The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity
Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen

Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

Title Pages

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Published in the United States of America by
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Subscriber: York University; date: 28 June 2020

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
The Devil's party: Satanism in modernity / edited by Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-19-977923-9 (hardcover : alk. paper)—ISBN 978-0-19-977924-6 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. Satanism. I. Faxneld, Per. II. Petersen, Jesper Aagaard.
BF1548.D48 2012
133.4′22—dc23 2012007394

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Per Faxneld is a research fellow at the department of the History of Religions at Stockholm University, Sweden. He has written several peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on Satanism and Western esotericism, co-edited *Förborgade Tecken* ('Hidden Signs', H:Ströms, 2010)—a book on esotericism in literature—and is the author of *Mörkrets apostlar* ('Apostles of Darkness', Ouroboros, 2006), a study of early Satanism. His research focuses on gender issues in Satanism and the literary roots of contemporary religious constructions of the Devil as a hero and helper.

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Alternative Religions in America (Greenwood, 2006). He is currently working on the uses and interpretations of scripture in new religions.

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PhD thesis on the history of Satanism, predominantly during the nineteenth century, provisionally entitled *Children of Lucifer: The Origins of Modern Satanism*.

(p.ix) **Jesper Aagaard Petersen** is an associate professor at the Programme for Teacher Education, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU). He has published extensively on modern Satanism; is the editor of *Contemporary Religious Satanism: A Critical Anthology* (Ashgate, 2009); and the co-editor of *Controversial New Religions* (Oxford, 2005) and *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism* (Prometheus, 2008). He has a PhD from the Department of Archaeology and Religious Studies at NTNU with the thesis 'Between Darwin and the Devil: Modern Satanism as Discourse, Milieu, and Self' (2011).

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Introduction

At the Devil's Crossroads

Per Faxneld
Jesper Aagaard Petersen

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.003.0000

Abstract and Keywords

This introductory chapter offers some basic elements to situate the study of Satanism. First, the nature of modern Satanism is delineated through a distinction between discourse on the satanic and satanic discourse. This distinction relates to the difference between cultural stereotypes and self-ascribed satanic identities, a move from a negative other to a positive self through de-otherization. Second, the chapter provides a brief presentation of the history of Satanism, followed by a discussion of seminal research on the subject. The chapter concludes with a summary of chapters and an extensive bibliography useful for further study.

Keywords: Satanism, satanic discourse, de-otherization, history of Satanism, research on Satanism

Satanism. Taste the word. To most it will conjure feelings of anxiety, while others may feel it is a ridiculous and immature pseudo-religion. Few people are likely to have a positive reaction. Yet, in a scholarly context, such feelings need to be put to the side. Satanism, like all other religions, can and should be studied in a detached manner, focusing on rigorous analysis and gathering of data. All the scholars involved in the present volume have taken this path at the crossroads. They have chosen historical-critical, sociological, or other methods to treat the highly controversial topic at hand like any other cultural phenomenon, no matter what their personal feelings, positive or negative, may be.

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The chapters of the book offer the reader an overview of the dark kaleidoscope that is Satanism: From early modern outlaws and Romantic poets to the Californian 'black pope' of 1960s Satanism. From playful 'self-spirituality' to the infiltration of violent neo-Nazi and Islamist terrorist groups by Satanists with sinister agendas. The chapters tackle very different varieties of enthusiasm for the Devil, approaching them from widely different angles, allowing for a nuanced view of this variegated phenomenon. This introduction will briefly discuss demarcations, history, and research before providing an overview of the individual chapters.

(p.4) Demarcations

The subject of modern Satanism is best described inclusively when viewed as a social and cultural phenomenon, and exclusively when viewed as a religious and philosophical one. One should separate the popular cultural conceptions of Satanism from actual satanic beliefs held by a group of some sort. A first step is thus a distinction between *discourse on the satanic* and *satanic discourse*, an analytical dichotomy between broader demonological narratives on Satan and Satanism circulating in Western culture and the narrower satanic discourse of self-declared Satanists operating within a satanic milieu (Petersen 2011a: 62–67). Although they are related in content, there are important differences between the self-image of Satanists and outsiders' perception of what Satanists are.

The popular understanding of Satanism is rooted in Christian values and concepts, that is, a myth of the enemy or the opposition, and is supported by highly visible individuals and groups living out this mythical frame. Whether it is Satanism *in* popular culture—as when some heavy metal groups, role-playing games, movies, or television series use 'occult' or even overtly satanic iconography, references, or plotlines to sell material—or it is Satanism *as* popular culture—found in adolescent 'dabbling' with forbidden emotions and desires—it is based on society's fears and prohibitions. By 'playing evil', a symbolic resistance can be voiced against dominant society. Inversely, through anti-satanic sentiments, society also negotiates values by acting on the side of 'goodness', illustrating the circular structure of demonological discourse on the satanic.

In contrast, satanic discourse goes beyond the Christian framework by incorporating Satan as an ideal with religious aspirations similar to the Human Potential Movement or Western esotericism. Although the symbolic resistance can be similar to that of 'reactive' Satanism, the focus has changed from reaction to religious engagement and from mimesis as an end in itself to a means found outside the norm (and often inside the self). Common discourses circulating in the satanic milieu include the more secular and rationalist, yet provocative, ones using Satan as a symbol for nonconformity and material wisdom, and the syncretistic and esoteric discourses honouring Satan as a

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metaphysical force or a personified being. That said, an interest in pop-culture Satanism can, in fact, not unlike what Christian moralists warn people of, eventually lead to a serious involvement with groups and literature expounding discourses which are part of modern religious Satanism proper (Lewis 2001; Petersen and Dyrendal, 2012).

A useful parallel is Joseph Laycock's discussion of discursive changes in the meaning of the term 'vampire', producing a 'vampire community' **(p.5)** roughly equivalent to the satanic milieu. He proposes a four-stage process of emergence of the self-identified vampire: First, an ostracized category of person is identified with by an individual or group, subsequently 'de-otherizing' the cultural category, making it 'familiar'. Third, it is transformed from within, which finally makes it a tool for constructing and defining the self (Laycock, 2009: 28–31, 135). This move from negative 'other' to positive 'self' can be applied to other discursive identities based on mythological narratives. More to the point, the categories of vampirism or Satanism become statements of identity implying active ascription. This is directly relevant for the language of satanic discourse, especially in terms of subcultural ancestry, which can now be viewed as a milieu *apart* from a Christian 'underground', populated with actors retroactively using historical people, processes and products to construct identity and tradition.

Here, it seems appropriate to address an often asked question: how many self-identified Satanists are there worldwide? The 2001 UK national census indicated about 1,600 Satanists in that country, while in the 2006 Australian census, 2,247 individuals declared it to be their religion. Extrapolating from this, Chris Mathews makes a very tentative estimate at 30,000–100,000 Satanists worldwide (Mathews 2009: 160), and this appears quite reasonable (but see also Evans 2009 for some cautionary remarks). Let us now turn to history to view the changing images of Satanism in time and space.

A brief history of Satanism

Conceptions about Satanists have been present in Western culture for a long time. Early modern 'witches', abortionists and poisoners close to the court of Louis XIV, certain English rakes, and many others, have been slandered as Devil-worshippers. On closer inspection, none of these seem to actually have been Satanists, with the French seventeenth-century example as a possible exception (Medway 2001: 70–99). An enduring and public tradition of Satanism was first instated in 1966, with the founding of the Church of Satan. There were, however, people who nourished an intense sympathy for the Devil much earlier. In the late eighteenth century, we can find purely literary Satanists, but the Luciferian leanings of these authors seldom extended beyond occasional outbursts in a text or two (Schock 2003). One later exception to this rule is the Polish decadent Stanislaw Przybyszewski (1868–1927), who is the subject of a chapter in the present volume. Satan was also popular among nineteenth-century socialists as a symbol of revolt against capitalism and the bourgeoisie, with some reds **(p.6)**

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using the figure in a fairly sustained and consistent manner (Faxneld, forthcoming d).

In the context of Western esotericism, one of the first to express unequivocal praise of Satan was H. P. Blavatsky, chief ideologist of the Theosophical Society, in her magnum opus *The Secret Doctrine* (1888). If her system is considered in its entirety, however, these ideas are peripheral (Faxneld, forthcoming a). The first person to construct an entire esoteric system, if a rather miniscule one, around Satan was the obscure Danish occultist Ben Kadosh (Carl William Hansen, 1872–1936). His satanic circle, if it was even realized in the manner he intended, was as tiny as the volume of his writings (Faxneld 2011). The German 1920s esoteric order Fraternitas Saturni was considerably more populated. It viewed Satan as an initiator and celebrated Luciferian masses, but whether these features were pronounced enough to make it correct to label the entire group satanic is not self-evident (Faxneld 2006: 177–188). The 'satanic' temple (a term she herself used) briefly operated by Maria de Naglowska in 1930s Paris presents similar problems. Its aim was an integration of Satan and God, and ultimately God seems to have been more important to Naglowska (Hakl 2008: 465–474).

None of these groups and individuals founded lasting satanic traditions. Fraternitas Saturni still exists but seems to have toned down the satanic content almost entirely. This applies even more to the Theosophical Society. A small Scandinavian group today draws on Kadosh's ideas, but this is a revival rather than a direct continuation (Faxneld 2011).

The undoubtedly most important and influential Satanist group is the Church of Satan, founded by Anton Szandor LaVey (1930–1997) in San Francisco in 1966. LaVey claimed a colourful background as a former police photographer, carny, and lover of the young Marilyn Monroe. Most of this was challenged later, and some of it disproven. Regardless, LaVey had a highly charismatic personality and soon attracted followers, as well as plentiful media attention to his church. Even some high-profile celebrities, notably Sammy Davis Jr. and Jayne Mansfield, were briefly attracted to the Devil's congregation.

The 1969 *Satanic Bible* presented LaVey's worldview to the public. Satan, to him, was a symbol of man's carnal nature, and LaVey's Satanism was a blend of Epicureanism, elitism, and streetwise cynicism. He once himself described it as 'Ayn Rand with trappings' (Klein 1970: 20). In LaVey's more or less atheist and materialist system, ritual and magic mostly function as theatre, psychodrama, and self-therapy. There is, however, also an unresolved tension present between ideas based strictly on the natural sciences and notions inspired by fringe science and 'rejected knowledge', such as the **(p.7)** theories of Wilhem Reich

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and the fiction of H. P. Lovecraft (Faxneld, forthcoming b; Petersen 2009a, 2011c, 2012).

In subsequent books, like *The Compleat Witch* (1971) and *The Satanic Rituals* (1972), LaVey kept disseminating his teachings. After only a few years, he grew tired of being in the spotlight and stopped hosting public rituals. The organizational system with ‘grottos’ spread across the United States, and in some places in Europe, was also disbanded after administrative troubles started growing. In 1975, LaVey’s right-hand man Michael Aquino and other high-ranking members left the church and formed the splinter group Temple of Set. Their focus was openly theistic, and they distanced themselves from the figure of Satan, claiming he was a later corruption of the ‘original’ Prince of Darkness, the Egyptian god Set. Aquino, a high-ranking military officer and assistant professor in political science, created an organization that aimed to be an esoteric academy, in sharp contrast to the deliberately seedy satanic carnival LaVey had set up (Gardell 2003: 290–292, 389; Petersen 2009a). Patterning themselves after fin-de-siècle initiatory orders, the Temple postulated self-deification as the ultimate goal of the practitioner. The tools to achieve this were an eclectic selection of techniques drawn from Western esotericism.

In spite of having mostly discarded Lucifer, Aquino filled LaVey’s role as America’s number one mass media Satanist in the 1980s, with appearances on talk shows like *Oprah* and *Geraldo*. Though soon acquitted, he was for a short time suspected of so-called Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) of children. This was part of the SRA scare, a rumour panic fired by fundamentalist Christians and dubious psychotherapists, which for a period spread like wildfire, mostly across the United States and England (Richardson et al. 1991; Lewis and Petersen 2008). The 1980s was also the age of satanic avant-garde artistic and (ambiguous) political provocation, courtesy of Church of Satan members like noise musician Boyd Rice (Baddeley 2000; Petros 2007).

During the 1990s, LaVey made something of a return to the public sphere, publishing two books and granting several interviews. The dawning of the Internet age also saw interest in Satanism grow, as adherents could interact on a global basis and more easily access information (Lewis 2001; Petersen, forthcoming). This led to an upsurge of theistic Satanism, with ideologists like Diane Vera of New York City propagating their interpretation of Satanism primarily online. Various new forms of atheistic Satanism, typically drawing heavily on LaVey, yet subtly different, also appeared. LaVey died in 1997, and the Church of Satan is today led by Peter H. Gilmore, who has further emphasized the rationalist and atheist elements in the original teachings.

(p.8) The first years of the 1990s also witnessed the rise of Scandinavian black metal: a form of extreme satanic music where musicians competed to outdo one another in being ‘evil’, which led to several murders and anti-Christian acts of

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terrorism like church burnings (Moynihan and Søderlind 1998). Black metal continues to be one of the most visible forms of Satanism, and it is clear that at least a handful of today's commercially most successful bands in the genre, like Sweden's Watain, are, in fact, Satanists in deadly earnest—not just as part of a stage show.

