<sup>8</sup> They consider *Satan* to be a symbol of rebellion, individuality, carnality and empowerment, and *Satanism* the material philosophy best suited for the “alien elite”; catchwords are indulgence, vital existence and rational self-interest. Although ritual practices are described and an ambiguous diabolical anthropomorphism or mystical deism is present from time to time, both are interpreted as metaphorical and pragmatic instruments of self-realization. Science, philosophy and intuition are advocated as authority, and productive non-conformity the highest goal of the individual. *Esoteric* Satanism is more explicitly theistically oriented and uses the esoteric traditions of Paganism, Western Esotericism, Buddhism and Hinduism, among others, to formulate a religion of self-actualization. Examples include the *Temple of Set* and the Dark Doctrines of the *Satanic Reds*.<sup>9</sup> The understanding of *Satan* is usually clothed in platonic or mystical terms; although often spoken of as a literal entity, it is not a god to be worshiped, but rather a being or principle to be emulated or understood. *Satanism* is therefore a path to enlightenment in a Left-Hand Path sense of non-union with the universe or true individuality. The ritual practices and organization of this type of Satanism often corresponds to other initiation-oriented groups within Western Esotericism, although this may vary considerably.

To sum up the strands of the argument so far, what are then the main traits in a minimum definition of the satanic discourse of organized Satanism within the satanic milieu? I would suggest self-religion, antinomianism, the use of certain “S”-words and a formulated ideological genealogy, often in the form of some relation to Anton Szandor LaVey, as the four major factors to be taken into consideration (Petersen 2005: 444).

---

<sup>8</sup> The texts by Vexen Crabtree, Nate Wardinski and Ole Wolf reproduced in [Part III](#) are examples of this type. In addition, see Alfred 1976, Baddeley 2000, Barton 1990, 1992, Gilmore 2007, LaVey 1969, 1972, 1989 [1971], 1992, 1998, Nemo 2007, Paradise 2007 and Shankbone 2007, as well as the websites and publications of rationalist groups.

<sup>9</sup> The texts by Stephen Flowers and Tani Jantsang reproduced in [Part III](#) are examples of this type. In addition, see Aquino 1985 [1975], 2002 [1975], 2005, 2006, Flowers 1997, Scar 1998, Schreck 2001b: 7ff, Schreck and Schreck 2002, as well as the websites and publications of esoteric groups.

As stated repeatedly throughout this introduction, self-religion and antinomianism are both ideological core terms for this milieu. As we saw earlier, *self-religion* is shared with most other streams within the cultic milieu as such, and could be one common theme for the epistemologically individualist and self-actualizing groups and individuals found within it. The goal of modern Satanism is found within, not outside the individual, whether it is humanity's animal nature or the isolate intellect. When combined with *antinomian* and elitist interests, we have a project of self-actualization transgressing the moral boundaries of society, setting the self above conventional expectations and mores. Indeed, as it is contaminated by socialization, the self must confront and dispense with this influence to realize itself (Flowers 1997: 3ff). Thus modern Satanism must be understood as a double negotiation of positive identity construction – self-realization – and negative identity destruction – the lack of conformity (Petersen forthcoming).

But to make these discursive formulations *satanic*, the antinomian self-religions need to be framed through a use of the words Satan, Satanism, Satanic and Satanist (and related words: Set, Devil, Lucifer etc.) as positive terms describing themselves and a set of ideas, practices and aesthetics, a common culture. A certain emic self-designation is thus important to differentiate between prejudice and modern Satanism proper, and to set it apart from similar formulations of the cultic milieu. Finally, all individuals and groups construct some sort of *genealogy*, a time-line of subcultural ancestry; most if not all groups and individuals relate this to the writings of Anton LaVey, especially *The Satanic Bible* (LaVey 1969). Some relations are positive, others negative, but he is a common denominator of some sort of entry or calling into the satanic milieu – some stop there and protect his formulation of the satanic philosophy and others move on or abandon it, but he is necessary as a dark prophet, a vanishing point that plays an important role in all genealogies.

Before venturing into the constructive side of modern Satanism it would be prudent to discuss some salient themes associated with modern Satanism, namely balance, satanic nature, aesthetics, iconography and rituals. Even though the most of the examples are drawn from the rationalist type of Satanism and the interpretations and focus are widely divergent, I think they could safely be applied across the board as common themes as they seem to have some general currency in the milieu.

First of all, to be a Satanist is often described as a mediating or balancing ideological act: After all, LaVey formulated Satanism as “nine parts social respectability to one part outrage” (Barton 1990: 16). Although this aphorism sounds rather unbalanced, it would be fruitful to understand the negotiation between positive and negative, carnal and intellectual, creative and scientific, individual and social, indeed between hedonism and pragmatic materialism as *redressing* the negative conditioning of modern life (Dyrendal forthcoming: 15). The opposition to authority structures is constant but should always be understood in tandem with self-development; thus the opposition to Christianity is actually a balanced expression of humanity, as is the opposition to the drug-crazed idealistic sexual

revolution of the hippie movement. The pragmatic law-and-order, anti-drugs, sex-among-consenting-adults values of Anton LaVey is not just a survival strategy in society, but also a central expression of control, of balance: More conservative than a hippie and more transgressive than the average inhabitant of the West, the Satanist constantly searches for “the third way” or “satanic alternative” (LaVey 1998: 29ff, 61ff, Shankbone 2007: 9) that provides the integrative factor.<sup>10</sup>

Secondly, a satanic nature is both described as an inner Black Flame, an authentic self, and as an embodied, performed act. Thus, Satanists are both “born, not made” (Barton 1990: 60f, 82f, 122ff, Shankbone 2007: 3–4) and constantly asserted through enaction and consumption (Barton 1990: 149–167, LaVey 1998: 79f). While the specifics vary from one type to the next, this is an important dynamic in the self-realization of contemporary religious Satanism. Indeed, we can relate this to the complex negotiations of individual choice and satanic perspective that can be found in initiatory systems, reading lists and discussions of high and popular culture’s “inherent satanic qualities” as opposed to “what is satanic for me”. An important part of the “how” of Satanism relates to the “what” in that the appropriation of cultural material as “satanic” depends on this subtle socialization of the born Satanist (Dyrendal 2008).

Both of these themes relate to satanic reflections on aesthetics and style, a third common theme. While it is impossible to single out a certain common denominator for people as individualistic as this, certain basic aesthetic dictums are nevertheless prevalent, especially within subcultures. Generally, the individual satanic aesthetics is in tension with the mainstream, either striking or classical (LaVey 1998: 115ff). As I have written elsewhere, LaVey integrated social psychology and visual theory in his understanding of a satanic aesthetics (Petersen 2005: 445f; see LaVey 1969: 111–113, LaVey 1989 and Barton 1990: 67). Thus a satanic taste is as varied and directed as the consumption of culture in general; a general trend could be described as a *consciousness* of and *reflection* on aesthetics and style (Dyrendal 2008: 25).

Fourthly, important iconographical “themes” are the pentagram and the Devil. The “material” pentagram (or “inverted” five-pointed star, as it is commonly called), often inscribed within one or two circles, has replaced the inverted cross as *the* prime symbol of Satanism today. It is found on a host of books (*The Satanic Bible*, *The Satanic Rituals* and *The Satanic Witch* by Anton LaVey are cases in point), on websites, clothing and of course medallions. Through a process of appropriation this symbol has come to connote adherence to a satanic “way of life” and participation in the satanic milieu in much the same way the “spiritual” pentagram has come to denote “Witchcraft” (Medway 2001: 25f, Petersen 2005: 444f, Faxneld 2006: 105); this is in contrast to the connotations prevalent in popular culture, of course: Black magic, evil and Devil worship. Some groups

---

<sup>10</sup> The Balance Factor is in fact a magical dictum both in lesser and greater magic as well as an ethical and ideological premise. See LaVey 1969: 127f, Barton 1990: 67, Flowers 1997: 193ff, Aquino 2005: 623.

rest on simple expositions of meaning, like the goat-head (two horns, two ears and a beard) contained in the pentagram, while others give detailed descriptions of the historical pedigree and symbolic content of their version: Pythagorean mathematics (the numbers phi and pi, perfection), Egyptian religion (The Goat of Mendes, Amon), the “pentagon house” and “blazing angles”, Lucifer and the morning star, the “fork” of the third way and so on (Shankbone 2007: 9, Gilmore 2005, Jantsang n.d., Flowers 1997: 230). Similarly, representations of the Devil and other adversaries (such as Baphomet, The Goat of Mendes, Set and the Dragon) abound. Again, these should be understood as creative appropriations and reinterpretations of images in the construction of self and tradition.

Finally, magic and ritual practice is a fifth common theme, whether understood psychologically as “lesser and greater magic”, “the intellectual decompression chamber” (LaVey 1969: 107ff, LaVey 1972, 1989) or “self-transformational psychodramas” (Shankbone 2007: 9, Gilmore 2007: 221ff), or more esoterically as magical Workings (Aquino 2002 [1975], Flowers 1997) or a creative “Art and Science” (*The Importance of Ritual in Satanism*). A secularized psychological or semi-scientific interpretation is nevertheless widespread in the satanic milieu; and in most cases, a pragmatic attitude is taken: Magic and rituals are expressive techniques of the self rather than occult instruments of power. Again, manipulation, emotional release, creativity and celebration are all linked to the realization of the self. As such, magic and rituals are prime examples of the dual process of “sacralization of the secular” and “secularization of the sacred” described by Christopher Partridge (Partridge 2004: [Part 1](#)). Traditional material is reinterpreted through a secular lens (magic as psychology, for example), but this, in turn, could be understood as a sacralization of the secular itself (e.g. psychology is self-transformative magic).

As I have alluded to repeatedly in the preceding analysis, it is important to frame a substantial or content-oriented discussion of contemporary religious Satanism with a constructive approach. It is to this we shall now turn.

### The “How” of Satanism

To understand the “what” of modern Satanism, we should appreciate that the concept of “Satanism” as such is of course integrated in the wider Christian tradition through theological metaphysics, Biblical passages, Gnostic speculations, demonology and folk myths in the form of the great Adversary and his followers.<sup>11</sup> Both Christians and modern Satanists can continue to construct themselves through

---

<sup>11</sup> I will not present a detailed timeline or discussion of either Satanism or alleged Devil worship here. The interested reader should peruse treatments such as Russell 1977, 1981, 1984, 1986, Flowers 1997, Medway 2001, Murchembled 2003, Schmidt 2003 [1992], Faxneld 2006 for earlier and Petersen 2005, Baddeley 2000 for more contemporary chronologies.

strategies of Othering while appealing to and appropriating support from the past and present. As such, the term is a *floating signifier*, a loose semantic cannon that can be filled with a variety of meaning and used accordingly in discursive battles (see Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 105ff). But as I mentioned earlier, modern *satanic* interpretations of “Satanism” cannot be subsumed under a simplistic anti-Christian nomenclature. To comprehend this present situation we must turn to the reinterpretations of literary Romanticism and “occultists” of the nineteenth century, which have disembedded Satan and Satanism from a Christian context in modernity.

*Dis-embedding and re-embedding* are closely related to the process of detraditionalization and the wider processes of privatization, secularization and globalization inherent in late modernity.<sup>12</sup> First proposed by Anthony Giddens, disembedding describes a condition of social activity and social relations in modern societies alongside separation of time and space and a reflexive appropriation of knowledge (Giddens 1990: 21ff, 53ff): “... the “lifting out” of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space” (ibid: 21). As developed by Olav Hammer, the dual processes of dis- and reembedding should be understood as techniques or strategies of appropriation and legitimation in modern religions – they can thus explain the radical eclecticism and syncretism in meaning- and identity-making today (Hammer 2001a, 2001b): “Bits and pieces of non-Western traditions are disembedded from their original religious contexts. Through an incessant bricolage carried out by leading religious virtuosi, these fragments are re-embedded in a modern, Western esoteric religious setting” (Hammer 2001a: 56). Hammer then places the results of these strategies on a spectrum from *structurally conservative* to *structurally radical* cultural products of reinterpretation: Old wine on new bottles as opposed to new wine on old bottles (ibid.: 46).

It is my firm belief that these hypotheses can be applied to processes *within* Western traditions, here namely the figure of Satan; as such, the disembedding and reembedding of Satan has moved from a more structurally conservative mould, where surface characteristics are changed but the basic dynamics of the Christian adversary are retained, as in romantic, early esoteric and modernist interpretations, to a more structurally radical mould, where the surface characteristics are retained but the basic structures are new, as in rationalist and esoteric Satanism today. Let me explain through some examples.

Various figures in the Romantic Movement, such as Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Blake, disembedded the Devil, Satan, Lucifer from the narrow constraints of Christianity and reembedded the figure in an aesthetic and classical context: The ultimate rebel and tragic hero (See Russell 1986: 168ff, Schock

---

<sup>12</sup> This is not the place to discuss the finer points of secularization theory; suffice it to say that while I agree with Christopher Partridge’s excellent analysis, I still consider secularization a valid, although complex, multiform and reversible, explanation of developments in western societies (Partridge 2004: [Part 1](#)).



2003, Dyrendal 2005: 50f, Faxneld 2006: 85ff). Through a synthetization of Satan with Prometheus and Pan, which is parallel to Hammer's concept of *pattern recognition* (Hammer 2001a: 51f), Satan is reinterpreted to support an ideological and aesthetic rebellion against the norm – a carnal and emotional individualist against the cold ratio of science, the arid morality of Christianity and the tyranny of political repression.<sup>13</sup> This reinterpretation is not without predecessors; it is in fact a consequence of the moral ambivalence of the Devil in folk myths, the partisan reading of John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and especially the secularization of Enlightenment philosophers (Russell 1986: 156, 169; Schock: 5ff, 11ff). From then on, the genie is out of the bottle, so to speak: Satan and Satanism have gained a new meaning outside Christianity:

The story of Satan takes on the aspect of a modern myth, wherein the conventional explanatory power of primary myth is displaced by other social functions. Destroyed as a pattern of traditional belief, the story of Satan becomes a desacralized and flexible form, its structure and meaning receptive to ideological manipulation and more radical transformation. (Schock 2003: 17)

One is tempted to continue the story through Hammer's *stages of appropriation*: From the initial travel reports, where a custom is presented, it is gradually transformed by spokespersons within the esoteric milieu on a discursive and then practical level through DIY-books and trendsetting templates (Hammer 2001a: 51). In the same vein, various decadent, modernist and *fin de siècle* inheritors of the romantic spirit continued and expanded on the tentative re-appropriation of Satan and the "Satanic" identity (Russell 1986: 190ff, Faxneld 2006: 97, 125ff), only to be integrated in the cultic milieu of the modern west.

What should be underlined in the present analysis is that these initial "travel reports" retain a structurally conservative conception of Satan, as the return to traditional Christian interpretations by many a maturing rebel alludes to. Both Jeffrey B. Russell and Peter A. Schock stress the unsystematic and ambivalent use of Satan that consciously or unconsciously are presented by Romantic Satanism and later decadents (Russell 1986: 156, Schock 2003: 5–6). Both traditionally Christian, pseudo-Gnostic and integrative understandings of Satan can be found side by side,<sup>14</sup> but they are still far from the wholly modern oppositional

---

<sup>13</sup> I should stress that this interpretation is based primarily on *English* Romanticism; in reality the Romantic view of science, religion and politics is complicated by various interpretations and reinterpretations in the development of these ideas in different countries and at different times.

<sup>14</sup> Gnostic (Satan is good, Jahve is evil) and integrative (Satan and God are two sides of the same coin) interpretations of Satanism are described by Joachim Schmidt as distinctive types (Schmidt 2002: 11ff) – I would rather include them as part of a wider Christian field or at the most proto-esoteric Satanism to simplify matters.

self-religion to be found today, and should rather be understood as early symbolic and political appropriations of Satan than Satanism as such.

Basically, the same reservation is suitable for the next stage of appropriation, namely the gradual transformation by spokespersons within the esoteric milieu on a discursive level, although the esoteric dimension is strengthened as Satan is integrated “to fit with culturally predetermined elements of their own (Western) tradition” (Hammer 2001a: 51). Thus the positive re-evaluation and liberation from a Christian context can be seen in the work of H.P. Blavatsky, Eliphas Levi and Aleister Crowley, for example – but what is striking is that their Gnostic and/or integrative interpretations are still rather dependent on a Christian “matrix” (Faxneld 2006: 101ff), and Satan is made to fulfil a purpose rather than be the purpose itself, so to speak. The most radical early exponent of disembedding in this period (late nineteenth and early twentieth century) is Stanislaw Przybyszewski, whose *Die Synagoge Satans* (“Satan’s Synagogue”, 1897/1900) and *Satans Kinder* (“Satan’s Children”) (1897) occasionally anticipate later, more rationalistic interpretations of Satan, as Satan is equated with the principle of evolution and the brutal nature of existence, and the human is inherently satanic (ibid.: 140ff). When one delves deeper into the thoughts of Przybyszewski, though, he is still dependent on Gnostic inversions and always considered himself a Catholic (ibid.).

With the third stage of appropriation, the practical DIY books “that transform the new element from a belief to be accepted to a practice to be performed or an experience to be sought after” (Hammer 2001a: 51), we get closer to the matter of structurally radical products. Even though the DIY-metaphor is stretched rather far, I will consider the use of Satan by Ben Kadosh, the sex-magical order around Maria de Naglowska and Fraternitas Saturni in the early part of the twentieth century more *practical* examples of reembedding (Faxneld 2006: 150–194, Flowers 1997: 147ff). Satan is integrated in ritual practices and organizational aspects, and the positive evaluation is now keyed to personal realization through esoteric work – thus only faint traces of Christianity are left, although the groups in all cases utilize earlier understandings of Satan. In this sense, we now arrive at early formulations of esoteric Satanism in the sense I have described previously, and it is only a matter of time before the “trendsetting templates” of Anton LaVey’s *The Satanic Bible* and Church of Satan, Michael Aquino’s *The Book of Coming Forth By Night* and Temple of Set, and Tani Jantsang’s *Dark Doctrines* makes Satanism generally available and Satan the detraditionalized symbol found today. These formulations are clearly eclectic and only relate to Christian concepts on the surface level – they are structurally radical cultural products.

If we now move towards contemporary religious Satanism itself as a synchronic entity, these disembedding and reembedding processes are appropriated by modern groups and individuals in a wider appeal to tradition, one of three major strategies of epistemology discussed in Olav Hammers seminal work *Claiming Knowledge* (Hammer 2001b). In this sense, historical processes of appropriation are retroactively used to selectively construct an *emic historiography* – the modern interpretations of Satanism are antedated to previous times and the historical

actors recruited in the modern struggles for ownership of the concept (*ibid.*: 34–36 and Part IV). Through the dual tactics of appropriation and innovation, significant exotic Others are embedded in novel constructions of tradition built upon a syncretism of homogenized elements, providing the new traditions with a much needed validity and authority – that of age and continuity (*ibid.*: 501). Apart from the figures and movements already mentioned, Friederich Nietzsche, Marquis de Sade and Benjamin Franklin are examples of Others recruited as “de facto-satanists”, to use a LaVeyan term.<sup>15</sup>

Aside from the appeal to tradition or emic historiography, Hammer mentions the appeal to self (narratives of experience, conversion narratives) and the appeal to science (as a language of faith) as legitimizing strategies, which provide other avenues of authority, namely individual experience and rationality. Both can be found in formulations within satanic groups; compare the themes of balance, satanic nature and rituals above, where individual experience is emphasized *and* tempered by appeals to science. What is important in the present context, however, is that the various strategies are aimed two ways as boundary maintenance: inwards and outwards. To understand this further, let us return to the delimiting exercises I undertook in the beginning. We should understand modern Satanism as a contested space, where actors of different persuasions compete as to the ownership of definition in public claims-making arenas.

In a recent article on the social construction of Witchcraft and Wicca, Titus Hjelm presents a “contextual process model for the location of religions in society” (Hjelm 2007: 293). Society and culture’s conceptions of religion and the alternative religion’s very existence meet in the claims-making arena, where boundary maintenance and legitimation takes place. This in turn relate back to both society and religion in feedback loops through the “reciprocal typification of religions and adherents by those participating in public discourse” (*ibid.*: 297). Some discursive battles result in a temporary unification of interests within the alternative religion to meet threats from without, thus providing a shared identity and sense of community, while the same or other battles, whether from the outside or inside, produce divisions and fragmentation in the movement: “One the one hand, struggling against negative stereotypes and misinformation, contemporary Witchcraft has changed into a more “exoteric” movement. On the other hand, the same process has created new boundaries within the movement” (*ibid.*: 306. Note deleted).

This could easily be transferred to contemporary religious Satanism understood as a satanic milieu. In the same vein, modern spokespersons of Satanism tend

---

<sup>15</sup> As a side note, it is important to remember that the strategy has a negative as well as a positive side: Syncretism functions both as a positive identification and negative distancing, and it is important to grasp both what is used and what is ignored or perhaps mentioned as negative Others (and thus in a sense builds the positive identity – we are *not* as compared to who they are) (Rothstein 1996: 18ff). This subtext of explicit denial or implicit aporia is an important part of any tradition.

to address the cultural stereotype of the bloodthirsty cultist with some unified fervour. In this sense, Satanism tries to conform to a vague understanding of “good religion” (ibid.: 291f) in the surrounding society in sharp contrast to Christian commentators and popular media. Conversely, a too broad understanding of Satanism attracts unwanted “dabblers”, joins together incompatible interpretations under one diffuse nomenclature and weakens the antinomian side of Satanism itself. This prompts the various interventions of “pseudo-Satanism” and boundary maintenance found in satanic literature and on satanic websites and message boards (see Petersen 2002b and Lewis 2003: 103ff).<sup>16</sup> To understand this, let me provide three interpretive matrices as related to the processes of producing, distributing and consuming modern Satanism (Fairclough 1992: 73, Hammer 2001a: 43f).

Transgressive and mundane subcultural capital is used by Keith Kahn-Harris to describe various ways of claiming power and status by contributing to the “scene” of extreme metal (Kahn-Harris 2007: Chapter 6). While mundane subcultural capital connects to mundane practices oriented towards collective space, such as knowledge of history, genres and bands, scenic ethics and commitment to the scene, transgressive capital connects to radical expressions of individualism and thus authenticity, innovation and nonconformity to trends. As such mundane capital relates to traditional fields of power and acts as a unifying force, while transgressive capital are embroiled in fields of culture and art and functions as a force of fragmentation. Both are necessary for the scene: Mundane actors solidify the scene and acts as audience, whereas transgressive actors provide renewal and pleasure.

These categories and the underlying understanding of negotiation and performance can be used to understand various positions within the satanic milieu and concrete groups. First of all, there is some overlap between the positive self-realization and negative non-conformity of the individual Satanist, as this individual project inevitably becomes related to the wider milieu, especially on the internet. But both self-realization and non-conformity are related to transgressive capital; it is rather in the explicit commitment to “Satanism” or some specific group that mundane subcultural capital starts to accrue. Even a religion as individualistic as modern Satanism has signposts that can be found on the internet, in movement texts and on rarer occasions through collective activities. The further one moves from non-committed seeker to collective commitment, the stronger the signposts. In many ways these processes stand in a dialectic relationship with the clustering of elements I described earlier and the specific “what’s” that are promoted as satanic (Dyrendal 2005, 2008, forthcoming).

Secondly, the two types of capital are in tension: Mundane capital views excessive transgression as a threat, while transgressive capital views excessive mundanity as conformity or selling out. Modern Satanists often point to excessive

---

<sup>16</sup> The examples are *legio*: see Scar 1998 vs. Shankbone 2007, the *Satanic Bunco Sheet*, Barton 1995, Rose 2000, Nemo 2007 and Gilmore 1999, 2005a, 2007: 170ff for illustrative examples.

transgression, as with Black Metal musicians' church burnings and murders; but too much mainstream is also detrimental to the uniqueness of Satanism as such and to the individual identity.<sup>17</sup> This is also translated into a battle of generations. New members and participants are on the one hand marginalized by older members before they accumulate capital; on the other, the young members criticise the control and conformity of the established satanic groups.

Bearing this generational conflict in mind, another interpretive matrix is the concept of "routinization of creativity" as proposed by Helen A. Berger. She concludes her analysis of contemporary Witchcraft in the United States with a chapter on the "routinization of creativity": "... as the religion itself changes from a fluid structure emphasizing individual innovation and creativity to a more formalized religion, there is a growing schism between those who support or work for structural modification of the religion and those who oppose these changes" (Berger 1999: 100). Although the name remains the same, whether Wicca or Satanism, things change through the establishment of tradition and institutionalization. Fissures erupt between older members with children and younger members, organizers and participants, spokespersons and grunts and newcomers and old-timers. All in all, these pressures result in standardization of rituals and practices, professionalization of administration and a homogenization of expression in both the smaller groups and *in the movement as a whole* (Berger 1999: 122).

This can of worms is obvious in the tension between older groups within the satanic milieu and younger participants on the edges, when formalized databases, FAQ sheets and introductory texts are posted online to answer the common questions the older members are tired of answering (Petersen 2002b, 2007). It is also obvious within groups, producing schismatic groups and conflicts of interest (for an early example, see Petersen [forthcoming]).

A third matrix for the construction and performance of contemporary religious Satanism I want to mention here is the factor of nationality. Contemporary Satanism is mainly an American phenomenon from its inception, and much can be said about the effects of globalization and the internet, and the effects of these distributory elements on both production and consumption of Satanism (see Söderlind & Dyrendal and the fifth primary document in the present volume). There is no doubt that the conflict of the global and the local affects Satanism as well, and the satanic milieu should be understood as a glocalised phenomenon. On the other hand, we are talking about small groups both on a local and global level, and it is not my impression that nationality itself plays a large part in identity construction within Satanism. Perhaps it is only fitting that the central instrument in promoting awareness of other Satanists, the global, transnational internet, is also the main battleground for the definitions of Satanism today.

---

<sup>17</sup> It is my experience that debates erupt from time to time around "toothless" conformist Satanism and the "revival" of LaVey's one part outrage or *non-conformity*.

## The “Why” of Satanism: Overview of the Contributions and Primary Material

The aim of life is self-development. To realise one’s nature perfectly – that is what each of us is here for. People are afraid of themselves, nowadays. They have forgotten the highest of all duties, the duty that one owes to one’s self. Of course they are charitable. They feed the hungry, and clothe the beggar. But their own souls starve, and are naked. Courage has gone out of our race. Perhaps we never really had it. The terror of society, which is the basis of morals, the terror of God, which is the secret of religion – these are the two things that govern us.

Oscar Wilde: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1908 (1890) (pp. 28–29)

As we have seen, contemporary religious Satanism in its’ many guises should be understood as a complex negotiation of atheism, secularism, esotericism and self: A self-religion in the modern age. Through the double move of negative *delimitations* of identity (estrangement or “Othering”), and positive *constructions* of identity (affinity, alterity and appropriation), modern Satanisms provide tools for the realization of one’s self in a secular age – realizations that attempt to bridge the gap between matter and intellect, nature and culture, rationality and mystery that is entrenched in Western culture. The concrete solutions are varied; from Church of Satan’s carnal to Temple of Set’s isolate self. But they all understand the power of transgression allying oneself with a most powerful symbol of resistance. It is thus no wonder that Satanism has some appeal in modern societies demanding reflexive negotiations of individuality and belonging, tradition and renewal and self and Other; in fact, it corresponds rather neatly to the wider contours of a diluted Western, post-protestant and late-capitalist ideology (Alfred 1976: 198ff), and I would advocate the inclusion of modern Satanism in all its multiplicity in the wider academic studies of contemporary Western religion to answer the elusive “why”. I think it would be fitting to pass on the stage to the contributors of this book.

The contributions are divided into three parts. The [first part](#) contains broader studies of influential groups and important aspects of the Satanic milieu, especially regarding historical developments, the construction of tradition and issues of legitimacy. The [second part](#) narrows the view to regional variations, especially with studies on Northern and Eastern Europe. The [third part](#) consists of primary documents selected for their representational and informational value, with material from rationalist and esoteric groups covering five different angles. These documents will be introduced individually in [Part III](#).

The first two chapters in [Part I](#) are revised editions of seminal papers on modern Satanism. Graham Harvey’s “Satanism: Performing Alterities and Othering”, which is loosely based on his important study of Satanism in Britain in 1995, examines the major strands of modern Satanism and relates them to the confrontations and identity-constructions in modernity. He suggests that we should be aware of the complexities of the word Satanism as both a self-designation and instrument of

Othering – we all imagine alterities and others, but some also identify with these alterities as others.

James R. Lewis' "Infernal Legitimacy" expands on the arguments from "Diabolical Authority" (2002) regarding the construction of authority and legitimacy in *The Satanic Bible*, the Church of Satan and in the modern Satanic subculture. Important avenues of legitimacy stem from the (partly fictional) biography of Anton LaVey, the dual appeal to science and tradition and the monumental importance of *The Satanic Bible* itself. Using questionnaire data and hermeneutical analysis, the chapter illustrates the complex negotiations and conflicts around Satan, Satanism and the Satanic today.

Asbjørn Dyrendal's "Darkness Within: Satanism as a Self-religion", further expounds on an idea first put forth by Graham Harvey, namely that we could understand modern Satanism as "self-religion" or "self-spirituality". Dyrendal puts the hypothesis to the test through a comparison of standard New Age formulations and in-depth analyses of the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set. He suggests that we can see similarities in both diagnosis, goals and cure, but that Satanism has alternate ways of conceptualizing Self, socialization and empowerment in relation to modernity.

Maxwell Davies' contribution, "Self-Conscious Routinization and the Post-Charismatic Fate of the Church of Satan from 1997 to the Present", is a development of James R. Lewis' analysis mentioned above, as Davies takes the theory of Max Weber and applies it to the evolution of the Church of Satan primarily after the death of Anton LaVey. Thus the hows and the whys of the post-LaVey church is explained through an examination of the motivations for its continued existence and the structural roles created within it to maintain the charisma of its founder routinized in the Church itself.

In "Embracing Others than Satan: The Multiple Princes of Darkness in the Left-Hand Path Milieu" Kennet Granholm takes a critical look at the scholarship working with Satanic and Left-Hand Path groups in order to clarify the concepts and definitions in the field. The two terms are not congruent; thus he proposes the concept of "post-Satanism" to differentiate between groups designating themselves as Satanic and groups that, while in the general trajectory of modern Satanism, should be demarcated and studied in other terms. Granholm strongly advocates the abolition of the term Satanism as it is associated with negative connotations and does not cover the specific constructions of tradition and identity found in contemporary groups.

Concluding Part I, Kathleen Lowney's "The Devil's Down in Dixie: Studying Satanism in South Georgia" could be considered as more of a reflection piece in that it discusses the various problems inherent in the study of adolescent Satanists and Satanic groups in relation to the researcher, the researched and the wider community. The autobiographical story detailing Lowney's experiences with the review board, the community, the media, and the Satanists themselves highlight the difficulties in doing qualitative research on a controversial topic and provides important ethnographical advice through an intriguing personal narrative.

The first chapter in [Part II](#), Milda Alisauskiene's "The Peculiarities of Lithuanian Satanism: Between Crime and Atheism in Cyberspace" focuses on the particulars of Satanism in the national context of Lithuania. She presents an insiders look at Satanism through the presentation of an interview with "Heretic" and "Travelling in the Dark" of the amorphous group *The Brotherhood of the Dark*, while the subsequent analysis evaluate both the classificatory system of Massimo Introvigne and the plurality of Satanisms in Lithuania in relation to medialized myths and empirical realities.

In the chapter "Satanism in Estonia", Ringo Ringvee examines the complex political manoeuvres of the Church and state in Estonia and contrasts them with the different actions of youth Satanists and rationalist LaVeyan Satanists both in relation to each other and the political reality of a young liberal democracy. While it seems that reactions based on moral panic and stereotypical profiling are strong in Estonia, primarily because of the ostensive actions of adolescents and the knee-jerk attitudes of the media, churches and the political and judicial systems, organized Satanists have tried to gain recognition and have a presence there.

Rafal Smoczynski's "Cyber-Satanism and Imagined Satanism: Dark Symptoms of Late Modernity" analyses two diverging discourses related to Satanism: the imagined Satanism of anti-Satanist circles and the identities and traditions of existing Satanic on-line communities in Poland. While both are very real and have very real consequences, the first discourse is related to repressive fantasies and mythological symbolizations of the monstrous Other that Smoczynski examines through Freudian theory, while the other relates to the identity-construction of self-designated individuals and groups in contemporary, secularized society. This second discourse as expressed on-line is characterized by fluidity and eclecticism and could be studied as neo-tribal communities.

In an effort to shed some light on an alleged cultural gap within Satanism, Didrik Söderlind and Asbjørn Dyrendal's "Social Democratic Satanism? Some Examples of Satanism in Scandinavia" examines the complex negotiations of style, ideology and legitimation in Satanism from America and Scandinavia through interviews with spokespersons in these milieus. These negotiations are seen as both heterogenizing adaptive responses to globalized Satanism and more locally founded adaptations, thus making modern Satanism as much a part of the "glocalizing" trend as any other. In addition, core values such as "creative alienation" and "rational self-interest" are activated in different ways in different social contexts, as success and opposition are conceptualized in various ways in local contexts.

Gry B. Mørk's chapter "'With my Art I am the fist in the Face of God': On Old-School Black Metal" is a detailed and insightful look at the discourse and practices of Norwegian Black Metal in the early nineties. Even though it is obviously rather a worship of darkness, nature and masculinity than Satanism in the sense used in this book, and thus understood as an adolescent rebellion and meaning-making, she manages to isolate some parallels with religious Satanism and illustrate some ideological similarities between reactive, paradigmatically conform Satanism and



organized Satanisms of a rationalist or esoteric bend. Consequently, paradigmatic Satanism as understood as inverted Christianity and worship of Darkness are shown to be deeply meaningful for those involved, especially as constructions of masculinity and delimitations between cultural expressions.

Through the examination of two charges of “satanic” crime, Andrea Menegotto’s “Italian Martyrs of Satanism: Sister Maria Laura Mainetti and Father Giorgio Govoni” confirms the findings of a number of scholars regarding the satanic panic and the mythological character of the alleged perpetrators. In the process, he accurately distinguishes between adolescent “Satanism” of the deviant sort and the modern Satanism of organized groups whether “occult” or “rationalist”, and relates these to juridical and media-related aspects of Italian society.

Dave Evans’ “Speculating on the Point 003 Percent? Some Remarks on the Chaotic Satanic Minorities in the UK” investigates the complex relations between chaos magicians, Satanists, Left-Hand Path practitioners, Christian authorities and wider society. Even within small minority groups (or perhaps *especially* within minority groups) the processes of Othering are working against Satanists, replacing self-identification with demonization. In order to clarify why Satanism occupies this position, Evans discusses the results of two different British censuses and dives into various expressions of mythological and literary Satanism and the Left-Hand Path.

## References

- Alfred, Randall H. 1976. “The Church of Satan”. In Charles Y. Glock & Robert N. Bellah (eds): *The New Religious Consciousness*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 180–202.
- Aquino, Michael. 1985 [1975]. *The Book of Coming Forth by Night*. San Francisco: Temple of Set.
- Aquino, Michael. 2002 [1975]. “Black Magic”. Pdf-file obtained through private correspondence. Introductory section of the *Crystal Tablet of Set*, the first volume of the *Jeweled Tablets of Set*.
- Aquino, Michael. 2005. *The Church of Satan*. Fifth edition [internet]. San Francisco: Temple of Set.
- Aquino, Michael. 2006. *The Temple of Set*. Sixth edition [internet]. San Francisco: Temple of Set.
- Austin, J.L. 1962. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Baddeley, Gavin. 2000. *Lucifer Rising. Sin, Devil Worship and Rock ‘n’ Roll*. London: Plexus.
- Barton, Blanche. 1990. *The Church of Satan*. New York: Hell’s Kitchen Productions, Inc.
- Barton, Blanche. 1992. *The Secret Life of a Satanist*. Los Angeles: Feral House.

- Berger, Helen A. 1999. *A Community of Witches: Contemporary Neo-Paganism and Witchcraft in the United States*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Campbell, Colin. 1972. "The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization". *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain*, vol. 5 (1972), pp. 119–136.
- Campbell, Colin. 1978. "The Secret Religion of the Educated Classes". *Sociological Analysis* 39, pp. 136–146.
- Crabtree, Vexen. 2002 [internet]. "More than Humanism". Accessed February 5, 2008 at <http://www.dpjs.co.uk/humanism.html>
- Dyrendal, Asbjørn. 2004. "Satanisme – en innføring". *Din*, vol. 4 (2004), pp. 48–58.
- Dyrendal, Asbjørn. 2005. "Satanisme og populærkultur". *Din*, vol. 3–4 (2005), pp. 49–59.
- Dyrendal, Asbjørn. 2007. "Satanismens historie". *Humanist* nr. 1 (2007), pp. 4–34.
- Dyrendal, Asbjørn 2008. "Devillish Consumption. Popular Culture in Satanic Socialization". *NUMEN*, vol. 55, no. 1 (2008), pp. 1–31.
- Dyrendal, Asbjørn [forthcoming]. "Satanism and Popular Music". In Christopher Partridge & Eric Christianson (eds): *The Lure of the Dark Side. Satan and Western Demonology in Popular Culture*. London: Equinox Publishing.
- Fairclough, Norman. 1992. *Discourse and Social Change*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Faxneld, Per. 2006. *Mörkrets apostlar. Satanism i äldre tid*. Warszawa: Ouroboros.
- Flowers, Stephen R. 1997. *The Lords of the Left-Hand Path*. Smithville, Texas: Runa-Raven Press.
- Fritscher, Jack. 2004 [1971]. *Popular Witchcraft: Straight from the Witch's Mouth*. Second edition. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Gilmore, Peter H. 1999 [internet]. *A Map for the Misdirected*. Accessed July 5 2007 at <http://www.churchofsatan.com/Pages/Map.html>
- Gilmore, Peter H. 2005a [internet]. *Pretenders to the Throne: Regarding the Temple of Set*. Accessed July 5 2007 at <http://www.churchofsatan.com/Pages/Pretenders.html>
- Gilmore, Peter H. 2005b [internet]. *The History of the Origin of the Sigil of Baphomet and its Use in the Church of Satan*. Accessed November 2 2007 at <http://www.churchofsatan.com/Pages/BaphometSigil.html>
- Gilmore, Peter H. 2007. *The Satanic Scriptures*. Baltimore, MD: Scapegoat Publishing.
- Gubrium, Jaber F. & James A. Holstein. 1997. *The New Language of Qualitative Method*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hammer, Olav. 2001a. "Same Message From Everywhere: The Sources of Modern Revelation". In Rothstein, Mikael (ed.): *New Age Religion and Globalization*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, pp. 42–58.

- Hammer, Olav. 2001b. *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age*. Leiden: Brill.
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 2007. "The Trouble with Images: Anti-image Polemics and Western Esotericism". In Hammer, Olav & Kocku von Stuckrad (eds): *Polemical Encounters: Esoteric Discourse and Its Others*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 107–137.
- Harvey, Graham. 1995. "Satanism in Britain today". *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol. 10, no. 3 (1995), pp. 283–296.
- Harvey, Graham. 2002. "Satanism: Performing Alterity and Othering". *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11 (2002), pp. 53–68.
- Heelas, Paul. 1996. *The New Age Movement*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Heelas, Paul. 2002. "The Spiritual Revolution: From 'Religion' to 'Spirituality'". In Woodhead, Linda et al. (eds): *Religions in the Modern World*. London, New York: Routledge, pp. 357–379.
- Hermonen, Merja. 2002. "Rationalistic Satanism: The Individual as a Member of a Countercultural Tribe". *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11 (2002), pp. 69–104.
- Hjelm, Titus. 2007. "United in Diversity, Divided from Within: The Dynamics of Legitimation in Contemporary Witchcraft". In Hammer, Olav & Kocku von Stuckrad (eds): *Polemical Encounters: Esoteric Discourse and Its Others*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 291–311.
- Hodkinson, Paul. 2002. *Goth: Identity, Style and Subculture*. Oxford: Berg.
- Jantsang, Tani and others. N.d. [internet]. *Symbols of Satan? – Baphomet – Four Articles*. Accessed February 7, 2008 at <http://www.geocities.com/satanicreds/baph.html>
- Kahn-Harris, Keith. 2007. *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*. Oxford: Berg.
- Klein, Kim. 1970. "Witches are Back, and so are Satanists". *The Washington Post, Potomac*, May 10, 1970, pp. 10, 18, 20, 23, 37–38.
- Laclau, Ernesto & Chantal Mouffe. 1985. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London: Verso Books.
- La Fontaine, Jean. 1999. "Satanism and Satanic Mythology". In Ankerloo, Bengt & Stuart Clark (eds): *The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, vol. 6: The Twentieth Century*. London: Athlone Press, pp. 81–141.
- LaVey, Anton Szandor. 1969. *The Satanic Bible*. New York: Avon Books.
- LaVey, Anton Szandor. 1972. *The Satanic Rituals*. New York: Avon Books.
- LaVey, Anton Szandor. 1989 [1971]. *The Satanic Witch*. Los Angeles: Feral House.
- LaVey, Anton Szandor. 1992. *The Devil's Notebook*. Los Angeles: Feral House.
- LaVey, Anton Szandor. 1998. *Satan Speaks!* Los Angeles: Feral House.
- Lewis, James R. 2003. *Legitimizing New Religions*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Lincoln, Bruce. 2003. *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press.

- Lowney, Kathleen. 1995. "Teenage Satanism as Oppositional Youth Subculture". *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 23 (4), pp. 453–484.
- Medway, Gareth J. 2001. *Lure of the Sinister: The Unnatural History of Satanism*. New York: New York University Press.
- Murchembled, Robert. 2003. *A History of the Devil*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Nemo. 2007. *The Fire From Within. Nemo on Satanism*, vol. 1. USA: Prometheus Foundation.
- Paradise, Matt G. 2007. *Bearing the Devil's Mark*. USA: Purging Talon.
- Partridge, Christopher. 2004. *The Re-Enchantment of the West*, vol. 1. London: T & T Clark.
- Partridge, Christopher. 2005. *The Re-Enchantment of the West*, vol. 2. London: T & T Clark.
- Petersen, Jesper Aagaard. 2002a. "Introduction". In *SYZYGY: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11 (2002), pp. 5–11.
- Petersen, Jesper Aagaard. 2002b. "Binary Satanism: The Construction of Community in a Digital World". *Syzygy*, vol. 11 (2002), pp. 37–52.
- Petersen, Jesper Aagaard. 2005. "Modern Satanism: Dark Doctrines and Black Flames". In James R. Lewis & Jesper Aagaard Petersen (eds): *Controversial New Religions*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 423–457.
- Petersen, Jesper Aagaard. 2007. "Enacted Satanism: Religion in Hybrid Texts". Paper presented at the EASR/DVRW conference *Plurality and Representation*, University of Bremen, September 2007.
- Petersen, Jesper Aagaard. [forthcoming]. "Satanists and Nuts: The Role of Schism in Modern Satanism". In James R. Lewis (ed.): *Sacred Schisms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Przybyszewski, Stanislaw. 1979 [1897]. *Die Synagoge Satans: Entstehung und Kult des Hexensabbats, des Satanismus und der Schwarzen Messe*. Berlin: Verlag Clemens Zerkling.
- Przybyszewski, Stanislaw. 1993 [1897]. *Homo Sapiens/Satans Kinder*. Paderborn: Igel Verlag.
- Rose, Michael. 2000 [internet]. *Satanic Brotherhood?* Accessed July 5, 2007 at <http://www.churchofsatan.com/Pages/RoseBrother.html>
- Rothstein, Michael. 1996. *Belief Transformations*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
- Russell, Jeffrey Burton. 1977. *The Devil. Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Russell, Jeffrey Burton. 1981. *Satan. The Early Christian Tradition*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Russell, Jeffrey Burton. 1984. *Lucifer. The Devil in the Middle Ages*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Russell, Jeffrey Burton. 1986. *Mephistopheles. The Devil in the Modern World*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Sahlins, Marshall. 1985. *Islands of History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Saler, Benson. 2000. *Conceptualizing Religion*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Satanic Bunco Sheet*. N.d. [internet]. Accessed July 5· 2007 at <http://www.churchofsatan.com/Pages/Bunco.html>
- Scar, Kiki. 1998 [internet]. "Sado-magic for Satan. An interview with Zeena Schreck". *Cuiru Underground* 4 (2). Accessed October 11· 2007 at <http://www.black-rose.com/cuiru/archive/4-2/zeena.html>
- Schmidt, Joachim. 2003 [1992]. *Satanismus. Mythos und Wirklichkeit*. Marburg: Diagonal-Verlag.
- Schock, Peter A. 2003. *Romantic Satanism*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Schreck, Nicholas (ed.). 2001b. *Flowers from Hell. A Satanic Reader*. N.p.: Creation Books.
- Schreck, Nicholas & Zeena Schreck. 2002. *Demons of the Flesh. The Complete Guide to Left-Hand Path Sex Magic*. N.p.: Creation Books.
- Shankbone, David. 2007 [internet]. "Satanism: An interview with Church of Satan High Priest Peter Gilmore". Accessed January 14· 2008 at [http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Satanism:\\_An\\_interview\\_with\\_Church\\_of\\_Satan\\_High\\_Priest\\_Peter\\_Gilmore](http://en.wikinews.org/wiki/Satanism:_An_interview_with_Church_of_Satan_High_Priest_Peter_Gilmore).
- Taylor, John. 1995. *Linguistic Categorization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- The Importance of Ritual in Satanism*. N.d. [internet]. Accessed February 7· 2008 at <http://www.geocities.com/satanicreds/imp-ritual.htm>
- Walls, Nicholas Alexander. 2007 [internet]. "Interview: Peter Gilmore". Accessed February 5· 2008 at <http://nicholas-walls.com/sdblog/?p=5>
- Wikipedia, "Satanism" [internet]. Accessed January 30· 2008 at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satanism>
- Wilde, Oscar. 1992 (1908). *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Suffolk: Wordsworth Editions Ltd.

# PART I

## Broader Studies: History, Tradition, Legitimacy



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

## Chapter 2

# Satanism: Performing Alterity and Othering<sup>1</sup>

Graham Harvey

From among the many religious identities available today, there are a few people who chose to name themselves Satanists. In this paper, discussion of the activities and interests of such people is generated by the related facts that (a) their Satanism is a performance of alterity and (b) discourses about Satanism are generally revelatory of society's obsessions. That is, both "insiders" and "outsiders" similarly construct "Satanic" identities even when their understandings are (or can be) quite different. Satan continues to be the archetypal "other" and "transgressor". The precise form of transgression encouraged by such archetypes is, in turn, generative of passionate discourses from both self-identified Satanists and those claiming to know what Satanism "really is".

The research base for this paper began as a short ethnographic project in 1995 which aimed to discover if there were, in fact, self-identified Satanists in Britain. Discussion of the results of that project forms the majority of what follows. The parallel question of what a wider (but "interested") population think about Satanism has concerned me in various ways since 1995. Unsurprisingly, evangelical Christians have a stake here. But so too do various kinds of therapists and journalists. A shift in the discourses of both some kinds of Satanism and some kinds of opposition to Satanism (whether real or imagined) has taken place since 1995. One example is the proliferation of material available on the internet and therefore the increase of access to ideas about (if not membership of) Satanist groups (Petersen 2002). Another example of shifting expressions of or about Satanism is media interest in violence committed by self-identified Satanist vampires in Germany. Thus, discussion of the Satanism of the Church of Satan, the Temple of Set and the Order of the Nine Angles (respectively the founding form, the largest exemplar and the intended most sinister form of Satanism today) is followed by some comments on "Satanic vampires." A conclusion will make explicit comments on the related processes and performances of alterity and othering.

---

<sup>1</sup> The chapter is a revised version of "Satanism: Performing Alterity and Othering", *SYZGY: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture* vol. 11 (2002), pp. 53–68.



### Self-identified Satanism

Some self-identified Satanists belong to organizations of various sizes, some do not. Satanists hold wildly different understandings about what Satanism might be, what Satanists might do in order to justify their self-identity, and indeed about whom they think Satan is. They also vary in their claims about the origins or earlier history of Satanism. This, of course, is unsurprising because that “history” is comprised (largely or entirely) of claims and accusations and counts for very little in the construction of Satanists’ identities. Thus, I offer no view of the origins of the Devil, and say nothing decisive about when the “Black Mass” might have originally been performed. In fact, it matters little for this discussion whether such rituals were literary fictions or carnivalesque parodies, instruments of political and religious power struggles or hedonism reified into identity-politics, or actual and genuine acts of veneration to a putative devil. For what it is worth, I doubt that anyone before the late nineteenth century willingly accepted the label “Satanist”. Once people did begin to use the name it was almost certainly in order to appear more interestingly sinister. This, however, could only happen once it was fairly safe to do so – i.e. it is a product and evidence of a degree of secularization. However, only a very few individuals named themselves Satanists until the late sixties. It is to that time that I now turn.

### Satanism’s Foundation

Anton Szandor LaVey founded Satanism by forming the Church of Satan (CoS) in the sixties in California, and by writing *The Satanic Bible* (1969) and other similar books (see LaVey 1972, 1992). Undoubtedly he drew on existing beliefs and claims about Satan and Satanism. But LaVey’s Satanism could only be mistaken for the “coming out”, going public, or admission of the reality of the earlier fantasies and fears by someone who refused to read what LaVey wrote, listen to what he said, and observe what his Church did. Almost all that the CoS has in common with what people might expect Satanism to be is the sinister mask its founder and members like to present to the gullible. Really antisocial or immoral “Satanism” is no more substantial in CoS than in LaVey’s alleged performance as the Devil in the film *Rosemary’s Baby*. Certainly the performance is supposed to disturb, perhaps even offend, people – but it is play acting. LaVey’s Satanism behind the mask and masquerade is something else: a “self-religion”.

Paul Heelas coined the term “self-spirituality” to refer to the New Age movement (Heelas 1996). It usefully indicates what is central to a number of contemporary spiritualities: a project to discover, empower and enact our authentic (inner) nature currently contaminated by socialization. In the language of the New Age, “You are God, you are God, you are God.” And this “God” is to be found within, and its potential should be realized and expressed. This can generate spirituality of the mystical (or mystifying) kind separated from the everyday, the ordinary and the

mundane. But New Age is usually more like other religions in that it is inseparable from other aspects of life. In fact, some critics object to the success orientation of some New Agers. Indeed, New Age is manifest as much in styles of business as it is in devotion to angels and cosmic harmony. There is a logic in the notion that people who know they are God should be able to sell whatever they wish to sell and receive whatever they wish to receive.

Anton LaVey's CoS is a self-spirituality with a twist. It is not that Satanists insist "You are Satan, you are Satan, you are Satan" in some inversion of New Age and Christianity. Rather, it is that the attempted discovery of the true, inner self is undertaken not by positive thinking and harmonious living, and that the expression of one's true divinity is all "light", but that Satanism claims an even more radical rejection of socialization. According to LaVey religions are about power over people, gained when ordinary needs and desires are identified as "sin" or "delusion" and a "solution" (salvation or enlightenment) is offered to the obedient. Satan is the questioning of this system. Satan encourages each person to experiment and discover whether or not they find such needs and desires helpful.

LaVey's writings and CoS' magazine, *The Black Flame*, continually speak about Satan as if the name referred to an actual entity who speaks, acts, plans, desires, inspires and is addressed and summoned. Satan is, for example, said to be delighted when Christians use sensual music, and to accuse them of hypocrisy when they both bless troops and preach peace (LaVey 1969: 49). However, such talk of a seemingly personal Satan is intended to reinforce or empower the individual Satanist's "rational self-interest". Ritual, magic and lifestyle are boosted by such "psychodrama." Satan is a useful image for encouraging individualism as it refers to "opposition" or "non-conformity": "The reason it's called Satanism is because it's fun, it's accurate and it's productive" (LaVey 1992: 10). This is not a movement based on revelation from a divinity but a self-religion which encourages each individual to reach their own potential and promotes "rational self-interest".

In fact, it was somewhat inaccurate above to speak of the "discovery" of the true self: "One does not 'find' oneself, One creates one's self" (LaVey 1992: 44). In order to "create one's self", people are encouraged to honestly indulge their desires in the context of their society. CoS encourages people not to be abusive (a sign of immaturity) but to be oneself socially – albeit strongly and successfully. CoS does not offer a system of enlightenment or a technique for religious experience, but encourages "indulgence and a glorification of the carnal and the material" (Gilmore 1993). Satanism is not "a striving towards divinity" (either one's own or that of some greater being) but an acceptance and celebration of humanity's animal physical nature (Nadramia 1993). "The Satanist is expected not to worship diabolical deities but rather to manipulate them as symbols for the purpose of one's own glorification and gratification" (Alfred 1976: 185).

The Satanism of CS can be summarized (though with careful attention to context) in the first two of "the Nine Satanic Statements" in *The Satanic Bible*:

1. Satan represents indulgence, instead of abstinence!
  2. Satan represents vital existence, instead of spiritual pipe dreams!
- (LaVey 1969: 25).

The Nine Statements are more fully explored throughout LaVey's writings and *The Black Flame* and are also discussed in Alfred (1976).

For our present purposes, the sociological structure of CoS is important for two reasons: first, it is indicative of the nature of Satanism, and second, it led to another organization. CoS spread as a series of "chartered grottos" led by people who could demonstrate their "satanic" credentials by buying a charter and attracting a group. In the 1975 CoS "ceased its chartered grotto system as it was an experiment that was completed" and has since then "truly encourage[d] individualism and self-achievement" (Gilmore 1994; also see Barton 1990: 119, 129). People who join CoS now become members of a network and are free to meet together but rarely do so, valuing the encouraged independence. Their major link is through *The Black Flame*, published in New York and distributed world-wide. Thus, there is now no *organized* group called the Church of Satan. But it seems clear that when CoS did function as a series of linked local meetings, this fitted uneasily with its ideology and was probably intended to fail. The affirmation of individuality, personal excellence and self indulgence might encourage people to play at being leaders, but their success must be counted by the lack of followers. This kind of Satanism does not generate group cohesion and congregational structures, but promotes individualism and networking. In the UK in 1995 the best indicator of the size of CoS was the distribution of *The Black Flame*, and that indicates very low numbers indeed. Neither was there evidence of any desire for growth and I have seen no indications that CoS has grown since then.

Meanwhile, despite the important and lasting influence of LaVey and CoS on contemporary Satanism, their non-metaphysical approach and rejection of hierarchical degree structures has led some Satanists to form their own diverse groups. A brief aside on claims about multi-generational Satanism might be useful before that, in order to be very clear about an implication of the above.

### **Multi-Generational Satanism**

Contrary to the claim of the previous section that Satanism was initiated by Anton LaVey in the sixties – or, perhaps more accurately, that LaVey took various available fictional images of Satanism and created a reality – it is sometimes asserted that Satanism exists in particular families or groups over many generations, perhaps originating hundreds of years ago. Not only have I found no evidence to demonstrate the veracity of such claims, but I am persuaded that there is good evidence to question the likelihood of such multi-generational Satanism. The claims themselves are usually both exaggerated and inexact. Exaggerations include extravagant assertions such as that ten percent of the British population

are Satanists. At the same time it is often claimed that “a member of the royal family is a Satanist” without anyone publicly naming the accused. Similar claims are made in many other countries, all politicians and other famous figures are evidently suspect of leading a conspiracy that includes a remarkably large number of other people and threatens to engulf entire societies. In my research among a wide variety of self-identified Satanists I have yet to hear a narrative that is commonplace among most other religionists. Wiccans often claim to have been initiated by a grandmother, evangelical Christians often claim to have been led to Jesus by a relative. The only people who make even vaguely similar claims about Satanism are those claiming to have escaped. It is, at least, most unlikely that if multi-generational Satanism exists it never includes those who are happy to be Satanists. More than this, the very nature of Satanism requires doubt about it being disseminated within families or the kinds of groups alleged.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Temple of Set**

The Temple of Set (ToS) is an international organization which was incorporated as a non-profit Church in California in 1975, receiving state and federal recognition and tax-exemption later that year.

During research about “Satanic ritual abuse” (Harvey 1995a) I was approached by a UK member of the ToS who was concerned that I might be given false information regarding Satanism and the ToS. After some correspondence the ToS agreed (with some enthusiasm) to distribute a questionnaire specifically designed for its membership in Britain. Both the senior British ToS initiate, David Austen, and the Temple’s High Priest, Michael Aquino, were said to have been keen that members responded to the questionnaire. I published the results of that questionnaire survey (Harvey 1995b) and here provide a summary of the Temple’s interests and activities. The continuing validity of my previous research has been checked by reference to the vast amounts of information now easily obtainable by careful internet searches.<sup>3</sup>

It may be useful to begin with the question of numbers. In 1995 I received eleven responses to my questionnaire. When I discussed this with David Austen in an interview he suggested that this was around twenty percent of the UK membership. I am fairly confident that ToS is the largest “Satanist” organization in the UK (and in many other countries) and conclude that there are less than one hundred such Satanists in the UK. However, even these numbers might give a false impression. We should not imagine a gathering of fifty ToS Satanists for whatever purposes. Jean La Fontaine reports that “according to one former member I spoke to who attended several meetings, they never assembled more than about twelve

---

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion drawing similar conclusions see La Fontaine 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Most of this information was only available to ToS members in 1995 but some of it was made available to me during that research.

members” (La Fontaine 1998: 47). As with CoS, the ToS encourages individualism, not congregationalism. Members network (especially through the medium of the internet) but rarely meet.

ToS Satanists – perhaps I should call them Setians – are mostly male, between the ages of twenty and fifty. Questions about employment and sexual orientation provide a pattern much like that for the rest of the population. The only surprise (to me) came in response to a question about political affiliations as demonstrated in voting patterns in the previous Parliamentary Election. Despite all that I had already been told I still expected a high incidence of extremism – at either or both extremes of right and left. However, the responses revealed very ordinary voting patterns: all had voted for the three main political parties, including Liberal Democrats. There are, of course, many religionists who manage to separate their politics from their religion (as, indeed, they separate other aspects of life into more-or-less discrete domains). However, and also eschewing all conspiracy theories that might imply a devious ploy to infiltrate “normal” society, I believe these responses mean that Satanists like to project a sinister façade, but are actually very little different to their neighbors.

ToS origins include deliberate self-differentiation from CoS in several ways, most significantly in theology and sociology. In the publications of LaVey and CoS it may seem that Satan is understood as an ontological being, truly existent in some way that transcends ordinary reality, a divine figure. For example, *The Satanic Bible* (LaVey 1969) seems to include revelatory statements, some in Enochian (held by some magicians to be the angelic language). However, these should be understood (according to members of CoS) as symbolic or metaphorical stimulants to thought, endeavor and personal growth of the kinds valued and encouraged by CoS. That is, there is no Satan in CoS. Official ToS theology seems rather different. The understanding closest to being the “official” view of the TS is that “Set is a real being” (some ToS members are happy to speak of Satan, but many speak instead of Set). Michael Aquino founded ToS after, he claims, Set’s self-revelation. One respondent to my questionnaire wrote:

Set is a real being who has offered his Gift of the Black Flame to mankind. This means that man can become fully Self-conscious rather than remain tied to the cosmic order. Set is not worshipped as a god, but is approached as a friend.

Even if Set is “not a god”, he is clearly understood to be more than a projection of human desire or fear, more than an anthropomorphism justifying this or any religion. To those respondents who insisted on distinguishing between Satan and Set, the former is a “bogus bogeyman,” a “Judeo-Christian adversarial stereotype” invented “to justify their [Christians’] own continued existence (they needed an opposition, a wolf outside the village),” and something to “terrify believers into submissive adherence to the utterings of the various faith leaders”. These views match those eloquently expressed in *The Satanic Bible*. But many Setians go further, understanding Set to be a real if “incorporeal entity,” “a metaphysical or

mystical reality,” “an all powerful deity which has different faces, on the one side I think it is the same as the Christian God, on the other is Set,” “a guide” and “the Lord of this world,” “the ancient Egyptian God whose legends were twisted and became the basis for the Christian Satan.” Some Setians consider Set to be “the archetypal rebel,” “a figure representing pride, self-interest and self-gratification,” “the undefinable [sic] thing that separates man from the other apes” or “the driving force in human evolution.” Initiates are expected “to become” (a ToS catchword), that is to become increasingly truer to themselves, increasingly independent, increasingly like Set: “As Set was, we are; as Set is, we will be.” The shift between the affirmation of Set’s reality and the recognition that this language might be metaphorical is rarely systematized and never problematic in ToS. Whether Set is “real” or not does not, finally, seem to matter a great deal: his role (as being or as idea) is to encourage self exploration in those who speak of (and perhaps to) him. Whether he symbolizes humanity’s difference from animals, or whether that difference is Set’s gift (rather than a merely evolutionary change) is less important than the chosen task of “becoming”.

Sociologically, ToS is also different from CoS. At first it seems as though ToS is organized much like many other magical orders. There are deliberate hierarchical, initiatory or sociological similarities to groups such as the Golden Dawn and other esoteric movements (see York 1995 and Hanegraaff 1996). However, ToS’ “degree structure” works somewhat differently. Initiates are not expected or required to attempt to progress to what elsewhere might be the higher degrees. In ToS these are largely administrative or overseer functions. The majority are expected to be second degree or Adept II°, as ToS is more interested in individuals developing themselves and finding their own level than in creating a group-identity arising from everyone following exactly the same path. Basically, Adepts are recognized as competent Black Magicians.

I discuss what ToS means by both “magic” and “black magic” in my earlier article (Harvey 1995b). To briefly summarize a complex cosmology and psychology, “magic” is the deliberate process of making changes according to “Will”. There are “lesser” magics which might be the manipulation of things or events in the objective (rather than subjective) universe, and “greater” magics which cause change in the subjective universe. “Will” should be understood in line with the theories of other magically orientated movements, which themselves recognizably draw on Augustinian tradition. After all Aleister Crowley did not coin the phrase “Love and Do What You Will” but derived it from Augustine, perhaps via Christian esotericists. Something may be called “white” if it arises from and expresses the false consciousness that the individual is doing something for altruistic reasons: the benefit of others, the praise of deity, reaching for harmony with the cosmos or some other “Other”. The ToS recognizes that a gift to charity is at least as much an act of self-gratification as it is an attempt to be helpful. For the ToS this truism encourages self-gratification as the best possible reason for action. Something is “Black” when it celebrates the awareness of subjective benefit (even when this includes the alleviation of others’ suffering, for example).

Beyond the degree structure and the encouragement of “magic”, ToS is organized around a (non-hierarchical) series of affinity groups called Pylons after the gateways to Egyptian temples. Members of these too might never meet outside of cyberspace and other forms of correspondence. They network about topics of mutual interest that further the aims of ToS: broadly, to encourage self-development. As a final reinforcement of this oft-repeated point, TS has no set calendar and encourages the celebration of one’s birthday as the most important point in one’s lifecycle.

### **Other Satanic Groups**

There are a number of other Satanist groups. Most of these are small even when they seem to have a larger presence. The Order of the Nine Angles (ONA) is a good example. A prolific author who uses several different pen-names (e.g. Anton Long, Stephen Brow and Christos Beest) has developed a form of Satanism that is distinguishable by the complexity of its cosmology and by its assertion of the need to be sinister. The former, however, elaborates ideas that are common ground to many esotericists and to sci-fi films and books (e.g. that the everyday world is not the only dimension of reality), while the latter is almost certainly the presentation of a face designed to shock. My own (1995b) discussion of this group (or, more likely, solitary individual) should be compared with that of Kevin Logan (1994) – not because I am uncertain of my own conclusions, but to demonstrate that we are engaging with polemics that are all too often entangled with preconceptions and generated by self-promotion. ONA’s own documents are available via various websites (for example: “Necronomi” and “Satanservice”) alongside those of various other organizations and individuals.

### **Magic and Witchcraft**

In case any confusion remains, despite the similarities between some aspects of Satanists’ worldviews, rhetoric and rituals and those of wider magical groups, there is much that definitively distinguishes Satanism. The practices and self-identities of witchcraft are also distinguishable from Satanism. The groups introduced above are centrally concerned with individual personal growth and/or self-development. They are akin to New Age in that they are correctly identifiable as self-religions or self-spiritualities. Contemporary western witchcraft traditions are “nature-religions” even when some of them are deeply interested in the self (e.g. Crowley 1989). The difference is that the “self” for nature-religionists is relational, while it is thoroughly individual in self-religions. Some types of Pagan witchcraft and magic might be no more deity centered than Satanism, but their foundations, goals and flavors are quite different (see Harvey 1997). On the other hand, the typical Pagan polemic against Satanism – that the latter shares a Christian worldview

– is a misunderstanding. While “Satan” certainly derives from Christianity, the Satan of Satanists is a far from biblical character. Satan here is far more like a Jungian archetype, albeit of values not celebrated by Jung and his students. What Christianity provided, possibly via popular imagination and Hollywood films, is a sinister image. What that image both masks and reveals is very different in the various communities of discourse that clash in misunderstanding what each other mean. My suspicion is that some Satanists, at least, are happy for this clash of misunderstanding to continue to make them seem more sinister. However, my point in this section is to point out that while some Satanisms might be magical, most magical groups are of a very different nature.

### **Satanic Ritual Abuse**

In the eighties and nineties in the UK and elsewhere, a scare about the ritual abuse and murder of children and adults proliferated. The allegations and controversies did not remain in the arena of popular conspiracy theories, but became the subject of police investigations and Court cases. The most comprehensive research and publication about these issues is Jean La Fontaine’s excellent *Speak of the Devil* (1998). It is unsurprising that much of the debate was fueled by conservative evangelical Christians. More interesting is the role of the psychotherapeutic community because that indicates much more about trends in contemporary societies. For example, La Fontaine (1998: 191) concludes that “some therapy displays an approach to allegations of satanic abuse that encourages belief and discourages scepticism in a manner similar to that of fundamentalists”. This alone is powerfully indicative of problematic tensions in modernity (including late- or post-modernity) between critical enquiry and the overbearing authority of experts. Academics are in the business of raising questions and continuing debate. The plethora of accusations require examination but what is most interesting (for academia) is the question of how particular knowledges are legitimated (Habermas 1975).

Alongside this, La Fontaine draws parallels between fairly well established notions that accusations of witchcraft, sorcery or evil-doing become rife in periods of social change and uncertainty. The fact that recent scares have focused on fears for children’s safety significantly points to a pervasive nostalgia for a mythic past when children were (allegedly) valued inhabitants of families with established “traditional” patterns and roles. The fact is, however, that the accusations made are nothing new. Many more-or-less marginal groups (Jews, Mormons, Masons, Catholics, Protestants, Africans, Pagans, Communists, and many more) have been victims of similar accusations in the past. Indeed, many of these groups are still suspect to other groups (especially, of course, to evangelical Christians) as exemplified by a recent report from the *LA Times* (Faucett 2002). An internet search for information about Satan or Satanism will generate many links to sites that make accusations recognizably like those leveled at others in the past. Denial alone is not enough, despite the weight of evidence that points to the falsity of



accusations of a satanic conspiracy involving sacrificial deaths and sexual abuses.<sup>4</sup> Certainly we learn much about the accusers from considering their construction of alterities. To remain academic, and avoid becoming collaborators in merely verifying particular insider's polemics (cf. Beit-Hallahmi 2001), is to continuously ask questions (including of ourselves and our society). This critical position may entail resistance to the temptation proffered by invitations to be an "expert" every time the media become interested in alleged Satanism. It is with recent media interest that I conclude this discussion.

### Satanic Goths and Vampire Murderers

In addition to the adult members of self-identified Satanist groups, there are undoubtedly adolescents who identify themselves as Satanists. What they mean by this varies considerably. Even in one ad hoc group of male teenagers I met with on the streets of one UK city in 1995, understandings varied. Only one had read LaVey's books and knew of the magazine *The Black Flame*. Most were disinterested in such sources that seemed too close to bookish knowledge. Their Satanism was a statement of their "rebellion" and it was manifest in black clothes and occult symbolism. That the symbols were largely occult to the group did not matter; the only meaning that mattered was the hostility and/or fear the symbols generated in others. These adolescents considered the daubing of "satanic" graffiti to be infantile, especially in comparison with the complex artistry of more accomplished graffiti artists. So, while the police and some local Christians were disturbed by what generally turned out to be creative representations of fantasy images (whether from horror stories, children's literature or rock band iconography), these "Satanists" were content to be and wear their own self-representations. None had been approached by members of other Satanist groups, none knew of older Satanists (except the one who had read LaVey, and even that knowledge was literary). By now (February 2005), it is highly unlikely that any of that group continue with such a self-image or self-presentation. Some might have become "Goths" but my suspicion is that once their hormones settled down they moved on.

The "gothic" look of these teenagers, however, is not only a rebellious teen-fashion statement. There are older "Goths". Among them there are some who are deeply attracted to the image of the vampire. Like most Satanists they know that image is just image but that even "mere image" can evoke powerful responses in others. Thus they (both the Satanists and the vampires) can play with their chosen images. However, some "vampires" recently seem to have taken the image far more seriously. In the vampire club scene they had acquired the mannerisms

---

<sup>4</sup> The addition of the word "ritual" to "abuse" is only polemical and tries to divert attention away from the commonplace everyday occurrence of violence to children in ordinary and even "God-fearing" families. Cashman 1993: 47 is instructive here.

and costumes, and had replaced some of their teeth with animal canines to make them look like the stereotypical vampires. Even in clubs where these images and roles are played out, some indulged in the drinking of blood willingly provided by “victims”. However, Manuela and Daniel Ruda came to believe that they were actually vampires. For a while in February and March 2002 the world’s media seemed obsessed by “vampire satanism”. *The Times* (18 January 2002) reported that “Satanists blame Devil for 666 ritual killing.” This and similar reports of the German Court case (in which the Rudas are said to have admitted the killing but denied guilt because “the devil told them to do it”) includes claims about a wave of killings and suicides inspired by Satanism across Europe. Rather than survey this new set of claims and accusations, I intend to raise a couple of questions that lead towards a conclusion about academic interest.

If Manuela Ruda required a tooth transplant in order to make her look like Bram Stoker’s fictional character is she really a vampire? If the answer is “yes but only because we should allow people their own self-identification”, do we (scholars of religion) have to accept her implicit definition of vampires? If a vampire is not an immortal “creature of the night” who lives only by drinking blood from victims, but someone who mistakes Hollywood stereotypes for reality and tries very hard to live up to her fantasy, does anything she claims about Satanism carry weight? Do the fantasies of self-made vampires match those of evangelical Christian constructors of Satanism as genuinely Satanic? If so, what does it mean that evangelical opponents of Catholicism (among other things) are enamored of a medieval Catholic representation of the Devil? Meanwhile, those interested in self-identified Satanists might ask (a) whether it is possible to exclude those whose Satanism is indeed focused on obedience to “the Devil” rather than self-definition or personal growth, and (b) whether the claim “the Devil made me do it” means that all Satanists should be mistrusted as likely criminals? In short, there are many very different things that are called Satanism. These differences are important and should not be confused. The majority of self-identified Satanists are engaged in a religion that is very different to almost everything vilified as Satanism by most other people. Realities and accusations can be instructive about a host of fascinating and important issues, but they should never be confused.

### **Modernity and its Alterities**

Attempts to understand the nature of contemporary societies might be greatly furthered by the recognition that not only do people identify themselves as Satanists (meaning different things in different discourses) but also people continue to accuse others of being Satanists. That such rhetoric continues says much about the era in which we live. In particular, both the “sinister” image performed by self-identified Satanists and the accusations leveled against alleged Satanists are the alterity of “polite society”, two sides of the same coin and, thus, necessarily viewed together if an appreciation of the whole is to be gained. Both Satanic

performers of alterity and Christians who further “other” their own alterities (some of which have no real, independent existence beyond such rhetoric) reveal some of the key concerns and fears of the contemporary world. While the everyday may be dully mundane, part of the enchantment that maintains our interest is that it is also suspect and questionable. The media may continuously hint that the everyday actually provides a mask for unspeakable horrors. Although the majority of the few people who identify as Satanists are not part of such possible horrors – even when they (perhaps playfully, certainly deliberately) perform the transgression of “normal” social discourse in order to appear as the alterity the rest of us seem to need – they fully participate in the construction of a culture they pretend to transcend. Both self-identified and alleged Satanism reveal facets of the wider society that is modernity.

Modernity may have alterities identifiable as pre- or post-modernity. Satanism, however, is neither pre- nor post-modern in any of its existing guises. Members of existing Satanist organizations are demonstrably modern when they form an individualized “priesthood of all believers”, when they pursue their goals by entirely rational(ist) means, and when they seek self-knowledge and self-empowerment in entirely modern ways. Those who make allegations about the existence of Satanic conspiracies are equally modern, even when they fantasize about the power of an alleged personal Satan to hide evidence of heinous crimes. The goals they impute to alleged Satanists are, once again, entirely modern. As far as I am aware, all manifestations of these entangled alterities continue to inhabit and elaborate particular metanarratives (albeit opposed ones) that cannot be considered postmodern. While each kind of Satanism (self-identified or alleged) may be equated with enchantment, it does not thereby escape the confines of modernity. Rather, it exemplifies the kind of tension eloquently indicated in Bruno Latour’s statement “We have never been modern” (1993). Modernity has always been a project at odds with itself. Satanisms are forms of enchantment suited to the contested attempt by modernity to subject the messy realities of the world to human will. They evidence a struggle to form communities out of individualized, self-interested, self-motivating, self-aware, self-motivating persons. They are neither a return to pre-modernity nor a leap into post-modernity. A fuller understanding of the nature and dynamics of Satanist self-religiosity and of evangelical Christian scare-discourses promise to cast interesting light on the contests and constructions of modernity.

## References

- Alfred, R.H. 1976. “The Church of Satan”. In C.Y. Glock & R.N. Bellah (eds): *The New Religious Consciousness*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 180–202.
- Aquino, M.A. 1992. *Black Magic in Theory and Practice*. San Francisco: Temple of Set.

- Barton, B. 1990. *The Church of Satan*. New York: Hell Kitchen Productions.
- Beit-Hallahmi, B. 2001. "'O Truant Muse': collaborationism and research integrity". In B. Zablocki and T. Robbins (eds): *Misunderstanding Cults*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Cashman, H. 1993. *Christianity and Child Sexual Abuse*. London: SPCK.
- Crowley, V. 1989. *Wicca: the Old Religion in the New Age*. London: Aquarian.
- Fausset, R. 2002. "'Pagans' presence tests tolerance in high desert". *LA Times*, 28 April.
- Gilmore, P. 1993. "Pretenders to the throne: regarding the Temple of Set". *The Black Flame* 4 (3 and 4), pp. 8–9.
- Gilmore, P. 1994. Personal correspondence dated 11 November XXIX, Aeon Satanas.
- Habermas, J. 1975. *Legitimation Crisis*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Hanegraaff, W. 1996. *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Harvey, G. 1995a. "Ritual abuse allegations, incitement to religious hatred: Pagans and Christians in court". In R. Towler (ed.): *New Religions and the New Europe*. Aarhus: University of Aarhus Press, pp. 154–170.
- Harvey, G. 1995b. "Satanism in Britain today". *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 10:3, pp. 283–296.
- Harvey, G. 1997. *Listening People, Speaking Earth: Contemporary Paganism*. London: Hurst & Co.
- Heelas, P. 1996. *The New Age Movement*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- La Fontaine, J.S. 1998. *Speak of the Devil: Tales of Satanic Abuse in Contemporary England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Latour, B. 1993. *We Have Never Been Modern*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- LaVey, A.S. 1969. *The Satanic Bible*. New York: Avon Books.
- LaVey, A.S. 1972. *The Satanic Rituals*. New York: Avon Books.
- LaVey, A.S. 1992. *The Devil's Notebook*. Portland, Or.: Feral House.
- Logan, K. 1994. *Satanism and the Occult: today's dark revolution*. Eastbourne: Kingsway.
- Nadramia, P. 1993. "Review of Satanism – a basic introduction for prospective adherents (Shrewsbury: Thormynd Press)". *The Black Flame* 4 (3 and 4), p. 19.
- Necronomi: <http://www.necronomi.com/magic/satanism/> (accessed 31 Jan 2005).
- Petersen, J.Aa. 2002. "Binary Satanism: the construction of community in a digital world". *SYZGY: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11 (2002), pp. 37–53.
- Richardson, J.T., Best, J. and Bromley, D.G. (eds). 1991. *The Satanism Scare*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Satanservice: <http://www.satanservice.org/smackers.html> (accessed 31 Jan 2005).
- York, M. 1995. *The Emerging Network: A Sociology of the New Age and Neo-Pagan Movements*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

## Chapter 3

# Infernal Legitimacy<sup>1</sup>

James R. Lewis

LaVey describes Satanism as a secular philosophy of rationalism and self-preservation (natural law, animal state), gift-wrapping these ideas in religious trappings to add to their appeal.