As exemplified by the Temple of Set, many groups often belong only tangentially to the satanic milieu in a narrow sense and could rather be said to belong to a 'Left-Hand Path' milieu partly overlapping with Satanism. This term derives from Indian Tantra, and in the Western esoteric context typically signifies an ideology of antinomianism, self-deification, and individualism, which views man as a psycho-physical totality and celebrates life in the here-and-now (Granholm 2009a: 88–89). Many, but not all, of these groups use explicitly satanic symbolism to some extent. Aside from Aquino's organization, the Swedish order Dragon Rouge, founded in 1989, is an influential contributor to the Left-Hand Path current. Satanic symbolism is clearly present here, but Granholm, who is the foremost expert on this group, has argued fiercely against putting them in the Satanist category. More obviously satanic groups are the Swedish Left-Hand Path order the Temple of the Black Light; the American Satanic Reds, which combines their syncretistic dark doctrines with dialectical materialism; and the Order of Nine Angles, founded in the UK in the 1970s. Other forms of more or less satanic religiosity, such as the Luciferian witchcraft scrutinized by Fredrik Gregorius in the present volume, do not always fit the Left-Hand Path criteria but rather represent a different type of 'dark spirituality'. Satanism today is thus a heterogeneous assortment of ideas and practices tying into popular culture, esotericism, and diffuse religiosity, developing in many mutually incongruent ways.

Research on Satanism

Though Satanism might seem like something predominantly belonging to the field of religious studies, it has generated just as much, if not more, research by sociologists and psychologists, especially with regards to SRA, moral panics, and adolescent Satanism, subjects outside the scope of this book (Richardson et al. 1991; Lewis and Petersen 2008). This section cannot and will not provide a comprehensive coverage of research; instead, **(p.9)** we focus on a few key themes, works, and scholars in the field (see Petersen 2011a: 22–37 for an extensive literature review).

Historian Jeffrey Burton Russell has written the standard work on the history of the Devil (four volumes: 1977, 1981, 1984, 1986). The concluding volume is especially useful to understand the theological and societal context Satanism grew out of. Unfortunately, while Russell provides valuable information on the evolution of Satan, his treatment of Satanism bears a strong Catholic bias and is fraught with glaring errors. The first full-length work in English to attempt a broad analysis of the contemporary Satanic milieu, Chris Mathews' semi-

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scholarly *Modern Satanism* (2009), also suffers from a strong anti-Satanist bias, which turns the book into more of a diatribe than a detached and objective work. This is a pity, because it obscures some very poignant observations made along the way. In German, the work of Joachim Schmidt (1992, expanded edition 2003) is highly recommended, and for those fluent in Italian, Massimo Introvigne (1994) has written an excellent broader study (which is also available in a 1997 French translation and a substantially revised 2010 edition). Both of these books treat not only contemporary Satanism but also pre-LaVeyan varieties.

In English, there is little in the way of studies of older Satanism, aside from articles by Per Faxneld (2011, forthcoming a, forthcoming d), who has also written exhaustively in Swedish about the topic (2006), and a book chapter by Hans Thomas Hakl (2008). Gareth Medway (2001), Evelyn Lord (2010), and Lynn Wood Mollenauer (2007) debunk accusations of Satanism in historical times. Detailed studies, especially fieldwork based, of individual contemporary Satanist groups are few and far between. When the Church of Satan was a more public and organized group in the early 1970s, four important articles were written about it by sociologists (Truzzi 1972 and 1974; Moody 1974; Alfred 1976). Jesper Aagaard Petersen has written several articles (2005, 2009a, 2011b and c, 2012, forthcoming) focusing on the discursive strategies within the satanic milieu of the 1990s and 2000s, applying up-to-date methodological tools to the material and providing a much-needed theoretical framework. Other important recent articles have been written by Asbjørn Dyrendal (2008, 2009a and b, 2012); Graham Harvey (1995, 2009); Titus Hjelm et al. (2009); and James R. Lewis (2001, 2002, 2010).

As noted previously, Satanism shades into a broader subculture of 'dark spirituality'. The clearest connections tend to be to the so-called Left-Hand Path, which has been studied thoroughly by Finnish historian of religions Kennet Granholm. After his doctoral dissertation (2005) about the Left-Hand Path group Dragon Rouge, Granholm continued **(p.10)** his anthropological exploration of this current via fieldwork on the Temple of Set. He has also published a large number of articles (Granholm 2009a, b, and c; 2010a and b; 2011; 2012a and b). Though it should be noted he rejects Satanism as a general term, his work is, of course, nevertheless of great interest to those who consider that an appropriate name for their field or who focus specifically on the figure of Satan. One of the most valuable aspects of Granholm's contributions is that he has conducted extensive fieldwork, instead of remaining a distant outsider and relying on movement texts (as is often the case among scholars).

Regarding popular genres, musicologists and scholars of popular culture have studied its expressions in their respective fields. Cinema studies has not displayed quite as strong an interest—though there are many interesting cinematic depictions of the religion in question—and the best study of the role of Satanism in this media was written by a (then) practicing Satanist (Schreck

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2001). Satanism in literature has been the subject of numerous studies, among the best being Max Milner's monumental two-volume work (1960) and Hannes Vatter's doctoral dissertation (1978). A more recently published, short yet dense, contribution is Peter A. Schock's *Romantic Satanism* (2003). Lately, the relationship between practiced religious Satanism and such themes in literature has attracted the attention of scholars (Schipper 2010; Luijk, forthcoming; Faxneld 2010, forthcoming b and c).

The black metal scene has been the subject of only one major scholarly study in English (Kahn-Harris 2007) and a handful of articles (Granholm 2011; Mørk 2009; Dyrendal 2009). The most widely read book on the subject is no doubt the journalistic account *Lords of Chaos* (Moynihan and Søderlind 1998), which, though not scholarly and slightly sensationalist, contains a wealth of material useful for the scholar. There are also somewhat similar later popular books in Swedish and Norwegian (Klingberg and Johannesson 2011; Rem 2010), and a Swedish musicological monograph (Bossius 2003).

Practically all the important articles on Satanism written before the millennium are collected in Lewis and Petersen's *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism* (2008), and *Contemporary Religious Satanism* (Petersen 2009), which bring together contributions by most of the key players in the field today. Most chapters in the present volume are based on papers delivered at the first international Satanism studies conference held in Trondheim, Norway, in 2009. The conference has since become biannual, with a gathering in Stockholm, Sweden, in 2011, and one planned for Denmark in 2013. A platform of this type, where specialist scholars can meet and exchange **(p.11)** ideas, has greatly enhanced the quality of academic discussion of the topic. The book you hold in your hands testifies to this.

Overview of chapters

The twelve chapters are arranged in four parts which describe chronological as well as thematic development. The first part tackles the precursors to modern Satanism by examining both well-known and rather forgotten ancestors. In '"It Is Better to Believe in the Devil": Conceptions of Satanists and Sympathies for the Devil in Early Modern Sweden', Mikael Häll undertakes the important task of sorting through court records, trial documents, and theological treatises to answer two interrelated questions. First, Häll examines the conceptualization of the term 'Satanist' in the writings of the Swedish theologian L. P. Gothus and finds that aside from a polemical, general sense, the concept did denote actual worshippers of the Devil. Second, he investigates the popular mythology of the Devil and the interaction between folklore notions concerning nature beings, learned demonology, and the practices of cunning folk in the same period to conclude that actual 'Satanists' probably did exist but in a solitary and unsystematic sense. As such, contemporary sources reveal a heterogeneous

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assortment of discourses on Satanism even in the early modern period, although this complex is distinct from modern satanic discourse.

Ruben van Luijk's 'Sex, Science and Liberty: The Resurrection of Satan in Nineteenth-Century (Counter) Culture' provides a compelling argument for viewing the Romantic Satanists (or literary Satanists) of nineteenth-century European Romanticism as a turning point in the history of modern religious Satanism. Contrary to the attributive Satanism of Christian culture, figures such as Godwin, Shelley, Vigny, and Carducci provided the necessary reevaluation of Satan as a positive trope of identification. Van Luijk illustrates this disembedding through the three interrelated themes of rebellion, science, and carnality and concludes with a careful discussion of the specific character of Satan as a metaphorical and ideological short-hand in literary modes rather than worship of any specific kind. Thus, Romantic Satanists were primarily artists and romantics, not self-professed Satanists. Nevertheless, the artistic projects did influence later, more explicit formulations of Satanism in the satanic milieu.

Finally, Per Faxneld's 'Witches, Anarchism, and Evolutionism: Stanislaw Przybyszewski's fin-de-siècle Satanism and the Demonic Feminine' presents a detailed analysis of the writings of Polish decadent author and bohemian Stanislaw Przybyszewski (1868–1927). Contrary to other literary **(p.12)** Satanists of his and earlier periods, Przybyszewski combined a positive and negative understanding of Satan; the Devil was both the paragon of progress, carnality, and liberty as well as a figure of pain, suffering, and destruction. Przybyszewski's system is constructed around a complex amalgamation of semantic inversion using double and triple turns of the moral compass to highlight the darkness and pessimism *also* present in human life. This is further illustrated through an investigation of Przybyszewski's views on aesthetics and the feminine, especially his observations on witchcraft and witches as 'good evil'. All in all, Faxneld concludes that Przybyszewski can be seen as a pioneer of modern Satanism, expounding a systematic satanic worldview over a period of time which inspired a loose network of bohemians.

The second part examines Anton LaVey and the Church of Satan. It kicks off with Amina O. Lap's 'Categorizing Modern Satanism: An Analysis of Anton LaVey's Early Writings'. Lap substantiates the prevalent categorization of modern Satanism as a self-spirituality by looking closely at the anthropology of Anton LaVey in *The Satanic Bible*, *The Satanic Witch*, and *The Satanic Rituals*. She concludes that LaVey should be included in the company of humanistic psychology, self-religion, and human potential groups, but that he differs in his materialistic and ego-driven interpretation of human potential. Satanism is thus related more to the secularized 'prosperity wing' of New Age thought than the varieties of spirituality found in the cultic milieu today and should be considered a distinct discourse of world affirmation.

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In ‘Sources, Sects, and Scripture: The Book of Satan in *The Satanic Bible*’, Eugene V. Gallagher tackles the intricate question of categorizing the most popular and recognized book on Satanism today, Anton S. LaVey’s *Satanic Bible* (1969). Through a thorough compositional analysis of the first part, The Book of Satan, especially its relation to Ragnar Redbeard’s *Might is Right*, Gallagher redefines both *The Satanic Bible* and the category of ‘scripture’ to explain the form and function of LaVey’s book. This examination is subsequently used to discuss satanic and scholarly engagements with this work and the specific schismatic claims to authority furthered by criticizing LaVey’s strategy of appropriation. As such, Gallagher’s analysis questions both the scholarly (mis-)uses of the term ‘scripture’ and the various intentions of charging LaVey with plagiarism by opening up Satanism to broader comparative studies.

The part concludes with Asbjørn Dyrendal’s ‘Hidden Persuaders and Invisible Wars: Anton LaVey and Conspiracy Culture’, which examines a long-neglected dimension of LaVey’s work, namely his ambiguous play with conspiracy theories. Through a close reading of two texts, Dyrendal **(p.13)** isolates two major strands of conspiracy thinking in LaVey’s Satanism: On the one hand the straightforward incorporation of conspiracies and conspiratorial agents as both a negative other and a positive exemplar, and on the other hand an ambiguous postmodern duplicity concurrent with LaVey’s insistence on a ‘third side’ or ‘satanic alternative’ to traditional dichotomies. The former is found in early writings and later texts, such as ‘The Invisible War’, and is reminiscent of the agency panic prevalent in conspiracy culture broadly conceived. The latter is visible in ‘Insane Ramblings’ and illustrates that, as in many other cases, LaVey should be read carefully and understood with tongue firmly in cheek. In both cases, LaVey’s focus in on the individual, using conspiracy as a resource for developing a satanic anthropology.

The third part focuses on developments in the satanic milieu in the present day. In ‘Conversion to Satanism: Constructing Diabolical Identities’, James R. Lewis examines conversion experiences in Paganism and Satanism to address the common misconception that people joining such movements are either passive, confused, or adolescent. Through a theoretical discussion of conversion and a presentation of empirical data, Lewis criticizes external stereotypes of ‘cult behaviour’ or ‘adolescent crisis’ and internal ones of ‘coming home’ as incomplete explanations for engagement in loose networks such as the pagan or satanic milieu, let alone groups arising from them. Supplementing sociological dimensions like social pull and affective experience, he advocates investigating the weight of ‘ideological fit’, especially when confronted with decentralized networks propagated mainly through books, popular culture, and the Internet. Finally, Lewis suggests a terminological shift from conversion to identity construction to highlight the transformation of both self and community today.

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In ‘The Carnival of Dr. LaVey: Articulations of Transgression in Modern Satanism’, Jesper Aagaard Petersen follows the theme of transgression from Anton LaVey and into the plurality of expressions and practices in the satanic milieu today. Through a comparison of various registers and articulations within modern Satanism and their relative use of ‘satanization’ and ‘sanitization’ of a satanic ‘tradition’, Petersen questions any simple correspondence between modern Satanism and engagement with transgressive practices. Given their origin, all positions certainly arise from and frequently utilize anti-Christian and antinomian discourse. Nevertheless, there is ambiguity involved, stretching ‘transgression’ from prank and play to religious commitment. As such, adversarial or antinomian discourse is a resource for Satanists both in relation to mainstream values and as boundary markers within the satanic milieu.

(p.14) Rafal Smoczynski’s ‘The Making of Satanic Collective Identities in Poland: From Mechanic to Organic Solidarity’ offers an analysis of the recent developments of modern Satanism in Poland through the lens of poststructural theory. It is Smoczynski’s thesis that the collective identities of Satanists, especially online, are formed in dialogue with prevalent public articulations of moral panic. The anticult and antisatanic stereotypes thus form an important ‘symbolic background’ for identity work, forcing Satanists to define what they are not. This, in turn, is reflected in the positive ascriptions of Satanism, understood as an adversarial space appropriating well-established ideologies of emancipation and reason in contrast to the transgressions of ‘anti-Christians’. Smoczynski further relates these developments to postfoundational theory and asks the question whether this is Satanism at all and whether the collective identities can be elaborated by turning to theories on new social movements. To discuss this, he invokes Durkheim’s concept of solidarity to explain the move from ‘mechanic’ groups espousing LaVey to more heterogeneous ‘organic’ networks of post-Satanism.

The fourth part deals with the margins of the satanic milieu and analyses various ‘post-satanic’ or ‘Left-Hand Path’ groups and texts. In ‘The Left-Hand Path and Post-Satanism: The Temple of Set and the Evolution of Satanism’, Kennet Granholm submits a pointed critique and reorientation of previous attempts at delimiting Satanism. He suggests seeing Satanism as a heterogeneous discourse or discursive complex in relation to other currents, thus focusing on the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’ of discursive practice rather than belief in and engagement with mythological beings. In addition, Granholm advocates ‘Left-Hand Path’ and ‘post-Satanism’ as more productive concepts in scholarly discourse, a proposal that is illustrated through a description and brief analysis of the Temple of Set. In this way, the study of Satanism is opened up towards research in esotericism and late modern religiosity rather than isolated within a conceptual prison.

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In ‘Luciferian Witchcraft: At the Crossroads between Paganism and Satanism’, Fredrik Gregorius offers a tantalizing glimpse into the historical development of witchcraft of a darker hue than that most neopagan groups engage. Through an analysis of C. G. Leland’s *Aradia* (1899), Robert Cochrane’s Clan of Tubal-Cain and contemporary manifestations such as the writings of Michael Ford, Andrew Chumbley, and Michael Howard, Gregorius describes Lucifer as a trope stimulating the formation of a specific submilieu of texts, practitioners, and networks. This milieu lies between the satanic and esoteric Left-Hand Path milieux, sharing characteristics with both yet having a distinctive use of and practice around Lucifer, Lilith, and Cain, for example, in contrast to tropes such as Satan and witchcraft, respectively. As such, the **(p.15)** self-deification and adversarial practice of modern Satanism and Luciferianism are close relatives in a strained, but complex, relationship with Wicca and other neopaganisms.

Finally, Jacob C. Senholt’s ‘Secret Identities in the Sinister Tradition: Political Esotericism and the Convergence of Radical Islam, Satanism, and National Socialism in the Order of Nine Angles’ discusses a neglected submilieu between the satanic and Left-Hand Path milieux dubbed the ‘Sinister Tradition’. In contrast to more well-known examples, the amorphous groups and networks here are explicitly political and extreme in their esoteric pursuits. Senholt illustrates this through a presentation of seven distinct ‘sinister’ characteristics and a detailed analysis of one group, the Order of Nine Angles, and its founder David Myatt, also known as Anton Long. Through the practice of ‘insight roles’, the order advocates continuous transgression of established norms, roles, and comfort zones in the development of the initiate, exemplified in Myatt’s progression from National Socialism and Satanism to radical Islam (and possibly back again). This extreme application of ideas further amplifies the ambiguity of satanic and Left-Hand Path practices of antinomianism, making it almost impossible to penetrate the layers of subversion, play and counter-dichotomy inherent in the ‘sinister dialectics’.

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The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity
Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen

Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

(p.19) Part One The Question of History

Precursors and Currents

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.011.0001

Even before Anton LaVey founded the Church of Satan in 1966 there were Satanists, as discussed in the introduction. In the early twentieth century, a handful of small groups of esoteric Satanists existed, and in the case of Maria de Naglowska such a cult in Paris gained some mass media notoriety. But before them, we find individuals, occasionally part of loose networks, who could reasonably be designated Satanists—at least with qualifiers such as 'literary Satanists' or 'folk Satanists'. In this section we are introduced to some of them.

Who is and is not a Satanist is of course a matter of definition and time-specific conceptualizations of terms. As Mikael Häll shows, in early modern Swedish theological use, a Satanist (old Swedish: *Sathanist*) often meant not simply a wicked Christian, as the word, according to Gareth Medway (2001: 9), was used in English until the nineteenth century. Rather, it designated a person actually in league with the Devil. Through a process of exchange between learned and popular discourses, Satan came to be interpreted among the common folk as an occasionally helpful figure, a spirit governing the untamed realm of Sweden's deep forests. For some career criminals living in the wilderness, he could also become an icon of their status as outcasts.

While the sources are not absolutely reliable, it seems several of the felons actually confessed to their judges, in a boasting and defiant manner, that they had indeed given themselves over to the Devil. A very few individuals may even have lived for long periods of time in accordance with a sort of 'satanic' worldview, where they considered themselves the children of Satan, pariahs like him, who were doing his bidding in exchange for his protection. If so, it would

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perhaps be appropriate to speak of a form of 'folk Satanism', on a highly individual basis.

(p.20) Interestingly, Satan as a god of nature, who can offer help with fishing and hunting, for example, is a recurring theme in the testimonies. The Devil as a nature god is also present in the literary Satanism scrutinized by Ruben van Luijk in the following chapter. Provided these folklore notions were prevalent elsewhere in Europe as well, which does not appear unlikely, there was perhaps an influence from folklore on the Romantic Satanists. This suggestion would, naturally, need to be explored further to draw any firm conclusions. The route of ideas through various discourses is often difficult to trace, and, in this case, it may also be a question of both Häll's 'folk Satanists' and Luijk's men of letters independently having made idiosyncratic interpretations of traits associated with Satan in the dominant Christian discourse. As James R. Lewis has noted, during the development of Christianity the Devil came to embody 'sinful' things many felt were rather attractive (2003: 107). Häll's chapter shows that this, in fact, quite early led some sinners to turn to him as a friend and helper.

The Romantics and the Satanist outlaws are similar in that Satan symbolized ideas or practices they embraced but which were condemned by Christianity and conservative forces. Satan, thus, is employed as a tool for cultural critique—of a more articulate and sophisticated form among the celebrated authors and in a crude and implicit form by the outlaws. To the latter, Satanism seems to have been partly a way of mocking the established order but also a way to frighten their fellow men—and something they actually believed would grant them supernatural aid.

In the case of the Polish decadent author Stanislaw Przybyszewski, whom Per Faxneld's chapter focuses on, such cultural critique is also clearly present. Unlike the Romantics, however, Przybyszewski actually called himself a Satanist and was fairly consistent and persistent in his lauding of the Devil. The Romantics typically abandoned their sympathy for the Devil after a very limited number of works, and certainly never designated themselves Satanists. While the outlaws in Häll's court protocols may, indeed, have considered themselves Satanists for a long time, we cannot say for sure. Much can be hidden behind the words in the protocols, and the testimonies can be more or less coerced, manipulated, or distorted by the authorities. Then again, it is also fully possible that they are not and should be considered statements straight from the horse's (Satanist's) mouth. As this is impossible to determine, however, and van Luijk ascertains that the Romantics do not qualify as Satanists *sensu stricto*, it seems Przybyszewski is the first sufficiently documented 'real' Satanist—at least among the cases treated in the present volume.

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The individuals discussed by Häll, van Luijk, and Faxneld share certain views, among them a conception of Satan as a powerful figure connected to **(p.21)** nature (who has a helpful attitude towards at least some special categories of men), but they also display great differences. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Sweden, most people believed in the Devil as a very real spiritual entity. This was not the case in Byron and Shelley's circle, nor among Przybyszewski's Berlin bohemians. Not only is this fact a reminder to consider each historical Satanist or semi-Satanist as a unique individual, but also to always keep in mind the time and specific context in which Satanist utterances are made.

Häll demonstrates the possibility of actual Satanism being practiced by (admittedly rare) individuals in the early modern peasant population; something scholars have often dismissed as only existing in the paranoid fantasies of the time. As van Luijk observes, the history of Satanism displays 'a continuous process of interaction between attribution and identification'. With the insights gained from Häll's chapter, we can add that which is which is not always clear-cut. The potential existence of a form of 'folk Satanism' opens up the possibility that the Romantics' creative and disrespectful handling of Christian mythology may not have been as groundbreaking as it would seem. Drastic pro-satanic reinterpretations in folklore can, to some extent, have vastly antedated their writings. But, and this is the crux of the matter, these friends of Lucifer left no textual traces to speak of (only trial protocols hidden away in archives), and we are unsure if it is actually their voices we hear in the source material. The works of the Romantics thus remain the most important positive revaluating of Satan and opened the door for all that was to come of that sort.

Przybyszewski, who today is a figure known mostly to historians of literature and to Satanists with a strong interest in historical predecessors, never exerted an influence over the development of religious Satanism comparable to that of his famous English author colleagues. In his time, his celebrations of the Devil caught the imagination of many important avant-garde figures, and he put his diabolic stamp on famous works of art and literature. Yet, in spite of interesting similarities to, for example, Anton LaVey, direct influences from his ideas on present-day Satanists are hard to find, and a major reason is probably that his writings on Satan have been translated into English only very recently. The most important developments in practiced Satanism after 1966 have taken place in English-speaking countries, and thus older material not available in that language has largely been neglected by the producers of satanic ideology.

All three chapters shed new light on the history of Satanism in their own way. For the actual genealogy of LaVeyan (and some other forms of) Satanism, van Luijk's chapter is the most important. Häll and Faxneld, on the **(p.22)** other hand, discuss Satanists that primarily tell us interesting things about radical counter-readings of dominant discourse in their own eras.

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The Devil’s Party: Satanism in Modernity
Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen

Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

‘It Is Better to Believe in the Devil’

Conceptions of Satanists and Sympathies for the Devil in Early Modern Sweden

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DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.003.0001

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter demonstrates how, unlike in the English language, “Satanist” was in use as a term for Devil-worshippers in Swedish theological discourse as early as 1617. Further, using court records from the 17th and 18th centuries, the chapter shows such Satanists did actually exist in Sweden at the time, albeit only in an individual, solitary and unsystematic way. The sources reveal that for example some outlaws and cunning folk turned to the Devil for assistance, and that their practices could reasonably be seen as a form of “folk Satanism”. Through a process of exchange between learned and popular discourses Satan came to be regarded as a spirit governing the wilderness, and, similar to originally non-demonic nature spirits in folklore, he would sometimes grant favours to humans, for instance help with hunting and fishing.

Keywords: Satanism, Sweden, early modern, nature spirits, outlaws, cunning folk, folklore, theology

The term ‘Satanists’ was occasionally used by early modern Swedish theologians and other scholars to denote the proverbial servants of Satan. In certain contexts, this usage seems to have been of a derogatory character, but in others, it was undoubtedly meant to imply individuals believed to be in actual league with the Devil or even to belong to a form of satanic religious cult. But were there really ‘Satanists’ in early modern Sweden in any meaningful sense of the word, for example, according to certain modern academic definitions?

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The present study is a brief examination of the aforementioned motifs and conceptions, based primarily on a few particularly instructive court records and theological commentaries.

Definitions, demarcations, and points of departure

Academic definitions of Satanism or Satanists often present an intricate problem. Taking into account specific temporal and cultural conditions further complicates the matter. Additionally, historical periodical divisions are in themselves arbitrary approximations, which, in certain respects, may leave many important changes and continuities unconsidered. Depending on the geographic region and/or cultural sphere, the beginning and the **(p.24)** end of the early modern era can be set at different points in time. In Sweden, as in several other European regions, the early modern period is generally considered encompassing the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and most of the eighteenth. In this study, I will focus on the period 1600–1800, because it is the main subject of my research and offers better sources. Having observed that, I shall be bold enough to proceed directly to some definitions which will constitute the points of departure for the present study.

In another context, I proposed the following definition of a *Satanist*: An individual in whose worldview or belief system Satan—regardless of Satan being conceived as personal entity, impersonal force, or symbol—is revered as the crucial, fundamental, and/or ultimate principle. Additionally, bearing in mind the semantic meaning of the word, an oppositional stance towards a given normative system or principle may also be included (Häll 2002: 15–17). It should be noted that I implicitly conceived other traditional satanic names, such as ‘the Devil’ and ‘Lucifer’, in their common meanings as synonymous with Satan in this particular context. Like practically all such definitions, this one is admittedly far from unproblematic, not least regarding the multifaceted meanings of certain terms applied within it (such as ‘worldview’, ‘symbol’, ‘principle’). The ‘oppositional stance’ and ‘given normative system’ are, of course, also debatable in a number of ways. Still, I hold that it is reasonably plausible and shall therefore make use of it here.

Furthermore, it bears a notable similarity to another definition of Satanism, proposed by historian of religion Per Faxneld, which I consider very reasonable; namely, Satanism is a *system* where Satan is the only or the foremost of the divinities, personages, or principles being venerated. Faxneld emphasizes that a system, according to this definition, may contain anything from the simplest to the most sophisticated theoretical structures. He lucidly points out some potential problems with this definition, such as the term ‘system’, but asserts that this term is necessary to exclude those who have venerated or worshipped Satan on merely one or a few isolated occasions (Faxneld 2006: xiv).