(Barton 1990: 201)

The status of *The Satanic Bible* as an authoritative scripture – or, perhaps more accurately, as a kind of *quasi*-scripture – within the Satanic subculture was initially brought to my attention during my first face-to-face encounter with Satanists in the spring of 2000. Via the internet, I had found a small Satanist group in Portage, Wisconsin, which was about an hour south of where I resided at the time. This group, the Temple of Lylyth, distinguishes itself from Anton LaVey's brand of Satanism chiefly by its emphasis on the feminine nature of the Dark Power. I arranged to meet with them in Portage on a Friday evening.

Over the course of our conversation, the founder and then leader of the group mentioned that on Friday evenings he was usually downtown, where a small group of fervent Christians regularly set up what might be called a “preaching station” to spread the Gospel. This young fellow (he was nineteen at the time) would confront them as a practicing Satanist. He always carried a copy of *The Satanic Bible* with him, not just so he could quote some of accusations LaVey leveled

---

<sup>1</sup> The current chapter is a revised version of my article, “Diabolical Authority,” which originally appeared in the *Marburg Journal of Religion* (2002). A somewhat modified version of that piece also appeared as a chapter in my book, *Legitimizing New Religions* (Rutgers University Press 2003), where I develop the notion of ‘legitimation strategies’ utilized in the present chapter in greater detail. A special word of thanks to Satanists who provided me with thoughtful feedback on earlier drafts of this paper, particularly feedback from several members of the Obsidian Enlightenment and the Temple of Lylyth. One comment of particular note was that the social organization (or, perhaps more appropriately, *disorganization*) of modern Satanism cannot accurately be characterized as a “movement,” “community” or “subculture.” I have nevertheless used these terms throughout for lack of more adequate terminology. Another comment was that “conversion” is not appropriate in the context of Satanism. Again, however, I left this term in the chapter for lack of a better word. Finally, I was informed that Satanists prefer to refer to their community as the *Satanic* community (movement, subculture, etc.) rather than the *Satanist* community; I have tried to adhere to this convention throughout the present chapter.

against Christianity, but also so he could correct anything these evangelists might say about Satanism by citing an authoritative source. I'm sure this is something of a caricature, but I was left with the impression of dueling religionists, Christians hurling Bible verses at my informant as he matched them blow for blow with quotes from *The Satanic Bible*. This experience led me to pay attention whenever other Satanists mentioned *The Satanic Bible*.

The Temple of Lylyth is part of a loose, decentralized Satanic movement that coheres as a distinct religious community largely by virtue of adherence to certain themes in the thought of Anton LaVey, founder of modern Satanism, though few movement participants outside the Church of Satan would regard themselves as "orthodox LaVeyans." Following the dissolution of the Church of Satan's grotto system in 1975 and before the explosion of the internet in the mid-nineties, the Satanic movement was propagated almost entirely by *The Satanic Bible*, which has continuously been in print as a widely-available, mass market paperback. Rather than a guide to Devil-worship, LaVey's work advocates a blend of Epicureanism and Ayn Rand's philosophy, flavored with a pinch of ritual magic. Couched in iconoclastic rhetoric, *The Satanic Bible* has always held particular appeal for rebellious adolescents.

The present chapter focuses on issues of the legitimation of authority within the Satanist movement and among Anton LaVey's successors in the Church of Satan. LaVey was a charismatic individual who appealed to the authority of reason and attacked the authority of tradition. However, the figure of LaVey, and particularly *The Satanic Bible*, almost immediately became sources of authority for a new Satanic "tradition" after LaVey's passing.

### **Satanic Legitimacy**

Satanists do not consciously regard *The Satanic Bible* in the same way traditional religionists regard their sacred texts. In fact, the title seems to have originally been chosen for its shock value rather than from any pretence to scriptural status. However, *The Satanic Bible* is treated as an authoritative document, which effectively *functions* as scripture within the Satanic community. In particular, LaVey's work is quoted to legitimate particular positions as well as to de-legitimize the positions of other Satanists. This legitimation strategy appears to have been unconsciously derived from the Judeo-Christian tradition, which locates the source of religious authority in a sacred text. In other words, being raised in a religious tradition that emphasizes the authority of scripture creates an attitude that can be unconsciously carried over to other, very different kinds of writings.

The classic sociological analysis of the legitimation of authority is Max Weber's tripartite schema of traditional, rational-legal, and charismatic legitimacy. The dynamics (in the sense of upsetting rather than reinforcing established authority structures) of this schema are largely confined to the factor of charisma, a form of legitimation Weber viewed as particularly characteristic of new

religious movements. Weber's analysis of the legitimation of authority provides a useful starting point for understanding the legitimation strategies employed in contemporary new religions like the Church of Satan.

It should immediately be noted that Weber's analysis is also inadequate. For example, in contrast to what one might anticipate from the discussion of charismatic authority in Weber's *Economy and Society* (Weber 1968), one often finds new religions appealing to tradition – though the explicit nature of such appeals means that they constitute a variation from what Weber had in mind by the traditional legitimation of authority (which he viewed as more implicit than explicit). Also, when nascent movements attempt to justify a new idea, practice or social arrangement by attributing it to the authority of tradition, it is usually through a reinterpretation of the past that they are able to portray themselves as the true embodiment of tradition. Such variations on what one might anticipate from his schema indicate that Weber did not have the last word on this issue.

For Weber, "charisma" includes everything from direct revelations to the leader's ability to provide both mundane and supernatural benefits to followers. Charisma may be the keystone in a new movement's initial attractiveness, but charismatic leaders typically appeal to other sources of legitimacy as well. For instance, many modern movements appeal to the authority of reason as embodied in natural science. This is because the general populace of industrialized countries tends to give science and science's child, technology, a level of respect and prestige enjoyed by few other social institutions. As a number of observers have pointed out, science has come to be viewed quasi-religiously in the modern world.<sup>2</sup> Thus any religion that claims to be *scientific* in some way draws on the prestige and perceived legitimacy of natural science. Religions such as Christian Science, Science of Mind, and Scientology claim just that.

There is, however, a distinct difference between popular notions of science and science proper. Average citizens' views of science are significantly influenced by their experience of technology. Hence, in most people's minds, an important goal of science appears to be the solution of practical problems. This perception shaped the various religious sects that incorporated "science" into their names. In sharp contrast to traditional religions that focus on salvation in the afterlife, the emphasis in these religions is on the improvement of this life. Groups within the Christian Science/New Thought tradition, for example, usually claim to have discovered spiritual "laws." If these laws are properly understood and applied, they transform and improve the lives of ordinary individuals, much as technology has transformed society (e.g. Holmes 1944 [1926]).

Modern Satanism is in some ways a continuation of this line of development, and in other ways a departure from it. Though Satanism also appeals to science, its focus is not on developing a pragmatic science of mind. Rather, when LaVey founded the Church of Satan in 1966, he grounded Satanism's legitimacy on a view of human nature shaped by a secularist appropriation of modern science.

---

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. the work of Mary Midgley, as in *Science as Salvation* (1994).



Unlike Christian Science, Scientology and other groups that claimed to model their approach to spirituality after the *methods* of science, LaVey's strategy was to base Satanism's "anti-Theology" in a secularist *world view* derived from natural science. The appeal to a worldview based on "our scientific and technological advances" provided LaVey with an atheistic underpinning for his attacks on "obsolete" Christianity and other forms of supernatural spirituality (Barton 1990: 13). Certain other emergent religions such as, for example, the Raelian Movement, similarly appeals to the worldview of secular science for its legitimacy and, like Satanism, attacks other religions as unreasonable because of their lack of a scientific basis (Chryssides 2000, Sentes and Palmer 2000).

At the same time, LaVey went beyond contemporary secularism by suggesting the reality of mysterious, "occult" forces – forces he claimed were not supernatural, but were, rather, natural forces that would eventually be discovered by science. In his notion of mysterious forces that could be manipulated by the will of the magician, LaVey was really not so far from the mentalistic technology of Christian Science, Scientology, and other religious bodies in the metaphysical tradition.

The human nature to which LaVey appealed was humanity's animal nature, viewed through the lens of Darwinism. The human being in this view is little more than an animal with no ultimate morality other than the law of the jungle and no purpose other than the survival of the fittest. In terms of Weber's schema, we would say that LaVey's appeal to human nature (meaning, for LaVey, the Darwinist vision of human nature) was a rational legitimization of authority. In other words, LaVey claimed that Satanism was a legitimate religion because it was rational (i.e., congruent with the science). As a corollary, traditional religion was irrational (unscientific) and therefore illegitimate.

Beyond this explicit appeal to science, LaVey was a charismatic individual and this charisma was undoubtedly crucial for the successful birth of the Church of Satan. In addition to his personal magnetism, LaVey also consciously amplified his charismatic status by creating an impressive pseudo-biography in which he was able to convincingly portray himself as an extraordinary individual. However, LaVey's charismatic authority soon began to wane, particularly after he dismantled the Church of Satan (CoS) as a functioning church in 1975 (discussed below). This led to a number of interesting – though somewhat paradoxical – developments. In addition to numerous splinter groups, a decentralized, anarchistic movement emerged that was shaped by the central themes in LaVey's thought, particularly as expressed in *The Satanic Bible*.<sup>3</sup> This book became a doctrinal touchstone of the movement, though independent Satanists felt free to selectively appropriate ideas from *The Satanic Bible* and to mix them with ideas and practices drawn from other sources. LaVey's book became, in a sense, an actual scripture (or as mentioned above, a kind of quasi-scripture), and sacred texts are a form of what Weber meant by traditional authority. However, many independent Satanists also adhered to LaVey's program of the authority of rationality, feeling free to criticize

---

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed description of this process, see Petersen 2005.

and even to reject aspects of the LaVeyan tradition. Thus the contemporary Satanic movement's legitimacy is based on a dual appeal to independent rational authority and to the authority of the LaVeyan tradition.

In contrast, the remnants of LaVey's church – which is still technically the largest Satanist group in terms of formal membership – quickly solidified into a doctrinally-rigid organization focused on maintaining the purity of LaVeyan Satanism. This was partly in response to the challenge presented by non-CoS Satanists. In the ongoing argument over legitimacy, LaVey's successors have come to place excessive stress on their role as bearers of his legacy, even asserting that only CoS members are “real” Satanists, and characterizing Satanists outside the fold as “pseudo”-Satanists. In terms of Weber's analysis, one would say that CoS's legitimation strategy has narrowed to focus almost exclusively on CoS's claim to traditional authority.

### **Anton LaVey and Modern Religious Satanism**

To comprehend religious Satanism, one must first understand that Satan has become an ambivalent symbol within the modern world. Part of the reason for the attractiveness of LaVeyan Satanism is its ability to hold together a number of diverse meanings found in this symbol. In the Western cultural tradition, the Devil represents much more than absolute evil. By default, the Prince of Darkness has come to embody some very attractive attributes. For example, because traditional Christianity has been so anti-sensual, Satan became associated with sex. The Christian tradition has also condemned pride, vengefulness and avarice, and, when allied with the status quo, has promoted conformity and obedience. The three former traits and the antithesis of the latter two traits thus became diabolical characteristics. LaVeyan Satanism celebrates such “vices” as virtues, and identifies them as the core of what Satanism is really all about.

LaVey founded the Church of Satan in 1966, the first organized church in modern times devoted to Satan. As a consequence, Anton LaVey has sometimes been referred to as the “St. Paul of Satanism” (Wright 1991: 122). LaVey has two biographies, one historical and one legendary. This dichotomy has only become apparent in recent years. His real life was far more prosaic than the story he fabricated for the benefit of the media. LaVey effectively promoted his carefully crafted pseudo-biography through conversations with his disciples, media interviews, and two biographies by associates that he appears to have dictated – Burton Wolfe's *The Devil's Avenger* (1974) and Blanche Barton's *Secret Life of a Satanist* (1990). LaVey's fictional biography was clearly meant to legitimate his self-appointed role as the “Black Pope” by portraying him as an extraordinary individual.

According to the official Church of Satan biography, he was born Howard Anton Szandor LaVey in Chicago, Illinois. His parents, Joseph and Augusta LaVey, moved to San Francisco while LaVey was still an infant. He was introduced to the

occult by his Transylvanian gypsy grandmother. As a teenager he pursued various avenues of occult studies, as well as hypnotism and music. He also played an oboe in the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra. He dropped out of high school at 17 to join the Clyde Beatty Circus and worked as a calliope player and big cat trainer, later learning stage magic as well. While an organist in a burlesque theatre, he had an affair with the young Marilyn Monroe shortly before she became famous.

He married in 1950 and about that time took a job as a police photographer, but in 1955 returned to organ playing. Until he formed the Church of Satan in 1966, he was the city of San Francisco's official organist. He divorced in 1960 in order to marry Diane Hegarty. He purchased his house – eventually becoming the Church of Satan headquarters, later dubbed the “Black House” – after he found out it had been the former brothel of the madam Mammy Pleasant.

Drawing on his circus and occult backgrounds, he began to conduct “midnight magic seminars” at his house. This proved popular enough for him to found the Church of Satan in 1966. The basis for his rituals was Nazi rituals recorded on top-secret films he had seen as a teenager. LaVey's showmanship encouraged significant media coverage of such events as the first Satanic wedding and the first Satanic funeral, worship with a nude woman as the altar, and a cameo appearance as the Devil in the movie “Rosemary's Baby.” LaVey made much of being a close friend of Sammy Davis, Jr. and of having had an affair with Jayne Mansfield, two celebrity members of the Church of Satan. At its peak, he claimed that the Church had hundreds of thousands of members. LaVey passed away in 1997.

LaVey's historical biography overlaps his legendary biography at several points. He was born in Chicago and his family did move to San Francisco. He did make his living as a musician and, of course, he actually did found the Church of Satan and died in 1997. He had several marriages. Almost everything else, however, seems to have been a fabrication.

LaVey's self-created legend was not seriously challenged until a 1991 interview in *Rolling Stone* magazine, entitled “Sympathy for the Devil.” The author of that article, Lawrence Wright, did a little investigative footwork and discovered that: LaVey was born Howard Stanton Levey to Gertrude and Mike Levey; there never was a “San Francisco Ballet Orchestra”; no one by the name Levey or LaVey worked as a musician or cat trainer for the Beatty Circus during the period he claimed to have been an employee; neither he nor Monroe ever worked for the Mayan “burlesque” theatre; he never worked for the San Francisco Police Department; and there was no such thing as an official San Francisco city organist. These discoveries led Wright to remark toward the end of his article:

Later, as I began to take apart the literary creation he had made of his life, I would realize that “Anton LaVey” was itself his supreme creation, his ultimate satanic object, a sort of android composed of all the elements his mysterious creator had chosen from the universe of dark possibilities. (Wright 1991)

Wright later expanded his expose of LaVey into a chapter for his *Saints and Sinners* (1993). These findings were considerably amplified in “Anton LaVey: Legend and Reality,” a 9-page “fact sheet” compiled two or three months after LaVey’s passing by his estranged daughter Zeena LaVey Schreck and her husband Nikolas Schreck (1998). In addition to repeating the points made by Wright, the fact sheet dismissed most of Anton LaVey’s other claims, such as his claims to have had a Gypsy grandmother, seen films of secret German rituals, purchased the “Black House” (it was given to him by his parents, who had lived there, and had never been a brothel), appeared in “Rosemary’s Baby,” had affairs with Monroe and Mansfield, and so forth.

The current leadership of the Church of Satan has disputed some of these challenges to LaVey’s official biography. Their strategy has been to vigorously dispute undocumented challenges while ignoring LaVey’s documented fabrications. As one might anticipate, splinter groups from CoS as well as other independent Satanists have seized upon these revelations to challenge the Church leadership’s implicit claims to be the only authentic Satanist religious body.

Thinly disguised claims to exclusive legitimacy are peppered throughout CoS documents, such as in some of Blanche Barton’s remarks in her “Sycophants Unite!” essay (composed prior to LaVey’s death) posted on the CoS official website:

We’re lucky to have a leader like Anton LaVey. He has ensured that his philosophy will not die with him; it has been and will continue to be codified, expanded and applied in new areas *by his organization* (Barton n.d.; emphasis in original).

The scope and significance of this dispute is reflected in the *many* attacks on non-CoS Satanists found on the Church of Satan website, particularly in the “Satanic Bunco Sheet,” “Sycophants Unite!,” “The Myth of the ‘Satanic Community,’” “Pretenders to the Throne,” and “Recognizing Pseudo-Satanists.” Even a superficial perusal of these documents makes it clear that CoS is *obsessed* with shoring up its own legitimacy by attacking the heretics, especially those who criticize LaVey. For example, the unnamed author of the “Satanic Bunco Sheet” blasts non-CoS Satanists for “LaVey-baiting,” and then goes on to assert that such pseudo-Satanists deal with LaVey and the Church of Satan by playing “the Christian game of handing out laurels with one hand while stabbing their progenitor in the back with the other. ... they must somehow convince you that the author of *The Satanic Bible* wasn’t practicing pure Satanism [and] that his Church has gone awry in the hands of his successors ...”

The Church of Satan began generating splinter groups as early as 1973 when the Church of Satanic Brotherhood was formed by group leaders in Michigan, Ohio, and Florida. This Church lasted only until 1974, when one of the founders announced his conversion to Christianity in a dramatic incident staged for the press in St. Petersburg. Other members of the Church of Satan in Kentucky and Indiana left to form the Ordo Templi Satanis, also short lived. As more schisms

occurred, LaVey decided to disband the remaining grottos, the local units of the Church of Satan, which left the Church as little more than a paper organization generating a meager income for LaVey through sales of memberships (one could become an official member by paying a one-time \$100 fee to the Church of Satan; this fee was recently raised to \$200).

The conflict (mostly on the internet) between the original Church of Satan and new Satanist groups accelerated after LaVey's death. In addition to attacking non-CoS Satanists as illegitimate, LaVey's organizational successors have also sought to legitimate their positions by appealing to the authority of LaVey and his writings. These kinds of appeals are rather ironic, given the Black Pope's rejection of traditional religious authority. As indicated earlier, LaVey himself did not attempt to legitimate his new religion with appeals to tradition or to the supernatural. Rather, his explicit strategy was to ground Satanism's legitimacy on a view of human nature shaped by a secularist appropriation of modern science.

### Genesis of The Satanic Bible

The most significant single document for the Satanic "tradition" is *The Satanic Bible*. The idea for this volume came not from LaVey, but from an Avon Books editor named Peter Mayer. As a direct result of the success of the popular film "Rosemary's Baby" and the subsequent increase of popular interest in Satanism and the occult, Mayer decided that "the time was right for a 'Satanic bible'" and he approached LaVey about authoring it (Aquino 1999: 52).

LaVey and his wife took the material they had on hand, wove it together and expanded on these writings to form what became the core of *The Satanic Bible*. This pre-existing material consisted of:

- a short, mimeographed paper that they had been distributing as an "introduction to Satanism";
- the so-called "rainbow sheets," which were "an assortment of polemical essays" the LaVeys had been mimeographing on colored paper. (Ibid.: 52);
- a handout describing and containing instructions for the conduct of ritual magic;
- articles previously published in the Church periodical, *The Cloven Hoof*.

The LaVeys then ran into a problem, which was that, even after expanding upon all of their available material, they were still *substantially* short of having a manuscript of sufficient length to satisfy their publisher. So, either because the deadline was coming up quickly or because LaVey just didn't want to write anything else at the time (Aquino describes their situation in terms of the former), LaVey tacked materials written by other authors onto the beginning and end of his manuscript.

Without acknowledging his sources, he took sections of “an obscure, turn-of-the-century political tract,” *Might is Right* by New Zealander Arthur Desmond (writing under the pseudonym Ragnar Redbeard (Redbeard 1910)), added in a few sentences of his own, and incorporated it as a prologue. He also added the Enochian Keys (“a series of Elizabethan magical incantations”) as they had been modified by Aleister Crowley, and “further altered them by replacing their Heavenly references with diabolical ones.” Traditional occultists immediately recognized LaVey’s source for the Keys, but it was not until 1987 that the source of LaVey’s prologue was discovered (Ibid.: 65).

LaVey’s second daughter, Zeena Schreck, described the genesis of *The Satanic Bible* in the following way:

I’m pretty sure that ASL [Anton Szandor LaVey] intended to include the *Might is Right* part from the beginning as he’d always liked it and wanted to use it somehow. From memory of what my mother told me years ago, the Enochian was added at the last minute when the deadline was breathing down their necks. Writing did not come easily to my progenitor, and he often suffered from extremely inhibiting writer’s block, a side-effect of his chronic depression, which is another reason I believe he tended to “borrow” the writings of other authors so liberally.... My mother also synthesized material from many of the old CoS newsletters, *The Cloven Hoof* to round out *The Satanic Bible*. She did type the manuscript and even added some of her own writing and much editing of the manuscript. If one takes away what came out of the old newsletters, other plagiarized sources and the Enochian, as well as many blank “decorative” pages, and such filler as the list of Satanic names, there was very little original material written for it at all. ... The title of the book itself, which I believe is far more responsible for its image of “authority” than its rather thin contents, was a last minute decision (Schreck 2002).

It should also be mentioned that, in circles critical of CoS, one often comes across the accusation that LaVey’s “Nine Satanic Statements,” one of the Church’s central doctrinal statements, is an unacknowledged “paraphrase...of passages from Ayn Rand’s *Atlas Shrugged*” (Schreck and Schreck 1998), specifically a paraphrase of the character John Galt’s lengthy speech in the latter part of Rand’s novel. However, when one actually examines these parallels (which are conveniently laid out in Appendix 11 of Aquino’s *The Church of Satan* (Aquino 1999)), one finds that this is a caricature of LaVey’s indebtedness to Rand. For example, the first Satanic Statement is:

Satan represents indulgence, instead of abstinence! (LaVey 1969: 25)

The Rand passage presented as the source of this statement is:

A doctrine that gives you, as an ideal, the role of a sacrificial animal seeking slaughter on the altars of others, is giving you death as your standard. By the grace of reality and the nature of life, man – every man – is an end in himself. He exists for his own sake, and the achievement of his own happiness is his highest moral purpose. (Rand 1957: 940)

This passage is rather lengthier than LaVey's supposed "paraphrase." The second Satanic Statement is as brief as the first Statement:

Satan represents vital existence, instead of spiritual pipe dreams! (LaVey 1969: 25)

The Rand passage said to correspond with this Statement, though shorter than the first, is similarly distant in style and content from LaVey:

My morality, the morality of reason, is contained in a single axiom: existence exists – and in a single choice: to live. The rest proceeds from these. (Rand 1957: 944)

And there is a similar disparity in the other "parallels" between the Satanic Statements and Rand. Thus, even if it were true that LaVey was looking at *Atlas Shrugged* when he composed the Nine Satanic Statements, it would be more proper to say that he was *inspired* by Rand rather than to assert that he *paraphrased* her work.

I should finally note in this regard that the title of the appendix (which originally appeared as an article by George C. Smith in 1987) in which the LaVey/Rand connection is delineated, "The Hidden Source of the Satanic Philosophy" (Smith 1987), similarly implies that Rand's philosophy was the *unacknowledged* core of LaVey's thought. This is, however, incorrect; LaVey himself explicitly acknowledged that his religion was "just Ayn Rand's philosophy with ceremony and ritual added" (cited in Ellis 2000: 180).<sup>4</sup>

Despite the book's diverse source material and piecemeal assembly, it nevertheless coheres as a succinct – and, apparently, quite attractive – statement of Satanic thought and practice. As Aquino observes, "the *Satanic Bible* was somehow 'more than the sum of its parts.' Its argument was an argument of common sense, assembled in part from pre-existing concepts, but the excellence of the book lay in its integration of these into a code of life meaningful to the average individual – not just to occultists and/or academic-level philosophers" (Aquino 1999: 52).

One measure of *The Satanic Bible*'s appeal is that it has continuously been in print since it first appeared in 1970, and has been translated into a number of other languages. I have been unable to obtain recent figures, but in his *In Pursuit of*

---

<sup>4</sup> See the "Satanism and Objectivism" essay on the Church of Satan website where this connection is examined at length (Nemo n.d. b).

*Satan*, Robert Hicks mentions a sales figure of 618,000 copies (Hicks 1991: 351). There were also a number of illegal foreign language editions. These include a Spanish translation published in Mexico in the seventies and a Russian translation in the late nineties. Legal editions include Czech and Swedish translations in the mid-nineties and a 1999 German edition. The French translation has been completed but not yet printed. Also, the rights for a Greek translation were purchased, but the book does not seem to have appeared.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Role of *The Satanic Bible* in Modern Satanism**

Although religious Satanism is interesting, until relatively recently academics almost entirely ignored it.<sup>6</sup> The principal reason for the lack of attention appears to have been that Satanism is perceived as a trivial phenomenon rather than as a serious religion. The tendency was to regard Satanists as nothing more than immature adolescents who adopted a diabolical veneer as a way of acting out their rebellion against parents and society. Does the phenomenon of adolescent rebellion, however, exhaust the significance of religious Satanism? Are most Satanists, in other words, just angry teenagers who adopt diabolical trappings to express their alienation, only to renounce the Prince of Darkness as soon as they mature into adults? Though many youthful Satanists undoubtedly fit this profile, through my fieldwork I came to feel that this was, at best, only a partial picture. Instead, I hypothesized that there must be a core of committed Satanists who – for whatever reasons they initially became involved – had come to appropriate Satanism as something more than adolescent rebellion.

In order to test this hypothesis – and also because so little had been written on religious Satanism – I collected some basic demographic data in connection with a larger study of contemporary Satanism. I constructed a simple questionnaire that could be answered in 5 or 10 minutes, and began sending out questionnaires in early August 2000. By the end of February 2001 I had received 140 responses, which I felt was adequate to use as the basis for constructing a preliminary profile.<sup>7</sup>

When I sought feedback on preliminary write-ups of my findings from informants, a few voiced objections to the central role I assigned LaVey and his best-known work, *The Satanic Bible*, in the formation of modern Satanic religion. I was, furthermore, encouraged to shift my emphasis to the work of earlier literary

---

<sup>5</sup> Information on foreign language editions courtesy Peter H. Gilmore, High Priest of the Church of Satan.

<sup>6</sup> Prior to the advent of the new century, the relevant academic literature consisted of a handful of articles – e.g., Moody 1974, Alfred 1976, Harvey 1995 – and passing mentions in studies of the ritual abuse scare, e.g. Richardson et.al. 1991.

<sup>7</sup> 110 (almost 80 percent) of my respondents were North American. Because European Satanism is a somewhat different phenomenon, one should be therefore be cautious about making inferences to European Satanism based on my survey findings.



figures ultimately responsible for fashioning the positive image of the Devil that LaVey later adopted for his Church of Satan. My survey findings, however, consistently indicated the centrality of LaVey to modern Satanism. This finding was a surprise, as I had initially assumed that contemporary Satanism had moved well beyond LaVey. I was thus led to conclude that – despite his dependence on prior thinkers – LaVey was directly responsible for the genesis of Satanism as a serious religious (as opposed to a purely literary) movement. Furthermore, however one might criticize and depreciate it, *The Satanic Bible* is still the single most influential document shaping the contemporary Satanic movement. As one of my informants noted, “I do not think Satanists can get away from LaVey, although some seem to take a real issue with him or try to downplay his importance. He wrote the book that codified Satanism into a religion, and for that he should be considered the central figure of the religion.”

I do not intend to review all of my survey findings here (they are the subject of Lewis 2001), but I do want to note that I was surprised to find that the average respondent had been a Satanist for seven to eight years. I also found that over two-thirds of the sample had been involved in at least one other religion beyond the tradition in which they were raised – usually Neo-paganism or some other magical group. Both of these statistics indicate a level of seriousness I had not anticipated.

Because most respondents became involved during their teens, I inferred that many had initially become Satanists as an expression of teenage rebelliousness. It was clear, however, that their involvement did not end after they left home. Rather, they went on to appropriate Satanism as a serious religious option. The fact that the great majority of Satanists have looked into other religions shows that this was not an unconsidered choice, undertaken solely as a reaction against established religions. Also, though a reaction against Christianity may well have been a factor for some, too many respondents indicated that their religious upbringing was superficial, nominal or non-existent for this factor to explain why most people become Satanists.

Before I began collecting questionnaire data, I had received the impression from perusing the internet that contemporary Satanism had developed in different directions from the specific formulation developed by Anton LaVey in the sixties. In particular, at the time it appeared to me that many contemporary Satanists had moved to a position of regarding Satan as a conscious being, and legitimated their claims to authority on the basis of direct communications from Dark Forces. I was thus surprised to discover that LaVey’s humanistic approach – which rejects the real existence of personal spiritual beings, diabolical or otherwise – was the dominant form of Satanism professed by respondents.

At least part of the reason for this state of affairs appears to be the pervasive influence of *The Satanic Bible*. A full 20 percent of respondents explicitly noted *The Satanic Bible* as the single most important factor attracting them to Satanism. For instance, in response to a questionnaire item asking how they became involved, a number of people simply wrote, “I read the *Satanic Bible*.” It is also likely that

this book played a major role in the “conversion” of other Satanists in my sample. One respondent elaborated by noting that she had been a Satanist in her “heart first, but I couldn’t put a name to it; then I found *The Satanic Bible*.”

Similar stories attributing their infernal “conversions” to *The Satanic Bible* can be found in other sources. The popular book *Lucifer Rising*, for instance, recounts the story of how Martin Lamers, founder of the CoS-affiliated Kerk van Satan (Holland), was initially inspired by his discovery of LaVey’s volume (Baddeley 1999: 104). However, not everyone who is converted to Satanism via *The Satanic Bible* feels prompted to join the Church of Satan. *Lucifer Rising* also notes that “the Church of Satanic Liberation was established in January 1986 after its founder, Paul Douglas Valentine, was inspired by reading *The Satanic Bible*” (ibid.: 153). Other stories of conversions directly inspired by *The Satanic Bible* can be found in Michael Aquino’s *The Church of Satan* – e.g., the conversion of Robert DeCecco, who would later become a Master of the Temple (Aquino 1999: 69); and Lilith Sinclair, who would eventually become a Priestess and Aquino’s wife (ibid.: 82).

To return to the survey, LaVey’s influential publication was also referred to a number of times in response to other questionnaire items. For example, one person noted that, “because I agree with and practice the majority of the beliefs set forth in *The Satanic Bible* and other works of Dr. LaVey, I VERY MUCH consider myself just as valid a Satanist as any ‘official’ priest.” Another respondent wrote, “Satan is merely a word, a representative concept that encompasses all that the *Satanic Bible* teaches.” And yet another individual stated: “To me, Satan is the personification of mankind’s carnal nature. More information can be found in *The Satanic Bible* by Anton Szandor LaVey.”

My strong impression was that *The Satanic Bible* was a doctrinal touchstone for most participants in this movement, despite the fact that the great majority of my sample was not formal members of Anton LaVey’s Church of Satan (One respondent, noting that he was not a member of any organization, wrote, “[It’s] just me and my *Satanic Bible*”). And whatever LaVey had in mind when he entitled this publication, in certain ways *The Satanic Bible* has truly come to play the role of a “bible” for many members of this decentralized, anti-authoritarian subculture.<sup>8</sup>

In a follow-up questionnaire, respondents were explicitly asked how they regarded *The Satanic Bible*, and to what extent their personal philosophies were congruent with the ideas expressed in its pages. Most stated that their view of the world aligned significantly with *The Satanic Bible*. One Satanist said that *The Satanic Bible* was about the realities of human nature, so that there was “nothing [in *The Satanic Bible*] that I didn’t already know or believe myself prior to reading it.” Only one respondent completely rejected the LaVeyan tradition. Two respondents asserted that they regarded *The Satanic Bible* as just another “self-help

---

<sup>8</sup> As indicated in Zeena Schreck’s comments cited earlier, the title was “a last minute decision.” She further noted in the same communication that “Earlier titles proposed included such awkward possibilities as *The Bible of the Church of Satan*, *The Bible of Satanism* and so forth” (Schreck 2002).

book.” Some respondents diminished (without disparaging) *The Satanic Bible* as an “introductory text” or “primer” of Satanism. Most hastened to add that they did not regard it as “dogma.”

One can acquire a sense of how *The Satanic Bible* is regarded as a doctrinal touchstone by perusing the official website of the Church of Satan.<sup>9</sup> For example, the “Satanism FAQ” section of the *Church of Satan Information Pack* states that “critically reading *The Satanic Bible* by Anton Szandor LaVey is tantamount to understanding at least the basics of Satanism.” Similarly, the Church’s “Church of Satan Youth Communique” asserts that “LaVey wrote *The Satanic Bible* so that people could pick up a copy, read it, and know everything they need to know about Satanism and how to put it to work in their own lives.”

In addition to these general assertions, one can find other essays on the Church of Satan website in which authoritative tenets are cited from *The Satanic Bible*, as when the “Satanic Bunco Sheet” notes that “*The Satanic Bible* advises to ‘question all things’ ... .” or when, in an essay entitled “Satanism Needs an Enema!”, an individual writing under the pseudonym Nemo introduces a series of citations from *The Satanic Bible* to support a point he is arguing with the words, “Other quotes from LaVey’s own pen in *The Satanic Bible* reiterate this theme” (Nemo n.d. c). The clear implication of this statement is that because these quotations come from “LaVey’s own pen in *The Satanic Bible*,” they are authoritative; thus there can be no further discussion of the issue. Toward the end of the same essay, Nemo also asserts that,

We have a bible. We have a *pro-human* dogma. We have a church. We have a tradition. We have ceremonies and rituals. We have a High Priestess.  
(Nemo n.d. c)

In other words, with respect to the theme being pursued in this book, Nemo is asserting that CoS has an authoritative scripture, dogma and tradition that support his argument. And it is obvious that Nemo regards his appeal to CoS *tradition* as stronger than direct appeals to science or common sense, which were the touchstones of LaVey’s philosophy.

It is also interesting that one of the accusations leveled against non-CoS Satanists in Nemo’s “Recognizing Pseudo-Satanism” essay was that in such groups, “The words of *The Satanic Bible* become twisted and distorted until they no longer have useful meaning!” (Nemo n.d. a). Furthermore, in his “Satanism Needs an Enema!” essay, the same writer exclaims,

I am calling for a closing of the ranks and a throwing out of the heretics. I am asking for the Purge! I am asking for a *reverse* Inquisition. (Nemo n.d. c)

---

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.churchofsatan.com>

Both of these sets of passages – the first quoting *The Satanic Bible* to make a point and the second accusing heretical breakaways of warping *The Satanic Bible's* meaning (even going so far as to call for an “Inquisition” against heretics within the ranks) – exemplify all-too-familiar patterns found in the theological conflicts of traditional religions.

Quoting *The Satanic Bible* to legitimate a point of argument is not, however, confined to representatives of the Church of Satan. The so called “Xloptuny Curse” is an interesting example of how some of the “heretics” have turned the message of LaVey’s writings to their own purposes. A short essay on “The Xloptuny Curse,” written by Joe Necchi, was posted on the official website of the First Church of Satan in the summer of 2000 (Necchi n.d.).<sup>10</sup> The text discusses the circumstances of a seemingly effective suicide curse that was leveled by Lord Egan, founder/leader of the FCoS, against Xloptuny (John C. Davis), an internet pugilist and member of the CoS. Less than a year before Davis took a gun to his head, Egan had cursed Davis, specifying in a public, online communication that he would die by shooting himself. The passage to focus on for present purposes is where Necchi remarks,

What is interesting, however, is the way in which some have predictably tried to rationalize Xloptuny’s suicide as a Yukio Mishima-inspired act of heroism. Ironically, those trying so hard to canonize Mr. Davis thusly now have decided to conveniently ignore the book they are always waving about like a black flag at most other times: *The Satanic Bible*. In this sense, we see that many Satanists really behave exactly like Christians: they follow the precepts of their religion when it’s easy to do so, when it suits them, but are quick to abandon them when it really counts.

*The Satanic Bible* specifically states: “Self-sacrifice is not encouraged by the Satanic religion. Therefore, unless death comes as an indulgence because of extreme circumstances which make the termination of life a welcome relief from an unendurable earthly existence, suicide is frowned upon by the Satanic religion.” [LaVey 1969: 94] There is little ambiguity in this passage. As there is no reason to believe that Xloptuny was in “extreme circumstances which make the termination of life a welcome relief”; he died as a traitor to the Church whose cause he so often trumpeted, the defense of which he used as a rationale for his often black and bilious attacks on his enemies. Apparently “the great Dr. Anton LaVey’s” words meant little or nothing to John C. Davis when he arrived at the moment of truth (Necchi n.d.).

Here again we see *The Satanic Bible* being quoted as an authoritative document in a manner similar to the way sacred texts are quoted in comparable conflicts within other religious traditions. In other words, “The Xloptuny Curse” is yet

---

<sup>10</sup> The First Church of Satan – FCoS – is a newer Satanist organization founded by a former member of CoS whose brand of Satanism is very close to *The Satanic Bible*.

another example of how *The Satanic Bible* functions as quasi-scripture within the Satanic community.

Almost all Satanists would deny that *The Satanic Bible* is an “inspired” document in anything like the sense in which the Christian Bible is regarded as an inspired book. Interestingly, however, there are a few individuals – most notably Michael Aquino, a former CoS leader and founder of the Temple of Set – who *would* regard this book as inspired. For example, in the relevant chapter in his history of the Church of Satan, Aquino asserts that:

The *Satanic Bible* [clothes] itself in the supernatural authority of the Prince of Darkness and his demons. Less this element, the *Satanic Bible* would be merely a social tract by Anton LaVey – not High Priest of Satan, but just one more 1960s<sup>2</sup>-counterculture-cynic atop a soapbox. ... The substance of the *Satanic Bible* therefore turns upon Anton LaVey’s sincerity in believing himself to be the vehicle through which the entity known as Satan explains the mysteries of mankind’s existential predicament. To the extent that he did, the *Satanic Bible* deserves the dignity of its title. ... Despite the haphazard nature of its assembly, ... we may therefore consider the *Satanic Bible* in its totality not as argumentative, but as inspired writing. Thus it assumes an importance by its very existence, not just by its content. (Aquino 1999: 53)

Although Aquino’s position would be rejected by most other professing Satanists, something approaching this position seems to be unconsciously informing their attitude toward *The Satanic Bible*.

## Conclusion

Anton LaVey’s primary legitimation strategy was to appeal to the authority of science, specifically to the secularist worldview derived from natural science and to an animalistic image of the human being derived from the Darwinian theory of evolution. In light of his radically secularist legitimation strategy, it is ironic that his organizational successors have subsequently attempted to legitimate their positions by appealing to LaVey as if he had actually been some kind of “Black Pope,” and to *The Satanic Bible* as if it was truly a diabolically-revealed scripture. It appears that being raised in a religious tradition that locates the source of authority in religious figures and sacred texts creates an unconscious predisposition that can be carried over to other kinds of persons and books – even in the unlikely context of contemporary Satanism.

Outside the institutional bounds of the Church of Satan, modern Satanism became a loose, decentralized movement that coheres as a distinct religious community largely by virtue of participants’ adherence to certain themes in the published words of Anton LaVey, particularly in *The Satanic Bible*. Despite this volume’s patchwork quality and haphazard genesis, it came to play an authoritative,

quasi-scriptural role within the larger Satanic movement. Unlike members of the Church of Satan, however, non-CoS Satanists felt free to criticize and even to reject aspects of the LaVeyan tradition by appealing to the authority of rationality – a criterion of legitimacy LaVey himself put forward as the very basis of Satanism.

## References

- Alfred, Randall H. 1976. "The Church of Satan". In Glock, Charles Y. and R.N. Bellah (eds): *The New Religious Consciousness*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 180–202.
- Aquino, Michael A. 1999. *The Church of Satan*. fourth ed. Self-published.
- Baddeley, Gavin 1999. *Lucifer Rising: Sin, Devil Worship and Rock'n'Roll*. London: Plexus.
- Barton, Blanche 1990. *The Secret Life of a Satanist: The Authorized Biography of Anton LaVey*. Los Angeles, CA: Feral House.
- Barton, Blanche (n.d.) [internet]. "Sycophants unite!" Online document available at <http://www.churchofsatan.com/home.html>
- Chryssides, George D. 2000. "Is God a space alien? The cosmology of the Raelian Church." *Culture and Cosmos* 4:1 Spring/Summer 2000.
- The Church of Satan Information Pack* (n.d.) [internet]. Available online at <http://www.churchofsatan.com/Pages/cosinfopack.pdf>
- "Church of Satan youth communique" (n.d.) [internet]. Online document available at <http://www.churchofsatan.com/home.html>
- Ellis, Bill 2000. *Raising the Devil: Satanism, New Religions, and the Media*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky.
- Harvey, Graham 1995. "Satanism in Britain today". *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 10:3, 1995, pp. 283–296.
- Hicks, Robert 1991. *In Pursuit of Satan*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Holmes, Ernest 1944 [1926]. *The Science of Mind*. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company.
- LaVey, Anton S. 1969. *The Satanic Bible*. New York: Avon.
- Lewis, James R. 2001. "Who serves Satan? A demographic and ideological profile". *Marburg Journal of Religious Studies* 6:2 (2001).
- Midgley, Mary 1994. *Science as Salvation. A Modern Myth and its Meaning*. London: Routledge.
- Moody, Edward J. 1974. "Magical therapy: an anthropological investigation of contemporary Satanism". In Irving I. Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone (eds): *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974, pp. 355–382.
- Necchi, Joe (n.d.) [internet]. "The Xloptuny Curse". Online document available at <http://www.churchofsatan.org/xloptuny.html>
- Nemo (n.d. a) [internet]. "Recognizing Pseudo-Satanism". Online document available at <http://www.churchofsatan.com/home.html>

- Nemo (n.d. b) [internet]. "Satanism and Objectivism". Online document available at <http://www.churchofsatan.com/Pages/SatObj.html>
- Nemo (n.d. c) [internet]. "Satanism needs an enema!" Online document available at <http://www.churchofsatan.com/home.html>
- Petersen, Jesper Aa. 2005. "Modern Satanism: dark doctrines and black flames". In James R. Lewis & J. Aa. Petersen (eds): *Controversial New Religions*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 423–457.
- Rand, Ayn 1957. *Atlas Shrugged*. New York: Random House.
- Redbeard, Ragnar 1910. *Might is Right; or, The Survival of the Fittest*. London: W.J. Robbins, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. [Rpt. of 1896].
- Richardson, James, Joel Best and David G. Bromley (eds) 1991. *The Satanism Scare*. NY: Aldine de Gruyter.
- "Satanic bunco sheet" (n.d.) [internet]. Online document available at <http://www.churchofsatan.com/home.html>
- Schreck, Zeena 2002. Email communication to author, August 25<sup>th</sup>.
- Schreck, Zeena and Nikolas Schreck 1998 [internet]. "Anton LaVey: legend and reality". Online document available at <http://www.churchofsatan.org/aslv.html>
- Sentes, Bryan and Susan Palmer 2000. "Presumed immanent: the Raelians, UFO religions, and the postmodern condition". *Nova Religio*, vol. 4, no. 1 (Oct. 2000), pp. 86–105.
- Smith, George C. 1987. "The hidden source of the Satanic philosophy." Originally published in *The Scroll of Set*, June 1987. Reprinted as Appendix 11 in Aquino 1999.
- Weber, Max 1968. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Guenther Roth and Clau Wittich (eds). Ephraim Fischhoff et al. (trans.). New York: Bedminster Press.
- Wolfe, Burton H. 1974. *The Devil's Avenger: A Biography of Anton Szandor LaVey*. New York: Pyramid Books.
- Wright, Lawrence 1991. "Sympathy for the Devil". *Rolling Stone*, September 5, 1991, pp. 62–70.

# Chapter 4

## Darkness Within: Satanism as a Self-Religion

Asbjørn Dyrendal

Satanism, it has been argued, is an ideology or a movement focused on the self (Harvey 2002: 55; Petersen 2005: 424ff.). The aim of this chapter is to develop and discuss the concept of Satanism as self-spirituality: What is the Satanist concept of the self, and how is the Satanist self constructed? How does Satanism fit within Paul Heelas' concept of self-religion (Heelas 1996)? To what degree are Satanist ideologies and ideal practices devoted to topics of self-development? The chapter aims to show the relations between Heelas' construct of the New Age movement and Satanism, but it will also elaborate on the significant differences within Satanism.

The New Age movement and Satanism seem to share several points of view. Both concentrate ideologically on the individual.<sup>1</sup> At first sight, however, the attempt to join Satanism to Paul Heelas' concept of self-spirituality may look unpromising. Summing up what he dubs the "essential *lingua franca*" of the New Age ideology as self-spirituality, Heelas finds three main elements:

It explains why life – as conventionally experienced – is not what it should be; it provides an account of what it is to find perfection; and it provides the means for obtaining salvation. (Heelas 1996: 18)

Words like 'salvation' and 'spiritual' tend to ring false in most ears when used in relation to Satanism, but as we shall see, there *are* important thematic and structural similarities between Satanism and Heelas' New Age-construct. In order to see this more clearly, I shall begin by looking at "diagnosis", or how Satanist writers construct contemporary selves and society. From there we shall move on to "goals", or how Satanists envision the ideal person/self and their relation to (a transformed?) society. Lastly we shall examine the "cure": To what degree and how do Satanists theorize transformation and transformational techniques?

---

<sup>1</sup> There are also social similarities that may, to greater or lesser degree, be common to new social movements of late modern, western society. For instance, both Satanists and New Agers seem to rate formal membership of a group rather low in their priorities. Participation in collective activities (building "community") seems to be relatively rare.



My focus here is not on the seemingly miniscule amount of social, political action, but on practices related to the individual self. Finally, I shall aim to sum up by discussing Satanism up against some aspects of Heelas' "New Age"-self, primarily the distinction between utilitarian and expressivist selves, and how they relate to late modern, capitalist society.

The chapter mainly addresses the ideological level. I focus on a narrow spectrum of "movement texts," that is texts issued by figures central to contemporary Satanism that are ideologically important (cf. Hammer 2001: 37ff.). The chosen texts are related to specific organizations. Most of them are from books and official documents. In this chapter, I have chosen to mostly disregard web-based texts and relevant articles from Satanist journals. The examples are taken from what has been construed as two opposing categories of Satanism: "rationalist" and "esoteric" Satanism. Specifically, I have selected the central texts issued by Anton LaVey as being of primary importance in representing rationalist Satanism, ranging in time from *The Satanic Bible* (1969) to his selected essays in *Satan Speaks* (1998). In addition, I have used segments from the authorized LaVey biography and Church of Satan (CoS) history by Blanche Barton (1990, 1992). Esoteric Satanism is represented by texts from central figures in the Temple of Set (ToS), including Michael Aquino's early documents and history of the CoS (2002), Stephen Flowers' history of the Left-Hand Path (1997), and Don Webb's guide to the aspiring left-hand magician (1999). At the time they wrote *Demons of the Flesh* (2002), Nikolas and Zeena Schreck were leading members of the ToS, and this book is also included.

## Diagnosis

The New Age movement, writes Heelas, holds that the mores of established social order "disrupt what it is to be authentically human" (1996: 18). The New Age ideologists therefore seek a detraditionalized self, free from the constraints of repressive socialization: "Perfection can be found only by moving beyond the socialized self", thereby encountering "what we are *by nature*" (ibid.: 19). Man's essential nature, according to Heelas' New Age-construct, can only be approached through discarding the "ego" or the "intellect". The inner realm alone is "the source of authentic vitality, creativity, love, tranquility ... and all those other qualities which are held to comprise the perfect life" (ibid.). To anyone familiar with Satanist thought in the tradition after LaVey, the [first part](#) of the diagnosis may sound very familiar. The other items may not fit equally well.

With regard to the question of whether the established order disrupts the authentically human, the rationalist and esoteric Satanists seem to be of one mind: It does. Writing about Christianized culture, Anton LaVey (1969) considered that it has demonized the flesh to instill guilt and anxiety, thus promoting not only a spiritual view of man's nature, but also promoting ecclesiastical control over men's psyche. Thus Satan became "the best friend the church has ever had"

(ibid.: 25). Through many of his essays, he ridiculed or raged against a mass culture which he deemed to hold most people under control. The Satanist, however, should be a freer “spirit” or able to break free. Those who could not handle the flesh or the will invented the “sins” to keep mankind’s carnal nature under control. Man’s carnal nature, however, is not to be denied, and if denied, merely shows up in different, more harmful guise. Therefore, he advocated committing all of the seven deadly sins.

LaVey rarely stressed a need to break free of Christian socialization. Satanists are “born”, not “made”, he said. A Satanist should therefore already be at least partially free, with a strong, healthy ego. This ideal Satanist is therefore without need for any “support group,” thus the thought of CoS as an organization of non-joiners (LaVey 1998: 163). However, at least in the early years, there seems to have been systematic practices devoted to breaking free of socialization (e.g. Moody 1974; Barton 1990: 29), and there are several, albeit unsystematic, examples of his thinking around such practices (e.g. LaVey 1969: 53f., 99ff.).

It is easier to find systematic thought around causes of “sleep” and practices for “waking up” with the Temple of Set. Former leader of ToS, Don Webb, writing about the nature and goals of the Left-Hand Path, agrees that man’s situation is not what it could be. Humans, he states, “are but machines, but may in potential become gods” (Webb 1999: 3). To become as gods, there are obstacles to be done away with. Socialization and society have left “a series of randomly assorted thoughts, notions, and behaviors” which either actively hinder humans, or at best lull them into a sleeplike state. Everything from the food we eat to the patterns of “non-thinking” we acquire from society, works as obstacles to body, mind, emotions, or will, and keep humans from awakening. Webb systematically details how socialization entangles humans in patterns that keep them asleep. There are clear similarities with Heelas’ construct, and Webb’s thoughts are developed along similar lines.

In the New Age ideology, according to Heelas, detraditionalizing the self leads back to what we are by nature. The gradual process of awakening in Setian texts, however, is not so much a return to nature as it is awakening and developing a *special* capability. It is thought to be there in potential in all humans, but very few actually do awaken to become “lords of the Left-Hand Path.” Achieving this goal is certainly no case of merely shedding socialization. LaVey may appear somewhat closer to the view that “liberation” is a mere matter of freeing one’s natural self, but this could be due to his going in less detail on the matter. Although the details and the ideas of man’s natural capabilities differ between the texts of ToS and CoS, they agree on the necessity of an internal “Black Flame” burning. This flame is only awakened in a few (e.g. Barton 1990: 82; Temple of Set 1997: 4f.). While both rationalist and esoteric Satanism (and the differences between them may at times be less than obvious) thus agrees that the current order keeps people asleep, they may be more elitist than the self-spiritualities with regard to the possibility for waking up.

This possible difference aside, Satanism is in accord with Heelas' New Age on the view that the dominant order hides important aspects of the self. With regard to the view that one should shed the "lower self" or the "ego" or "intellect", however, these similarities melt away. This may be the point at which the self-declared Left-Hand Path differs most clearly from Heelas' construct. From the emic point of view, the difference is immense. Unlike all Right-Hand Path religions, states Setian scholar Stephen Flowers (1997: 2f.), the Left-Hand Path religions honor and value the self. Where the Right-Hand Path, writes Flowers,

is **theocentric** (or certainly alleocentric – "other-centered"), the left-hand path is psychecentric, or soul/self-centered. Those within the left-hand path may argue over the nature of this self/ego/soul, but that the individual is the epicenter of the path itself seems undisputed (*ibid.*: 3).

This view, while given a slightly different spin focusing more clearly on the body and on sexual practices, also reappears in the writings of Nikolas and Zeena Schreck (2002: 20).<sup>2</sup> In Flowers' Setian version, the self derives from the principle of isolate intelligence (Set, or the Prince of Darkness), and the goal of the Setian would be to develop similarly as an isolate intelligence. This isolate intelligence, many Setians hold, may be or could become purely spiritual. While starting out as located within human animals alone, thus being connected to the body, the "flame" may be fanned to continue as spirit after death. Thus, one may find that although the stress on ego and selfhood among Setians deviates from the construct of New Age ideology, they seem to ultimately share an idealist perspective.

A LaVeyan Satanist, on the other hand, would tend more towards materialism. While it is not *necessary* to read LaVey's early writings as materialist – there are plenty of passages that might support an idealist interpretation (e.g. 1969: 24, 94) – the development of his thought clearly points toward the conclusion that the ego's indulgence ends with the life of the body. The repeated statement to the effect that "Life is the great indulgence; death the one great abstinence" (1969: 92, 33) may indeed summarize most thought of rationalist Satanism on the subject.

The difference from the "New Age" derogatory view of the "lower" ego seems to be even clearer in rationalist Satanism than for the Setians' esoteric Satanism. Not only is the indulgence of the body and the ego the primary goal of LaVeyan Satanism; most of the practical advice for self-development and self-change is devoted to that indulgence. The Satanist, writes LaVey, "believes in the complete gratification of his ego" (*ibid.*: 94), and although there is considerable room for

---

<sup>2</sup> Zeena Schreck was at the time high priestess of ToS. The couple now lead a Setian splinter group called *The Storm*. Their variant definition of the Left-Hand Path reads, in compressed form: "The transformation of human consciousness to divine consciousness via the manipulation of the sexual currents of the physical and subtle bodies through erotic rites" (2002: 20). They underscore the focus on antinomianism, the individual psyche, body, and the physical realm as means to awakening.

interpretation as to how one might best develop to indulge oneself, most advice is straight-forward and utilitarian (e.g. LaVey 1989 [1970]). The self-development strategies we encounter in LaVeyan texts are rarely probable candidates for inclusion in a “New Age”-like moving beyond the ego to a “spiritual” higher nature. While New Age and Satanism share a common suspicion of the socialized self and of socially dominant ideologies, the specifics deviate, with rationalist Satanism (but also esoteric Satanism) placed closer to a utilitarian pragmatism.

We see something similar with regard to New Age belief in the “inner realm alone” as a source of vitality, wisdom, power, authority and anything of lasting value (Heelas 1996: 19). Again, there are important similarities, in that the vitality and power may, fundamentally, issue from the *Black Flame*, the “darkness within.” This is certainly the case with ToS literature, where life and the human intelligence are “gifts of Set,” working against the grain of nature (e.g. Flowers 1997: 233f.).<sup>3</sup> It is, however, difficult to escape the impression that both rationalist and esoteric Satanism see the qualities mentioned by Heelas as deriving from *interaction*. Vitality may be tapped by “psychic vampires”, wisdom relates to how one manages one’s life, and power and authority are not least related to how one interacts with others to create real-life success.

The topic of real-world action and success runs through so many of CoS’ texts that it may well be seen as *the* key goal. Considering that the debate over the split between CoS and ToS also concerned the practice of payment for priesthood, one might think that such practical considerations play a lesser role in the ToS.<sup>4</sup> The movement texts investigated here, however, value worldly success highly, and the leaders certainly do not subscribe to an “inner realm alone”-view of wisdom or vitality. While former high priest Don Webb warns against unthinking and damaging practices derived from one’s heritage, he equally advises the prospective magician to “take its products and enforce those you like” (1999: 26). Simple opposition against one’s background is an obstacle to be overcome, and this is an important task in initiatory magic. Setian philosophy also emphasizes the importance of acquiring an education. Although the final goal is to develop a principle of isolate intelligence, the path seems to be filled with study of all kinds of philosophy as well as with developing as magician (e.g. Aquino 1989; cf. Webb 1999: 102ff.).

This also puts the Setian outside the small fringe of New Age thinkers who seem to propose solipsism, not merely epistemological individualism. Satanist movement texts all agree that there is a real world independent of human consciousness. One must usually act in manners that are intersubjectively agreed to work in order to achieve one’s aims.<sup>5</sup> What is “true for me” about the outer

---

<sup>3</sup> Similar thoughts were voiced by Michael Aquino in the early days of CoS. His essay *Diabolicon*, written in 1970, investigates similar thoughts (Aquino 2002: 497–514).

<sup>4</sup> As I know next to nothing about internal life in the ToS, this *may* be true.

<sup>5</sup> Of course, this may also include magical workings, for which many may deny validity. These should, writes LaVey, be judged by the result, and the magician should

world or myself should generally become validated by others. There is little room for epistemological individualism of the strong kind. However, a weaker version may be more common, as it also seems to be among real New Age practitioners. This weaker version holds that one should do “what works for you.” There may be no one right way to achieve a certain goal, or there may be no one single goal everyone should work for. Certainly, this is also related to the focus on individuality and selfhood among both New Agers and Satanists. Individuality is not least understood as difference, and this side of selfhood seems to play a larger role in satanic movement texts than in New Age texts. In the vocabulary of Kevin Hetherington, the Satanic self of movement texts is more centered on the *bricolage* of individual identity than the homology of identification as a collective (Hetherington 1998: 28).

There is, however, one situation in which one will find that the Satanist is encouraged to adopt a position where the inner realm of the Satanist’s mind is all that counts. This is with regard to the performance of ritual. Anton LaVey writes: “Any and all intellectual activity must take place before the ceremony, not during it” (1969: 111). But if one should perform with a focused will, certain of the outcome, one ought still to judge by results. The main purpose of workings of such “greater magic” is presented as emotional release. Webb relates similarly of the kind of magic he calls sorcery, that it depends on emotional energy, and that “logic and reason ... must be dropped for the time of your ceremony” (1999: 21). Afterwards, however, one should again take a “scientific approach” and learn what works and “what doesn’t work for you” (*ibid.*).

## Goals

The primary goal of rationalist Satanism is *success*, understood as physical and emotional fulfillment (e.g. LaVey 1969: 83). Indulgence, not abstinence, was a central feature of Satanism in the thought of LaVey. We may see this in many central parts of *The Satanic Bible*, but it is summarized very pointedly in the first two of the nine satanic statements.<sup>6</sup> In order to be able to indulge (relatively) freely, however, there are other goals to be reached. Indulgence was also contrasted with *compulsion*. The strong ego should be able to control impulses and desires, not be a slave to them. Indulgence, writes LaVey, implies choice (*ibid.*: 81). He argues that compulsion is the result of repression: “When a person has no proper release for his desires they rapidly build up and become compulsions.” If people did have the opportunity for periodic indulgence, however, “they would be sufficiently released to lead unfrustrated lives in the everyday world” (*ibid.*). Thus, freedom may increase both pleasure and strength. Freedom may also increase generosity:

---

acknowledge as functioning magic whenever the result is in accordance with the will.

<sup>6</sup> Satan represents “indulgence instead of abstinence” and “vital existence instead of spiritual pipe dreams.”

“Only if a person’s own ego is sufficiently fulfilled, can he afford to be kind and complimentary to others, without robbing him of his self-respect” (ibid.: 94).

Indulgence increases the chance of reaching other, important goals as well: self-respect, freedom, a strong ego, emotional, and physical gratification. All these elements interact to strengthen each other. Other goals (sometimes hard to separate from techniques) may be added. One of these important goals is that of self-knowledge. Writing about what he terms “The Balance Factor”, LaVey says:

If, in attempting to attain your goal through either greater or lesser magic, you find yourself failing consistently, think about these things: Have you been the victim of a misdirected, over-blown ego which has caused you to want something or someone when the chances are virtually non-existent? ... To be able to adjust one’s wants to one’s capabilities is a great talent. (ibid.: 127)

LaVey recommends introspection and self-evaluation as tools to achieve a balanced view of one’s own capabilities. We may further notice the value placed on self-knowledge by observing that self-deceit, pretentiousness (empty posturing), lack of perspective, and solipsism are all on the list of nine satanic sins. They are classified as counter-productive and unwanted.

Furthermore, a Satanist should display a sense of *individuality*. Herd conformity is another of the nine satanic sins. It is wrong because of its unthinking response to the habits of the many, but also because it shows a lack of the independent and iconoclastic spirit otherwise valued. However, individuality and non-conformance should only be taken so far. Counter-productive pride and a lack of compliance with (what is presented as) universal standards of aesthetics are considered satanic sins. Aesthetics is important, and one should strive for one’s own style, “reflective of one’s own nature”, but not deny “universally pleasing and harmonious configurations” (Barton 1990: 67). These sins are presented as being counter-productive with regard to the central goal of “success”. Pride is a good thing, but not beyond the point where it is no longer productive. A lack of aesthetics is seen as an impediment to lesser magic, and is thereby a hindrance to success. Pretentiousness is regarded as a sin, not because posturing is wrong in itself, but because the pretentious cannot actually deliver. There are many reasons why stupidity is regarded as the cardinal sin in LaVey’s Satanism, but one important reason is that it serves as a hindrance to the good life.

These elements of elitism and comfortable living also come to the fore with regard to social visions. In the program entitled “Pentagonal Revisionism”, LaVey (1992: 93ff.) outlined a short list of goals for social transformation. The central element is *stratification*. Society should, to a much larger extent, reward the productive and let the unproductive fall behind. The remaining four – taxation of all churches, reintroducing Lex Talionis, development of artificial human companions and total environments – serve or rest on stratification. Taxation of churches is presumed to lead them into bankruptcy. Reintroducing the law of the jungle is seen as necessary to revive a sense of responsibility, and to counter the

state victimization of those who choose to fight back against becoming victims of crime. Eugenics is presented as important, both ecologically and as a way of producing more Satanists. "Satanists are *born* not made ... so we must *breed* our new race of Satanists" (LaVey in Barton 1990: 82). Society is unlikely to change just because a few of its members have become awakened to their inner flame. While LaVey saw extremism as an important social safeguard against simple mediocrity and herd thinking, he made no specific political program. LaVey seems to have emphasized a kind of limited, enclave-forming withdrawal from ordinary society (Barton 1990: 83). The construction of artificial human companions and total environments was presented also as ways of ensuring the insular "happiness" of the herd, but it seems not least to have been a vision for freeing the Satanist from having to live in the ugliness and pollution of ordinary society (*ibid.*: 87ff.). The total environment would be a place for the satanic self to indulge, create, enjoy. More than reforming the totality of social life by evolving as a self, the vision seems to have been to create a free space for the existing self to enjoy. If society plays a central role in this vision, it is to the extent it enables or hinders this goal of total environments.

The self-oriented goals of the ToS are devoted to transforming the mature adult into a "philosopher king". This central goal is to be reached through a process of sequential mastery of more specific tasks. These "goals on the way" seem to include most of those promoted by LaVey, but they are understood within an esoteric framework, and there are further goals added to LaVey's. Webb separates his didactic presentation of goals into those related to the *inner* and those related to the *outer* world. He divides the path into levels. These levels are presented as rulership and royal power in the inner and outer world. The process would normally go from rulership of the inner world through rulership and royal power in the outer world, and end with royal power in the inner world (Webb 1999: 3).

Rulership of the inner world involves controlling the body, mind, emotions, and will, and means that the initiate achieves "a sense of reality and purpose in what one does" (*ibid.*: 4). To reach this goal, one should find factors that hinder development at all levels, and remove them. Forces opposing the *body* are "those things which shorten life, remove energy, or dull the senses" (*ibid.*: 3), and range from drugs and the wrong kind of food to cultural and environmental factors. Forces opposing the *mind* are all "habits of non-thinking" involved in herd conformity or habitual thought and feeling: "The average human being follows his or her emotions; for the Left-Hand Path initiate, emotions follow him or her" (*ibid.*: 4). Sentimental attachment to cultural norms should be confronted and rejected, as they are signs of "blind obedience to external symbols", a force opposing the *will*. The performance of symbolic actions involving rejection and making fun of such norms is seen as a valuable tool for deconditioning.

Rulership of the outer world involves being able to make informed choices based on "rational foresight plus healthy self-love" (*ibid.*: 5). The goal is to know what one likes, what is good for one, and to decide what to sacrifice in view of other or later gains, and to make manifest in the initiate's life the results of such

insights. Mastery of the outer world involves fulfillment and personal achievement in the real world. Together with rulership of the inner world, it seems that this goal overlaps with LaVey's view of success.

Royal power in the *outer* world relates to goals involved in making other people better. The initiate, writes Webb, "recognizing as virtues personal strength and self knowledge, does what he or she can to help others create the states" (ibid.: 6). This means overcoming Right-Hand Path denigration of the desire to show off and "immature" Left-Hand Path denigration of the desire to help others. Success in helping others on the path also benefits the initiate, however, by refining thoughts and moods, ascertaining what *really* works in the world, thus furthering self-initiation (ibid.: 7).

Royal power in the *inner* world means to be able to "take on the inner darkness and make it glow with its own self-created light" (ibid.). The metaphor of inner darkness here seems to involve what Webb terms "inward-directed fears": fear of the unknown impulse, fear of the future, fear of wasted time, and fear of the unverifiable (ibid.). The goal of making the inner darkness glow is not merely a matter of overcoming such inner fears, but also a matter of turning episodes that formerly produced fear to effective use. The unknown impulse is a key to power, writes Webb. The magician's actions are neither random nor accidental, and the impulse from within ought to be "a great source of Mystery, from which even more being can be gained" (ibid.). Fear of the future relates to the unknown consequences of one's actions. The future is "the Great Darkness out of which all things are manifested." Royal power means learning to let go of justification, take full responsibility, and act in a way that enables one to feel good about one's choices (ibid.: 8). Overcoming the fear of wasted time is the act of choosing wisely, writes Webb. This also depends on finding the right attitude to inform one's actions. The right attitude is based on earlier achievements from the other parts of sovereignty, the realization that "if you continue with an Initiatory attitude, all life experiences can be used in the Quest for Sovereignty" (ibid.). The last fear to overcome is that the quest for sovereignty may in the end, be at best good motivational psychology, that the "Quest for Immortality might be a unicorn-hunt" (ibid.). Letting go of the last fear involves being able to explain one's own life to oneself, and "make the remaining decades of our life powerful and joyous" (ibid.).

There seem to be few or no texts on how the transformation of the self may be related to society, or how Setian initiation may change society. Founder Michael Aquino seems to have an approach to justice is similar to that invoked by CoS' program of pentagonal revisionism,<sup>7</sup> but I have no available authorized movement text on the general subject of society. Webb's social focus is the "school of magic", how the initiate will be drawn towards a school of magic, break with it, and found his or her own. The school of magic, such as the ToS or its subgroups, seems to be the main concern and the central consequence of Setian initiation.

---

<sup>7</sup> E.g. the comments on Frank Miller's *Return of the Dark Knight* in the ToS reading list (Aquino 1989).



## Cure

We may gather from the information above that the ToS theorizes (and almost certainly practices) techniques focused on self-development to a larger extent than does the CoS. The ToS aspires to be an esoteric, initiatory school of thought, and therefore expends a large amount of energy on thinking out a system. Acknowledging its occult forebears as well as its more or less scientific contemporaries, it also has a large body of thought and practice to draw on. The CoS on the other hand, having developed its degree system less as a system of initiation, has had less to gain both for the organization and its members by focusing on steps towards and processes by which to develop the self. Instead, Anton LaVey chose to develop the CoS more as a “mutual admiration society” for those who had already taken some steps towards achievement (1998: 163).

This does not mean, as stated above, that the CoS does not have a history of systematic thought or practices devoted to processes of self-development. There are several topics of at least the early CoS texts that relate to transformation. The first is that of the Black Mass and similar tools for deconditioning the individual from negative socialization. The Black Mass in the satanic context, is then not to be viewed as a set piece of ritual, but as a form of psychodrama with the purpose “to reduce or negate stigma acquired through past indoctrination” (LaVey 1972: 34; cf. Webb 1999: 4). The performance is always antinomian, in that it must break rules of “past indoctrination” in order to have effect. It must, in the words of LaVey, maintain “the degree of blasphemy necessary to make it effective psychodrama” (LaVey 1972: 34). Transgression is, however, only a tool in order to reach the goal of freedom, and the specific, transgressive content must be tailored to fit the individual participant. Similar formal rituals (“greater black magic”) were adopted and adapted for other purposes. The ceremony of *L’Air Épais*, wrote LaVey, could be used to exorcise “any unconscious death motivations,” serve as a dedication to life, and turn “death’s accouterments into instruments of lust and life” (ibid.: 57). *Das Tierdrama* should strengthen the view that man is also an animal, making participants assume “animal attributes of honesty, purity and increased sensory perception”, at the same time reinforcing the message that all religions and gods are man-made (ibid.: 77f.). All ritual magic also involves preparations and mental activities supposed to train one’s imagination, will, feelings, and thus promote one’s ability to live life fully. Individual ritual practices may, then, play a role for those rationalist Satanists who want to use them.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to ritual or greater magic, the practice of lesser magic also may involve techniques for self-transformation. The main object of lesser magic as presented by LaVey (1989) is to manipulate others into conforming to one’s desires. Lesser magic seems to consist mainly in behavioral techniques. The different techniques may use social stereotypes or personal preferences regarding looks, smell, behavior etc. in order to promote specific effects. Such lesser magic

---

<sup>8</sup> My impression is that they seem not to care much for ritual.

at the same time, trains the aspiring Satanist in the behaviors most likely to have the desired effects on other people (cf. Moody 1974). This necessarily also acts on the individual Satanist, and as s/he gains mastery, successes may build self-assurance in the insecure as Moody argued. More generally, the training in and application of techniques of lesser magic teaches new skills, and thus might tend to achieve at least some level of transformation.

These techniques are presented for general consumption through LaVey's books. If they have an important frame of use, it may be as a rough guide to building an individual style, and the importance of doing so. The CoS seems no longer to involve itself much in explicit attempts at "curing" individuals of the afflictions supposedly put there by dominant ideologies. Ever since the middle of the 1970s, the focus has been more on using the CoS as a collective for the "alien elite", what LaVey termed the "*productive* aliens, not misfits who need to depend on a group" (in Barton 1990: 30, emphasis in original). The leaders and members of the CoS do not view the organization as a "school" in which to train members to rid themselves of the ill effects of socialization. While they may still, occasionally, engage in such activities, emphasis is elsewhere.

Movement texts of the ToS, on the other hand, are resplendent with both techniques for, and theories of, transformation. Its self-identity is of a school of magic, where evolving, or "becoming", as an isolate intelligence takes center stage. The central work of the Setian is his or her own *xeper*, initiatory magic, and the levels of the organization are devoted to that development in different ways. The degree system of the ToS, writes Stephen Flowers, "is a map or guiding instrument for the general parameters of that Xeper-process" (Flowers 1997: 238). The guiding principle behind all the practices, writes Webb, "are Trust, Honesty, Forgiveness, Growth, Artistry, and Extraction" (1999: 44). The path is theorized as training to trust oneself, being more honest with oneself, forgive oneself of self-loathing, grow, develop artistry, and "extracting the essences and structures of phenomena within and beyond one's self and working directly upon them" (Webb 1999: 46).

Flowers accepts the primary focus of CoS as being important also to Setians. Separating the world into the natural and the non-natural, objective and subjective, lesser magic is defined as working with "obscure physical or behavioral laws" (Flowers 1997: 237) and part of the natural order.<sup>9</sup> A Setian ought, according to Flowers and Webb, never to use unnecessary means. Lesser magic should only be used when simple, natural actions are not sufficient, and greater magic only when lesser will not do. In the same manner, the techniques advised for self-change range from advice regarding exercise and diet to items such as the construction of sigils and the performance of initiatory rituals.

---

<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, Flowers seems to define, by way of Aquino's *Black Magic in Theory and Practice*, most of LaVey's ceremonial, greater magic as "white magic" (Flowers 1997: 236).

The types of techniques for self-change listed by Webb, closely matches his four-fold division of rulership and royal power. Again, he is relatively detailed and didactic. He gives a seven-part list involved in taking care of and training the body, and five-part list related to mastering a traditional system of magic (Webb 1999: 33f.).

These are again only two parts of a list with nineteen general items. Most of the nineteen items are related to different practices for developing a utilitarian self. Four or five of the items relate more clearly towards the expressive side, such as practicing an art, learning to sing and to tell jokes. The expressive and the utilitarian elements are integrated into each other, but utility seems to be the guiding factor. Singing is said to relieve stress and teach the magician how to control others through voice. Practicing an art may give experiences of “flow” and bypass the “medial level of being” in how one acts upon the universe (Webb 1999: 43). Thus art may encourage and facilitate one’s development as a magician. The esoteric utilitarianism is more clearly visible in the advice to “plan for your retirement” to be able to enjoy the fruits of life as much as possible (ibid.: 42). The esoteric part of planning ahead also relates to the body: “What kind of things can you do in your 20s (like all night shamanic vigils) that you won’t do in your 50s? Learn how to make the stages of life work with your goals” (ibid.: 33). Mastering a traditional system of magic and constructing one’s own system are presented as important techniques to further one’s development, thus fusing the expressive and the utilitarian closely together.

Webb’s advice to “explore your sexuality” (1999: 33) may also be construed as fusing the expressive with the (esoterically) utilitarian. Webb himself does not develop the topic of sexuality to any degree.<sup>10</sup> However, there are several other important Setian writers who develop the topic of sex magic as an important Left-Hand Path tool of self-transformation. In the work of Nikolas and Zeena Schreck (2002: 20f.) the part of sex is (almost) as important as self-deification in defining the Left-Hand Path. Sexual rites, violation of taboos, and exaltation of the female principle are central elements in their concept of initiation and self-development. The stress on violation of taboos should probably be read similarly to Webb’s advice that one should not assume that anyone else’s model of one’s sexuality is right, and Crystal Dawn’ and Stephen Flowers’ advice that magicians “need to find out what *really* excites and arouses them” (2001: 3). For both the Schrecks and the Flowers this seems primarily to involve practical advice and theoretical discussions on how to use (very controlled) sado-masochistic practices in self-development. This is indeed the sole of focus of the Flowers’ book *Carnal Alchemy* (2001), subtitled “a sado-magical exploration of pleasure, pain and self-transformation”, while the Schrecks are much more inclusive in their discussion of different kinds of sexual magic. Nikolas and Zeena Schreck may seem to be more narrowly focused than other Setian ideologists, and it may be no

---

<sup>10</sup> Except for spells to attract sex in his work on typhonian magic (Webb 1996: 71ff) he seems to leave the topic alone.

surprise that they broke off from the ToS at about the same time as their book was published.

## Final Discussion

Movement texts are obviously not lived life, and all of the above says very little about real, individual Satanists and how they actually go about ordering and constructing themselves. What *can* we say then?

We have seen that Satanism celebrates the self or the ego. If there is a question about the extent to which the different varieties of Satanism are self-religions, this ought mainly to involve the part of “religion.” Certainly there are many definitions of “religion” by which at least rationalist Satanism ought to be excluded. One might, then, take seriously the claim and desire of many rationalist Satanists to be categorized by a different label. However, it does seem like contemporary Satanism belongs on the outskirts of the same kind of late modern “religion” as do the self-spiritualities discussed by Heelas. More specifically, both rationalist and esoteric Satanisms are primarily world-affirming forms of self-spirituality. They see success in society and the world as it is as a valid and desirable goal. While one may find much disgust with prevalent forms of society among Satanists, there seems to be very few world-rejecting Satanists among the two groups discussed above. The movement texts examined above show no such dispositions. Rather, if one should place most Satanists on the spectrum from “harmonial religions” (where success is one valid goal, springing from one’s rapport with cosmos) to “mainstream empowerers” (seeking spirituality to operate more successfully in the real world) (Heelas 1996: 30ff.), we would expect to see a clearly right-skewed graph. Heelas’ description of the utilitarian self clearly seems to fit the satanic self: “What matters is exercising one’s capabilities – powers, will, determination, initiative, reasoning abilities – in order to maximize what the externals of life have to offer” (ibid.: 166). Pleasure, success in life, and in the world among other men are not only valid goals in and of themselves, they are signposts by which one may measure one’s progress along the Left-Hand Path.

They are, however, not the only signposts, and the Satanist self is not merely utilitarian. Looking at the “self” of the Satanist movement texts, we find traits such as self-defined, heroic, self-directed, and inner-motivated. Most of the traits would fit with the solid personality hailed by modernists. The self is also seen as an essence. It is essential, and singular. Deviating from the “herd” by one’s individuality is a must. This singular, inner-motivated self ought simultaneously to seek, rationally, to maximize its self-interest. These interests, however, to varying degrees go beyond the simply utilitarian. Success in life may variously be understood as success in business or in personal life. Leading the good life, however understood, takes precedent in the writings of LaVey over the kind of successes that might lead one to miss out on the pleasure of living. In the writings of Don Webb, the development of a rounded and full personality also includes

following multiple interests. Expressivity is an important part. The Satanist self of these texts thus seem to stride the fence, both capitalist utilitarian and romantic-expressive. While the Satanist of movement texts would not devalue success, nor minimize utilitarian pursuits, they would also fit within Heelas' description of expressivists:

Expressivists live their life in terms of what they take to be a much richer and authenticated account of what it is to be human. They are intent on discovering and cultivating their 'true' nature, delving within to experience the wealth of life itself. (Heelas 1996: 156)

To achieve such experience, ideologists such as Don Webb may agree that there are certain things one might need to give up, but the ego is not one of them. Nor is the calculating ethicality of the utilitarian necessarily thrown away. While everyone from LaVey to Webb may harbor ideas that one's "authentic nature" may lead one to behave better towards others – at times – they tend to mean that cruelty may be equally authentic and spontaneous. The self-ethic of the Satanist also includes these behaviors as expressions of the true self.

In conclusion, this means that one may say much the same for Satanism as a religion of modernity that Heelas said about the New Age (ibid.: 169). Satanism provides a legitimization of many widely held values, assumptions, and practices of modern society. Satanism, however, goes further towards legitimating common practices that compete with important contemporary values. Elitism and stress on stratification, however much more in touch with *real* society, goes against values about equality. Stress on man's viciousness and the legitimacy of violence and retribution equally collide with New Age ideas about "tranquility, harmony, love, [and] peace" (ibid.). Thus, Satanism, while decrying the effects of much dominant culture, in both the versions examined here, goes further in legitimating a self that belongs to and may thrive in the, at times, vicious and chaotic circumstances of the late modern world.

## References

- Aquino, Michael A. 1989. "Temple of Set reading list". In *Crystal Tablet of Set*. (Weirdbase file version, 1997).
- Aquino, Michael A. 2002. *The Church of Satan* (fifth rev. ed.). San Francisco: Temple of Set.
- Barton, Blanche. 1990. *The Church of Satan*. New York: Hell's Kitchen.
- Barton, Blanche. 1992. *The Secret Life of a Satanist*. Los Angeles, CA: Feral House.
- Flowers, Stephen. 1997. *Lords of the Left-Hand Path*. Smithville, Tx: Runa-Raven.

- Flowers, Stephen & Crystal Dawn. 2001. *Carnal Alchemy*. Smithville, Tx: Runa-Raven.
- Hammer, Olav. 2001. *Claiming Knowledge*. Leiden: Brill.
- Harvey, Graham. 2002. "Satanism. Performing alterity and othering". *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11, pp. 53–68.
- Heelas, Paul. 1996. *The New Age Movement*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hermonen, Merja. 2002. "Rationalistic Satanism". *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11, pp. 69–104.
- Hetherington, Kevin. 1998. *Expressions of Identity*. London: Routledge.
- LaVey, Anton S. 1969. *The Satanic Bible*. New York: Avon Books.
- LaVey, Anton S. 1972. *The Satanic Rituals*. New York: Avon Books.
- LaVey, Anton S. 1989 [1971]. *The Satanic Witch*. Los Angeles, CA: Feral House.
- LaVey, Anton S. 1992. *The Devil's Notebook*. Los Angeles, CA: Feral House.
- LaVey, Anton S. 1998. *Satan Speaks!* Los Angeles, CA: Feral House.
- Moody, Edward. J. 1974. "Magical therapy: an anthropological investigation of contemporary Satanism". In Zaretsky, Irving I. & Mark P. Leone (eds): *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 355–382.
- Petersen, Jesper Aa. 2005. "Modern Satanism". In Lewis, James R. & Jesper Petersen (eds): *Controversial New Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 423–457.
- Schreck, Nikolas & Zeena Schreck. 2002. *Demons of the Flesh*. New York: Creation Books.
- Temple of Set. 1997. *General Information and Admission Policy*. San Francisco, Ca: Temple of Set.
- Webb, Don. 1996. *The Seven Faces of Darkness*. Smithville, Tx: Runa-Raven.
- Webb, Don. 1999. *Uncle Setnakt's Essential Guide to the Left Hand Path*. Smithville, Tx: Runa-Raven.



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

## Chapter 5

# Self-Conscious Routinization and the Post-Charismatic Fate of the Church of Satan from 1997 to the Present

Maxwell Davies

For the purposes of this chapter, Anton LaVey will be assumed to possess charismatic qualities under Weber's distinction of "exceptional powers or qualities." Above and beyond this, however, LaVey cultivated the image of possessing supernatural or superhuman qualities. From the earliest foundational days of the Church of Satan, circa 1965–66, LaVey began to create the image of an extraordinary life ranging from stories of running off to join the circus, lion-taming, and playing first oboe in the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra, to a host of other fabrications to create a more colorful background to what would become the High Priest of the Church of Satan (Wright 1991). Harking back to Weber's definition of charisma, the qualities which distinguish a "charismatic" are to be regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary. In LaVey's case however, an interesting inversion of this is manifested by LaVey's "pact with the Devil" that is supposed to exemplify his "infernal mandate" (Aquino 2002: 784–786) or "diabolical authority" (Lewis 2002: 1).

LaVey further cultivated the image of charisma by using the Jayne Mansfield curse story<sup>1</sup> to legitimate his "magical powers", which Weber also describes as a means to cultivate charisma (Weber 1947).

Once these stories took hold in the core group that formed the Church of Satan (the Magic Circle group), and repeated long enough without contesting their verity, then the pattern was set for others to continue the stories and complete the self-perpetuating system of building an aura around LaVey and thus add prestige to his leadership. Fabricated stories have appeared in *The Satanic Bible*, ever since its first paperback edition, and after that with the assistance of Burton Wolfe, Anton LaVey's first biographer.<sup>2</sup> One shouldn't be surprised by this since LaVey's listed influences in the hardcover edition of *The Satanic Bible* listed Ambrose Bierce among others as a key influence. Bierce wrote more than a handful of "tall tales" that used the figure of a con artist or shyster. These characters use religious trappings to fleece followers, and all the tall tales use the premise that

---

<sup>1</sup> See Burton Wolfe's introduction to *The Satanic Bible* in LaVey 1969, page 15; see also Barton 1990b: 93–114.

<sup>2</sup> Compare LaVey 1969: 9–18, Schreck 2002 and Wright 1991.



if you believe them at the end, you are to buy the teller a drink (Bierce 1984: 1–4 and 403–404).

The shift in the basis of charismatic authority is the next innovative move by LaVey. The metamorphosis from the Magic Circle to the Church of Satan embodies a shift from an acknowledgement of authority by LaVey's "followers" which was hailed by the Mansfield curse story, to a more stable form of charisma based on a duty which his followers may have felt called to a "charismatic mission to recognize its quality and act accordingly" (Weber 1947: 359), in assistance to the Church of Satan (See Lewis 2002: 4–7).

### The Death of the Founder

With the passing of Anton LaVey, a charismatic power vacuum was left in the leadership in the Church of Satan, and rightly so. As ex-Church of Satan member Ole Wolf points out, the Church of Satan started out very much as a personality cult following LaVey, and remains so even now (Wolf 2002: 1). Membership cards contain the words "Anton Szandor LaVey Founder and High Priest" prominently beneath the organization's heading. This format led Wolf to suggest that while church membership is primary, the recognition to LaVey would be a close second (ibid.).

A line of successors followed, with no publicized shifts in authority, from Blanche Barton to Peter Gilmore and Peggy Nadramia. The only publicity outside of the literature limited to the subculture was that of their contribution to books by LaVey. Blanche Barton was the first to truly reap the benefit name association with LaVey, while Michael Aquino was the self-proclaimed first to have his writings in any book after the *The Satanic Bible* (Aquino 2002). Barton's writings appeared in *The Satanic Witch* (LaVey 1989), and a subsequent reprinting included a short segment by Peggy Nadramia as well. In addition to these appearances, Barton wrote *The Church of Satan* (Barton 1990a) and *The Secret Life of a Satanist* (Barton 1990b) and is credited with editorship of *The Black Flame* magazine – one of the official organs of the Church of Satan.<sup>3</sup> Nadramia is credited with editorship of the fantasy magazine *Grue* (Wolf n.d.: 13). Beyond this, publicity has been made regarding a book now published by Peter Gilmore, entitled *The Satanic Scriptures*.<sup>4</sup> What is most interesting is what such a book which implies orthodoxy for a heterodox group would mean; for the 1975 schism was also the result of an effort to declare the correct theological stance regarding the non-/existence of the Devil for Church of Satan followers.<sup>5</sup> The Church of Satan took the "official" stance that the Devil does not exist, keeping with the chapter in Arthur Lyons'

<sup>3</sup> See Peter H. Gilmore, "Waffen SS email", taken from Wolf n.d.: 13.

<sup>4</sup> See the Church of Satan website: [www.churchofsatan.com](http://www.churchofsatan.com), "News" section [It was published in the spring of 2007 by Scapegoat Publishing].

<sup>5</sup> See the discussion in Aquino 2002, especially chapters 35 and 36.

*The Second Coming* (Lyons 1970) and later publicity ranging from newspaper articles and the later works of Anton LaVey.<sup>6</sup>

Problems with administration and church make-up faced the Church of Satan in progressive degrees of seriousness both before and after the LaVey's death. The first problem was that of administration within the Church because the Council of Nine, the administrative body of the Church of Satan, suffered in two stages. The first took place with the 1975 schism of Aquino, and the second at the death of LaVey. The schism severely changed the make-up of the church with the loss of Aquino, a co-conspirator. From the inception of the church, the Council of Nine had been a tool through which LaVey announced statements of policy through an authoritative, anonymous voice that was supposed to represent the voice of the "inner circle" (Brown 1992: 2) or "elite" much like Babeuf did (Billington 1980: 76). The value in doing this is that it superficially does not lend itself to credit or blame a certain person's views, in this case LaVey's. The other value in this is to portray a consensus of higher-ups whose image could intimidate the lay membership into silence, acquiescence, or isolation. Moreover, the advantages in this are obvious to anyone attempting experimental ideas in a new organization.

One might believe that the followers of the Church of Satan never developed a real dependency upon Anton LaVey or the church for social purposes. As LaVey had structured the Church of Satan, little to no social contact was required of its membership for doctrinal reasons, and geographically, Satanists were fairly dispersed over the country. Grottoes, which provided the main outlet for social interaction between Satanists in an ordered format, were regulated in the pre-schism days (Aquino 2002: 111), in disuse for the post-schism days, and reused in the post-charismatic days. Each change in policy came from a direct need posed by the church membership, and as time progressed, the independence stressed by the teachings became a reality either by choice or necessity. The advantage to decentralized membership is that interdependence is not necessary for the survival of the movement, people that need leadership are not created as often, and thus when LaVey died, the death – although tragic for the membership, was not a fatal event for the membership. The followers were compartmentalized enough that the disillusionment of one or many would not create significant rippling effect on the whole.

The best way to see this idea is through its opposite scenario. When Aquino and others of the Church of Satan broke off, several entire grottoes were affected, leaders who corresponded with one another spread the word, and what could have been passed off as one or two isolated individual's dissatisfaction, ultimately became a significant schism (Aquino 2002: 418–435). Learning from this setback, the church entered a decentralized, somewhat reclusive organization characterized by a similar attitude of withdrawal by LaVey at about this time (Barton 1990b:

---

<sup>6</sup> Entire articles are excerpted in the Appendices of Aquino's *Church of Satan*, and LaVey's *The Devil's Notebook* and *Satan Speaks* (both Feral House 1992 and 1998 respectively) continue this point of view.

125–129). It was in this phase that the 1984-esque type strategy of keeping each of the hands from knowing what the other is up to developed, yet all hands continued to report to Central Grotto (Aquino 2002: 419). This reorganization minimized the need for a large power structure diffused over the vast areas, and allowed a select handful of people the ability to keep the entire church running. Thus, after recruiting a small handful of competent people, there would be enough people to fill the leadership role that LaVey left at his death. Not only this, the small core group could also be more easily moved from one place to another. However, there is evidence to suggest that this trend of isolated, blind activity has been countered with correspondence between members (Wolf n.d.: 3).

“Pure charisma cannot remain stable but becomes either traditionalized or rationalized, or a combination of both” (Weber 1947: 364). Weber thus divides principle motives for the transformation by postulating “(a) The ideal and also the material interest of the followers in the continuation and the continuous reactivation of the community,” and “(b) The still stronger ideal and also stronger material interests of the administrative staff, the disciples or other followers of the charismatic leader in continuing their relationship” (ibid.). As noted earlier, “communities” of LaVeyan Satanists do not exist to any large degree,<sup>7</sup> so when juxtaposed with (b)’s reliance on the economic motivations for the administrative staff, one should be able to safely conclude that the High Priesthood consisting of Maguses and Magistras will be the most likely beneficiaries of membership and dues collected in the Church of Satan’s name. Such use of the Church of Satan makes even more sense insofar as the Church of Satan is considered a “Corporations Sole”<sup>8</sup> in milder light, and a corporate fascist dictatorship at the extreme (Wolf n.d.: 7–8). An explanation of the fees is offered in the Church of Satan informational packet, which states that, “The money that the Church of Satan receives for its unsolicited memberships and fees go to administrative costs, such as those incurred by any other organization” (Paradise n.d.: 51). Yet, this explanation does not include reasons for recruitment efforts by Grotto Masters that are given financial encouragement of \$10 toward “yearly grotto fees” for each sponsorship of new Church of Satan members (Church of Satan: *Grotto Master’s Handbook*, page 6), nor does it explain the sliding fee scale for a “yearly grotto fee” (ibid.: 5–6). One could loosely interpret this as administrative costs only to a point where communication is increased in that area, but not so much that the Grotto Master’s duties are relieved. Financial interest may thus be one of the administrative motives for running the organization.

---

<sup>7</sup> See Petersen 2002 for the contrast to virtual communities.

<sup>8</sup> See *Black’s Law Dictionary*, Sixth edition, entries on “corporations sole” and “corporations aggregate”.

## The Development and Nature of Post-Charismatic Administration

Now that a motivation for post-charismatic authority to continue the Church of Satan has been established, the tasks of determining the nature of this administrative staff and how it came to be presently must be discussed. For defining the nature of the administration, one must return to Weber's model to explore the six general categories (Weber 1947: 364–366) and show their historical placements in the development of the Church of Satan.

Weber proposes that with the disappearance of the charismatic leader, several possible types of solution arise. The first of these comes in the form of "(a) The search for a new charismatic leader on the basis of criteria of the qualities which will fit him for the position of authority" (ibid.: 364). This ideology was present in the meritocracy days, pre-schism, but also resurfaced later as a real process with the reinstatement of the grotto system. The basic attitude inherent in this strategy for it to work is that certain distinguishing characteristics get weaned in the membership in order to carry on a tradition of sorts, and the danger in taking this to the extreme is that "the purely personal character of leadership is eliminated" (ibid.). The best example to illustrate this is to look at pictures of the more public figures representing the Church of Satan. Abundant illustrations demonstrate the male role dominated by white males, often sporting facial hair in the form of beards, many of which in the fashion of LaVey.<sup>9</sup> For the female counterpart, the standard image is that of a "blonde bombshell" type look fashioned after a Jayne Mansfield or Marilyn Monroe. Several examples of this likewise show up as personal physical traits<sup>10</sup>, but also the implied character traits those roles would employ as espoused by *The Satanic Bible* (LaVey 1969: 112–113) and the various methods discussed throughout *The Satanic Witch*.

Weber's next method for searching for a new charismatic leader is "(b) By revelation manifested in oracles, lots, divine judgments, or other techniques of selection" (Weber 1947: 365). This method is best shown in religious settings, but not in regards to Satanism because the working mechanism behind it is some higher power to direct the outcome of the lots. One would also think Satanists would find such a method demeaning, even if two equally qualified people were available. Such a situation of equal qualification arose between Karla LaVey and Blanche Barton, and their method was to have the situation arbitrated by a judge as to who gained possession of the "Church of Satan" (Boulware 1998: 3).

The next manner of passing authority is "(c) By the designation of his own successor, and his recognition on the part of the follower" (Weber 1947: 365). This situation would be analogous to LaVey designating his successor as Blanche Barton or Karla LaVey. Interestingly enough, he did not do this clearly—with Karla citing his long time disagreement with wills and his recent heavy medication from a near death experience as perhaps reasons for her case, and Barton's production

<sup>9</sup> Baddeley 1999, example pictures on pages 102, 106, 226, 227, 240.

<sup>10</sup> Baddeley 1999: 72, 151, 220.

of a handwritten will claiming that “the church, LaVey’s personal property, and all rights to LaVey’s writings were the sole property of Blanche, and LaVey’s youngest son Xerxes” (Baddeley 1999: 212–213) for hers. This whole fiasco took place in 1998, and even became the subject of a local news article, which focused on elements of the fate of the Church of Satan, which to Boulware, “suggest the Church of Satan may be headed south, so to speak” (Boulware1998: 7).

Weber’s fourth method enumerated is that of: “(d) Designation of a successor by the charismatically qualified administrative staff and his recognition by the community” (Weber 1947: 365). Ideally, this would be the approach that the Council of Nine would do if it had had authority over anyone. Instead, those who were closest to LaVey (Barton and Karla LaVey) would not submit to the others’ authority since they were of equal rank, and no one else would have been close enough or closer to LaVey than his most recent consort (Barton), and his daughter Karla. Both ladies were qualified by their interaction with the media, long standing-familial ties, and their ability to be charismatic to an extent. Therefore, one can see the problem of having two roughly equal candidates for a position with little guiding the selection process.

This period of strife was a formative period for how the governing body would begin to function,<sup>11</sup> or continue to function (Boulware 1998: 6), depending upon which of the sources one believes, yet the qualifications remain vague to outsiders and the only visible qualifications from that perspective is a literary qualification much like the one discussed earlier. Such lack of personal charisma sparked a need for a supreme authority to end the factionalism that Barton and Karla LaVey posed by their battle for succession. An installation of a governing body became clearly desired to execute decisions. Thus, with the conditions being as they were, Weber’s astute analysis of this possibility rings especially true: “It is not to be determined merely by majority vote, but it is a question of arriving at the correct designation of *the right person* who is truly endowed with charisma” (Weber 1947: 365 [emphasis added]).

The second to last means of filling a charismatic vacuum is “(e) By the conception that charisma is a quality transmitted by heredity; thus that it is participated in by the kinsmen of its bearer, particularly by his closest relatives. This is the case of hereditary charisma” (Weber 1947: 365). This method has a rich history in the Church of Satan, but ultimately did not turn out to be the means used. In a rather long chain for so short a time, a chain of hereditary inheritance spanning Diane Hegarty (LaVey), Karla LaVey, Zeena (LaVey) Schreck, Blanche Barton and Xerxes LaVey was formed. It is worth noting that Barton is the only non-LaVey to be included in this list, and her inclusion is largely due to her maternal status in regards to Xerxes LaVey. The importance of the method described by Weber lies in the fact that personal charisma can be totally absent from the successor. Such an absence would probably have been the case for Diane LaVey, and Xerxes (so far). The others participated in the church’s publicity campaign more and would

---

<sup>11</sup> See Michael Aquino’s response to Stephen Brown in Brown 1992: 5.

have been more qualified independently of their familial status, which intriguingly depart from Weber's nineteenth century male notions of charisma.

Finally, we reach Weber's last model for succession which states: "(f) The concept that charisma may be transmitted by ritual means from one bearer to another or may be created in a new person" (ibid.). A model of this sort would have quite some resemblance of a Pope upon assumption of office. With such imagery in mind, one can see the analogous situation attempt to play itself out with the "Black Papacy" of Anton LaVey, and the association of charisma attached to that office rather than what the individual brings to it, and makes it, "an objective transferable entity" (ibid.: 366).

Given the above information; why this long discourse on the various models of succession? The breakdown of the various models was necessary to illustrate that the Church of Satan did not follow one distinct path of succession in order to assure its longevity, but had several methods in place at many times during the evolution of the church and several played a role to some degree. Such methods did not necessarily have to have been deliberate, and whether they were or not is not the prime focus of the chapter. The interesting ideas to draw from this evolution is that the Church of Satan surmounted these difficulties by routinizing charisma and entered the next stage of the church's development, that of the routinization of the body of the church (see Miller 1991).

The methods for routinizing various parts of the Church of Satan had to be slightly different than the norm, for although many heterodox groups have some sense of solidarity or selflessness, the Church of Satan had to work in a medium where self-sacrifice for higher purpose was not the given mindset – where in fact selfishness was and still is lauded.

Thus at the top of the organizational pyramid is the High Priest/ess role, whose decision to be supreme arbiter was more of a forced decision based on circumstances surrounding the inheritance as noted before under condition (c), that two developed personalities were facing off for supreme authority over the church. Finally, after giving way to a third party (Peter Gilmore), the debate ended, and resulted in Karla LaVey leaving the Church of Satan in order to found the First Satanic Church.<sup>12</sup>

Lower down on the administrative ladder were the regional executives, whom little affected their particular role, as administration of regions simply requires the collation and forwarding of data to Central Grotto.

However, the most interesting and innovative methods used were by far in the Priesthood specializing in grotto administration. The reason why this is so striking is that a manual was put out to function like a cheat sheet for Satanism, to a certain extent, but also offers a look at how a Satanic organization would essentially run itself in a decentralized fashion. To understand this, one must see that it is given

---

<sup>12</sup> "The First Satanic Church was formed on October 31, 1999 by Karla LaVey." From <http://www.satanicchurch.com/content/about.aspx>

that there are no Satanic “seminaries,” per se, in which masses of Satanists can get an orthodox theological interpretation of their quasi-scripture.

The way that the *Grotto Master’s Handbook* (Church of Satan n.d.) gets around this problem of orthodox education is that it leaves the education entirely in the hands of the grotto leader, bounded by a list of “Further Reading” and then creates a make or break dilemma where the priest must either actively recruit and sponsor members to prove his or her worth as a priest, or the grotto is seen as an unnecessary social gathering by the administration above him or her. Not only does this spur the priests to activity, it also functions to contest one of Weber’s truisms that, “Charisma can only be ‘awakened’ and ‘tested’; it cannot be ‘learned’ or ‘taught’” (Weber 1947: 367). The “Further Reading” section in the *Grotto Master’s Handbook* is so instrumental to demonstrating this point that it is necessary to discuss the genres of books on this list. It gives one a general idea of how and what is expected of a Grotto Master; to interact with the members, but also how the Church of Satan reinstated the grotto system at a time when it was needed in order to fill any sort of gap the passing of LaVey might have left on the membership.<sup>13</sup>

The subject matter of the books on the list lend one to think in a very militaristic mindset, which has its implicit idea that those below you are to obey orders, insubordination cannot be tolerated, and that one is constantly at war with one’s surrounding environment. Books such as N. Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War* and B. Pandolfini’s *Weapons of Chess* along with a few others lay down a solid tactical outlook, and develop leadership skills in their implementation in the real world. Certain ideas such as “spies” even lend themselves to the personality disorders most prevalent to some leaders in Satanic groups such as “paranoids” (See United Satanic Covenire n.d.). Similarly, several books concern the acquisition of charisma and its application. D. Carnegie’s *How to Win Friends and Influence People* is perhaps the most field tested book in regards to charisma, and it is not surprising that this, along with books on rhetoric, will, symbolism, and histories of empires flesh out the rest of the reading list.<sup>14</sup> These last cornerstones on how the Grotto Master gets educated really lay the whole structure of Satanism at one’s feet to understand better. One can gain a historical perspective from these readings, understand the shifting in leadership, learn preventative measures to protect from infiltration, stave off disunity, and perhaps even go out and conquer the hearts and minds of other people.

Moreover, the body of Satanic literature provides a lengthy reading list for educational purposes. The bibliography of *The Satanic Witch* (LaVey 1989: 266–274) is brimming full with works on all manners of “lesser magic,” social

---

<sup>13</sup> Some time before his death, Anton LaVey had the grotto system reinstated, and by his death, the fruition of these groups would have been obvious to the upper echelons – which had something to gain from it – money.

<sup>14</sup> These books include: *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* – Edward Corbett, *Will* – G. Gordon Liddy, *Mind Tools* – Rudy Rucker, *Methods of Logic* – W.V. Quine, *Man and His Symbols* – Carl Jung, and several others.

psychology, sociology, and a host of other topics of study. The appendices in *The Church of Satan* (II, III, IV) (Barton 1990: 149–167) offer an approved list for educational purposes ranging from music, movies, and reference items in literature, and more broadly books.

One is brought to the question of why the church goes through this effort, and the only reasonable conclusion is that the Church of Satan wants people to read these other books to be educated in the fashion that the priesthood wants, and as a follower, to do what they command – which could include anything from kicking someone out of a chat-room to slandering former members to intimidating current ones.<sup>15</sup> Ultimately the body of affiliated Church of Satan “Satanists” is a small one, with conservative estimates running as little as three hundred (Boulware 1998: 6) to one thousand (Introvigne 1997: 80), which although disappointingly small, are much more manageable than ranges of seven thousand (Lyons 1970: 174 ) to ten to twenty thousand (Kahaner 1988: 68). This gives the inquirer a much better idea as to how the organization works, how it functions on both the administrative and on an interpersonal level with its members.

As this chapter has progressed, one has been able to learn the various tactics the followers of Anton LaVey’s Church of Satan use to continue to function, continue to derive meaning and social interaction from the ideas at a crucial time surrounding LaVey’s death. How the administrative body of the Church of Satan functions in the future will depend on how well they are able to produce charismatic leadership. And as Lawrence Wright so succinctly phrased it, “There’s no future for that church unless some other person comes along who can spin out the same kind of charisma that LaVey was able to do” (Boulware 1998).

## References

- Anonymous. No date [internet]. “Satanism – an authoritative essay and brief history: Satanic Community article.” Accessed at [www.the600club.com/satanism/](http://www.the600club.com/satanism/)
- Aquino, Michael 2002 [internet]. *The Church of Satan*. Fifth edition online format. Accessed at [www.xeper.org/maquino/nm/COS.pdf](http://www.xeper.org/maquino/nm/COS.pdf)
- Baddeley, Gavin 1999. *Lucifer Rising*. London: Plexus Printing Co., UK.
- Barton, Blanche 1990a. *The Church of Satan*. Hell’s Kitchen Productions.
- Barton, Blanche 1990b. *The Secret Life of a Satanist*. Los Angeles: Feral House.
- Bierce, Ambrose 1984. *The Complete Stories of Ambrose Bierce*. University of Nebraska Press.
- Billington, James H. 1980. *Fire in the Hearts of Men: Origins of Revolutionary Faith*. New York: Basic Books.
- Black’s Law Dictionary*. Sixth edition [internet]. Available at: <http://www.commonlawvenue.com/Glossary/Glossary.htm>

---

<sup>15</sup> See Wolf n.d. for examples.



- Boulware, Jack 1998. "Has the Church of Satan gone to Hell?". *SF Weekly*. June 17, 1998.
- Brown, Steven 1992. *The Satanic Letters of Stephen Brown*. Shrewsbury: Thormynd Press, vol. 1, excerpt.
- Church of Satan. No date. *Grotto Master's Handbook*. Private printing, 1997 or later.
- Introvigne, Massimo 1997. "A rumor of devils: The Satanic ritual abuse scare in the Mormon Church". *SYZGY*, vol. 6, issue 1 (winter-spring).
- Kahaner, Larry 1988. *Cults That Kill: Probing the Underworld of Occult Crime*. New York: Warner Books.
- LaVey, Anton 1969. *The Satanic Bible*. New York: Avon Press.
- LaVey, Anton 1989. *The Satanic Witch*. Los Angeles: Feral House.
- Lewis, James R. 2002. "Diabolical authority: Anton LaVey, *The Satanic Bible* and the Satanist 'tradition'". *Marburg Journal of Religion*, vol. 7, no. 1 (September 2002).
- Lyons, Arthur 1970. *The Second Coming: Satanism in America*. New York: Cornwall Press.
- Miller, Timothy 1991 (ed.). *When Prophets Die: The Post-Charismatic Fate of New Religious Movements*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Paradise, Matt G. No date [internet]. *Church of Satan Informational Pack 2.0*. On-line packet available at [www.churchofsatan.com](http://www.churchofsatan.com)
- Petersen, Jesper Aa. 2002. "Binary Satanism: the construction of community in a digital world". *SYZGY*, vol. 11 (2002), pp. 37–53.
- Schreck, Zeena and Nicholas 2002 (1998). "Anton LaVey: legend and reality". *SYZGY*, vol. 11 (2002), pp. 245–257.
- United Satanic Covenire. No date [internet]. "The myth of Satanic unity: the facts, fallacies, and fall-outs, plus a suggested guide for help". On-line essay available at [www.satan4u.8m.com/philosophy/unity.html](http://www.satan4u.8m.com/philosophy/unity.html)
- Weber, Max 1947. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wolf, Ole 2002. "Analysis of the Church of Satan: the Emperor's new religion". *SYZGY*, vol. 11 (2002), pp. 257–310. It can also be found as an on-line essay at <http://fcos.us/pdf/cosanalysis.pdf>
- Wolf, Ole. No date [internet]. "The CoS Files: exposing corporate fascists". On-line essay at <http://www.luckymojo.com/esoteric/religion/satanism/firstchurchofsatan/cosfiles/>
- Wright, Lawrence 1991. "It's not easy being evil in a world that's gone to Hell". *Rolling Stone*. New York: Straight Arrow Publishers. September 5, pp. 63–68, 105–106.

## Chapter 6

# Embracing Others than Satan: The Multiple Princes of Darkness in the Left-Hand Path Milieu

Kennet Granholm

The phenomenon identified as Satanism by scholars, the general public and practitioners often coincides with a category of esoteric spirituality termed the Left-Hand Path. Whereas Satanism is generally understood as a number of religious traditions and philosophies that in some way appropriate the Judeo-Christian Devil, movements within the Left-Hand Path milieu operate with a multitude of mythological beings beyond this context. In my opinion, the term Satanism has all too often been loosely applied by scholars to include movements that should not really be contained under the banner. In this chapter I will take a look at the Left-Hand Path, shortly introduce three influential movements that are contained in this milieu, and discuss the existence of a multitude of “Princes of Darkness” in the philosophies and practices of these movements. In discussing the terminologies of Satanism, “Post-Satanism”, and the Left-Hand Path, I hope to demonstrate the problematic nature of the first of these.

### **Satanism, “Post-Satanism” and the Left-Hand Path**

This chapter is contained in a book about religious Satanism, and thus the term will no doubt receive ample discussion elsewhere in this anthology. However, as it is of great significance for the present chapter I will still devote some space to discuss it. First off, what exactly is Satanism? Let us look at some scholarly definitions of the term. In the *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* Massimo Introvigne defines Satanism as “adoration, in an organized and ritual form, of the figure known in the Bible as the Devil or Satan” (Introvigne 2005: 1035). When reading the Bible we find that there in fact seem to be many different variations of this Devil. For example, we have the Old Testament Satan who tests the obedient and God-fearing Job on the command of God (Job 1-2), and we have the New Testament Satan of Luke who unsuccessfully tempts Jesus in the desert and finally helps Judas Iscariot betray Jesus (Luke 4 and 22). The nature, acts and power of Satan seems to vary in the different Biblical stories. Even though appropriate, a definition such as Introvigne’s says very little about the actual nature of Satanic

philosophy and practice. In addition, it might be added that few contemporary Satanists tend to draw their picture of Satan directly from strictly Judeo-Christian sources. In many cases popular culture and other mediated depictions seem to be more influential (see Partridge 2005).

In his article on Satanism in the *Encyclopedia of Religion* David G. Bromley does not define the subject *per se* (Bromley 2005). He does shortly discuss Satanic churches, exemplified by the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set, but devotes most of the article to a discussion of the Satanism scare. Thus, there emerges another kind of Satanism; the one created by non-Satanists in the Satanism Scares of the 1980s and 1990s.

Lisbeth Mikaelsson and Ingvild Sælid Gilhus treat Satanism in conjunction with Neopaganism, as they regard these forms of spirituality to have many commonalities. One of these similarities is the opposition to dualistic worldviews, where evil and good are regarded as fundamentally opposed. Mikaelsson and Gilhus divide Satanism into four different categories:

- organized Satanism, such as the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set. This form of Satanism is identified as the one resembling Neo-paganism the most;
- *ad hoc*-Satanism, practiced by youth groups who employ the figure of Satan as a counterforce to the Christian God, often engaging in acts of vandalism of churches and graveyards;
- the use of disembedded Satanic symbols, without attaching any reflected Satanic philosophy to them;
- the belief in Satanic ritual abuse (Mikaelsson & Gilhus 1998: 112–114).

It is the first of these categories that is of relevance for this chapter, as it is the only one with any clear religious or spiritual aspirations. However, there seems to be no clear definition as to what functionalistic or ideological qualities make up Satanism. Thus, it can be assumed that Satanism here is formed of those groups and people who identify as Satanists.

In the introduction to the present volume, religious Satanism is defined in relation to the creative use of the figure of Satan, including related names such as Devil and Lucifer, by groups and individuals. Furthermore, Satanism is identified as a form of self-religion or life spirituality, as discussed by Paul Heelas (Heelas 1996; 2002), albeit with an explicitly antinomian focus. Of the different variants of religious Satanism discussed, Esoteric Satanism, which draws inspiration from Western esoteric elements, is of most relevance for the present article.

Elsewhere I have defined Satanism as a countercultural form of spirituality where central premises are the focus on the self and the opposition to the experienced dualism of mainstream culture and religion (Granholtm 2000). I have also stressed the importance of focusing on the self-designation of individuals and groups as Satanic (Granholtm 2000; 2001).

What is meant, then, by the term “Post-Satanism”? If we regard the history of modern, or contemporary, Satanism to have started with Anton Szandor LaVey and the founding of the Church of Satan in 1966, then post-Satanism would imply further developments of that particular strand of religious philosophy. In particular, this would entail the shift of focus away from the figure of Satan to other deities and mythological beings. Thus, groups such as the Temple of Set, which does not define itself as a Satanic religion and which has largely relinquished the figure of Satan in favor of the Egyptian Set, could be termed “Post-Satanic”. The Temple of Set should in fact not be termed Satanic (see Gregorius 2006: 20), if any consistence in the use of the term Satanism is sought. The term “Post-Satanism” is useful when discussing non-Satanic groups, individuals and philosophies that have a background in Satanism proper, i.e. when focusing on further developments in the Satanic milieu. Other than that, “Post-Satanism” is a term of limited usefulness.

The third term included in the title of this subsection, the Left-Hand Path, is the one of most significance for this chapter. The term has received far less attention in academia than the term Satanism. Richard Sutcliffe discusses the Left-Hand Path in an article in the anthology *Paganism Today* (Sutcliffe 1996), Graham Harvey mentions it in the book *Listening People, Speaking Earth* (Harvey 1997: 97–99), and Dave Evans includes it in *The History of British Magick after Crowley* (Evans 2007). None of these scholars really define the Left-Hand Path. In my doctoral thesis I use the term frequently (Granholt 2005), but as Marco Pasi correctly remarks in his review of the book, my use of the term is essentially an adoption of the emic term used by the group studied, Dragon Rouge (Pasi 2007). This limited treatment of the term is not sufficient, so let us take a closer look at what the Left-Hand Path could possibly be. I, Sutcliffe and Evans all identify antinomianism as a central ingredient in Left-Hand Path spiritualities, and discuss the aim of Left-Hand Path magic to transcend the boundary the dualisms of “black” and “white” magic, and good and evil. However, more substance is needed in a definition of the Left-Hand Path.

Drawing from emic self-understandings, I propose an etic<sup>1</sup> definition of the Left-Hand Path as a distinct development of contemporary Western esotericism<sup>2</sup>, which can be identified by the following characteristics.

---

<sup>1</sup> Etic definitions always have emic understandings as their starting points, and as both “Satanism” and “Left-Hand Path” are scholarly constructs (as well as numerous different emic constructs), it is appropriate to mention this again. A common-sense understanding of a phenomenon will often be of some usefulness for scholarly pursuits, but will not suffice as a pure academic definition. Academic definitions need to be systematic, and will by their very nature be reductions of the phenomena defined. In my opinion, an etic definition of Left-Hand Path spirituality needs to be based on existing emic understandings.

<sup>2</sup> Western esotericism has been defined by Antoine Faivre as “an ensemble of spiritual currents in modern and contemporary Western history which share a certain *air de famille*, as well as the form of thought which is its common denominator” (Faivre 1998: 2). Faivre furthermore states that the following four characteristics should be found in a material in

*The Ideology of Individualism*

Discursively, the individual and his/her spiritual development is the primary concern in Left-Hand Path spiritualities, even with individuals operating in groups. Organizations are typically likened to schools where the individual magician can acquire the tools necessary for his/her magical progress. This is mainly a rhetorical device, as Left-Hand Path organizations, like others, naturally involve individuals who invest much time and energy into running the organization in question. The individual is positioned in opposition to the collective, and this often results in a form of elitism, which posits the magician as an elect individual. I have earlier termed this condition “uniqueism” as the term elitism is rather pejorative and the common understanding of it not really capturing the essence of the phenomenon (Granholt 2005: 129–131). It could be argued that most or all esoteric traditions throughout history have been individualistic in character. However, the distinction with Left-Hand Path spiritualities is that this individualism is raised to the level of explicit ideology.

*The View of Man as a Psycho-physical Totality*

The essence of man is considered to be both physical and psychic, and any absolute separation of these spheres is considered unsound, reductionist, or even impossible. The terminology, and specific foci will differ in various Left-Hand Path traditions. While some traditions have a stronger focus on “psyche”, views of the body as (merely) the temple of the soul are uncommon.

*The Appraisal of Life in the Here-and-now*

The focus of Left-Hand Path spiritualities is on corporeal existence in the present, not on an afterlife. All aspects of life are valued, even its destructive aspects (e.g. death), which are regarded as necessary components of life. Moderate to extreme hedonism is advocated, as one it is thought that life should be enjoyed, and again in both its positive and negative aspects. Ways of enjoyment (e.g. sex) are sometimes used as methods for spiritual development. This applies to the negative aspects of life as well, such as symbolically and ritually confronting one’s impending death (Granholt 2008).

---

order for it to be considered esoteric: the idea of correspondences; the idea of a living, divine nature; the primacy of imagination and mediation as ways to gain esoteric knowledge; and the experience of transmutation (Faivre 1994: 114–115). Faivre’s characterization of esotericism has come under some critique (see Stuckrad 2005a; 2005b) , and it should be remembered that the characteristics mentioned are based on Renaissance sources. Other scholars have discussed the change of esotericism over time (see Hanegraaff 1996; 2003; Hammer 2001). However, Faivre’s characterization will suffice for the present purpose.

### *The Goal of Self-deification*

The aim of the practitioner is to become a creator, or a god, and this is effected through initiatory processes. The nature of this self-deification is interpreted in various ways by different individuals (as groups rarely define it in a singular fashion). On the one side of the continuum we find psychological interpretations in which self-deification signifies assuming total control over one's own personal existential universe. On the other side we find purely metaphysical interpretations in which the practitioner is thought to become an actual god.

### *An Antinomian Stance*

Collective religious and cultural norms are questioned in the pursuit of individualized ethics (Granholtm 2006) and spiritual evolution. The magician seeks to abandon his/her culturally given set of ethics, and adopt personal and individualized ones. This is often realized in ritualistic fashion in spiritual practices in which the magician breaks religious, cultural, and personal taboos (most often on a purely mental level) (Sutcliffe 1996; Granholtm 2005: 137–138). The idea is that this will grant the magician a level of freedom and separation in his individualization and self-deification. Part of the antinomianism is that any particular Left-Hand Path exists in an antithetical relation to what it perceives to be “the Right-Hand Path”. This includes religious (and often political, ideological etc.) groups that are “mainstream” and confer to established norms, as well as many forms of alternative spirituality which are regarded as being essentially collective in character, and/or conforming in ideology and practice (including esoteric spiritualities such as New Age and Neo-Paganism). A particular Left-Hand Path thus defines itself in opposition to this “Right-Hand Path”, and becomes what this “mainstream” spirituality is not (Granholtm 2005: 138, footnote 43; see also Granholtm 2007).

It should be mentioned that “Left-Hand Path” is a term that is both broader and more restricted than the term Satanism. In other words, it includes some groups that are commonly identified as Satanic, excludes others, and also includes groups which are not normally labeled Satanic.

### **The Left-Hand Path: Brief History and Presentation of the Groups Discussed**

After having defined the term Left-Hand Path it is now time to take a brief look at the historical use of the term and the development of the Left-Hand Path milieu, and to give a more detailed presentation of the three groups under scrutiny in this chapter: Temple of Set, Rune-Gild, and Dragon Rouge.

The origin of the term Left-Hand Path can be traced back to the form of Indian religion called Tantra<sup>3</sup>, where a distinction between various traditions is expressed in the terms *Vamamarga* (which can be translated as left way) and *Dakshinamarga* (which can be translated as right way). The terms were borrowed from the Indian context, and reinterpreted to fit into the Western esoteric context in the late nineteenth century. The popularization of the terms can probably be attributed to Helena Petrovna Blavatsky of the Theosophical Society, who used them in her work *The Secret Doctrine* (Blavatsky 1888a: 6, 193; 1888b: 26). The term did occur relatively frequently in the early twentieth century magic milieu, but almost solely as a derogatory term. It should be noted that although the origin of the term lies in an oriental religious context, the Western Left-Hand Path is a distinctly *Western* phenomenon.

The evolution of the Left-Hand Path cannot be discussed without mentioning the most well known occultist of the twentieth century; Aleister Crowley (1875–1947). While Crowley did not use the term Left-Hand Path as a self-designation, his magical philosophy and practice has been extremely influential on the later Left-Hand Path milieu<sup>4</sup>. Crowley received his initial training in magic and occultism in the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (founded in 1888), and came to develop his own magical religion, Thelema, from 1904 onwards. In 1912 Crowley became involved with the German-originated magic order Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.), which is the main organization expounding Crowley's teachings today (see Pasi 2005). Crowley's use of sex as an initiatory tool, his antinomian stance towards traditional society and religion, his focus on Will as the main instrument of the magician, and his uncompromising attitude to spiritual progress have all influenced Left-Hand path spiritualities.

Something of a positive re-evaluation of the term Left-Hand Path can be found in the works of the British magician and author Kenneth Grant (b. 1924). Grant was the personal secretary of Crowley for a short period in 1945, and further developed the Thelemic system of his mentor. After Crowley's death Grant made an attempt to take over the O.T.O., and although this ultimately failed he has maintained his own branch of the order, commonly identified as the Typhonian O.T.O. (Koenig 1999: 25–26). Even though Grant's O.T.O. has never had more than a handful of members, his writings are well known within the occult milieu.

---

<sup>3</sup> It should be remembered that the term Tantra is in itself a label applied to “those practices Westerners regarded as most abhorrent” in the Indian religious climate of the eighteenth century (Smith 2005: 8988). Tantrism as a uniform and organized system of belief and practice does not exist, or at least did not exist until the Western imagination created it and reintroduced it to India (see Urban 2003). For the problems with the terms Tantra and Tantrism see Urban 2003, White 2005, and Smith 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Aleister Crowley's influence is apparent in most contemporary esotericism, for example on Neo-pagan witchcraft and Wicca (see Bogdan 2007: 147–155). However, it is not uncommon that this heritage goes unmentioned, as the image of Crowley is still rather negative.

The most famous of these are the three Typhonian Trilogies, published between 1972 and 2002<sup>5</sup>. The Left-Hand Path receives much contemplation in these works. For example, in *Cults of the Shadow* Grant writes “It is the almost universal failure to understand the proper function of the Left Hand Path that has led to its denigration...” (Grant 1994a: 1), and this sentiment is expressed in *Nightside of Eden* as well (Grant 1994b: 52). Grant identifies the Left-Hand Path as a genuine and important spiritual path, and considers it to be as valid as the more common “Right-Hand Path”.

If the term Left-Hand Path is not directly used as a self-designate by Kenneth Grant, it is used so by Anton Szandor LaVey, founder of the Church of Satan (1966) and “father of modern Satanism”. For example, in *The Satanic Bible* the following line is included as part of an incantation: “Strengthen with fire the marrow of our friend and companion, our comrade on the Left-Hand Path” (LaVey 1976 (1969)). Also discussed is the “Right-Hand Path”, in the preface of the book portrayed as the realm of ignorance and fear (LaVey 1976 (1969)). It is interesting to note that this “Right-Hand Path” is treated a lot more thoroughly than the Left-Hand Path. This is an example of the importance of the “other” for Left-Hand Path spiritualities (see the characteristic of antinomianism in the above definition of the Left-Hand Path).

The three movements constituting the primary focus of this chapter are the Temple of Set, Rune-Gild, and Dragon Rouge. Next, I will provide a brief history and description of these movements.

The Temple of Set was founded in 1975 as an offshoot of the Church of Satan. In May 1975 Anton LaVey instituted a number of changes in initiation structure of the Church. Michael Aquino, a high-ranking member of the Church, and several other members regarded these changes as a betrayal of the fundamentals of the Church and left the organization (see Aquino 2002b: 407–413; 2008: 6–10). Unsure of how to proceed, Aquino performed a magic working on the summer solstice of 1975. The result was the text *The Book of Coming Forth by Night* (Aquino 2008: 110–115), which is structured as a statement by the Egyptian god Set and provides the mandate to form a new organization to continue the work started in the Church of Satan.

Like all Left-Hand Path organizations, the Temple of Set is an initiatory society. It operates with six initiatory degrees; namely I – Setian, II – Adept, III – Priest/Priestess, IV – Magister/Magistra Templi, V – Magus/Maga, and VI – Ipsissimus/Ipsissima (Temple of Set 2007; Kotkavuori 2007). Of these degrees the third one is of special significance, as it entails entry to the Priesthood of the Temple. First and second degree members can be regarded as “lay members” (Aquino 2002a: 24–32).

---

<sup>5</sup> The first trilogy consists of *The Magical Revival* (1972), *Aleister Crowley & the Hidden God* (1973) and *Cults of the Shadow* (1975), the second trilogy consists of *Nightside of Eden* (1977), *Outside the Circles of Time* (1980), and *Hecate's Fountain* (1992), while the third and last trilogy consists of *Outer Gateways* (1994), *Beyond the Mauve Zone* (1999), and *The Ninth Arch* (2002) (Bogdan 2003).



The philosophy of the Temple is centered on the concept *Xeper*, which is translated as “becoming” (Aquino 2002a: 21). According to Aquino the word refers to “the transformation and evolution of the Will from a human to a divine state of being – by deliberate, conscious, individual force of mind” (Aquino 2002a: 114). The Temple operates with the concepts of objective and subjective universes. The objective universe signifies the natural world and collective meaning systems, whereas subjective universes signify individual meaning systems and experience worlds (Kotkavuori 2007: 17–21). The primary forms of the Temple’s magic practice, Lesser and Greater Black Magic, reflect the concepts of objective and subjective universes. When performing Lesser Black Magic the magician manipulates the objective world, whereas Greater Black Magic involves the Setian working with his/her subjective experience world, and through this affecting change in other subjective worlds and the objective world. The aim of Greater Black Magic is the spiritual evolution and transformation of the practitioner (Aquino 2002a: 72–98).

Rune-Gild was founded in Texas, USA, in 1980 by Stephen E. Flowers, who writes most of his works dealing with the philosophy and practice of the Gild under the pseudonym and magic name Edred Thorsson. The Gild has strong connections to the Temple of Set, as Flowers has attained the sixth and highest degree in the Temple. Consequently, both organizations share certain philosophical tenets, such as the concepts of objective and subjective universes, and varying levels of focus on Germanic traditions.

As the name of the organization indicates, the focus of the Gild is on Germanic mythology in the form of the study and magical application of runes. The Finnish member Ensio Kataja regards the work of the Gild as development of the conscious Self through Rune-work (Kataja 2005: 9–10). The main practice of the Gild consists of a series of exercises called *The Nine Doors of Midgard*, also published in book form (Thorsson 1994). On the website of the Gild, rune work is divided into Rune thinking, which involves meditation and contemplation, divination in the form of Rune casting, *galdor*, implying the verbal magical use of the runes, the manufacturing of rune talismans, and, perhaps most importantly, self-transformational Rune-work. Ensio Kataja describes Rune-work as the “internalization of the runes” in a way that lets one “experience and activate the power of the runes in oneself” in order to “effect change” in the outer and inner worlds (Kataja 2005: 89–90). The Germanic god Odin (spelled Ódhinn in the Gild) is regarded a model for self-deification, and the goal in the Gild is to “become like Odin” (Kataja 2005: 20–21, 38; Rune-Gild 2007). Rune-Gild is an initiatory society, organized in an outer and inner hall. The loosely structured outer hall consists of three degrees, whereas the inner hall consists of two (Karlsson 2005b; Rune-Gild 2007).

The last of the Left-Hand Path organizations treated in the context of this chapter is Dragon Rouge, founded by Thomas Karlsson in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1990. Like the two other organizations treated earlier, Dragon Rouge is an initiatory society. The initiatory system of the order is based on the 11 qliphotic

spheres, the shadow-side of the sephiroth or tree of life in Kabbalah (Scholem 1991: 73–77). When becoming a member one has the possibility to partake in correspondence courses in magic, which leads to initiation in the degree system. The order is arranged in three primary levels. Level one consists of those members who have not yet been initiated into the first degree, while level two consists of those initiated in degrees 1.0 and 2.0. Upon initiation into degree 3.0 the member swears the Dragon Oath and is initiated into the Dragon Order, the third organizational level and the inner order of Dragon Rouge (Granholm 2005: 187–190).

The order operates with the dichotomies of Chaos and Cosmos. Chaos, which is the focus of the Dragon Rouge magician, is understood as the sphere of un-manifest potential, and as a source of power that the magician can tap into. Through utilizing the destructive powers of Chaos, the magician can tear down obstacles and restrictions in his life, in order to recreate the foundation of his/her own existence. The form of magic practiced in Dragon Rouge is called Dark Magic, signifying the exploration of hidden aspects of the Self and existence (Granholm 2005: 123–134). The foundation of the order's practice and philosophy is based on qliphotic Kabbalah, tantric kundalini meditation, Old Norse mythology, and alchemy (Granholm 2005: 169–170, 235–242).

None of the Left-Hand Path movements discussed above have large memberships. Dragon Rouge is the largest, with nearly 400 members in February 2007. The number of members in the Temple of Set is around 200, whereas the number of members in Rune-Gild is probably less. However, all of the organizations have a transnational membership, spread out over the whole of the Western world and beyond. They also regularly generate a level of mass media and public interest not implied by these relatively low membership numbers.

### **Multiple Princes of Darkness**

As suggested in the title of this chapter contemporary Left-Hand Path organizations operate with multiple “Princes of Darkness”, not only with variations of the Judeo-Christian figure Satan. In fact, most of these “Princes” are far removed from a Judeo-Christian context and interpretation, even in cases where the names of the beings are ultimately derived from the aforementioned religious traditions. The concept “Prince of Darkness” is adopted from Temple of Set usage, and it does not figure in a particularly prominent position in the other groups discussed. It is nonetheless useful as a generalizing term. The “Darkness” included in the term should not be interpreted as implying a romanticizing of evil. Rather, it indicates an antinomian appropriation of religious terminology commonly regarded as negative, as well as the expression of the perceived need to create a holistic image of the divine, including darkness in addition to light.

The Temple of Set, the oldest of the groups studied here, has one central mythological being primarily identified as the “Prince of Darkness”; namely the Egyptian god Set. In the context of the Temple Set is regarded as “the ageless

Intelligence of this Universe” and the only god with independent existence (Aquino 2008: 111). The god is considered the origin of the non-natural evolution of man, i.e. the factor that is the cause behind the emergence of the individual nature, consciousness, intelligence, and possibility of divinity in man (Aquino 2002a: 56–63). Even though members should revere Set and experience his greatness, the god is not worshipped. Instead, Set is regarded as a teacher and guide, as well as a model on which to base one’s own deification (Temple of Set 1975: 2).

The Setian is, however, not restricted to only using Set in a ritual context. In one of the earliest issues of the Temple of Set members’ publication, the *Scroll of Set*, a member expresses the opinion the Setian can make use of beings from several different mythologies when performing magic. However, it is also stated that all of these lack any objective existence and that they only function as tools for the magician (Temple of Set 1975: 2).

At a quick glance Rune-Gild would seem to be more restricted than the Temple of Set when it comes to its choices for “Prince of Darkness”. As mentioned earlier, the focus of the Gild is on the runes and Germanic tradition. In Edred Thorsson’s book *Northern Magic*, four gods of the Aesir family and three of the Vanir family of gods are primarily discussed. In addition, several Old Norse gods that are named in Snorri Sturluson’s Edda are mentioned (Thorsson 2005: 27–39). In reference to these gods, Thorsson writes that “There is a whole pantheon of magical archetypes with which the *Vitki* can work” (Thorsson 2005: 33). This implies that the gods and goddesses are considered as tools in a similar fashion as in the Temple of Set, as discussed above. In his book *Riimujen viisauus* (Wisdom of the Runes) Finnish Rune-Gild member Ensio Kataja discusses the multipartite nature of gods (based on Thorsson 1987). He writes that gods have a subjective existence in the individual psyches of human beings, as well as a tripartite objective existence. Gods exist as ethnic god-models, as god-archetypes common to the whole of humanity, and independently from humanity. It is further added that most gods are created by humans, and thus lack independent existence (Kataja 2005: 19–20). Even though many Old Norse and Germanic gods are mentioned in the books by Thorsson, one of them has a hegemonic position. In the Gild the god Ódhinn is seen as a god of both light and darkness. As the god of Rune masters, and the god who sacrificed himself to himself in order to gain knowledge (Thorsson 2005: 33), Ódhinn is regarded as a being whom the Rune magician should draw inspiration from on his/her path to self-deification. Thorsson makes a distinction between Odinism, the worship of the god Ódhinn, and Odianism, the emulation of the god in the pursuit of spiritual evolution and fulfillment (Thorsson 1994: xx). The latter is the approach in the Rune-Gild.

Of the three movements discussed in this chapter, Dragon Rouge is by far the most eclectic. The order incorporates divine and demonic beings from almost all religious traditions. These include the Egyptian god Set (Dragon Rouge 2004c: 15; 2005a: 24) and the Old Norse god Odin (or Ódhinn) (Dragon Rouge 1996/5: 9; 2004a: 17). Most commonly the gods appropriated by Dragon Rouge are drawn from pre-Christian religious traditions, or alternatively from non-Western

and non-Christian contexts. Examples of beings appropriated are the Babylonian god Kingu (Dragon Rouge 2003c: 25), the Old Norse trickster god Loki (Dragon Rouge 2004a: 17; 2004b: 18), The Aztec sky god Quetzalcoatl (Dragon Rouge 2004b: 10), the Egyptian gods Apep and Anubis (Dragon Rouge 2004c: 14; 2005a: 23–24), the Slavic gods Czernobog (Dragon Rouge 2001d: 4–8) and Weles (Dragon Rouge 2002a: 11–15), the Hellenic gods Typhon and Pan (Dragon Rouge 2005a: 23), the Indian god Shiva (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 14; Granholm 2005: 143, 195), the Knights Templar-associated Baphomet (Dragon Rouge 2003a: 25; 2003b: 28), the Persian god Ahriman (Dragon Rouge 2004a: 20; 2005a: 24), and the Yezidic peacock god Melek Taos (Dragon Rouge 2001b: 3–4), to name only a few. Dragon Rouge does also make use of Judeo-Christian and Kabbalistic demons such as Satan (Dragon Rouge 2003a: 13–14), Lucifer (Dragon Rouge 2003a: 24), Samael (Dragon Rouge 2001b; 2002b: 18, 2003a: 13–14), and Leviathan (Dragon Rouge 2005a: 23). It should, however, be noted that the order's understanding of these beings is very different from the one found in Christian contexts. Lucifer, for example, is seen as a being or principle that can light the way of the magician and show him/her the path to self-deification (see Granholm 2005: 224). The order also makes extensive use of medieval grimoires, and many names and descriptions of demonic entities are derived from these (see e.g. Karlsson 2004). In addition, mythological beings derived from fictional settings, such as H. P. Lovecraft's "Great Old Ones", are at times used in the ritual context of the order (Dragon Rouge 1996/5: 6; 2004b: 3–7; 2005a: 24; 2005/b: 13–16).

A very interesting factor in Dragon Rouge is its extremely strong embracing of the feminine divine, and thus inclusion of a large number of "*Princesses of Darkness*". Feminine deities mentioned in Dragon Rouge material and practice include the Old Norse goddesses Hel and the Norns: Urd, Verdandi and Skuld (see Granholm 2005: 205–220), the Mesopotamian/Kabbalistic demon Lilith/Lilith (Dragon Rouge 2001a/6: 2–5; 2001d: 20; 2002a: 20; 2004a: 20), the Kabbalistic demon Naamah (Dragon Rouge 2004a: 19), the Indian Tantric and Hindu goddess Kali (Dragon Rouge 2003a: 26; 2003c: 27), the Hellenistic Hecate (Dragon Rouge 2001c: 14; 2005a: 23), the Slavic goddesses Morana (Dragon Rouge 2001d: 4–8) and Ragana (Dragon Rouge 2002a: 11–15), The Egyptian goddesses Kebechet (Dragon Rouge 2005c: 19) and Sekhmet (Dragon Rouge 2004c: 23; 2005b: 26), and the Babylonian Tiamat (Dragon Rouge 2003c: 25).

One could easily expect that the eclecticism of Dragon Rouge would result in a situation where the relativism inherent in such an approach would hinder the development of any form of coherent and satisfying mythology. The order does, however, have a symbol and mythical being which is more central than any of the ones mentioned earlier; namely the Dragon. The Dragon represents an "original and limitless force" (Dragon Rouge 1996/1: 2) which is principally seen as the foundation of everything, both in the manifest cosmos and in un-manifest chaos. This force is present in the rhythm of nature (Eriksson 2001: 131–132), and finds expression in the life force of the individual magician, possible to awaken through the practice of Kundalini meditation (Granholm 2005: 146).

## Beyond Satanism?

All of the groups discussed in this chapter have at times been linked to Satanism in one way or another. The Temple of Set is regularly identified as a Satanic organization or religion by scholars of religion (see for example Bromley 2005; Introvigne 2005). The Swedish scholar Fredrik Gregorius voices the opinion that the Temple should not really be categorized as Satanism (Gregorius 2006: 20), and I wholeheartedly agree. As the Temple of Set is a direct successor to the Church of Satan, and sees itself as the authentic continuation of it, the background of the movement in Satanism cannot be denied. In addition, the terms Satan, Satanism, and Satanic have been used by the Temple. However, this has very rarely occurred in a directly self-designative way. When reading the members' publication of the Temple, the *Scroll of Set*, references to Satan and Satanism are plenty. However, for the most part these occur in direct reference to the Church of Satan. During the first ten years of the Temple, 1975 to 1984, numerous references were made to the Church of Satan, with only a few instances of a member identifying as a Satanist. One can also find articles where the term Satanism is renounced, and others where the Setian is identified as "an evolved Satanist". Curiously, in the mid 1990s, at the height of the Satanism Scare, a stronger appropriation of the term Satanism seemed to occur. However, even during this time articles about why the term should not be directly applied to the Temple outnumbered the ones in defense of the label. In the most central piece of literature within the Temple, Michael Aquino's *Black Magic* (Aquino 2002a), the term Satan and Satanism almost exclusively occur in reference to the Church of Satan. One can find no instances where the term is used as a self-designate for Temple members.

In Temple of Set philosophy the Egyptian god Set is regarded as the original inspiration for the Judeo-Christian being Satan (Aquino 2008: 111). However, as Set is (rightfully) considered as the older of the two, I feel that any more definitive links with a Judeo-Christian tradition would be somewhat dubious. In drawing on both Anton LaVey's and Aleister Crowley's material and teachings Michael Aquino defines Satan as a composite being consisting of a combination of the Egyptian gods Horus and Set. In 1904 Crowley conceived the text *The Book of the Law*, in which the Aeon of Horus was declared to have begun (as a shift away from the Christianity focused Aeon of Osiris, and the still earlier Aeon of Isis, where the focus had been on fertility cults and the feminine divine) (Pasi 2005). When founding the Church of Satan in 1966 Anton LaVey declared the Age of Satan begun. Michael Aquino conceived the idea that after the intermediary Age of Satan, in which Horus and Set were combined, Set was separated from Horus and the Aeon of Set was conceived.

Regarding the two other groups discussed, Rune-Gild and Dragon Rouge, the label Satanism has been used much less often. I know of no instances where the Rune-Gild has been termed as a Satanic organization by scholars. However, in the United Kingdom some concerns of the Satanic connections of the organization were raised in the neo-pagan milieu during the early and mid 1990s (see Harvey

1996). This was due to the fact that the founder of the Gild, Stephen E. Flowers, is a longtime and prominent member of the Temple of Set, an organization which has, as said, very often been labeled Satanic.

In the mid to late 1990s the label was applied to Dragon Rouge as well, mostly by representatives of mass media (Nilsson 1995a; 1995b; Stugart 1995) and Christian apologetic writers (Arlebrand 1995: 1; Nylund 1998: 239–242; Rinne 1998: 13–16). In a scholarly context something of an identification of Dragon Rouge with Satanism was presented in Liselotte Frisk's study of Swedish new religiosity (Frisk 1998: 142–147). Frisk presented Dragon Rouge as a representative for "Dark Magical and Satanic Movements", although it has to be pointed out that she merely discussed the similarities of the two categories and never directly defined Dragon Rouge as a Satanic organization.

Is it really prudent to use the term Satanism for movements that make use of Egyptian, Old Norse, and various other pagan deities? What do Set, Ódhinn, and Shiva really have to do with Satanism? And further on, does the term Satanism have any analytical value? My short answers to these questions are: No, Nothing, and Doubtful. As stated earlier in this chapter, I feel that the self-identification of a group or an individual as Satanic should be critical when considering using the label Satanism. This category arouses predominately negative presumptions in the general public as well as in scholars not familiar with the subject matter, and it should therefore be avoided whenever not absolutely necessary.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed the category of esoteric spirituality termed the Left-Hand Path, with a special focus on three movements: Temple of Set, Rune-Gild and Dragon Rouge. The Left-Hand Path is a category of spirituality that includes both organizations that could be labeled as Satanic, and organizations that would not traditionally be identified under this banner. This chapter has focused on groups that, in my opinion, should be excluded from the label. Groups that might more easily be placed in the Satanic category, but at the same time under the Left-Hand Path category, include, for example, the Church of Satan, The Order of Phosphorous, and the Neo-Luciferian Church. Even with some of these, though, the label Satanism is not an ideal one. I have argued that the term Satanism should be avoided whenever possible, due to the vague definition of the term and the overly pejorative connotations it arouses.

The groups discussed in this chapter, similarly to many other Left-Hand Path spiritualities, operate with multiple "Princes and Princesses of Darkness". Some of them are derived from a Judeo-Christian context and could be regarded as variations of the Biblical Satan. Others are, however, derived from contexts that lie firmly outside the Judeo-Christian tradition. There seems to have occurred a shift within the Left-Hand Path milieu where close associations and identifications with strictly Satanic subjects and themes has given way for more pre-Christian

pagan associations. If this is indeed so, then Satanism might be evolving away from Satanism. This is an interesting prospect that would merit more attention from scholars of religion.

## References

- Aquino, Michael A. 2002a. *Black Magic*. Unpublished. San Francisco: Temple of Set.
- Aquino, Michael A. 2002b [internet]. *The Church of Satan*. Unpublished. San Francisco: Temple of Set. URL: <http://www.xeper.org/maquino/nm/COS.pdf>
- Aquino, Michael A. 2008 [internet]. *The Temple of Set*. seventh draft. Unpublished. San Francisco: Temple of Set. URL: <http://www.xeper.org/maquino/nm/TOSd7.pdf>
- Arlebrand, Håkan 1995. *Det okända. Om occultism och andlighet i en ny tidsålder*. Örebro: Libris.
- Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna 1888a. *The Secret Doctrine. Vol. 1: Cosmogony*. London: The Theosophical Publishing Company, Limited.
- Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna 1888b. *The Secret Doctrine. Vol. 1: Anthropogony*. London: The Theosophical Publishing Company, Limited.
- Bogdan, Henrik 2003. *Kenneth Grant. A Bibliography – from 1948*. Gothenburg: Academia Esoterica Press.
- Bogdan, Henrik 2007. *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Bromley, David G. 2005. "Satanism". In Jones, Lindsay (ed.). *Encyclopedia of Religion, Second Edition*. Detroit: Macmillan, pp. 8126–8129.
- Dragon Rouge 1996. *Magikurs 1.0*. Unpublished. Stockholm: Dragon Rouge.
- Dragon Rouge 2001a. *Magikurs 2.0*. Unpublished. Stockholm: Dragon Rouge.
- Dragon Rouge 2001b. *Magikurs 3.0*. Unpublished. Stockholm: Dragon Rouge.
- Dragon Rouge 2001c. *Draksådd, nr 3, 2001*. Unpublished. Stockholm: Dragon Rouge.
- Dragon Rouge 2001d. *Draksådd, nr 4, 2001*. Unpublished. Stockholm: Dragon Rouge.
- Dragon Rouge 2002a. *Dracontias, nr 1, 2002*. Unpublished. Stockholm: Dragon Rouge.
- Dragon Rouge 2002b. *Dracontias, nr 3, 2002*. Unpublished. Stockholm: Dragon Rouge.
- Dragon Rouge 2003a. *Dracontias, nr 1, 2003*. Unpublished. Stockholm: Dragon Rouge.
- Dragon Rouge 2003b. *Dracontias, nr 2, 2003*. Unpublished. Stockholm: Dragon Rouge.
- Dragon Rouge 2003c. *Dracontias, nr 3, 2003*. Unpublished. Stockholm: Dragon Rouge.

- Dragon Rouge 2004a. *Dracontias, nr 1, 2004*. Unpublished. Stockholm: Dragon Rouge.
- Dragon Rouge 2004b. *Dracontias, nr 2, 2004*. Unpublished. Stockholm: Dragon Rouge.
- Dragon Rouge 2004c. *Dracontias, nr 2–3, 2004*. Unpublished. Stockholm: Dragon Rouge.
- Dragon Rouge 2005a. *Dracontias, nr 1, 2005*. Unpublished. Stockholm: Dragon Rouge.
- Dragon Rouge 2005b. *Dracontias, nr 3–4, 2005*. Unpublished. Stockholm: Dragon Rouge.
- Eriksson, Tommie 2001. *Mörk Magi*. Sundbyberg: Ouroboros produktion.
- Evans, Dave 2007. *The History of Magick in Britain After Crowley. Kenneth Grant, Amado Crowley, Chaos Magic, Satanism, Lovecraft, the Left Hand Path, Blasphemy and Magical Morality*. London: Hidden Publishing.
- Faivre, Antoine 1994. *Access to Western Esotericism*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Faivre, Antoine 1998. "Questions of terminology proper to the study of esoteric currents in modern and contemporary Europe". In Antoine Faivre and Wouter J. Hanegraaff (eds): *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion*. Leuven: Peeters, pp. 1–10.
- Frisk, Liselotte 1998. *Nyreligiositet i Sverige*. Nora: Nya Doxa.
- Gilhus, Ingvild Saelid & Lisbeth Mikaelsson 1998. *Kulturens refortrylling. Nyreligiositet i moderne samfunn*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Granholt, Kennet 2000. *Dragon Rouge. Religion, Magi, Nypaganism, Satanism? Beskrivning och klassifikation av ett alternativandligt fenomen*. Unpublished MA thesis. Åbo: Åbo Akademi University.
- Granholt, Kennet 2001 [internet]. "Dragon Rouge – a spiritual organization in opposition to the Church?" Torino: CESNUR. URL: <http://www.cesnur.org/2001/london2001/granholt.htm>
- Granholt, Kennet 2005. *Embracing the Dark. The Magic Order of Dragon Rouge – Its Practice in Dark Magic and Meaning Making*. Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press.
- Granholt, Kennet 2006. "Den vänstra handens väg. Etik, moral och synen på ondska i en mörkmagisk orden". In Leppäkari, Maria & Jonathan Peste (eds): *Hotbilder –våld, aggression och religion*. Åbo: Åbo Akademi.
- Granholt, Kennet 2007. "The Prince of Darkness on the move. Transnationality and translocality in Left-Hand Path magic". Torino: CESNUR. URL: [http://www.cesnur.org/pa\\_granholt.htm](http://www.cesnur.org/pa_granholt.htm)
- Granholt, Kennet 2008. Död och återfödelse i den vänstra handens väg. In *Finyar Årsskrift 2007*.
- Grant, Kenneth 1994a. *Cults of the Shadow*. London: Skoob Books.
- Grant, Kenneth 1994b. *Nightside of Eden*. London: Skoob Books.
- Gregorius, Fredrik 2006. *Satanismen i Sverige*. Malmö: Sitra Ahra Förlag.



- Hammer, Olav 2001. *Claiming Knowledge. Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age*. Leiden: Brill.
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 1996. *New Age Religion and Western Culture. Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*. Leiden: Brill.
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 2003. "How magic survived the disenchantment of the world". In *Religion*, 33, pp. 357–380.
- Harvey, Graham 1996. "Heathenism: A North European pagan tradition". In Hardman, Charlotte & Graham Harvey (eds): *Paganism Today. Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and Ancient Earth Traditions for the Twenty-First Century*. London: Thorsons, pp. 49–64.
- Harvey, Graham 1997. *Listening People, Speaking Earth. Contemporary Paganism*. London: Hurst & Company.
- Heelas, Paul 1996. *The New Age Movement*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Heelas, Paul 2002. "The spiritual revolution: from 'religion' to 'spirituality'". In Woodhead, Linda et al. (eds): *Religions in the Modern World*. London, New York: Routledge, pp. 357–379.
- Introvigne, Massimo. 2005. "Satanism". In Hanegraaff, Wouter J. & Jean-Pierre Bracht, Roelof van den Broek, Antoine Faivre (eds): *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 1035–1037.
- Karlsson, Thomas 2004. *Kabbala, klifföt och den goetiska magin*. Sundbyberg: Ouroboros produktion.
- Karlsson, Thomas 2005. "Rune magic and radical traditionalism: politics and world-view in the Rune-Gild". In *Finyar Årsskrift 2/2005*, pp. 48–58.
- Kataja, Ensio 2005. *Riimujen viisauus*. Riihimäki: Athanaton.
- Koenig, Peter R. 1999. "Introduction". In Crowley, Aleister & Theodor Reuss: *O.T.O. Rituals and Sex Magic. Edited and Compiled by A.R. Naylor*. Thame: I-H-O Books, pp. 13–59.
- Kotkavuori, Tapio 2007. *The Left-Hand Path*. Raisio: Voimasana.
- LaVey, Anton Szandor 1976 (1969). *The Satanic Bible*. New York: Avon Books.
- Nilsson, Kerstin 1999a. "Religionens nynazister". In *Aftonbladet*, February 12, 1995.
- Nilsson, Kerstin 1999a. "Min son skall tro på djävulen". In *Aftonbladet*, February 12, 1995.
- Nylund, Karl-Erik 1998. *Att leka med elden. Om livet på sektens villkor*. Stockholm: Sellin.
- Partridge, Christopher 2005. *The Re-Enchantment of the West. Volume 2. Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture and Occulture*. London: T & T Clark.
- Pasi, Marco 2005. "Crowley, Aleister". In Hanegraaff, Wouter J. & Jean Pierre Bracht, Roelof van den Broek, Antoine Faivre (eds): *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 281–287.
- Pasi, Marco 2007. Review of Kennet Granholm's *Embracing the Dark*. In *Numen*, 54, pp. 216–221.
- Rinne, Riku. 1998. *Pimeys Väisty*. Helsinki: Kuva ja sana.

- Rune-Gild 2007 [internet]. *Rune-Gild website*. URL: <http://www.runegild.org>
- Scholem, Gershom 1991. *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead. Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah*. New York: Schocken Books.
- Smith, Brian K. 2005. "Tantrism: Hindu Tantrism". In Jones, Lindsay (ed.): *Encyclopedia of Religion, Second Edition*. Detroit: Macmillan, pp. 8987–8994.
- Stuckrad, Kocku von 2005a. "Western Esotericism. Towards an integrative model of interpretation". In *Religion*, 35, pp. 78–97.
- Stuckrad, Kocku von 2005b. *Western Esotericism: A Brief History of Secret Knowledge*. London: Equinox.
- Stugart, Martin 1995. "Satanister snart på svart lista". In *Dagens Nyheter*, December 5, 1995.
- Sutcliffe, Richard 1996. "Left-Hand Path ritual magick". In Hardman, Charlotte & Graham Harvey (eds): *Paganism Today. Wiccans, Druids, the Goddess and Ancient Earth Traditions for the Twenty-First Century*. London: Thorsons, pp. 109–137.
- Temple of Set 1975. *Scroll of Set, Issue Number 3, Volume I–3, November 1975*. Unpublished. San Francisco: Temple of Set.
- Temple of Set 2007 [internet]. *Temple of Set website*. <http://www.xeper.org>
- Thorsson, Edred 1987. *Runelore. A Handbook of Esoteric Runology*. San Francisco: Weiser Books.
- Thorsson, Edred 1994. *The Nine Doors of Midgard. A Complete Curriculum of Rune Magic*. St. Paul: Llewellyn Publications.
- Thorsson, Edred 2005 (1992). *Northern Magic. Rune Mysteries and Shamanism*. Woodbury: Llewellyn Publications.
- Urban, Hugh B. 2003. *Tantra. Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- White, David Gordon 2005. "Tantrism: An overview". In Jones, Lindsay (ed.): *Encyclopedia of Religion, Second Edition*. Detroit: Macmillan, pp. 8984–8987.



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

## Chapter 7

# The Devil's Down in Dixie: Studying Satanism in South Georgia

Kathleen Lowney

It was the “dead day” for Spring Quarter 1988, the day after classes ended and the day before finals began. I was proofing the final that I was to give the next day when the phone rang. It was a local Methodist minister, calling to ask if I would come talk to his church’s youth group about the Satanism at Winnersville High School.<sup>1</sup> A bit flustered, my mind caught up in the final I was examining, I asked him to tell me more – what, for instance, had he heard about Satanism at the school? He didn’t know a lot of details, just kids talking. I wondered how he’d come to call me, since I had been on the faculty for barely a year. “The campus public relations office has a list,” he said. “You’re the expert on cults, they told me.” That was news to me (I later learned that my name and expertise in new religious movements had been added by my department head to this list). So we talked for a while and I promised to call him back in a week or so, after I had done some research. A bit puzzled by the conversation, I turned back to my final, only to be interrupted about ten minutes later by the phone. Expecting it to be a worried student, I was surprised to learn that it was an employee at a local bookstore, who was a student in one of my husband’s college classes. The young man said that my husband had mentioned that I studied alternative religions, and he wanted me to know that his store had been selling about thirty copies a month of *The Satanic Bible* (LaVey 1969) for the last few months. Intrigued, I also wondered at this point if someone might be playing a practical joke on me. Those thoughts vanished, however, when twenty-five minutes later, a second minister called, begging me to talk to his youth group.

I was hooked. I had finished my doctoral degree in religion and society sixteen months earlier, and I knew I needed a new research project. By the end of that day, I had made initial contacts with two reporters at the city’s newspaper, a counselor at the high school, and a police officer who sometimes came to my Social Problems classes to discuss drugs. That’s how my journey studying adolescent Satanism began. Well, that’s how I tell the abridged version. The full story is more complicated.