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I agree, yet herein lies the crux of the matter, especially concerning any presumed early modern (or earlier) ‘Satanists’ or ‘Satanism’. The beliefs of the popular or ‘unofficial’ cultures in early modern Europe were mainly orally founded and transmitted. Thus, there are very few pristine sources documenting them; that is, sources uninfluenced by the more textually oriented official or ‘elite’ cultural spheres. Regarding early modern culture(s) in general, I agree with historian Robert W. Scribner when he argues: ‘Early modern Europe was inhabited by a complex of overlapping **(p.25)** cultural segments, part-cultures and subcultures’, but through complex developments and processes

> a relatively unified culture was formed, moreover one which embodied certain sets of polarities which did allow people at times to distinguish between ‘elite’ and ‘popular’, between ‘dominant’ and ‘subordinate’, between the powerful and the powerless, between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Scribner 2002: 18).

Judicial records, for example, represent one of the best source categories for accessing early modern culture as a whole. They may provide elucidating insights into the conflicts and interactions between different cultural spheres and belief systems (Oja 1999: 127). Still, many conceivable problems and sources of error face the historian using them. To what extent did the courts and authorities goad, threat, persuade, or force individuals into confessing things they had not actually done or said? To what extent did defendants deny things they had actually done or said to escape punishment? To what extent did the conceptions and aims of official judicial and religious authorities influence and/or distort popular, alternative, and unofficial notions? Also, it is frequently difficult to decide whether the accusations against individuals were the result of slander, lies, and/or vague assumptions brought forth by their accusers. And, perhaps most crucial in the present context, to what extent did the confessions of an individual before the court—even if made willingly—represent the actual larger belief system or worldview of that individual?

In any case, it is obviously notoriously difficult to know the nature of the larger context outside of what has been preserved in the trial records. Still, having emphasized that I am aware of the difficulties, I shall attempt to examine what such sources, along with a few theological commentaries, tell us about the subject in question. For obvious reasons, I cannot plunge into a more detailed discussion of the problems of interpreting early modern historical sources in the present study. Likewise, I must leave several important issues—such as questions of gender, age, occupation, and so on—unaddressed. It may suffice to say, however, that I made an effort to select examples that I believe to be particularly representative. Most are from original sources that I have come across in my research; a few are from the works of other scholars.[1]

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(p.26) There seems to be no evidence of any individuals or groups in early modern Sweden literally referring to themselves as ‘Satanists’ or anything similar. The term itself was utilized by certain theologians, and occasionally by other members of the elite, to denote the presumed servants of Satan and/or generally ‘diabolical’ individuals according to the theological discourses of the time. Here one must take care, however, to distinguish between at least two partially different connotations: Satanists could be understood not only as ostensibly ‘conscious’ or bona fide worshippers and collaborators of the Devil, such as witches and sorcerers, but also as liars, traitors, and deceivers in a more general sense.

This was especially palpable in polemical religious discourses. Indeed, a source which contains one of the first—perhaps *the* first—known documented applications of the term in Swedish history echoes the latter, more general conception. In a letter from 1588, King John III of Sweden accused the priesthood in the duchy of his brother Duke Charles (who later became King Charles IX of Sweden) of calling the king and his men ‘Papists’—a derogatory term for Catholics. Therefore, King John stated, the priests in the duke’s duchy shall be called ‘Sathanists’, in old Swedish *Sathanister*; the reason being that they speak falsehoods in the manner of the Devil who is the father of lies (in transcript in Bergius 1759: 203–210). This example resembles the first known usages of the terms ‘Satanism’ and ‘Satanists’ in the English language, also dating from the second half of the sixteenth century, as shown by author Gareth J. Medway citing the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Here, it obviously implies, as he puts it, ‘a Christianity other than one’s own’ (2001: 9).

While interesting, I shall not dwell further on such implications of the term Satanist in the present study. Instead, I will endeavour to examine two themes. First, the way in which the great early modern Swedish theologian Laurentius Paulinus Gothus conceptualized the term ‘Satanists’ to denote individuals and groups presumed to actually collaborate with and/or worship the Devil through certain wilful acts and beliefs. Second, did Satanists actually exist in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Sweden according to the aforementioned modern academic definitions of the term?

Briefly returning to Medway and the issue of connotations, he asks when the term ‘Satanism’ came to imply ‘a conspiracy of diabolical orgiasts, as it does today’ (2001: 9). He again cites the *Oxford English Dictionary* which states that this understanding stems from the alleged Devil-worship in France during the second half of the nineteenth century (ibid.). While this may very well be the case, I shall demonstrate that at least the word ‘Satanists’, in the old Swedish form *Sathanister*, was indeed used by a renowned early modern Swedish theologian in the early seventeenth century to denote something very similar.

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(p.27) Bishop Laurentius Paulinus Gothus and the ‘Sathanists’

In *Ethica Christiana*, a monumental commentary on Christian morals and ethics —the first part was originally published in 1617—Bishop Laurentius Paulinus Gothus, who was elected archbishop of Sweden in 1637, condemns the beliefs and acts of whom he refers to as ‘Sathanists’ (*Sathanister*; always in the plural form). The use of the term takes place almost exclusively within the context of the sixteenth chapter, dealing with ‘sorcery and black arts’. Thus, from the very beginning, it is clear that Gothus not only connects sorcerers and sorceresses with ‘Sathanists’; to him, they are virtually synonymous.

As is well known, the demonological notion of a cult of diabolical and anti-Christian witches and sorcerers haunted the minds of theologians long before Gothus (Cohn 1993: 145–147, 205–207). What is interesting is his application and interpretation of the *word* Satanists in connection with such notions. Gothus condemns ungodly humans who adhere to the horrific works of ‘Sathanists’ and then poses the question whether such Satanists can inflict damage on the bodily health of humans and cattle. He explains that this is indeed possible. Through the power of Satan—here referred to as ‘Sathanas’ or the Devil—it is possible not only to harm but also to heal. This, of course, makes his works all the more deceptive and sinister. Since the Devil himself is well versed in the anatomy of both humans and beasts, and is wise in the ways of nature, he knows thousands of methods to harm and to heal God’s creatures. Gothus obviously implies that Satanists can learn such knowledge and arts from the Devil (Gothus 1617: 244–246).

By the insidious grace of Satan, sorcerers and sorceresses are able to work all manner of wonders and create treacherous illusions, Gothus asserts. Secretly, the Devil can bring them treasure, wine, and other things from unavailable and exotic locations. Since he holds a form of dominion in the air, he has the ability to enable the sisters and brothers of his covenant, i.e., the ‘Sathanists’, to fly to his councils. There they engage in all manner of lusts, gluttony, dancing, and other orgiastic excesses (Gothus 1617: 249). In another passage, perhaps appearing somewhat comical to the modern eye, Gothus also claims that the Devil, even in the winter, can bring grapes, figs, and other exotic fruits from Africa, India, and other southern locations, if his Satanists so desire (248–249). The phrasing ‘his Satanists’, of course, suggests a conception of Satanists as those sworn to or owned by the Devil. On a similar note, the bishop condemns those who seek to discover lost treasure by magical means, since it is considered devilish and a transgression of God’s providence and order to make oneself **(p. 28)** richer against the Lord’s will by such means. The Devil, he asserts, has knowledge of the locations of buried treasure (255–256).

Gothus also discusses Satanists when considering the incubus-succubus thesis, concerning human copulation with demonic beings. He admits that humans, especially witches and sorcerers—and here the term ‘Sathanists’ is used once

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again—may possibly engage in such foul fornication with the Devil. Following the teachings of Thomas Aquinas, he argues that evil spirits possess the ability to manipulate the natural elements into a form of vaporous phantasmal bodies (Gothus 1617: 250; see also Häll 2006: 37–40). In another chapter discussing infidels, the bishop distinctly mentions ‘practitioners of the black arts, sorceresses, conjurers’ and other humans versed in magic, while also condemning ‘heretics, false teachers, Popish believers, false prophets, Calvinists, Zwinglians’ and others. Obviously, they are all infidels to Gothus, yet since the magically inclined ones are categorized one after the other and given specific definitions, they seem to represent a distinct form of infidels (120–122). In contrast to scholars who may learn the properties of creation by lawful philosophical and natural arts, there are those who desire to ‘fly higher than their wings are capable of’, Gothus argues. Such individuals abandon the baptismal covenant with God and join forces with the Devil, accepting him as their master to the great offence of the Lord (193–194).

In light of his comments on the subject, where the term ‘Sathanists’ is used interchangeably with these ungodly magicians, the nature of his conception regarding the matter is clear. To wit, Bishop Gothus does not define Satanists as liars, false teachers, or even Papists, in general. Satanists, to him, are black magicians or sorcerers and sorceresses practicing illicit magic made possible by *pactum diabolicum*; that is, humans who accept as master, glorify, and do the work of the Devil in exchange for various personal benefits.

Unsurprisingly, the traditional scholarly diabology and demonology of Christian theology is the foundation of his conceptions, which is clear if one compares those conceptions with, for example, historian Stuart Clark’s exceptionally detailed study of early modern demonology (Clark 1997). Still, it is interesting to note that parts of *Ethica Christiana*, including some of those containing the comments regarding Satanists, were later published in his more accessible work *Gyldene Clenodium*, the ‘Golden Gem’ (Gothus 1631). This work was intended for the common populace, and although it is difficult to know whether it was widely read, his ‘Sathanists’ may have been known to at least some people other than scholars.

(p.29) ‘God is caught in hell, so it is better to believe in the Devil’: popular sympathies for the Devil as the enemy of God

People occasionally thought of the Devil as an ambiguous trickster, a jester, or even a helper; that is, an entity more similar to the traditional nature spirits of popular mythology than the Satan of Christian doctrine. One may speak of alternative traditions and discourses concerning the Devil, in which it was possible to conceive of him as a master, helper, or familiar spirit, even though he appears to have simultaneously retained important traits of his adversarial role

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as the enemy of God. People did indeed believe that the Devil was more powerful and helpful than God, voicing quite blatant blasphemies in the process.

One especially colourful example of this is the case from 1685 of the ungodly blasphemer and alleged sorcerer Matts Larsson (Court records 1685). He also stood accused of having intimate relations with the mountain nymph, the Swedish *bergrået*. Most interesting, for the purpose of this text, however, is that he allegedly proclaimed ‘God is no more; He is caught in Hell’—and therefore that ‘it is better to believe in the Devil, for he will help you’ (Court records 1685). The name used for the Devil in this context is the Swedish *Fanen*. It is an old traditional name for Satan, originating from the ancient Norse *Fjandi*, meaning fiend, enemy, or evil spirit. Furthermore, the records state that Matts had suggested that taking tobacco and liquor was much better than taking the bread and wine at the Lord’s Supper. It was known that he had not been to church for two years, yet Matts claimed he was unable to go because of illnesses. Witnesses also reported that he boasted of being able to talk to Satan, and that Satan had given him unnatural physical strength and taught him how to make bears attack cattle. They also reported that he often took off into the woods at night, presumably to communicate with the Devil or sleep with the mountain nymph. It was claimed that he preferred sleeping with the mountain nymph over lying with his wife, but Matts retorted that he had said such things because his wife annoyed him.

Be that as it may, it is still obvious that such blasphemous statements not only articulate a form of popular appropriation of the Devil as a potentially benevolent being reminiscent of the nature spirits of popular culture. They also clearly express sympathies for Satan as the enemy of God. By having God and the Devil change places in the traditional Christian cosmic order and, indeed, asserting that God is caught in hell and therefore virtually powerless, Matts’s words suggest a conception of Satan as the ruler of the universe. Thus, he seems cast not only as the ‘prince of this world’, **(p.30)** allowed to tempt mankind according to the Lord’s plan, which at that time may have had reflected a common Christian idea of the Devil. He is also portrayed as a powerful deity in and of himself: seen, perhaps, as having defeated God or at the very least, as ruling in place of a god who for some reason has been rendered powerless. If considered in relation to the larger context, the statement ‘God is no more’ furthermore seems to indicate a belief that God had once been a force to be reckoned with, yet had now been replaced by the Devil.

There are other examples of how individuals could turn to the Devil as a form of adversary to the religious order when feeling unjustly treated by the priesthood. Historian Soili-Maria Olli recounts a case from 1710, where a man named Sven Brun put his trust in Satan, whom he referred to as his ‘brother’ (Olli 2007: 127). Sven seems to have done this for the purpose of vindication. He had been convicted of a minor felony, and he proclaimed that he wished the Devil to take

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him, the mayor, and the vicar—his main accuser—to hell. There he expected a new trial to take place with Satan as his advocate, the mayor—who apparently was his friend—as judge, and the vicar as the accused.

As Olli notes, this may be an example of an individual strategy to master the injustices of the world on a psychological level (127). The notion of the Devil as a benefactor in certain situations is part of a popular diabology which diverged from its learned or official counterpart. The Devil was conceived of as more powerful, more reachable, and more tangible—Olli even writes ‘more real’—than God; a true helper in need. This popular image of Satan was part of a greater collective popular thought-complex. That complex allowed individuals to form personal and original worldviews in which the Devil acted as a powerful and trustworthy helper.