My preparation for studying religions really began long before. I grew up in a devout Roman Catholic family, the youngest of five daughters. My family’s faith

---

<sup>1</sup> Winnersville is the acronym I am using for the primary site of my research.

was quite liberal, outspoken, and deeply held. When my parents became angry with the associate pastor of our local parish for not allowing my second-oldest sister to marry five weeks before the oldest one, we began church shopping, trying out a new Catholic church each week, until we decided we all liked St. Patrick's Church on Capitol Hill in Seattle. It was often labeled – truthfully, I might add – the most liberal parish in the Seattle Archdiocese in the seventies, when we became members. Two of my sisters and my mother joined the folk music group. Younger and not wanting to use my musical talent in the same way as them, I found another way to be involved. At sixteen, the very year I officially became an adult in the faith and thus eligible to participate in decision-making, I ran for the Parish Council, the board that helped the pastor set church policies. I lost by one vote, shocking many in the congregation. The pastor, amazed at my support among adults far older than I, chose to name me to the Council, using his ability to appoint one person each year. Admittedly, I had mixed motives for wanting to be on the Parish Council. I was interested in policy setting and budget issues, true, but I also was searching for a reason to make my parents teach me to drive!

On the way home from my first meeting, my, by now quite-bored father-chauffeur, told me that he would teach me to drive that next weekend. Mission accomplished! I served for three years on the Parish Council, and during that time, I was invited to be a member of the first-ever Archdiocesan Pastoral Council for the Seattle Archdiocese, working directly with the archbishop. I was the sole member who was under thirty. We met for four weekends a year debating largely goals and fiscal policies. I remained a member until I moved away to graduate school.

Both intellectually and personally, religion early on became my primary interest in life. I recall checking out books about other faiths from our public library when I was ten or eleven. Graduating early from high school because I was bored, I entered the University of Washington in 1977, declaring a major in comparative religions. One quarter later, on the third day of my Introduction to Sociology class, I realized that it too was my passion. I became a major that very day. I quickly was invited to join the honors program. I was lucky – in a university of over forty thousand people – my degree programs were nice and small. The comparative religion major enrolled thirteen students and the honors sociology program had only five other students. Such small classes allowed each of us to get individualized attention and be pushed to deepen our academic skills.

By my sophomore year, I began looking seriously at graduate programs in either sociology with an emphasis on religion, or religion/theology, or joint programs in religion and law. Walking the halls of the university, I would tear off every card on every poster which advertised graduate programs in which I might be interested. I gathered over one hundred brochures and graduate catalogs as I pondered my academic future. Then, one day in August, I received an unsolicited brochure in the mail about the Religion and Society program at Drew University, in Madison, New Jersey. It seemed at the time to be everything I wanted – a way to combine both my interests in religion and sociology. My searching stopped – I knew that was where I wanted to matriculate. And two years later, I enrolled

directly in Drew's Ph.D. program. The program allowed me to focus on what most interested me: alternative or new religious movements practicing in the US and, particularly, in their gender roles. Initially, my first dissertation proposal detailed a study of five major new religions: fundamentalist (polygamous) Mormons, Hare Krishnas, Scientology, a Jesus Movement group, and the Unification Church, more commonly known as "the Moonies." Wiser heads prevailed, and my dissertation's focus narrowed to just the Unification Church. I interviewed fifty blessed (their term for married) couples, asking them about their marriage vows and how they lived them out in daily life. By the time my interviews had began, my life had changed once more: I was engaged to a physicist who was on the academic job market. Frank took a job at Valdosta State College (now University) in 1985, and I joined him in August of 1986.

So here I was: a "Yankee" in deep South Georgia; a Roman Catholic in a community that was predominantly Southern Baptist; someone who studied religion academically instead of just believing it; a newly married woman who did not take her husband's last name; a political liberal in a conservative section of the country. At first, I had a bad case of culture shock. I was adjusting to marriage, a new town, my husband's academic schedule, and my own – temporary, I hoped – unemployment, and felt a bit out of sorts. I worried a lot: would I get a teaching job at the university, how would it be if I did, and what was I going to study next. Once I began teaching, my days and nights were filled with grading, preparing lectures and tests, and all the rest that goes along with the academic lifestyle. That first year, I was almost too busy to worry about doing research, but by February of 1988, I knew that I had to start a new project – and soon. And then, the next month, those three phone calls – the two ministers and the bookstore employee – changed both my personal and my academic life.

### **The Devil's in the Details**

The day after that third phone call, I drove to Winnersville High School and observed teens leaving the school. The two pastors had told me that the Satanic teens were dressing in solid black clothing and black trenchcoats emblazoned with the name of their favorite music group, *Megadeath*. It didn't take that long to spot them. About ten teens were off by themselves near the edge of buildings. A young woman, who I shall call Zena, seemed to be the center of attention. It was easy to see why. Even from a distance, it was obvious – she was attractive, thin, and she often laughed. But it was her hair that caught my eye; that day it was hot pink. As I got to know her, I witnessed her hair color and style change, often on a daily basis. But it was usually bright, almost fluorescent colors, unless it was dyed dark black.

Now that I had "found" them, I began to observe them from afar. Following up on the pastors' comments, I went to the Winnersville mall the next evening, on a Friday. The group was there, nine in number. They walked the mall with hands

linked, as if they were a human chain. Their bodies took up about three quarters of the width of the interior courtyard of the mall, and they did not break the chain, even when people were walking in the opposite direction right into them. Instead, they would sometimes lift up their hands, allowing some to go by but not others. Mall security would come by, rather forcefully ask them to separate, and they did, into small groups of two or three. But not much time later, they would reform their chain. The cycle continued for another two hours: they would form a chain, other customers would get angry, security would come. Once and a while some members would drift off, to browse in the local record store. Often they would purchase music.

For the next few months, I observed them at the mall on Friday evenings. As I began to recognize their cars, I would follow them when they left the mall. Often they just returned home, but sometimes they would drive considerable distances, often into rural areas of the county. A few beers and a bonfire later, they went home. Throughout the spring and summer, I researched Satanism when I was not teaching, and would follow this group, who I began to call The Coven, around on weekends. By that next fall, I felt ready to talk to them. I knew enough about their habits to ask good questions and I was prepared to discuss their theology with them. I was prepared to begin my research, but it was not that easy.

#### *Negotiating with the Institutional Review Board (IRB)*

Back in 1988, I knew that Valdosta State University had an IRB, but I had had no reason to interact with it. So early in the fall of 1988, I wrote up a research proposal, which involved interviewing the minors involved with Satanism in Winnersville. I naively thought this would be a rather simple process. Was I ever wrong.

I knew enough to realize that asking the IRB to grant me permission to study minors without parental permission might be difficult. But I was prepared: I had citations to show that parents often overreacted when researchers wanted to speak with children about alternative religions, and that such a problem might be magnified in the South, where Winnersville was located. I had months of observational data to show that these minors were doing little normative rulebreaking (other than the underage drinking), save for their religious beliefs and practices. I wrote up a five-page proposal, even giving a sample interview protocol. I submitted it. I was not completely surprised when the IRB asked to meet with me.

But I was stunned when, at the meeting, the board members spoke of federal regulations about medical experimentation, not ethnographic research. They had little understanding of qualitative research; in particular, they could not understand why I could not give them in advance every question I might ever ask the adolescent Satanists. The medical model that they used did not really fit what I was trying to do, and they did not seem aware that other models of human subject research were permitted by government regulations. I went to my department head after the meeting and we put together a set of documents about how qualitative research is done, how the federal government has given approval to this methodology, etc.,

and sent them to the chair of the board. I was confident that the second meeting about my research would go smoothly.

During the second meeting I realized that I had more problems to face. First, many IRB members kept discussing their worries about the school's reputation if it got out that a faculty member was researching Satanism. This concern bothered me, for several reasons. First, I knew that reputational considerations were far outside of the purview of the IRB. But how to tell them that and yet still have my project approved? Second, I worried that their concerns might be rooted in religious bias. I kept wondering if the IRB would be as concerned if I wanted to study a group of Southern Baptist students. At the meeting and afterwards, I kept thinking how absurd it was that someone who wanted to study an alternative religion in order to understand and explain its followers' involvement was not able to conduct such a study due to religious intolerance. But how could I, not yet even in a tenure-track position, teach the entire upper administration such a lesson?

I turned to the Ethics Committee of the American Sociological Association for help. I sent them my entire proposal, the minutes of the two IRB meetings where my project was discussed, as well as all my supporting methodological evidence, and asked for their assistance. The ASA responded with a short statement about the values of qualitative research and suggested I show that to the IRB. With copies in hand, I went to yet another IRB meeting where my proposal would be discussed.

While I was waiting for approval to begin interviews with the teens, I continued my "research from a distance." I continued to observe at the Winnersville mall and at public places in the community. And I listened a great deal. During that process, I learned some awkward facts. I discovered, for example, that one of the members of the IRB, the person most vociferously against my project, was the parent of Zena, the charismatic leader of The Coven. I wondered if this faculty member was perhaps trying to limit my research in order to ensure that the child's religious activities did not become well-known in the community? Could that explain why I could make whatever changes the faculty member suggested at IRB meetings only to discover that at the next meeting, there would be many more hoops through which I had to jump. I began to chafe – wondering whether I should ask that this faculty member be recused from my application and what would be the long-term implications if I did so. But I kept quiet and let the IRB process work itself out.

This back and forth about the project continued for over a year. Many IRB meetings passed; each time I would be there, with more information about qualitative methods, about researching adolescents, etc. And at each meeting, some new objection would be raised, and I was frequently encouraged to find another research project. Indeed, at one meeting, an IRB member finally said it: "Dr. Lowney, why don't you just stop with this Satanic stuff and find a nice, non-controversial group to study, at least until you get tenured?" I don't quite remember what I said, but I know that I spoke about how deviance is a social construction, that studying a group on or near the boundaries of normative behavior is sociologically fascinating, for it allows the constructed process to be analyzed up close, etc. I fought the anger I was feeling, and somehow, convinced them that



I could do this project ethically, professionally, and in a way that would protect the school's reputation.

That meeting proved to be a turning point – now we were just haggling over the details of the informed consent form, rather than whether I would be allowed to do the project at all. The IRB wanted me to contact parents, either on the phone or in writing, to request parental permission to interview their child because of the child's recent Satanic activities. I protested, saying that I was concerned about the damage – emotional at least – that statement could do to the minor, especially if the parent was adamantly opposed to his or her child's new faith. I felt it was unethical of me to in effect “out” the teen religiously. Just because some in the community found these adolescents' faith to be disconcerting, did not mean that they did not deserve the utmost in ethical protections.

During this time when I was negotiating with the IRB, I was learning that others knew who and what I was studying. Sometimes it was a bit disconcerting, knowing that others knew about my research. I remember, for instance, grocery shopping on a Friday morning and being stopped in the frozen food aisle by a perfect stranger asking if I was the one studying “the heathen kids.” When I said “yes,” the person began to lambast me, angry that I was not trying to convert them to the “right” religion, Christianity. I struggled to find words to explain the difference between ethnographic research and deprogramming, but gave up when the woman became hostile. All I wanted to do was to reach the frozen spinach – but she was in the way. I was a bit uneasy about becoming a public person. As a faculty member, I had already learned that much of our lives were visible to students; they know what cars we drive, and in a small town, they often are the waiters and waitresses who take our credit cards at local restaurants. But that was to be expected; I was not ready for so many Winnersville strangers coming up to me and talking – often preaching at me – about my research on Satanism. I felt that the zone of privacy we all need had shrunk considerably. Sometimes it felt like everyone knew me – not as the well-rounded person I believe I am, but just as the “Satanic prof,” as one man said to me in the Winnersville mall.

And while it felt like the town was turning on me, upset that I refused to deconvert these teens, it was just then that The Coven decided that I could be trusted. Some fourteen months into my research, they would wave when I walked into the mall to observe them and would tell me “hi” when we were in a store together. Members would hand me their phone numbers and tell me to call when it was convenient. I became increasingly frustrated, unable to interview them until an agreement was reached with the IRB. Surprisingly, Coven members also seemed frustrated. I still remember the day that two members just showed up at my office at school. They introduced themselves, sat down, and began to burst forth with information about The Coven; they were insistent that they wanted to be interviewed right then. At their first sign that they were stopping for breath, I explained that I did not yet have the necessary permissions to conduct interviews. They listened patiently, only to spout more insider information. We went round and round, with them gently but firmly refusing to leave my office until I interviewed

them. I was conflicted: I believed in the ethical rules and knew waiting was the right thing to do but on the other hand, I was fascinated by what they were saying. I wanted to take notes, ask them questions . . . but I could not. Finally when they would not give up, I excused myself and walked down the hall to my department head's office and explained my dilemma. He told me to go home immediately and promised to get them out of my office and turn off my computer.

The next day, I pressed the IRB for a meeting and we worked out an acceptable research methodology. I would finally be allowed to interview Coven members, under the following rules: First, I could only interview those members over the age of 18 who signed the informed consent form (thus bypassing the impasse about what to tell parents). Second, I was to have limited contact with younger members of The Coven. If any came to talk with me, I was allowed to take their name, phone number, birth date, and whether they would allow me to contact them when they became legal adults. If so, then I could contact them once they were of legal age to see whether interview was still acceptable. And I was to keep all my files, interview tapes, and photographs in a safe deposit box at a bank of my choice when I was not using them at home. While some of these rules significantly limited my research, this compromise allowed me to conduct interviews in a way that I and the IRB felt was ethical. However, getting the school's permission did not mean that the research faced no further ethical hurdles.

I thought that would be the last time this project would have to go before my university's IRB. Lamentably that was not to be. About six months after gaining permission to begin interviews with Coven members, I began receiving phone calls at my unlisted home number. The calls were odd, in that whoever was calling was using a computer to alter the voice, making it sound robotic. The caller seemed to have detailed information about Satanic rituals – but not ones done by the Coven. Rather, they seemed to be about an adult group in the Winnersville area. I was never home when the calls came, so the voice was captured on my answering machine. The phone calls created an ethical dilemma: what if they were from a juvenile? I did not have IRB permission to gather information from those who were underage. Back to the IRB I went. This time, the committee paid for an analysis of the answering machine tapes, to see whether an age could be determined. But we were not able to determine who was calling or the person's age. After much discussion and another consultation with the Ethics Committee of the ASA, the IRB agreed to let me use the phone information despite the ambiguities about its source.

When the calls came, I learned to respond quickly. Once, the call said to drive to a remote area if I wanted to see an animal sacrifice. My husband and I jumped in the car, but went unprepared for what we found – a freshly disemboweled goat or sheep. We took a few pictures and jumped in the car to go home to get a shovel, some garbage bags, etc., so I could take some samples. By the time we got back to the site, the entire area had been cleaned up: the carcass was removed, the ground cleaned, all artifacts removed, even the blood-stained dirt had disappeared. It was curious, for I had spent the evening before with Coven members, so I knew that

this was not their doing. I was never able to verify who the caller was, although I have strong suspicions. More intriguingly, I was never sure just why the caller wanted me to do his or her bidding. I presume the person wanted to clue me into the continuum of Satanic activities in the Winnersville surroundings – activities far different than The Coven’s hard-rock bonfire rituals. Still, I wonder who the caller was and how she or he got my unlisted number. I have often wondered whether I have spoken to the person and didn’t realize it and whether that gives the caller some sort of unexpected emotional pleasure. But while I puzzled about my mysterious caller, I had to turn my attention to the task ahead – getting a couple dozen teenagers to talk to me.

### *Negotiating with The Coven*

While Coven members and I had been literally and figuratively circling each other for months, it was not always easy to get them to agree to be interviewed. First off, the Coven’s membership was always in flux; most members who knew me in my initial “hanging around” phrase had long since dropped out of the group, and so I had to prove myself over and over to new members. So I continued my observation-from-afar in order to let new members get used to me, to “feel me out.”

The primary leadership of The Coven, however, had remained consistent during this time. That however, did not mean that they helped to facilitate my blending into Coven activities. My status posed significant problems: I was an adult, yet interested in their activities. It took a while for them to see me as truly interested instead of wanting to challenge their new-found faith, as so many other adults had done. I was also a teacher, with the power that comes with such a label, but not their teacher. Initially, I had to lead conversations more than I wished, until members became more comfortable with my presence. Eventually, I negotiated a “friend” research status (Fine 1987), where I was treated as an adult who sort of “got” their religious worldview. I was tested frequently at first, primarily by being told things about some members, who just happened to be the children of university colleagues and friends. What would I do? Would I tell parents or police what I knew about their non-normative behavior (i.e., underage consumption of alcohol) or would I keep their secrets? Only as I passed these tests did Coven members begin to divulge more about their lives and their reasons for choosing a faith that was so controversial in our community. The process took time; I was proving myself to one member at a time.

The interview I most coveted – that with Zena, the charismatic leader – was perhaps the hardest to accomplish. We had “danced” around each other for quite awhile by the time that I received IRB permission to interview, so in one sense I think we both felt that we knew each other. I contacted her the very day that I received permission, knowing that if she agreed to be interviewed that other members would be more likely to consent. Coyly, she said that she was busy and to keep contacting her. A bit frustrated at that response, I contacted the second in command of The Coven and requested an interview the next day. We talked for

hours in an intriguing interview. Much of the time I felt that I was being tested – little hints about rituals would be thrown out, but when I followed up on them, the respondent grew quiet. I had done enough qualitative research to understand that I was engaged in the opening moves of an intricate dance with The Coven. I had to prove myself – prove that I was truly interested, prove that I would maintain confidentiality, prove that I was tenacious enough to stay the course with them. I did a follow-up interview a week later, asking clarifying questions and listening for what was not being said as much as what was. I was sure that Zena was being updated about the interviews, so I continued to chat with her when we were together, just keeping conversation alive between us.

As my interviews continued with other members, I felt sure that they had sought her permission to talk to me. One day, a bit irritated at how slow the “dance” was going, I just asked her if she was ever going to agree to an interview with me or only give others permission to talk to me. While I try not to be that blunt with research subjects, it worked with Zena. She laughed heartily, and began to talk. She spoke of her anxiety about being interviewed – that I knew her parents and how every adult in her life had, at one time or another, let her down. She wondered not whether, but when I would do the same. I asked her what she was most afraid I might do? I figured, let’s get her fears out on the table and deal with them. I was expecting to hear her say that I might tell her parents about the depth of her new-found faith, for that was most other Coven members’ fear. Her fear, however, was that I would not take her faith seriously; that I would just drop the project at a moment’s notice, that I just wanted to make a name for myself in the community. Surprised, even shocked at that, I just let her continue. Her parents knew all about her faith, for it was theirs too. All her life she had experienced people who were shocked at Satanism but then just walked away – she wanted someone to really understand what her faith meant to her and why she was encouraging others to convert – what Satanism meant in her life. She asked me what my fear was about the research. I gulped – did I really want to say it to her? Could I trust her? Surprising questions for a researcher, yet they were what was running through my head. I decided to tell the truth: one of her parents worked at the university and had authority over me, in a distant kind of way. Had I had any nightmares about being turned down for tenure because of this? I cannot lie – of course I had! That instant of mutual honesty forged the beginning of a long-standing ethnographic relationship. Over the next three years Zena and I spent many hours together talking about her life, her faith, and her dreams for the future. I went along as she shopped for clothes and jewelry and discombobulated clerks with her choices (Lowney 1995). She talked at length about wanting to shock Winnersville into overcoming what she saw were stereotypical values and behaviors.

Getting Zena’s “blessing,” so to speak, made it easier to continue with my research. Of course there are always rough spots during a multi-year research project with several dozen individuals, but for the most part, subsequent interaction with The Coven proceeded smoothly. The most problematic moment for me was when The Coven asked me to buy them alcoholic beverages for their late night bonfires.

It felt like a test; I am sure it was. My negative answer was a bit of a surprise to them. I explained to them that first, they were underage and thus it would be illegal for me to purchase beer for their parties. I was already worried about their driving under the influence (something they told me they did during the interviews) and did not want to contribute to it. I also explained that I am allergic to beer and that I do not drink at all. Their request precipitated an interesting conversation about the role of alcohol in their lives. I learned to expect that when members were at all upset with my questions, they would joke about the fact that I do not drink, and thus would not know what alcohol to purchase anyway. Of course there would be a few more four-letter words when they said it.

### *Negotiating with the Press*

Studying a faith that many felt was controversial taught me some hard lessons about the press. As word got out that I was studying adolescent Satanism, I became an unwitting and often unwilling local media star. My university's press office ordered me never to speak to the press without one of its staff being present. At first, I was upset by this "babysitting" – it was annoying to me and seemed to minimize my expertise before the press. As the project continued, I asked around and found that I seemed to be the only person forced to have a press officer at all interviews. Once again, I wondered whether it was because I was studying Satanism that I required such university attention. However, I came to realize that such assistance could come in handy.

My hardest lesson occurred the day that Geraldo Rivera was scheduled to air a two-hour NBC special about Satanism just a few days before Halloween, in 1988. The local NBC station called the school's press office and asked if I would be willing to do an interview for the 6 o'clock and 11 o'clock news. At the time, I thought it might be a wonderful opportunity to challenge the construction of Satanism that I knew from the commercials would be presented on the special – that it was a cult filled with blood-thirsty criminals, whose faith was merely a cover for their dastardly deeds. So I agreed to an interview – my first television interview, the truth be told. The four of us (the press officer, the reporter, his camera man, and myself) began the interview in my office, and the questions were exactly what I expected. So far, so good. And then, unexpectedly, the reporter asked if I could take the camera crew to one of the places where the Coven met. I hesitated, but being a bit "green" about the press, I said that I would be happy to take them. And so out we went.

Things seemed fine – they asked me about why the Coven chose such an out of the way location for its rituals, and I suggested a few reasons. First, it was far away from most of civilization, so that they would be able to have bonfires, do some underage consumption of alcohol. But also, the bridge's location fit instructions in *The Satanic Bible* (LaVey 1969) to find "between" places: between water and sky; the river was the border between two counties, etc. The reporter's questions continued, until it happened. I knew it would, and I was thoroughly prepared for

it. "Has this group ever committed animal sacrifices?" I was adamant in my denial, explaining that in fact their adherence to LaVey's text (1969), which forbid animal sacrifice, ensured that they would not. And with that question, the interview ended. The four of us went our separate ways. I thought it had gone fairly well. And yes, I admit that I tuned in, anxious to analyze how I did. I was surprised that I was the lead story – it must be a slow news day, I thought. The first two minutes were fine, and then, the bottom fell out. For most of the interview, the camera had been focused on me. Suddenly, as the animal sacrifice question aired, the camera panned the woods, first at a distance, then suddenly focusing on the ground close to the camera man's feet. Sitting on my couch, I blanched. There, as my words were saying "no animal sacrifice," the camera managed to show a decaying carcass of an animal, perhaps a dog or a deer. I wanted to be sick, right then and there in my living room. I knew all the literature: when words and pictures disagree, pictures are more believed. So while I was saying the truth, what viewers would most likely take away from the report was that rotting animal and the words animal sacrifice linked to The Coven. I was furious: at the editing of the story, at the cameraman for taking such a shot in the first place, but most especially at myself for being so naive not to think such a visual might appear.

I called the university press office almost before the story was off the air. Luckily, someone was still there who listened to my concerns. A few minutes later, the head of the office called me to talk. I was grateful that she had been the person out with me on the interview, and so knew exactly what had happened. When I told her how the story had turned out, she told me to relax and that she would take care of it. And she did. Despite the fact that the 6 pm story had promised a longer version at 11 pm, after the Geraldo special, the story did not air again. The next day, when I called to thank her, she said that she had just done her job – to protect the university and one of its faculty members. More importantly, she told me that she had long believed I was fine doing interviews alone and that I no longer needed to have one of the press officers with me. While grateful to be "flying solo," the next several interviews were nerve-wracking, and I have limited filming ever since. That experience taught me to negotiate with reporters prior to the interview, telling them that they had to call me back and read me the text of the finished story and demanding to see the edited version before it airs or I have the option of killing the story or requesting it be changed after it aired. With one exception (which happened quite recently) I refuse to take any reporter to Coven ritual sites. I realized that I need to manage interviews as much as possible, and leaving my office makes that much more difficult.

## **Managing the Devilish Details**

### *Negotiating the Expert Role*

Transitions are never easy; they require lots of patience as people learn new statuses and become comfortable performing new roles. This research became the means through which I transitioned from “graduate student” to “expert professor.” There was no one to go think out loud with, no dissertation advisor to give (hopefully) sensible advice. I was on my own, learning my institution’s organizational culture at the same time that my research seemed to be challenging it just a bit. It took a while to learn how my department and the university worked. And it took a while to build up the institution’s trust in me. I did not always perceive this research from the perspective of a state-funded small-town university administration in the South. Here I was a new faculty member that the administration did not know well, a spouse of another faculty member, and I had chosen a very controversial topic to study. From their perspective, I can see why this research must have been a bit nerve-wracking. To their credit, after two quarters of excellent teaching evaluations and my getting active on various committees, they began to trust in my professionalism and things became a bit easier.

A transition is not only problematic to others, it also can be difficult for the person undergoing it. I found it trying to be a graduate student one day and a professor a few months later. People wanted *me* to talk to their groups? Why? I certainly didn’t feel like an expert. I remember when I was just a few months into this research and the program chair for the Georgia Parole and Probation Officers annual convention called. He wanted to know what my speaking fee was to talk to their state-wide convention about adolescent Satanism. I was stunned into silence, for two reasons. First, I was shocked that even after I told him I was just beginning the project and had not yet begun any interviews, he still wanted me to come and share my expertise. Second, I had no idea what a speaking fee should be. Frankly, I was stunned that people wanted to pay me at all! I didn’t see myself as an expert about Satanism and I was puzzled why others already did.

Eventually, despite my doubts, I began to make presentations. Speaking in public is a perennial fear of mine so I did things to make myself more comfortable. I wore my favorite clothes, in my favorite color – black. I noticed that during the first few talks, the audience was well – subdued. There were few questions – mostly things I had already said in the talk. The room just felt “off.” Initially, I strongly critiqued my own performance, something I find easy to do. While I found lots of things to improve in my delivery, nothing seemed to help. There was always this unease in the room. People were polite, to be sure, but it just felt unlike other talks I had given, and not in a good way. I kept tweaking my oral delivery, thinking that was where the problem lay. Several months later, a friend came with me to one of these presentations. After it was over, she took me aside and said, “Well, I don’t know how to tell you this exactly, but people think you’re a Satanist, dressed in all black. And so they sort of get really distressed listening to you talk about it. They

think you are discounting Satanism's horrors, or worse, propagandizing for it, and tune you out." Looking back, I wonder why I didn't realize that might happen! From that point on, I made changes to these presentations. I used to tuck the gold Christian cross that my husband gave me the day we were married into my clothes, so that it remained hidden during such talks, for I did not want to advertise my own faith. Now, I wear it out, clearly visible. While I still wear mostly black, I try to wear some other color too, so that my verbal descriptions of The Coven's outfits does not parallel my own quite so completely! And I begin these talks with some line about "how this Irish Catholic kid came to be studying Satanism" and am rewarded by nervous laughter. Even in audiences full of academics, the anxiety is there until I introduce myself in a way that allows it to recede. While these changes in one way seem small to me, I have been rewarded with more relaxed audiences who settle back into their chairs, their looks of concern erased. Each time, however, that I have to manipulate my presentation of self in such an obvious way in order to legitimize myself in a way that facilitates being heard, I relearn the powerful sociological lesson that perceptions effect interaction.

### *Coping with the Devil*

Research can be exhausting. In graduate school – mostly likely our first real experience with it – there still is the rush of its newness. But conducting ethnographic work while teaching three courses a quarter (and in 1992, four courses a semester), with nearly two hundred students a term, and having any semblance of a private life, requires learning the delicate art of balancing priorities. Since this was my first project as a faculty member, I often did not get the mix just right. Developing courses is an art that took me quite a while to learn. To this day, I handwrite my lectures each day, in order to mentally walk through what I want to accomplish. Test writing can take me hours to find just the right blend of questions. Back then, it took me even longer.

To compound the problem, I was in a temporary faculty line all the while, but seeking a tenure-track one. The pressure to do what the department and what students wanted, no matter how I felt, just to get the job was immense. I taught using books I hated too many times to count, because I was told to do so. I agonized over student complaints about "too much work," wondering if this would cost me a job – even though I was sure the workload was appropriate. After all, I was betwixt and between two statuses: I was a faculty spouse trying to become a faculty member. Then add in ten to twenty hours of observational time each week and the seemingly constant messages, especially during my time of struggling with the campus IRB, that I should choose a more "safe" topic. I frequently wondered if I should just pick a research topic that was more "mainstream" until my position became more secure.

I had to learn to set boundaries. It took me quite a while, years even, to be able to say to myself, let alone The Coven, that I did not need to observe every second of their activities on weekends. But I needed to learn that repeatedly observing the



same activities does not always advance explanation; it just tires the researcher out! I learned to notice when I am getting frazzled, caught up in a project to the point where I lose all perspective. There was the time when I just had had it – it seemed that everywhere I turned or more accurately, every place I drove, I found Coven handiwork. I drove to visit a sick colleague and on the back of the stop sign on her street were Coven spray-painted messages. Coming home, their graffiti was on eight other signs and the bridge railings. It seemed like they were everywhere: not just in interviews, but in my head, and now in my physical life at every turn. It reached a boiling point that day and I said to my husband that I needed to get out of town to celebrate our anniversary, that “if I saw one more Coven symbol I was going to scream.” Like good academics, we decided to go visit a library! We planned to see a play, to go to dinner, and take a quick trip to Tallahassee’s Florida State University’s library. Frank was familiar with the campus, for he goes every Friday to FSU to do research. It was my first time there and I was looking forward to a wonderful day. Alas, getting away from The Coven proved more difficult than I thought. Sure enough, The Coven had been there first; I spied several of their graffiti signatures on the underpass headed into the school’s main entrance. And there was one member’s signature splashed over the sidewalk going into the library. Well, I didn’t scream; instead I burst into tears when I saw that last bit of graffiti. I felt that this project was omnipresent and I needed a break – from The Coven, from thinking about Satanism, from my anxieties about the project.

Without a mentor here or even a colleague who did ethnographic research with whom I could share these desperate thoughts, I struggled to manage all the various statuses in my life. Luckily it got better, primarily because I began to see patterns in my reactions. I have realized that during every research project I do, ethnographic or not, there will come a time when I “hit a wall,” so to speak. It is when, given a few minutes, I could easily hit the delete key and erase every data file, burn every photograph, shred every videotape I have made, when I just feel overwhelmed and under-inspired. When those moments come now, I use what The Coven project has taught me: first, to distract myself with another research project. Yes, for me, the hair of the dog that bit me works! I now always have at least two research projects, at different stages, ongoing at all times. When data collection seems endless, I will analyze my notes for a while, if observing becomes the problem, I will do some library research. Different tasks mitigate the sense of panic.

Switching between projects and classroom preparation helps provide some of the balance I seek. Learning to be patient, to let a project progress at its own pace, of course, is never easy. I want the project to come together quickly and when I feel I am getting in the way, I get frustrated easily. At this stage, close friends often received an email which asks them if they think the project is worth anything. Deep in the moment of despair, I am never quite sure how I want them to respond. Do I want them to say, “yes, shred away to your heart’s content” or do I want them to encourage me to bring the project to fruition? Luckily, I have friends who support yet challenge me, and they never fail to encourage while subtly (sometimes not so

subtly) critiquing my work. Their talent – pushing yet comforting – often gets me past the intellectual logjam.

Odd as it might sound, I now long to “hit the wall”. For I know that it is the moment before inspiration, so it seems, hits. The not-so-quiet moment of desperation, I have come to realize, is actually a punctuation point in the research project. It is when I know that I am finally ready to begin my analysis. It is the sign of the struggle – not coming to an end, per se – but to a place of *verstehen*, of understanding their lives as best I can. It is the moment when I *must* begin to write. I know that my research subjects have gotten me to the point where I am ready to tell the stories of their lives and the meanings they construct. That was the gift The Coven gave me: not just sharing their faith, but giving me the gift of understanding how it is that I come to do sociology. Full of graduate school hubris, I didn't expect to learn all that much from my subjects. How arrogant was I. And how wrong. This project taught me not just about adolescent Satanism in Dixie, but about institutional bureaucracies really work, in a way no textbook could, and especially about how the interaction ethnography allows is an intimate gift. The Coven gave me the stories of their lives, trusting me to tell them in a discourse they really didn't fully grasp – the discourse of sociology. They also helped shape, in a way graduate school did not, the kind of sociologist I strive to be: one who listens, even to the silences of people's lives, who will wait for years if need be, to listen – and to learn.

## References

- Fine, Gary Alan. 1987. *With The Boys: Little League Baseball and Preadolescent Culture*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago.
- LaVey, Anton S. 1969. *The Satanic Bible*. NY: Avon Books.
- Lowney, Kathleen S. 1995. “Teenage Satanism as oppositional youth subculture.” *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 23, pp. 453–484.
- Rivera, Geraldo. 1988. “Devil worship: exploring Satan's underground.” Two-hour television special on NBC. October 25, 1988.



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

PART II  
Regional Studies



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

## Chapter 8

# The Peculiarities of Lithuanian Satanism: Between Crime and Atheism in Cyberspace

Milda Alisauskiene

The phenomenon of Satanism might be considered balancing on the periphery of religious life; its existence in modern society is usually hypothetical and based on different rumours. But since the late sixties Satanism has emerged as a religious alternative with organizations in Western societies – especially the US and Western Europe. Only as recent as the nineties has Satanism shown up in Eastern Europe. Such a delay was consistent with the fall of the Soviet Union and most visible in the Roman Catholic countries, like Poland and Lithuania. But unlike in Western societies (mostly the US) there were no official satanic organizations created in Lithuania.

Such a tendency might be explained by one of the typical definitions of Satanism that refers to its links with Christianity (see Melton & Baumann 2002): Satanism is understood as an attack upon a dominant Christianity and the society it supports. While there were attempts by the mass media to create some kind of satanic panic linking profanations of cemeteries and other sacral objects with the existence of satanic groups, they were not successful<sup>1</sup>, although the deeply rooted Christian thinking in the mind of Lithuanians divides social reality in two poles – good and evil. Usually evil is understood as somehow connected with Satan but such criteria is also used to describe other religious groups, so-called sects or cults that in reality have little in common with the phenomenon of Satanism.

In this chapter I would like to review the phenomenon of Satanism in Lithuania by invoking a classification of Satanism as a religious organization made by Massimo Introvigne (Introvigne 1997). He uses a definition of Satanism that is derived from Christian demonology: Satanism is the cult of Satan or the Devil, which could be described as a power of evil that might be found in the Bible. According to the doctrines of the satanic groups Introvigne offers to categorize these groups as propagating either *rational* or *occult* Satanism. *Rational* Satanism refers to Anton Szandor LaVey and the doctrine of his Church of Satan, where Satan is believed to be a metaphor, not a real being. On the contrary, the *occult* satanic groups believe that Satan is a real being that might be invited into their rituals and asked for endowments and services. In addition, Introvigne divides Satanism

---

<sup>1</sup> There is no information about any satanic group existing in Lithuania that was accused of any of the above-mentioned crimes.

as a religious organization into *adult* and *youth* Satanism groups. According to him, the *adult* groups usually have doctrines and rituals, identified leaders and sometimes even press coverage. Typically, the *youth* Satanism groups do not have these features and might be considered a part of a subculture where actions are influenced by music, drugs, etc.

After this short presentation of a typology of Satanism, I will present the manifestations of such groups in Catholic Lithuania followed by an analysis comparing the groups with positions within the classification.

### **Satanism in Lithuania: An Inside Look**

The first concrete signs of the existence of Satanism in Lithuania showed up in the late nineties when a Lithuanian translation of the book *The Satanic Bible* by Anton Szandor LaVey was published independently. This book was edited by a previously unknown organization called the Brotherhood of the Dark (BOD). This organization has never tried to legitimize its activities as those of a public or religious association.

During the last decade, scholars in religious studies have observed the increasing role of the internet in reaching potential followers for religious communities (e.g. Lewis 2002), and the Lithuanian situation is similar in this case. In the year 2000, the website *www.satan.lt* was launched and it soon received a lot of attention from mainstream society. The website is owned by the afore-mentioned non-official organization the Brotherhood of the Dark and is considered to be the most visible and developing manifestation of contemporary Satanism in Lithuania.<sup>2</sup> With the classification of Introvigne in mind, the ideas that are spread on this website might be called rational Satanism. This is complicated, though. On the one hand material like *The Satanic Bible* is published here, but on the other hand the amount of critical material about different religious communities and religion in general is so large that it might be called more atheistic than satanic. The significance of this website and its popularity among young people obviously merited more analysis. Consequently I conducted an interview with the creators of this website in 2003.

They are the twin brothers Vaidotas and Evaldas Jocys that have the pseudonyms “Heretic” and “Travelling in the Dark”. “Heretic” seemed to be more ideologically minded and was the one to present an overview of what they were doing. The other

---

<sup>2</sup> Other discussions on and publications about Satanism are found in Lithuanian cyberspace. A search on <http://google.lt> with the Lithuanian word “satanizmas” (Satanism) displayed 1640 occurrences. The largest parts of the occurrences of this word were in forum discussions. There is also a segment that refers to different subcultural websites like heavy metal music and the gothic milieu, where this term is used in publications. The [third part](#) is critical publications about Satanism that are published on Christian websites, while the final part is news and information containing this concept and analytical publications from newspapers and journals.

brother – “Travelling in the Dark” – seemed to be more or less the first one’s right hand. The stories of these pseudonyms were presented in the following way. “This name [Heretic] was thought up especially for the situation that the church takes us to court; then the headlines of newspapers would be “The church against heretic” or “The first heretic after 400 years”” (Alisauskiene 2003: 6). The idea of using the pseudonym “Travelling in the Dark” came from the Michaelis’ book *In the Grip of Religion*: “... I liked one idea in that book: the one that stands in the shadow might see the one who is in the light, but the one standing in the light doesn’t see anything standing in the shadow. This is true that a man who walks in the shadow can see both the dark and the light” (Alisauskiene 2003: 7).

The creators told me that they are Satanists because society thinks that they are Satanists; they believe in neither God nor Satan. But they still prefer to call themselves Satanists because they are against the rest of the society: “The believers have only two possibilities – there is God and there is Satan. There is position and opposition. Now we are in the opposition, that is why we are Satanists, we are on the evil side” (Alisauskiene 2003: 1). “Travelling in the Dark” explained the meaning of his brand of Satanism in more depth a few months later in an interview for a newspaper. According to him

Religious Satanism exists in the United States and it is in reality a business. It is a belief in Satan as a being; there are different rituals, black masses in the US. All this is like inverted Christianity. It was Christians who actually did create Satan. But in Lithuania, as in the whole of Europe there exists the so-called European, non-religious Satanism. It is a parody of religion; it is free of charge and it is mixed with atheism. (Peleckis 2003)

The authors of the website think that they are non-believers and their activity is aimed at the weakening of religion. “Free thought is one side, and the other side is our aim to weaken religion” (Alisauskiene 2003: 1).

The foundation of such a satanic/atheistic position is not stated: “Essentially everything was accumulating for a long time ....”, as “Heretic” says (Alisauskiene 2003: 1). Their way towards this position began in the nineties with the reforms in the former Soviet society. The authors think that with economical reforms and decline, the belief in different miracles and hopes usually strengthens, but they also believe that belief in such things doesn’t help or might even be dangerous because people approach religion as the last hope. But in such a situation, religion is a suggestion to do nothing and is in reality damaging: “It might be said that a situation that existed four hundred years ago is good enough for religion nowadays” (Alisauskiene 2003: 2).

The religious tradition of the authors’ family was Roman Catholic, but only their grandmother was a regular churchgoer. Their parents were non-believers and there was no religious socialization in their family; thus it seems they had a possibility to choose their own way: “We had a possibility to choose and the turmoil of the Independence was like a strike of lightning for us” (Alisauskiene



2003: 2). Books about physics that tried to answer questions of meaning also had a big influence on their views.

The idea to create a website was born in the late nineties, but it took time to evolve. The first step was the publishing of *The Satanic Bible*. Later this book appeared to be very simple and similar to the Christian Bible: “We thought that *The Satanic Bible* was too weak, the same propaganda as the Christian Bible. The most worthy thing in that book is its title and maybe the rituals described at the end of it that might be interesting to some people, but we didn’t publish them” (Alisauskiene 2003: 3).

According to the creators the main purpose of the website was to reduce the influence of religion in society. One visitor of the website asked its authors in the commentary section to try to be neutral and to not disseminate “the dark”. The answer was: “We’ll try, when you stop selling the opium for people in the churches”. Other phrases describing religion and its functions are: “Religion is an indicator that people are not able to think logically” or “Religion stops scientific research (genetics, etc.) and tries to limit its development; the outcome of this is that many people do not receive the required treatment and die. Religion takes away hope from many sick people that might be helped by such research. It kills implicitly.”<sup>3</sup> The results of such educating activity are expected to show up during the next census.

The authors indicate that there are three groups of visitors on the website: Satanists, freethinkers/atheists and Christians. Freethinkers are the ideal visitors; here they find ideas and ideological cousins. The two other groups of visitors – Satanists and Christians – are also welcomed. The authors of the website think that there are almost no Satanists in Lithuania that perform rituals. Most of them profane cemeteries, but this is made mainly with the intention of stealing metals that are later sold. Satanists, according to the authors themselves, consider this website authoritative. Usually they search it for answers; sometimes visitors try to join the organization, BOD. The authors of this website pay attention to different events that the mass media portray as manifestations of occult Satanism, like desecrations of cemeteries and churches. The attitude of the authors towards such events is unambiguous, as they try to teach these young persons and in one sense this website is educational for the young people who call themselves Satanists:

This website is very useful for Satanists, because they don’t find authoritative priests or their parents; usually they don’t speak and don’t listen to anyone. They come to our website and we are the only people they listen to, so we try to make them peaceful ... We try to explain rather than threaten our visitors and make them think on their own and decide not to desecrate crosses in the cemeteries. (Alisauskiene 2003: 4)

---

<sup>3</sup> A selection from the rubric of opinions on the website [www.satan.lt](http://www.satan.lt)

A similar argument is used when Christians browse the website; they are told that it is not useful to believe in God. In this case the authors of the website try to convince the visitors to make a choice to become atheists: "... we don't try to convince people not to believe. We want them to stop believing as their own wish" (Alisauskiene 2003: 4).

The founders of the Brotherhood of the Dark, the only manifested Satanic organization with three years of existence in virtual space, concludes that there is no *occult* Satanism in Lithuania. There are separate individuals that might be attracted to satanic ideas but they cannot be called occult Satanists, because, according to the authors, no "Black Masses" or other satanic rituals are being held in Lithuania, and no satanic organization exists: "There are single persons that are interested in Satanism after they read a book about it. But, like the people with extrasensory perceptions, they do not unite into any organizations" (Alisauskiene 2003: 5). They also distinguish another group of people who are interested in Satanism that might be called Lithuanian youth Satanists: "... they want to look "cool", dress in black etc. This is a rebellious youth" (Alisauskiene 2003: 5).

During the interview the brothers also addressed the question of the role of mass media in portraying the Satanists: "For instance, they [the mass media] wrote that the secret service is interested in us, that we kill people" (Alisauskiene 2003: 5). The authors claim that a lot of attention is paid to the activity of Satanists by the church and they think that the church is afraid of losing its followers.

In the last part of the interview, the creators of the website said that in the future they plan to edit a CD with information from their website. They think it would help to spread information among people without access to the internet. Summarizing the history of development of Satanism in Lithuania they told me that "the atheism of today started as Satanism" (Alisauskiene 2003: 8). The situation where people find this website attractive is seen as temporary:

It is now fashionable so a young man comes to our website and finds it attractive, but later he grows up and has to adapt to society – one can't work in the bank or in business having a cool hairstyle. His worldview is formed here. As an outcome a sceptical thinking must be developed and it would be good if people gave their minds to this world and not the other world. We are like spice that is added to these young people (Alisauskiene 2003: 8).

## **Analysis**

The interview with the authors of the website reveals the complicated development of their worldview, starting with a self-designation as Satanists but evolving to naming themselves atheists and freethinkers. In their view, the starting point for the position of Satanist seems to be the Christian dichotomy of the world as a scene where the battle between good and evil takes place. In this battle the Christians are symbolically on the good side, while the evil side consists of a motley crew of

Others. Thus the authors do not speak about a faith in or belief in Satan; they stress (Christian) society's attitude towards those outside the mold and conclude that they originally decided to call themselves Satanists because society designated them as such. But they did not say when and under what circumstances society did that.

Such a conflict between them and society might be created purposefully, to legitimate their activity, or the reasons might be rooted in the personal experience of the authors of the website. The creation of the website was a move into the public sphere and the authors were waiting for the outcome of this event; they even prepared pseudonyms for themselves in case they were taken to court, so that their names would remind readers of an inquisition trial. The organization that was created before the website was launched was named the Brotherhood of the Dark another reference to the evil side of reality they supposedly operated in. In effect it might be suggested that this group unites not only the authors of the website but other interested parties too.

In Introvigne's terms it seems that this organization could be classified as an *adult* satanic group, but without a clear leader, hierarchy, rituals etc. The only manifestation of its activity is the website and the publication of *The Satanic Bible*, a book that is sometimes conceived of as an anti-bible (e.g. Christiano et.al. 2002). But can it be called *rational*? Such a categorization is not without difficulties, since it refers to a type of Satanism introduced by LaVey where Satan is considered a metaphor. What supports this labeling is that the authors publish *The Satanic Bible* and other materials, as does humoristic pictures of the Devil on the website, that implies something about their position towards the Devil as an object of worship. In addition, all the material on the website and the main ideas of its authors expressed in the interview and elsewhere, are targeted at Christianity and religion as such (jokes about religions, the rubrics "Saint Stories", "Christian Bible", "Priest-killer", "Fakers and sects", "The Museum of Inquisition" and so on). Finally, the authors also stress that they consider themselves to be freethinkers and atheists. In summary, it can safely be asserted that this most visible and developed manifestation of Satanism in Lithuania, especially as seen on the website *www.satan.lt*, is in fact rational Satanism.

What about the existence of satanic groups or individuals in Lithuania that propagate *occult* Satanism? Here we have to sharply discern religious Satanism from the confused criminal acts of young malcontents and disturbed individuals using Satan as a cause for, or cover for, their motivations. There is no information about adult satanic groups that celebrate "Black Masses" or other rituals. The authors of the website were also convinced that there are no examples of occult Satanism in Lithuania. Of course more research has to be done, but at this moment the data only shows single, unsystematic hits at cemeteries and churches, which should be considered simple hooliganism or at most manifestations of disorganized youth Satanism.

The authors of the website said that the youth "Satanists" that profane cemeteries try to sell iron things stolen from cemeteries. This kind of rationalization might

be useful when trying to explain those incidents of theft and vandalism in the cemeteries that are usually researched by law enforcement institutions. In 1999–2001, when the chapels of Vilnius Calvary were desecrated, the detractors left slogans on the walls of the buildings which cited the *www.satan.lt* website. The dates for desecration were chosen and not accidental – as the desecrations were performed during the warm season and on the eves of religious feasts when the believers visited the chapels with processions. These events might suggest some coherence among the youth Satanists who desecrate sacral buildings in order to demonstrate their symbolic rebellion against Christianity or religion as such. For instance, messages have been published in the opinion section of the website with invitations to join the group of youth Satanists and email addresses and/or telephone numbers.

In conclusion, it is complicated to talk about organized Satanism in a Lithuanian context because until now there has been no such clearly identifiable organization. If we suggest that the Brotherhood of the Dark is a Satanic organization, then it is of course an *adult* organization, but with indistinctly defined doctrines, rituals and leadership structures, while the descriptions of religious Satanism in the press and the material I gathered during my research might be explained by presupposing the existence of *youth* satanic groups that usually deal with church and cemetery desecration. As is amply documented by research, such groups are usually part of a subculture where music, drugs, etc. influence their actions, not “religious beliefs” (see e.g. Richardson et al. 1991). The statistics about the events do not allow us to draw the conclusion that those events are associated with each other or that they might be committed by a satanic organization. In such cases it is young people who commit these crimes.

## **Conclusion**

The emergence of ideas about Satanism in Lithuania coincided with the revival of religion, especially with the revival of Catholicism that is considered being a part of Lithuanian identity. A distinction has to be drawn between two spheres of Satanism – on the one hand the Brotherhood of the Dark and their website *www.satan.lt* and on the other the activities of the alleged groups of people attracted by the ideas of Satanism. The first sphere started as an attack against Catholicism and later evolved into a critique of religion as such, thus having moved from a position where Satanism is derived from Christianity towards atheism. It should also be stressed that the authors of the website always understood Satanism as an attack on Christianity but did not emphasize it as a cult of the Devil. Accordingly, although the position of the authors of the website has been modified somewhat during the term of its existence, it is still considered to be the best known Satanic website in Lithuania.

The possibility of a development of a group of people that have been acquainted through this website remains, together with the possibility of a more orderly

appearance of organized religious Satanism – rational and occult – in Lithuania. On the other hand the present activity of alleged satanic groups should not be called Satanism, neither rational nor occult – it is more or less an antithesis of religion (in the case of desecrations of religious symbols) and society as such (the desecrations of the cemeteries).

What is usually called Satanism in Lithuanian society and mass media are not manifestations of a cult of the Devil that is derived from Christian demonology, as it is either a rational anti-religion or a disorganized rebellion among the young. In effect, what the issues about Lithuanian Satanism discussed here should do is leave us questioning the existence of the phenomenon of criminal Satanism in Lithuania, thus inviting scholars to research the processes occurring in society from a different angle than the one proposed by the sensational media reports.

## References

- Alisauskienė, M. 2003. Interview with “Heretic” and “Travelling in the Dark”. Conducted in 2003.
- Christiano, K.J., W.H. Swatos & P. Kivisto Jr. 2002. *Sociology of Religion. Contemporary Developments*. Lanham Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, Inc.
- Melton, J. Gordon & Martin Baumann (eds). 2002. *Religions of the World. A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*, vol. 4. Santa Barbara: ABC Clío.
- Introvigne, M. 1997. *Il Satanismo*. Leumann (Torino): Elledici.
- Lewis, James R. 2002. “The Satanic Bible: Quasi-Scripture/Counter-Scripture”. Paper presented at the International CESNUR Conference, “Minority Religions, Social Change, and Freedom of Conscience.” Salt Lake City and Provo, June 20–23, 2002. Accessed at <http://www.censur.org/2002/slc/lewis.htm>
- Peleckis, Mindaugas. 2003. “Satanistai parodė savo veidus”. *Respublika*, nr. 107. October 5 2003.
- Richardson, James T., Joel Best & David G. Bromley (eds). 1991. *The Satanism Scare*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

# Chapter 9

## Satanism in Estonia

Ringo Ringvee

The following chapter is a short overview of Satanism in Estonia during the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century. Like in many other societies, the Satanism scare has had its place in the popular mind in Estonia. It is interesting that no other religious milieu or movement has succeeded in attracting such a strong reaction from both mainline churches and politicians as have Satanists. But both the analytical term “Satanism” as well as the phenomenon known as Satanism are quite complex. Traditionally in the popular mind, Satanism is connected to a certain outlook, behavior and beliefs considered deviant by mainstream society. Thus it may be difficult to define who is a Satanist in the religious sense or who is a follower of certain sub-cultural trends.<sup>1</sup>

### **Some General Remarks on Religion in Estonia**

Estonia is one of the post-Soviet societies with an experience of the Soviet Marxist-atheist ideology, which has formed the current religious situation. In addition, the present situation is due to the rapid urbanization during the Soviet period, which affected religious affiliation trends.

Two censuses, one from the pre-Soviet and the other from the post-Soviet era, can illustrate the change. According to census data from 1934, 77,6% of the population identified themselves as Lutherans, the Orthodox made up 18,8% of the population and 0,6% of the population declared to have no religious affiliation (Ederberg, 1934: 114). In a census from the year 2000 the question concerning the religious preferences was asked to 1,121,582 persons who were over the age of 15.<sup>2</sup> According to this data, 34% of the population declared themselves to be indifferent on religious matters, 14,5% did not know what to answer, 13,5%

---

<sup>1</sup> In this respect the situation resembles the situation with Rastafari where the distinction between religious, cultural, and political Rastas may be difficult. It holds especially true among white Rasta youth who have been associated with the Rastafari through reggae sub-culture which from the seventies has been the main gateway to Rastafari for non-Jamaicans. In a similar way the heavy metal subculture has been a hotbed for Satanists.

<sup>2</sup> The age of 15 was selected due to the Estonian legal system, which allows persons from the age of 15 to choose her or his religious affiliation.

identified themselves as Lutherans, 12% as Orthodox, 6,1% as Atheists and 0,5% as Baptists. The largest adherence among non-Christian religions was Islam – 0,12% of the population older than 15 years. 7,99% refused to answer the question concerning religious preferences (2000 Census, Table 83).<sup>3</sup>

According to a survey from the year 2000, only 4% of the sample of 1,092 respondents said they had attended religious services on a weekly basis (Elust 2000: 6). According to another survey from 2003 5% of the respondents considered religion “very important” in their lives (Eestimaalaste moraal 2003, Figure 1).

In this context it should be mentioned that according to the census from the year 2000 there were 43 persons who identified themselves as Satanists, i.e. 0.0038% of the survey population that answered the question concerning religious preferences. 30 of them were under the age of 24, 36 of them were males, 28 of them lived in urban areas and most of them were native Estonians (2000 Census).

The freedom of religion and belief is guaranteed in Estonia by different legal acts. The principles of freedom of religion, belief and conscience are stipulated in the Estonian Constitution from 1992.<sup>4</sup> The judicial framework for religions and religious associations in Estonia is liberal. All religious associations which are registered according to the Churches and Congregations Act are equal in the eye of the law.

### **Satanism in Estonia**

The exact birth date of Satanism in Estonia is hard to determine. However, it developed with the heavy metal scene in the mid- to late eighties and the early nineties. The wider Estonian audience became aware of Satanism through graveyard vandalism in the early nineties where symbols related to Satanism were used. However, most of these so-called Satanists were teenagers in search of excitement, and in most cases under the influence of alcohol. Some of them claimed to be Satanists. This was also the period when Christian churches started to react against Satanism.

When a group of Satanists announced their wish to get State recognition as a religious association in June 1999, the media became interested in the subject of Satanism once again. The leader of this group, a man in his early twenties known

---

<sup>3</sup> The 2000 Population and Housing Census database is also available on-line, and it is more useful than the printed version: [http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/1\\_Databas/Population\\_Census\\_regional/16Religious\\_affiliation/16Religious\\_affiliation.asp](http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/1_Databas/Population_Census_regional/16Religious_affiliation/16Religious_affiliation.asp)

The Estonian version of that database is available from: <http://gatekeeper.stat.ee:8000/px-web.2001/Database/Rahvaloendus/17Usk/17Usk.asp>

<sup>4</sup> On the Estonian legal system concerning religious organizations see Kiviorg 2001, 2003 and Ringvee 2001, 2006.

as Jason, stated that “Satanism is not grave robbing, burning of churches, humans sacrifices and other such horrible stuff” (BNS News, June 22, 1999).

The issue of registration became the focus of the media again in 2001. During this period, Satanists were probably the most popular religious news issue in the local media. When looking at the reactions to the news by some political parties and Christian churches it could be easily assumed that a real danger existed to Estonian society in general by Satanists. In this respect, the Satanist issue should be put into much wider perspective.

### Youth Satanism

The period from the late eighties and early nineties to the end of the decade was a time when the young metal scene was rearranged – the rise of international Black and Death Metal bands such as Venom, Slayer and others had their influence also in Estonia.<sup>5</sup> During this period, there were several graveyard and church related cases of vandalism, which were connected to Satanism by the use of its symbols.

During the first half of the nineties, there were several incidences of graveyard vandalism in Estonia related to Satanism. While the majority of these cases where Satanist symbols were used turned out to be committed by youth with little knowledge on Satanism, there were also more serious crimes committed. The best known case, which brought youth Satanism to the limelight of local media in this period, was the stabbing of the respected Estonian poet Hando Runnel in 1994 (Ritari and Hanson 1994b). Besides the more traditional graveyard vandalism, this group of four young males between the age of 17 and 20 were also involved in the case of the sexual abuse of a dead woman. One of these persons defended his acts by his Satanist faith by considering it as a “baptism by Satan” (Ritari and Hanson 1994a).

By generalizing the police investigators statements, it could be said that the average youth who had committed acts of graveyard vandalism had problems in school, little knowledge of Satanism, and was in most cases under the influence of alcohol or inhaled intoxicants while committing the crime (Ritari and Hanson 1994c; Ulmiste 2000; *Satanistidest...* 1996).<sup>6</sup> In contrast, at the same time in 1994, the police announced that to their knowledge the Satanists in Estonia were mostly intelligent and better off people (Ritari and Hanson 1994b). One police official commented on the arrest of two youngsters accused of committing graveyard

---

<sup>5</sup> The metal scene in Estonia has changed by now – instead of Satanism, Paganism or Neo-Paganism is the vague term by which many metal bands have identified themselves.

<sup>6</sup> In the latter anonymous news article a kind of standard approach to the Satanist related news can be found. While the article has the headline “Satanist graveyard vandals found guilty”, in the article itself the convicted youth gang has been labeled as “youth interested in Satanism”, and not as Satanists.



vandalism in the year 2000: “One of them bears an upside-down cross and said that he’s interested in Satanism, but he had very little knowledge on the ideological side of it. It’s more like copying” (Aotäht 2000). A similar comment was given by the Commissioner of the Defense Police (Kärmas 1999).

It should be said that both the general public and governmental institutions have been generally cautious in relating the vandalism in the graveyards to Satanism. Commenting on graveyard vandalism, a columnist from one of the major daily newspapers noted that:

The teenage schoolboys who demolished around one hundred graves were not raging Satanists, and neither were their peers, who acted with similar fervor in the Jewish cemetery in Tartu. There is even less reasons to suspect the [so-called] steel stealers of Satanism, however, and these are the people who are suspected by the police for committing most of the 27 acts of vandalism in Tartu graveyards this year (Liimal 2000).<sup>7</sup>

However, the Satanism-related vandalism has not limited itself only to graveyards. There have also been acts of vandalism toward Church buildings. On May 13 1994, there was an attempt to set fire to a Lutheran church in the small town of Võru in South Estonia. On August 23 of the same year, a goat’s head was nailed to the door of this same church building (Ritari and Hanson 1994c). In 1999, a Pentecostal church in a small town of Rakvere was set on fire. Before setting the fire two youths – one aged 19 and the other 18 – painted “666” and the word “Satan” on the church wall. When arrested, they said they were interested in Satanism (Politsei uudised 1999; ETA News, August 17, 2000).

In the case of so-called youth Satanism the role of the news media as a trendsetter should not be underestimated. The importance of the media in the spread of Satanism has been noted in Italy as well as elsewhere (Introvigne 1997, Lippert 1998, Hjelm 2000). Similar conclusions were reached by the German governmental Enquete Commission on “So-called Sects and Psychogroups”, who pointed out the role of the media in relation to the Satanist practices among youth in their final report (Enquete Commission 1998: 78, 85, 350).

In a liberal post-traditional Western democratic society it seems quite hard for a rebellious teenager to find a form of protest which gets a reaction from the mainstream adult society. In this context youth Satanism should be understood as the clearest, strongest, and possibly also the most available, oppositional worldview and value set in mainstream society. Kathleen S. Lowney has described a teenage Satanist coven as a form of opposition to and critique of the established society, its norms and values (Lowney 1998). As long as being a Satanist is considered deviant behavior, the power of this opposition remains an alternative.

---

<sup>7</sup> The steel-stealers desecrate cemeteries in order to steal metals for resale.

## Organized Satanism

While there were rumors about Satanist congregations in the early nineties, the first evidence of organized Satanism came in June 1999 when a Satanist group, the Estonian Church of Satan, asked for information from the Ministry of Internal Affairs on the requirements for registration as a religious association. They were the followers of Anton Szandor LaVey's branch of Satanism.<sup>8</sup>

Although the group expressed their interest in becoming recognized as a religious association in legal terms, the next step was taken almost two years later. In April 2001 the news agencies published the story that Satanists wanted to become registered in the Estonian register of Churches and Congregations (ETA News, April 23, 2001). They consulted with the officials in the Ministry of Internal Affairs about the registration requirements and their statute. The Department of Religious Affairs at the Ministry pointed out that in the application for a recognition the name "Estonian Church of Satan" must be changed, as the term "church" could be used officially only by Christian associations with episcopate according to the 1993 Churches and Congregations Act (CCA 1993, Art 2(1)). These consultations were unofficial, and the formal application for registration was not made. However, from there on the local news started paying attention to this Satanist group, now calling itself the Estonian Satanic Congregation "The Order of the Black Venus" (OBV). The news, published by the media, concentrated on the speculations of possible application for registration and the possible reactions from the governmental officials.

The Estonian Satanic Congregation "The Order of the Black Venus" was and is relatively small, and does not embrace all the Satanists, although it seems to be their aim according to their statute.<sup>9</sup> The leader of the group, Jason, became interested in Satanism in 1997. The idea to become an organized and recognized religious organization derives back to the year 1999 when he contacted people who had visited his Church of Satan website and formed a group of ten to fifteen people (Kärmas 1999). Both Jason's statements and the website have been stressing that Satanism is not synonymous to graveyard vandalism and other criminal activities. He has said that his aim is to unite the people who take Satanism as a life philosophy (BNS News, June 22, 1999). To the question of why they want to become an official religious association, Jason said: "So people can see that we have neither tails nor horns" (Valme 2001). In 2001, they published an Estonian translation of LaVey's *The Satanic Bible* (with a new edition published in 2005). In 2003 the Order also published a translation of LaVey's *Satan Speaks*.

In March 2002 the OBV made an official application to become recognized as a religious association. On March 28th, the Department of Religious Affairs returned the application due to technical inadequacies (ETA News, March 28,

---

<sup>8</sup> See their website <http://mvo.saadanas.org>

<sup>9</sup> In 1999 their leader Jason declared that there were approximately between 400 to 500 Satanists in Estonia (Petersoo 1999, 6).

2002). However, at the same time the head of the Department of Religious Affairs pointed out that this was not a denial, and when all legal requirements were completed, the group might apply again (ETA News, March 28, 2002).

The next application for the registration was made by the OBV on February 10th 2005. Due to the change in legislation, the registration of religious associations now takes place at register departments of city or county courts. On April 11th 2005 the assistant judge of the Tallinn City court made a decision not to register the OBV as a religious association on the basis of Article 14 of the Churches and Congregations Act. According to the Act the registrar has the right not to register the religious association if “the activities of the religious association damage public order, health, morals, or the rights and freedoms of others” (CCA 2002). In her decision the assistant judge noted the possibility that Satanist philosophy may have destructive influences on mentally unstable persons, and their actions may therefore become unpredictable and dangerous for themselves as well as for others.

In their statute presented to the court for the registration procedures the OBV had stated that they seek to unite and serve all the Satanists living in Estonia. According to the Court this meant that the association is aimed to unite persons with criminal intention, and the existence of such an association could damage public order and national security. According to the Court’s interpretation *The Satanic Bible* contains texts that instigate provocative, hateful and destructive acts, and therefore the OBV was considered an association which accepts criminal activity in reaching their objectives.

The OBV appealed to the court’s decision noting that court’s interpretation of Satanism as well as LaVey’s book is one-sided. The Court, however, did not change its decision, and in spring 2006 the OBV announced on their website that they have decided to drop the attempt to become registered as religious association. According to them they had no financial means to sue the Ministry of Justice, and on the other hand they found that the decision reflected the official policy toward Satanism. They accused the vice-chancellor of the Ministry of Justice to be behind the decision not to recognize the OBV as a religious association as he is also the member of the general council of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church.<sup>10</sup>

Here the story of Estonian Satanists attempting to get legal recognition by the state as legal religious association ends. It could be well considered as an end of an era in the history of Satanism in Estonia. At the same time a new splinter group of the OBV, the Luciferian Order Ordo Templi Echelon has entered the Estonian alternative religious scene, at least the virtual one.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> <http://liin.saadanas.org>

<sup>11</sup> [www.echelon-org.net](http://www.echelon-org.net)

## Reaction from Churches and Political Parties

The Christian churches have reacted to the local Satanist scene. In fact, they have been in the vanguard of the fight against Satanism. Already in 1992, Jaan J. Leppik, then a deacon of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, warned about the threat of Satanists, and claimed that allegedly there were 3 Satanist congregations in Estonia (Leppik 1992: 57).<sup>12</sup> These claims, however, were not proved.

In January 1995, the Estonian Council of Churches announced in their press release that all destructive organizations, including Satanism, should be banned in Estonia (ETA News, Jan. 28, 1995). In the same year, the former Estonian Prime Minister Mart Laar, in an interview with the *Word of Life's* newspaper on the question of the freedom of religion, answered that, “[I]f Satanist sects are going to emerge – I could not call it religion – I would draw a clear line. Enough is enough” (Laar 1995, p. 2). These words were picked up in October 2001 when the leader of the OBV asked if Mart Laar had changed his opinion (ETA News, Oct. 26, 2001).

The Satanist scare took off in 2001 when the news hit the media that a Satanist group wanted to be recognized by the state. The Head of the Department of Religious Affairs Ilmo Au responded to the question for possible registration that, “The organizations should rather be legal than illegal” (ETA News, April 23, 2001).

Some political parties as well as Christian churches started to react as the printed and electronic media published interviews and news on local Satanists. So, for example, the dean of the Tallinn deanery of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church announced that, “the Church tries to influence the governmental officials not to register them [Satanists]. To give them official state recognition would be against our principles of faith, against Christianity” (BNS News, Sept. 3, 2001). The church officials from the Lutheran Church also compared the Satanists to drug dealers and booze smugglers, and commented that the state should not tolerate them (Jürjo 2001). However, only the Union of Baptist Churches in Estonia and one Baptist congregation gave official statements, which condemned any possible registration of Satanist congregation in the Estonia Register of Churches and Congregations (ETA News, Sept. 20, 2001).

At the same time, three Russian political parties condemned Satanism and any possible registration of any Satanist organizations (ETA News, Sept. 4, 2001). In addition, the small Estonian Christian People's Party protested against any recognition of Satanists, and started to collect names for appellation against the registration of a Satanist congregation (BNS News, May 16, 2001).

It should be mentioned here that during the autumn of 2001 there was an ongoing discussion in the Parliament concerning the draft of a new *Churches and Congregations Act*. Due to the Satanist issues some political parties as well as

---

<sup>12</sup> Three articles on Satanism which were published in the official newspaper of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1993 by Leppik became the main source for getting information on the subject during the early nineties.

some individual politicians wanted the new Act to prohibit Satanism in Estonia, or at least prohibit all religious associations which were “destructive” (ETA News, Sept. 4, 2001). The outcome of this discussion was that the limitations for practicing freedom of religion and belief, which are currently stipulated in the Constitution and follow Article 9 (2) of the *European Convention of Human Rights*, were included in the new text of the *Churches and Congregations Act*.

## Conclusion

The stereotypical negative image of, and attitude to, Satanism by some segments of society was reflected in Estonia after the story about a possible application to get official recognition by a Satanist organization reached the news. With this reaction we come to the field of freedom of religion and belief. Should new religious groups with beliefs and practices that are considered deviant or dangerous by other religious communities be recognized by the State? If we look at the situation from the perspective of Christian churches, then definitely no. While looking at the issue from the side of political parties – it seems to be an easy way to become noticed and to gain popularity among possible voters.

However, if we look at this question from the viewpoint of a secular state – and Estonia is definitely a secular state – then the whole question becomes a different one. According to Estonian legislation all religious communities have the right to become recognized by the State as religious associations if they apply for it and fulfill the requirements for such recognition. Nevertheless, the requirements say nothing about the religious beliefs and practices of the association. Although Article 9(2) of the *European Convention on Human Rights* sets the limits on the freedom to manifest one’s religion, these limitations should not be used to discriminate religious communities on the basis of their beliefs, neither on the basis of their practices without any factual proof that they expose a danger to public safety, public order, health or morals, nor on the rights and freedom of others. These possibilities for restrictions are stipulated also in the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia. The matter rests on a more difficult question of how to define these vague terms.

I will give the last words to a member of the Estonian Satanist Congregation “Order of Black Venus”. In the documentary “Viirastused” (“Delusions”) premiered in March 2002 he said,

It seems like the outside world would push all this stuff – they look, a-ha, they wear black, made an upside down cross in the school’s workshop, it’s clear – a Satanist. Basically, they said who we are. ... If all had gone quiet, maybe I would never have declared myself to be a Satanist.

## References

- 2000 Census. *2000 Population and Housing Census. Education. Religion. IV. Education. Religion*. Tallinn: Statistical Office of Estonia.
- Aotäht, Aivar 2000 [internet]. "Sadat hauda rüüstasid teismelised koolipoisid" (One hundred tombs vandalized by teenage schoolboys). *Postimees*, September 11, 2000. Retrieved on September 10, 2001 from the internet: <[www.postimees.ee/index.html?number=297&op=lugu&id=3337](http://www.postimees.ee/index.html?number=297&op=lugu&id=3337)>
- BNS News, June 22, 1999 [internet]. "Satanistid tahavad seaduslikult luua oma koguduse" (Satanists want to establish their congregation legally). *BNS News*, June 22, 1999. Retrieved on September 10, 2001 from the internet: <[http://hp.bns.ee/ppwse/rgw?arp=as\\_arch\\_body\\_url&mtmpl=arch\\_body\\_loc&bid=1060](http://hp.bns.ee/ppwse/rgw?arp=as_arch_body_url&mtmpl=arch_body_loc&bid=1060)>
- BNS News, May 16, 2001 [internet]. "Kristlik Rahvapartei on satanistide registreerimise vastu" (Christian Peoples' Party is against the registration of Satanists). *BNS News*, May 16, 2001. Retrieved on April 15, 2002 from the internet: <<http://www.bns.ee/archiveNewsBody.jsp?articleId=417501&UID=UID1018963086676&beginDate=01.01.2000&endDate=02.04.2002>>
- BNS News, Sept. 3, 2001 [internet]. "Eesti võib saada ametliku satanistide koguduse" (Estonia might get an official Satanist congregation). *BNS News*, September 3, 2001. Retrieved on September 10, 2001 from the internet: <[http://hp.bns.ee/ppwse/rgw?arp=as\\_arch\\_body\\_url&mtmpl=arch\\_body\\_loc&bid=1121](http://hp.bns.ee/ppwse/rgw?arp=as_arch_body_url&mtmpl=arch_body_loc&bid=1121)>
- CCA 1993. "Churches and Congregations Act". *Riigi Teataja* RT1/93/30/510.
- CCA 2002. "Churches and Congregations Act". *Riigi Teataja* RT I 2002, 24, 135. English text available online: [www.legaltext.ee](http://www.legaltext.ee)
- Ederberg, Bruno 1934. *Lahkusud Eestis* (Sects in Estonia). Rakvere: np.
- Eestimaalaste moraal 2003. *Religioonisotsioloogilise küsitluse "Eestimaalaste moraal ja väärtushinnagud" pressikonverentsi abimaterjal* (The additional materials for the press conference of the Religio-Sociological Survey "The morality and values of Estonian population"). Tallinn: Eesti Kirikute Nõukogu.
- Elust 2000. *Sotsioloogilise küsitluse Elust, usust ja usuelust II tulemused (%)* (Results of the sociological survey about life, religion and religious life II). Hans Hansen (ed). Tallinn: Eesti Kirikute Nõukogu, Eesti Piibliselts, Eesti Evangelisatsiooni Allianss.
- Enquete Commission 1998. *Final report of the Enquete Commission on "so-called sects and psychogroups"*. *New religious and ideological communities and psychogroups in the Federal Republic of Germany* (transl. W. Fehlberg and M. Ulloa-Fehlberg) Bonn: Dt. Bundestag, Referat Öffentlichkeitsarbeit.
- ETA News, Jan. 28, 1995 [internet]. "Eesti Kirikute Nõukogu presidendiks valiti piiskop Einar Soone" (Bishop Einar Soone was elected the President of the Estonian Council of Churches). *ETA News Agency*, January 28, 1995. Retrieved on January 29, 2002 from the internet: <http://www.eta.ee/cgi-bin/eta/one?19950128=007>

- ETA News, March 28, 2002 [internet]. "Siseministeerium lükkas satanistide dokumendid tagasi" (Ministry of Interiors rejected the documents of Satanists). *ETA News Agency*, March 28, 2002. Retrieved on March 28, 2002 from the internet: <<http://www.eta.ee/cgi-bin/eta/one?20020328=0141>>
- ETA News, April 23, 2001 [internet]. "Satanistid tahavad end legaliseerida" (Satanists want to be legalized). *ETA News Agency*, April 23, 2001. Retrieved on January 29, 2002 from the internet: <<http://www.eta.ee/cgi-bin/eta/one?20010423=0089>>
- ETA News, August 17, 2000 [internet]. "Lääne-Viru maakohus karistas sataniste tingimisi" (Lääne-Viru County Court put Satanists on probation). *ETA News Agency*, August 17, 2000. Retrieved on January 29, 2002 from the internet: <[www.eta.ee/cgi-bin/eta/one?20000817=0260](http://www.eta.ee/cgi-bin/eta/one?20000817=0260)>
- ETA News, September 4, 2001 [internet]. "Vene erakonnad hülgavad satanismi" (Russian Parties repudiate Satanism). *ETA News Agency*, September 4, 2001. Retrieved on January 29, 2002 from the internet: <[www.eta.ee/cgi-bin/eta/one?20010904=0279](http://www.eta.ee/cgi-bin/eta/one?20010904=0279)>
- ETA News, September 20, 2001 [internet]. "Baptistid protestivad satanistide registreerimise vastu" (Baptists protest against the registration of Satanists). *ETA News Agency* Sept 20, 2001. Retrieved on February 23, 2002 from the internet: <<http://www.eta.ee/cgi-bin/eta/one?20010920=0175>>
- ETA News, October 26, 2001 [internet]. "Laar ignoreerib sataniste" (Laar ignores Satanists). *ETA News Agency* October 26, 2001. Retrieved on January 29, 2002 from the internet: <<http://www.eta.ee/cgi-bin/eta/one?20011026=0122>>
- Hjelm, Titus 2000. "The making of a media panic". In Jeffrey Kaplan (ed.): *Beyond the Mainstream. The Emergence of Religious Pluralism in Finland, Estonia, and Russia*. Studia Historica 63. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, pp. 289–297.
- Introvigne, Massimo 1997. "The Gothic milieu: Black Metal, Satanism, and vampires". Retrieved on January 30, 2002 from the internet: <http://www.cesnur.org/testi/gothic.htm>
- Jürjo, Villu 2001 [internet]. "Keda tuleks karta" (Who should be feared). *Postimees*, September 20, 2001. Retrieved on September 21, 2002 from the internet: <<http://www.postimees.ee/index.html?op=lugu&id=33066&number=306&rubriik=6>>
- Kärmas, Mihkel 1999 [internet]: "Musta missa kiriku koidik" (Dawn of the Church of Black Mass). *Eesti Ekspress*, July 22, 1999. Retrieved on September 10, 2001 from the internet: <[www.ekspress.ee/arhiiv/1999/29/aosa/tempo.html](http://www.ekspress.ee/arhiiv/1999/29/aosa/tempo.html)>
- Kiviorg, Merilin 2001. "State and Church in Estonia". In Ringolds Balodis (ed.): *State and Church in the Baltic States: 2001*. Riga: Latvian Association for Freedom of Religion.
- Kiviorg, Merilin 2003. "State and Church in Estonia". In Ferrari, S., W. Cole Durham, Jr. & E. Sewell (eds): *Law and Religion in Post-Communist Europe*. Leuven: Peeters, pp. 99–120.

- Laar, Mart 1995. Interview with Albert Törnpu. *Elu Sõna Leht. Valimiste Extra*, February 1995, p. 2.
- Leppik, Jaan J. 1992. "Uususundid Eestis" (New religions in Estonia). *Vikerkaar* 6, 1992, pp. 52–57.
- Liimal, Pille 2000 [internet]. "Mis peatab hauarüüstajad" (What stops the grave robbers). *Eesti Päevaleht*, November 10, 2000. Retrieved on September 10, 2001 from the internet: <<http://leht.epl.ee/artikkel.php?id=85920>>
- Lippert, Randy 1998 [internet]. "The construction of Satanism as a social problem in Canada". In Lorne L. Dawson (ed.): *Cults in Context. Readings in the Study of New Religious Movements*. New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 1998 (1996), pp. 263–286.
- Lowney, Kathleen S. 1998. "Teenage Satanism as oppositional youth subculture". In Lorne L. Dawson (ed.): *Cults in Context. Readings in the Study of New Religious Movements*. New Brunswick & London: Transaction Publishers, 1998 (1996), pp. 313–336.
- Petersoo, Indrek 1999. "Saatana märgi all" (Under the sign of Satan). *Sõnumileht*, July 3, 1999, pp. 6–7.
- Politsei uudised* 1999. (Police News). *Eesti Päevaleht*, December 31, 1999. Retrieved on September 10, 2001 from the internet: <<http://leht.epl.ee/artikkel.php?id=72262>>
- Ringvee, Ringo 2001. "Religious freedom and legislation in post-Soviet Estonia". *Brigham Young University Law Review*, vol. 2001, no. 2, pp. 631–642.
- Ringvee, Ringo 2006. "State and religious associations in Estonia". *Laicidad y libertades: escritos jurídicos*, no. 6, pp. 503–532.
- Ritari, Tiiu and Hanson, Raimu 1994a. "Uinunud mõistus sünnitab koletisi ehk Meie igapäevane satanism" (Dormant mind gives birth to monsters or our everyday Satanism). *Postimees*, November 29, 1994, p. 6.
- Ritari, Tiiu and Hanson, Raimu 1994b. "Uinunud mõistus sünnitab koletisi ehk Meie igapäevane satanism" (Dormant mind gives birth to monsters or our everyday Satanism). *Postimees*, November 30, 1994, p. 6.
- Ritari, Tiiu and Hanson, Raimu 1994c. "Uinunud mõistus sünnitab koletisi ehk Meie igapäevane satanism" (Dormant mind gives birth to monsters or our everyday Satanism). *Postimees*, December 1, 1994, p. 6.
- Satanistidest...* 1996 [internet]. "Satanistidest hauarüüstajad mõisteti süüdi" (Satanist grave robbers found guilty). *Eesti Päevaleht*, January 30, 1996. Retrieved on September 10, 2001 from the internet: <<http://leht.epl.ee/artikkel.php?id=5438>>
- Ulmiste, Hans 2000 [internet]. "Satanism ei õigusta kui oled lihtsalt pätt" (Satanism is not an excuse if you are just a hoodlum). *Nelli Teataja*, November 10, 2000. Retrieved on September 10, 2001 from the internet: <<http://www.nelli.ee/990/eelu.html>>
- Valme, Valner 2001 [internet]. "Saatana sigidikud" (Satan's offspring). *Postimees/Arter*, September 8, 2001. Retrieved on October 9, 2001 from the internet: <<http://arhiiv.postimees.ee/leht/01/09/08/lugu5.htm>>



Viirastused 2002. Documentary “Viirastused” (Delusions). Tallinn: Braindrop Creations.

## Chapter 10

# Cyber-Satanism and Imagined Satanism: Dark Symptoms of Late Modernity<sup>1</sup>

Rafal Smoczynski

There are probably few social phenomena that emerged on the scene of late modernity where reality and fantasy overlap so intensively as in the case of Satanism. At present we face two contradictory discourses related to Satanism – the first is proposed by self-identified Satanists and the second is constructed by anti-Satanist circles. Both narratives function as social facts and both indicate certain social anxieties and challenges. Their presence also alludes to the complex issue of the position of identity and fantasy in late modern age.

My chapter is divided into two sections. The first section is dedicated to the analysis of the discourse of imagined Satanism as exposed in the mass media and in the narrative of the so-called *Anti Cult Movement*; I am here concerned with the meaning of repressive fantasies in modern witch-hunts and the role of self-appointed experts on Satanism in constructing the Self as an ongoing narrative. The second section of the chapter is focused on the phenomenon of Polish Cyber-Satanism. Here I attempt to examine some problems of religion in the age of virtual communities.

### **The Common Phantasmatic Thread of the Ritual Abuse Scare**

There are many similarities of moral panics in form and discursive content in various countries. The Polish ritual abuse Scare developed in the mid-nineties, but it did not reach the scope of British or American panics, even though the Polish panic was fuelled by discursive materials once constructed in the United States and the United Kingdom. Rumours about criminal Satanists were disseminated in Poland by people who came from a wide variety of occupations and social positions. In general the vast number of anti-Satanist claims was raised by clergymen, self-appointed experts in identifying the signs of Satanism and volunteers in

---

<sup>1</sup> The author would like to acknowledge that portions of this chapter have been reworked from an earlier article that has been published in *SYZYGY: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture* 2002, Vol. 11, and from a paper presented at the “American Orders and Disorders” conference organized by Polish Association of American Studies held at University of Warsaw, October 2004.

anti-cult organizations. As it was depicted in anti-Satanist publications, the Satanic activity displayed a violation of all the fundamental social rules that constitute modern society (Smith and Pazder 1980). The development of the ritual abuse panic followed a similar pattern to that identified by Stanley Cohen in his study of the Mod and Rocker phenomena, having four major features – exaggeration and distortion, symbolization, manufactured news and reaction and control (Cohen 1972).

My focal point of interest deals with the problem of symbolization. Mary de Young has suggested that the Satanism Scare is a new shape of reworked ancient myths and fairy tales about evil and innocence (see La Fontaine 1998). Indeed this hysteria rests upon a profound symbolic content. The symbolism embedded in the contemporary Satanic cult legend has much in common with claims about witchcraft in early modern Europe. Norman Cohn has shown that the medieval and early modern witch-hunts in Europe with typical images of witch-cults, including sexual orgies, child sacrifices, and inversion of cherished cultural symbols of social order also circulated with little variations in the ancient Mediterranean world. Such deviant imagery of perversions was upheld in different communities and was used against their enemies during social tensions: Romans used it against Christians, Christians against Jews, and Catholics against members of heterodox movements (Cohn 1976).

It seems that the discourse of proponents of today's Satanic conspiracy is an updated version of the ancient multiform image of secret societies that in the name of subversive motives practices orgies, human sacrifices and other atrocities. Yet historians agree that this image is nothing more than deep fantasy of subversive cults. What binds all anti-Satanic claims together is neither the matter of non-evidence of ritual abuse nor the social status, cultural, national or religious background of the claims-makers. The most important common thing about this panic is a structure of fantasy as exposed in anti-Satanist discourse. Thus the essential aspect in the analysis of Satanic ritual abuse moral panics consists of a dissection of the meaning of these claims. What is the significance of the phantasmatic images that are projected by these allegations and how are they related to other aspects of the social life of the society in which they have appeared? What is the symbolic structure of ritual abuse discourse? What does it expose and what does it try to hide?

### **A Monster Immersed in the Principle of Pleasure**

The central role in this discourse is played by the stereotype of "the Satanist" who is symbolized as the enemy, the Other. Here it is necessary to broaden the traditional definition of stereotype, which is understood as a collection of worldviews, superstitions, false generalizations and prejudices towards a certain social group or real existing persons. The Satanic Other is an object of pure invention, and its' image is being shaped in articles, books, radio and TV programs, as well as in oral

tales told in the “witch-hunt circles”. The mythic Satanist is the Other who exists only in a discourse.

This stereotype represents a degenerated symbol with an interrupted relation between its’ rational and irrational content; it contains a broader mythological background, however. While analyzing ritual abuse discourse we need to focus on the numinous character of the Satanic Other. The state of “numinosity” – as Rudolf Otto put it – expresses horror and fear but also fascination (Otto 1926). Such is the representation of the Other according to the narrative of anti-Satanist campaigners: On one hand it is a horrifying beast that drinks human blood and eats human flesh (tremendous), but at the same time “the Satanist” functions in the most powerful and influential circles of society (fascination). He or she takes part in creating world-wide politics and is often a member of the cultural elite or one of the professionals in the financial sphere (Stratford 1988).

Following a Freudian perspective we could add that such a numinous character is not affected by the Reality Principle – the existence of the numinous “Satanist” is entirely immersed in the Pleasure Principle (Freud 1961). The discursive image of “the Satanist” reveals a form of semi-supernatural monster that is driven only by its’ huge and unnatural appetite for pleasure. This Satanic pleasure is oriented at the same time towards the drives of Eros and Thanatos when regarded through the phantasmatic structures of anti-cult discourse. While the Satanic Other satisfies his or her destructive pleasure, all values cherished by Western civilization are violated. Like dragons and other monsters so well recognized in fairy tales, “Satanists” are not forced to obey social laws, they are not bound by moral regulations or the norms of the Superego. Even if they are rooted in social institutions, even if they hide behind façades of friendly looking organizations, it only serves to manipulate the unaware and uphold their demonic game of searching for tremendous desire.

Here we face not merely a new version of the traditional phantasmatic content of the fairy tale – the struggle between forces of evil against forces of good. The moral panics of Satanic ritual abuse also point towards states of anxiety of late modern man. In Zygmund Bauman’s analysis of fears of late modernity, which among many symptoms are characterized by tensions between the Reality Principle and the Pleasure Principle, the social fabric of modernity that is built upon the Reality Principle is nowadays undermined by the chaotic and dangerous forces of the Pleasure Principle (Bauman 2000). In ritual abuse discourse these chaotic forces are embodied within the mythic form of Satanic abusers.

Nonetheless it is necessary to note that post-modern anxieties are somehow masked in the claims of the proponents of ritual abuse conspiracy theory. This discursive strategy reduces the horrible numinous character of the Satanic Other, as the structure of the traditional fairy tale is covered by a semi-rational narrative. Since the Satanic plot becomes more predictable, ontological anxiety is diminished. The phantasmatic content of the anti-Satanic discourse, as exposed not only in rumours but also in TV shows, documentaries, films, trial transcripts and articles, is given a discursive reality. If horrifying tales are to act as an integrating factor within the anti-Satanist community and spread in society as a persuasive idiom,

they must be presented in a coherent way with the sensibility of contemporary society. That is why the ancient mythic tales about secret anti-human societies are modified by complicated discursive operations.

In summary, the Anti-Satanist campaigners created a modern demonology that mixed popular images of Devil worship, witchcraft, nineteenth century occult ideology, some contemporary New Age concepts, fundamentalist apocalyptic tales about a demonic threat and conspiracy theories popular in New Christian Rights circles. Experts on Satanism were using self-invented descriptions of alleged secret Satanic rituals, holidays, demonic calendars and Satanic symbols (Hicks 1989). They fabricated an alternative, underground world with an inverted, perverse logic. In addition, the campaigners were disseminating lists of ritual abuse symptoms, which could allegedly be found in the behaviour of so-called survivors who managed to escape from cults. Gothic assertions about cannibalism, blood drinking and infant sacrifices were supplemented by modern semi-scientific language. All these efforts were about obtaining scientific credibility for the Satanic conspiracy.

### **The Role of Fantasy in the Ritual Abuse Scare**

This peculiar specialist discourse could not be effectively introduced to the public without a professional group committed to the dissemination of the ritual abuse discourse. This notion is confirmed by Stanley Cohen's theory about the crucial role of interest groups in the diffusion of a moral panic (Cohen 1972), but there is another aspect in the role of self-appointed experts on the "Satanic" threat who emerges on the scene in post-modern times. According to Anthony Giddens the very essence of late modern ontological security is based on systems of expert knowledge (Giddens 1991). Apparently such a system is legitimate even if the expert's knowledge is a complex of phantasmatic discursive strategies. The ontological security of the anti-Satanist community is built upon a strong phantasmatic content disguised in expert trappings. Consequently ritual abuse narratives support Giddens insight that the late modern Self is an ongoing narrative rather than a stable Cartesian subject.

Fantasy acts as an important factor in the creation of the Self as an ongoing narrative, but it should also be considered in order to determine social dynamics, including witch-hunts. In Freudian tradition fantasy is not merely an escape from reality, but a constant accompaniment to real experiences, constantly interacting with them. Hanna Segal notes that:

Since fantasy aims at fulfilling instinctual drives, irrespective of external reality, gratification derived from fantasy can be regarded as a defence against the external reality of deprivation. It is however, more than that: it is also a defence against internal reality. The individual producing a fantasy of wish-fulfilment, is not only avoiding frustration and the recognition of an unpleasant external

reality, he is also, which is even more important, defending himself against reality of his own hunger and anger – his internal reality. Fantasies, more-over, may be used as defences against other fantasies. (Segal 1973: 16)

We could add that the internal anger and anxiety of late modern man produces repressive fantasies, which are based on deep-seated cultural patterns of struggle – the struggle of forces of good against forces of demonic evil – and thus they show continuity with symbolic content underlying the witch-hunts of early modern Europe.

The moral panic phenomenon shows us that in periods of stress and rapid social change structures of ancient fantasies tend to be embodied in quasi-expert tales which elevate belief over empiricism. The phantasmatic discourse attempts to adjust reality to its agenda in order to ease the pressure of ontological anxiety, which triggered its emergence. During the early modern witch-craze the processes of conforming reality to fantasies were realized through inquisitional tortures resulting in bizarre testimonies about wild orgies performed during Sabbaths; nowadays “ritually abused” children are talking about Devil worship because of the pressure of repeated interviewing, peer pressure and the coercion of social workers trying to make the children ready to disclose “the truth” (de Young 2004). As many studies have shown, ritual abuse panic was initially promoted and enhanced by the leading questions of anti-Satanist “experts” whose questioning of “survivors” (mostly children) was aimed at the confirmation of the interviewers’ belief (Ceci & Bruck 1995).

In conclusion, ontological uncertainty seeks a symbolic representation to reduce anxiety and thus creates ritual abuse narratives through its efforts to provide an explanation of the origin of evil in social life. As American or British cases have shown, these symbolic representations are sometimes transformed into means of repression. Imagined folk devils must be discovered in real social life to validate the content of phantasmatic claims.

### **Polish Cyber Satanism**

Let us now leave the mythical claims and search for real existing Satanic communities in contemporary Poland. Unfortunately we cannot stand on stable ground, as fantasy and reality overlaps again and again. In the late modern age it is pretty hard to find well-defined identities even when we examine self-identified Satanists. The only empirical signs of the existence of Polish Satanism can be traced to web sites – there is neither a registered native Polish Satanic Church, nor a Polish division of large Satanic organizations such as the Church of Satan or the Temple of Set. No material institutions, no physical members, no solid ideology, just inchoate forces exposed in Cyber-Satanism.

Since 1997, several dozen homepages related to broad Satanic beliefs have surfaced. They reflect the entire ideological diversity of modern Satanism

(Petersen 2005), as well as plenty of individual Satanic concepts fabricated to match personal visions. We encounter discursive approaches to Satanism focused on philosophical discussion (in most cases concentrated on Nietzsche's heritage), but on the same websites we can often find "wild manifestations" of Black Metal fans or bizarre mixtures of neo-Nazi and Satanic views (Tuchowski 2002). Usually these sites disappear as quickly as they manifest.

At present, we can point to at least six Satanic homepages that appear to be relatively long-lived and stable: [www.satan.pl](http://www.satan.pl), [www.homodeus.pl](http://www.homodeus.pl), [www.szemhazaj.republika.pl](http://www.szemhazaj.republika.pl), [www.ocult.prv.pl](http://www.ocult.prv.pl), [www.lectus.prv.pl](http://www.lectus.prv.pl) and [www.midgard.topnet.pl](http://www.midgard.topnet.pl). These sites consist of articles, essays, interviews, virtual art exhibitions, chat-rooms, forums dedicated to online debate, etc. Usually newcomers willing to take part in active conversation are asked to fill out a registration form. There has been no scientific research into the number of active Satanists in Poland, online or offline. The only data we have is the information about the frequency of people visiting homepages. The chief webmaster of the biggest Polish Satanic site, [www.satan.pl](http://www.satan.pl), claims to have from 600 to 700 visitors every day (500–600 visitors in 2003). They have more than 3000 registered members: half declare themselves to be Satanists; the rest use designations such as "still searching for religious identity". Since 2001, Lectus' site, [www.lectus.prv.pl](http://www.lectus.prv.pl), has been visited more than 10,000 times.

### **Mosaic Structure of Satanism**

The traditional sociology of religion – concerned as it is with church-oriented practices, sacerdotal hierarchy, rituals, sacred books and dogmatic formulas – doesn't apply very well to the study either of Polish or international Satanic circles. As Thomas Luckmann stated, scientific research, which identifies religiosity with formal church attendance, does not provide satisfactory results nowadays, and we cannot consider this traditional church-oriented sociology as a valid tool with which to examine the phenomenon of Satanism in the period of late modernity (Luckmann 1996: 51–61). At present, religiosity often defines itself in opposition to institutional churches and their interpretative schemes of the universe. Similarly, in most instances modern Satanists create their own frameworks of religious meaning, selectively drawing doctrinal content from institutionalized Satanic organizations (Acheront 2003). In this way Satanism reflects larger trends in secularization, specifically the decline in traditional patterns of belonging to formal institutions. One consequence of this trend is the rise of Satanic communities in a digital world.

Much more relevant than the sociology of churches for understanding contemporary digital communities – including Satanic groups – is Marshall McLuhan's concept that the medium is the message (McLuhan 1965: 7–22). The internet has generated an alternative sphere of expression and functioning of human communities (Dawson 2001). Scores of Satanists do not find it necessary to launch

new organizations offline or to participate in existing churches in real life because the social interactions they experience online address their needs. Cyberspace can also supply them with distinctive features such as anonymity or disembodiment, which encourages them to be committed to Satanism, which offline might cause problems (Witmer 1998). In contrast to logical linear constructions that represent the repressive Gutenberg Galaxy, the “World Wide Web Galaxy” embodies McLuhan’s mosaic structure, with its indulgence to dissimilarity, incoherencies, and heterodoxy (McLuhan 1975: 281–300). Evidently, all of this perfectly fits the unique form of contemporary Satanism, which is a decentralized movement (Petersen 2002).

For the many Polish Satanists I encountered, Cyberspace is a sphere where opinions are exchanged and discussions are held. Lectus, one of the most prominent Polish Satanists, claims: “I don’t need any religious association or rituals. The web site is perfectly okay with me”.<sup>2</sup> The acceptance of Cyberspace as the ultimate form of activity is likely the result of the specific atheistic and anti-metaphysical character of much Polish Satanism, which belittles the sense of religious bonds (Lectus 2003). However, we can find quite the opposite opinion on this matter among other Satanists, like Nadah’s statement from [www.homodeus.pl](http://www.homodeus.pl): “Satanism online is a misconception for me. The web is a wonderful tool but it is just a tool. It can serve as a great map, but even a great map cannot replace the soil”.<sup>3</sup> Nadah insists that Satanism requires rituals and a space where physical people are able to get together. He is a co-founder of the grotto *Ex Homini Lux*, a group that serves as a place where occult practices can take place and where colleagues support each other’s pursuit of the Left-Hand Path. *Ex Homini Lux* is not a strictly Satanic organization; its identity is built on elements of Aleister Crowley’s magic principles and selected fragments picked up from broader Satanic beliefs. Due to Nadah’s influence, there are scores of such informal, isolated grottoes in Poland.

This problem was to some extent highlighted by a survey conducted at [www.satan.pl](http://www.satan.pl) in 2002 (Kvik 2004). The web master asked visitors: “What kind of practicing Satanism would you be most happy with?” Three hundred and forty-nine individuals pursuing Satanism on their own responded as follows:

1. in favour of founding regular Satanic church – 103;
2. preferred occasionally getting together with friends to conduct rituals – 124;
3. would be happy with discussions on philosophical subjects – 77;
4. felt that the internet was adequate for expressing themselves as Satanists – 44.

Kvik, the webmaster of the site, concluded from this poll that Polish Satanists are individualistically oriented and the desire for a religious institution seems to be

---

<sup>2</sup> Smoczynski, R. with Lectus. E-mailed correspondence. February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Smoczynski, R. with Nadah. E-mailed correspondence. February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2003.



premature. To date nothing has changed in regard to this notion. Polish Satanism merely flourishes online.

### **Buddhist, Discordian, Ironic**

Some leading Satanists point out other reasons to abstain from establishing a Polish Church of Satan. First is the Catholic environment in Poland, which is partly responsible for the dominant stereotype of criminal Satanists. It is hard to imagine that this mythic picture would be overcome in the near future. An official visible Satanic church would be blamed for any crime committed by an adolescent Satanist. On the other hand, the majority of Polish Satanists are not willing to engage in any kind of martyrdom (Kvik 2003). It is thus no wonder that the internet is the only possible venue for expressing Satanic beliefs. We can also add one universal factor related to the peculiarity of late modernity, namely a profound cultural subjectivism which reacts against established organizations, defined doctrinal slogans and hierarchical orders.

There is no Black Pope or any other central institution which would enjoy universal respect among Polish Satanists. We cannot point to such an authority. Neither the Church of Satan nor the Temple of Set occupies this position. It would be accurate to say that Polish Satanism has a complex and even contradictory background drawn from various sources of inspiration. Despite the essential importance of books by Anton Szandor LaVey (not only for Polish Satanism but for all Satanists world-wide as James R. Lewis has clearly shown), Chaos magic and Discordian ideas are also important influences (Lewis 2001). Additionally, the ideological picture is blurred by the strong presence of Buddhist ideas often displayed on the [www.satan.pl](http://www.satan.pl) web site (Vincent 2003). Generally, Polish Satanists attach more importance to philosophical discussion than to religious commitment.

This mixture of different traditions composes a specific approach. We can characterize it by emphasizing three crucial terms: relativism, criticism and irony. Inspired by Chaos magic and *Principia Discordia*, Satanists view all ideological constructions with suspicion. Nothing is taken for granted, even the most revered rules of contemporary Satanism. They refuse to identify with any closed ideological project; they refuse to subscribe to any finality. Another aspect of this approach is the relativization of all sorts of institutional titles and social positions, and an ironic view regarding anything official. With such a distrust of strong ideological entities, it is almost impossible to form a solid organization with rituals and hierarchy. That is why Cyber-Satanism in Poland is characterized by fluidity, dispersion and incoherence. Satanists are free to move from one group to another, and they are simultaneously involved in many different organizations and web sites (Neo-Pagan, Occult, New Age, Buddhist). There seems to be no stability. The opinion of the founder of the first Polish Satanic web site seems to be

helpful to illuminate some aspects of contemporary Polish Satanism as displayed on the internet:

Satanism as it is depicted by the media provides glamour, explicit symbols, subcultur[al] community, and doesn't demand any sectarian practices, doesn't require the acceptance of any rules which wouldn't have been accepted before. Today almost everybody recognizes the right of the individual to follow one's desires or to deny the existence of absolute truth. Satanism in cyberspace is not a religion. You can't call it philosophy either. Rather, it is an offer of tribal affiliation for those who are not willing to belong to any organization, but at the same time they want to acquire a strong identity. They want to distinguish themselves from the masses. So Satanism is not about religion, belief or ideology, but about the quest for identity.<sup>4</sup>

### Satanic Neo-Tribes

What initially comes to mind when looking for a concept to describe this phenomenon is Max Weber's notion of an *emotional community*. Weber depicted such community as ephemeral, with an ill-defined nature and weak organization. What binds such a group together is collective sensibility, warmth, companionship and local flavour (Weber 1971: 475–478). But what is probably an even better fit for Polish Satanism is Michel Maffesoli's notion of *neotribalism*.

In *The Time of the Tribes*, the French sociologist asserts that while neo-tribal groups have weak powers of discipline, they have strong powers of inclusion and solidarity. In the foreword, Rob Shields summarizes: "These powers are displayed and actualized in initiatory rituals and stages of membership. As the highest social good, the members of [the tribe] are marked by it, wearing particular types of dress, exhibiting group-specific styles of adornment and espousing the shared values and ideals of the collectivity" (Maffesoli 1996: xi). This creates a unique aura that serves as glue within an urban or, even better, digital tribalism. Aesthetics is a way of feeling a common bond while a strong ideological position is not so important. In interviews with Polish Satanists, I have often heard that what really matters for them is a being together, the sense of companionship; everything else is a matter of secondary importance.<sup>5</sup> Michel Maffesoli spots another important feature of neo-tribal community: "The person ... plays *roles* ... within the various tribes in which the person participates. The costume changes, as the person, according to personal tastes (sexual, cultural, religious, friendship), takes his or her place each day in the various games of the *theatrum mundi*" (ibid.: 76).

This finally brings us to the question of the authenticity of internet Satanism in light of the complexities of authenticity of any community generated online.

<sup>4</sup> Smoczynski, R. with Bast. E-mailed correspondence. March 1<sup>st</sup> 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Conversation with Kvik, Haal, LeWhoo and Ruda. February–March 2003.

It is quite probable that it is a genuine experience for many Satanists and other religiously committed people who expose their interests on the net, although we cannot neglect the fact that there are plenty of internet users for whom Cyber-Satanism is a kind of show or psycho-drama, an opportunity to raise an additional identity displayed only in the virtual dimension. The adoption of an imaginative identity and playing with multiple identities takes place among some Polish Satanists for whom Satanic ideology serves a sort of shock performance<sup>6</sup>, while others are deeply committed to the expression of neo-tribalism in the digital or physical world.

## References

- Acheront 2003 [internet]. "Do antysekcjarzy". On-line document found at [www.satan.pl](http://www.satan.pl)
- Bauman, Z. 2000. *Ponowoczesność jako źródło cierpień*. Warszawa: Sic!
- Ceci S.J. & M. Bruck. 1995. *Jeopardy in the Courtroom: A Scientific Analysis of Children's Testimonies*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association Press.
- Cohen, S. 1972. *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. London: Macgibbon & Kee.
- Cohn, N. 1976. *Europe's Inner Demons*. St Albans: Paladin.
- Dawson, L. 2001. "Cyberspace and religious life: conceptualizing the concerns and consequences". Unpublished paper presented at the 2001 CESNUR Conference in London.
- Freud, S. 1961. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Giddens, A. 1991. *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hicks, R. 1989. *In Pursuit of Satan. The Police and the Occult*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.
- Kvik 2003 [internet]. "Polska Rzeczpospolita Lucyferianska". On-line document found at [www.satan.pl](http://www.satan.pl)
- Kvik 2004 [internet]. "Kosciol Szatana w Polsce". On-line document found at [www.satan.pl](http://www.satan.pl)
- La Fontaine, J. 1998. *Speak of the Devil*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lectus 2003 [internet]. "Satanistyczna дума". On-line document found at [www.lectus.prv.pl](http://www.lectus.prv.pl)
- Lewis, J. R. 2001 [internet]. "Who serves Satan? A demographic and ideological profile". *Marburg Journal of Religion*, Vol. 6/2 (2001).
- Luckmann, T. 1996 *Niewidzialna Religia. Problem religii we współczesnym społeczeństwie*. Kraków: Nomos.

---

<sup>6</sup> Smoczynski, R. with Bast. E-mailed correspondence. March 1, 2003.

- Maffesoli, M. 1996. *The Time of the Tribes. The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*. London: Sage.
- McLuhan, M. 1965. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- McLuhan, M. 1975. *Galaktyka Gutenberga*. In Toeplitz, K.T. (ed.): *Marshall McLuhan. Wybór Pism*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe.
- Otto, R. 1926. *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Petersen, J. Aa. 2002. "Binary Satanism: the construction of community in a digital world". *SYZYGY: Journal of Contemporary Religion and Culture*, Vol. 11 (2002), pp. 37–52.
- Petersen, J. Aa. 2005. "Modern Satanism: dark doctrines and black flames". In J. R. Lewis & J. Aa. Petersen (eds): *Controversial New Religions*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 423–457.
- Segal, H. 1973. *Introduction to the work of Melanie Klein*. London: The Hogarth Press.
- Smith, M. & Pazder, L. 1980. *Michelle Remembers*. New York, NY: Congdon & Lattes.
- Smoczynski, R. with Bast. E-mailed correspondence. March 1, 2003.
- Stratford, L. 1988. *Satan's underground*. Eugene, OR: Harvest House.
- Tuchowski, M. 2002. "Satanizm tradycyjny wobec nowych ruchów satanistycznych". Unpublished paper presented at the conference *Satanism, Esoteric and Occult* held at Jagiellonian University in Cracow, November 2002.
- Vincent 2003 [internet]. "Jestesmy inni". On-line document found at [www.satan.pl](http://www.satan.pl)
- Weber, M. 1971. *Économie et Société. Les Catégories de la Sociologie*. Trans. J. Freund. Paris: Plon.
- Witmer, D. 1998. "Practicing safe computing: why people engage in risky computer-mediated communication". In Sudweeks, F., M. McLaughlin & S. Rafaeli (eds): *Network and Netplay: Virtual Groups on the internet*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 127–146.
- de Young, M. 2004. *The Day Care Ritual Abuse Moral Panic*. Jefferson, NC and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers.



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# Chapter 11

## Social Democratic Satanism?

### Some Examples of Satanism in Scandinavia

Didrik Söderlind and Asbjørn Dyrendal

In Denmark and Norway, Satanism has become synonymous with Black Metal's inverse-Christian church arsons and murders. But now, a new generation of Satanists is trying to establish "rationalist" or LaVeyan Satanism (e.g. Petersen 2005) as a legitimate religious alternative. In this chapter we focus on how this involves local adaptations with regard to style and politics. The latter includes a surprising political stance, the former some rather surprising pants.

The term "rationalist" is used to distinguish the less from the more esoterically inclined Satanists, while the term "LaVeyan" derives from the strong tendency for "rationalist" Satanists to use Anton LaVey's *Satanic Bible* as a starting point for their philosophy, if not necessarily as gospel.<sup>1</sup> There are other satanically inspired groups and more or less organized scenes and networks present in Scandinavia, but they fall outside the scope of this chapter.

While using LaVey's books and belonging to a LaVeyan tradition, the Scandinavian Satanists we examine here disassociate themselves to various degrees from LaVey's American organization, the Church of Satan (CoS). One of the reasons given for this disassociation is the alleged Americanism of the CoS. This Americanism, they claim, makes the CoS and LaVeyan Satanism an American import which it is necessary to adapt to Scandinavian culture and political realities. As we shall also see towards the end, the CoS holds a different opinion.

The adaptation to local circumstances involves politics, but it is also relevant for issues such as subcultural style. These two elements, we shall argue, may involve different forms of local adaptation. One possible interpretation of the disassociation from avowed "Americanism" is to see it as a heterogenizing, adaptive response of globalized Satanism to local political culture. It involves translating or packaging the global product in terms suited to regional tastes, and thus more likely to appeal to a local following. We are, in other terms, speaking of a "glocalized" variety of Satanism, where the local is an aspect of the global (Robertson 2003[1994]: 35; 37ff.). It may also be in partial tension with a few, selective, and admittedly slight,

---

<sup>1</sup> One may, of course, argue that all forms of modern Satanism are "LaVeyan" with regard to genealogy.

homogenizing pressures from the ideological centre, here represented by the CoS' interpretations of LaVey's philosophy.

With regard to style, Finnish researcher Merja Hermonen argues that, although the community may be more imagined than real, Finnish rationalist Satanists may be construed as an elective tribe (Hermonen 2002: 94ff.) Such elective tribes, sociologist Kevin Hetherington argues, are related to "affective forms of sociation" and adopt distinctive styles (Hetherington 1998: 52, 54ff.). We address the topic of style regarding identity construction and identification, where we will show that issues of style may be seen as local adaptations arising more from "purely" local circumstances.

Our sources for this chapter are primarily interviews with leading figures of organizations and some of their published material. Thus, we mainly aim to say something about ideology and leadership. In order to relate our observation to a broader group of Scandinavian Satanists, we occasionally draw on observation of the online message boards belonging to the Danish group *Satanisk Forum* and the Norwegian *Det Norske Sataniske Samfunn* (DNSS).<sup>2</sup> The "Scandinavia" of our title is thus a fairly amputated Scandinavia, meaning only Norway and Denmark.

The chapter is organized in the following manner: First we sketch very briefly the background on the Scandinavian situation, focusing on Scandinavian religion and topics relevant for Satanism. We give a simplified sketch of some of the immediate historical background on Black Metal to explain issues of style and local adaptations. When we cover the reactions to the Black Metal arsons, we focus mainly on the leaders of Norwegian groups. Moving on to the criticism of CoS "Americanism", we focus mainly on Danish leadership, with comments from CoS leader, Peter Gilmore. We emphasize the Danish leadership because their group is oldest, they have done most work on this particular issue, and we see similar arguments from the Norwegians as being (at this point in time) largely derivative.

First, however, we need to give some background on how Satanism fits into the Scandinavian religious and political scene.

## Scandinavian Religion and Satanism

An important facet of religion in Scandinavia is that the religious economy is dominated by Lutheran state churches. However, Sweden recently changed the

---

<sup>2</sup> There are other boards and other groups in both countries, but these are the ones with which we have more than passing familiarity. We expect that there might be important differences between the two Danish groups and boards *Satanisk Forum* and *Satanisk Netværk* (now defunct), as there have been several personal and ideological (or ideologized) clashes between them (Petersen 2002: 45ff). No such conflicts are apparent for Norway, and since the known organizations cooperate, we would not expect similar differences at this point in time.

relation between church and state, so that its privileged position is no longer grounded in the constitution as it still is in Norway and Denmark. The state church dominates the ritual life of the citizens, but mainly with regard to rites of passage and calendrical rites. Regular attendance outside such occasions is low, and a minority of the population believes in central tenets of the Christian faith.

The relation between church and state favors elected political influence over the church. Partly as a result of this, the theological climate is moderate to liberal. An important emic division is made between those who are “personally Christian” (aka “religious”) and the rest. While many more may term themselves Christian under other criteria, this is often more of a cultural identity coupled with belief in something unspecified.

The history of the polities and churches means that serious experience with religious pluralism is a relatively recent phenomenon in Scandinavian countries. The Christian “monoculture” and the dominance of social democratic politics in the post-WWII era have secured a culture of consensus where common values and norms of behavior are taken for granted.<sup>3</sup> One may perhaps talk of this as a kind of Scandinavian “secular, social democratic Protestantism”, where liberal politics and liberal theology (often) go hand in hand. Conservative forms of Christianity, in being deemed illiberal, are frequently demonized. Similar demonization afflicts deviant religious groups that hold to strict norms of behavior and illiberal views. On the other hand, “alternative spiritualities” and liberal groups are mainly left alone.<sup>4</sup> With the onset of increased migration, globalization and medialization of the Scandinavian societies, much of this is changing. But that is another story, only parts of which are relevant to our topic.

The Scandinavian culture of consensus has been important with regard to local reception and uses of Satanism. From its chosen label and symbols to the political rhetoric of *Lex Talionis* (“The Law of the Claw”) and fierce competition, Satanism in the LaVeyan form has potential shock value. It collides with the consensus discourse on the good, a discourse where it is important to display what LaVey might term the “Goodguy Badge” (LaVey 1992: 20ff.). Satanic opposition to Christianity mainly provokes those who are devout Christians, but disrespect for the goodness discourse makes it easier for those who would classify Satanists in the category of evil Other, for instance as Nazi sympathizers (e.g. Kristiansen 2002). The borders of appropriate morals are, however, drawn differently in the Scandinavian countries than in the United States. This is important, as Satanism in the LaVeyan tradition follows LaVey’s principle of “nine parts respectability to one part outrageousness” (Alfred 1976: 187). Satanists seem mostly to adopt culturally

---

<sup>3</sup> All of this is of course extremely simplified. There are, for instance, obviously differences related to class, gender, and region of residence, but although significant in many areas, they seem fairly small with regard to our concerns here.

<sup>4</sup> Except, mainly, for charges of financial misconduct. The situation has changed somewhat from earlier periods, as shown by Danish historian of religions, Mikael Rothstein (2001: 50f.).



accepted opinions and practices, although the addition of the “outrageous”, aspects (often symbolic) showing estrangement from “the herd”, seems near obligatory in order to uphold some sort of creative tension with society.

Since, however, the nine parts of respectability weigh heaviest in the balance, it may be necessary for an acceptably “glocalized” version of Satanism to adapt politically, as even points of view commonly held among Americans may disqualify in a Scandinavian context.

The issue of the death penalty might be a useful example of this. Supported by a large percentage of the American population, the death penalty is seen by many Satanists as a perfect expression of *Lex Talionis*. In contrast, Norway has abolished the death penalty even during war time, and endorsing the death penalty would seem a good recipe for political suicide. One interesting consequence of this was that when a Norwegian women’s magazine<sup>5</sup> interviewed Church of Satan spokeswoman Peggy Nadramia for its series “Women in the service of evil”, an aspect of “evil” that was emphasized was Nadramia’s support for the death penalty.

Other, local matters relating to a more recent history also play an important role for Scandinavian Satanism. And, as we found, the importance of style does not only have to do with identification with a particular subculture.

### **A Matter of Style**

When Söderlind arranged to meet with the leader of Det Norske Sataniske Samfunn (The Norwegian Satanic Society), Paal Magne Aanestad, he was told that Aanestad could be recognized by his pants. Aanestad refused to elaborate on the theme, only asserting confidently that “you’ll notice them”.

A few hours later, Söderlind was waiting at the appointed place at the appointed time, next to a flowerbed at a subway station in central Oslo. And indeed he did notice a pair of pants that really stood out from the crowd, although in an unexpected way. When meeting a Satanist in Norway, the anticipation as to what the person is wearing is quite specific. The clothes are expected to be black and touch on the stylistic excesses of subcultures like Black Metal.

Aanestad’s pants turned out to be even more excessive than even the most theatrical Black Metal act: Light blue jeans totally covered in graffiti, including a peace symbol and the slogan “Kiss my Ass.” Truly a fashion statement from Hell.

LaVey stressed that style was important, both as a tool of lesser magic and otherwise, and he considered style to be a way of performing personal identity (LaVey 1989). Style plays a large part in how one is identified by “in-group” members, and in how one is identified by “outsiders.” In Scandinavia, clothes have become very important to any discussion of Satanism. For while Satanism lacks

---

<sup>5</sup> *Kvinner & klær*, no. 27, 1997.

strictly formalized rules for clothing on par with those found among many other new religious movements (e.g. Rothstein 1996), clothes are highly significant to this subculture. In Norway, and in a somewhat smaller scale in other Scandinavian countries, Satanism achieved its public presence through its association with Black Metal.

Black Metal is a subculture built around a form of heavy metal that makes metal godfathers Black Sabbath and Led Zeppelin sound like supermarket muzak. The genre was spawned by the very tongue-in-cheek British act Venom, but the lighter side of Black Metal was lost as the style was first copied and then developed by a small but seminal scene of Norwegian musicians. While Venom's vehement proclamations of allegiance to Satan probably had more to do with a long-established tradition of dark theatricality in heavy metal, some of Venom's Norwegian fans would take their cheesy shock tactics at face value.

The Norwegian scene's godfather, "Euronymous" (Øystein Aarseth) from the band Mayhem, demanded ideological purity from Black Metal bands. The result was that in Black Metal, for a time, Satan had a presence on par with that of Jesus in Gospel music. But how to properly worship the Dark Lord?

The Norwegian Black Metal scene concocted its own peculiar brand of Satanism, culled from Christian scare propaganda, horror comics and the shock lyrics of heavy metal. An analogy might be to try to create a version of Judaism based on a study of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. As a result, the "Satanism" was more of a strange inversion of fundamentalist Christianity than anything Anton LaVey would recognize. Interestingly, this discrepancy was also acknowledged by the Norwegian scene, who found LaVey's Satanism too positive. Indeed, the slogan "Anti-LaVey" appeared on several seminal Norwegian Black Metal releases. It got to the point where some black metallers would not say that food was "good", to avoid taking such a word in their mouth. Instead, a meal was to be described as "tasty". But where LaVeyan Satanists consider food a source of joy and indulgence (e.g. LaVey 1989: 103–115), Norwegian "Satanism" had an almost ascetic streak as "suffering" was a core value.

More weirdness would follow as this strange ideology was used as a catalyst for a state of all-out war against normal Christians that included a long series of arson attacks against churches by black metallers. Several murders, violent attacks, desecrations of corpses and graveyards have also been perpetrated by both important and minor players on the Black Metal scene (see Moynihan & Söderlind 1998).

In addition to the strange ideology and music, clothes were an important component of Black Metal. The look was severe: Black boots, black T-shirts with satanic symbols and/or band slogans, ditto leather jackets. Long hair was *de rigueur*, and often dyed to match the rest of the outfit. Pants were to be black as well, though the fabric and style was optional, and leather, denim or combat pants were equally acceptable. The "traditional" heavy metal studded belts and cuffs were not enough for some, who donned long and sharp metal spikes. Symbols like skulls, runes etc. completed a cocktail of aesthetics, politics and religion carefully

concocted to scare the pants off outsiders. While the look could often appear comical to streetwise outsiders, the wave of arsons and church burnings connected with the subculture soon gave the clothes sinister connotations as moral panic ensued (ibid.; Dyrendal & Lap 2002).

In Norway “Black Metal” and “Satanism” have become interchangeable to the point that newspapers often refer to the Black Metal scene as the “Satanist scene”, while subcultures that have very little to do with Satanism, like the Goths, are often seen as Satanists because some elements of the Goth look (black clothes, dyed hair) resembles Black Metal.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, the fact that the leader of The Norwegian Satanic Society only wears one piece of black clothing (a sheepskin jacket no diehard black metallers would be seen dead in) and tops his colorful, casual ensemble off with a T-shirt from a cult children’s TV show, carries a lot of cultural significance. Seen in context with his verbal statements, his clothes underscore that Aanestad’s Satanism is not a fashion statement, a youngster’s rebellion against parents or preachers, or part of a subcultural lifestyle package. Instead, Aanestad’s Satanism is an ideological stance. It is also a matter of identity, certainly, but his identification lies more with the philosophy of LaVey than with the black metallers most associated with Satanism. So instead of an easily recognizable “Satanic” character, Paal Magne Aanestad looks like the sociology student he turns out to be.

The head of Ordo Illuminatorum, another Norwegian satanic initiative, is also a student and goes by the *nom de plume* Atrius. Like Aanestad, Atrius abstained from wearing any expected uniform. On the day of the interview, he wears dressy grey wool pants. The rest of the outfit is completed by a duffle coat with a brown dress jacket. His black turtleneck might have passed as somehow related to youthful Satanism, if his very sensible shoes had not negated his chances of fitting into any style-conscious subculture.

Atrius seems, then, to be another man who does not use Satanism as a rebellion or lifestyle accessory. It would probably have been counterproductive. Atrius combines studies of psychology with a part-time job as a watchman, and aspires towards a position in the police. It does not take much imagination to understand the career-wrecking implications of being associated with a milieu infamous for crime and right-wing political extremism.<sup>7</sup>

One could suppose that the prehistory of arsons, murder, and vandalism have made Norwegian Satanists less interested in standing out from the crowd, if only as a tactical consideration to distance their LaVeyan Satanism with its emphasis on law and order from a milieu rife with criminal connotations. To a limited degree, this concern is visible throughout Scandinavia, most prominently among the leadership. Atrius is acutely aware of Satanism’s image problem:

---

<sup>6</sup> Goths are, of course, often thought of as Satanists in other countries as well, but in Norway it is linked specifically to the historical development above.

<sup>7</sup> As a result of the “1968”-generation gaining power, left-wing extremism is rarely a career problem in Norway.

I realize that we shoulder a few prejudices and generalizations from the media and other sources, church-burnings and so on. We publicly and actively distance ourselves from criminal acts and drug-taking, as criminality and drug-use certainly isn't supported by our philosophy. (Atrius, interview)

Aanestad concurs, and raises a criticism which has been commonplace among Satanists for the past fifteen years:

The Black Metal "Satanism" is just a perverted form of Christianity where everything is inverted. And while Christianity has a lot of stupid stuff in it, it has good points too, but these people invert those as well. And then there's *nothing* of value left. I have a far-fetched dream of being able to say, straight out, "I'm a Satanist", just as a Jew can say he's Jewish without getting any problems because of it. (Aanestad, interview)

However important it may be for some to distance themselves from the exaggerations of the Black Metal era, there are certainly also Satanists in the Black Metal subculture. Even in Norway, they may very well constitute the majority of self-identified Satanists. Some have a LaVeyan philosophy, as witnessed by the recent translation of *The Satanic Bible* into Norwegian. It was published by Wolff's Lair, a store in Oslo which specializes in Black Metal paraphernalia. A foreword was commissioned from Ingar Amlien of Black Metal *Crest of Darkness*, and the book was released at the *Inferno* festival, a Norwegian event specializing in extreme forms of metal music.

The impact of the Black Metal church arson period has been most telling in Norway, but this does not mean that it has left no traces among Satanists elsewhere, nor that they do not distance themselves from it.<sup>8</sup> Moving along to Denmark, the homepage of Satanisk Forum (Satanic Forum) features a satirical attack on Black Metal "Varg Wannabes", concluding that being obsessed with Christianity to such a degree probably means that rather than being a Satanist, one belongs in a Pentecostal congregation.<sup>9</sup> Ole Wolf and Amina Lap together constitutes one half of the leadership in the Danish organization,<sup>10</sup> which is trying – quite successfully, it would seem – to create an above-ground LaVeyan organization.<sup>11</sup> They keep a watchful eye on media coverage, but their concern about image seems less prominent today than a few years back, perhaps because they have managed to

---

<sup>8</sup> Of course, not everyone does so. It seems like at least a sizeable minority may identify with the emotions behind the arsons, although very few go so far as to actually support it.

<sup>9</sup> The article was written by Amina Lap in 2000 (Lap 200).

<sup>10</sup> It is led by a board consisting of, at the present, four members.

<sup>11</sup> The core of Satanisk Forum started out as CoS DK and was at one time a grotto of the Church of Satan, but through a sequence of local and international events, Satanisk Forum no longer has formal affiliation with the CoS.

influence media stories themselves for the past few years. Which, in a roundabout manner, returns us to the topic of style.

As he picks Söderlind up at the train station, it is easier to guess that Ole Wolf is a Satanist. For while his casual jacket has no connotations to any subcultural style, he wears black slacks and a black T-shirt with a computer programmer in-joke. It is a grown-up-Satanist style with a sense of humor. Amina Lap also balances on the edge of a subcultural style. She sports flowing locks and a long black overcoat, without tipping over into full-fledged Gothic clichés. While they are nowhere near the stereotypical look of the black metallor, they clearly fit closer with the expectations of a subcultural style than the Norwegian Satanic leaders.

In some ways, Wolf and Lap may be closer in stylistic and musical preferences to other Scandinavian Satanists than the two we met above. (Their household has a non-stop heavy metal soundtrack, even if the headbanging music is played at a more toe-tapping volume.) If we set the dislike of the extremes of Black Metal subculture aside, fondness for (some form of) metal seems to be common among Satanists. On Satanisk Forum's message board, metal concerts are among the more regular occasions for some members to want to meet. A discussion on the topic of heavy metal showed, unsurprisingly,<sup>12</sup> that many of the regular users are fans of (and sometimes musicians in) Heavy, Death, and Black Metal bands. The same holds true for participants on the board of DNSS, where the participants are even clearer in their preferences.<sup>13</sup> Although fairly few assume the "life-style package" of Black Metal, with the correct clothes etc., the consumption of specific forms of popular culture, especially music, seems to play an important role in identity construction.<sup>14</sup> Clearly, music is important to how identity is performed online. Members of both boards share their musical preferences with each other, without, however, the recriminations and debate on "sell-outs" common to fandom. Deviations in taste are shown freely, albeit rarely flaunted as examples

---

<sup>12</sup> Pictures from their summer parties show many of them, especially the men, in t-shirts with band names.

<sup>13</sup> Respectively located on <http://forum.sataniskforum.dk/sfboard/viewforum.php?f=17&sid=4b5982ac1aaf1cef0289876acf6dc366> and <http://www.satanisk.com/forum/index.html>

<sup>14</sup> Aanestad, now 20 years old, also gives an example of how consumption of music may play a role in identity formation:

When I was around 14 or 15, I was a big fan of Marilyn Manson. I read Marilyn Manson's biography, *Long Hard Road out of Hell*, where he mentions LaVey and talks a bit about Satanism. To me, it seemed absurd that someone acknowledged the existence of Heaven, the existence of Hell, the existence of God and Satan, and then chose Satan – I couldn't make sense of that. So I bought LaVey's *The Satanic Bible*. I found that there was nothing I disagreed with in the book, and nothing I would have to do, no change in my lifestyle if I wanted to declare myself a Satanist. (Aanestad, interview)

of individualism. An incongruent example was when Aanestad responded in a discussion thread dominated by hardcore metal fans, that at the moment, he was enjoying a Paul McCartney album. That may be seen as an example of the DNSS-leader presenting the Satanic value of individual identity over collective identification, or “emotive sociation”.<sup>15</sup>

The question, then, is whether matters of style and musical preferences have anything to do with local adaptations of Satanism. We believe that it does, but that it seems to be less about adapting a US-made Satanism to Scandinavia and more about local identity performance and relating this to local events and cultural climate. It also makes sense that the stylistic issues are more important for the Norwegian organizers of Satanism. They need more clearly than other Satanists to disassociate themselves from the stereotype of black-metallers, since they are closest to their activities. The leaders are entrepreneurs in the religious economy, and since they adopt an agenda of respectability, they need to present a respectable front. A response to local circumstances, it seems to be a far cry from reaction against an American ideological center.

When we turn towards the explicit disassociation from the CoS, the case is different. Turning to our second topic, politics and culture, we shall see that our informants feel the need to reinterpret, revalue or repackage a few elements of LaVeyan Satanism in order to make it fit a new location.

### **Culture Cult? A Satanism to Fit Scandinavia**

As we have seen, leading Scandinavian Satanists adapt their thinking to their immediate circumstances in some rather obvious ways. But some of them also argue that a few less obvious adaptations are necessary. There is a conscious decision towards constructing a different, *Scandinavian* Satanism. The decision involves both explicit rejection of ideas that are deemed to be American, and adopting ideas and practices deemed more in tune with Scandinavian culture and society. On the other side of the issue, we shall see that to the degree the CoS reacts, it rejects the need for any ideological revision in order to adapt. Satanism seen from that point of view is both flexible enough to be fitted into different cultural contexts and still universal.

The primary critics of CoS “Americanism” are found in the Danish leadership, where Ole Wolf has authored an essay called “The Culture Cult” (Wolf 2003).<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Similar points are made more regularly in international discussion fora. Fans of Marilyn Manson and Black Metal-bands are regularly ridiculed, and although the taste in music among more mature participants may include such musical genres, it is much more common to underline “Satanic” music more in the spirit (and to the taste) of Anton LaVey. To take the board of Satannet.com as an example, Sinatra’s “My Way” was recently (december 2005) touted as a good example of Satanic lyrics.

<sup>16</sup> See [Chapter 19](#) in the present volume.

In this essay he argues that the New York-based Church of Satan is a mix of what he sees as *real* Satanic principles and American culture. We asked him to expound briefly on this topic:

A large number of the ideas LaVey used as inspiration, and that are quoted by the Church of Satan, are decidedly “American dream” authors and thinkers. Good examples are Mark Twain, Jack London, and Ayn Rand, combined with liberal doses of LaVey’s beliefs about “good old *American* days” and southern-state romanticism. Equally, there is a lack of those European and Eastern thinkers that are less widespread in the US than in the rest of the world. There’s just so much American culture in his sources of inspiration that parts of his definition of Satanism is bound to be Americanism and little else. (Wolf, interview)

Similarly, Wolf argues that with the dissemination of Satanism from the US to countries with a different social order, Satanism must change to function in a new context. He points to Islam as an example of how a religion will change to suit the cultures it takes root in. He argues that Satanism has a few central goals, and that at least some of the *methods* for reaching these goals ought to be seen as contingent. Context matters, he argues, and we may see this in the way he frames Satanism:

Satanism is mostly about satisfying your own self-interest. Every variation of Satanism follows this premise. For example, if an individual wants success in the US, his best choice would probably be to compete for it. But in Denmark, the individual would gain more success cooperating with others.

Also, the United States is one of the most religious countries in the world, whereas Denmark is one of the most secular. This means that Satanism in the US is practiced in a more religious form than in Denmark. Rituals in the US will have clear religious overtones, but in Denmark a Satanist might not even realize he’s performing a ritual when, for example, he behaves ritualistically at, say, a Black Metal concert where he or she dresses up and shouts “Hail Satan!” (Wolf, interview)

Another local adaptation should be noted in passing here; Scandinavian Satanists tend to dislike having their identity termed “religious.” Both Danish and Norwegian Satanists prefer terms like “philosophy,” as they, like most Scandinavians, identify religion with an ontological supernaturalism few of them share.

This also goes for Amina Lap, but, being a religious studies student, she sees the possible analytical point in terming Satanism a religion (e.g. Lap 2002). Like her partner, she argues that there are important differences between American and Scandinavian values that make for different forms of Satanism:

There is also a connection between a group's philosophy and its organization. So you wouldn't be able to organize Satanism in Denmark like it is in the US. If someone claimed to be a High Priest or Warlock or something like that in Denmark, people would just laugh. Likewise, an organization that claimed to have a High Priest with some sort of authority – that also says something about the philosophy. In Denmark, authority is defined in other ways than in the US. (Lap, interview)

Instead of a formalized hierarchy, initiatory or not, Lap and Wolf argue that Danish Satanism must follow a Danish tradition of “flat” organizations, where leadership is more dynamic. “You lead what you're good at while you're good at it, not because you have a particular social position or are skilled in an unrelated field,” Wolf states. The anti-authoritarian tradition means viewing rules more like guidelines, and giving respect to people for what they are good at, not for their place in a hierarchy. Lap is of the opinion that members of Satanisk Forum are better at giving people respect for their dedication to what they like than the CoS. She opines that the CoS is more interested in what garners cultural prestige:

We Danes are anti-authoritarian. We don't view rules as final and focus more on teamwork. So in Satanisk Forum there is less focus on hierarchy and on placing oneself within that hierarchy. On the other hand, there's a lot of respect for people who go into depth with the things they are interested in. And the respect they get does not depend on a differentiation between having a Ph.D., or dedicating themselves to being at home raising their children, but on the dedication that they show to their desired activity. Whereas the Church of Satan tends to give status to people within certain fields, for example those that work with music. (Lap, interview)<sup>17</sup>

The Norwegian Satanists echo the need for cultural adaptations of Satanism to fit different circumstances. While Paal Magne Aanestad is not a member of the Church of Satan, he still bases his perception of Satanism on Anton LaVey's writings. Asked whether he has encountered any problems adapting a religion developed by an American to a Norwegian reality, he replies pragmatically:

There are cultural differences you need to take into account. If certain aspects of Satanism wouldn't work here, or are far in excess of what people would accept, I always try to avoid it. I try not to say or do things that will cause more harm than good here. (Aanestad, interview)

---

<sup>17</sup> It should perhaps be noted here that her appreciation for dedication and achievement outside prestigious arenas seems to be shared by participants on American boards organized by CoS members. We do not presume to judge whether or not she is right about the priorities of the CoS leadership, but there are certainly American CoS members who think similarly.



Atrius follows suit:

More European Satanists than Americans deviate from the principles in *The Satanic Bible*, as these principles – so-called LaVeyism – are very American. Instead, we are trying to create our own philosophy. But until something better comes along, we will have to use *The Satanic Bible* as a basis for our activities. For it is the best description of Satanism so far. (Atrius, interview)

*The Satanic Bible* is, then, seen as a good and useful starting point, as well as a good description of Satanism. Numerous participants on both groups' online discussions boards agree. Does this include the libertarian and/or the social Darwinist political implications that many, both enemies and sympathizers, have drawn from LaVey's text?

In our title, we pose the question whether Scandinavian Satanists are shaped, politically, by the predominance of social democracy. One would think that political positions would be among the central adaptations to local circumstances, as is partially attested by Graham Harvey's investigation of British Satanists (Harvey 1995). At first sight, however, one might be excused for thinking that this is not so. Discussions among Scandinavian Satanists reveal many of the same "iconoclastic" ideas opposed to a supposed climate of "political correctness" as one finds among American Satanists.

Giving the word once again to Paal Magne Aanestad, one quickly finds that he can hardly be defined as a leftist, as he is a member of Unge Høyre (Young Conservatives). Although the Norwegian Conservative party is to the left of mainstream American Democrats, and Aanestad stresses that he "will never use the religion as a basis for political viewpoints," he echoes the libertarian reading of *The Satanic Bible*. But while he proclaims an affinity for libertarianism, and at times voices social Darwinist ideas, his skepticism towards the privatization of formerly state-owned companies in Norway makes him possibly the most moderate libertarian in existence.

Participants on the web forum of DNSS diverge. A few proclaim, proudly, that they are members of Sosialistisk Ungdom (Socialist Youth), the younger and more radical arm of governing coalition party Socialist Left. Others place themselves across the political spectrum. One may observe the same for the Danish Satanisk Forum. While Ole Wolf and Amina Lap are more vocal and radical leftists, the board participants cover the "decent" political spectrum (participants voicing radical right-wing sympathies risk prompt exclusion from the forum). A (non-representative) poll after the latest election showed that a majority of those who answered had voted for parties of the left. The sympathies are dominated by both liberal (including libertarian) attitudes *and* left-leaning sympathies. Even some of the self-proclaimed liberals support the welfare system. The SF board members seem to generally be a few years older than the Norwegian DNSS members. More of them are students, parents, and wage earners with academic

training, and the discussions on politics often carry that experience and turn it into calm and nuanced reflections on the pros and cons of the existing system.

We found many of the same nuances in the interview with Aanestad, who, although it contrasted with his libertarian ideals, was quite able to live with and to find positive sides of both the social democrat arrangements, model of the state, and the then Christian Democrat Prime Minister. The principle of *Lex Talionis* finds as much<sup>18</sup> and as little support with Aanestad as it does with the Danish Satanists. He states that he would never support the death penalty. Atrius agrees: “I don’t support the death penalty. I prefer to keep some sort of faith in the small part of our brains that contains some good.”

This is not far from what we expected to find. Being brought up in a society dominated by consensus culture and social-democratic pragmatic thought and institutions would most likely leave some imprint on the distribution of political positions, even among Satanists. Adaptation to local circumstances and Scandinavian culture may be one of the reasons for the greater sympathy for left-leaning politics and collectivist solutions to social challenges, as well as a sometime pragmatic attitude of “well, it seems to work” among those who lean to the right. However, we have also, not infrequently, observed similar attitudes and arguments from American Satanists. So is it really a case of Scandinavian versus American? Might there not also be competing or complementary explanations?

High Priest of the Church of Satan, Peter Gilmore, thinks so, and after hearing how four Northern Europeans feel about the differences between their projects and the American CoS, it seems fair to give the word to the Church itself.

### **Peter Gilmore**

After the death of its founder, Anton LaVey, the position of High Priest of the Church of Satan has been assumed by Peter Gilmore. With black shirt, black tie, black pants and black shoes, and a dark grey jacket that makes the black items of clothing look even blacker, Peter Gilmore embodies a different Satanic style archetype, right down to his slightly demonic beard and discreet pentagram on his lapel.

We raised the question with him whether LaVeyan ideology, based on principles like “might is right” and its emphasis on individuals competing for personal success, ought to be seen as a product of capitalistic and individualistic American culture, like their critics claim.

It’s certainly a correct observation, but I wouldn’t necessarily say that the competing individual, even in a popular sense, is necessarily an American concept. Even though it was popularized by the American mythology, you can still trace it back to Friedrich Nietzsche and other folks. So it has a European

---

<sup>18</sup> Few seem to disagree with the view that revenge sometimes can be a valid response, however, surprisingly many argue that response to crime should be an issue for the police.

basis as well, but not one that's particularly in sync with a more social democratic approach where the emphasis on the group is dominant. So I would say Satanism is tied to wherever there is a sense of the individual, by himself, as opposed to being subsumed to a group consciousness. And that wherever people come from, if they have that sensibility, they can embrace it. The popular culture would definitely see this as an American aesthetic. (Gilmore, interview)

Gilmore thinks, however, that the issue is not about culture, but about organizational rivalry. The Church of Satan, he states, has always promoted socio-political pragmatism. The "Satanism of LaVey and the current Church of Satan encourages its adherents to do what works best locally to make their existence as rich and fulfilling as possible," he states (Gilmore, personal correspondence).<sup>19</sup> He finds claims that Satanism needs to be adapted further "in order for members to accommodate a more cooperative mode of societal existence" to be nonsensical (*ibid.*). The actual basis for this situation, he states, is the "personal reasons of an expelled member", who is rationalizing his current position and promoting a competing group:

I think some of the folks that say they want to take Satanism away from the American cultural influence are doing it because they don't want Satanism to be attached to the Church of Satan. So it is easy for them to say that the CoS is American, and that they are going to take Satanism away from being American and therefore take it away from the CoS. It's absolutely an organizational issue, and not a cultural one. Our members throughout Europe, Asia, Australia, everywhere, don't seem to have a problem with the American influence on LaVey's writings. They don't complain that there isn't enough European or Asian or Australian things happening in Satanism. To them, Satanism is just a philosophy that reflects their nature. It's not cultural, it is trans-cultural. Whatever culture and mythologies you grew up with, you look into that and see what elements resonate with your Satanic perspective.

This, he argues, one may see clearly with regard to reactions from members outside of the Western cultural hemisphere:

Our members in Japan and China *do* have a real interest in American culture. And they think that their individualism bucks the trend of the cultures that they are part of. But again, that energizes them. This is the "creative alienation" that we say is part of Satanism. The idea is that you, as an alien, are energized by not being a part of the cultural fabric that exists around you. To Japanese and Chinese Satanists it is highly stimulating to buck the centuries and millennia of inertia that has happened as a result of subsuming the individual. (Gilmore, interview)

---

<sup>19</sup> Email correspondence, Jan. 10–12, 2006.

“Creative alienation” and “creative iconoclasm” are important aspects of the Satanic philosophy of the individual. One form of adaptation to local culture, Gilmore explains, may lie with how people seek out the “dark aspects” of their cultural heritage, e.g. pre-Christian mythology, and find ways of using and celebrating this.

An obvious example is my own “Rite of Ragnarok”,<sup>20</sup> where I seek out the dark aspects of my own Northern European cultural heritage. My use of these dark aspects does not mean that I accept Norse religion as a whole. Rather, it is a form of exoticism, like when Beethoven integrated Turkish janissary music in one of his compositions, or when Americans flocked to Polynesian restaurants in the 1950s and '60s. The Japanese do the same thing where they look at American culture and extract things from it and then put it in a context where it works for them, but seems very odd to us Americans. I think it would be a mistake to see that as having a lot of American cultural baggage. (Gilmore, interview)

If we read Gilmore’s comments as a critique of the criticism from Ole Wolf, we find several interesting points. Satanist groups independent of the CoS, and especially the entrepreneurs behind them, obviously have something to gain from ideologizing their differences and/or conflicts with the CoS. Ideologizing conflicts may be efficient strategies for legitimation. However, this does not invalidate the idea that there may be differences based on cultural adaptation. To the degree that such ideologizing is *effective*, claims of culturally based ideological gaps seem more plausible.

Gilmore’s interpretation of examples from adaptation by Chinese and Japanese Satanists is another matter. Studies of such adaptations would be highly interesting. However, he also elegantly places an implicit criticism of the Scandinavians by referring to the creative alienation of “not being part of the cultural fabric that exists around you.” The “alien” identity of the born Satanist is an important aspect of Satanist ideology, whereas unthinking “herd conformity” is one its central sins. Read this way, adapting Satanism too much to a dominant social democratic society and ideology may be seen as positively un-Satanic.

Like all ideologies, however, Satanism has points of dispute and values that may conflict. Ole Wolf points to another central value of Satanism when he interprets it in opposition to “Americanism”. We repeat a quote from above:

Satanism is mostly about satisfying your own self-interest. Every variation of Satanism follows this premise. For example, if an individual wants success in the US, his best choice would probably be to compete for it. But in Denmark, the individual would gain more success cooperating with others. (Wolf, interview)

---

<sup>20</sup> See Gilmore 1993.

Success, operationalized as satisfying one's self-interest, may usefully be set up against "alienation" in certain cases. However, Wolf is in other circumstances equally occupied with concepts of standing out and up against "the crowd", so it would be wrong to conclude that he would emphasize "indulgence" at all cost. It all depends on circumstances, and the choice of politics and communal action as a place for deviating from CoS-Satanism, could be a sign that this is more relevant in Scandinavia. However, without more reliable knowledge of the distribution of such points of view and real life action based on them, it is difficult to draw any conclusion about real differences between Scandinavian and American Satanists.

Obviously, our material is not of a kind that makes it possible to draw general conclusions. Gilmore seems to have no trouble fitting such political "deviation" into his concept of Satanism, and Wolf himself notes that one should not overdo such an angle. Satanists are so few that any attempt of streamlining, political or otherwise, in one direction or another, would only decrease the chances of the organization's having any lifespan to speak of.<sup>21</sup> We can only note that the relatively successful ventures into above-ground LaVeyan Satanism in Scandinavia have thrived on opening up to what is plausibly presented as cultural adaptations to the local situation, and that the distribution of ideals seems different in the US.

In that regard, it may also be interesting to note the relative lack of interest in "religious" issues among Scandinavian Satanists. Gilmore's focus on using the dark side of local culture relates nicely to Lap and Wolf's comments. Specifying ritual and mythology, he may be read as showing the importance of religion in the American context. However, Scandinavian Satanists are often fond of Norse religion and its symbolism as well. Nor are they strangers to ritual, even though, like their American counterparts, ritualizing seems to play a very minor role. Although the differences may be minor, even fewer Scandinavian than American Satanists seem to have been "seekers" (see Lewis 2001: 328f.) They seem to present themselves as having little existential interest in religion before they adopted a Satanist identity, and few see their Satanism as a religion. This, perhaps, makes the use of (the dark side of) pagan mythologies less relevant for many as an area for creating their Satanist identity.<sup>22</sup> But again, this seems true for American Satanists as well.<sup>23</sup>

## **Final remarks**

The differences between Scandinavians and Americans should not be exaggerated. LaVeyan Satanism looks fairly similar between the two continents. We have

---

<sup>21</sup> Wolf, personal correspondence, Feb. 10, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> It does seem to play a role in identity performance, but, as far as we can tell, rarely as a religious expression.

<sup>23</sup> Gilmore (personal correspondence, Jan. 16, 2006) is quite clear on this with regard to members of the CoS.

observed the same continuum of positions, arguments, attitudes and values among American Satanists as we have among Scandinavians. The differences we believe we have observed, are differences in emphasis and distribution. Religion and myth may be important as examples of “heritage” for more Americans than Scandinavians. Fewer American Satanists may be opponents of the death penalty, and more Scandinavian Satanists may be social democrats.

This would not be surprising. All it would do, is to show that Satanists, whether “creatively alienated” or not, are also part of their own, local cultural matrix. By changing emphasis, and making a few adjustments, Satanists are making LaVeyan Satanism a global phenomenon, exemplifying the point that globalization and localization are two sides of the same coin. The globalization of Satanism entails not homogenization in an American image, but differentiation and a broader spectrum of “soft” adaptation to local circumstances.

These soft adaptations may involve reactions against the ideological centre, but they may also involve “simple” yet meaningful statements of style – such as wearing an unexpected pair of pants.

## References

- Alfred, Randall H. 1976. “The Church of Satan”. In Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah (ed.): *The New Religious Consciousness*. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 180–202.
- Dyrendal, Asbjørn & Amina Lap. 2002. “Satanism as news item in Norway and Denmark. A brief history”. *Syzygy. Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11, pp. 197–232.
- Gilmore, Peter. 1993. “The Rite of Ragnarok”. *The Fenris Wolf*, vol. 3, p. 39.
- Harvey, Graham. 1995. “Satanism in Britain today”. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 283–296.
- Hermønen, Merja. 2002. “Rationalistic Satanism”. *SYZYGY: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11, pp. 69–104.
- Hetherington, Kevin. 1998. *Expressions of Identity*. London: Routledge.
- Kristiansen, Roald. 2002. “Satan in cyberspace”. *Syzygy. Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11, pp. 11–36.
- Lap, Amina Olander. 2000 [internet]. “Varg-Wannabe nedtrappingsguiden”. Online document found at <http://www.sataniskforum.dk/smwane/Dansk/blacker.html>
- Lap, Amina Olander. 2002. “Religion eller filosofi?” *Satanisk Bulletin*, no. 2 (2002), pp. 40–43.
- LaVey, Anton S. 1989 [1971]. *The Satanic Witch*. Portland, Or.: Feral House.
- LaVey, Anton S. 1992. *The Devil's Notebook*. Los Angeles, Ca: Feral House.
- Lewis, James R. 2001. “Appendix III: Satanist survey”. In Lewis, James R.: *Satanism Today*. Oxford: ABC-Clio.
- Lewis, James R. 2002. “Diabolical authority: Anton LaVey, The Satanic Bible and the Satanist ‘tradition’”. *Marburg Journal of Religion*, vol. 7, no. 1.

- Moynihan, Michael & Didrik Søderlind. 1998. *Lords of Chaos*. Venice, Ca: Feral House.
- Petersen, Jesper Aa. 2002. "Binary Satanism: the construction of community in a digital world". *SYZYGY: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11, pp. 37–53.
- Petersen, Jesper Aa. 2005. "Modern Satanism". In Lewis, James R. & Jesper Petersen (eds): *Controversial New Religions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 423–457.
- Robertson, Roland. 2003 [1994]. "Globalisation or glocalisation?" In Robertson, Roland & Kathleen E. White (eds): *Globalization. Critical Concepts in Sociology*. Volume III. London: Routledge, pp. 31–51.
- Rothstein, Mikael. 1996. "Patterns of diffusion and religious globalization. An Empirical Survey of New Religious Movements". *Temenos* 32, pp. 195–220.
- Rothstein, Mikael. 2001. *Gud er (stadig) blå*. København: Gyldendal Dansk forlag.
- Wolf, Ole. 2003 [internet]. "Kulturkulten". Online essay found at [http://www.sataniskforum.dk/sforg/info/artikel.php?dk\\_satan/dkvsus](http://www.sataniskforum.dk/sforg/info/artikel.php?dk_satan/dkvsus) (accessed 11.9.2005).

## Chapter 12

# “With my Art I am the Fist in the Face of god”: On Old-School Black Metal<sup>1</sup>

Gry Mørk

For many people in different parts of the world the concept of Black Metal evokes images of long-haired, corpse-painted young males dressed in spikes and black clothing, churches on fire and vandalized graveyards, disharmonious and noisy music and Satanic symbols like inverted crosses and pentagrams – at least if we look back to the time when the Black Metal movement figured most strongly in the mass media, i.e. from 1993 and a few years onwards. Now it has obtained a reputation as quite acceptable quality music made by serious and hard-working musicians that most of all – or solely – are into this for the sake of the music, and where the aggression, the dark image and the sinister symbols mainly are part of a larger artistic totality. Nonetheless, there are still some musicians and bands that in part pass on old-school Black Metal, whose development and peak can be put approximately to the period 1990–1994 and is connected with Norway in particular.<sup>2</sup> It is the indistinct “Satanism” of this kind of Black Metal that I propose to analyze in the following.

### “Kampen Mot Gud og Kvitekrist er i Gang”<sup>3</sup>

Black Metal was a music culture that originated and got known as a Satanic movement. The word *Black* was meant to point out as Satanic the self-image of a fairly select circle of like-minded male individuals. But what does this mean? After having pored over empirical material related to old-school Black Metal,

---

<sup>1</sup> Quote taken from Darkthrone’s “To Walk the Infernal Fields” on *Under a Funeral Moon* (1992).

<sup>2</sup> The Black Metal that arose in Norway around 1990 are often categorized as the second phase or wave of Black Metal, because it in different ways continues the legacy of certain metal bands from the eighties, e.g. Bathory, Celtic Frost, Venom, Sodom, Hellhammer, Kreator. I nevertheless speak of it as “old-school” because it was not until 1990 that Black Metal as a term denominating a relatively well-defined musical, lyrical and visual style came into being.

<sup>3</sup> “The Fight against God and Christ has begun.” From the album *The Shadowthrone* (1994) by Satyricon.



such as CDs and fanzines, it has become clear to me that not only are the concepts of Satan, Satanism and the Satanic of great importance within the scene; they also come across as ambiguous, flexible and vague.

The abundant and partly explicit references to the domain of Satanism neither point to any cultic, sacrificial form of theistic Satanism, to a limitation of one's area of interest to Satanism in a narrow sense (although such a cult or cultivation of interest cannot be ruled out completely on the individual level), nor to any coherent ideology, faith or philosophy of life with a concept of, or symbol of, Satan at its core. Both visually and lyrically Satanic imagery and concepts invariably coexist with elements from other contexts, such as Scandinavian folklore and ancient, heathen history, the medieval era, witch lore, forms of art such as fantasy literature and gothic fiction, horror, splatter and snuff movies, occultism, role-playing games, and of course, metal music. The so-called "Satanism" of Black Metal rather points to a general attraction towards occultism, dark and evil urges, forces and powers within the universe, as well as other hidden and repressed parts of man, culture and history. In 1993, Varg Vikernes, also known as "Grevn" ("the Count") or "Count Grishnackh", stated that Black Metal's (as well as his own) "Satanic ideology" was about creating a dark and gloomy atmosphere both within and around oneself through the music (Grude 2007). The ideology furthermore aimed at the destruction of kindness and light. Vikernes, one of the most prominent contributors to the founding of the Norwegian Black Metal scene, was sentenced to 21 years in prison for willful murder, church arsons, having illegal weapons in his possession and desecration of graves.

How are we to understand this apparent worship of "darkness" for the sake of "darkness"? Is it really nothing but a sign of (result of and/or source to) nihilism, confusion, destruction and illness? Is it possible to discern any deeper concerns behind this black, severe and uncompromising façade of contempt and hatred? The Norwegian philosopher Knut Kolnar's understanding of violence is very useful when approaching these questions. In his doctoral dissertation *Det ambisiøse selv* (*The Ambitious Self*, 2003), Kolnar introduces the concept of *creative violence* which, especially in relation to his analysis of the violence in the movie *Fight Club*, enables new and enlightening perspectives on Black Metal's worship of darkness. If we assume the point of view of the aggressor every act of violence is said to hold some kind of meaning. Its meaning resides in its "intentional" character (Kolnar 2003: 18). The formative, healing, structuring, centripetal and/or balancing functions that violence has for the individual, especially the male subject, who is situated in an alienating contemporary Western world, are revealed by the concept of *creative violence*. The aggressive attitude of the Black Metal scene is tightly interwoven with a range of existential issues, such as alienation, pain, thirst for vigor, force and self-fulfillment, while simultaneously launching critical perspectives on Western civilization. The construction and shaping of masculine identity is also one of the most distinctive features of this particular subculture and its worship of darkness. The creative violence that we are being

confronted with in Black Metal is the subgroup labeled *progressive violence*. This kind of violence is

... knit to the masculine self, as part of a project of authenticity. It points forward. It has a constructive purpose beyond the immediate rooting of the self. (...) It ... aims at stopping the manner in which consumer culture waters down and undermines the male. It seeks a platform, and displays a will to establish routes towards a more worthy and authentic sense of reality.<sup>4</sup> (Ibid.: 20)

In other words, through the overturning potential and goal of progressive violence, it carries a “dimension of revolution and hope” (ibid.: 231).

A complete list of empirical material that my analysis rests upon is provided at the end of this chapter. It comprises CDs, fanzines and other interview-related material. Due to practical reasons, as well as the fact that these two were among the first within the scene, I have focused on the Norwegian Black Metal bands Darkthrone and Burzum. They also proved to be two of the most influential bands regarding Black Metal’s stylistic as well as philosophical or ideological dimension.