Master of sorcery and familiar spirits: folk magic, the demonization of nature spirits and the popularization of the Devil

Erik Johan Prytz, a Swedish vicar in the diocese of Linköping, extraordinarily interested in the sin of illicit sorcery, extensively examined the connection between fallen angels and nature spirits in his handwritten work from 1632, the *Magia Incantatrix* (Manuscript 1632: 18–23; see also Häll 2006: 31–36). Prytz complains that people frequently strike deals with nature spirits, such as forest nymphs and water spirits, and even the Devil himself, in order to learn sorcery, secure advantages in hunting and fishing, or to gain general luck. He is not referring to abstract **(p.31)** demonological doctrines in this discussion, but states that the said knowledge has been acquired through actual ‘daily experience’ in his own parish (Manuscript 1632: 18). Individuals making pacts with or engaging in sexual intercourse with nature spirits, for example, may become unnaturally successful. According to the vicar, all this is abominable since it hurts and perverts the natural order of God’s creation. Furthermore, deals with nature spirits were generally perceived as diabolical pacts by theologians. Prytz explicitly asserts that in truth the forest nymph and similar female beings are succubae, while male nature spirits are incubi. Hence, those spirits are nothing but demons; fallen angels that had taken refuge in the wilderness after being thrown down into ‘the darkness of this world’—into lakes, streams, woods, mountains, and so on—together with Lucifer himself.

Regardless of Christian doctrine and its immense impact on early modern society in general, the belief in anthropomorphic supernatural beings was undoubtedly an integral component of a more unofficial ‘popular’ mythology. In part, that mythological tradition probably dates back to pre-Christian times. As folklorist Waldemar Liungman and ethnologist Gunnar Granberg have shown, such beliefs held that certain spirits were the supernatural ‘owners’ of nature and thus possessed the power to influence the wilderness and the natural world, for example wild animals (Liungman 1961: 72–75; Granberg 1971: 228). Therefore, it could be beneficial for humans to strike deals with nature spirits,

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for instance, to ensure success in hunting and fishing, even though such beings could be as dangerous and powerful as the ‘proper’ diabolical entities themselves.

Through the process referred to as demonization, a strategy applied already by the medieval church but reaching its pinnacle in Sweden during the early modern era, the often ambiguous supernatural entities of early modern popular culture were frequently identified with the Devil and his demons, as historian Jonas Liliequist has shown (2006: 153). He emphasizes that this was intensified by the emergence of a stronger central government in symbiosis with the Lutheran church. The strategy of demonizing nature spirits did not succeed unmitigated, however. Judging from what we know of the belief in such spirits in early modern Sweden, some people still thought that pleasing these supernatural beings would yield various advantages. It is not difficult to imagine how the primarily demonological idea of the *pactum diabolicum* could be projected onto such conceptions.

However, I am opposed to viewing this process as some sort of one-way exertion of power, where an official ‘elite’ culture imposed its definitions and categories on a passive and naive peasantry. As I suggested, the demonization failed in certain important respects. For even the Devil **(p.32)** himself was not always conceived of as an entirely hostile entity, as shown by Olli and folklorist Ulrika Wolf-Knuts (Olli 2007; Wolf-Knuts 2001).

In connection with magic and witchcraft, there are, of course, hints of certain ritualistic or formalized methods for summoning and communicating with the Devil or lesser members of his party. Such methods are found in trials against alleged sorcerers, witches, and ‘cunning folk’; the ambiguous magical specialists of the rural local community.

One case concerns a man who appears to have been in allegiance with Satan for several decades. In 1697, the infamous sorcerer Jon of Hallebo, called a ‘wrathful and abominable sinner’ in the records, confessed to having made a pact with the Devil written in his own blood sixty years ago (Court records 1697). He was more than ninety years old when appearing before the court, and he proclaimed that he had served Satan ever since establishing the contract. The confession was reportedly made without coercion and Jon seems to have had a long history of sorcerous transgressions. Jon’s story is particularly interesting since he offers several detailed accounts concerning his interactions with the Devil. He had renounced God and Jesus Christ and written a pact to summon Satan. Through Satan he then received a demonic familiar spirit called Lucifer and Marcus. Jon asserted that the spirit was always with him and did all that he commanded, be it good or evil. Jon was in possession of a mysterious ‘book of black arts’ that he had received from the Devil and/or a being called ‘the Man of the Stream’, in Swedish *Strömkarlen*, after carrying out the proper rituals. He

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also hinted that Satan had bestowed additional familiar spirits upon him over the years. ‘The Man of the Stream’ is a water spirit of Swedish folk culture. All this makes it probable that Jon may be understood not as a mere ‘wrathful and abominable sinner’ according to the categories of priests and judges, but also as a cunning man who actually believed himself to be working with various spirits through the power of the Devil.

In a similar case from 1653, the old maid and cunning woman Karin Persdotter confessed to having learnt sorcery from a male water spirit, variously referred to as ‘the Man of the Stream’, ‘the Neck’ (*Näcken*), or ‘the River’ (*Älven*)—but also as a member of the ‘following of Lucifer’, *Lucifers anhang* (Court records 1653). To the spirit, she sacrificed money, whereupon he taught her magic. Among the names, both diabolical and divine, which she used to summon the spirit was ‘the Evil One’. Indeed, she also regularly shunned the Christian community and refused to go to the church even on the great holidays.

The cited examples are not to be interpreted so as to imply that these practitioners of popular magic, albeit including some tribute to the Devil, actually worshipped him in his Christian role as the ultimate personification **(p. 33)** of evil. There was undoubtedly some degree of slander and interrogational manipulation involved. Still, what we see is the popularization of the Devil mentioned above; the process by which he and his demons were occasionally endowed with the more ambiguous traits of traditional nature spirits. Such a reinterpretation represents a curious reverse of the demonization of the popular spirits. The demonization motif is, of course, also put to work in the cited cases. Both processes were enabled by the continual interaction and conflict between different yet overlapping cultural spheres. Conversely, in certain circumstances, such entities were directly connected with the Devil’s party not only by the priesthood and the law, but also by the cunning folk themselves. Compared to the Christian God, both Satan and the nature spirits could be understood as more tangible, more available, and more inclined towards direct intervention in the material world.

Lord and lover of witches: diabolical witchcraft

The two cases which I shall cite next are common examples of witch trials. Accusations and confessions of, especially, women’s involvement in purely diabolical witchcraft are often highly stereotypical, fraught with spurious allegations, and notoriously sensitive to the workings of witnesses and judges. Therefore, I have chosen not to dwell long on the subject in this study. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the following protocols explicitly state how shamelessly the accused individuals articulated their relationship with Satan. Exactly why they came to do that and whether such views were part of their actual worldviews cannot be known. It may be that they knew their lives were already forfeit and therefore decided to mock and shock the established order which condemned them. Still, what they say indicate that there were

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people who, for various reasons, at least *claimed* that they praised or worshipped Satan, even in the manner that bishop Gothus asserted that the 'Sathanists' did.

In 1618, the ill-reputed sorceress Ingeborg Bogesdotter allegedly confessed that she had learned the art of sorcery from an older woman (Court records 1618). Ingeborg had then ritually renounced God the creator and his son Jesus Christ. She had also denied the sacrificial suffering and death of Christ on the cross. Instead, Ingeborg swore herself to Satan, whom she thereafter met in the woods. She kneeled before him, took his hand, promised that she would never serve God, and, finally, had sexual intercourse with Satan.

In a witch trial from 1673 in the province of Hälsingland, the maid Giölug Olufsdotter seems to have openly and without coercion confessed to having intimate relations with Satan (Court records 1673). She even **(p.34)** claimed that she perceived her relationship with him as beautiful. The court complains that she denied or regretted nothing, showed no desire to repent; and that she claimed to drink, dance, and sleep with the 'worst Devil', i.e., Satan himself, while she was in Blåkulla, the location of the Swedish Witches' Sabbath. As if it did not suffice to proclaim herself a satanic witch, Giölug confronted the court and authorities with utter disdain, reviling the priesthood, the mayor, the court assessors and the police officers with perverse and blasphemous comments.

Fulfiller of Unfulfilled Wishes: Written Pacts with the Devil

There are also several written pacts with the Devil—often called 'explicit' pacts as opposed to the silent or tacit ones often associated with witches—preserved in early modern Swedish court archives. In her thesis on cases of blasphemy and pacts with the Devil in eighteenth and late seventeenth-century Sweden, Olli provides a few pacts in full transcript, such as those written by Erik Ahlgren and Nils Svensson Bolin summarized later. Although frequently made under quite desperate conditions, or having the characteristics of youthful rebelliousness, they substantiate the motif of Satan as a conceivable rescuer. In exchange for body, soul, and service to Satan, the pact writers in early modern Sweden most prominently expected money, but also general success, good health, physical strength, luck in gambling, beautiful clothes, tobacco, success in romantic or sexual affairs, special knowledge, and wisdom (Olli 2007: 36).

One quite explicit and yet representative example is a pact from 1727, written by the tax accountant Erik Ahlgren in his own blood (Olli 2007: 190). Erik begins with proclaiming the Devil as his highly honoured father in whom he puts his trust. He promises to serve the Devil with body and soul in this world, and that the Devil shall have his body and soul on his death. In return, Erik simply wants money. For the same reason as Erik, Nils Svensson Bolin made a written pact with Satan in 1746 (Olli 2007: 191). If the Devil provided him with money for all of his remaining life, Nils vowed to give himself body and soul to his 'brother'

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Satan for eternity—and even to do his bidding by engaging in whoredom, drunkenness, swearing, quarrelling, pride, and other sinful or unvirtuous activities. Nils furthermore assured that if the Devil helped him on all occasions, then he would do all that the Devil commanded and all that served the Devil and his angels.

The fact that people actually believed in the Devil as a real and tangible entity, even in the late eighteenth century, is evidenced by a somewhat **(p.35)** amusing case from 1769 (Olli 2007: 53). A soldier had long been suspected of making written pacts with Satan. Therefore, the authorities had an officer of the law dress up in dark clothes and other presumably diabolical paraphernalia. Finally, the man was tricked into a staged situation where he met the disguised officer at a cemetery. He actually went there and was about to deliver the contract—whereupon he, of course, was apprehended.

The general notion of the written contract seems to have been that it should contain the conditions of both parties, be written or signed in blood, and be delivered to Satan on a Thursday night at a graveyard or a crossroad. The latter act should be repeated thrice for the covenant to be considered valid. Even though many pacts seem to be results of desperate measures under desperate conditions, it has been noted that elaborate preparations were necessary to complete them. There is the ritual element, the mental and technical planning, and the knowledge of how to make the pact itself, for example. Some pacts were undoubtedly expressions of individual strategies which included notions of the Devil as a powerful ally (Olli 2007: 35, 134–135).

Patron Saint of Outsiders: Radical Outlaws and the Ruler of the Wild

In 1658, the notorious Tideman Hemmingsson appeared before a district court (Court records 1658). He was accused of a whole range of felonies: thievery, poaching, whoredom, and robbery—although, crime against the majesty of God was the most prominent. He lived in the forest outside the borders of the local community and struck fear into people for several years. Tideman seems to have required no harsh persuasion to confess his transgressions. Perhaps this was due to the fact that he could hardly deny all of his many crimes. Instead, he seems to brag about his heinous exploits and clearly rebels against the established order even before the court. Although apprehended several times before, he always managed to run away, for example, by changing places with his prison guard while the latter was senselessly drunk. Interestingly, Tideman had also made a pact with the forest nymph, the Swedish *skogsrået*, which reportedly granted him great luck in hunting. This covenant, however, bears a strong semblance to a diabolical pact. Bearing in mind that Tideman was also prone to general rebelliousness and devilish blasphemies, the case may therefore be an example of the aforementioned integration of popular and elite notions. The nymph promised Tideman that he would be able to shoot as much game as he wished during a period of twenty years if he gave her a limb from his

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body on the completion of the period. **(p.36)** Apparently the pact was efficacious, for Tideman had shot a leaping hare immediately afterwards. Before the court, Tideman confessed that eleven years had passed, and thus nine remained. Indeed, it was this pact that the court defined as a crime against the majesty of God, punishable by death (Court records 1658).

Hunting magic seems to have been particularly steeped in blasphemy, sacrilege, and satanic leanings. The reasons may have been that it was related to death and killing and, of course, to the powers and spirits of the wilderness, often equated with demons by the church. As ethnologist Carl-Herman Tillhagen has shown in connection with Swedish popular beliefs of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was assumed that a hunter could become a 'free-shot' (*friskytt*) or 'sorcerous hunter' (*trolljägare*) by swearing himself to the Devil and/or desecrating hosts by firing on them. The free-shot could, it was believed, kill as much game as he wished whenever he wished. Tillhagen asserts that notions of stealing hosts and befriending Satan for such purposes were very common, at least in nineteenth and early twentieth-century folk beliefs (1985: 25, 69, 113).

The fact that similar magical arts were known and most probably practiced at least as early as the seventeenth century is evidenced by a trial in the parish of Habo from 1665. It was reputed that the accused, a man named Håkan Jonsson, owned a book of black magic, abused the sacraments, and boasted of being able to shoot game whenever he wanted (Court records 1665). Håkan claimed that he would hide the host at the Lord´s Supper and then smuggle it out of the church. Later, he would attach it to a tree and fire on it, whereupon three drops of blood flowed from the host. Finally, he would rub the blood onto his hat, knife, and rifle. Furthermore, Håkan had offered to teach this procedure and show the 'black book' to others. But, the unconditional requirement was that they had to swear themselves to the Devil first. This was the prerequisite for becoming a magically fortunate hunter. Last but not least, Håkan had professed to own a particular black shirt, which effected that 'the Devil himself' was with him whenever he wore it (Court records 1665).