### **Black Metal Satanism as Worship of “Darkness”**

When the Sun has Died / When the Angels are Blind / When the Fog Lies Thick / Over the Palace of god // When the Fullmoon Lights the Earth / When the Wolves Gather in the Open / When Blood rains from Heaven High / and from the pearly Gates // When Jehovas Hordes are slaughtered / When Disciples Twelve are Dead / When Beliefs of Easter lands / are Raped and Raped again // When the Whore of Babylon Rides / When Pity turns to Hate / When All Sons of Satan / Sodomise the Lambs of christ // When the Gates have all been opened / When the Funerals Never End / When Satans Power Paint our Hearts / and Satisfies our Souls // When Witches Burn the Priests / When the Ancient Ones Return / When the Demons Ride the Nuns / with their Horns of Dark Desire (“Unholy Black Metal” (lyrics: 1992), *Under a Funeral Moon*)

The brutal and ruthless attack on all things precious and revered within the Jewish-Christian tradition that is conveyed by these lyrics of Darkthrone, is supported by the Black Metal scene in general. The hatred towards Christianity is fiercely stated through an abundance of anti-Christian symbols and metaphors, anti-Christian slogans and values, visions of violent effacement of Christians, Christianity and everything related to or reminiscent of this tradition, such as the above-mentioned “Beliefs of Easter lands”. The well-known “Drep de kristne” (“Kill the Christians”) t-shirt that was being sold by the historic shop *Helvete*

---

<sup>4</sup> My translation.

(Hell), exemplifies this.<sup>5</sup> So do the church arsons, vandalization of graveyards and use of inverted crosses in logos and sleeves as do records carrying titles with explicit Satanic references, such as Mayhem's, *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas*, Immortal's, *Diabolical Fullmoon Mysticism* and Gorgoroth's, *Under the Sign of Hell* and *Antichrist*, along with countless anti-Christian song titles and lyrics.

### *De(con)struction and (Re)creation*

On a basic level, Black Metal's criticism of Christianity deals with the conflict between the individual and the system. Christianity is in different ways and for different reasons regarded as blocking a progressive process of individuation and creation of meaning. Its substantial, regulating and juridical hold in a number of (originally Heathen/Pagan) Western countries is seen as highly unnatural and illegitimate. The multifaceted and uncompromising aggression leveled at Christianity from within the Black Metal scene can be seen as creative in the sense that it is a response to what is being conceived as this tradition's oppressive, hypocritical and alienating character. "Daimonion" from Enslaved describes society as Christian and hypocritical and the governmental socialization of the Norwegian population as force-feeding (Mørk 2002: 61).

That Christianity for some is experienced as a strait jacket, is scathingly depicted in the title track *Hvis lyset tar oss* (*If the light catches us*, 1992) by Burzum, where "the light" and "the Sun" symbolically refers to "god's goodness" or to the Christian dualistic view of life in general:

A clearing in the forest / where the sun is shining / Obstructed by the trees we are caught / in this clearing of god // It burns it scorches / when the light is licking our flesh / up towards the clouds a smoke / a cloud of our shape // Trapped by the funeral / we are being tormented by the goodness of god / no flames no hatred / they were right came to hell.

The lyrical subjects are caught in a sunny glade in the wood. The surrounding trees shut the way out, and they are being scorched, tortured, to death. The Sun is thus put before us as a destructive force. As I see it, this song depicts how Christianity's cultural dominion may affect the lives of marginalized people. Just like "the Sun" is all-encompassing and merciless in this glade, Christianity by dint of its intolerance and greed for power oppresses and obliterates those who refuse to adjust or submit to it. In this clearing there is no room for diversity, for people of a different and unfamiliar "shape". The experience of painful, even extinguishing entrapment is dramatically underlined by the desperate, the claustrophobic,

---

<sup>5</sup> *Helvete* was a shop established and run by the underground Metal guru "Euronymous" (Øystein Aarseth), specializing in Black and Death Metal music and artifacts.

disharmonious and monotonous, character of the song. As the torment gets worse and death draws near, there is an increase in the songs musical vehemence.<sup>6</sup>

The privileged position of the Christian religion is strongly criticized by Black Metal. Specifically Christian norms and values are continually being dispersed outside the strictly religious domain through the state church system in Norway. This formative, Christianizing process already starts from the cradle, through nursery and the official school system which are placed under a Christian objects clause. For most people it even symbolically begins by the baptismal font. In the sleeves of the albums *Under the Sign of Hell* and *Destroyer*, Gorgoroth calls on people to resign their membership in the State church. The latter album moreover characterizes Christianity as a “sexist, racist ... monster” that suppresses the individual, as “misanthropic and ugly”, “disgustingly welcoming the tall poppy syndrome” and “mad men’s ideas of monopoly regarding the salvation of the human soul”.<sup>7</sup> “C”, who has served a sentence for church arson, spoke of his motives for doing this as follows:

Norway has to be moral all the time. The Christian moral has always to be followed in Norway, rules, laws, everything has to be religious, and the more you think about Norway being Christian, the more you hate it. The more you realize that Norway never should have been Christian. It should have been dechristianized a long time ago.<sup>8</sup> (Grude 2007)

“C” added that the main point was to make a symbolic statement against the institutionalization of religion and a consequent religious concentration of power. “A” similarly claimed that his motive for church arson partly was “to get rid of that kind of institution [the State church]“, but also that it reflected an attempt to make Norway a Heathen country again (ibid.).<sup>9</sup>

That the church arsons has to do with revenge is quite obvious. Many of the members of the Black Metal scene are provoked by the unscrupulous manner in which the Christians obliterated the Heathen way of life and thinking and forced their own unnatural and alien religion on the indigenous, Heathen population of Norway, who to a certain degree are conceived of as ancestors. Or as Vikernes puts it: “Norway was Christianized by the sword, so we shall make it Heathen again by means of flames and machine guns” (Vikernes 1995).<sup>10</sup> The dismay and critique

---

<sup>6</sup> At the time of the writing of these lyrics, Burzum had quit using Satanic concepts and symbols in any positive manner, which may be viewed as a total rejection of Christian interpretations of life. However, the discarding of the concept of Hell did not really signal any significant change as regards the content of Burzum’s experience of living in a modern Christian society.

<sup>7</sup> My translation.

<sup>8</sup> My translation.

<sup>9</sup> My translation.

<sup>10</sup> My translation.

that the church arsons provoked is bluntly rejected as just another expression of Christian manipulation, their double set of morals and lust for power:

And their saying that it was a thousand years ago, and that times are changed now – that is just another way of stating that ‘It is allowed to kill, as long as we are the ones who does the killing, but as soon as we have killed the ones we want to kill, it is not allowed to kill anymore’. (Vikernes, *ibid.*)

The violent attitude towards Christianity, here exemplified through church arson, is a creative and revengeful violence, in the sense that it at least partly can be seen as a reaction towards the Christians’ illegitimate, violent display of power throughout history in order to seize control of people of other beliefs and practices. As Gorgoroth states in the cover of *Destroyer*: “The sight of burning churches, it fills our heart with joy / The fanfares are resounding – the earth is booming of sound / We are marching through the streets in step / The Plague is cast back by force ...”.<sup>11</sup> In other words, for some people, the churches, chapels and cathedrals stand as provocative, manifest and constant reminders of the Christian tradition’s illegitimate fortification, centuries long presence and deep cultural and societal influence in Norway and other countries around the world. Kolnar refers to the philosopher Frantz Fanon’s reflections on violence as a primary strategy for people who seeks liberation from oppressive forces. The cleansing and resetting potential of violence gives it a crucial function in the eradication of the marks that the oppressors have impressed in people’s body and mind, so that the rebuilding of the pride, dignity and independence of the self can take place (Kolnar 2003: 80). Church arson is probably connected with extraordinary states of mind and sensational experiences before, during and/or after the act. Experiential descriptions of this type of act reveal a need to express and bale out anger and hatred. Fire has throughout history also worked as a symbol of purification and pain. A church being devoured by flames might on many levels serve as a powerful symbol of destruction and regeneration:

The first church burned on the 6th of June [1992], with the intention probably to light a flame, to put dried grass and branches on that, to light it up on the coal and the fire to make it big. It’s a psychological picture – an almost dead fire, a symbol of our heathen consciousness. The point was to throw dry wood and branches on that, to light it up and reach toward the sky again, as a growing force. That was the point, and it worked. (Varg Vikernes in Moynihan and Söderlind 1998: 89)

Fire in other words does not only imply sheer destruction, but is also a source of regeneration, growth, as in the case of forest fires, where the forest floor some time after the desolating fire starts to sprout again. The very dark, aggressive and deconstructive art of Burzum similarly aims at “reconstruction”:

---

<sup>11</sup> My translation.

In the beginning I made music, I think, because I did not want to do anything at all. I had resigned and wished to pull as far away from the modern world as I possibly could. One could say that I did not want to participate. The music was a sort of escape and an attempt to create something new; to recreate the past, a past that may not at all have existed and that I did not know that much about. All I knew was that I preferred this past to the modern world.<sup>12</sup> (Vikernes, letter dated 29.02.2002)

Darkthrone is another band which in a very succinct manner exemplifies the connection between violence, emancipation of the individual, courage, lust and sense of power, often in combination with traditionally Satanic elements. According to the last half of the song, “To Walk the Infernal Fields” (lyrics: 1992) on *Under a Funeral Moon*:

I am Your Disciple / and therefore my own. / Your Weapon I Will Be / with the Demons that Possess me. / We'll Ride the seven Sins of Death / that takes me to Katharsis. // The sign of Your Horns / is My Dearest Vision. / They Impale all holy and Weak // You watch me face the Mirror / and see Desecration. / With my Art I am the Fist / in the face of god.

Satan is portrayed as source as well as symbol of the enlightened, self-willed, masterful individual who goes his own way, indomitable in his self-assertion and the making of his own life-world.<sup>13</sup> This crucial theme is also illustrated by the following extract from Darkthrone's “Paragon Belial” (1991) on *A Blaze in the Northern Sky*:

The Ancient White light writings / were just lying men and their Pens / You are the same, only in Black. / Return with the knowledge / of making your own god // Dreamking of the Tombworld: / I Enter Into an Eternal Oath / Creating my Paragon Belial.

Belial seems to endow the lyrical subject with the following insight and commission: That there is no absolute truth, no interpretation of life that might apply to all people independent of their personal, cultural, societal and temporal background. Given this, it is a matter of finding one's own life truths, of creating one's own “God”, that may not exist anywhere but in one's own heart, in one's own dreams and visions, but nevertheless has the power of committing and directing the individual.

---

<sup>12</sup> My translation.

<sup>13</sup> See also: “Summer of the Diabolical Holocaust” (music: 1992/lyrics: 1990), “The Dance of Eternal Shadows (m.: 1992/l.: 1990), and “Crossing the Triangle of Flames” (m.: 1991/l.: 1990), all on *Under a Funeral Moon*.

Christianity's concern with the communal and "the weak", i.e. exposed and vulnerable human beings, is taken as just another expression of its underestimation of and hostility towards the individual and individuality. It is perceived as holding down human beings' self-empowering qualities and drives. Black Metal is on the contrary a celebration of the "strong", meaning the proud, ambitious, excellent, self-centered and self-reliant individual. The Christian tradition is seen as forcing bad conscience, low self-esteem and feelings of guilt and shame upon people. Besides holding views reminiscent of social Darwinism, Black Metal individualism finds expression in the (in)famous Crowleyan Law of Thelema, "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law", which was widely accepted within the scene (at least theoretically).

*"A gate out of hell into the void of death"<sup>14</sup>*

Black Metal is not least a criticism of the dualistic aspect of the Jewish-Christian tradition, what the Black Metal guitarist "Tormentor" in an interview with a more general term called the "metaphysics of light", which is any religion, ideology and philosophy that sees "darkness" and "light" as contrasting and incompatible principles – and favors "the light". Black Metal rather reflects alternative experiences and judgments of darkness, of what its absence as well as presence means for the development and quality of life of people, sometimes even the human race. This topic is clearly present in the lyrics of "Snu mikrokosmos tegn" ("Turn the sign of the microcosmos", 1992) on the Burzum album, *Det som engang var* (*What once were*):

No silence out here - / a dream / Here where the moon reigns - / a dream // I hate this wood / where no danger threatens / No wolf / no bear / no troll / is breathing / No evil spirits / nothing / is breathing // Only the night and I - / only the night and I // One night I will go to Hell.

As the title and the lyrical content of this song indicate, a overturning of the civilized contemporary world is wished for. The Black Metal progressive worship of darkness often takes the form of violent lyrical visions of a cosmic or apocalyptic nature.<sup>15</sup> The longing for "Hell" in this song, which clearly displays the influence of the fantasy genre on the world of Burzum, is brought to life or accentuated within the framework of safe and empty nightly nature. Thus "Hell" represents a vibrant and dynamic existence, seething from the interplay between contrasting forces, where vigilance, pulse and immediate self- and life-presence is made possible by its unpredictable, challenging and hazardous nature. At the end of the song "What once were" (1992) on the album carrying the truly expressive

<sup>14</sup> Quote taken from the Burzum-track "A Lost Forgotten Sad Spirit" on *Aske* (1991).

<sup>15</sup> For instance, the frequent and extensive use of inverted crosses and pentagrams can be viewed in light of this.

title *Hvis lyset tar oss* (*If the light catches us*, 1992), “Count Grishnackh” (or one of the lyrical subjects?) in seemingly desperate agony screams: “We did not die....we have never lived”, as a consequence of acknowledging that the magical, vivacious world which alone is imagined capable of reviving the ability to fully feel and feel really alive, is gone forever. They are doomed to live in this world as living dead, for all eternity. The peculiar Black Metal image may in the light of this be interpreted as a way of presenting oneself as alienated creatures, not quite of this world, neither dead nor alive. This world, these times, this society seems to be experienced as nothing but desert and death, “a gate out of hell into the void of death”. A fulfilling existence is conditioned by the inclusion of darkness in the life-world of humans, which is very clearly depicted in the Burzum song “Decrepitude” (1992) on *Filosofem*: “When night falls / she cloaks the world / in impenetrable darkness. / A chill rises / from the soil / and contaminates the air / suddenly... / life has new meaning.” The darkness and shuddering chill of the night revitalizes life. The following extract from the lyrics of “The Dance of Eternal Shadows” (lyrics: 1990) by Darkthrone suggests darkness as a form of possession and a satisfactory sensation of power and desecration that somehow is attached to a desert-like experience of life: “I must Embrace Visual Hell / to Satisfy Us / Rape the Whores in Blasphemy / I am Him while I Feast upon Your Flesh // Glance into My Eyes / and see the Darkest Shadows Dancing / Playing in the Desert of My Life / Burning ...”

The understanding of darkness as powerful and the attached contemptuous attitude towards the so-called “weak” light or any metaphysics of light, must have received nourishment from the characteristic Black Metal image. Its main ingredients were black clothing, and long, straight hair dyed raven black and preferably a little greasy. More or less outrageous spikes, nails and other metal equipment were also very popular within the scene, as well as cartridge belts around the hips and sometimes even across the chest and shoulders, often together with a variety of occult symbols and (band-) t-shirts/-sweaters with blasphemous and spiteful “messages” printed on its front, back and/or sleeves. And last but not least the well-known wearing of corpsepaint, the demoniac death mask.

This image was partly designed to spread fear and terror. As Norway is a country with small urban environments where flamboyant behavior and looks are easily noticed and often scorned, the sight of Black Metal “uniformed” young males, seemingly hostile and unapproachable, “marching” up and down the streets must at the least have caused insecurity and skepticism among people,<sup>16</sup> especially when we remember that Black Metal was a completely unknown phenomenon to most people in the beginning of the nineties. Thus the power of darkness could literally be incorporated, absorbed by the bodily senses, as the ability to cause fear often is linked to experiences of power.

---

<sup>16</sup> It was not common to wear corpse-paint during daily activities, as it was neither to become trivial nor habitual. It was usually reserved for special occasions, such as photo sessions, walks in the wood and live-shows.



The darkness worship in Black Metal does not in my opinion signal any metaphysics of darkness, i.e. an “inverted” metaphysics of light. The idea is that humans need darkness *too*, and they need to learn to *appreciate* it, that there is no real “light” without “darkness” and vice versa, or according to the Albert Camus quotation in *Slayer* (1995: 9): “There is no sun without shadow, and it is essential to know the night.” The interaction of “darkness” and “light” is seen as a necessary condition for gaining a vital and developing life.

### *Natural Darkness*

A lot of Black Metal bands have been influenced by Burzum’s judgment of the Jewish-Christian tradition as a spiritual plague or in other words as a warping and mentally deranging view of life. “Kristen manns blod” (“Christian man’s blood”) is similarly described as “igler på Våre Hjerter” (“Leeches on Our Hearts”) in Darkthrone’s song “En vind av sorg” (“A Wind of Sorrow”, 1994) on *Panzerfaust*.<sup>17</sup> This also implies an understanding of the metaphysics of light in general and Christianity in particular as *unnatural*. Nature plays a prominent part within the Black Metal scene. “Snu mikrokosmos tegn” (“Turn the sign of the microcosmos”) exemplifies a typical Black Metal-pattern: A visual and lyrical representation of a vital connection between the power- and energy-giving qualities of darkness and nature. A fairly direct depiction of such a connection, although *ad via negativa*, is found in the lyrics of the song “Jesu død” (“Jesus’ death”, 1993) on Burzum’s *Filosofem*:

A figure was lying on the ground / so evil that the flowers about withered / a gloomy soul was laying on the ground / so cold that all the water turned to ice / Then a shadow dropped over the wood // when the soul of the figure faded away /'cause the soul of the figure was a shadow / a shadow of the force of evil.<sup>18</sup>

Jesus is here portrayed as dark, cold and life-extinguishing figure, irreconcilable with vitality and natural life. This alludes to a broader conviction in Black Metal, that the main cause of man having been disrupted and alienated from his natural state of being and natural wholesomeness is the Jewish-Christian tradition’s dualism. The stigmatization, tabooing and discrediting of man’s dark sides is regarded as having made him into a divided being, a stranger to himself. The Black Metal worship of darkness has as a goal to make man whole again, restore man’s kinship with – his tie to – nature, in other words to return him to his natural “Satanic” state of being. The Satanic self-image that is operative implies a focus on humans primarily as beings of nature, as Satan often is conceived as a dark force or symbol of nature. At times the lyrical subjects are more or less depicted as incarnations of natural forces, often hunting or battling Christians. Darkthrone portrays the subjects as a

---

<sup>17</sup> My translations.

<sup>18</sup> My translation.

Northern storm's pride in the song "A Blaze in the Northern Sky" with the lines, "a Triumphant sight on a Northern Sky" and "a Blaze in the Northern Sky". Another Black Metal band that has been greatly influenced by the mighty and inhospitable aspects of the Norwegian scenery is Immortal. One might say that besides lyrical and visual elements, this inspiration is reflected through its distinctly clear and cold, fast, fresh and fierce music style. Nature also serves as a major source of inspiration when it comes to choosing artistic names for oneself or a name for the band, as "Frost", "Zephyrous", "Fenriz", Ulver ("Wolves"), Ravn ("Raven") and In the Woods amply illustrates. "Satyr" from Satyricon has said:

I feel very close to the woods. I feel like a part of it. You know....Satyr....  
 God of the woods, a demon of nature. As I said, this is where I get inspiration from. Feelings are stronger when you are part of them. Walking in the woods changes my personality. I sometimes feel the presence of evil, at such times I enjoy existing. (*Slayer* 1995: 31)

Besides the extensive use of pure landscape pictures, it is also very common to do photo shootings in natural environments, which contributes to making the individual band member or the band as a whole seem as if inserted or immersed in, or even as extensions of nature. I am thinking of the grim, gloomy and theatrical pictures of often wild and proud-looking band members posing in their Black Metal outfit, preferably in the wood at night, sometimes in the winter. Weapons of some old-fashioned and primitive kind, such as swords, daggers, maces, axes and scythes<sup>19</sup>, are often carried and correspond with the type of scenery that is being worshipped and furthermore reveals the prevailing view of what it means for humans to be in a "natural state". But what do people that seek authentic existence, that want to become whole, reunited with its natural self, have to do in order to accomplish this? The majestic, harsh and willful character of nature is taken as a model of authentic being. Hence emotions and traits such as hatred, contempt, selfishness, arrogance, and revengefulness are to be cultivated. During a police interrogation an infamous member of the Black Metal scene explained that the waging of war is natural and great and that the feelings of hatred, jealousy and wickedness are natural, innate, and ought to be released through aggression.<sup>20</sup> The primitivistic musical expression, the style of singing included, can also be

---

<sup>19</sup> The Black Metal worship of darkness also covers a strong fascination for weapons, primitive and medieval-looking ones in particular. Potential buyers could get hold of such weapons – for example "around 60 cm. long maces with 3,5 cm. long spikes" from Euronymous' shop (*Helvete* 1992: 2). People were encouraged to buy these kind of weapons before it was too late, that is, while it was still legal to sell them (*ibid.*). Some individuals made weapons for themselves and for sale and/or stole them. An acquaintance of "Greven" said that he was obsessed with weapons and even collected them (Grude 2007).

<sup>20</sup> This process of masculine identity formation reflects an understanding of masculinity reminiscent of the one advocated by the mythopoetic men's movement, as it embarks on a

understood in view of this way of thinking within the subcultural scene (see the section “Attacking the Mainstreams or ‘No Trend’” below).

As we have seen above, Black Metal’s focus on nature is clearly related to a process of self-becoming. The perception of self is fundamentally tied to Norwegian climate and scenery. This confirms the claims made by the cultural historian Nina Witoszecz regarding the relation between Norwegians and the Norwegian landscape. She says that Norway’s natural heritage has for centuries served as a very strong symbol of identity for Norwegians, sometimes to the degree that the images of nature and “Norwegian-ness” appear as nearly one and the same thing (Witoszecz 1998: 17). According to Witoszecz, there is a tradition for this type of identification in Norway, a tradition that has only grown stronger over the years.

### *The Restoration and Framing of Authentic Manhood*

The destructive effect that Judeo-Christian dualism is thought to have on male individuals is harshly suggested in the piece “Musstad” on Burzum’s *Filosofem*:

With the spiritual plague [the light] from the south came also that which killed courage and honour. ... Men that could have won glory and honour by dying a worthy death on the battlefield were forced to die in bed. The forces of darkness were to be weeded out, war was a sin and no man was ever to kill another. Peace prevailed, but no true peace, ‘cause the peace depleted people’s powers more than any war might have depleted them, for eternal peace is no peace, it is the differences that create energy. The light did not warm them, but burnt them, the light did not let them see, it bedazzled them, the light sucked out all their energy, and they died in bed after a long, honourless life. The light brought them peace, Gods peace, true Hell.

From the standpoint of Black Metal, the Christian tradition(s) has gone a long way to banish and demonize darkness and stigmatize violence as a means of expression. This is understood as making redundant the male subject’s specifically masculine resources, as choking his natural drive towards masculine fullness and dignity. In other words, Christianity seems in other words to offer an effeminizing view and way of life.

The worship of darkness and critical existential experiences that Black Metal imparts can fruitfully be viewed as a response to serious challenges that contemporary, Western males are being confronted with in regard to the formation of masculine identity and existential meaning. It is quite possible to interpret the scenario in “Snu mikrokosmos tegn” (“Turn the sign of the microcosmos”) as a young man’s visions of what it takes to get his masculine potential fully realized, but still has to live in a world where this – the release of violent and virile energy

---

search for natural, authentic manhood. Both movements think that revival of man’s wilder sides is necessary in order to achieve true manliness.

– is illegitimate. The obsession with weapons as well as the pictures in sleeve photos illustrates the conception of authentic manhood and aggression as somehow connected to each other.

A fact that underlines the fruitfulness of a gendered perspective in the analysis of this particular subcultural music scene, is that it is undeniably a male community. It was developed *by* young men *for* themselves and for likeminded people of the same sex, in a phase of life where freeing oneself from parents and other authorities, finding and realizing oneself, one's own identity, one's place in society, one's own life for many is of utmost importance (see also Bossius 2003). Members of the Black Metal scene were almost desperate in their effort to distance themselves from "the kids" within the underground as well as more mainstream metal scene (see section below), which to a certain degree proves my point: That we are dealing with young men on the way from childhood into the adult world with its many laws, commitments and responsibilities as well as liberties and rights, in a global society where manliness has become something opaque, fragmented and in motion. My understanding of Black Metal as some sort of cult of masculinity is strengthened by its sometimes patronizing view on women, its traditional view on gender, its rejection of "feminine" values, together with the nearly non-existing possibility for girls to be seen as equal members of a scene swelling with traditionally masculine identity markers. The Black Metal scene is furthermore hostile towards homosexuals, hierarchically structured, strongly fascinated by violence and a variety of grotesque phenomena. Indeed Satan, which the self-image among other symbols is tied to, is often portrayed as a highly masculine being or force.

### **Attacking the Mainstreams or "No Trend"**

When going through the empirical material, fanzines in particular, I was struck by a conspicuous controversy against the "mainstream" and commercial turn the Death Metal scene had taken at the time, from both the side of fanzine editors as well as musicians and fans within the underground. Even though the origin and framing of the Black Metal scene undeniably was connected to an increasing commercialization of the Death Metal scene, it is nonetheless a veiled understatement of sorts when Vikernes claims that "[t]he most accurate thing to say is that Black Metal was nothing but a revolt against Death Metal" (Mørk 2002: 87). The fight against the so-called trendy, mainstream and commercialized branch of Death Metal was rather a concretization of a fight against a greater, though not so evident enemy, i.e. against forces of a more fundamental and more encompassing kind.

Underground metal was – and was meant to be – an extreme and strongly masculine subculture consisting of people who thought differently and were sincerely into this form of cultural expression. It was meant to be a powerful source to an exclusively and authentically conceived identity. About the last half

of the eighties Death Metal ruled as perhaps the most marked and exaggerated, most macabre and brutal form of underground metal that hitherto had existed, musically and lyrically, as well as in attitudes and the kind of symbols that were being used. It was meant to serve as a stronghold against a reality that was experienced as disintegrating, empty, false, effeminating etc. That Death Metal had gone commercial and mainstream was according to its critics proved by the fact that it was being released on big, financially strong labels and promoted via MTV and Metal magazines such as *Metal Hammer* and *Kerrang!* To many underground metalheads this development undermined the original functions and message of this particular music scene: "I refuse to have anything to do with all the mainstream trendies in the scene today. ... Death Metal should not be played on MTV or be on TOP 10, because that is killing the scene" (Euronymous in *Slayer* 1990/1991: 34). That the underground was dying, or already dead, was a common view within the scene itself. "Morbid" from the Greek underground Metal band Necromantia emphasized the corrupting power of money and was of the not uncommon opinion that the avariciousness of record-labels, not only the Death Metal bands and musicians themselves, were to be blamed for this development: "Death metal is dying. Occult-black metal is the future. No, it's not underground [when you can watch bands like Napalm Death, Entombed, Morbid Angel and Death on MTV] and the bands are not fully responsible for it. Labels are! Money, pal!" (*Orcustus* 1992: 21)

The development of Black Metal was bound to the criticism of what was seen as Death Metal's growing discrepancy between the diverse stylistic components, as well as between the stylistic dimension and the attitudes of bands and its members. In the eyes of the critics the image, the lyrics and the attitudes of band members and the musical style itself should support each other, form one package. Many were for instance fed up with the ordinary, expressionless and "americanized" street-fashion image of Death Metal, which generally consisted of trainers, tracksuit or shorts and hardly any use of make-up and equipment in the form of corpsepaint or spikes and cartridge belts. Adherents of the extreme underground metal scene wanted to establish a style that in its outrageous and grotesque character would manage to create an unbridgeable gap between truly extreme metal circles and the rest of contemporary society, between those who were self-willed and strong enough to rise above the Western trend-oriented consumer culture and "the dependent herd-people". The dawning Black Metal scene stood for a stylistic concept of coherent, continuous darkness, which drew quite a few bands to the scene. Most of these bands changed during the process from being Death Metal to becoming Black Metal. Immortal's change of style is explained thus by its guitarist and songwriter "Demonaz":

We decided to do that because we have been into black metal for a long time and because we are getting bored with the death metal scene! It has become standard and it seems like everyone do death metal these days!! We don't just want to play brutal music but we also want to do evil live shows with corpsepaint in

our faces ... And black metal has a special feeling and it gives us much more than the usual death metal. Death metal should be supported by true people and not by little kids..!!! ... It seems like the trend people are afraid of bands with corpsepaint and the evil stuff. That's good. People should hate it!!!! Yes the death metal scene is lost ... It's for stupid kids. It's like the thrash thing ... It's been accepted by all kinds of people! (*Sadistic Noise* 1991: 39)

Darkthrone's reason for changing from Death Metal to Black Metal is about the same, as the vocalist and songwriter "Nocturno Culto" says: "What we are doing now is the true thing. The new stuff is much more brutal, dark and evil. We love darkness, and we are gonna piss on the graves to all fucking trendies" (*Orcustus* 1992: 6).

Death Metal was, as its name signified, meant to be about real, misanthropic worship of death and death-related phenomena (e.g. blood, torture, murder, necrophilia etc.), not politically correct and current topics. "Greven" answered thus to the question of why he left the Thrash/Death Metal band Old Funeral in order to start up his own band project: "I think some of the people in Old (Fun)eral aren't true worshipers of 'death', and that's what death metal is all about. If not, I'll call it life-metal, fun-metal, or maybe trend-metal ... not death metal" (*ibid.*: 32). Or as another core member of the newly established Black Metal scene said in 1992 in a private letter: "Death to humanitarian life metal pigs." The making of Death Metal into a cool, socially beneficial and quite non-committal musical style gradually broke down the boundaries that were set between it and other mainstream cultural expressions, and between it and certain cultural and societal influences. It got too accessible, watered out, used up. As a primary expressive arena for unconventional young male individuals, the Death Metal scene seemed lost forever:

It's a big trend today to look totally normal with these goddam jogging suits and sing about 'important matters' and call it Death Metal. These people can die, they have betrayed the scene. Death Metal is for brutal people who are capable of killing, it's not for idiotic children who want to have a funny hobby after school. ... Death and Black Metal is my life. (Euronymous in *Slayer* 1990/1991: 33)

Even if some believed, or hoped, that the popularity of Death Metal was a passing phenomenon, and that only the true, dedicated musicians and fans would remain in its wake, some also seemed to realize that they had to create something relatively new, a new underground: "[T]he scene is dead. I'd just like to save the rest of it and create a new one with only brutal people. Everyone else – FUCK OFF" (*ibid.*: 35). Beginning with a set of traditional elements from the world of metal in general, underground metal enthusiasts more or less consciously set out to create a style that they did not believe could ever possibly be turned into a

demanded product in a commercial landscape.<sup>21</sup> What mattered now was to separate “the false” from “the true” by way of an aesthetics and a cast of mind that in its inhumanity, its unsavory and extreme worship of darkness impossibly could gain attraction in contemporary society, neither among potential consumers, such as cool teenagers, nor in the culture or life-style industry. The modern, Western world had never before seen anything like the subculture that now was being generated.

### *The Birth of the Black Metal Anti-Aesthetic*

Black Metal aesthetic is an anti-aesthetic in the sense that it entails an adoption and development of unconventional, culturally illegitimate aesthetical standards, of the “grotesque” bodily style (Hetherington 1998: 72, 146). One aspired to ugliness, abomination, primitiveness. The anti-aesthetic played an all-important part in the process of shaping, expressing and consolidating both individual and collective identity. It worked as a kind of coded and expressive tribal symbolism, comprehensible to no one but the initiated and chosen. It was the glue of the scene, that which united “the dedicated”, “the true ones”, not least by communication of who one is *not* and what one does *not* adhere to. Thus the boundary drawing, distancing and culture-criticizing dimensions of the anti-aesthetic are central:

I'd like to see a scene where the music is something gruesome and evil that normal people fear, and where the people in the scene all look like Hellhammer or old Sarcófago, spikes and chains rule! The scene must ... be out of reach for normal idiots, because I think it should be for extreme people. (Euronymous in *Slayer* 1990/1991: 35)

The sound technician “Pytten”, who has contributed to the production of a great number of Black Metal releases, said that this might find expression in the use of “elements that in ordinary music ... have been discarded as ugly”<sup>22</sup>, and exemplifies this with ugly sounds, bad playing and distorted guitars (Mørk 2002: 75). Black Metal vocals can be described as an unarticulated, at times brutish hissing, spitting or screaming, contrary to what is thought of as a proper or beautiful singing voice. Besides having a personal feel to it, the acoustic dimension were to cultivate an antisocial, subversive atmosphere by being unpolished, cold, disharmonious, thin, rough and violent, in contrast to the kind of music that the majority appreciates as pleasant, which is relatively harmonious, distinctly structured, well-arranged, rhythmic and professionally perfected in different ways. The anti-aesthetics was

---

<sup>21</sup> Through the adoption of certain (anti-)aesthetic, “traditional” metal components the Black Metal scene expressively signaled that it was in search of the “uncool” and authentic (see i.e. Moynihan and Söderlind 1998; Hansen 2001). This might also have contributed to a sense of substance and coherence in life (Mørk 2002).

<sup>22</sup> My translation.

also reflected lyrically, both through its often high-flown style and the tendency to be about occult phenomena, hatred, violence, death, evil, suffering, war, etc.

The wish to repel and offend was also expressed visually and behaviourally in different manners, which is shown by the following visions that the singer and song-writer “Dead” had for Mayhem’s concerts:

Nobody shall still be left in a place we’d played at. I want people to feel disgust when they see us live.... I think of having rotted flesh in the air condition. Work out something more with the cutting in myself and have something more than only impaled pigheads, maybe an impaled cow or something. (*Putrefaction zine*, 1990: 28)

When it came to bodily appearance the ideal was to be rather thin, sinewy and sharp-edged, “unpolished” and as pale as can be. It was also preferable to look a bit unkempt, and some cut and burnt their own skin. A few years back I was told a story about a member of the scene who did not manifest “the correct” bodily appearance, which serves to show that the specifically anti-aesthetic bodily ideal within Black Metal had to do with gender issues.<sup>23</sup> This guy was increasingly troubled by the soft and chubby character of his body, and once in a while got mocked because of this. In order to change his looks he sometimes beat the knuckles of his hands sore. For a period of time he almost stopped eating, and he even scratched himself in the face with a knife. Desperate acts which aimed at the achievement of a shape that stood as truly masculine. But the traits and motivations underlying these strategies was not approved as properly masculine by his circle, or rather, as the correct Black Metal attitude. Seemingly signaling an inferiority complex, a need of acceptance and a preoccupation with food and looks, they were instead conceived of as feminine, pathetic and all-too-human. On the contrary, the alleged self-torture of the infamous and seemingly extremely evil-worshipping Swedish band *Abruptum* during the recording of the album *Obscuritatem Advoco Amplexere Me* was held in great esteem, as it was considered extreme and evil (*Helvete* 1992: 2).

However disgusting and destructive it may seem to the outside world, the worship of darkness and the anti-aesthetic (which are two sides to the same story), in particular the aggressive and violent aspects, imply taking an active interest in the shaping of one’s own identity, view and way of life. It can be seen as a means to “exorcise the emblems” that postmodern consumer society has imprinted and is constantly imprinting in males, that is the beating and bleeding out, the ridding oneself of “the varnish from degenerating civilizational influence, [to] reinstate pure and hardened masculinity” as the basis on which a new (personal) world order are to be built upon (Kolnar 2003: 200, 231). The Black Metal subculture is a manifest rejection of most things valued and desired by ordinary people and

---

<sup>23</sup> With regard to the privacy of the individual I will not state the reference of this information.



trendy teenagers, e.g. a tanned and flawless skin, sleek and gym-shaped bodies, entertainment, fun and various forms of pleasures. The “ugliness” and relative timelessness or constancy of the Black Metal image is both a critique of culturally dominant aesthetics and of the fluctuating, shallow and capitalistic fashion industry and consumerism more generally. In addition, by making black and white the scene’s prevalent code of colour, especially in regard to the “uniform”, signalled a celebration of seriousness, harshness and primitivity in contrast to the light-hearted and tolerant rich colouring of the blinking “neon culture”.

### *The Anti-La Vey-“Campaign”*

Black Metal is at times interpreted as decisively influenced by the Satanism of Anton LaVey and the Church of Satan. These interpretations overlook the fact that Black Metal’s attitude towards LaVey and the Church of Satan has all along been both ambiguous and often even dismissive.<sup>24</sup> Euronymous created a symbol which conveyed an explicitly anti-LaVeyan stance: it was framed as a prohibitory sign encircled by the catchwords “no mosh”, “no core”, “no fun”, “no trend”. This symbol was for instance used in connection with record releases on his own label Deathlike Silence Productions. Just as commercial, mainstream Death Metal was considered a betrayal of what this form of expressive art was meant for, the Satanism that the Church of Satan offered was deemed as misrepresenting “true” Satanism. “It” from Abruptum referred to LaVey’s sort of Satanism as “idiotic humanism”, as a Christian-like peace-loving poisoning of “the name of evil”, and continued thus: “Get lost, old geezer and take with you all the damn bands worshipping your word ... and hundreds of other fucking idiots. The true Satanist horde spreads evil and not words of sex and happiness” (*Helvete* 1992: 4).<sup>25</sup>

The following quotation shows the opinion of “Faust” from Thorns and Emperor some time before his arrest:

[I]t is wrong to call bands who follow the path of Anton LaVey for Black Metal. Those who have read the ‘Satanic’ bible know that Anton LaVey stands for everything that’s good in life and the worship of all kinds of pleasures which leads to big gratification for him and the members of the Church of Satan. ... [They are only a family club who wanna make sure that people get the best out of their earthly lives and nothing more than that.] He wants to make sure that Satanism gets a good reputation and that it can become something acceptable. And this is exactly how it is not meant to be. When people hear the word Satanism they

---

<sup>24</sup> The feeling is mutual: LaVey wasn’t fond of what he perceived as herd music, and the Church of Satan and most self-identified Satanists in the LaVeyan tradition take exception to the perceived stupidity and lack of balance in the style and criminal acts of the Black Metal scene in Norway [editor’s note].

<sup>25</sup> My translation.

freeze on their backs and they shall be really afraid of the Satanists ... (*Slayer* 1995: 4)<sup>26</sup>

Although the Social Darwinism of the Church of Satan overlaps with ideas within Black Metal to a certain extent, its Satanism was perceived to be lacking subversive and substantial identity processing potential. LaVey's hedonistic and utilitarian brand of Satanism was all in all tailor-made for the contemporary Western world, i.e. postmodern consumer society, and that was its main and insurmountable problem. The official, law-abiding and thereby accessible and open character of the Church of Satan probably reinforced the Black Metal scene's hostility towards it.

### *The Demand for Originality*

The dawning Black Metal scene's demand for innovation and uniqueness served as another vital part of the struggle to distinguish oneself from mainstream Death Metal and commercialism. Bands which at the outset had been unique within the Death Metal genre was made more or less standard by numerous new bands copying them – bands that “Dead” tended to label “clone-bands”. To the question of what a band has to do in order to be taken as original, Morbid from the Greek band Necromantia answered: “Never sa[y], ‘we’ll make a song like Morbid Angel, Death etc’, or to be satisfied when people say ‘they sound like.....’. NEVER! Be what you are, play what you play, no matter how hard it’s to the audience to swallow it. Create, not copy!!” (*Orcustus* 1992: 21)

Critical voices within the scene claimed that instead of giving innovative contributions to the scene that helped keep the true Death Metal spirit alive, these so-called “clone” or mainstream bands along with the commercial music industry converted an artistic expression into mass-produced, insignificant and hollow signs, unable to ravish and transform, inspire and collect. Aspirations to become rich and famous “rock stars” were deemed corrupting and incompatible with a sincere and individual approach to the music. Accordingly, within the Black Metal scene *original creative power* became a distinguishing mark. It was taken a sign of self-confidence, genius and strength on behalf of the musician(s) in the band, in contrast to unimaginative musicians and bands that manifested herd-mentality. Immortal from the West coast of Norway had their own way of putting it in the cover of the album *Battles in the North*: “The ‘IMMORTAL’ Single stands forever as a mark against those who so pathetically tried to follow us lyrically and musically... YOU ARE TRULY BENEATH US.”

---

<sup>26</sup> This interview with Faust contained utterances that point to a more traditional, religious conception of Satanism, but it is beyond the scope of this chapter to assess clearly exceptional expressions of what seem to be a single individual's religious Satanism.

### *The Demand for Action*

The demand for consistency that arose in contrast to mainstream Death Metal was knit to a rejection of what was perceived as an abysmal gap between musical practice and life style within the Death Metal scene. The development of this into a demand for action, that is to live one's life according to one's musical affiliation, was the point where Black Metal differed most radically from all previous Metal scenes. "A" expressed that black metallers were "expected to hold extreme viewpoints and to do the things that earlier on had been spoken of in band's lyrics" (Grude 2007). According to a couple of members of the scene the stress that was put on containing a Satanic profile from around 1990, also led to a considerably rougher mentality in the sense that "soft" or "feminine" values and traits such as kindness, mercy, compassion, forgiveness and love was rejected. One should rather aim at being bad and vicious, especially towards people one did not know very well or had any close relationships to, as well as towards the rest of society (ibid.). Actions are generally more binding and demanding of the individual than words, and would in this context help to distinguish the "true" from the "false", the brave from the cowards, the strong from the weak, to make it simple. In other words, those who showed themselves to *be* Black Metal, that they were truly dedicated to this music culture, were accepted as (more or less) "true" and worthy of respect. An inevitable consequence of this way of thinking was a threatening and aggressive attitude towards representatives of the "trendy" Death Metal scene, especially the Swedish one. Insulting utterances and slogans in fanzines, flyers and on records, threatening letters, demonstrative behaviour at concerts, and even physical attacks directed at individual Death Metal band members, illustrates this. Attempts to live up to the harsh, "Satanic" mentality and image also resulted in the aforementioned church arson, vandalization of graveyards, breaking into sacred buildings and arsenals, as well as homicide. Varg Vikernes maintained that the Black Metal scene had deviating attitudes towards killing and violent behaviour in general: "The attitude towards killing, there was no ideological antagonisms with respect to that. ... If anyone had killed a priest, a preacher of this sort of Asian regurgitation, then there would scarcely be anyone within the scene that would find it regrettable" (ibid.).

The connection between violence and male identity processing is not least present where violence is a reaction against menacingly effeminizing impulses. The murder that "Faust" committed when stabbing an unfamiliar, gay man who by Faust's account more or less subtly had invited to some kind of intimate dealings, can be viewed in light of this:

They thought it was a little tough ... 'cause nobody had until then done such a serious act [to have killed a man]. ... It had after all crossed a line, from committing criminal damage, as it was called, to committing such a serious act as murder. So clearly, this was looked at in a positive way ... [I]n that time the scene was very closed, it had its own moral values. (ibid.)

The homicide indubitably led to an elevation of Faust's position within the scene, although Faust himself has stressed more than once that he committed the murder neither for the sake of his own personal or his band's status-elevation. To commit a crime in order to gain access to and respect within the scene on the one hand and to do it because one *is* Black Metal as a person and "by nature" on the other – these are to completely different things. In an interview that was done some time after his imprisonment, Faust claimed that not even his circle of ordinary acquaintances got surprised when they heard of his killing and church arson: "They knew that I sooner or later would do something like this" (*Slayer* 1995: 7). He was concerned with appearing as "true", far above posers and wannabees. In an interview that was done approximately a year earlier, before his arrest, Faust uttered: "I have never said that I'm evil and such things, because I'm not into this just for the sake of being evil. This is what I wanna do, this is my life, so then it's just a trifle whether it's 'evil' or not" (*ibid.*: 5).

There have always been individuals within the scene who have taken a stand against its criminal aspects, individuals who have been into Black Metal purely for the artistic dimension. I would nevertheless dare to say that the majority of black metallers – musicians, fanzine editors and fans alike – support at least some of its immoral and illegal aspects. Added to this is the fact that there has hardly been any trace of regret among the ones remaining as well as among newcomers, although some pulled out of the scene when the media coverage was peaking and the police and judicial system tightened their grip. Faust has said that he did not wish undone any of the criminal acts that had the Norwegian Black Metal scene as its origin, except for the murder of Euronymous:

I think it's perfectly all right that we burn churches and about the murder I have committed ... well, it's something I always wanted to do, so I gladly serve 14 years in prison for it. But honestly, I think the murder of Euronymous was a tragedy. I don't understand at all the point of killing him while there are so many other people who should rather be killed. But anyway, shit happens and it is nothing we can do about it. (*Ibid.*: 6)

In response to the court's question whether he regretted the murder of Euronymous, "Greven" said: "He is dead, I am alive!" To have pangs of conscience when one emerges victorious from a struggle, when one comes out of a fight alive and (in one's own eyes) with dignity, obviously seems absurd and unnatural to him.<sup>27</sup> In an environment where action and the capability to stand by one's words is idealized, regret is taken as an indication of weakness. The phrasing "cowardly men talks, real men acts" had a major influence within the scene for a period of time for quite a few members. It serves to show not only the limited value that

---

<sup>27</sup> The nature and result of the conflict between Greven/Vikernes and Euronymous/Aarseth, as well as Vikernes' own portrayal of it, has been, and to a certain extent still is, a controversial and sensitive topic within the Black Metal scene.

was being attributed to words, reason and dialogue within the Black Metal scene, but also that the idealistic demand for action was really about establishing and maintaining masculine identity.

### *The Insufficiency of Words*

Within Black Metal the body is in many ways given precedence as field of expression and experience. Its orientation towards sensuousness and comprehensiveness contain a dimension of cultural criticism in that it can be seen as a negation of the Christian and modern civilization's disparagement and disciplining of the body, of intuition, fantasy, mysticism etc. Bodily strategies that exist separate from, prior to or exceed the limits set by reason, are placed above words, dialogue and rationality, and functions as primary and indispensable emancipatory strategies for young men who more or less have been situated in postmodern consumer society from birth. According to Kolnar, consumption and consumerism is something that the people of today *is* (Kolnar 2003: 196). Our whole mode of being is entangled in it – our entire way of desiring, feeling, thinking, acting and choosing. And it is precisely for this reason and because of the forceful and violent way it has been and *is constantly being* impressed into people's body and mind, that it has to be stopped and "drained out" by way of "wordless", e.g. aggressive, strategies: "The words, the dialogue, the negotiations are only 'skin-deep', they are unable to transform the deep structures of identity [and patterns of world-cognition] that consumer society has imprinted" (ibid.: 201).

The bodily domain has such a distinct and primary function with regard to the purification and restructuring of the self and its perception of the world, because our body is what is most intimate to us, because we "are" our body in the sense that we depend on it for our existence. We exist in the world through our body and also perceive the world through it. The significance of the body when it comes to change, articulation and consolidation of the self, as well as to creation of existential meaning, is in the context of Black Metal reflected through its clear connection with issues of masculinity. Firstly, a bodily centered worship of darkness constitutes an immediate and powerful source of masculine fullness and energy. Secondly, it is a manifestation of and thereby in many instances leads to incorporation and enforcement of ideal conceptions of manhood. In my opinion church arson is linked to the formation of masculine identity on different levels. As a physical act church arson might make real and thereby effect the internalization of the idea of action as an evidence of strong and authentic masculinity. The construction of a masculine identity through church arson has probably been reinforced by the fact that such a deed are likely to represent a gateway to extraordinary, "transgressional" bodily experiences and presence, while at the same time must have formed a more or less definite break with the prevailing and common cultural and societal surroundings. Kolnar maintains that "it is via the transforming properties of violence that a homeless masculinity can establish a bodily and mental point of departure that

enables a totally different and far more autonomous view on the cultural field and one's place in it" (op.cit.: 203).

### **Conclusion: "A gate out of hell into the void of death", Part II**

"A Lost Forgotten Sad Spirit" (1991) by Burzum launches a very critical view on contemporary Western civilization and reflects a comprehensive existential pessimism. Visions of "Hell" as a vital and dynamic place belonging to the past, where there was also room for "temperatures" and sentiments such as cold and hatred, stands in sharp contrast to the contemporary world which is draining out the life and energy of the lyrical subject, and which neither offers nor ever will offer any real or vital existence:

The fire in the sky is extinguished / Blue waters no longer cry / The dancing of trees has stopped / The stream of freshness from cold winds / Exists no longer / The rain has stopped to drip / From the sky / Still dripping exists / From the veins of a nearly dead boy / Once there was hatred / Once there was cold / Now / There is only / A dark stone tomb / With an altar / An altar which / serves as a bed / A bed of eternal sleep / The dreams of the human in sleep / Are dreams of relief / A gate out of hell / Into the void of death / Yet undisturbed / The human sleep / And one day / Will the grave be unlocked / And the soul / Must return to this world / But this time as / A lost forgotten sad spirit / Doomed / To haunt / Endlessly.

Both the world of today and the existence of the lyrical subject is depicted as petrified, void of life, as an empty, vast and unending deathlike corridor. People are stupefied and imperturbable in their everlasting dreams of "relief". I see these lyrics as a critique of modern societies' secular form of the metaphysics of light: Man's want of a convenient and comfortable life and the tendency to shun the sad and difficult – the dark – sides of life. The lost, forgotten, sad spirit in this song cannot help but strive to awake people, to make them aware of and engaged in changing the life world back into luxuriant and vital "Hell", but it is a hopeless mission.

In my eyes, the Black Metal worship of darkness is a way of taking a clear stand against the metaphysics of light in modern, Western civilization. Black Metal's uncompromising and exaggerated worship of darkness has attempted to break down the value-laden wall that culturally for centuries has intended to keep life and death, joy and sorrow, darkness and light apart. The point has been to wake people up from their slumber, make them think, as people's minds are believed to be imprinted and impregnated with delusive images as to what a truly good or ideal life consists in via existing ideologies and the mass media. The human pursuit of different kinds of enjoyment in a modern and partly overprotective society is seen as degenerating and in the long run diminishing the quality of life. The attempt to isolate and banish illness, pain, misery and death from the human

domain, to make natural and inevitable aspects of life into something unnatural and solely destructive that humans at all costs has to be protected from, has made humans blasé and their life easy and empty. But it has also weakened our innate capacity to handle the hard facts of life. However far-fetched and extreme worship of darkness might be, it neither implies glorification nor romantic aesthetization of it. The Black Metal scene has wanted to push darkness in all its horror in the faces and into the lives of people, and it even conveys a willingness to incorporate it into one's own life in spite of (or perhaps precisely because of) what it is. It has among other things to do with cultivation of courage and strength, as it takes courage to relate to darkness qua darkness, which the following statement by Euronymous illustrates:

... I think it's great that [snuff-movies] are forbidden. If they were legal and easily accessible, all the small trend children would be watching them, and then it would not be something extreme anymore. ... It's just the same what happened to death metal – it became something everyone could buy in every store, something normal and accessible for everyone. All the mystic and evil atmosphere is GONE. I do not think snuff-movies are funny, I think they are DARK. I've seen people laugh at them, but that's probably because they will not be mentally able to take the PAIN and EVIL on over themselves. That is the best way to watch such a movie, to try to FEEL the actual pain of the victims. It becomes much more gruesome then, and that's great. One must be alone in the darkness and suffer with the victims. If you watch it with other people, they will often talk, laugh and so on, and then you get more distanced from it. It's not supposed to be funny (death to fun), it's much better when it's depressive. (*Orcustus* 1992: 37)

It is worth noticing the interesting constellation that the capitalized, and probably unconsciously stressed, words frame: “GONE”, “DARK”, “PAIN”, “EVIL”, “FEEL”. In order to (re)gain an enhanced sensation and awareness of self and life one has to go through pain, evil, darkness. One has to challenge and surpass one's own sensitivity and limits, not only as a strategy restricted to a certain life phase but as an integral part of one's existence. Within Black Metal traditional and essentialistic conceptions of manliness are being activated through practices demanding courage, capacity for violence and endurance of pain (and thereby mental and physical strength), ability to act and determination. Pain and violence have made central ingredients in manhood rites in various cultures throughout history (Kolnar 2003: 202). Besides this, war and violence is historically speaking linked to men and often considered as carving men out of boys, as necessary for the cultivation of masculinity. In the song “War” on Burzum's album *Burzum*, music-making is fundamentally related such issues:

This is War / I lie Wounded on Wintery Ground / With Hundred of Corpses  
around / Many Wounded Crawl Helplessly around / On the Blood Red Snowy

Ground // War // Cries of the (ha, ha) suffering sound / Cries for help to all their dear Moms // War // Many hours of music / Many drops of blood / Many shiverings and now I am dead / And still we must never give up // War.

This unvarnished depiction of a bleak battlefield reveals a lack of compassion for its suffering and helpless victims. Despite being in the same boat as the others on the battlefield, the lyrical subject seems insensitive or indifferent even to his own misery, and also refuses to go down with his own suffering. The parallel that is being drawn between this battlefield scenario and making music tells us something of the existential scope of this dark form of art, as I have touched on earlier. Black Metal is said to be at the very core of their being, inseparably tied to their life and who they are.

“War” seems to idealize an unconditional will to self-sacrifice, an indomitable and indefatigable idealism, and gives a voice to the band’s dismissal of both the incongruence within Death Metal, the typically postmodern attitude to life and various expressions of the metaphysics of light in contemporary, Western society. As proposed by the drummer Erlend Erichsen/Sgt. Erichsen from Molested and Gorgoroth, the Black Metal subculture may be understood as a Romantic movement, a Romantic kick against the specifically postmodern mentality that is marked by a certain ironical attitude and superficiality in relation to self and life, thereby expressing a lack of capacity, courage or will to passionate commitment and to show “the world” who one really is (Mørk 2002: 87). Instead postmodern individuals seem to hide behind this mask of irony and adjust all too easily to people, situations and roles. The specifically postmodern individualism and attitude to life differs widely from Black Metal which combines radical individualism with a focus on authenticity and continuity, meaning coherence, originality and capacity to take idealistic/revolutionary action, as well as a conception of ancestral roots and cultural tradition.

### *The End?*

The anti-aesthetic foundation and distinguishing ideals of Black Metal reflect a desperate or energetic attempt to hold one’s own against what may seem as a constant outer threat, an incessant and intimidating pressure on one’s sense of distinct identity and meaning from civilizational forces. The almost paranoid, rapidly increasing mistrust in even *Black Metal* musicians’ and bands’ alleged truthfulness, expressed a doubt as to whether the scene’s powerful strategies were sufficient to maintain Black Metal as a “pure” and “true”, understood as extreme and inaccessible, subculture. Accusations of falseness, weakness and so on began to fire back and forth within the scene. Besides this, “Samoth” from Emperor (among others) questioned the apparent ambivalence or double set of morals which broke surface with the murder of Euronymous:



If death and darkness is what they worship then the death of EURONYMOUS shouldn't be that hard to handle, but that doesn't mean we support that murder, though destroying BURZUM items is just as childish because the music of BURZUM is as dark as ever. (*Slayer* 1995: 9)

It was in other words not only the media coverage of the many extreme and illegal circumstances which laid the foundation of radical changes within the Black Metal scene. Because the two perhaps most marked, charismatic and influential individuals of the circle disappeared with the killing of Euronymous – Euronymous was now dead, “Greven” was after some time arrested and sentenced to 21 years in prison – basic questions regarding the scene's self-image and self-presentation, what being sincere and true mean within the framework of Black Metal, what the worship of darkness is really about, were acutely as well as lastingly activated. It was first and foremost solving the murder of Euronymous which, probably unintended, tore the circle apart and fragmented the scene and within a relatively short time span turned Black Metal into what perhaps Euronymous most of all dreaded: A rather acceptable, decent, commercial, standardized, mainstream and trendy music culture – although there still are musicians, bands and fans who scorn this development. Even if the internal discourse which got accentuated and accelerated as a consequence of the killing of Euronymous, displays a rather normal and healthy commitment within the scene, it also gave expression to a diversity that made Black Metal more exposed and susceptible to the disintegrating forces one attempted to combat.

## References

- Agaliarept*, issue 1, 1994.
- Bossius, Thomas 2003. *Med framtiden i backspegeln. Black metal- och transkulturen. Ungdomar, musik och religion i en senmodern värld*. I serien: Skrifter från Institutionen för musikvetenskap, Göteborgs universitet, nr. 74. Göteborg: Daidalos.
- Grude, Torstein 2007. Written interview material collected by Torstein Grude/ Piraya Film in connection with the production of the documentary *Satan rir media* (1997). I will keep the anonymity of his informants.
- Hansen, Petter 2001. *Fra gravstøtte til statsstøtte: en kultursosiologisk studie av black metal*. Unpublished Masters Thesis in Sociology, University of Oslo.
- Helvete*, katalog nr. 1, 1992.
- Henriksen, Jan-Olav 1999. *På grensen til Den andre. Om teologi og postmodernitet*. Oslo: Ad Notam Gyldendal.
- Hetherington, Kevin 1998. *Expressions of Identity. Space, Performance, Politics*. UK: SAGE Publications.
- Kolnar, Knut 2003. *Det ambisiøse selv*. Dr. art. avhandling (Ph.D. dissertation), Filosofisk institutt, NTNU Trondheim, 2003.

- Losten, Peder 2001. "Ödet har skänkt mig en gåva. Brevväxling med kyrkbrännare." In *Hundre år av rörelse. Jönköpings läns museum 1901–2001*. Småländska kulturbilder 2001, pp. 113–136.
- Mørk, Gry B. 2002. *Drømmer om fortiden, minner for fremtiden. Norsk black metals norrøne orientering, 1992–1995*. Unpublished Masters Thesis in Religious Studies, University of Tromsø. Contains written and oral interview material produced in connection with the dissertation in my main subject.
- Moynihan, Michael & Didrik Söderlind 1998. *Lords of Chaos. The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground*. Venice, CA: Feral House.
- Orcustus*, issue 1 (2), 1992.
- Putrefaction zine*, issue 3, 1990.
- Sadistic Noise*, issue 3, 1991.
- Sægrov, Jon-Arne 1996. *Svart ungdom*. Unpublished Masters Thesis in Pedagogy, University of Oslo.
- Slayer*, vol. VIII, 1990/1991 (doubtful date).
- Slayer*, vol. X, 1995 (doubtful date – could be published in late 1994 or early 1996).
- Torgovnick, Marianna 1996. *Primitive Passions. Men, Women and the Quest for Ecstasy*. New York: Knopf.
- Vikernes, Varg 1995. Radio interview with Varg Vikernes in the series *Gamle synder*, P4, 1995.
- Witosczeć, Nina 1998. *Norske naturmytologier. Fra Edda til økofilosofi*. Oslo: Pax forlag.

## Albums

### Burzum

- Burzum* (Recorded: 1992/Released: 1992)
- Aske* (REC.: 1992/REL: 1993)
- Det som engang var* (REC: 1992/REL: 1993)
- Hvis lyset tar oss* (REC: 1992/REL: 1994)
- Filosofem* (REC: ?/ REL: 1996)

### Darkthrone

- A Blaze in the Northern Sky* (REC: 1991/REL: 1992)
- Under a Funeral Moon* (REC: 1993/REL: 1993)
- Transilvanian Hunger* (REC: 1993/REL: 1994)
- Panzerfaust* (REC: 1994/REL: 1995)

### Gorgoroth

- Under the Sign of Hell* (REC: 1996/REL: 1997?)
- Antichrist* (REC: 1994+1996/REL: 1996?)
- Destroyer* (REL: 1998)

Immortal

*Battles in the North* (REL: 1995)

Satyricon

*The Shadowthrone* (REL: 1994)

# Chapter 13

## Italian Martyrs of “Satanism”: Sister Maria Laura Mainetti and Father Giorgio Govoni<sup>1</sup>

Andrea Menegotto

### **The Background: Satanism and Satanists in Italy<sup>2</sup>**

The statistics on *organized Satanism* (also called “adult Satanism” (Introvigne 1997)) can be reconstructed in a fairly precise way, as it is practically impossible that an *organized* group may completely escape the survey carried out by experts and police organs. An estimate to calculate the number of people adhering to organized Satanic groups in Italy (referring to the year 2003) can count about 240 members which can be summarized in the following table:

Table 1 Adherents to groups of organized Satanism In Italy

Bambini di Satana	50
Chiesa di Satana (rationalist)	20
Chiesa di Satana (occultist)	20
Minor groups	150
<b>Altogether</b>	<b>240</b>

Source: CESNUR 2003.

Therefore, despite the numbers often supplied by mass media – those who propose such numbers should, of course, be capable of supporting their statements

---

<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based on the paper “Italian Martyrs of Satanism: Sister Maria Mainetti and Father Giorgio Govoni” presented at the CESNUR Conference *Religion and Democracy: An Exchange of Experiences Between East and West*, Vilnius, Lithuania, April 9–12 2003.

<sup>2</sup> With particular reference to the Italian situation, see the important studies in Introvigne 1994, 1997. For a classification of Satanism within the widest magic current, see Menegotto 2003. On the recent controversies on Satanism, see Richardson et al. 1991.

with evidence as far as we can see from the numbers right now – the groups of organized Satanists only represent an insignificant percentage of the Italian population. Thus organized Satanism is a phenomenon that is often overrated; the statistics suggest that it concerns only a few thousand people all over the world.

Of course, these statistics can neither include the activities of isolated “Satanists” – in fact, criminals often say that they kill “for the taste of killing inspired by a demon” – or the *adolescent* Satanism (also called “acid Satanism” for its association with drugs) composed of small groups of young people under 18. They are lacking in ritual and organizational continuity and contacts with the groups of organized Satanism. In fact they perform eclectic Satanic rituals under the influence of movies, television, comics, and certain musical subcultures, but they are also affected by reports on Satanism made by the mass media which appear as stereotypical shocking narratives.

Even if the phenomenon of Satanism is much more widespread, the statistics on adolescent Satanism are hypothetical, owing to the sociological features of the phenomenon itself, and, as a result, many groups can be found only in case they commit a crime. In addition, from the police data, which concerns different Italian regions, we can presume that in Italy the phenomenon in question involves about a thousand people while a more restricted circle (2,000–3,000 people) adopts styles typical of the Satanic subculture (clothes, symbols and gestures) without yet taking parts in any real activities of the adolescent Satanic groups.

It is in this *ostensive* and *reactive* context that crimes of various kind and seriousness occurred: vandalism, violation of churches and cemeteries, rape and murders like that of the nun, Sister Maria Laura Mainetti (1939–2000). We will deal with her case first and then delve into the story that saw the involvement of a clergyman, Father Giorgio Govoni (1941–2000), which has a different nature and genre.

### **The Case of Sister Maria Laura Mainetti**

On the night between the 6th and the 7th of June 2000 at Chiavenna, a little town in the province of Sondrio, in Lombardy, on the border between Italy and Switzerland, a catholic nun, Sister Maria Laura Mainetti, belonging to the Congregation of the Daughters of the Cross, was killed with nineteen stabs by three girls. Two girls were seventeen and one was sixteen. The Sister, who was well known in the small town she lived in, and in the surroundings<sup>3</sup>, for her social and charitable commitment to young dispossessed and poor people, fell into a well planned trap. During the night, under the false pretext of a pregnant girl who found herself in serious difficulties and needed her help, the three young murderers were able to

---

<sup>3</sup> A memoir having hagiographic frames about Sister Maria Laura Mainetti is traced by the report of the congregation Sister Maria Laura belonged to. See *In semplicità* (In simplicity), the Cross Congregation Sisters’ magazine, a special issue in July 2002.

draw the nun into an ambush, leading her to an isolated place. Sister Laura didn't suspect any danger being well accustomed to frequently doing such charitable deeds.

According to the reconstruction done by the investigators and the elements emerging from interviews with the three murderers, the nun was, at first, hit on her head with a small cube of porphyry and with a stab, then the three murderers obliged her to kneel, as a gesture of submission, in compliance with a symbolic ritual. She was repeatedly hit by them while they were hurling abuse at her. They made use of two knives to carry out their macabre rite, while the nun was praying and was granting them her forgiveness. The three girls were caught twenty two days after the murder. At first, they said they had only had the intention of playing a game in order to break the monotony of their boring existence in the small town in which they lived; then, from the jails, they confessed to have wanted to make a sacrifice to Satan. When the inquiry was closed, the investigators, in their numerous searches carried out in some adolescents' and young people's houses, were able to find the unsuspected existence of a "Satanic" subculture present around several boys coming from good families, thus instigating "Satanism" as the keyword for the interpretation of the whole story. From their investigations, details relevant to ritual gestures also emerged, which can be attributed to an adolescent "Satanic" subculture.

Some months before the murder, the three girls had made an oath of blood, to strengthen the allegiance between them and to their cause. After making a cut in their hands and their wrists, as a sign of mutual fidelity, they poured their blood into a glass and they drank it; the girls themselves yet confirmed that one of them, deeply disgusted, had refused to take part in their ritualistic action. A second action, this time of vandalism, consisted in the theft of a Bible (which was afterwards burnt) from a church, which seemingly also involved three friends of theirs, who are however believed to be innocent with regard to the murder of the nun. From their jails where, at present, they are locked up, the young murderers show repentance.

### *The Procedural Story*

On 5th February 2001, the trial started with a summary procedure that caused wild arguments among experts. Some of them said that the girls were to be punished, while others said that they were mentally incompetent at the very moment they committed their crime. During the three hours of her final speech, the public prosecutor Cristina Rota many times pointed to the fact that the reason for the crime laid in the "Satanic" rite, defining Sister Maria Laura as an innocent sacrificial victim to the Devil. Therefore she asked for severe sentences lasting between 10 and 15 years, ultimately believing Amber, the girl that would be considered not guilty in the judgement of first instance, to be the real inspirer for the terrible crime.

According to the verdict being brought in August 2001, the crime was committed with malice aforethought; but the girls could get the benefit of a reduction of a third of the penalty guaranteed by the abbreviated rite. The judge for preliminary hearing in Court, Anna Poli, chose a third way however, by reducing the penalties requested for the adolescents by the Milan Public Prosecutor's Office, condemning to eight and a half years two of the three girls charged with the "Satanic crime", and absolving the third girl, who was believed to be mentally ill. The girl who was found not guilty was immediately sent to a judiciary reforming house for at least three years, whereas the two girls condemned for mental semi-illness (Veronica and Milena) had a common lot after their release.

The sentence of the Milan Appeal Court in April 2002 confirmed, instead, the Public Prosecutor's thesis. In fact, it didn't recognize the girl Amber, who was considered not guilty in the first verdict, as in a state of mental illness and thinking she was the leader of the three young murderers, they condemned her to twelve and a half years' imprisonment (the severest penalty), while confirming the judgement for her two friends.

An appendix to the procedural story regards Amber's temporary exit from prison in January 2003 because of expiration of the terms of preventive detention before the verdict of the Supreme Court of Cassation (Last resort Court), to which the girl's defence lawyers appealed after the sentence, in contrast to Veronica's and Milena's legal advisers. On the 23rd of January 2003, the Supreme Court of Cassation confirmed the judgement of the Court of Appeal, believing the girl to be guilty.

### **The Case of Father Giorgio Govoni**

Father Giorgio Govoni, a catholic priest who was very socially engaged in the geographic area of the Modena Lowlands as president of an association of voluntary services, was accused by some children, but in reality just by psychologists and social assistants of the local Health Unit (ASL), in Mirandola, who asserted to be able to interpret the children's tales. He was considered guilty of organising "Satanic" rites, during which the children were abused. The crimes he was accused of dated back to the year 1997. He was charged with having abused thirteen children (the youngest was just four months, the oldest was thirteen), together with some of their relatives (parents, uncles, grandparents and a brother) and a teacher. The inquiry he was involved in was set up in 1997 from the confessions of a child (who was well known to the social services for his hard family life). He started talking to the Mirandola Health Unit (ASL) team about sexual abuse carried out against him in a domestic and extra domestic background and in a context that was interpreted as "ritualistic" and "Satanic" by the team, as the episodes described by the child occurred in a cemetery. The investigations spread in all directions: 13 children were separated from their families and entrusted to the Modena Health

Unit (ASL) and Court of Law. They were fostered to Communities for Children and to custodian families.

According to the interpretation of the psychological team of the local Health Unit, the children themselves acknowledge while being interviewed that they have been victims of episodes of paedophilia and they point out the adults involved in "Satanic abuse". In particular, Father Giorgio Govoni is charged with being the leader of a group of "paedophilic Satanists", who were supposed to have acted in the cemeteries between Mirandola and Finale Emilia, performing among the other things false funerals, beheading children in Satan's honour and throwing their heads into the water of a river while the rites are being celebrated. Afterwards, it was dredged without finding any human remains, however.

Even though there was no evidence to convict him<sup>4</sup>, as we will see, the Public Prosecution, supported by the psychological team of the local Health Unit, demanded passing exemplary sentences against the identified adults. As for Father Giorgio Govoni, he kept on pleading his innocence supported and believed innocent by his parishioners, by his Bishop, by the Curia and by the whole Diocese of Modena-Nonantola.

#### *The Procedural Story*<sup>5</sup>

The procedural story linked up to the case of Father Giorgio Govoni is complex chiefly because of the great number of people involved in the searches and in trials. In any case, a judicial story can be described in four phases through a synthesising effort that highlights some very important elements emerging from the huge quantity of procedural acts in relation to the cases of other people involved in the reports drawn up by the experts, by the numerous interviews of children, social assistants and psychologists, and by the various experts reports.<sup>6</sup>

1) With a judgement of first instance on 5th June 2000, the Modena court filed 15 convictions with penalties varying between two and nineteen years. As regards Father Giorgio Govoni, the Court declared his crime discharged because "of the death of the guilty". In the eyes of the Court, the request for a 14-year sentence was thus well grounded and the priest's guilt was recognized, but as he died of a heart stroke in his lawyer's office on 19th May 2000, just a few hours after the

---

<sup>4</sup> It is enough to remind at this point that, from the reading of the trial proceedings, we may note a medical survey intended to prove the occurrence of sexual abuse where it is stated that the violated virginity of a maiden could rebuild by itself.

<sup>5</sup> The procedural story is composed of these important documents, which the author of this paper has read completely: *Tribunale di Modena* 2000, *Atto di interposizione di appello imputato Govoni Giorgio* 2001, *Corte di Appello di Bologna* 2001 and *Corte Suprema di Cassazione* 2003.

<sup>6</sup> For a general and critical setting of the matter, see this volume by a member of the Senate, Sen. Augusto Cortelloni (Cortelloni n.p.o.d).



pleading of the public prosecutor who believed him to be guilty, the crime was discharged.

2) On the 16th January 2001 the Council for the defence of Father Giorgio Govoni deposited an act of interposition of appeal at the Court of Appeal in Bologna at the criminal office of the Modena Court of Law in order to clear his client's memory.

3) The Bologna Court of Appeal (second Criminal Section), with a sentence of the 11th July 2001, demolished the hypothesis that alleged the existence of a group of "paedophilic Satanists". According to this hypothesis, they would have committed paedophilic acts for their Satanic rituals particularly inside some cemeteries in the Modena Lowlands. The judgement of first sentence was based on this faulty theory. The judgement of the second sentence confirmed or reduced the condemnation for just seven of the 15 people considered guilty, but it is necessary to point out that the facts they were accused of referred to acts of paedophilia committed inside a home environment. By knocking down the Satanic track and by clearing a lot of the convicted from their charges, the figure of Father Giorgio Govoni was in actual fact cleared, with the great satisfaction of all those who, above all in the clerical circles, had always believed in his innocence.<sup>7</sup>

4) The Supreme Court of Cassation confirmed the judgement of the second instance at the end of November 2002.

### **Two Different Stories but the Same Destiny: the Martyrdom**

The cases of Sister Maria Laura Mainetti and Father Giorgio Govoni seem to be very different at first sight, but actually they have an element in common: in both the cases the Bishops responsible for the Dioceses to which the Father and the Sister belonged spoke of them as "martyrs", even if they didn't interpret the term in a technical sense typical of beatification cases.<sup>8</sup>

#### *Some Remarks on the Case of Sister Maria Laura Mainetti*

The lives of the three young murderers of Sister Maria Laura don't make us think of affiliation or contact with officially organized Satanic groups, but of adolescent obsessions with sexuality and transgression. The "tedium of life", boredom, restless adolescence, and great fascination for subjects such as death, drugs and despair,

---

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. the note of the Vatican daily newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* on 13th July 200, "Don Giorgio Govoni era innocente: riabilitazione postuma in appello" (Father Giorgio Govoni was innocent: his posthumous rehabilitation).

<sup>8</sup> The two "martyrs" seems to suffer their martyrdom in nearly the same instant: Sister Maria Laura Mainetti was killed on the night between the 6th and the 7th June 2000, whereas father Giorgio Govoni, already dead because of the heart attack on 19th May 2000, was declared guilty the day before (on 5th June of the same year).

are the objects of an endless correspondence and their diaries also report various mottos drawn from the songs of the controversial rock singer Marilyn Manson.<sup>9</sup> All that emerges from the studies of the recollections on their PC's, carefully examined by the enquirers, is a deep attraction to "Satanism" as it is referred in the journalistic reports and so on, from which a pathological and constant interest in "Satanic rites" comes into being through the reading of books and the practice of domestic primitive rituals up to the very serious deed they committed.

From these considerations, we can draw two confirmations: first of all, one in favour of scholars specialized in the study of contemporary spiritual trends and in religious minorities<sup>10</sup>, who have insisted for years on the fact that *adolescent* Satanism has its *own* features; it is in this context that criminal episodes of various type *can* take place. Sometimes these episodes can obviously have a dramatic ending as happened in the case of Sister Maria Laura Mainetti. However, while some "fundamentalist" local interpretations (which are also spreading throughout Italy recently) were critical towards some horror or fantasy literary and cinema products dealing with magic themes, charging them with introducing children and adolescents to the world of magic and Satanism, it should be noted that the nun's young murderers weren't among the Italian fans fond of these genres and their products.<sup>11</sup> For lack of further evidence, we could indeed assume that the reading of Harry Potter's adventures, for example, characterized by a sharp distinction between the spheres of good and evil, might only have been of great help to the three wretched girls.

The second confirmation that we can get from the tragic story of Chiavenna, also in favour of the theses that experts have been supporting for years, lies in the fact that much adolescent "Satanism" basically assume the form of deviance and unease. Consequently it should not be analysed with the categories of the sociology of religious movements, but with those of juvenile deviance and unease. The stories of many young "Satanists" refer to the frequentation of deviant surroundings, of drugs, hooliganism, small-time crime, tedium of life, excessive

---

<sup>9</sup> Brian Warner's pseudonym (born in Canton, Ohio, USA., on 5th January 1969) that claims to draw on the two "myths" of Marilyn Monroe, the sex symbol, and Charles Manson, the inspirer of the Los Angeles slaughter. In 1994 Marilyn Manson meets Anton Szandor LaVey (Introvigne 1994, pp. 265–291) and joins the Church of Satan. According to Marilyn Manson's several biographers, this meeting deeply inspires the various themes and messages that emerge from the texts of his songs; he has become the idol of many young people that imitate his lifestyle inspired by a subculture with references to Satanism and to different types of transgressions. Numerous biographies on Marilyn Manson are available, both in paper and on the web – these biographies and the terms used are obviously to be examined critically because the different authors and fans tend to present the singer in "legendary" terms (Rogers 1997, Wainer 2000, Baddeley 2000).

<sup>10</sup> See in particular Introvigne 1994, 1997.

<sup>11</sup> On the matter and for some critical considerations on the "fundamentalist" trends in the approach to some genres of the popular culture, refer to Introvigne 2002.

sexuality, and monotony (some of these elements can also be found in the profile of the three young girls of Chiavenna). Sharing this thesis, Joyce Mercer therefore interprets adolescent Satanism like a mask of unease and deviance (Mercer 1991). On the other hand, as Massimo Introvigne states while analysing the attitudes of a number of marginalized young people crowding the scene of juvenile Satanism or adopting a Satanic subculture in their life style: "... in a world where sex and obscene language don't cause any scandal ... , maybe only Satan remains actually provoking" (Introvigne 1997: 362. My translation).

*Some Remarks on the Case of Father Giorgio Govoni*

Father Giorgio Govoni is definitely a victim of false charges, but also of a circle seized by a moral panic owing to mass-media reports on "Satanism" that, in contrast, excited the three murderers of Sister Maria Laura Mainetti. It is worth stopping for a while to examine the context in which his story can be placed, to understand that it represents another tragic chapter of the enormous and controversial psychiatric literature based on the so called "recovered memories" and on supposed "Satanic abuse" committed by adults against children.<sup>12</sup> Fortunately in Italy the "plague" of the "recovered memories" by children or by adults who, on the bed of the psychologist, falsely charge adults with "Satanic" criminal rites and with "Satanic ritual abuse", has had few marginal manifestations, the most important and tragic being the one we are presently interested in.<sup>13</sup>

The concept of "moral panic" developed in seventies to explain how some social problems, characterized either in the media or in the political institutions by a disproportionate reaction compared to the real menace, are hyped and cause excessive fears. Moral panics often base themselves on stereotypical statistics which, even if they are not corroborated by scientific or academic studies, spread from one medium to the other and may suggest political measures. According to the American sociologist and criminologist Philip Jenkins, one of the main scholars of the subject, it is important to underline the role of *moral entrepreneurs* that have some interest in making specific fears perpetual when dealing with moral panics. In addition, according to Jenkins, "the panic reaction doesn't take place owing to a rational evaluation on the scale of a particular menace", but is instead "the result of not well defined fears that eventually find a dramatic and simplified centre in a single incident or stereotype that therefore acts as a visible symbol for the discussion and debate" (Jenkins 1996: 170).