In a case from 1699, very similar to that of Tideman, the renegade soldier Simon Simonsson Brynt first confessed to having stolen great amounts of money from the church (Court records 1699). Later he declared that he had engaged in sexual intercourse with three women who were all carnal sisters. This was apparently true, though it should be noted that he did not lie with them all at the same time. Finally, Simon said, he had slept with the forest nymph. When fishing in a lake, he was unable to catch anything, and therefore he had summoned supernatural assistance. Simon either did this **(p.37)** in the name of Satan or implied that the nymph actually *was* Satan in the guise of the female spirit. He had 'called out to Satan' so that his fishing would improve, whereupon he immediately caught a large pike (Court records 1699). Then, suddenly, the forest

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nymph appeared before him in the shape of a fair woman. Simon had carnal intercourse with her and afterwards she brought him into a beautiful building. Their ‘sinful relationship’ allegedly lasted for three years.

Finally, in 1747–1748 the violent robber, thief, and diabolical blasphemer Jöns Björnsson, who had put fear into the local peasantry for a long time, stood trial (Court records 1748). He was said to carry a large knife and three loaded rifles, to live in the wilderness, and to threaten people into giving him all that he demanded. Jöns seems to have repeatedly reviled God and the sacraments and praised the Devil as his master. He also explicitly stated that he refused to obey any generally accepted authorities, religious or secular.

There are more cases similar to those of Tideman, Håkan, Simon, and Jöns in early modern Swedish court records. The conception of the wilderness as the abode of, or ‘gateway’ unto, demonic powers was also firmly established in Christian demonology. We have seen that motif in the work of the vicar Prytz cited earlier. In more general terms, the perception of the outsider and/or liminal individual was often linked to the physical space of the wilderness, that is, forests and mountains, and so on, as is shown in the work of ethnologist Gunnar Olof Hyltén-Cavallius (1922: 248; cf. Englund 2002: 80). Furthermore, literary historian Robert Pouge Harrison conceptualizes the forest as ‘the shadow of civilization’ and a potentially ‘inverted world’, not least in the lore of outlaws and outcasts (1992: 75–80). Various delinquents, justly or unjustly accused of some crime or sin, frequently made their escape into the wilderness, dwelling outside the boundaries of society physically and ethically. That some of these outsiders would turn to the Devil as a kind of god of the outlawed and enemy of the established order is not surprising.

This was appropriate in a way, since the priesthood held that it was especially in the desolate wilderness that unclean spirits dwelt. It was, of course, also the natural habitat of the nature spirits of folk mythology. As I have shown, the demonization of popular supernatural entities did not prevent certain individuals from making pacts with spirits or sleeping with nymphs, even though it was generally known that such creatures were equated with the Devil and his demons. Sometimes Satan himself was the nature spirit par excellence. In 1739, the soldier and fisherman Mickel Kalkström explained the concept of how to get lucky in fishing by stating: ‘It will not help to pray to God, even a beggar has more influence on the fish than God; **(p.38)** it is the Devil who decides about the fish’ (Olli 2006: 174). He also asserted that the Devil created and ruled over the wind and the thunderstorms.[2]

Conclusions

In the examples described and examined, we find views, acts, and formulations which suggest that a positive interpretation of the Devil could be part of more or less coherent, unofficial worldviews. To some extent, it seems that the

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priesthood and its demonology achieved a result opposite to its intentions. When striving to keep people away from the works of Satan by inculcating a strict Lutheran faith, the church simultaneously made him more tangible and visible. Olli states that ‘in this way the same image of the Devil, as a real power could be used in different ways by different groups in society’ (176). Furthermore, I argue that the conceptualization of him as the lord of nature spirits, reinterpreted by the church and the law as fallen angels or guises of Satan himself, reinforced such notions.

Many of those who praised or turned to the Devil appear to have done so only on a few occasions and under extraordinary circumstances. But some individuals clearly maintained worldviews or belief systems in which he constituted the major supernatural principle—a prince by whose name lesser spirits could be summoned, a god of the outsiders and the dispossessed; a principle considered more powerful, more reliable, or more real than even God.

So, returning to the main question, were there really Satanists in early modern Sweden? It is always precarious to impress upon the people of the past a term which they themselves probably did not use to describe their beliefs or worldviews. The historian sometimes has no other option, however. Furthermore, in the present context one must emphasize that the individuals in the cases summarized most likely did not refer to themselves as ‘sorcerers’, ‘witches’, or ‘magicians’ either. Bearing all this in mind, I argue that it is possible to speak of a form of early modern Satanists in Sweden according to the definitions proposed in the beginning of this study. That is to say, then, that there existed individuals in whose belief systems Satan was conceived as the crucial entity or deity, perhaps in the role of master of sorcery, ruler of the supernatural and/or undomesticated **(p.39)** natural realm, trustworthy helper and/or adversary to the established order. And thus, regardless of the ontological reality of the supernatural realm, there most probably were a few people who fitted even Gothus’ description of the sinister ‘Sathanists’. Here it must be stressed, however, that this is plausible *only* if one discounts his theory of an organized religious cult or sect of Devil-worshippers, but keeps the notion of the existence of individual Devil-venerating magic users and other outsiders in opposition to God and Christianity. I certainly do not believe that such individuals were common, but to me it seems strange to contend that they did not exist at all.

Thus, while there is no evidence of any doctrinal or organized system of ‘Satanism’ or a ‘satanic cult’ in early modern Sweden, one may—in certain respects—speak of the existence of a form of ‘individual Satanists’ and a satanic discourse partially outside the boundaries of established religion and the framework of learned demonology. To some people, it, indeed, seemed better to believe in the Devil.

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Notes:

(1) . The translations of Swedish words and passages from the sources and the literature are my own. For some particularly important or specific Swedish terms, I use italics to highlight them in the text in connection with the translation or give the original Swedish word in parentheses directly after the translation.

(2) . For interesting comments on the continuing connection between Satan, nature, and nature gods in nineteenth-century literary romantic Satanism, see Ruben van Luijk’s chapter in the present volume.

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The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity
Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen

Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

Sex, Science, and Liberty

The Resurrection of Satan in Nineteenth-Century (Counter) Culture

Ruben van Luijk

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.003.0002

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter discusses the turning point in the history of Satanism from early modern attribution to contemporary identification, which can be located in the nineteenth century–especially in literary works by Romantic Satanists like Blake, Byron and Shelley. They represent an essential stage in the emergence of contemporary religious Satanism; the elements they emphasize in their revaluation of Satan having deeply influenced its form and content. However, the chapter ascertains they do not qualify as Satanists *sensu stricto*: they never designated themselves as such or held religious rites to worship Satan, and showed widely divergent, often contradicting, attitudes towards Satan, with none of the authors displaying a consistent identification with Satan in their life and works, even during a limited period in their career, and not even in a strictly metaphorical sense. Prominent in the Romantic resurrection of Satan were three thematic elements, which are here captioned under the keywords Sex (linking him with earth, nature, and "the flesh"), Science (Satan as symbol of scientific progress and "modern" critical thought), and (political and individual) Liberty.

Keywords: Satanism, Romanticism, romantic Satanism, sex, science, politics, William Blake, Lord Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley

Introduction

One way of getting a grip on the history of religious Satanism is to approach it as a continuous process of interaction between attribution and identification—attribution being the mechanism of attributing the practice of Satanism to

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others; identification that of identifying oneself with the concept of Satanism, or with the figure of Satan, or both. Very generally, we can say that the history of religious Satanism up to and including early modern time is almost exclusively one of attribution, while contemporary religious Satanism presents us with a clear example of identification. In my opinion, the turning point from early modern attribution to contemporary identification can be located in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, I believe that *literature*, especially that of the so-called Romantic Satanists, was important in bringing about this shift.

The Romantic Satanists are somewhat neglected by historians of religious Satanism. They are ignored (Introvigne 1997); spoken about as though they had virtually no connection with the history of 'real' religious Satanism (Frick 1982–1985, 2: 131–155; Medway 2001: 12; Schmidt 1992: 80–101; cf. Russell 1986: 253–255); or discussed mainly with regard to the question of whether they participated in black masses (Frick 1982–1985; **(p.42)** and Medway 2001 again).[1] In contrast with this view, I believe that the Romantic Satanists represent an essential stage in the emergence of contemporary religious Satanism. I do so for three reasons. First of all, they mark the first historical moment that a major intellectual current appeared in Western culture positively revaluating Satan. Second, as part of the broader movement of Romanticism, they mark the emergence of a new creative way of dealing with spirituality and (Christian) mythology. Finally, the elements they emphasize in their revaluation of Satan deeply influenced the form and content of modern Satanism.

The first two points I plan to return to in other places and at other times (Luijk, forthcoming a, forthcoming b). In this contribution, I wish to discuss the third and final point.

Basic questions

Yet, before we turn to the topic, let's take a glimpse at some basic questions. Who were these Romantic Satanists, and why were they so attracted to Satan? Peter Schock has given an excellent introduction to this subject in the book *Romantic Satanism* (Schock 2003. See also Butler 1989; Guthke 1968; Osterkamp 1979; Schnierer 2005).[2] Taking as their inspiration the portrayal of the fallen angel in John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in the years around the French revolution, a circle of Radical artists and writers associated with the publisher Joseph Johnson undertook a radical rereading of Satan. For these Radicals, Milton's famous lines 'Better to reign in Hell, than to serve in Heav'n' obtained a completely different significance, especially following the events in France. Satan's rebellion against absolute, 'divinely ordained' authority made him, in their eyes, a hero instead of an object of horror. This new attitude is reflected in the artwork of Henry **(p.43)** Fuseli, which portrays the fallen angel as a classical hero (Schiff 1974), and also in the writings of another member of the

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circle, the political philosopher William Godwin. In *Enquiry into Political Justice* (1793), Godwin wrote on Satan:

> But why did he rebel against his maker? It was, as he himself informs us, because he saw no sufficient reason, for that extreme inequality of rank and power, which the creator assumed. It was because prescription and precedent form no adequate ground for implicit faith. After his fall, why did he still cherish the spirit of opposition? From a persuasion that he was hardly and injuriously treated. He was not discouraged by the apparent inequality of the contest: because a sense of reason and justice was stronger in his mind, than a sense of brute force; because he had much of the feelings of an Epictetus or a Cato, and little of those of a slave. He bore his torments with fortitude, because he disdained to be subdued by despotic power. (Sharrock 1962: 464)

At about the same time, William Blake, an etcher and artist loosely connected to the Johnson circle, privately printed *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (ca. 1790); a remarkable little book that could be considered the first 'satanic' Bible in history because of its complete reversal of sympathy towards the Devil and his 'evil' (Blake 1927).

After the Reaction set in, the theme lay dormant until Percy Bysshe Shelley appeared on the scene. The English Romantic poet was an enthusiastic reader of Godwin's radical writings and would eventually even elope with the philosopher's daughter Mary. In *Defence of Poetry* (1820), Shelley expressed himself on the subject of the archangel in much the same terms as Godwin, while he also used the 'Satanist' theme in several of his longer poems (Shelley 1905: 26–27; Shelley 1972, 2: 11–129).

Shelley, in his turn, may have forwarded the theme to his literary comrade-in-arms Byron, who rewarded Lucifer with extensive stage presence in his play *Cain* (1821). Byron enjoyed immense international fame, and this greatly contributed to the dissemination of the new Romantic appraisal of Satan over Europe (Boss 1991). Most conspicuously, it found its way to France, the land of revolution itself, where it resulted in an impressive output of long epic poems in the Radical 'satanic' vein. Alfred de Vigny and Victor Hugo are two of the most prominent names that spring to mind in this connection (Milner 1960). These Romantic poets who sang the praises of Satan were sometimes denoted by conservative literary critics as the 'Satanic School'; an appellation introduced by the English poet laureate Robert Southey in the preface to his poem *A Vision of Judgement*:

> **(p.44)** Men of diseased hearts and depraved imagination, who, forming a system of opinions to suit their own unhappy course of conduct, have rebelled against the holiest ordinances of human society, and hating that

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> revealed religion which, with all their efforts and bravadoes, they are unable entirely to disbelieve, labour to make others as miserable as themselves, by infecting them with a moral virus that eats into the soul! The School which they have set up may properly be called the Satanic School; for though their productions breathe the spirit of Belial in their lascivious parts, and the spirit of Moloch in those loathsome images of atrocities and horrors which they delight to represent, they are more especially characterized by a Satanic spirit of pride and audacious impiety, which still betrays the wretched feeling of hopelessness wherewith it is allied. (Southey: xix–xxi)

This, in fact, is the origin of the designation 'Romantic Satanists' that we still use today.

Resurrection

This in brief outline is the history of Romantic Satanism. I used the term 'resurrection' in my subtitle because it encompassed a resurrection of Satan in two respects. Firstly, and most obviously, while Christian mythology had banished Satan to hell and blamed him for evil, Romantic Satanism, to a greater or lesser degree, rehabilitated the fallen angel and proclaimed that he had stood in his right after all. Secondly, and not less significantly, they resurrected him from the burial the Enlightenment had given him. The *philosophes* had generally ridiculed Satan, if they had deemed him worthy of attention at all; they would certainly not make him their hero (Russell 1986: 136–146). The Romantic Satanists shared many of the Enlightenment's points of view—especially a strong antipathy against dogmatic faith—but freely adopted and adapted elements of Christian mythology, such as Satan, to express their convictions. Why they did so had everything to do with the more appreciative Romantic attitude towards myth and spirituality, on which, as mentioned, we will not dwell in the context of this article (but see Luijk, forthcoming a).

Liberty: Satan and Rebellion

Prominent in the Romantic resurrection of Satan were three thematic elements, which I will caption here under the keywords *sex*, *science*, and *liberty*. Our short chronicle of Romantic Satanism has already brought to the **(p.45)** fore the most important element in this threefold division: Satan's role as archetypal embodiment of rebellion. In traditional Christian theology, Satan's fall had been associated with proud, unlawful insurrection against divine authority. The *philosophes* and the French Revolution, however, had given 'insurrection' a wholly new, positive meaning for substantial parts of Europe's intellectual elite; and this revaluation reflected on the myth of Satan as well.