On an international level, in the years between 1988 and 1991, such outbreaks of panic caused remarkable damage in English-speaking countries, until it was stopped by a series of sentences and reports commissioned by public authorities.

---

<sup>12</sup> Victor 1993, Introvigne 1994, La Fontaine 1998.

<sup>13</sup> To be precise, the Modena Lowlands-episode takes place mainly in the context of supposed "Satanic ritual abuse" not having all the specific features to be set in the field of "recovered memories".

In particular, in 1994, two official reports, an English one commissioned to the sociologist Jean La Fontaine by the Health Ministry (La Fontaine 1994), and an American one of the National Center of Child Abuse and Neglect (Goleman 1994), gave the final death stroke to the taken-for-granted belief in the existence of "ritual Satanic abuse". Now, instead, as in the case of "recovered memories", social assistants and psychologists are obliged to answer for charges of slander and defamation in Court after the not guilty verdicts of supposed "Satanists". The American report states that, on 12,000 denunciations of supposed Satanic ritual abuse, *no cases* have been supported with evidence, even though a small number of cases concluded that individual paedophiles or couples (but not *organisations*) claimed to have relations with Satan or use this as a pretension to frighten their victims (*ibid.*).

Massimo Introvigne, CESNUR manager, was one of the consultants of Father Giorgio Govoni's defence team in the Modena Trial and on such occasions he prepared a wide, complex, articulated account drawn up on a precise request of Father Giorgio Govoni's defence team on "The myth of the rediscovered memories and the supposed Satanic Ritual Abuse" (Introvigne 1999). Such a report, not taken into any consideration by the judges of the first Trial, was instead implicitly kept in a very high account in the second Appeal Judgement. Concerning this subject, it is worth pointing out that this report represents the first intervention of an expert of religious minorities in a case of supposed "Satanic ritual abuse" (while, of course, there are many more cases abroad than in Italy).

According to Philip Jenkins, the spread of theories and the promotion of legal proceedings on "Satanic ritual abuse" have caused the reputation and popularity of the job of social assistant to rush to its lowest levels in the English-speaking countries. As a result, it has led governments to revise the rules relevant to the job, decreasing its powers and warning about leading questions asked to children in case of supposed abuse.<sup>14</sup> According to Jenkins, among moral panics which have arisen in our century, the only one that can be said to have actually ceased (in English-speaking countries) is that concerning Satanic ritual abuse, since it has been completely discredited either by Courts of Law, most times with appeal sentences, or by political authorities.

To the judges and to their charges at the Trial Court of First Instance for the case of the Modena Lowlands, to avoid enormous miscarriages of justice – the verdict of guilty was fortunately revoked in the Second Instance – involving innocent human beings with tragic consequences, we should suggest seeing and reflecting deeply on the film of the American director and producer Oliver Stone, *Indictment: the McMartin trial* (directed by Mike Jackson, 1995), broadcast in Italy

---

<sup>14</sup> Jenkins 1992. As regards the role of the social assistants and of the Juvenile Court of Law it must be pointed out that in consequence of the Modena Lowlands case, Sen. Augusto Cortelloni has introduced a bill on the people's initiative "for the abolition of the Juvenile Court of Law and established departments specialized in family matters and for the people under 18 at ordinary Courts of Law" (Cortelloni n.d.o.p: 79–86).

from RAI with the title *L'asilo maledetto* (The cursed nursery school) long before the reading of government reports and scientific literature on the theme of Satanic ritual abuse. The film accurately retells the events connected with the McMartin-case in 1983, which ended with a verdict of not-guilty for the people charged with Satanic sexual abuse of very young children of the McMartin preschool. The judicial McMartin case has been used as a model for a hundred similar cases, and it reveals remarkable similarities to the stories of which Father Giorgio Govoni has unfortunately been a victim.

## Conclusion

Sister Maria Laura Mainetti and Father Giorgio Govoni have, each in their own way, been martyrs of an unsuitable and emphatic way of facing the question of Satanism by the mass-media and, consequently, by the public opinion and bodies. To avoid such cases happening again, it would be necessary, above all, that the mass media should point out the fact that Satanists, both adolescent and organized, are actually few and that criminal activities among adolescents are rather infrequent. The latter are not powerful “lords of the darkness”, but rather, in many cases, just poor souls. Indeed, adolescent “Satanism” should be explicitly understood as a contrast to the worldview of *organized adult* Satanism with a unique understanding of Satan, Satanism and the Satanic.

## References

- Atto di interposizione di appello imputato Govoni Giorgio* 2001. Atto di interposizione di appello imputato Govoni Giorgio (alla Corte di Appello di Bologna) dell'avvocato Pierfrancesco Rossi, del Foro di Modena, difensore di don Govoni. Depositato presso la Cancelleria Penale del Tribunale di Modena il 16 January 2001.
- Baddeley, Gavin 2000. *Dissecting Marilyn Manson*. New Jersey: Plexus Pub.
- Corte di Appello di Bologna* 2001. Corte di Appello di Bologna – Seconda Sezione Penale, Sentenza dell'11 luglio 2001. Registro sentenze n. 1657. R.G. n. 2001/7041. RNR n. 1381/97. Depositata in Cancelleria 8 October 2001.
- Cortelloni, Augusto n.p.o.d [internet]. *Pedofilia e Satanismo. Risorge l'Inquisizione. Quel Pasticciaccio della Bassa Modenese* (Paedophilia and Satanism. The Revival of the Inquisition. The Bad Fix of the Modena Lowlands). Available in e-book version at [http://www.falsiabusu.it/documenti/Cortelloni\\_Augusto.pdf](http://www.falsiabusu.it/documenti/Cortelloni_Augusto.pdf)
- Corte Suprema di Cassazione* 2002. Corte Suprema di Cassazione – Terza Sezione Penale, Sentenza n. 2234 del 26 November 2002. Registro Generale n. 10739/2002. Depositata in Cancelleria 22 January 2003.
- La Fontaine, Jean 1994. *The Extent and Nature of Organized and Ritual Abuse: Research Findings*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

- La Fontaine, Jean 1998. *Speak of the Devil: Tales of Satanic Abuse in Contemporary England*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Goleman, Daniel 1994. "Proof lacking for ritual abuse by Satanists". *New York Times* October 31, 1994.
- Introvigne, Massimo 1994. *Indagine sul satanismo. Satanisti e anti-satanisti dal Seicento ai nostri giorni*. Mondadori, Milano (cf. the revised and updated French edition: *Enquete sur le Satanisme. Satanistes et Antisatanistes du XVIIIe Siècle a nos Jours*, Dervy: Paris, 1997).
- Introvigne, Massimo 1997. *Il satanismo*. Leumann (Torino): Elledici.
- Introvigne, Massimo 1999. "Parere pro veritate in relazione al procedimento penale". *Tribunale di Modena* n. 166/99 (Galliera e altri).
- Introvigne, Massimo 2002. "Tra Fondamentalismo e Magia. La Strana Controversia su Harry Potter" (Between Fundamentalism and Magic. The Strange Dispute on Harry Potter), paper presented at the meeting *Trovare Dio in Il Signore degli Anelli e in Harry Potter* (Finding God in The Lord of the Rings and in Harry Potter), 31 May 2002, organized by the Centro Studi Oriente Occidente (Centre of Eastern-Western Studies), Rectorate Hall of Ancona University. Available online at [http://www.cesnur.org/2002/potter\\_008.htm](http://www.cesnur.org/2002/potter_008.htm)
- Jenkins, Philip 1992. *Intimate Enemies*. Hawthorne, New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Jenkins, Philip 1996. *Pedophiles and Priests. Anatomy of a Contemporary Crisis*. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mercer, Joyce 1991. *Behind the Mask of Adolescent Satanism*. Minneapolis: Deaconess Press.
- Menegotto, Andrea 2003. "L'attuale panorama del sacro". In *Via Verità e Vita*, n. 193 (monograph: *Magia, occultismo, satanismo... Quali provocazioni per la catechesi?*), May–June (2003), pp. 8–14.
- Richardson, James T., Joel Best and David G. Bromley (eds) 1991. *The Satanism Scare*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Rogers, Kalen 1997. *Marilyn Manson: The Unauthorized Biography*. London: Omnibus Press.
- Tribunale di Modena* 2000. Sentenza n. 87/2000 del 5 June 2000 (Galliera e altri), Reg. Trib. n. 166/99, RNR n. 1381/97. *Depositata in Cancelleria* 2 December 2000.
- Victor, Jeffrey S. 1993. *Satanic Panic. The Creation of a Contemporary Legend*. Chicago, La Salle (Illinois): Open Court.
- Wainer, Chuck and Marilyn Manson 2000. *Marilyn Manson in his Own Words*. London: Omnibus Press.



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# Chapter 14

## Speculating on the Point 003 Percent? Some Remarks on the Chaotic Satanic Minorities in the UK

Dave Evans

In this chapter I discuss attempts to measure the number of Satanists in Britain, the process of othering, fundamentalist errors and assumptions about Satanism, the inherent flaws in societal perceptions of Satanists based on various popular authors' lurid misconceptions, and remark on chaos magic as a parallel to Satanism.

When they heard about this chapter-in-progress, an online chaos magician correspondent wrote to me: "So, do you heart Satan, baby, despite the fear – don't you want something safer?" (Anon. Email. 1–12–07). This raises the interesting point, that there is certainly a huge fear of Satanism in everyday society. A recent pagan correspondent to *Pentacle* magazine complained that the "Mind, Body, Spirit" section of a major British bookshop chain openly displayed *The Satanic Bible* and similar titles, which they regarded as being akin to hard-core pornography – in other words material that they felt simply should not be on public display. Subsequent correspondence to the magazine was lively, with no letters printed supporting the notion, but many calling for freedom of speech, emphasising the need for freedom of choice, and criticising the "dumbing down" of paganism in general that would result were overtly Satanist (and similar) books banned. A further letter highlighted that the attitude of the original writer demonstrated precisely the heavy-handed and dogmatic censorial attitude that many neo-Pagans decry the Christian Church for holding about Paganism (*Pentacle* 2004, two consecutive editions).

There does seem to be a perceived "continuum of supposed evil" within those interested in religion of all kinds. The modern British occult philosopher Lionel Snell said: "Some would say we live in a secular age ... interest in things spiritual is a minority fringe thing ... but when you consider establishment figures into religion you realise that is not so" (Snell, 2002, lecture). This would be a given, when one regularly witnesses Heads of State and politicians attending televised Church services, and Snell continued: "but such people would agree that there is a loony fringe – those interested in the occult ... but when you consider the broad sweep of Anthroposophists, Theosophists, Alice Baileyites ... etc. you realise it is hardly just a loony fringe, it includes many respected establishment figures" (ibid.).



This too is a given, with members of the British Royal Family often advocating New Age concepts (for example, CNN Website 2000).<sup>1</sup> Snell continued: “but such people would agree that there *is* a loony fringe – namely those who claim to be into magic ... now get a group of magicians together – including the Inner Light people, the W. E. Butler and Gareth Knight lot etc. – and they too seem fairly normal. But they would agree that there really is a loony fringe – i.e. those that follow the dangerous Aleister Crowley ... ” (Crowley, 1875–1947, was perhaps the most notorious occultists of his, or any other age. See Evans 2007). Snell continued:

“ ... well, get a group of Thelemites (Crowleyans) together and you do have some odd people, but not much more than any other minority clique – but they do admit that there are dangers, particularly in the sort of uncontrolled sorcery practiced by Austin Spare” (Spare was a magician, artist and philosopher much beloved of black-clad Left-Hand Path magicians)

“ ... get a group of Spare admirers together and it includes lovers of his art as well as his magic, and they might well warn you off Chaos Magicians, who have done so much to discredit the man ... get a group of Chaos magicians together and they will say ‘*please* don’t confuse us with Satanists!’” (Ibid.).

Quite whom the very few remaining Satanists, (the 0.003 percent of my title, which figure is discussed below) on this reducing continuum of evil would warn the listener against is unclear! But it is probably the Christians.

This process of “othering” is a powerful tool, and misunderstood, as the historian Michael Foldy wrote:

Otherness only signifies *difference without quantifying it*, and, in many cases, *without explaining why difference, in and of itself, is necessarily bad...* stigmatising someone as “other” implies that we know practically nothing about them... the real threat of the “other” is the threat of our *own* ignorance, which is *projected outwards* (Foldy 1997: 144, emphasis added).

This fear and ignorance is often projected onto Satanists, or in many cases a social construction that is labeled as Satanism. The academic Jean La Fontaine wrote that, historically “as well as being the source of evil in the world, Satan and his demons were believed to have human allies and servants. In the late twentieth century ... it is on the human servants of Satan, rather than ... on the figure of Satan himself, that the *myth* of modern Satanism focuses” (La Fontaine 1999: 85).

Richard Horsley agrees (in a discussion of early-modern witchcraft) that the institutions of the time failed to “distinguish between the official *theory* and the popular *realities*” (Horsley 1979: 690), so that those executed in earlier centuries as “evil satanic witches” were usually nothing of the kind. This is still the case today,

---

<sup>1</sup> HRH Prince Charles initiated the Foundation for Integrated Medicine in 1996, and lobbied the government to allocate £10 million to fund a five-year research program into the effects of alternative medicine.

it is not simply long-dead “witches” who can be demonized, it can be anyone with whom we take issue. As the modern Satanist Anton LaVey described:

The Devil and his works have long assumed many forms. Until recently, to Catholics, Protestants were devils. To Protestants, Catholics were devils. To both, Jews were devils. To the Oriental, the Westerner was a devil. To the American settler of the Old West, the Red Man was a devil. Man’s ugly habit of elevating himself by defaming others is an unfortunate phenomenon, yet apparently necessary to his emotional well-being (LaVey 1972: 11).

To this 35-year old comment it should be added that today, to much of the Muslim world, America is seen as “the Great Satan”. To many Americans the Muslims are the embodiment of evil, and the most recent war in Iraq is seen as part of “the war on terror” and loudly portrayed as a high-stakes fight between *absolute good* and *absolute evil*, and hailed as a “crusade” (being a very provocative Christian-derived word) for “freedom” (whatever that is).

Although consistently “othered”, Satanism continues, but cannot exist in a vacuum, it is interdependent with the wider society in which it occurs, and the majoritarian perceptions of it. As such “post-war Satanisms” (a deliberate plural, since Satanism is not one concrete thing, but has many facets) are in very many ways not the same as any forms of it existing pre-WWII. The very event of the war and the death and destruction that ensued, the introduction and continuation of rationing, changes in consumer confidence, political developments, ongoing secularisation, increases in international transfer of information, technological advances and many other factors left the face of the wider world, and Satanism in the late 1940s onwards drastically altered from 1939.

As the archaeologist Robert Wallis remarks about the distinctions and confusions between older and current Druidry, “for the most part, the critics perception ... is clouded by images of ... [the] Victorian ... [form] but the two strands barely resemble each other today” (Wallis 1999: 12). The same is true of modern Satanism, which for a large part has a “hangover” of imagery lingering stubbornly in some cases as pretty much wholesale “lifts” from nineteenth century Freemasonry (the leadership of the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn*, inspiration for much subsequent ritual magic, was comprised largely of senior Masons), but which today is outdated in many instances. It also suffers hugely from the writings of the novelist Dennis Wheatley, and the imagery of the horror films that his books spawned, as is discussed below.

The American psychiatrist and entheogenic pioneer Dr. Timothy Leary wrote that LSD is a psychoactive drug with the most unusual emotional and psychological effects: it can cause terror and panic *among people who have never taken it* (Leary 1997: 71). Being an academic deliberately studying the occult, and especially so studying it with an attitude that does NOT automatically *a priori* pathologise the subject (and, crucially, the participants), has a similarly terrifying power, in that it frightens those who have no knowledge of the subject. For someone to study Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism or most other religions should not upset rational adults, but the occult is

different. Within that, mention research into Satan and the most objective, rational, intelligent, educated colleagues often tend to blanch, or simply flee. Why?

### Qualitative Investigations

It would be useful to first give some context as regards the actual numbers of people who might be currently involved in Satanism in Britain. Participation is a minority activity: that much is certain, but it is necessary to examine the likely numbers involved, since fundamentalist Christian sources often make wildly inflated claims for the size of “the opposition”.

Nearly twenty years ago the British occult equipment supplier and bookseller the *Sorcerers Apprentice* (SA) ran an ambitious survey, *The Occult Census* (Sorcerers Apprentice 1989: 9–10). This was based on elective self-reporting of an opportunity sample, contacted either *via* a customer mailing list, through personal callers to the shop, or *via* the non-homogenous and *ad hoc* distribution of piles of the census form to other known shops and magical groups around the country. This gave a geographically-skewed picture, with 21% of responses from the North-East, the SA’s “home” area, and 12% from the neighbouring North-West, which gave a total of 33% of their responders from an area of the country which according to official data held only 22% of the national population at the time. By contrast, the South-East of the country had a population of 16% of the total for the country, yet supplied only 8% of the *Occult Census* data.

Another example of the statistical glitches in the *Occult Census* is that it showed 4% of respondents self-labeling as Satanists, which if extrapolated to a national population of occultists would mean around 10,000 Satanists. This seems hugely higher in proportion than the more recent 2001 Government census figures of around 1,500 (see below) would indicate. One reason for this may be simply that the SA sells more nominally (and subjectively) “satanic” merchandise and books than many other occult shops, thus probably drawing in more “satanic” customers than others. Many Satanists would simply not be interested in completing *any* surveys, up to and including the Official Census, since such actions maybe perceived as bowing to authority; being anathema to their own individualist principles.

As Jean La Fontaine wrote: modern “Satanists could ... be described as both hedonist and individualist, although they themselves might refer instead to anti-puritanism and anti-authoritarianism, all authority being perceived as equally evil” (La Fontaine 1999: 89).

Despite problems of interpretation the SA should be warmly credited for attempting this (then) unique task; the intention of which was to gather factual information to counter some of the fundamentalist propaganda surrounding a “Satanic ritual abuse” scare in eighties Britain. They received slightly over 1,000 replies, from which they extrapolated a British population of occultists to be 250,000 (by means that are not made clear). This approximately doubly overstates the subsequent estimates of Ronald Hutton around a decade ago that the numbers

of general Occultists, Druids, Wiccans and neo-Pagans in Britain were somewhere between 105–130,000 (Hutton 1999: 400–401).

It should also be remarked that talk of neo-Pagans, witches, magicians and occultists involves terms that are ill-defined and sometimes, but not always, interchangeable. The numbers of neo-Pagans are likely to be considerably higher than the numbers of practicing witches and magicians, since neo-Paganism is more often a lifestyle matter rather than a religious-magical stance. Peripheral to this lie the Satanists.

From the 2001 UK Government census results, the minority religion results for the question “religion held” were released to a third-party pagan website (Cursus Walker website, 6–8–2003, UK Office for National Statistics Office website, a), from which [Table 1](#) below, is derived. I have been selective with those faiths included, there were various other categories with less than 100 respondents, such as “ancestor worship,” but I trust the point being made is clear. It is important to note that respondents were permitted to write the name of their “other religion” on the form, so they were self-labeling, not ticking a pre-printed box for the categories given below.

For comparison, non-denominational “Christian” made up over 71% of the total, with many other Christian faiths named separately from that (Catholic, Methodist, Greek Orthodox etc), which if accrued would take the “Christian” percentage even higher. Over 160 different faiths were mentioned on the Census, less than 20 of them being easily ascribed to a pagan-magical source. There is also the major problem of the interpretation of self-labeling, since any term cannot be assumed to translate equally across all individuals choosing it.

Table 1 Selected minority “religious affiliation” in England and Wales: respondents to the 2001 National Census.

	NUMBER	% rounded
<b>ENGLAND AND WALES</b>	<b>Total 52,041,920</b>	<b>100</b>
Selected Neo-Pagan Faiths:		
Animism	401	0.001
Druidism	1,657	0.004
Heathen	278	0.001
New Age	906	0.002
Pagan	30,569	0.059
Satanism	1,525	0.003
Vodun	123	0.001
Wicca	7,227	0.014

*Note:* Based on results of a snapshot census held on 29 April 2001. Participation in the census itself was compulsory, but not all questions, including religion, were mandatory. Results are for England and Wales only, although from commentary on the Census Office website these are not hugely different in proportion to those of Scotland.

The very notion of a stated religion on a census form is problematic since definitions of “religion” can exclude practices such as the more pragmatic forms of chaos magic (which often have no room for spirituality or mysticism, only magical results) or philosophical Satanism, which holds Satan as a convenient metaphor for action, not as a deity *per se*.

Also, as the Office of National Statistics’ commentary points out, although completing the core information on the survey was mandatory, “the religion question was voluntary, and 4,011,000 people chose not answer it (7.7 per cent)” (UK Office for National Statistics Office website, a).

An additional *caveat* is that neo-Paganism, magic and Satanism are still in some cases (perceived as) societally and legally contentious issues. For example to openly state that one is a Satanist on an official form, as 1,525 individuals did, on the same official form that also gives considerable other personal detail (including one’s name and address) and which data is at the full disposal of those in power, might be a risk considered not worth taking by many, especially given the repeating cyclic pattern of Satanic ritual abuse (SRA) moral panics which seem to occur in the UK.<sup>2</sup>

### So, How Many Satanists in Britain?

The census results beg the question: are there around 1,500 “real” Satanists in England and Wales? This is doubtful, as one must consider the responses of young adults wishing to merely shock or pose, so of those 1,500 some may be “fashion-Satanists” only. There may also be many who have *not* self-labeled, for reasons discussed above. It should also be noted also that only just over 1,600 self-identified as Druids, yet Druidry in the UK is much more “out in the open” and public than Satanism (and has been extensively studied by academics), and there would be considerable doubt that there were only 1,600 actual Druids in the country.

There is also, for the first time in the history of the UK National Census, the problem of deliberate spoofing. There was an online campaign for fans of the *Star Wars* science-fiction films (Lucas, 1977) to respond to the religion question with “Jedi Knight”, the mystical warriors in the films. “The number of people who stated Jedi was 390,000 (0.7 per cent of the population)” (UK Office for National

---

<sup>2</sup> This area is outside the scope of this chapter, however the conclusive official report into the original matter, denying that any such ritual abuse occurred, is La Fontaine 1994. For a wider view of the SRA matter the reader is directed to the other books by Jean La Fontaine and Gareth Medway indicated in the bibliography, and for a case study of the effects on local communities of the invasion by police, social services and the media see Bell 1988. As Medway highlights, the abuse that did for certain occur was that of numerous sociologists, care workers, medics and police officers, compulsively if not ritually probing (and photographing) the anuses of countless young children, in their desperate (and ultimately futile) desire to prove wholesale sexual abuse.

Statistics Office website, b), a figure in excess, by perhaps threefold, of the total number of “real” neo-Pagans in the UK. It also exceeded those who self-identified as Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist, Church of England, Roman Catholic or Methodist.

My work on the census data indicates that Occultism in Britain is probably based around a minority group of perhaps not much more than a hundred–thousand (Evans 2007: 70–81) so Hutton’s estimate now seems very accurate, and if there are as many as three thousand Satanists within that figure this would amaze most researchers in the field. The point 003 percent population figure given in my title is optimistic indeed.

In many cases, when discussing particular magical groups within any belief system the numbers involved are far smaller – hundreds or perhaps dozens, but their influence may still be significant. This is most often due to publications they produce, which are accessed and assimilated by a wider audience, since active membership of a group is not synonymous with total readership. So even a few Satanist writers can be influential. The healthy continuation of *The Satanic Bible* and Anton LaVey’s other Church of Satan titles in print for over 30 years (a feat that is *very* rare in any occult title) also does not automatically indicate that there are huge numbers of practicing Satanic magicians (in precisely the same way that the huge circulation of many printings of the Christian bible is far from perfectly correlated with the number of active believers in that faith). Many readers will have been attracted by the individualist, self-agency approach, and as such they will be “philosophical satanists” (with no capital “s”), or simply be bohemians, hedonists and dilettantes who might enjoy the shock value or fashionable *kudos* of having such a book on display in their homes, rather than being magical practitioners *per se*.

The attitude of some Church groups to occultism is that it is *all* derived from, or under the control of, Satan, and is thus blasphemous and evil by definition. Although the Church is now largely separate from wider secular society, it is often the case that religious speakers claim to be (albeit un-elected) representatives, if not actual moral protectors of all of British society, and that thus they hold that occultism is regarded as absolutely evil by all of that society. “Occultism” in this context includes everything from newspaper horoscopes to full-blown full-dress magical ritual, and this occasionally results in the Church opening itself to extremes of ridicule. For example, despite his injunction that “careless sensationalism will not help our reputation as Christians”, the fundamentalist Christian author Roger Ellis warns how simply listening to Reggae music can lead into involvement in the evils of voodoo, apparently (and this is his only stated reason) since both derive from the Caribbean (Ellis 1989: 78, 116).

As a more common example of Christian authorities and occultists crossing swords on this matter, in the early eighties a vicar in High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire attempted to prevent the local multi-screen cinema complex

from running a “horror film theme night” for Hallowe’en,<sup>3</sup> since it encouraged Satanism, in his opinion.

This was not long after a women’s pre-natal yoga class had been banned from using a local Church hall for their un-Christian practices and “occultism”. Ironically there was already an active Church of Satan cell subtly active in the same town at that point. The musician Marc Almond was initiated into the Church in the early eighties “in a wood...very near where the Hellfire Club used to meet” (Almond 1999: 400). The Hellfire Club were a group of aristocratic dilettantes of the nineteenth century who met either in a man-made cavern at West Wycombe or the nearby Medmenham Abbey, and are still a much-beloved figurehead of modern bohemians and esoteric types. So to some extent the unfortunate Vicar had missed his chance of “prevention” of anything.

It should also be noted that some of the “authoritative” sources in use by Church and lay “experts” alike in examining Satanism (and the occult in general) suffer hugely under any level of academic scrutiny. One example would be “The Reverend” Montague Summers (1880–1948), whose damning polemics on witchcraft and magic, both ancient and modern, are still used as unimpeachable academic source materials by some (often self-titled) “experts” among fundamentalists (for example, the Ankerberg Foundation website, 14–7–2004). A taste of Summers’ style might indicate how far away from modern attitudes (and academic accuracies) he is:

I have endeavored to show the witch as she really was – an evil liver: a social pest and parasite ... devotee of a loathly and obscene creed ... adept at poisoning ... and other creeping crimes: a member of a powerful secret organization inimical to Church and State: a blasphemer ... an abortionist ... a minister to vice and inconceivable corruption, battenning upon the filth and foulest passions of the age (Summers 1994 (1925): xvi).

However Summers was not the pure, devout Christian cleric he appeared to be. Despite his habitual wearing of priestly clothing and affectation of a priestly calling his “reverendship” was unorthodox, at best originating in a “breakaway” Christian group with no authority to grant such a title and at worst simply fake; thus in either case having no clerical validity. He was an avid accumulator of erotic writings and pornographic homosexual photographs, and was once charged with paedophilia. It seems he also conducted a “black mass” in 1918 (d’Arch Smith 1991: 40).

The anti-occult novelist Dennis Wheatley (1897–1977) who ironically made a large fortune based at least in part from salacious black magic novels produced a “factual” book, *The Devil and All His Works* in 1971, late in his career. This was in part a negative polemic about religions other than Christianity, such as

---

<sup>3</sup> A neo-Pagan festival which has some historical precedent for being celebrated in earlier times, see Rogers 2002 for excellent coverage.

Buddhism, and what he saw as the “primitive” beliefs of Islam. Wheatley’s own upper-class background and ultra-Conservative politics invariably intervened in his increasingly paranoid novels where he repeatedly allied Satanists with Communists and/or Nazis in a global conspiracy to take over the world.

“Satanisation” is a very powerful social and political tool: the German Kaiser was depicted as a demon in First World War era cartoons in Britain (La Fontaine 1999: 89), and in national politics the demonisation of candidates has been a regular practice in the electoral “dirty tricks” arsenal. In the UK Parliamentary elections of 1997 Tony Blair, the Labour party’s potential new Prime Minister was portrayed in posters commissioned by the Conservative government as a red-eyed leering Satanic caricature, which did not prevent his party winning that election. The poster campaign was heavily criticised at the time by Church leaders for “irresponsible use of satanic imagery” (*Guardian* newspaper website, 22–07–2002).

After the election of the conservative government of Margaret Thatcher in 1979 and the ensuing 18 years of conservative rule (which was ultimately overturned by the “satanic” Blair), British society was hugely influenced by a political remodeling of society. This revolved around the creation and maintenance of a consumerist model, in parallel with advances in technology which was reflected in more and more products being made available to the consumer with the means to buy them, and more and more complex weapons being made available to the military and more powerful machinery and chemicals being made available to industrial and agricultural concerns. Ironically it might have been precisely that consumerist, expansive, free-trade “Greed is good” society (and that particular Prime Minister, in Margaret Thatcher) so hated by many eco-friendly “green” occultists that actually allowed for the explosion of a revival of interest in magic in general, and individualist beliefs such as Satanism in particular. An avalanche of occult books (even if they were critical of the political *status quo* of the time, as many were) and commodities became much more freely available in the marketplace under this consumerist and individualist model. Despite the fall of Thatcher herself in 1990, and subsequent nominally “socialist” governments in the UK since 1997, plus several periods of “boom and bust” economics during the period, this financial paradigm has largely remained, as has the relative ease of occult book publication and supply of magical commodities, which has grown hugely in the last 15 years especially.<sup>4</sup>

So far as Satanism and Christian fundamentalist assumptions of evil and morality is concerned, the occultist and artist Ithell Colquhoun wrote in the fifties, perceptively, “if one is going to classify all non-Christian rites as black, one will find oneself in very deep water indeed” and that it was unwise to believe that “the

---

<sup>4</sup> A recent development has been the company Lightning Source (and similar companies), whose rationale allows for “Do It Yourself” publication and distribution of small print runs at prices that are not prohibitive, allowing for many more “minority” titles to appear, and has put publication in the hands of individuals, not publishing companies.



motive (for any magical act) ... need only be “selfish” to be classed as “black”. If this were so, then much petitionary prayer ... would come into the same category” (Colquhoun 1952: 173–4, 177), as would the acts of those visiting orthodox religious shrines such as Lourdes wishing to be healed of their afflictions, which if God-given are surely to be accepted as such by those who believe in that deity? In the following decade the founder of modern Satanism, Anton LaVey added that “anyone who buys an article of clothing for a purpose other than covering his body and protecting it from the elements is guilty of pride” (one of the seven deadly sins in Christianity) (La Vey 1977 (1969): 39). They both make very good points.

As the modern magician and author Lionel Snell pointed out in the mid-eighties, no-one in magic, apart from “the odd artist or pimply adolescent going through a decadent crisis” dedicates themselves to absolute evil, everyone believes in themselves that they are doing right” (L’Estrange 1998 (1986): 21). The Right-Hand Path rush to a white-magic only perspective has also been criticised by Snell as actually dangerous for

accentuating the positive and eliminating the negative so all is discussed in terms of “light” with little reference to the role of darkness except as an error waiting for the light ... such religious devotion to the Good, or Light, or Purity ... without some balancing attention to the negative could lead us down the path to perfection beaten by the Nazis if we are not careful (Snell 2001: 147).

There is of course no accepted unit of measure or absolute authority in what is good and what is evil. The occultist Phil Hine writes:

Like many other aspects of occultism, what is termed to be “black magic” depends very much on who is doing the defining ... a Christian might argue that whatever pagans and magicians might say, all magical practices are “black”. It is more common however, for those who expound the reality of “black magic” to define it in terms of that which they disapprove of. For example Gareth Knight, in his book *A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism* (1976) states unequivocally that: “Homosexuality, like the use of drugs, is one of the techniques of black magic” (Hine n.d.).

Black and White magic have become synonymous with the terms Left-Hand Path (LHP) and Right-Hand Path (RHP) magics, derived from the Hindu system, and to many (erroneously), the Left-Hand Path *is* purely Satanism. It is important to note that within the early Hindu culture there was no moral distinction made between the two paths; they were simply two alternative and equal means to attain the same goal, that being religious union with the Divine. It is only latterly, in the last 120 years or so, and in the West, that any value judgments have been added to the practices, since Hinduism and more latterly the Buddhism derived from it split into two factions, one largely following the RHP methods, and one the LHP.

## How Did the Left-Hand Path become Labeled as Satanic?

The use of the negative, Satanic value judgment attached to the terminology of the LHP in the West appears to derive from the Ukrainian explorer and mystic Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891). She was the founder of Theosophy, a movement intended to distil and employ the essential principles of divine contact from the worlds' religions. Blavatsky, or HPB as she is often referred to in magical conversation, was widely traveled and is perhaps the most influential figure in late nineteenth century occultism.

From her travels, Blavatsky helped to create a fabricated historical precedent for extant general definitions of black and white magic, calling these the Left- and Right-Hand Paths. It is likely that a similar situation might have occurred if a somewhat gullible Hindu explorer had traveled in early-modern Europe during the Reformation, and had first met with communities of Protestants, who would surely have warned them from consorting with “those evil Catholics”, or *vice versa*. The subsequent books written by this explorer may have delineated between the nice, down-to-earth Protestants and the alleged “baby-eating Catholics” of Europe in a similar way to Blavatsky's knee-jerk demonisation of the adherents of the LHP. Her distinction was poured into an indiscriminate *fin-de-siecle* Western mind hungry for any kind of exotic magical lore, and other writers (largely unquestioningly) reproduced Blavatsky's notions of the LHP, where such a specific duality had not been known before.

One such early example of the propagation of a Blavatskyesque LHP was by the mystic Arthur Edward Waite (1857–1942). The American-born Waite traveled to England as a child and later joined numerous mystical and magical groups, including the *Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn* in 1891, and he subsequently formed several groups of his own. In one of his many books on occultism he writes of “the sovereign horror of the Brothers of the Left Hand Path”, and describes this as if the distinction is both new to him, and of modern genesis. He sounds a slight note of caution as to the labeling: “occult life has been entered by two classes of adepts, who have sometimes been fantastically distinguished as the Brothers of the Right and the Brothers of the Left, transcendental good and transcendental evil being specified as their respective ends, and in each case they are something altogether different from what is understood conventionally by either White or Black Magic” (Waite 1898/1911: 16–17).

An important character of the first half of the twentieth century in this respect is “Dion Fortune”, (Violet Firth, 1890–1946) who led the Right-Hand Path (and loosely Hermetic) Order now known as the *Servants of the Light*. Fortune's books were identified by the modern magician Phil Hine as being an influential source of scurrilous commentary on the nature of what “black magicians” did, which Fortune presented both in her lurid magical novels and her practical magic texts: “throughout the twenties & thirties ... (she) alleged that there was a conspiracy of male occultists who used “homosexual techniques” to build up what she called “dark astral power”. Although she never named any of these “black adepts”, it

is clear that she was probably referring to C.W. Leadbeater, and perhaps, also Aleister Crowley” (Hine 1991).

Although still influential in some magical quarters, Fortune’s books now seem rather “stuck in their era” (the twenties or so), for example with her discussion of how best to manage one’s Indian house-servants to prevent them worshipping the dark goddess *Kali* (Fortune 1970 (1930): 67). What proportion of her current readership run into that problem on a daily basis is probably very low. So far as Fortune’s allegations of a homosexual conspiracy go, Crowley certainly was an active and often promiscuous bisexual for most of his life, and Charles W. Leadbeater (1847 or 1854–1934; the birth date is uncertain and open to debate) was a leading light in the Theosophy Movement of the early twentieth century until his career was damaged by several (seemingly accurate) scandals about his sexual predilection for young boys (Blavatsky Study Centre website, 18–4–2005; Washington 1993: 117–118), but that is all.

The seed of such ideas may also have originated in the publicity storm following Oscar Wilde’s several trials for immorality and indecency with young men in 1895. The moral panic of predatory Satanic homosexuals metaphorically “feeding” on “innocent young boys” spread from wider society into occultism in the early part of the twentieth century, where to some extent the notion remains. As the modern magician and author Phil Hine writes:

By the end of the Nineteenth Century there were two “identities” based on Gender preference – two categories of person: Heterosexual (normal) and Homosexual (Deviant). These became mutually exclusive absolutes – one was either normal, or not, in these terms ... as a great deal of what passes for modern occult literature emerged at the end of the Nineteenth Century, it’s really of no surprise that occult writers took on board the prevailing social mores of their age, especially when it came to regarding attitudes to sexuality.

This appears to be based upon the Leadbeater incidents, and “the resulting furore not only damaged the Theosophical movement as a whole, but also gave rise to the rumours that there existed groups of ‘Black Magicians’ who obtained occult power by psychically vampirizing young boys” (Hine 1991).

The negative, racist and salacious fictional works of Dennis Wheatley (1897–1977) and the later horror-thriller films based upon his writings have considerably helped to reinforce this negative view of the LHP and its adherents. For example in his fifth novel *The Devil Rides Out* (1935) the members of a black magical, Left-Hand Path group headed by a character called *Mocata* (based in many respects on Crowley, whom Wheatley had met several times), include a Negro who is “a ‘bad Black’ if ever I saw one” (as described by one of the book’s heroes), an Albino, a Mandarin Chinese “whose slit eyes betrayed a cold, merciless nature”, a one-armed Eurasian, a “fat, oily-looking Babu” (a hugely derogatory term of the time for an Indian) and a hare-lipped German (Wheatley 1972 (1935): 5, 10, 11, 25). In his *Strange Conflict* “the Order of the Left-Hand Path ... has its adepts

... the Way of Darkness ... has held Africa, the Dark Continent, in its grip for centuries ... most of the black man's Magic is crude stuff but ... among whites ... it is generally the wealthy and intellectual ... to whom it appeals". A link is also made to Nazism's involvement with the Left-Hand Path (Wheatley 1996 (1941): 12–13). In another book (Wheatley 1960: 88, 392–3), a Satanic group have as their henchman a sinister Indian, and a group of Satanists arrested in Britain comprised "a strangler ... a bank-note forger ... a Czech secret agent ... mostly rich people and well-known...who have been paying fat cheques ... to ... sabotage British industry", thus being a collection of both "low-lives", other nationalities and unpatriotic aristocrats.

This blanket-condemnation seems eerily reminiscent of the xenophobic media storm generated after the trials of Wilde with the media decrying his aesthetic, decadent artistic philosophy as a "*French* and *pagan* plague" and as Michael Foldy writes: "since England and France had been "natural" enemies for centuries, and ... France had always been a hotbed of vice, permissiveness and radical ideas, Wilde's "cult" was viewed as unpatriotic if not treacherous". Wilde did not have a cult, of course, in the same way that there is no homosexual conspiracy in occultism. In the latter half of the nineteenth century much pioneering medical and psychiatric work was carried out, across Europe, in an attempt to medicalise and categorise deviancy and degeneracy in its many forms.

As Foldy continues, these included the "chronically sick, the mentally ill, the criminals, the sexually deviant, the politically malcontent, and even the chronically poor" and "the 'degenerate' label was used so often in popular discourse ... that an inevitable cross-linkage of negative associations occurred. *If a person managed to fall into any one of the ... categories, he was often, by association, suspected of fitting them all*" (all from Foldy 1997: 53, 73–4, 142–3, *fn* 69, emphasis added).

This is much the technique used by Wheatley in his novels, of attaching every possible "sin", deformity, defect of character or disease of mind to any scapegoat, thus the adherent of the Left-Hand Path, under Wheatley, commits an all-encompassing and encyclopaedic range of religious, moral, political and criminal offences, is physically unpleasant to the eye, has a disease or morality that is possibly contagious in some manner and is usually "not British", or at least not a patriot. Thus as a Satanist you are denied even nationality in the eyes of the "pop" novelist, and thus in the eyes of those that read the material. To a very large extent public perception of what Satanists do is based on this level of work, produced by people who knew very little about Satanism at all.

As a hugely best-selling popular author, the writings of Wheatley had magnitudes more readers in wider culture (and in the case of his films, millions more viewers of the ideas therein) than those of Blavatsky, Waite, Fortune, Crowley, LaVey, Kenneth Grant or any other occultists or academics combined. In 1972, after nearly 40 years of publishing (including this period having been interrupted by a world war, and several subsequent years of paper rationing, which limited non-essential book publication) Wheatley wrote of selling the quite astonishing figure of *30 million* books (Wheatley 1972: *xii*). Achieving even a tenth of that would

simply delight any author today, even with freedom of the presses and a much better publicity machine than Wheatley ever had access to.

In the eighties the hit adventure film *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* propagated this stereotype further, with an evil Indian Left-Hand Path cult worshipping the Goddess *Kali* and giving human sacrifice, plus eating monkey brains and live beetles while employing a *smorgasbord* of evil magical practices against both the “civilised whites” and their fellow Indians who were not on the Left-Hand Path (Spielberg 1984). Again, bearing in mind the low numbers of magical practitioners in any case, the aggregated viewers of this very popular film would exponentially outnumber the readers of any published occultist or academic possessed of a coherent and balanced view of the LHP.

It should also be noted that the “othering” processes of colonialism, Orientalism and class prejudice has perhaps extended into the way that academia itself looks at magic. As the academic and magician Justin Woodman wrote:

It is important that academics do recognise ... how (their work) can impact on the ways in which the claims of various social/cultural groups may or may not be recognised and validated ... social scientists up until now have largely ignored satanism, chaos magic, etc, or have marginalised practitioners... magicians are represented as white, well educated middle class professionals; chaos magicians are on the other hand are shown as scruffy, working class layabouts – thus ... (not) “proper”, “authentic” or “serious” magicians! (Woodman, JSM E-list, 30–7–2004)

They are thus considered unworthy of study by much of academia. The magician Phil Hine also writes: “there is a certain glamour for some occultists around declaring oneself to be a “black magician” or “satanic adept”. If a label has a significant taboo or shock value attached to it, then some individuals are going to be attracted to trying it on themselves” (Hine n.d.). As an example, the pop singer Marc Almond formally joined the Church of Satan in the eighties not strictly as a magician, but to ritually align himself with the Satanic philosophy, of man being “dark and melancholic, inherently romantic”. As he freely admits in his autobiography the act was also “a juvenile attempt to shock and be outrageous” (Almond 1999: 59–60).

This goes much deeper, of course than mere shock value, there is ritual self-transformation going on. Lionel Snell writes that: “The direction of Magic is not towards Good, nor towards Truth, but rather towards Wholeness. A Wholeness in which Bad and Untruth also have their part” (Johnstone 2001: 124). The American magician and Crowleyite, Jack Parsons (1914–1952), expressed a similar view: “We must have it all out, the fear and the disgust, the hatred and cowardice, and the beauty, tenderness and courage as well, and balance all. Then we can get the truth” (Parsons 1989).

The need for balance is a quality often remarked upon in practical magic texts. One of the modern founders of chaos magic, Peter Carroll wrote: “a natural

inclination toward the darker side of magic is as good a point as any from which to begin the ultimate quest, and half this book (his *Liber Null*) is devoted to the black arts” (Carroll 1978: 7). So, by derivation, half of his book must also be devoted to white magic.

In common with many “new movements” (in any field) chaos magicians are often seen by their contemporaries, both in the occult or secular materialist world, as anarchists, dangerous and/or worrying revolutionaries. The modern occult philosopher, Snell, described the “continuum of perceived evil” as discussed above, and chaos magicians were seen to be very far towards the “evil” end of the spectrum. Snell also wrote “a materialist world is not flexible. It is brittle, and would shatter rather than stretch to make room for magic” (Angerford & Lea 2002: 115) and it is probable that within that view there is a similar continuum *via* which the wider magical subculture itself is too inflexible to completely accept chaos magic.

The seemingly amoral, nihilistic motto of Chaotes, “nothing is true, everything is permitted” is also disturbing to reflexive onlookers, since as Phil Hine pointed out “the implied criticism was that “chaos magicians” would become immoral monsters capable of just about *anything*” (Hine, 1997, p. 12). Very much like the popular media view of Satanists, in fact.

To the observer a Chaote may appear to be practicing Wiccan rites, Shamanism, Ceremonial Magic, Voodoo, Tantra and Druidism (for example) on successive days, and doing all manner of other practices in-between. As was written of Oscar Wilde by the historian Michael Foldy, “an artist ... has no ethical sympathies at all. Virtue and wickedness are to him simply what the colours on his palette are to the painter” (Foldy 1997: 110, *fn* 59). It is in this vein that the transgressive method or philosophy of chaos often feeds off the tenets of Satanism.

## Concluding Remarks

While not all chaos magicians are Satanists, and not all Satanists are chaos magicians, there is considerable crossover, since the creed of individualism and individual agency are shared by both systems. Also there are probably a lot more chaotes in the UK than there are Satanists, but that is still not a large number. Satanists are nowhere near as populous as might be believed from fundamentalist claims, and as remarked above, if the total number of “serious” Satanists in the UK is over 3,000 that would be hugely surprising. Fundamentalist claims otherwise are largely nonsense, only designed to create panic, based on fundamentalist notions of what Satanists actually *do*. As Gareth Medway highlights in his admirable research on Satanic moral panics, “when one Expert says that there are ten thousand human sacrifices a year in the United States alone, and another Expert ... (claims) 2 million ... one starts to wonder if ... there are *any* human sacrifices a year in the United States, *or anywhere else*” (Medway 2001: 323, emphasis added).

Those relatively few Satanists that do exist are a considerable conceptual distance from the commonly scapegoated and fearful caricatures that have been perniciously propagated *via* the “expert” works of the largely ignorant and paranoid Dennis Wheatley, the confused and gullible Madame Blavatsky, the out-of-date Dion Fortune and the rabidly Christian paedophile hypocrite Montague Summers for most of the last hundred years. It is a tragedy that these writers have a far wider audience than any academic source with some coherent and credible research supporting it. This view may change over time, as my own work leads me to believe that there might actually now be more academics *researching* occultism in general in the UK than there actually are Satanists *practicing* their version of it. Both numbers are low.

## References

- Almond, Marc 1999. *Tainted Life: the Autobiography*. London: Pan.
- Angerford, Liz & Lea, Ambrose 2002. *Thundersqueak*. London: TMTS.
- Ankerberg Theological Research Institute website. 14–7–2004 [internet]. Online <http://www.johnankerberg.org/Articles/apologetics/AP1003W3.htm>
- Bell, Stuart 1988. *When Salem came to the Boro'*. London: Pan.
- Blavatsky Study Centre website. 18–4–2005 [internet]. Online <http://blavatskyarchives.com/leadbeaterbib.htm#Life>
- Bucks Free Press Newspaper*. Various press articles and letters from readers (including myself) during October 1983.
- Carroll, Peter J. 1987. *Liber Null & Psychonaut*. York Beach, Maine: Weiser.
- CNN website 2000 [internet]. Online <http://www.cnn.com/2000/HEALTH/alternative/11/29/health.britain.charles.reut/>
- Colquhoun, Ithell 1952. *The Living Stones: Cornwall*. London: Peter Owen.
- CursusWalker website 6–8–2003 [internet]. Online at <http://www.cursuswalker.co.uk/>
- d'Arch Smith, Timothy 1991. *The Books of the Beast*. Oxford: Mandrake.
- Ellis, Roger 1989. *The Occult and Young People*. Eastbourne: Kingsway.
- Evans, Dave 2007. *The History of British Magick after Crowley: Kenneth Grant, Amado Crowley, Chaos Magic, Satanism, Lovecraft, the Left Hand Path and Magical Morality*. London: Hidden.
- Foldy, Michael S. 1997. *The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality and Late-Victorian Society*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Fortune, Dion 1970 (1930). *Psychic Self-Defence*. Northampton: Thorsons.
- Guardian* newspaper website 22–07–2002 [internet]. Online <http://media.guardian.co.uk/advertising/story/0,7492,758599,00.html>
- Hine, Phil 1991 [internet]. “Breeding devils in chaos: homosexuality & the occult”. Online [http://www.philhine.org.uk/writings/flsh\\_breeding.html](http://www.philhine.org.uk/writings/flsh_breeding.html) (Original 1991)
- Hine, Phil 1997. *PerMutations*. (E-book).

- Hine, Phil (n.d.) [internet]. "Black magic and the left-hand path". Online [http://www.philhine.org.uk/writings/ess\\_bmlhp.html](http://www.philhine.org.uk/writings/ess_bmlhp.html)
- Horsley, Richard 1979. "Who were the witches?" *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, IX, 4. Spring 1979, pp. 689–715.
- Hutton, Ronald 1999. *The Triumph of the Moon: a History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- La Fontaine, Jean 1994. *The Extent and Nature of Organised and Ritual Abuse*. London: HMSO.
- La Fontaine, Jean 1999. "Satanism and Satanic mythology". In Ankarloo, Bengt & Clark, Stuart (eds): *The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, Volume 6: The Twentieth Century*. London: Athlone.
- LaVey, Anton Szandor 1972. *The Satanic Rituals*. New York: Avon Books.
- LaVey, Anton Szandor 1977 (1969): *The Satanic Bible*. London: WH Allen.
- Leary, Timothy 1997. *Design for Dying*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.
- Lucas, George (dir.). 1977. Motion Picture. *Star Wars*.
- Medway, Gareth 2001. *Lure of the Sinister: the Unnatural History of Satanism*. New York: NYU Press.
- Parsons, Jack 1989 [internet]. *Correspondence between Jack Parsons and his 'Elemental' Marjorie Cameron*. Cameron, M. & Hymenaus Beta (eds). Online at <http://www.bablon.net>
- Pentacle*. Issues 8 and 9. Spring and summer 2004. The correspondents to the magazine were 'Motna', spring 2004, pp. 35–36; "Raven", Summer 2004, p. 39; Kenneth Rees, p. 40; "G. St M", p. 40 and Caroline Tully, pp. 40–41.
- Rogers, Nicholas 2002. *Halloween: from Pagan Ritual to Party Night*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Snell, Lionel 2001 (as Lemuel Johnstone). Ramsey Dukes (ed.): *S.S.O.T.B.M.E.* London: El-Cheapo/TMTS.
- Snell, Lionel 2002. Talk at Watkins Bookshop. London. April 2002.
- Snell, Lionel 1998 (1986) (as Hugo L'Estrange). "Satanism for today". In Ramsey Dukes (ed.): *What I Did in My Holidays: Essays on Black Magic, Satanism, Devil-Worship and Other Niceties*. Oxford: Mandrake/TMTS, pp. 20–25. Originally published in *Chaos International* magazine, 1986. L'Estrange and Dukes are both pen-names for Lionel Snell.
- Sorcerers Apprentice 1989. *The Occult Census*. Leeds: SA Press.
- Spielberg, Steven (dir.). 1984. Motion Picture. *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*.
- Summers, Montague 1994 (1925). *The History of Witchcraft and Demonology*. London: Senate.
- UK National Statistics Office Census website [internet]. Online <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/default.asp>
- UK National Statistics Office Census website, b, comment on ethnicity [internet]. Online <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/profiles/commentaries/ethnicity.asp>



- Waite, Arthur Edward 1898/1911. *The Book of Black Magic and Pacts*. London: Rider.
- Wallis, Robert 1999. "The sociopolitics of ecstasy: autoarchaeology and neo-shamanism". PhD Thesis, 1999. This work was subsequently reworked, edited and published as *Shamans-neoShamans* by Routledge (2003). However the page numbering will differ to that quoted here.
- Washington, Peter 1993. *Madame Blavatsky's Baboon: Theosophy and the Emergence of the Western Guru*. London: Secker & Warburg.
- Wheatley, Dennis 1972 (1935). *The Devil Rides Out*. London: Heron.
- Wheatley, Dennis 1966 (1941). *Strange Conflict*. London: Hutchinson.
- Wheatley, Dennis 1960. *The Satanist*. London: Hutchinson.
- Wheatley, Dennis 1971. *The Devil and All His Works*. London: Hutchinson.
- Woodman, Justin 2004 [internet]. Posting to JSM e-list. 30–37–2004. The URL for this is now defunct and the list archives lost, so it is not given here. An equivalent new group can now be found on links from: <http://www.sasm.co.uk>

# PART III

## Primary Documents



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# Chapter 15

## Reflections on Satanism

Vexen Crabtree

Vexen Crabtree is a British Satanist who has been active on-line since the late nineties on discussion fora and with numerous websites. He is a member of the Church of Satan. In the following three texts taken from the website *Description, Justification, Philosophies of Satanism* ([www.djps.co.uk](http://www.djps.co.uk)) Crabtree discusses the Satanic focus on flesh and the body (“Religion of Flesh”) as well as the natural and unnatural aspects of Satanism – that is, the no-nonsense Fangs, Flesh and Fucking on the one hand (“Satanism is the Religion of Nature”) and the unique position of the individual Satanist *vis-a-vis* nature on the other (“The Unnatural Religion”). See <http://www.djps.co.uk/index.html>, <http://www.vexen.co.uk/religion/index.html> and <http://www.vexen.co.uk/index.html> for more information.

### RELIGION OF FLESH

**December 1st 2002**

Let them who have ears, fear these words! For the diatribe of the Demonic Will is insurmountable and spans great ages. Those of all ages hear the call of their will! If the values of diabolical virtue through healthy freedom from guilt have been killed by the shame of being Human, then let us raise those values back to life!

Move your body, like a machine!<sup>1</sup> Train your body. Exercise the demon within with rigorous physical work. Burn the candle at both ends and survive, grow, become stronger! We will flesh out the demonic bodies that have been shed: The skeletons of survivalism will be reclad anew! This is a religion of the FLESH! Here no virgins give birth: in this religion of real life, life becomes through sex! Through carnality and love ... through the materialism that defines our nature and makes our nature noble! Through love!

If a man smite you on one cheek, SMASH him on the other!<sup>2</sup>

*The Satanic Bible, Book of Satan 3:7*

---

<sup>1</sup> Lyric taken from a track by Die Krupps on the album *Rings of Steel*.

<sup>2</sup> How can there be peace in a Satanic world?

Promote the Church of the Subgenius! The Temple of the Vampire! Promote ridicule of dogmatic thought, promote doubt and scepticism, promote rational self interest, promote the technological age. Science and technology are necessary!

Jihad on the world! There is an eternal struggle! You must struggle against the world, in doing so you become part of the world and not a victim of it for the world is based on a struggle for survival. Social survival depends on your own self worth, so make yourself worthwhile! Train your body, like a machine! Make yourself a powerful friend and a powerful enemy of the world!

Make examples of those who challenge you! Make an example of yourself, when you are wrong, by admitting you are wrong! Become a superman! Americans... you need to overcome your American nature! Europeans need to overcome their European nature! Human beings need to transcend culture, to learn the ways of others.

Become a Demon in body and mind. Seek and destroy stupidity and its causes like you shatter spiritual pipe dreams with a hammer, to show those reflected in its false hopes that it is but a house of glass mirroring their unease! Unease, disease, religion... take a hammer to these!<sup>3</sup>

If your body is weak, if you cannot run miles, move with agility or use force and strength then your mind is soon to follow into a decayed, underachieved bog of unhealthy chemicals. Even a healthy mind succumbs so! But a healthy body without a healthy mind is a mistake and a folly... a mere zombie, fit for abuse by anyone who control's the weak helms' mind!

Know your weaknesses.

The biggest weakness of all is *not knowing* your weaknesses.

*Satanic Power* by Vexen Crabtree, January 24th 2000

Become a Demon in body and mind, but know your weaknesses and in kind know the weaknesses of those around you!

A Demon cannot allow himself into a mindless stupor in front of the television. Nor does a Demon become idle or pointless ... even the *resting* of a Demon should be formidable!

The world erupts in war and conflict. Spiritualism and modern lifestyle are weak and breakable, consumerism and commercialism have created a mass of Humankind, the *Untermensch* have come to show themselves as the masses of sheep and the unthinking horde that lose, generation by generation, their physical fitness.

The religious neurosis, the ultimate opiate of the masses,<sup>4</sup> is a spiritual malaise that is both a cause and symptom of the mindset of the *Untermensch*! And how much so is the television and mass media the opiate of the atheists! Many atheists

---

<sup>3</sup> What is all this talk of hammers? Nietzsche said he “philosophized with a hammer” and was a devout anti-Christian.

<sup>4</sup> Karl Marx wrote “religion is the opiate of the masses”.

too contribute to the mediocrity of the world; the counter productive laziness of the western world is a result of the complacency bred by material success!

But material success at what cost? The cost has been our spirit! The fighting spirit of man has become almost Orwellian<sup>5</sup> in the extent to which mass media and commercialism has subdued the spirit! The Human Potential movements are gaining ground and the fighting spirit still remains but how weakened it is! How lacking in striking imagery, how it fails to ravish the world... many modern pro life movements such as Humanism contain but the bare bones of strength. Where there should be an entire stone war machine reclaiming the vitality of the Human Ego instead there is but the cornerstones. The skeletal crew of the Human Spirit!

When it is not fed with pretence, ritual and drama the Human Spirit does become ill, starved, ego-impoverished ... like a skeleton without flesh. If decay is what causes a skeleton to be all that remains from a civilisation once as high as the Greeks, then stagnation must be the cause of decay. Stagnation of thought ... the advent of complacency that comes with the Abrahamic religions telling us that God cares about us, in the particular details about each of us, creates such a false feeding of our ego that our ego becomes distorted.

We need new idols and a new banner, Humanity is not represented by the Cross of the Christians, nor the star and crescent of the Muslims! Both are blasphemies against Human Nature, one glorifies sacrifice of another for our own sins, the other signifies the absolution of our will and submission to an ideal. These ideals, like communism, are manifestations of falsehood and failure. A complacency, again! Because to think Human Nature can be subdued by religious piety or our will to power subdued by sense of community is false, this we have learnt historically! For communism has failed because it is not Human Nature to be equal or to have no aspirations, and Christianity has failed because our sins are NOT absolved by anyone else than ourselves, and Islam has failed because we cannot submit ourselves to the will of a God that does not exist. We have learnt the hard way: Communism never transpired beyond violent military dictatorship or corruption that is just hidden commercialism as in China. "The Chinese face of communism" they call it, which amounts to hypocrisy... our monotheistic religions have failed us through ages of darkness and holy wars. We have learnt the hard way! We have learned hard lessons, and the impoverished spirit of man has used up all its strength and but the fragile remains: the bare bones of Humanism.

So to strength we must look. We need a symbol of strength to inspire us towards a new recuperation. We need to take the logical positiveness of Humanism and bring it to full power against the mistakes of the past. We need a symbol that revitalizes our ego. There has never before been a religion of the ego! A religion of the flesh! O, what a healthy religion this would be! To put flesh back on to the bones of humanity! How sweetly it would smell when compared to the rank condemnations of those who consider it a sin that we are imperfect! For imperfection is no sin, it

---

<sup>5</sup> "Orwellian", meaning of the dystopia expressed in the book *1984* by George Orwell.

is human nature, and to reclaim the health of mankind we need a religion to put us back amongst the animals.

It has become necessary for a NEW religion, based on man's natural instincts, to come forth. THEY have named it. It is called Satanism.

*The Satanic Bible*, Book of Lucifer 3:14

Satan represents man as just another animal, sometimes better, more often worse than those that walk on all-fours, who, because of his "divine spiritual and intellectual development," has become the most vicious animal of all!

*The Satanic Bible*, Number 7 of the 9 Satanic Statements

The basics of Satanism have always existed. The only thing that is new is the formal organization of a religion based on the universal traits of man. For centuries, magnificent structures of stone, concrete, mortar, and steel have been devoted to man's abstinence. It is high time that human beings stopped fighting themselves, and devoted their time to building temples designed for man's indulgences.

Even though times have changed, and always will, man remains basically the same. For two thousand years man has done penance for something he never should have had to feel guilty about in the first place. We are tired of denying ourselves the pleasures of life which we deserve. [...] Why not have a religion based on indulgence? Certainly, it is consistent with the nature of the beast. We are no longer supplicating weaklings trembling before an unmerciful "God" who cares not whether we live or die. We are self-respecting, prideful people – we are Satanists!

*The Satanic Bible*, Book of Lucifer 3:37–38

Instructions of Fire, hear ye the words of Satan!

Move your body like a machine. Train your body.

- Do not be a fat American or one of the increasing numbers of fat English.<sup>6</sup>
- Do not be a physically weak computer user.
- Take on the world.

Do not complain about that which you can change yourself.<sup>7</sup>

- Learn the skills of weaponry and the combat sciences.

---

<sup>6</sup> One in four Americans are medically obese. The next worst country is the UK, we're catching up! We are the fattest of all the European countries by quite a while, kind of a half-way fat house between the rest of the world and America.

<sup>7</sup> Anton LaVey, *The 11 Satanic Rules of The Earth*: "8. Do not complain about anything to which you need not subject yourself."

Instructions of Self Love, hear ye the urges of Leviathan!

Never underestimate the important of love and friendships.

- Do not let false, theoretical love fool you.
- Do not let psychic vampires masquerade as friends.

Love yourself.

- Eat good food, eat balanced food, drink water.
- Do not let smoke, drugs or alcohol consume you.

## **SATANISM IS THE RELIGION OF NATURE**

**December 24th 2005**

*Nature*

There are millions of mammals on this planet. We are all on the top half of the food chain; under us are *billions upon billions* of subjected life forms from bacteria and mould to insects and fish. The higher up the food chain you are, the more multiples of creatures have died to provide you with sustenance. Nature is violent, amoral, uncaring, deadly and dangerous. Simple survival is not a luxury afforded too many creatures for very long.

What religion, in the name of truth and honesty, reflects the violence and desperation of the natural life? What religion upholds the symbols that nod a head to the sacrifices of brutal reality? Real life, below the surface of our noble conscious existence, is so immoral, short, pained and traumatic that not many face it. They turn away and look towards distracting figureheads of love and happiness. They deceive themselves. Real life; the life of the world, is not often represented or illuminated by religious texts or preachers. People want religion to be an escape from the truth. Satanism is not a religion for such people.

- The Church of Satan embodies a religion of fierce truth. Satanism is the religion of nature.

**Satan represents nature:**

Satan is the dark force in nature. Satanists do not see that nature contains a dark and light force, the dark force is nature. Nature is uncaring, part of its natural processes is death. Satan is death, a returning to the Earth of one's own elements. Good is derived from chaos and evil and not from will or motive. Altruism is long term selfishness and the recognition of this forms the Satanists' reverence for the dark force in nature.

*The Dark Force in Nature* by Vexen Crabtree 2002



*The Old Religion*

They say that the oldest trade is prostitution. Only the bravest or most naive anthropologists would disagree. Likewise the oldest religious principles of the world have nothing to do with hugging trees, lighting candles, chanting in harmony with one another or admiring beautiful sunsets. All of these are the blind human artefacts of dishonest distractions. The oldest religion of the natural world is reproduction, feeding and territory.

Those who claim that their religion is natural truth or “old”, must surely include in their reverence of all things green the blood and strife of natural life. To be *in harmony* with nature is not to be in a pleasant place at all! Anton LaVey, the founder of the Church of Satan, summarizes that Humanity, with its great power and understanding that is frequently turned into tools of war and hate, has not deviated from the plan of the natural world, but expresses it in an advanced form:

Satan represents man as just another animal, sometimes better, more often worse than those that walk on all-fours, who, because of his “divine spiritual and intellectual development,” has become the most vicious animal of all!

*The Satanic Bible*, Number 7 of the 9 Satanic Statements.

Donna Black, a witch behind the United Kingdom’s Satanic magazine *Rule Satannia*, despairs at the ignorance of modern-era religionists:

Do they ever stop to consider what living in harmony with nature actually means? It means survival of the fittest, death to the weak, live and let die, kill or be killed. This is all very admirable but you won’t find a Wiccan or Pagan who practices it. Living in harmony with nature does not mean collecting crystals, chanting to the goddess and lighting candles to heal the earth. Nature isn’t all love, peace and baby animals. Nature is birth, sex, death, instincts, survival, predator and prey. It is fangs, flesh and fucking.

“On The New Age” by Donna Black

*All Human Development is an Altar of Satanism*

The Human species survives on the unnatural: Technology, science, understanding and knowledge (the four biggest threats to religion!) have turned our existence into a frivolous and headstrong rollercoaster ride completely divorced from the realities of the food chain. We are cut off from nature, and we should be rightfully thankful for it, too!

But we can only be thankful for our privileged position on Earth if we first understand and admit, even revere, the fact that the natural world is violent, aggressive, and dangerous, and that we are the cream of the crop.

It is worked out from maggots unto man the universal law of the violent destruction of living beings. The whole Earth continually steeped in blood is nothing but an immense altar on which every living thing must be sacrificed without end. Without constraint. Without remorse. Until the consummation of the world, the extinction of evil and the death of death.

The Electric Hellfire Club, *Kiss The Goat* (2001), "The Abattoir Eternal".

Our enlightened sciences and our religious zealots do well to remember that all our accomplishments are a slap in the face of all the lower species. A sombre altar to truth would include symbols of blood, struggle, love and violence. Only species that sit atop this carnage have the peace of mind to devote time to philosophical questions and love. Only as a result of bloodshed and violence can the higher species enjoy their most noble emotions and concepts. Only upon an unholy altar of pain and sacrifice can sit the values of intelligence, love, compassion and sorrow. Only at the top of the food chain can we look down and judge life, and feel superior because of our "understanding" of the world! Only a hypocrite can talk about love, and not also revere the death and sacrifices that go on in nature in order to provide us with food! All should hail Satan and take a moment to reflect on the cold realities of life: Fangs, Flesh and Fucking are the three pillars of all goodness and to deny them prominence is to embody self-deception and wishful thinking.

## THE UNNATURAL RELIGION

**April 12th 2006**

Satanism describes the world as it is. The vastness of the universe humbles normal Human religions and endeavours, and Satanism represents the fact that the majority of existence is cold, dead and lifeless. To this end, Satan embodies the following:

- There are no gods, and certainly no good-natured gods.
- Death is the ultimate victor over life and meaningfulness.
- The natural world is cold, uncaring and amoral.
- Rational thought beats all religious neurosis any day.
- Doubt is the highest intellectual value.
- Altruism is an illusion – all kindness is born from ulterior motives.

This long list of melancholy concepts weighs down the weak with thoughts that they will rapidly reject, but the secret for the strong who endure for a while, is that Satanism is not a negative religion. It is not merely a natural religion of death, coldness, selfishness and nihilism. It goes beyond that. From all of these things above comes positive inspiration which Satanists put to good use:

- Satanists believe in love.
- Satanists find happiness in the search for truth.
- Psychologists and sociologists have shown that thinking realistically about death is healthy and positive.
- Pretending that the universe is guided by morals, goodness, light or god is an imbalance.

Is there a contradiction between the productive and motivated lives of Satanists, and the cold, morbid truths that Satan represents? The two go hand in hand. Richard Dawkins makes an excellent comparison between a medical doctor and a moralist. The situation is that Dawkins' book *The Selfish Gene*

... extol the inescapable factual correctness of [the amorality of nature]. If you seem to smell inconsistency or even contradiction, you are mistaken. There is no inconsistency in favouring Darwinism as an academic scientist while opposing it as a human being; any more than there is inconsistency in explaining cancer as an academic doctor while fighting it as a practising one. For good Darwinian reasons, evolution gave us a brain whose size increased to the point where it became capable of understanding its own provenance, of deploring the moral implications and of fighting against them.

Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, pp. 12–13.

As a Satanist we rightly point out that reality is best represented with a symbol of death (as all life dies), evil (as nature is violent and all benevolence comes from materialism), that the weak are dominated by the strong etc., but just because we point out that this is the way the world is, does not mean that we automatically think it is how the world *should* be. Indeed, in admitting the prominence of death, we reinforce our own joy at being alive and therefore our religion is anti-natural, unnatural. We are moral, social beings who can consciously understand our own biology and impulses and control them; thereby changing the course of nature.

I have a text explaining how Satanism is the natural religion but I hope that you can also see how Satanism is also an unnatural religion, rebelling as it does against the unthinking automatons of nature, and rebelling against death by enjoying life (...).

## Chapter 16

# Excerpt from *Lords of the Left-Hand Path:* A History of Spiritual Dissent

Stephen E. Flowers

Stephen Edred Flowers, also known under the name Edred Thorsson, has been active in various esoteric organizations since the early seventies, most notably the Temple of Set, the Rune-Gild and the Ring of Troth. The following passage is taken from the introduction to the book *Lords of the Left-Hand Path*, laying the conceptual ground work and definitions necessary for the subsequent analysis of manifestations of the Left-Hand Path. The book covers most traditions associated with the Left-Hand Path in the East and West (including the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set) covering a period from approximately 500 BCE to the late eighties. See [http://www.xeper.org/pub/xp\\_main.htm](http://www.xeper.org/pub/xp_main.htm), <http://www.runaraven.com/> and <http://www.runegild.org/index.html> for more information.

### **Chapter 1: The Left-Hand Path**

#### *Introduction*

We will begin with definitions. Philosophical inquiry calls for clarity, and we need clarity for this publicly unexplored realm. Without these precise definitions anyone exploring this path on any level will be led into the sea of misunderstandings and confusion (evident in the section below on the historical portrayals of the left-hand path and the “black magic”). Exact understanding of the nature of the left-hand path hinges on a precise theory of the universe in which it is perceived. This theory and the model it presents will prove useful in analyzing the left-hand path traditions throughout history.<sup>1</sup>

The universe is the totality of existence both known and unknown. This is a complex model, divided into at least two components: 1) the objective universe and 2) the subjective universe. The objective universe is the natural cosmos – or world order. This is essentially mechanical or organic, i.e. it is ruled by certain predictable laws manifested in a time/space continuum. The objective universe, including the laws governing it, can be equated with “nature” as well as with

---

<sup>1</sup> A chief source for this discussion is Michael A. Aquino’s “Black Magic in Theory and Practice” (San Francisco: Temple of Set, 1987). [*Crystal Tablet of Set*, pp. 1–61.]

“God” in the Judeo-Christian tradition. All of natural science as well as orthodox theology is predicated upon the concept that these laws of the objective universe can be discovered and quantified or described in a purely rational manner in the first instance or by “divine revelation” in the other. When considered closely it is evident that what is usually referred to as “God” in orthodox religions is actually identical to that which he is said to create – the natural/mechanical/organic order – or *cosmos*. It might also be pointed out that there has generally been a popular but sometimes misleading distinction between the concepts “mechanical” and “organic”. On one level they are the same in that both are governed by predictable laws. A clock-work or the human body are both ruled and maintained by certain mechanical structures which allow them to function in their environments. At another level there is a distinction between the mechanical and the organic in that the organic model has the ability to propagate and mutate its mechanical structures to ensure its survival. This is possible because there are coded mechanisms within the organism expressly for this purpose (DNA) and because the malleable molecular structure of the mechanism allows for these mutations.

The *subjective universe* is the “world” of any sentient entity within the universe. There are as many subjective universes as there are sentient beings. The subjective universe is the particularized manifestation of consciousness within the universe. Usually experience of the *objective universe* is only indirect as information concerning it must come through the subjective universe. Curiously enough the subjective universe does not seem governed by the same natural/mechanical/organic laws as the objective universe – in fact this is the main distinction between them. The subjective universe has the option of acting in a *non-natural* way, i.e. free from the limitations of the world of five senses and three dimensions.

At this point it might be worth pointing out that the terms objective/subjective have nothing in common with the distinction between accurate/inaccurate, or exact/inexact which popular usage might have projected onto the terms. The subjective universe is capable of far more accurate and exact manifold operations than the objective universe – your reading and understanding of these words is based on the exercise of a faculty within your subjective universe. In simple grammatical terms the subject is the reader, i.e. that which reads, and the object is that which is read. The subjective universe is capable of a full spectrum of possibilities which range from virtually absolute precisions to almost total delusion because it is not bound by natural laws. The focus or epicentre of this non-natural subjective universe is equated with human consciousness, or soul, or self.

The *non-natural* aspect of this soul is clearly and basically indicated by humanity’s drive to impose structures artificially created in that subjective universe upon the objective universe. All artificially created structures (i.e. those made by art/craft) are by definition something separate and apart from the natural cosmos – be those structures pyramids, poems, or political institutions. Animals, many of which may have complex social organizations, are bound by nature and by their organic programming. The wolf-pack, no matter if in one part of the world or another, now or a million years ago, has the same social order. But you will

look in vain to find *any two* human social institutions that are absolutely identical. Anything which is the product of the subjective universe – individual or collective – will bear the mark of variation.

Each particular instance of this soul – this phenomenon of the subjective universe – implies the existence of a first form or general principle from which all the particular manifestations are derived. In the most philosophically refined of the schools of the left-hand path this first *principle of isolate intelligence* is identified with the “Prince of Darkness,” or the ultimate deity of the left-hand path. This is the archetype of the Self from which all particular selves are derived. This is also an element of the non-natural universe which objectively belongs to the universe itself. In this way the Prince of Darkness can be seen as an independent sentient being in the objective universe because this is the very *principle* of that quality in the universe. Humanity is the only species we know of which shares that quality.

### *The Right-Hand Path and the Left-Hand Path*

The central question now becomes what is the way in which this conscious, free soul is going to relate to, or seek to interact with, the objective universe or the universe as a whole. The right-hand path answers this question simply by saying that the subjective universe must harmonize itself with the laws of the objective universe – be that envisioned as God or nature. Humanity is to seek knowledge of the law, and then apply itself to submitting to that law in order to gain ultimate union with the objective universe, with God, or nature. The right-hand path is the path of union with universal reality (God or Nature). When this union is completed the individual self will be annihilated, the individual will become one with the divine or natural cosmic order. In this state the ego is destroyed as “heaven” is entered or a nirvanic existence/non-existence is “attained.” This is clearly the goal of all orthodox Judaic/Christian/Islamic or Buddhistic sects.

The left-hand path considers the position of humanity as it is; it takes into account the manifest and deep-seated desire of each human being to be a free, empowered, independent actor within his or her world. The pleasure and pain made possible by independent existence are seen as something to be embraced and as the most reasonable signs of the highest, most noble destiny possible for humans to attain – a kind of independent existence on a level usually thought of as *divine*.

Just as most humans go through their natural, everyday lives seeking that which will give them maximal amounts of such things as knowledge, power, freedom, independence and distinction within their world, those who walk the left-hand path logically extend this to the non-natural realm. They eschew right-hand path admonitions that such “spiritual behavior” is “*evil*” and that they should basically “get with the program” (of God, of Nature, etc.) and become good “company men.” The self awareness of independence is seen by many as the fundamental reality of the human condition – one can accept it and *live*, or reject it and *die*. By accepting the internal, known reality of human consciousness an eternally dynamic – ever

moving, ever changing – existence is embraced; by rejecting it and embracing an external, unknown reality of God/Nature, an eternally static – ever still and permanent – existence is accepted. From a certain enlightened perspective, both paths are perfectly good, it is just a matter of the conscious exercise of the will to follow one of these paths in an aware state without self-delusion.

Essentially, the left-hand path is then the path of non-union with the objective universe. It is the way of isolating consciousness within the subjective universe and, in a state of self-imposed psychic solitude, refining the soul or psyche to ever more perfect levels. The objective universe is then made to harmonize itself with the will of the individual psyche instead of the other way around. Where the right-hand path is **theocentric** (or certainly alleocentric – “othercentered”), the left-hand path is **psychecentric**, or soul/self-centered. Those within the left-hand path may argue over the nature of this self/ego/soul, but that the individual is the epicenter of the path itself seems undisputed. An eternal separation of the individual intelligence from the objective universe is sought in the left-hand path. This amounts to an immortality of the independent self consciousness moving within the objective universe and interacting with it at will.