We can see this element return in virtually all Romantic Satanists' works. In Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, the 'son of fire' fearlessly opposes the 'gloomy King' of the old order and 'stamps the stony law to dust … crying,

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Empire is no more!' (Blake 1927: Plate 27). Lucifer in Byron's *Cain* declares his brotherhood with those 'who dare look the omnipotent tyrant in His everlasting face / and tell him that His evil is not good!' (Byron and Steffan 1968: 167). 'I am not the demon, I am the archangel of legitimate revolt, and the patron of great struggles,' are the words with which Satan introduces himself in *Consuelo* (1842), a Romantic novel by George Sand (Sand 1959, 2: 28, 29; Milner 1960, 2: 358–422). Victor Hugo, in his unfinished epic poem on Satan, uses even clearer imagery: he makes Liberty the daughter of Satan, born of a feather from his wings that has been brought to life by God. The remaining drafts of the poem show that Hugo meant this cosmic event to coincide with the fall of the Bastille in 1789 (Hugo 1979).

These examples could be multiplied ad infinitum. Satan as noble champion of political and individual freedom remained the most important theme of Romantic Satanism throughout the nineteenth century. His opponent, the 'Jehovah' of yore, can be understood either as the Christian god as such—the nineteenth century saw Europe's first substantial wave of secularization—or as the 'prototype of human misrule', standing for all oppressive forms of government and religion on earth (Shelley 1972, 1: 271). To most Romantic Satanists, the two meanings would have been intimately intertwined. From a political perspective, the nineteenth-century poets singing paeans to Satan were almost invariably leftist orientated, usually combining a progressive belief in social and political reform with strongly anti-Christian or anticlerical attitudes. Thus, we should not be unduly surprised to encounter the Romantic Satan among 'real-life' revolutionaries as well. The French anarchist Proudhon, for instance, enclosed Satan in his arms in a famous passage of his *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l'Église* (Proudhon 1858, 2: 540); his Russian colleague Bakunin lauded Satan as 'the eternal rebel, the first freethinker and the emancipator of worlds' (Bakunin 1970: 10).

(p.46) Science: Satan and the Pursuit of Knowledge

A second, and perhaps more surprising feature connected with Satan in Romantic Satanism was his association with science, scientific progress, and 'modern' critical thought. Ever since Satan's identification with the serpent of Genesis, the lure of forbidden knowledge had been one of his classic attributes in Christian cosmology. In a nineteenth century that would see the birth of a scientism with sometimes plainly religious overtones, the seeking of knowledge became a thing that could hardly be thought evil any longer. 'Knowledge is good, And life is good, and how can both be evil?' wonders Byron's Cain; and it is Lucifer who discloses to him the knowledge of the stars and of other worlds past and present (Byron and Steffan 1968: 162). Thus Satan, in his aspect of Lucifer the light-bringer, became a paragon of those pursuing scientific enquiry regardless of the boundaries set by faith or tradition. One of the most explicit articulations of this tendency is Giosuè Carducci's famous hymn *Inno A Satana*, first published in 1865. In this long poem, both Luther and Galileo are declared

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followers of Satan, who is invoked as the 'forza vindice / De la ragione', 'avenging force of Reason'. The imminent coming of his reign is already visible in the miracle of the steam machine, Satan's 'unstoppable chariot of fire' (Zacharias 1990: 133–138; esp. 137–138, my translations).

Sex: Satan and Carnality

Finally, a third complex of meaning linked Satan with earth, nature, and 'the flesh', particularly in its manifestations of passionate love and sex. Already from the time of the apocryphal story of the Watcher Angels, the fallen angels had been brought into connection with lust, temptation, and the 'works of the flesh'. This 'pornofication' of Satan found ample continuation in later Christian lore and probably reached its apogee in the demonological fantasies of the early modern era. In this respect also, Romantic Satanism implemented a reversal of appraisal. The Romantics accorded an almost divine status to passionate love, transcending all human and godly laws; the Romantic Satanists, moreover, mostly supported ideas of the 'free love' variety. If this was seen as belonging to the territory of Satan, the dark angel might be preferable to the stern, law-giving god of Christianity.

This reversal of sympathy can be detected in William Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, where the Devil is celebrated as the embodiment of Desire and Energy, or 'Eternal Delight'. It reappears in Alfred de Vigny's *Eloa* (1823), an epic poem that can be considered the first example of Romantic **(p.47)** Satanism in France. Here Satan takes on the role of Eros, addressing the female angel Eloa with the following words too beautiful not to quote in full:

> Sur l'homme j'ai fondé mon empire de flamme
> Dans les désires du cœur, dans les rêves de l'âme,
> Dans les liens des corps, attraits mystérieux,
> Dans les trésors du sang, dans les regards des yeux.
> C'est moi qui fais parler l'épouse dans ses songes;
> La jeune fille heureuse apprend d'heureux mensonges;
> Je leur donne des nuits qui consolent des jours,
> Je suis le Roi secret des secrètes amours.
> Vigny 1950, 1: 73–75[3]

We should be careful, however, of rashly projecting contemporary attitudes towards 'carnality' upon early nineteenth-century authors like the Romantic Satanists. For Blake, Hugo, and even Shelley, the material world and the body remained ultimately inferior or ephemeral by nature, greatly subordinate to the world of 'Ideals' and 'Ideas'. A strong trait of neo-Platonism permeated Romanticism. Thus, while Goethe made Satan the representative of nature and sexuality in a repressed scene for *Faust* (1808–1832), this also marks him as ambivalent: it is the human striving for the ideal, Goethe tells us, in his play, that is to be considered the better part of our nature (Schöne 1982: 107–230). Byron's Lucifer even expresses open disdain for the corporal in *Cain* and

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suggests that it is man's spirit and his faculty to conceive the ideal that makes him stand out among his fellow animals. Moreover, Eros was conceived of by most of these authors in an implicit or explicit Platonic sense: that is, as a spiritual impulse that ultimately is to be understood as a passionate desire for the perfect and the ultimate. It is only among later authors that this ambivalence shifts into a full-blown rehabilitation of nature and sexuality. Carducci sings uncomplicated praise of Satan as lord of love, nature, and the flesh in *Inno a Satana*; **(p.48)** the historian Jules Michelet, although with more ambiguity, undertakes the same endeavour in *La Sorcière* (1866).[4]

The satanic connection with sex and nature gained further complexity because of Satan's historic association with the 'Antient Gods of the Woods', as Shelley called them: the pagan gods and spirits of the natural world. These 'most poetical personages' connected 'with all that could enliven and enjoy' (to quote Shelley once again) had been deformed into demonical creatures by early Christianity 'to purposes of deformity & falsehood' (Shelley 1993: 97–99). The identification of Satan with the old nature gods or the Great God Pan opened up vast possibilities of association and sometimes enabled Satan to grow into a kind of universal earth god, completely eclipsing his old enemy Jehovah. Carducci's hymn *Inno a Satana* is once more a case in point.

Satanists?

Sex, science, and liberty—these were, in shorthand, the elements that the Romantic Satanists incorporated into their Satan. In doing so, they used Satan to express values that they (and probably many of us) considered essential to human existence. Yet, how 'Satanist' were these so-called Romantic Satanists exactly? Can we consider them early adepts of religious Satanism, engaging in religious veneration of Satan? Because this volume deals primarily with practiced Satanism, it might be well to look a bit closer into the matter.

It has to be remembered, first of all, that Romantic Satanism is a term of literary history, not of religious studies. There are no indications that any of the Romantic Satanists ever held religious rites to worship Satan. It is true that Victor Hugo was deeply immersed in spiritualism and had been inspired by the 'turning tables' to compose his poem on Satan. Yet, it was the spirit of Jesus and Moses which had particularly instructed him to do so (Zumthor 1946: 1–62). Among the other Romantic Satanists, the only instance in which we find anything faintly resembling religious practices is with Shelley, who writes in one of his letters that he has raised an altar to the Great God Pan (Hutton 1999: 25). Although this might be a highly significant occurrence in itself, it hardly amounts to Satanism.

(p.49) The Romantic Satanists, in fact, never really acknowledged Satan's existence in the formal sense of the word—in sharp contrast with the Christian tradition from which they adopted this mythological figure. In this respect, they

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were true children of the Enlightenment. Satan had a function only *inside* their works for them; and there, he was employed as a thinly veiled metaphor for something else, usually humanity on its road to emancipation, or at least that part of humanity actively struggling for a better world—sometimes primarily understood as the Romantic poet himself. We must, however, be careful with this argument. As every student of Satanism is aware, even the official Church of Satan does not believe in the literal existence of Satan and awards him an ontological status that might be described as metaphorical. Besides, for the Romantics, more than literature or mere allegory was at stake here. Poetry and literature were the ways in which they expressed and practiced their spirituality. It is there that they proposed their own alternative mythologies, and it is highly significant that it is precisely in their most ambitious endeavours to this effect that Satan so often rears his tail (Frye 1968: 13, esp. 126; Peckham 1970: 231–257; cf. Luijk, forthcoming a).

Even when we apply wider, nontheistic definitions of religiosity, though, the Romantic Satanists are ill qualified as religious Satanists. The authors grouped together under this banner never designated themselves as such and showed widely divergent, often contradicting, attitudes towards Satan. In France, for instance, virtually every piece of Romantic Satanism would end in reconciliation between God and Satan. And when considered individually, even the icons of Romantic Satanism often turn out to be not *that* Satanist at all. Blake, for example, would take recourse to a different, self-designed mythology after *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and when Satan reappears in his work later on, Satan has regained his traditional role as symbol of evil (Raine 1968, 2: 214–238). Shelley, assuredly the most violent anti-Christian author of the Romantic Satanists, abandoned Satan at a certain point for the morally less ambiguous figure of Prometheus, whom he judged

> a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which, in the hero of *Paradise Lost*, interfere with the interest. (Shelley 1968: 36–37)

Controversy is still rife about the way Byron depicted Lucifer in *Cain*, which is clearly much less panegyric than his earliest readers tended to think. When we take a close look at the actual material, we must acknowledge that **(p.50)** none of the authors discussed in this article displayed a consistent identification with Satan in their life and works, not even during a limited period in their career, and not even in a strictly metaphorical sense. Satan, for them, was simply an apt metaphor used to express a certain ideological or theological program in a certain number of poems. As such, he was interchangeable with other apt metaphors, for instance, Prometheus, Frankenstein’s monster, or even the Wandering Jew. A minimal measure of constancy in invoking Satan is a

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prerequisite, I would say, before we can begin to speak about genuine religious Satanism (cf. Petersen 2009: 8, 10–13).[5]

Conclusion

Although the Romantic Satanists may not have been Satanists in the religious sense of the word, this does not diminish the significance of their reinvention of Satan in the history of European consciousness. For one thing, the triple association of Satan with sex, science, and liberty that they engendered certainly endured. It reappears time and again during the remainder of the nineteenth century. Carducci already brings together all three elements in the fifty stanzas of his famous hymn. They turn up again in *La Sorcière* by Jules Michelet, especially the element of sex and nature (Michelet 1867: 125–127, 146–151, and esp. 389). Jules Bois, when he analyses his century's obsession with the fallen angel in *Le Satanisme et la Magie* (1895), also distinguishes the three aspects of Satan: Satan 'the most dejected of anarchists' (le plus désolé des Anarchistes); Satan as 'lucid intelligence' (intelligence lucide); and 'Satan-Pan' (Bois 1895: 27–35). Elements of the triple association turn up in the work of widely differing figures as Joséphin Péladan and Walt Whitman (Péladan 1894: xi–xiii and 38–40; Whitman 1881–1882: 339 ['Chanting the Square deific']). When Édouard Schuré takes up the threefold theme in his play *Les enfants de Lucifer* at the turn of the century, the connection of Satan with sex, science, and liberty has already become a fixed set of *topoi* (Schuré 1900: 1–159). As such, it would be transmitted into the next century.

The scope of this contribution does not allow me to venture into exhaustive coverage of how and to what extent this complex of thought influenced the shape of contemporary religious Satanism. Those familiar with contemporary **(p.51)** Satanism will have noticed some elements that make a conspicuous reappearance in the religious thought of today's Satanists, particularly that of sex and liberty (LaVey 1969: esp. 66, 68, 81, 66–74, and 81–86). These resemblances deserve further, and more detailed, scrutiny. What is clear, however, is that a rich and well-established nineteenth-century tradition regarding Satan was available to contemporary Satanism for the construction of its identity. In this way, too, the Romantic Satanists have played a vital part in the adventure of Western civilization that is modern Satanism.

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Notes:

(1) . It is true that Schmidt and Medway present Byron and Baudelaire, respectively, as the first modern Satanists in a more or less religious sense, but this does not noticeably affect their historical accounts of Satanism.

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(2) . For historians of literature, the term 'Romantic Satanists' can sometimes designate a wide variety of authors, some of whom only used the Devil as a traditional bogeyman in spooky stories, while others merely showed a marked predilection for things wicked (cf. for instance Praz 1951: 53–91). For the purposes of my research, I narrowed down this bewildering variety to those Romantic authors who display a positive identification with Satan in their works. Even when narrowed down in this way, Romantic Satanism cannot be described as a coherent movement but rather as a post-factum identified group of sometimes widely divergent authors among whom a similar theme is found. Nevertheless, the term is still useful, particularly for localizing and analyzing shifting attitudes towards Satan, as is our present aim.