### *White Magic/Black Magic*

The terms “white magic” and “black magic” have been so bandied about in popular jargon that they might be said to have lost most of their meaningfulness. For my purposes I will restore them to a meaningful philosophical context. Magic can be defined as a methodology by which the configuration of the subjective or objective universe is altered through an act of will originating within the psyche, or the core of the individual subjective universe. Perhaps the most famous definition was offered by the English magician, Aleister Crowley who said: “Magic(k) is the Science and Art of causing Change to occur in conformity with Will.”<sup>2</sup>

Actually there is no one definition of magic universally accepted by academics and practicing magicians alike, nor is there a common agreement on the distinctions between *religion* and *magic*. But taking most of the current theories into account a more comprehensive definition might be ventured: Magic is the willed application of symbolic methods to cause or prevent changes in the universe by means of symbolic acts of communication with paranormal factors. These factors could be inside or outside the subjective universe of the operator. Magic is a way to make things happen that ordinarily would not happen. Religion may be distinguished from magic only when the nature of the human will is taken into account. In magic the individual will is primary and is considered to have a real and independent existence. The magician makes the universe do his bidding, to harmonize itself with his will, whereas in religion the human community attempts to harmonize its behavior with a universal pattern, be it God or Nature.

---

<sup>2</sup> Aleister Crowley. *Magick* (New York: Weiser, 1974), p. 131.

In a precise sense the distinction between White and Black Magic is simply that White Magic is a psychological methodology for the promotion of *union* with the universe and pursuing aims in harmony with those of the universe, while Black Magic is such a methodology for the exercise of independence from the universe and pursuing self-oriented aims. Structurally, White Magic has much in common with religion as defined above, while Black Magic is more purely magical in and of itself. This is why magic as a category of behavior is often condemned by orthodox religious systems.

The historical conceptualizations of White Magic and Black Magic will be discussed below, but for the sake of precise understanding here, I will simply be using White Magic as a designation for the spiritual methodology or technology of the right-hand path and Black Magic as a designation for that of the left-hand path.

### *Lords of the Left-Hand Path*

In this book I examine the ideas and careers of many magicians and philosophers of the past and present. Some are figures widely thought to be “Satanic” or evil, while others may have gone through history without such an image. But images rarely correspond to reality – despite what Madison Avenue or Washington, DC would have you believe. In the final analysis some of these figures will be rejected as being something other than practitioners of the left-hand path. The criteria I use in determining the true left-hand path character of those so deemed must be laid out clearly at this point. Some of those considered in the book will have a number of the criteria, but not enough to be considered a “lord” or master of the path.

There are two major criteria for being considered a true Lord of the Left-Hand Path – Deification of the Self and Antinomianism. The first of these is complex: The system of thought proposed by the magician or philosopher must be one that promotes individual self-deification, preferably based on an initiatory magical scheme. This first criterion will be seen to have four distinct elements:

1. Self-deification – attainment of an enlightened (or awakened), independently existing intellect and its relative immortality.
2. Individualism – the enlightened intellect is that of a given individual, not a collective body.
3. Initiation – the enlightenment and strength of essence necessary for the desired state of evolution of self are attained by means of stages created by the will of the magician, not because he or she was “divine” to begin with.
4. Magic – practitioners of the left-hand path see themselves as using their own wills in a rationally intuited system or spiritual technology designed to cause the universe around them to conform to their self-willed patterns.

The second criterion, antinomianism, states that practitioners think of themselves as “going against the grain” of their culturally conditioned and conventional norms



of “good” and “evil.” True Lords of the Left-Hand Path will have the spiritual courage to identify himself with the cultural norms of “evil.” There will be an embracing of the symbols of conventional “evil,” or “impurity,” or “rationality,” or whatever quality the conventional culture fears and loathes. The lord of the left-hand path will set himself apart from his fellow man, will actually or figuratively become an outsider, in order to gain the kind of inner independence necessary for the other initiatory work present in the first criterion. The practice of this second criterion often manifests itself in “antinomianism,” that is, the purposeful reversal of conventional normatives: “evil” becomes “good,” “impure” becomes “pure,” “darkness” becomes “light.”

Literally antinomianism implies something “against the law.” But the practitioner of the left-hand path is not a criminal in the usual sense. He or she is bound to break the cosmic laws of nature and to break the conventional social laws imposed by ignorance and intolerance. But in so doing the left-hand path practitioner seeks a “higher law” of reality founded on knowledge and power. Although beyond good and evil, this path requires the most rigorous of ethical standards. These standards are based on understanding and not on blind obedience to external authorities.

This latter characteristic of the true left-hand path is the chief cause of its misunderstanding, not only for those on the outside, but for some who would follow this path as well. It takes an enormous amount of spiritual courage to persevere in the face of rejection by not only the world around them but by elements within their own subjective universes as well. Many break under the strain and fall away from the aim and sink back into the morass of cultural norms.

To be considered a true lord of the left-hand path then, someone must have rejected the forms of conventional “good” and embraced those of conventional “evil,” and have practiced antinomianism, as part of the effort to gain a *permanent, independent, enlightened and empowered* level of being. This self-deification does not seem sufficient without the “Satanic” component which acts as a guide through the quagmire of popular sentiment and conventional beliefs.

In completing research for this book I discovered that in fact there are two distinct *branches* of the left-hand path. *Both* of these branches fulfill the criteria outlined above, but approach the process from distinct points of view. One of these, which I will call the “Immanent Branch of the Left-Hand Path,” proceeds from an “objectivistic” and even *materialistic* outlook. Its magical methods are often steeped in *imagery* and its orientation is almost exclusively toward the objective or mundane universe. In this branch the antinomian aspect is especially pronounced. Among modern schools it is exemplified by LaVeyan Satanism. ...

The second branch, which I will name the “Transcendental Branch of the Left-Hand Path,” is based upon a psychecentric (soul- or intellect-centered) model. It is highly idealistic and its magical methods are usually founded on *eternal forms* or *archetypes*. The ultimate separation of the human mind from the cosmic order around it is recognized and celebrated. In its highest forms the Transcendental Branch is focused on the subjective universe – on the separation of the Self from

the cosmic order and the evolution of that Self into a permanent and empowered form. In this branch the self-divinizing aspect is especially pronounced. Among modern schools it is exemplified by the Setian magical philosophy of Michael Aquino (...).

### **Acknowledgement**

This chapter is taken from: Flowers, Stephen E. *Lords of the Left-hand Path: A History of Spiritual Dissent*. Second edition. Smithville, Tx: Runa-Raven Press 1997, pp. 1–5.



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# Chapter 17

## Dark Doctrines: Two Examples

Tani Jantsang

Tani Jantsang has been active in various esoteric and occult groups since the seventies, but became well known as an advocate of the Dark Doctrines in the late eighties and one of the founders of the Satanic Reds in 1997. In the following two texts taken from their website, Jantsang describes the basic concepts of the Left-Hand and Right-Hand Path (LHP and RHP) and Asat, Sat and Tan. The philosophy is a strongly non-dualistic and syncretistic Satanism with roots in esoteric Eastern and Western traditions. See <http://www.geocities.com/satanicreds/> and <http://www.geocities.com/satanicreds/dd-ad.html> for more information.

### LEFT-HAND PATH AND RIGHT-HAND PATH: DEFINED

The terms LHP, and RHP, are not Western, and certainly not Christian. While Tantrik “Buddhists” never called themselves RHP or LHP, this term was applied to them. The two aren’t at odds with each other. Both paths are ways to Wisdom: the difference is not in the goal but in the **method**.

Hinayana Buddhism (Little Path Buddhism) is the closest Buddhist sect to what Siddhartha actually taught. Its emphasis is on the eight-fold noble path, and other things typically associated with early Buddhist practice. It is very concerned with rules, laws, and proper behavior: etiquette! While it is a path of Wisdom, it is not a path of Knowing. Of course, those on this path are not considered **able to know** otherwise they wouldn’t be on that path! It is not their fate to be on any other path.

Mahayana Buddhism (Great Path Buddhism) replaced Theravada. Nagarjuna is considered the successor to the Buddha by the followers of this path. Mahayana is more of a path of knowing, but it’s not what we would consider “Satanic” in the Dark Path sense that “all knowing happens directly through the whole body.” The person who seeks out this path seeks it out because he is unable to know through the body directly, but he is able to understand with the mind. In Pythagorean terms, these people could be considered Akousmatikoi: those who are able to listen, and learn the way to do something, even if they can’t truly understand.

Vajrayana (Vajra Path, Lightning Path, Direct Path), or Tantrik “Buddhism,” is the path of instant, direct, and specifically physical-body knowledge and is more rightly called either Padma Sambhava-ism or just Shiva-ism. Strictly speaking, in terms of Theology, it is not Buddhism. Herein is the tradition of Kundalini

Yoga, the Siddhi, Tumo, Phova, Milam, the Chod, etc. and other recognizably Black Magical practices. Those who are on this path are there because they can do Vajrayana and attain Samadhi without thinking about it (literally). In fact, they do it without “wanting” to. That’s the real key. . . they do through active non doing. Vajrayana is totally LHP – but this does not mean that those from whole cultures that are Vajrayanists don’t have fun or do normal things. (This has nothing to do with the invention called “Tantrik Sex,” nor does it have a thing to do with breaking taboos. These notions are totally modern, Western inventions of sex clubs or specific to India where they do have some rather silly taboos that some feel the need to rebel against and break in some pretty disgusting ways. It does not apply to Tibetan or Tatar Lamaism at all, where no such taboos exist.)

Mahayana is LHP in the sense that the reason for its existence is that it is a path of knowing from the inner method even if it takes slow, methodical steps to this knowledge. Mahayana is also RHP because it is the doing of deeds that help the person “acquire” this knowledge.

Now ... here is the **important Truth**. There is no conflict between these paths if they are True; they are yin/yang and exist together and this embodies real stratification in the sense of people naturally working at their own abilities. I.e., what you are good at, naturally comes easy! Because of this, there is always RHP in LHP, and always LHP in RHP. There is the “**Being**” of the receptive LHP and then the “**Becoming**” which is the active RHP. There is the Knowledge of the LHP that leads to the deeds of the RHP. Everything is Yin and Yang. Passive Idea; Active Deed. Like Sat-Being and Tan-Becoming.

To people at **inner peace** with themselves, the Dark Paths are Peaceful. They are beautiful, soft, and solitary ... This does not mean they are hermits; not at all. There is nothing busy or hectic about the Dark Paths. They are totally inner. When a person has an inner core which has been compromised by cultural Christianity or something else, the best they can come up with is a self-overcoming where they try, oftentimes in vain, to “fix” their broken selves. In neurological terms, they lack the “organic I.” These people cannot know. The best thing for them is to join one of the pacifistic liberal Christian Churches they rage against so at least they have rules that prevent them from hurting themselves or others. What they don’t understand is that they cannot know, because they are not able to grasp the knowledge that is at the Core of their Being. They often sublimate by “getting interested in” rebellion: but against what? What exactly is it they are rebelling against?

If they really want to revolt against tyranny, why are they sublimating? Why don’t they **do** something? Most of these types that “get into Satanism” are inversionist Christians and they shove their “Christian shit” in our faces as much or more than Fundamentalist Christians shove the Christian shit in our faces. They reek of Christianity, and **within** them it’s an infection they try to get out of their systems by screaming and wailing about it and turning it all upside down. Satanists don’t want to hear it. An American flag side ways or upside down is recognizably still an American flag. And a cross upside down is still a Cross. Same thing.

The RHP is the way of Yang. The LHP is the way of Yin. That's it. And like Yin and Yang, you cannot separate the two. Yin/Dark/Receptive. Yang/Light/Active.

But this is the danger of **the Lie**. ... when Right and Left become something that are **against** each other, then the RHP is a false path ... a false Light. And LHP is felt (not thought, but **felt**) to be frightening and evil. This misconception, **within** a person, is the striving, craving for the Light Alone rebelling to exist without the Dark Parent from whence it came. That is truly self-destructive ... The only people who understand what RHP and LHP really are ... **and then also** see these as separate and opposed ... are Klippothes (Hebrew) or Preta. They see it opposed because they themselves are opposed to their own shell-ish non-being. In otherwords, they know this **Lie** and **Falsehood** through their **own peculiar flesh!**

Apparently, or so I'm told, there is some kind of Thelemite tradition that has it that the LHP was derived from the thesis about Lucifer being God's angel seated on His left. It spoke or taught of a more aggressive approach to the occult and was adopted by many styles of magic, including early Thelema. That puts a whole new slant on the confusion over LHP and RHP which is, in fact, very new and exclusively Western, perhaps WASP only.<sup>1</sup> I am unable to locate a thesis on this; it may be just the oral tradition of some groups of Thelemites and never written down.

For the record, "Lucifer" was **never** used as the name for Satan or the Devil until Milton used it. The other reference to Hilel for Nebuchadnezzar is a mistranslation by Origin, as is pointed out in an essay entitled, "Satan Or Lucifer – The Same? Or the Opposite!"<sup>2</sup>

However, interestingly, from the Christian Bible: [Mat 25:32] Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, [Mat 25:33] and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Christians have always referred to themselves as sheep. Satanists identify with the Goat of Mendes. The Goat is actually Azazel, but Azazel alone was never associated with the Hebrew *ha stn* (The Satan). The Hebrews did have a more folkish tradition wherein they combined Samael, Leviathan (or Lilith) and Azazel together to make "The Beast," or CHIVA.<sup>3</sup>

The Standard Definition, even given in "Mind of the Ninja" by Dr. Peterson, which he wrote and explained for a Western readership, is what we use in the bonafide Dark Tradition. This has **nothing** to do with behavior, or with rebellion. In fact, the entire Promethian (or Luciferian or Faustian) tradition in regular Western Civilization, something that led to the industrial age and technological age, is very RHP. Surely, the inspiration for such works was originally LHP in that

---

<sup>1</sup> Please refer to "Which KINDS of Satanism" on the website <http://www.geocities.com/satanicreds/>

<sup>2</sup> See the *Package of Doctrines* available at <http://www.geocities.com/satanicreds/dd-ad.html>

<sup>3</sup> See *Kaballa – Dark Tradition* <http://www.geocities.com/satanicreds/dd-ad.html>

it was inspired; but making these marvels of technology manifest is an act that is purely an example of RHP. More or less, the inventors took what was darkly inspired and brought it into the light to be seen and used by all.

If anything, rebellion and revolt against unjust societies (very bloody usually) are **Yang** – ergo RPH according to the way we ubiquitously understand things. I’ve given the standard definition in this article. The Encyclopedia of Buddhism, which also defines Naga Shivaism, something much older, has this same definition and anyone that takes the “above” and synthesizes it with the “below” can clearly see this. Even in Kung Fu, the way they define yin and yang forms, fits this definition.

### DARK FORCE: ASAT, SAT AND TAN

*ASAT and SAT – Sankara Wrote Clearly on This*

The oldest name of Brahma is Sanat-Kumara.<sup>4</sup> This would be part of what is called the Sanatana Dharma. Brahma was made into a Deity for the “ones incapable of inner truth, the ones who cannot Know it.”

The Cosmos shows design, mathematically precise design. Ergo, it was theorized that there must be an agent or ruler, or **force**, which creates and maintains all things, as if forming things into a mathematical mold, preserving it for awhile (*coagule*), and then dissolving it (*solve*). This is Brahma. But this is more specifically Brahma:

Brahma has two **conditions** in relationship to the cosmos and all that exists **in** the cosmos:

1. it is completely transcendental or outside of it;
2. it is completely present and infused everywhere in this cosmos.

Both, at the same time.

Both 1 and 2 have two aspects that can be Known: passive and active.

**Transcendental, the passive** is called *ASAT*. This is universal dissolution back into The One. This “Big Crunch” is called Pralaya.

**Transcendental, the active** is called *SAT*. This is Being and the *Sat* (through the five *Tan* or *Tanmatri* principals it manifests **in** this cosmos) maintains Being. “**The One.**”

The completely **present and infused aspect, the passive** is shown by the idea that matter (and energy) seem to make the things in the cosmos seem real, and yet when you try to look at matter, you see something that is being acted upon.

---

<sup>4</sup> See our *Serpents vs. Adamites* available at <http://www.geocities.com/satanicreds/dd-ad.html> for more on this.

Question: acted upon by What? Answer: the **Sat** but this is now the **Sat** in the form of **ATMA** which means “Infused Dark-Breath” i.e., Black Flame.

The completely **present and infused aspect, the active** is **ATMA**. The Atma has no qualities (like matter and energy do), but it brings about alteration in everything that exists, to different degrees. Yet the Atma itself is unchanging because it is, in truth, THE **SAT**. And it is the SAME ATMA in ALL living things. “**The All.**”

We reverse the active and passive in our doctrines (by that I mean the Pythagorean and non-Hindu Tantrik) to mean more at YANG [and YIN] – light (visible, seeable) and dark (hidden, invisible) – but the meanings are the same in both traditions. (In the Pythagorean system, Atma is Pan meaning *to pan*, the all. Sat is Apeiron or *to en*, the one.)

The things or people (living) that are able to *feel* this in them are called “Brahman” and this means that “My ‘soul’ IS Brahma”. Ergo: Abrahm means “NO SOUL” (in our terms: Adamite). This came to mean the name of a group of people much later on and it took on the aspect of a “racial type.” Not so in the original doctrine at all.

Sanat-Kumara, in more detail, has five aspects – i.e., ways in which it can be seen to affect matter/energy. These words are Vedic and Naga.

Originally, whoever was a Brahman, was a Brahman. Later on, this all became hereditary priesthoods and racial laws and etc. much later when the Suryavansa came. And even much later than that, people who misunderstood the word Aryan came, and misunderstood all of this. The Chandravansa were those that had the esoteric schools of thought.

That Dark Force that is molding all of matter/energy is our Cosmocrator. Also later, a concept of “hell” was put forth – apparently by people who felt as if life were hell. Then the faith and salvation dogma crept in. Some whole groups of people just DO this because they FEEL this and it is the only thing they are capable of understanding. Everything got changed into religion. But the people who Know the doctrine simply by turning within – they keep it pure.

They also knew that matter was Atomic and said it, described it clearly, but that Kundalini or Atma is NON-atomic. The Greeks did not stress this as much as the Vedics did. The Greeks, instead, knew that Atomic (Demiurgos) is the thing that does sustain matter and keeps “That” which results in increased entropy from totally ripping everything to shreds, and they knew what would happen if you broke this force open: the tetraktys would collapse. Tetraktys is “image you are in.”

## SAT AND TAN

From the Vedanta and earlier Naga writings.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> You can find the terms Sat and Asat in the *Columbia Encyclopedia*, 1971, volume 21, page 6433 under “Vedanta.” You can also find “Sat” in the 1975 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and from there find further references to this and similar large schools of thought



There is a Dark Force that Is. It is **ONE** and it is immutable reality. It is infused into ALL living things – the atma, the “breath.” It animates these living things manifesting as Will. It is One-Thing – therefore, no matter where it is, or what it is in, it is always One-Thing.

But the living things are multiform. No two are alike, and that is a **LAW** of our Cosmos which this Dark Force **RULES** as it **PUSHES** the Cosmos onto constant change, and at the same time consumes it, dissolves it. This is the Mystery of the Serpent that eats its own Tail. No matter what, the Darkness is always **ONE**. Some call it “none” or “void” because they have truly **SEEN**, but I’m sure the reader can understand One-Thing better than he would understand “none.”

In pre-Sanskrit, Deva-Nagari language of Nagas, this is called **SAT**:

This Dark-One-Thing **IS** what animates living things. Scientifically, as regards things (matter/energy) – there is the same exact amount of matter/energy in the universe now as there was 100 trillion years ago and as there will be 100 trillion years from now; the amount never increases or decreased but it constantly shifts and changes as if propelled on to constant change. Things get more complex but there is never more or less of the things (matter/energy). Let’s focus on living things. The living things come in many forms. Probably any form you can imagine, exists – somewhere, or at sometime. As such, these things are ALL inter-related – as if they too, are One. Death is only the dissolution of this animating One from a given life form. Then the flesh-form of the living thing goes through rapid change. Its atomic or molecular structure falls apart. (Molecular – a living creature; atomic, a star like the sun).

To be able to look at a cat, for instance, and See that animating Will, that Darkness infused, the Atma – this is the most beautiful and awesome thing I can imagine. And to Know, “I am that too”. To look at a seed, and watch it become a tree. That growth, that Will to Become what it **IS** – that is the same Dark-One-Thing in the tree.

There is a chain, like a sequence to this all. One could call it a food chain if one could truly **see** matter as it is moving through time – forming a weave, or a pattern like in cloth. Big fish eats little fish. Bird eats fish. Some animal eats the bird – and so on. Sometimes there is symbiosis and two distinct things merge to become another wholly other thing – like mitochondria evolved. It might seem “violent” to some – but that is due to their Ignorance of the Laws of Nature. Each animal (and plant) in all of their multi-forms, **IS** what it **IS**, and that Dark-One-Thing infused into it, **URGES IT** to Will-to-Be **WHAT IT IS** and do what is innate for it to **DO**. They flow on a Cosmic Wheel that spins and never stops spinning. The Dark-One-

---

in the *Micropedia*. There are 3 major schools of Vedanta interpretation, this one is the **NON-DUALISTIC** school of Sankara (a person) [,and] it’s called the Advaita School. The Esoteric one is for those who Know. The exoteric dualistic ones are for the dummies who can’t know and who need “personal gods.” Tan, however, is a simple root word, as in Tantra, Tanmatri, etc.

Thing spins it, whirling. We experience this as Time. And we usually experience time as change.

Each of the all-different living creatures (and plants) have a Law of their OWN Nature. This Law is the result of **how** this Dark-One-Thing is “stretched” so that it is infused into their particular being-flesh-atoms. **How** it is infused, is called **TAN** (as in Tantra), which means stretching forth.

1. The creature lets-go to its own nature and the FLOW of its own Being.
2. The creature KNOWS its own boundaries, it knows who and what it IS.
3. It is connected to its parents, who are connected to their parents, who are connected – all the way to the slime, and ultimately, all the way back to the ROOT before the Cosmos came into being.
4. The creature follows its own Nature without even thinking about it – it is automatic.
5. The creature is in-tune, at-peace with its own chakra-flow and each part of its own Being.

There is a sixth principle too, though it is not part of the Tan. It is connected to the Abyss, it is a defender, though it really seems more like a Child: **Innocence**. This Innocence is like a “sparkle in the Eye of the Great Dark” like a shining diamond child, metaphorically speaking. ALL LHP magicians KNOW this! NONE would harm it!

The disrespect for what another creature IS, is a violation of ALL principles of life. To hunt for food is normal. All animals do this as per a chain of life. But that is part of innate survival instinct. Disrespect means to NOT HONOR what another creature is. Or a human not respecting WHAT another human of another type IS. This disrespect is EVIL, it is like a war against the Great Darkness and it is thus, a war against the Self. The Dark Breath in that other person or being is the SAME Dark Breath that is in the offender. And, the Dark Breath CAN withdraw leaving a shell.

The turning of an animal, or a person, against himself, is a war against Innocence. And it is a One Way ticket into the Abyss, as the destroyer destroys HIMSELF. Christians and others who imagine there is a “battle” between the “light and the dark” have waged this war over and over and yet they SEARCH for Deity. They look for “a Light”. They do not realize that the Great Darkness IS that Light, **WHEN** it is ANIMATING a living creature. They seek the “light alone” and try to fend off the darkness. The Light can not exist alone: it is IN Darkness, within the Darkness from whence it came and into which it returns. The Vajra or Logos comes INTO YOU from Darkness. It whooshes up as kundalini through the chakras (nerve centers) and nourishes your entire Being. It whooshes up and OUT – back into the Darkness from whence it came. As this process continuously happens, without being blocked, the person flows on his path on the Wheel of Life. That kind of person is in tune.

It is this process and the Darkness, that dualists have turned their own backs on and waged a war on. When you turn your back on the Dark Breath, it withdraws. What's left is a Klippoth or Preta – a thing with no Self.

## Chapter 18

# The Satanic Politic

Nathan Wardinski

Nathan Wardinski was a member of the Obsidian Enlightenment, a Wisconsin group mentioned in James R. Lewis chapter “Infernal Legitimacy”. In the following text, Wardinski writes on the possibilities of a Satanic front to the politico-religious alliances of today. Apparently, the chances are rather remote, although the individual Satanist should always reflect the Satanic third side to an argument. See <http://www.uwosh.edu/obsidian/> for more information.

The dominant religions of the world, Christianity and Islam, have intersected their religious beliefs with secular public issues ranging from abortion to war to codes of public and private decency. Most minority religions in the United States, Satanism included, have little clout in the realm of politics. Christianity and Islam have succeeded in creating societies whose laws and identity are based upon religious traditions and it would appear that these two religions are in the midst of a cultural war that will only end with the destruction of one and establish the other as the dominant religion in the world. As Satanists tend to look for the third side to an argument, might it be appropriate for Satanists to join in the fight and make their own political group? Given the aggressive nature of Satanism and its growing numbers, could a Satanic political front emerge?

Christianity’s influence in American politics is not to be underestimated. The current debate in the United States over gay marriage is primarily a religious one; those who support a ban on these unions claim that they are protecting the sanctity of marriage but the notion of marriage as sacred is rooted in religion. The abortion debate has also heated up recently as some Catholic leaders have refused to give the sacrament of Communion to those who do not stand with the Church’s anti-abortion position, drawing lines on the issue based on religion affiliation. A crackdown by the Federal Communications Commission on obscenity, triggered by Janet Jackson’s Superbowl Half-Time Show, is rooted in Judeo-Christian beliefs that condemn sexuality and the human body.

Where debates on the aforementioned issues have an obvious religious center to their divisions, the war in Iraq is more complicated. From the side of the United States, the motives for this war have been an ever-evolving issue. The original argument made by President Bush and by Prime Minister Tony Blair was primarily one of defense as citizens in both countries were warned that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and was sheltering and supporting terrorists.

As facts surfaced and this was shown to be at best an error of bad intelligence or at worst a deliberate lie, the reasons for the war shifted to that of a humanitarian mission to liberate the Iraqi people and end the rule of a vicious dictator.

While Vice President Dick Cheney may have gone to Iraq for oil profits, and Prime Minister Blair might have merely been along for the ride, President Bush appears to have gone to Iraq for deeper ideological reasons. Christian principles show though in the cause of liberation. The imperative for such intervention is based upon the same notions as proselytizing religions; the liberator must assume that those he or she liberates are existing under an inferior belief system or social structure and that the liberator's superiority gives him or her the right to destroy the indigenous status quo and replace it with something akin or identical to the liberator's own values. Essentially, all acts of proselytization have some element of cultural centrism. As such, the current war in Iraq and the larger war on terror are linked to the Crusades of the fourteenth and fifteenth century that sought to "liberate" the holy land from the Muslims and constitutes a modern holy war.

Conservative Christians got their major boost into mainstream politics in the early eighties with Ronald Reagan's conservative "revolution." As a part of his platform for election, Reagan courted the conservative Christians in both of his winning campaigns by proposing to support federal legislation that would have instituted prayer in public schools. He only pursued this legislation in his first term but Reagan's Christian faith was constantly in the public eye and was a major part of his public identity, in much the same way as it is for George W. Bush.

The alliance between Reagan and the conservative Christians provides a template for political influence by any group, but particularly religious organizations. Reagan needed support and was able to rally an untapped resource of voters by making campaign promises to them. These people, in exchange for his support, lent Reagan two things. First, they granted him a significant number of votes. Second, they bestowed on Reagan a certain legitimacy to the majority of America; even if most were not a part of the conservative politic, the endorsement made it seem as though God himself approved of Reagan's candidacy, similar to days when the Pope might have given his endorsement to the successor of a kingdom.

This template for activism is problematic for Satanists because the *modus operandi* for groups with a political agenda requires that they either support those politicians who are sympathetic to their aims or provide candidates from their own organization. While this is no great revelation, it illustrates the main roadblock facing Satanism as a social movement. To require that a politician align himself or herself with Satanism or any extreme group or apparently extreme group would likely result in political suicide. In America it is common for the nightly news to include information about the worship schedules and activities of the President and other political leaders. Imagine if the nightly news had pictures of Prime Minister Blair in a black robe, holding a chalice or if First Lady Bush were photographed participating in a Black Mass (as an altar, perhaps?). Their political careers would be destroyed overnight.

Another problem facing the formation of a Satanic politic is unification. As a uniquely individualistic religion, there are many Satanists who simply do not agree with each other. The only formal structure or organization that provides representation to Satanists is America's Church of Satan (CoS) and even within the Satanic subculture this entity has been controversial and in some cases divisive. Groups that have resulted from schisms in the CoS, such as the Temple of Set, have themselves fractured, presumably because of internal strife that is perhaps unavoidable within such a fiercely independent group of people.

The Church of Satan outlined its own political agenda in its "Pentagonal Revisionism" essay. This, along with *The Satanic Bible's* heavy quotations from Ragnar Redbeard's *Might Is Right*, indicates that Satanism is primarily a right wing ideology. The first book of *The Satanic Bible*, and Redbeard's work, condemns weakness and charity and ennobles strength and power. The points of "Pentagonal Revisionism" build upon this politically right wing view of the world by promoting issues such as stratification and rigid taxation of churches and other non-profit organizations. The "Revisionism" essay also indicates that Satanism is an ideology of science, or at least one of materialism, as it asserts the foundation of aesthetic freedom and works against the institutionalization of religions views into law. This adds up to an ideology that is politically to the right inasmuch as it believes in stratification and independence but not so far to the right that it would assert a fascistic level of control over the populace.

While the Church of Satan has established a political agenda, it remains to be seen if this agenda is indeed representative of the majority of Satanists. James R. Lewis' controversial (and admittedly flawed) profile of Satanists, "Who Serves Satan? A Demographic and Ideological Profile", may provide some insight. According to the results of Lewis' questions on political affiliation, fifty-nine percent of Satanists identified themselves as either politically independent or having no political affiliation. As Lewis states, "this finding is congruent with what one might anticipate from people following an individualistic philosophy" and unfortunately does not help in nailing down any kind of hard and fast criteria for a Satanic political ideology. It may indicate instead that there is none to be found. Lewis' work suggests that Satanists are too individualistic to be assigned to political categories or at least traditional ones.

This is curious, because groups with right wing viewpoints typically have a greater amount of solidarity than those with a more leftist stance on issues. The Democratic Party of the United States can be seen as a one room schoolhouse, containing and representing a large number of viewpoints and interests, some of them opposing. The Republican Party, by contrast, has a much slimmer representation and a stronger sense of group solidarity. Yet, Satanism lacks a sense of solidarity despite having a primarily right wing outlook to its ideology. However, if the CoS were to take stances on particular issues such as abortion or war and expect that its members share these points of view, this would contradict the very independence and anti-herd mentality that Satanism claims to celebrate and perhaps threaten the very integrity of the CoS.

To return to the initial issue of creating a Satanic politic, the answer would seem to be a tentative no. Few politicians would, or could afford to, align themselves with Satanism or Satanic personalities because the consequences would be too great and Satanists do not have the numbers to influence or recruit them. On a more ideological level, Satanism has an inherent problem defining what the agenda of such a politic would be because its political identity is so ambiguous.

The lack of a Satanic politic may not be something to lament. The September 11th Commission's report contains an interesting observation about Islamic terrorism, that it "is motivated by religion and does not distinguish politics from religion, thus distorting both ... to them America is the font of all evil, the 'head of the snake,' and it must be converted or destroyed." Our adversaries, whether it is those who seek to destroy us (al Qaeda) or those who seek to convert us (Conservative Christians) share a common link. Both dissolve the line between religion and government in an attempt to assert their own ends. Satanists should work against this, rather than play into it.

This certainly does not mean that Satanists are apolitical. Those Satanists wishing to exert their influence on political issues are active if they chose to be, but out of prudence it is best not to approach an issue as a "Satanic issue" but rather to let the issue define itself. For instance, if one were to argue against the war in Iraq, he or she might utilize reasons that coincide with Satanism (it was an act of stupidity and counterproductive pride, the war was a step toward establishing Christianity as a dominant religion) or use Satanism's ideology for arguments in support of the war (imperialism is nothing to be ashamed of, might makes right) but not make the issue and Satanism synonymous. To do so changes the focus from the issue to one of religious identity and makes Satanists a part of the problem now facing the international stage.

## References

- Fineman, Harold. "Religion: Apocalyptic Politics." Online at <<http://msnbc.msn.com/id/4988491/site/newsweek/>>. Accessed August 15, 2004. [Dead link]
- LaVey, Anton. "Pentagonal Revisionism." Online at <<http://www.churchofsatan.com/home.html>>. Accessed August 14, 2004.
- Lewis, James R. "Who Serves Satan? A Demographic and Ideological Profile." Online at <http://web.uni-marburg.de/religionswissenschaft/journal/mjr/lewis2.html>. Accessed August 14, 2004.
- Lind, Michael. "The Right Still Has Religion." Online at <<http://www.newamerica.net/index.cfm?pg=article&DocID=662>>. Accessed August 15, 2004 [Dead link]
- National Commission on the Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. Online at <<http://www.9-11commission.gov/>>. Accessed August 15, 2004.
- Perlstein, Rick. "The Jesus Landing Pad." Online at <<http://www.villagevoice.com/issues/0420/perlstein.php>>. Accessed August 17, 2004.

## Chapter 19

# The Culture Cult

Ole Wolf

The Danish Satanist, Ole Wolf, has been active in Satanic groups since the early nineties, most notably Satanisk Forum (Satanic Forum), an independent Danish organization created in 2001. In the following text, originally appearing in the organization's magazine in a slightly different form, Wolf discusses how Satanism adapts to a specific culture. Hence a mature Satanic organization in Denmark will necessarily represent a particular "Danish Satanism" rather than e.g. "American Satanism." See [www.sataniskforum.dk](http://www.sataniskforum.dk) for more information.

A Danish sociologist with special interest in Scientology once remarked that those of Scientology's ideas that alienated the organization the most from Danish norms had, in fact, little to do with the organization's religious concepts. While Scientology's beliefs generally do strike Danes as odd, few Danes are familiar with those beliefs; instead, Danes recognize qualities that happen to be traditional American marketing techniques and rules of conduct. When Scientology's ideas strike a Danish spectator as odd, it is therefore mostly because its demeanor reflects the American way of thinking and acting. Danes note the culture that Scientology represents, not Scientology's actual belief.

Scientology does strike many Americans as bizarre, but considering that to a Dane the organization's cultural legacy by far outweighs the peculiarities of its beliefs, perhaps this gives an idea of the magnitude of the difference between the American and Danish cultures: if Americans find Scientology strange, Danes find Americans even stranger.

The above is also the case for Satanism and other ideologies imported from the US. Much of the Satanic ideology that has traditionally been practiced in Denmark has been so strongly influenced by Americanism that Satan has been all but replaced by Uncle Sam.

An in-depth analysis of American versus Danish culture is beyond the scope of this article, and I will instead provide examples of Americanism masquerading as Satanism. The article focuses on differences between Satanism in the American and Danish cultures, and is the view of a Dane watching the US from the outside based on his own cultural background. One should expect similar discrepancies between Satanism in the US and virtually any other culture, as well as between Satanism in any two non-American cultures.



## Cultural Influence

*Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands* (Adams Media Corp, MA 1994) is a guide to business travelers that captures the characteristics of the cultures of various countries. Among other facets, the book mentions how decisions in the US often are based on the belief in capitalism and consumerism while anxiety is reduced through hard work that produces results, which in turn cause others to acknowledge one's achievements. The latter is a consequence of Calvinistic tradition, which suggests that when humans are destined for salvation, it will become apparent while they are alive because they have earthly success. Not surprisingly, this has motivated American people to work very hard for their earthly success, and even today Americans tend to focus so strongly on even trivial achievements that from a Danish point of view it appears rather awkward. In fact, Danes tend to consider Americans rather shallow.

In contrast, decisions in Denmark are based on the belief in social welfare and individual dignity, and Danes are generally satisfied with personal achievements. Anxiety is reduced through protection by the Danish welfare system, which leaves little room for distinguishing oneself via individual achievements.

The Church of Satan is the primary exporter of Satanism from the US, and the American influence on the Church of Satan is evident. For example, it is official policy in the Church of Satan that one's status in the organization should echo one's status in real life. This stance is pure American culture (and Christian tradition!), and as such has nothing to do with Satanism per se. The dependency on the need to prove oneself socially is evident in the Church of Satan's hierarchy: those who receive titles in the Church of Satan are people with status *according to others* (typically entertainers), not, e.g., people with professional skills.

In the US, sexual equality is still far from the Danish level. This cultural characteristic is prominent in the Church of Satan, which solicits a marked difference between female and male roles. The principles described in LaVey's book, *The Satanic Witch*, would make even moderate Danish advocates of sexual equality see red. Incidentally, red is considered a positive color in Denmark, and its impact as described in *The Satanic Witch* can be therefore expected to be quite different in Denmark.

While Danish social equality is pronounced with flat organizations and loose roles, the American social status according to *Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands* is characterized by competition and structured inequality. It is therefore not surprising that the Church of Satan has placed social stratification as the first point in its "Pentagonal Revisionism" as the point on which the others rest.

## Religious Influence

Research shows that the US is one of the most religious countries in the world, only surpassed by Poland and Ireland on certain metrics in the Western world.

In comparison, Denmark is one of the most secularized countries in the world. Christianity has thus left a much deeper imprint on the US than it has on Denmark. Although the Satanism of today is atheistic, this does not change the fact that Americans are far more used to religious traditions, argumentation, and positions than Danes.

This is obviously also true for American Satanists, and American Satanism often speaks about Christianity, in particular in its American forms. Similarly, the use of religious titles of people and organizational units in American Satanic organizations indicates Christian influence, because although the titles may be intended as mockery, blasphemy only means something to believers. There also appears to be a stronger focus on rituals in American Satanism than in Danish Satanism, which again can be explained by the fact that Americans are more used to religious rituals.

It may be a combination of both religion and culture when American Satanists take it for granted that if a man and a woman live together and have children, they must be married.

### **Cultural Manifestation**

Satanism has a number of key principles that transcend cultural differences, but the principles can become manifest quite differently in different cultures. For example, when the Satanic ideology states that one should pursue one's own satisfaction, local circumstances determine how this is feasible. In the US, it is probably easier to achieve one's goals by conquering a high position in a hierarchy, whereas in Denmark one's satisfaction is more easily obtained through cooperation and consideration of social relations.

Hence, if an American maintains that Satanism is an ideology of competition while a Dane maintains that Satanism is an ideology of cooperation, both can be right at the same time – just not in the same *place*. It is only an “ideologic error” (in the form of solipsism per the Church of Satan's use of the word) if an American insists that it is the nature of Satanism to compete, because it is not Satanism per se that dictates competition, but Satanism *applied within a specific culture* that turns competition into an advantage.

### **The Elephant and the Mouse**

The Church of Satan is used as an example because it has set the standard for most Satanic organizations, but it is not only the Church of Satan whose Satanism is defined by American values. Also organizations such as the Temple of Set, the First Church of Satan, the Satanic Reds, and many other Satanic organizations define Satanism by American standards.



Figure 1 It is tempting to say that in American Satanism, the ratio between Americanism and Satanism can be illustrated by a flag where only one of the stars is oriented with three points down. American Satanism is comprised of both American culture and Satanism, and it is the American culture that takes the lion's share of the ideology

Since the definitions of Satanism proposed by these organizations depend on the American culture, members in European countries will eventually develop their own characteristics as they mature that cannot harmonize with those characteristics of their parent organizations that are based on the American culture. Hence, the Church of Satan in Europe cannot be the same as the Church of Satan in the US, and Europeans in the Satanic Reds or the Temple of Set will necessarily disagree with their parent organizations. Either that, or there is reasonable doubt whether those members really understand what Satanism implies.

It is important to realize that unless Satanism can be isolated from the culture in which it is found, it makes no sense to emphasize Satanism as a unique ideology. Satanism must necessarily be something else and beyond (American) culture to earn distinction.

Yet this is one of Satanism's problems. American Satanism is characterized by a strong influence from American culture, and there is no distinction between the part of the ideology that is American culture and the part that is Satanic ideology. This way, spokespersons for American Satanism are prone to passing

along American culture instead of Satanic ideology, and American documents about Satanism – including books by Anton LaVey – are in practice better suited as tutorials in American thinking than introductions to Satanism. It is therefore quite understandable why LaVey sees “evidence of a new Satanic age” in *The Satanic Bible*, because with his definition of Satanism, he merely states that most Americans are Americans.

When American Satanists voice opinions on political or global issues, their opinions mostly express the general American opinion. This is fair enough, because one should not assume that Satanists’ convictions are always different from mainstream beliefs. However, it becomes awkward when it prompts Satanists to believe that mainstream beliefs are inherently Satanic, rather than vice versa. Peter Gilmore, High Priest in the Church of Satan, inadvertently caricatured this situation in an interview to “The Black Table” on March 18, 2003:

America is absolutely a Satanic nation, by our definition. ... We see the U.S. as being very unique in history, the world’s first Satanic republic, and so it is important to many Satanists.

And that can hardly come as a surprise to anyone, when their definition of Satanism is mostly Americanism. Peter Gilmore’s statement becomes that of the mouse who travels with an elephant and exclaims: “What a noise we make!”

On issues where LaVey has expressed pure American attitudes, it is only natural that non-Americans must either agree with American culture or disagree with LaVey. It is doubtful whether American organizations understand that disagreement with their practices or seemingly fundamental truths is not always indicative of a disagreement on the part of the ideology that is distinctly Satanic.

## **Cult or Culture**

Any ideology is colored by the sentiments in the country where the ideology is found, but compared with other ideologies Satanism is particularly influenced by the cultures of those countries. The reason for this is to be found in the fact that Satanism has no tradition, no formalized introduction, and a very vague definition.

Fledgling Satanists are forced to read books and speak with other Satanists, and based on this interaction create an interpretation of Satanism on their own. One’s cultural traditions and sentiments will have much more to say in such an ideology than in an ideology that is filled with predefined ethics, morals, definitions of good and evil, etc.

Satanism has traditionally been defined by Satanists from the US, and Satanism outside of the US is therefore filled with American convictions. Over time, however, this Americanism can be expected to tarnish and be replaced with local customs as Satanism matures in these countries.

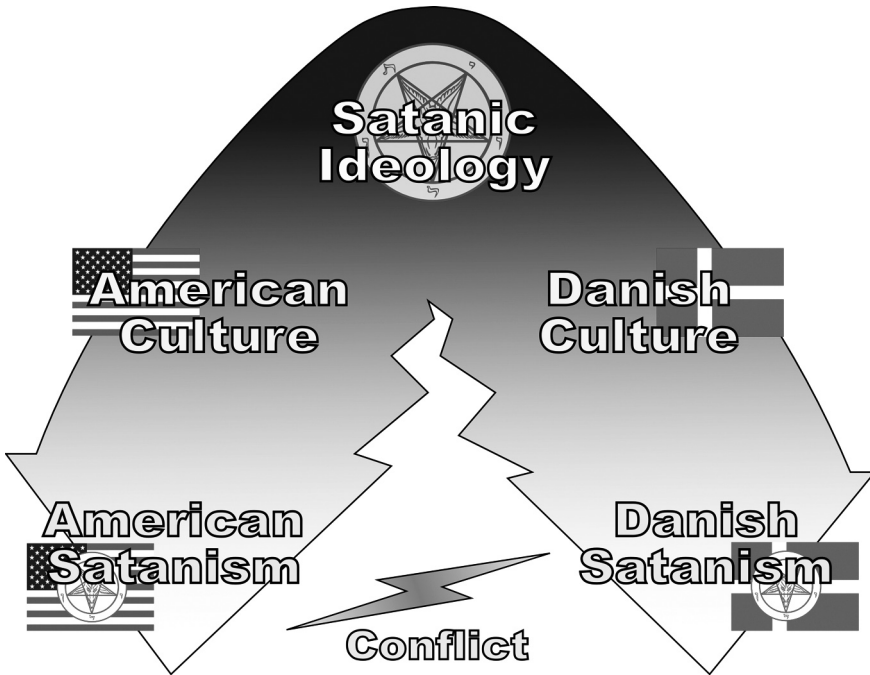


Figure 2 The Satanic ideology has some fundamental principles that transcend cultural differences. But, the *use* of these principles in a particular culture has a unique outcome, and thus two different cultures can easily entail such different applications of Satanism that the use of Satanism in one culture contradicts the use in the other culture. However, although the two directions soon oppose each other, both are correct applications within the context of the respective cultures. It is not until one attempts to apply Satanism of one culture to another that a conflict arises

### American Satanism in Denmark

As part of their self-image, American organizations often describe their organizational structure as either that of a traditional Christian church or as a Masonic lodge, and use the respective orders of these institutions. In practice the organizations are rarely organized as such, and rather resemble the unstructured New Age culture. New Satanic organizations in Denmark often not only mimic the American claims of organizational structure, but also believe that this is how Satanism can and should be in Denmark.

Danish Satanists who confuse American culture with Satanism are often easy to spot. They tend to preach social Darwinism, but their claim to being “the elite”

only earns them a derisive laugh in the Danish culture. They tend to exaggerate the number of members in the new – and always biggest – organization, or are very meticulous in the structure of their organization and/or the degrees given to their members. (They are usually either strict hierarchies with plenty of titles or “secret” and filled with degrees.) Finally, they create gaudy web pages where the number of texts and services have higher priority than quality or a common denominator of the contents. Bigger is better, quantity beats quality, and excess equals success.

For someone raised in the Danish culture it is difficult not to smile overbearingly when such Danes announce that they are Satanists. They sometimes do have an understanding of the fundamental principles shared by the various Satanic ideologies, but as a rule their newfound ideology is mostly American culture, not Satanism.

It is when a Danish Satanist is unaware when his convictions are Satanic or American that he starts to contradict himself, expressing an American “might is right” attitude with one side of his mouth, and supporting Danish equality and democracy where “everyone has a voice” with the other side.

It is not a question to neither American nor Danish Satanists whether the US or Denmark provides the best form of Satanism, and one should not be misled to believing that there is no Satanism in American Satanism, because certainly there is. Similarly, there are also aspects of Danish Satanism that are more Danish than Satanic.

The key is to know when an issue is about culture, and when it is about Satanism with its fundamental values and views – that man is an animal with carnal desires, that Satanists pursue their own gratification, that Satanists follow their own inner light instead of trusting non-existing gods, that there are no objective values such as good and evil, etc.

If one is to identify the Satanic aspects of Satanism in any culture, the key is to look for the aspects that are specific to Satanism and disregard everything that most people in that country regards as axiomatic. Otherwise one is bound to make the mistake of believing that 90 percent of all citizens in one’s country are Satanists.

The original article can be found in *Satanisk Bulletin* nr. 10 (2003), pp. 7–13.



**Taylor & Francis**

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

# Index

- Aanestad, Paal Magne 156, 158, 159, 160, 163, 164
- Abyss 253
- Alfred, Randall H. 17, 29, 30, 155
- Alisauškiene, Milda 19
- Almond, Marc, Church of Satan  
membership 218, 224
- alterities, and modernity 38
- American Sociological Association, Ethics  
Committee 107, 109
- Americans, Danish view of 260
- Amlien, Ingar, *Crest of Darkness* band  
159
- animal sacrifice 113
- Animism 215
- anti-aesthetic, Black Metal as 186–8, 195  
*see also* darkness
- antinomianism 7, 8, 89, 243–4
- Aquino, Michael 31, 32, 50, 56, 60, 67, 76  
on Satan 96  
*The Book of Coming Forth By Night*  
13, 91  
*The Church of Satan* 49
- ASAT, and SAT 250
- ATMA 251, 252
- Atrius 158–9, 164, 165
- Au, Ilmo 135
- Austen, David 31
- Azazel 249
- Barton, Blanche 47, 60, 79, 80  
*Black Flame*, editor 76  
*The Church of Satan* 76, 83  
*Secret Life of a Satanist* 45, 76
- Bauman, Zygmund 143
- Berger, Helen A. 16
- Bierce, Ambrose 75  
*The Black Flame* 29, 30, 36, 76  
“Black Flame” 61, 63
- black magic 68, 218, 220, 239  
and Buddhist traditions 247–8  
white magic, comparison 243
- Black Mass 28, 256  
as psychodrama 68
- Black Metal 154  
action, demand for 190–92  
as anti-aesthetic 186–8, 195  
the body in 192  
clothes 157–8, 184  
and creative violence 172–3  
Denmark 160–61  
nature, focus on 181–2  
originality, demand for 189  
Romantic movement 195  
Satanism 171–2  
scene, Norway 157, 159  
vocals 186  
*see also* Death Metal; Euronymous;  
Underground Metal; Vikernes
- Black Metal bands 157, 159, 173, 181, 184  
albums 197–8  
anti-Christianity 173–5, 178, 182  
anti-LaVey campaign 188–9  
church arsons 175–6  
darkness worship 178–80, 193–4  
Death Metal, criticism of 189  
male dominance 183  
weapons, fascination with 181 fn181  
woods, affiliation with 181  
*see also* Burzum; Darkthrone;  
Emperor; Gorgoroth; Mayhem
- “Black Pope” 45, 48, 56, 81, 148
- Blair, Tony 255, 256  
Satanisation of 219
- Blavatsky, H.P. 13, 226  
Left-Hand Path 221  
occultism 221  
*The Secret Doctrine* 90
- the body  
in Black Metal 192  
and Satanism 231–2
- Boulware, Jack 80
- Brahma, cosmos, relationship 250



- Britain
- Druids 215, 216
  - Jedi Knights 216
  - neo-Paganists 215–16
  - occult publications 219
  - occultism 217–18, 220
  - Satanists 27, 31, 214, 215, 216–20, 225
  - Temple of Set 31
- Bromley, David G. 86
- The Brotherhood of the Dark 122, 125, 126, 127
- Buddhism
- Hinayana 247
  - Mahayana 247
  - Polish Satanism, influences on 148
- Burzum, Black Metal band 173, 176
- anti-Christianity 174
- songs
- “A Lost Forgotten Sad Spirit” 193
  - “Decrepitude” 179
  - “If the light catches us” 174–5
  - “Jesus’ death” 180
  - “Leeches on Our Hearts” 180
  - “Musstad” 182
  - “Turn the sign of the microcosmos” 178, 180, 182
  - “War” 194–5
  - “What once were” 178–9
- Bush, George W. 255, 256
- Campbell, Colin, *The Cult, the cultic milieu and secularization* 4
- Camus, Albert 180
- Carnegie, Dale, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* 82
- Carroll, Peter 224–5
- Liber Null* 225
- Chaotes 225
- charisma 43
- LaVey’s 44, 75, 76
  - Weber on 78, 79, 80, 82
- Cheney, Dick 256
- children, Satanic ritual abuse 35
- Christian Science 43, 44
- Christian tradition, effeminizing effect 182–3
- church arson 175–6
- Church of Satan 7, 13, 17, 18, 27, 45, 97
- administration 77
  - Almond membership 218, 224
  - American values 260
  - celebrity members 46, 218, 224
  - Council of Nine 77, 80
  - criticism of 161–2
  - decentralized phase 77–8, 81–2
  - dismantlement 44
  - Europe 262
  - foundation 28, 45, 46
  - Gilmore on 165–7
  - Grotto Masters 78
  - grotto system 30, 42, 48, 77, 78, 82
  - heretics, attacks on 47, 54
  - High Priesthood 78, 81
  - income 78
  - legal status 78
  - legitimation strategies 43–5
  - organisation 81
  - “Pentagonal Revisionism” 257, 260
  - political agenda 257
  - routinization 81
  - schism 76, 77
  - as “self-spirituality” 29
  - social contact, lack of 77
  - splinter groups 47–8
  - Temple of Set, comparison 32, 33
  - see also* Temple of Set
- Church of Satanic Brotherhood 47
- clothes
- Black Metal 157–8, 184
  - Death Metal 184
  - Satanism 156–7, 160, 165
- Cohen, Stanley 142, 144
- Cohn, Norman 142
- Colquhoun, Ithell 219–20
- cosmos, Brahma, relationship 250
- Crabtree, Vexen 231–8
- “Religion of Flesh” 231–5
  - “Satanism is the Religion of Nature” 235–7
  - “The Unnatural Religion” 237–8
- creativity, routinization of 16
- Crowley, Aleister 13, 33, 49, 212, 222, 242
- Left-Hand Path, influence on 90
- The Book of the Law* 96

- cultic milieu 4–5  
 cyberSatanism *see* internet Satanism
- Danes, view of Americans 260
- Dark  
   Breath 253, 254  
   Force 251, 252  
   Paths 248  
   Power 41  
   Tradition 249–50
- darkness  
   and light 253  
   worship, Black Metal bands 178–80, 193–4  
   *see also* anti-aesthetic
- Darkthrone, Black Metal band 173  
 anti-Christianity 173–4  
 Death Metal, change from 185  
 songs  
   “A Blaze in the Northern Sky” 181  
   “A Wind of Sorrow” 180  
   “Paragon Belial” 177  
   “To Walk the Infernal Fields” 177  
   “Unholy Black Metal” 173
- Das Tierdrama* 68
- Davies, Maxwell 18
- Davis, John C. 55
- Davis Jr., Sammy 46
- Dawkins, Richard, *The Selfish Gene* 238
- de Young, Mary 142
- Death Metal 183, 190  
   clothes 184  
   commercialisation 184  
   criticism by Black Metal bands 189  
   essence of 185–6
- demonising, LaVey on 213
- Denmark  
   Black Metal bands 160–61  
   Satanisk Forum 154, 159, 160, 163, 259  
   Satanism 163  
     American 259, 264–5  
     anti-authoritarian 163  
     secularity 261
- Desmond, Arthur (Ragnar Redbeard), *Might is Right* 49, 257
- Det Norske Sataniske Samfunn (DNSS), Norway 154, 156, 160, 164
- Devil 9, 45, 85  
   in the Bible 85  
   Romanticism, reinterpretation 11–12
- disembedding 11  
   of Satan 13
- Dragon Rouge 87  
   basis 93  
   Chaos/Cosmos dichotomies 93  
   dragon symbol 95  
   eclecticism 94–5  
   feminine deities 95  
   foundation 92–3  
   initiatory degrees 92–3  
   magic practice 93  
   membership 93  
   organisation 93  
   Princes of Darkness 94–5  
   Princesses of Darkness 95  
   Satanic labelling of 97
- Druids, Britain 215, 216
- Dyrendal, Asbjørn 2, 18, 19
- Egan, Lord 55
- ego gratification, Satanism 62–3, 71
- Ellis, Roger 217
- emotional community, Weber on 149
- Emperor, Black Metal band 195
- Encyclopedia of Buddhism* 250
- Encyclopedia of Religion* 86
- Enochian Keys 49
- esotericism, Western 87 fn2
- Estonia  
   Christian People’s Party 135  
   church vandalism 132  
   Council of Churches 135  
   Evangelical Lutheran Church 135  
   graveyard vandalism 131–2, 133  
   Order of Black Venus 136  
     registration attempts 133–4  
   Register of Churches and  
     Congregations 135  
   religious affiliation 129–30  
   *Satan Speaks* (LaVey), translation 133  
   *Satanic Bible*, Estonian translation 133, 134  
   Satanism 130–36  
     churches’ reaction 135  
     and heavy metal scene 130, 131

- in the media 130–31, 132, 133
  - organized 133–4
  - political parties' reaction 135–6
  - youth 131–2
- Union of Baptist Churches 135
- eugenics 66
- Euronymous 157, 188, 194
  - murder of 191, 195–6
- European Convention on Human Rights,
  - article 9 (2) 136
- Evans, Dave 20
  - The History of British Magick after Crowley* 87
- Ex Homini Lux organisation 147
- expressivists, Heelas on 72
- Finland, Satanism 154
- First Satanic Church, foundation 81
- Flowers, Stephen (Edred Thorsson) 2, 60,
  - 62, 97, 239–45
  - and Crystal Dawn, *Carnal Alchemy* 70
  - on the Left-Hand Path 239–45
  - Lords of the Left-Hand Path* 239–45
  - Northern Magic* 94
- Foldy, Michael 223
  - on Otherness 212
  - on Wilde 225
- Fortune, Dion 221–2, 226
- Franklin, Benjamin 14
- Frisk, Liselotte 97
- Giddens, Anthony 11, 144
- Gilhus, Ingvild Sælid 86
- Gilmore, Peter 81, 263
  - on Church of Satan 165–7
  - The Satanic Scriptures* 76
- glocalization, Satanism 16, 153–4
- Gnosis and Western Esotericism, Dictionary* 85
- Goat of Mendes 249
- gods, multipartite nature 94
- Golden Dawn movement 33, 90
- Gorgoroth, Black Metal band
  - anti-Christianity 175
  - church arsons 175, 176
- goths, image 36
- Govoni, Fr Giorgio 200, 206, 207
  - martyrdom 20, 208
- Satanic ritual abuse
  - accusation of 202–3, 206
  - cleared of 204
  - procedural story 203–4
- Granholm, Kennet 3, 18
- Grant, Kenneth 90
  - Left-Hand Path, influence on 90–91
  - works
    - Cults of the Shadow* 91
    - Nightside of Eden* 91
- Gregorius, Fredrik 96
- Grotto Masters 78
  - self-education 82
- Grotto Master's Handbook*, reading list 82
- grotto system, Church of Satan 30, 42, 48,
  - 77, 78, 82
- Grue* magazine 76
- Hammer, Olav 11
  - Claiming Knowledge* 13
  - pattern recognition 12
- Hanegraaff, Wouter, on Western
  - Esotericism 6
- Harvey, Graham 17, 18, 87, 164
- Heelas, Paul 1–2, 3, 71, 86
  - on expressivists 72
  - on New Age ideology 59, 60
  - “self-spirituality” 28
- Hegarty, Diane *see* LaVey, Diane
- Hell 174, 175
  - concept 178, 193, 251
- Hellfire Club 218
- Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn 221
- Hermonen, Merja 154
- Hetherington, Kevin 64, 154
- Hicks, Robert, *In Pursuit of Satan* 50–51
- Hine, Phil 220, 221, 222, 224, 225
- Hjelm, Titus 14
- Horsley, Richard 212
- Horus 96
- Hutton, Ronald 214
- identity construction, and Satanism 8
- Immortal, Black Metal band 181, 185, 189
- Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* 224
- individualism
  - ideology of 88
  - Satanism 65, 71

- indulgence, vs compulsion 64–5
- internet Satanism
- authenticity 149–50
  - Lithuania 122, 124, 125, 127
  - Norway 154, 156, 160, 164
  - Poland 145–6, 147–8
- Introvigne, Massimo 85, 121, 206, 207
- Iraq war (2003) 256
- Isis 96
- Italy, Satanism, numbers 199–200
- Jackson, Janet 255
- Jantsang, Tani 247–54
- Dark Doctrines* 13
- Jedi Knights, Britain 216
- Jenkins, Philip 206, 207
- Jocys, Evaldas & Vaidotas 122–3
- Kahn-Harris, Keith 15
- Kali, goddess 222, 224
- Karlsson, Thomas 92
- Kataja, Ensio 92
- Riimujen viisau* 94
- Kiss, Bow, or Shake Hands* 260
- Kolnar, Knut 192
- on creative violence 172
- Kundalini 93, 95, 247, 251, 253
- Kung Fu 250
- La Fontaine, Jean 31–2, 207, 212, 214
- Speak of the Devil* 35
- Laar, Mart 135
- L'Air Epais* ceremony 68
- Lap, Amina 159, 160, 162–3, 164
- Latour, Bruno 38
- LaVey, Anton Szandor 2, 9
- charisma 44, 75, 76
  - on Christian culture 60–61
  - Church of Satan
    - dismantlement 44
    - foundation 28, 43, 45, 46, 87
    - legitimation strategy 44
  - on demonising 213
  - on indulgence vs compulsion 64–5
  - pseudo-biography 45–6, 75
    - exposure 46–7
  - on religions 29
  - on Satanism 8
  - successors 76, 79–80
  - works
    - Satan Speaks* 60, 133
    - The Satanic Witch* 9, 76, 79, 82–3, 260
    - see also *The Satanic Bible*
- LaVey, Diane (Hegarty) 80
- LaVey, Karla 79, 80
- LaVey, Xerxes 80
- Leadbeater, C.W. 222
- Leary, Dr Timothy 213
- Left-Hand Path 3, 7, 20, 60, 66
- Blavatsky 221
  - branches 244–5
  - Buddhist sources 248
  - characteristics 87–9
  - Crowley, influence of 90
  - etic definition 87–9
  - film, negative influence of 224
  - Flowers on 239–45
  - Grant, influence of 90–91
  - Lord, qualification for 243–4
  - and Lucifer 249
  - organisations 91–3, 97–8
  - origin 90, 220, 247
  - The Satanic Bible* 91
  - Satanic labelling of 221–5
  - Temple of Set 91
  - vs Right-Hand Path 62, 89, 241–2
  - Western 90
  - Wheatley, negative influence on 222–3
  - as Yin, way of 249
  - see also *Satanism*
- legitimation of authority
- through tradition 43
  - Weber 42–3
- legitimation strategies, Church of Satan 43–5
- Leppik, Jaan J. 135
- lesser magic
- behavioural techniques 68–9
  - purpose 68
  - and self-transformation 69
- Levi, Eliphas 13
- Lewis, James R. 2, 18, 19, 255
- “Who Serves Satan?” 257
- Lex Talionis* 65, 155, 156, 165
- life, appraisal, in present 88

- light, and darkness 253
- Lithuania
- The Satanic Bible*, Lithuanian translation 122
  - Satanism 122–8
    - internet 122, 124, 125, 127
    - non-religious 123
  - Satanists, personal narrative 122–5
- Logan, Kevin 34
- Lowney, Kathleen S. 18, 132
- Lucifer, and the Left-Hand Path 249
- Luckmann, Thomas 146
- Lutheranism, Scandinavia 154–5
- Lyons, Arthur, *The Second Coming* 77
- Machiavelli, Niccolò, *The Prince* 82
- McLuhan, Marshall 146
- Maffesoli, Michel
  - neo-tribalism concept 149
  - The Time of the Tribes* 149
- magic 10
  - academic study of 224
  - chaos 148, 224
  - definition 242
  - religion, distinction 242
  - school of 67
  - sexual 70
  - see also black magic; lesser magic; ritual; white magic
- magicians, chaos, and Satanism 225
- Mainetti, Sr Maria Laura
  - martyrdom 20, 208
  - murder of 200–201
    - procedural story 201–2
    - Satanism 201, 202, 205
- man, as psycho-physical totality 88
- Mansfield, Jayne 46, 47, 75, 76, 79
- Manson, Marilyn 160 fn14, 151 fn15, 205
- marriage, gay 255
- martyrdom
  - Fr Govoni 20, 208
  - Sr Mainetti 20, 208
- Mayer, Peter 48
- Mayhem, Black Metal band 157, 187
- Medway, Gareth 225
- Megadeth band 105
- Menegotto, Andrea 20
- Mercer, Joyce 206
- metaphor, Satan as 121
- Mikaelsson, Lisbeth 86
- Milton, John, *Paradise Lost* 12
- modernity
  - and alterities 38
  - and Satanism 38, 72
- Monroe, Marilyn 46, 47, 79
- moral entrepreneurs, role in moral panics 206
- moral panics
  - discrediting of 206–7
  - features 145
  - moral entrepreneurs, role 206
  - Satanic ritual abuse 141, 142, 145, 206, 216, 225
- Mørk, Gry B. 19
- music, and identity formation 160 fn14
- Nadramia, Peggy 76, 156
- National Center of Child Abuse and Neglect 207
- nature, and Satanism 235–6
- Necchi, Joe 55
- Necromantia, Underground Metal band 184, 189
- neo-Luciferian Church 97
- neo-Paganism 215
  - Britain 215–16
  - Satanism, similarities 86
- neo-tribalism concept, Maffesoli 149
- New Age ideology, Heelas on 59, 60
- New Age movement 28–9, 215
  - Satanism, similarities/differences 59, 61–3, 72
- New Christian Right 144
- Nietzsche, Friedrich 14
- The Nine Doors of Midgard* 92
- Nine Satanic Statements 29–30, 49, 50, 64
- Norway
  - Black Metal
    - clothes 157–8
    - scene 157, 159
  - Det Norske Sataniske Samfunn (DNSS) 154, 156, 160, 164
  - Inferno* festival 159
  - internet Satanism 154, 156, 160, 164
  - Ordo Illuminatorum 158
  - The Satanic Bible*, Norwegian

- translation 159
  - Satanism 157, 163
  - Satanists, political affiliations 164–5
  - Sosialistik Ungdom 164
  - Unge Høyre party 164
- Obsidian Enlightenment 255
- occult publications, Britain 219
- occultism
  - Blavatsky 221
  - Britain 217–18, 220
- Odin 92
  - hegemony of 94
- Odinism, vs Odianism 94
- Order of Black Venus, Estonia 133–4, 136
- Order of the Nine Angles 27, 34
- Order of the Phosphorus 97
- Ordo Illuminatorum, Norway 158
- Ordo Templi Echelon 134
- Ordo Templi Orientis 90
- Ordo Templi Satanis 47
- Other, Satanists as 142–3, 212
- Othering, Satanism 213
- Otherness, Foldy on 212
- Otto, Rudolf 143
- Pandolfini, B, *Weapons of Chess* 82
- ‘paranoids’ 82
- Parsons, Jack 224
- Partridge, Christopher 5
- Pasi, Marco 87
- pattern recognition, Hammer 12
- Pentacle* magazine 211
- “Pentagonal Revisionism” 65, 67, 257, 260
- pentagram, symbolism 9–10
- Peterson, Kirtland C., “Mind of the Ninja” 249
- Pleasure Principle, vs Reality Principle 143
- Poland
  - Satanic ritual abuse scare 141–2
    - features 142
    - symbolization 142
  - Satanism
    - Buddhist influences 148
    - features 149
    - influences 148
    - internet 145–6, 147–8
  - post-charismatic leadership, Weber on 79–81
  - Post-Satanism
    - meaning 87
    - Temple of Set 87, 96
  - Prince/s of Darkness 45, 51, 56, 62
    - concept 93
    - Dragon Rouge 94–5
    - multiple 93–5
    - and principle of isolate intelligence 241
    - Rune-Gild 94
    - Temple of Set 93–4
  - Princesses of Darkness, Dragon Rouge 95
  - Principia Discordia* 148
  - Przybyszewski, Stanislaw
    - Die Synagoge Satans* 13
    - Satans Kinder* 13
  - Raelian Movement 44
  - Rand, Ayn, *Atlas Shrugged*, *Satanic Bible*, similarities 49–50
  - Reagan, Ronald 256
  - Reality Principle, vs Pleasure Principle 143
  - Redbeard, Ragnar *see* Desmond, Arthur
  - ‘rediscovered memories’ 206, 207
  - reembedding 11
    - of Satan 13
  - religion, magic, distinction 242
  - religions, LaVey on 29
  - religiosity, US 260
  - religious affiliation, Estonia 129–30
  - research project, Satanism, personal narrative 106–17
  - Right-Hand Path
    - Buddhist sources 248
    - origin 220, 247
    - The Satanic Bible* 91
    - vs Left-Hand Path 62, 89, 241–2
    - as Yang, way of 249, 250
  - Ring of Troth 239
  - Ringvee, Ringo 19
  - ritual 10, 64
  - ritual magic 68
  - Rolling Stone* magazine 46
  - Romanticism, Devil, reinterpretation 11–12
  - Rosemary’s Baby* 28, 46, 47, 48
  - Ruda, David & Manuela 37
  - Rule Satannia* magazine 236

- Rune-Gild 239  
 foundation 92  
 organisation 92  
 Prince of Darkness 94  
 Rune-work 92  
 Satanic label 96–7  
*see also* Temple of Set
- Rune-work 92
- Runnel, Hando 131
- Russell, Jeffrey B. 12
- Sade, Marquis de 14
- SAT 252  
 and ASAT 250
- Satan  
 Aquino on 96  
 conceptions of 12–13  
 disembedding of 13  
 as Jungian archetype 35  
 as metaphor 121  
 reembedding of 13  
 Set, distinction 32–3, 96  
 and sex 45  
 as ultimate rebel 3
- Satan, Age of 96
- Satanic aesthetics 9
- The Satanic Bible* 7, 8, 13, 18, 28, 29, 60, 79, 112  
*Atlas Shrugged*, similarities 49–50  
 content 42  
 Estonian translation 133, 134  
 Left-Hand Path 91  
 Lithuanian translation 122  
 Norwegian translation 159  
 as quasi-scripture 41–2, 44, 54, 55–6, 57  
 Right-Hand Path 91  
 role, in modern Satanism 51–6  
 sales figures 51, 103  
 sources 48–51, 75  
 translations 51  
 Zeena LaVey Schreck on 49
- Satanic milieu  
 categories 6  
 scope 5
- Satanic Reds 7, 247, 261
- Satanic ritual abuse 1, 86  
 accusations of 35–6  
 children 35  
 fantasy, role of 144–5  
 moral panics 141, 142, 145, 206, 216, 225  
 satanic panic 1, 20, 121  
 scare, Poland 141–2
- Satanic Vampires 27, 36–7
- Satanisation, of Tony Blair 219
- Satanisk Forum, Denmark 7, 154, 159, 160, 259
- Satanism  
 academic neglect 51  
 ad-hoc 86  
 adolescent 106–12, 122, 125, 205–6, 208  
 adult 122, 126  
 American 261–3  
 Christian influences 261  
 Scandinavian, comparison 168–9  
 anti-religions 233  
 Black Metal *see* Black Metal  
 and the body 231–2  
 categories 86  
 chaos magicians, crossover 225  
 and Christian tradition 10–11  
 clothes 156–7, 160, 165  
 as cult of opposition 2, 8–9  
 cultural adaptation 166–7, 259–65  
 definitions 3, 85–6, 121  
 Denmark *see* Denmark  
 diagnosis 60–63  
 diversity 2  
 ego gratification 62–3, 71  
 emic historiography 13–14  
 as enchantment 38  
 esoteric 7, 13, 61, 86  
 essence of 2, 29, 237–8  
 Estonia *see* Estonia  
 Finland 154  
 globalization 16, 153–4  
 goals 64–7  
 of inner/outer worlds 66–7  
 homogenization 16  
 and identity construction 8  
 ideologies 257, 261, 264  
 individualism 65, 71  
 Italy *see* Italy, Satanism  
 LaVeyan 8, 45

- characteristics 45
    - materialism 62
  - Lithuania *see* Lithuania
  - main traits 7
  - Mainetti murder 201, 202, 205
  - and modernity 38, 72
  - mosaic structure 146–8
  - multi-generational 30–31
  - and nature 235–6
  - neo-Paganism, similarities 86
  - neo-tribalist 149
  - New Age movement, similarities/
    - differences 59, 61–3, 72
  - non-religious 162
  - occult 121, 126
  - organized 86
  - Othering 213
  - Poland *see* Poland
  - political influence, possible 255–8
  - positive/negative aspects 3
  - as post-Christian 3
  - primary documents 231–66
  - rationalist 7, 61, 62, 64, 121, 126, 153
  - reactive 6–7
  - reading lists 82–3
  - research project, personal narrative
    - 106–17
  - as Satanic milieu 14–16
  - Scandinavia *see* Scandinavia
  - Scandinavian, American, comparison
    - 168–9
  - scares 86
  - and Self 2
  - and self-development 8, 17, 68
  - self-identified 28
  - as “self-religion” 18, 28, 29, 59–72, 86
  - tradition, lack of 263
  - use of term 97
  - varieties 37
  - Wolf on 162, 167–8
  - see also* internet Satanism; Post-Satanism
- Satanists
- Britain 27, 31, 214, 215, 216–20, 225
  - characteristics 8–10, 61
  - demonising of 143–4
  - Norway, political affiliations 164–5
  - as Other 142–3, 212
  - profile 52–3
  - self-identified 37
  - stereotypical 142–3
- Scandinavia
- consensus culture 155
  - Lutheranism 154–5
- Satanism
- influences 153
  - non-religious 162, 168
  - see also* Denmark; Finland, Satanism; Norway
- Schock, Peter A. 12
- Schreck, Nicholas 47, 62
- and Zeena LaVey, *Demons of the Flesh* 60
- Schreck, Zeena LaVey 47, 62, 80
- on *The Satanic Bible* 49
- science, prestige of 43
- Scientology 259
- Scroll of Set* 94, 96
- secularity, Denmark 261
- Segal, Hanna 144–5
- Self
- detraditionalizing 61
  - as ongoing narrative 144
  - and Satanism 2
- self-deification 89
- self-development
- Oscar Wilde on 17
  - and Satanism 8, 17, 68
- self-knowledge 65
- “self-religion” 7, 8, 17
- Satanism as 18, 28, 29, 59–72
- “self-spirituality” 28–9
- Church of Satan as 29
- self-transformation
- and lesser magic 69
  - techniques 70
- Servants of the Light 221
- Set
- Aeon of 96
  - as archetypal rebel 33
  - nature of 93–4
  - Satan, distinction 32–3, 96
  - see also* Temple of Set
- Setians 32, 33, 62, 63, 69, 94, 96
- sex, and Satan 45
- sexuality 70, 255



- Shields, Rob 149  
 Smoczynski, Rafal 19  
 Snell, Lionel 211–12, 220, 224  
 socialization, Webb on 61  
 Söderlind, Didrik 19, 156, 160  
 Spare, Austin 212  
 Stone, Oliver, *Indictment: the McMartin trial* 207–8  
 stratification 65  
 Sturluson, Snorri, *Edda* 94  
 Summers, “Reverend” Montague 218, 226  
 Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* 82  
 Sutcliffe, Richard 87  
 symbols, Satanic 86
- TAN 253  
 Tantra/Tantrism 90  
 Temple of Lylyth 41, 42  
 Temple of Set 7, 13, 17, 27, 31–4, 56, 239  
   American values 261  
   Britain 31  
   Church of Satan, comparison 32, 33  
   foundation 91  
   individualism 32  
   initiatory degrees 91  
   as Left-Hand Path organisation 91  
   magic practice 33, 92  
   membership 93  
   objective/subjective universes 92  
   philosophy 92  
   as Post-Satanism 87, 96  
   Prince of Darkness 93–4  
   Satanism, use of term 96  
   *Scroll of Set* 94, 96  
   structure 33–4  
   UK membership 31, 32  
   will 33  
   *see also* Rune-Gild; Setians
- Thatcher, Margaret 219  
 Thelema 90  
   Law of 178  
 Theosophical Society 90  
 Thorsson, Edred *see* Flowers, Stephen
- Underground Metal 183–4  
 uniqueness 88  
 universes, objective/subjective 92, 239–41
- US, religiosity 260
- Venom, Black Metal band 157  
 Vikernes, Varg 172, 175, 177, 183, 190  
 violence, creative  
   in Black Metal 172–3  
   Kolnar on 172  
 Vodun 215  
 Voodoo 217, 225
- Waite, Arthur Edward 221  
 Wallis, Robert 213  
 Wardinski, Nathan 255–8  
 weapons, Black Metal bands, fascination with 181 fn19  
 Webb, Don 60, 63, 64, 67, 70, 72  
   on socialization 61  
 Weber, Max 18  
   on charisma 78, 82  
   on emotional community 149  
   legitimation of authority 42–3  
   on post-charismatic leadership 79–81  
   works, *Economy and Society* 43
- Wheatley, Dennis 213, 226  
   book sales 223–4  
   Left-Hand Path, negative influence on 222–3  
   works  
     *Strange Conflict* 222  
     *The Devil and All His Works* 218–19  
     *The Devil Rides Out* 222
- white magic 225  
   black magic, comparison 243
- Wicca 14, 215  
 Wilde, Oscar 225  
   trials 222, 223
- witchcraft 14, 34  
 Witozsec, Nina 182  
 Wolf, Ole 76, 159, 160, 164, 167, 259–65  
   Church of Satan, criticism of 161–2  
   on Satanism 162, 167–8
- Wolfe, Burton, *The Devil’s Avenger* 45  
 Woodman, Justin 224  
 woods, Black Metal bands, affiliation with 181
- Wright, Lawrence 46  
   *Saints and Sinners* 47

*Xeper* concept [92](#)  
“Xloptuny Curse” [55](#)

Yang, Right-Hand Path, as way of [249](#), [250](#)  
Yin, Left-Hand Path as way of [249](#)  
Yin and Yang [248](#), [251](#)