(3) . 'Over Man I have founded my empire of fire

> In the desires of his heart, the dreams of his soul,
> In the bonds of his body, its mysterious attractions,
> In the treasures of his blood, the glance in his eyes.
> It is me who makes the husband speak in his dreams;
> The happy young girl hears pleasing lies;
> I give them nights to comfort for their days,
> I am the secret Lord of secret loves'. (My translation.)

(4) . The Luciferians in Sand's *Consuelo* (1842), it should be noted, also want to 'rehabilitate the life of the flesh' (réhabiliter la vie de la chair), as well as 'love, equality, and the community of all the elements that give us happiness' (cf. Sand 1959, 2: 19). But there is nothing in her huge novel that reflects this 'carnal' attitude—least of all, the traditional and rather unreal virtuousness of the female protagonist.

(5) . Clearly, the demarcation lines are sometimes hard to draw, and the possibility remains for a literary Satanist to be a religious Satanist at the same time, without involvement in ritual or organized activity. Elsewhere in this volume, Per Faxneld argues that such was the case with Polish fin-de-siècle author Stanislaw Przybyszewski.

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The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity
Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen

Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

Witches, Anarchism, and Evolutionism

Stanislaw Przybyszewski's fin-de-siècle Satanism and the Demonic Feminine

Per Faxneld

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.003.0003

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter presents the Satanism propagated by the Decadent author Stanislaw Przybyszewski (1868–1927), and interprets the role women play in it. Unlike other literary Satanists, Przybyszewski's sympathy for the Devil was sustained through many works, he publicly declared himself a Satanist and the ideas were well-developed enough to be called a system. Przybyszewski, the chapter argues, was therefore "the first Satanist" in a strict sense. The core themes in his thinking are a celebration of evolution (anchored in social Darwinism) and sexual lust, a pessimist view of human existence, and lastly a nihilist anarchist will to destruction, all presented using a shock tactic of semantic inversion typical of the Decadent movement, turning "evil", "degeneration" and other usually obviously negative words into designations for something positive. Reading Przybyszewski's seemingly misogynist texts about witches within this framework, a plausible interpretation is that he is not at all slandering her but rather pays homage to her as a vitally necessary representative of the evolutionary "good evil" his system is centered around.

Keywords: Satanism, Stanislaw Przybyszewski, decadence, women, evolutionism, anarchism, witches, misogyny

Stanislaw who?

Satanist, Decadent, king of the bohemians, pioneering expressionist … the Polish author Stanislaw Przybyszewski (1868–1927) was known for many things during his lifetime.[1] When he made a name for himself in Berlin's bohemian milieu at

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the turn of the century, Przybyszewski was a twenty-five-year-old former student of architecture and medicine, who had been expelled from the university due to his socialist activities. He was an expressive, but not overtly skilful, piano player, and often mesmerized his acquaintances with violent renderings of Chopin (Jaworska 1995: 13–15). His earliest works were essays on Chopin, Nietzsche, and the Swedish author Ola Hansson (*Zur Psychologie des Individuums* I–II, *On the Psychology of the Individual*, 1892), followed by the sombre experimental prose poem *Totenmesse* (*Requiem Mass*, 1893). Later, he would gain fame for his short stories and novels, typically treating topics most contemporary critics felt were quite sordid—like anarchism, incest, and adultery.

Many of his friends considered Przybyszewski something of a demon in human guise. He seems to have relished this image, probably doing his best **(p.54)** to strengthen the idea of him as a sardonic Satan in the Byronic antihero mould. One friend later recalled: 'If we were to tell him … that he was a pederast, a consumptive, a drunk and a thief all in one, he would be very flattered indeed' (Tadeusz Zelenski quoted in Krakowski 1999: 75). In reality, though, he was not quite as cruel, cold, and aloof as he wanted to appear. Once, he met a destitute proletarian in the street and, after hearing about the poor man's difficult life, proceeded to give him his pocket watch and all the money he had on him, leading the friend who was in Przybyszewski's company on the occasion to later write that 'this Satanist had a heart as weak as wax, and sensitive to human misery' (Zelenski quoted in Klim 1992: 32).[2]

It is not primarily because his texts have been deemed worthwhile by posterity that Przybyszewski turns up as a footnote in many works of literary history and treatises on modernist art. Rather, his enduring claim to fame is the bizarre portrayal of him in various literary texts of the era, and his impact on writers, artists, and critics. Studies of modernism and expressionism in Germany and Poland have identified Przybyszewski as an important disseminator of these new ideas and as a link between the German and Scandinavian avant-garde and its counterpart in his native country (Taborski 1996: 12–15; Kossowski 1995: 66–67). He knew personally, and noticeably influenced, important figures of the time like Edvard Munch, Ola Hansson, Richard Dehmel, and August Strindberg.[3] In *Inferno* (1897), Strindberg's novel of occult paranoia, the Swedish writer portrayed his then former friend, under the name Popoffsky, as a malicious Russian black magician trying to kill him by occult means. This is only one of numerous pieces of fiction in which he appears.

My interest in Przybyszewski is motivated by something entirely different. The research I have conducted in the field of early Satanism has yielded the result that Przybyszewski was probably the first person ever to attempt formulating an actual *system* of satanic thought. Uniquely, he also stayed true to it through a series of essays and works of fiction written during a succession of several years. There are certainly many examples of literary Satanism before his writings, but

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none of the authors, for instance Shelley or Baudelaire, identified themselves as Satanists and kept continuously propagating something even vaguely approximating a coherent satanic worldview. This renders Przybyszewski special, and he must clearly **(p.55)** be considered a pioneer in the history of Satanism. In addition, he also expressed ideas concerning women as demonic that were, on closer inspection, rather original (though they may seem utterly clichéd at first glance), and which this chapter presents a reading of.

I shall attempt to show that the tactic of semantic inversion intrinsic to Przybyszewski's bleak outlook necessitates a reading of his portrayals of women different from the superficial indignation at his 'misogyny' that would likely be most people's instinctual reaction. Trying to dissolve the apparent contradictions in Przybyszewski's Satanism and views on women, interpreting his texts as more cohesive and consistent than their surface meaning implies, is perhaps a futile task to undertake. Quite possibly there was no real unity in his thinking and he was simply confused, sloppy, or changed his views rapidly (or maybe all of these). My interpretation is a suggestion built on what is, admittedly, maybe an overly generous assumption of inner logic. This being said, I still believe the reading presented here persuasive when the totality of the textual sources is taken into consideration.

As such, Przybyszewski's works of fiction cannot be decisively separated from his essays in art criticism and the history of Satanism. The novels and short stories often contain extended passages of dialogue on philosophical, political, and artistic matters, and the essays are often stylistically closer to passionate prose poems than calm and collected argumentation. Further, the sort of philosophizing regarding Satan that Przybyszewski has his fictional characters do is frequently almost identical to the phrasings he uses in his essays. I therefore treat all these texts, regardless of genre, as expressions of his satanic worldview.

The chapter commences with a presentation of the core themes in Przybyszewski's Satanism and tries to situate them in the intertwined political, literary, and esoteric discourses of the fin-de-siècle. Thereafter, a discussion of how his writings connect woman with Satan follows, which endeavours to make sense of his demonic female figures by considering them as part of his satanic system.

A satanic manifesto

The Przybyszewski text propagating Satanism most explicitly is the essay *Die Synagoge des Satan* (*The Synagogue of Satan*, 1897), written during the years when he rubbed shoulders with Scandinavian greats like Munch and Strindberg. This fact may be significant in terms of ideological inspiration. Strindberg would later state that he too was a Satanist for a time, by which he meant simply that he considered this world to be ruled by an evil principle, **(p.56)** not that this

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principle was something he celebrated. This explanation was given by the author himself in an 1897 interview with a Swedish newspaper. Yet, if we look at the most obviously satanic text he wrote, the mystery play serving as an epilogue to the verse edition of his play *Mäster Olof* (*Master Olof*, 1878, almost twenty years later also incorporated in the French version of *Inferno*), a slightly different picture emerges, more in tune with what Przybyszewski propagated. Some sort of exchange of ideas between the two authors therefore seems plausible.[4]

However, a French influence on Przybyszewski is more obvious: *Die Synagoge des Satan* borrows in form as well as content from *La Sorcière* (*The Witch*, 1862) by the famous French historian Jules Michelet. Both texts are a sort of mixture between nominally detached historical scholarship, and passionate and impressionistic passages closer to a prose poem. They also have a shared tendency to shift without warning between rationalistic theories (for example, that Satan's presence at the witches' sabbath simply consisted of a big wooden effigy) and mythical motifs (poetic descriptions of how a demon conducts a satanic mass). Michelet's book praises Satan as the spirit of progress and science, and is also one of the first positive depictions of the witch figure (Hutton 1999 [2001]: 137–140). To the republican Michelet, the witch was a representative of the people, and satanic witchcraft a form of folk culture engaged in a struggle with an oppressive aristocracy supported by the corrupt Christian church. As we shall see, Przybyszewski was somewhat ambivalent towards such egalitarian Satanism.

When it comes to attacking the figure of God, Przybyszewski is considerably more caustic than Michelet, and he emphasizes God's function as an oppressor. In a Manichean manner, Przybyszewski postulates two eternal gods of equal strength. One is the God of Christianity, who wishes to keep mankind in a childlike state and wants to extinguish its free will. The other God, Satan, embodies lawlessness, curiosity, and titanic defiance. Just like in Michelet's book, science, philosophy, and art are brought forth through Satan's providence (Przybyszewski 1990–2003, vol. 6: 46. From here on, references to Przybyszewski's collected works are given as volume and page **(p.57)** number). According to Przybyszewski, the Christian religion—the religion of the stupid masses—preaches 'Be poor in spirit and humble, be obedient, follow the example, don't think!' (vol. 6: 51). In contrast to the 'humble slavery' Christianity propagates, Przybyszewski proposes 'proud sinning in the name of Satan-instinct, Satan-nature, Satan-curiosity, and Satan-passion' (vol. 6: 55). To the Polish decadent, Satan is 'the father of life, reproduction, progression, and the eternal return', while God and goodness is 'the negation of life, since all life is evil' (vol. 6: 73). When 'the eternal return' is mentioned, most readers will naturally come to think of Nietzsche, and Przybyszewski goes on to state that it was in the name of Satan that the philosopher taught his *Umwertung aller Werte* (vol. 6: 73).

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Satan, the First Anarchist

To Przybyszewski, Satan is the ultimate freethinker. This makes him not only ‘the first philosopher’ but also ‘the first anarchist’ (vol. 6: 39). Linking anarchism with Satanism was certainly not a new thing. Two of the most famous anarchist thinkers of all time had celebrated Satan as virtuous: in his *Dieu et l’état* (*God and the State*, written in 1871, published 1882), Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876) hails the Devil as the liberator of the oppressed (symbolically, of course, since Bakunin was a staunch atheist), while Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865) sang Satan’s praise in *De la justice dans la révolution et dans l’Eglise* (*Of Justice in the Revolution and the Church*, 1858). In Sweden, anarchists and other socialists frequently used satanic symbolism when they expressed their hatred of capitalism. This could very well have been something Przybyszewski was aware of, given his intimate ties to Scandinavia.[5] The link between Satanism and anarchism was, in other words, not farfetched or unusual in the time period but rather quite natural.

Combining the two plays an important part in Przybyszewski’s novel *Satans Kinder* (*Satan’s Children*, 1897), where a radically nihilist variety of anarchism is depicted (and, perhaps, propagated). The main character, Gordon, is the driving force behind a series of planned anarchist deeds of terrorism. A member of his terrorist cell asks Gordon, ‘Do you believe in God?’ and receives the answer ‘No, because Satan is older than God’. ‘So’, he continues to interrogate him, ‘Satan is your god?’ (vol. 3: 321). To this, he receives only silence and a **(p.58)** smile as an answer, implying that Gordon is indeed a Satanist. Additionally, Gordon is perceived as a symbolic Satan by his comrades and his ex-mistress in several scenes in the book, and the former refer to themselves as ‘Satan’s children’—thus the title of the novel (vol. 3: 323, 330, 348, 410, 440).

Gordon talks of his all-consuming hatred and a lust for destruction for its own sake, and frames this nihilist anarchist worldview in satanic symbolism, explaining that ‘my hatred is holier than your love, for your love is to your brain. My hatred is older and deeper, because it existed before all love. Lucifer existed before the world, which arose from love’ (vol. 3: 336). The love directed to the brain he mentions alludes to how one of his terrorist associates wants to build a new future according to socialist principles, an endeavour that does not interest Gordon in the least. He explicates this when discussing Napoleon:

> If Napoleon would have destroyed the world only to destroy it, if he would have overthrown kings without instating new ones, if he would have dissolved the order of things without creating a new one, then he would have been a God to me! No! not God! Why, God is only there to protect the *property* of goodness and life … but he would have been a Satan to me! the highest! He who owns nothing, who is indifferent to life, he needs no God,

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> God then becomes superfluous to him, but he needs Satan, the God who speaks through the deed, and incites the deed. (Vol. 3: 339)

The connection between Napoleon and the Devil appears in one of Przybyszewski's essays in satanic art criticism as well. Here, he explains that the great men of history—like Napoleon, Alexander, Socrates, Schopenhauer, Chopin, Schumann, and Poe—are all 'Satan's children' (vol. 6: 38).[6] Satan, he says, is 'the god of the poor and hungry, the god of the dissatisfied and the ambitious, the god of nature and the instincts, who always desires evil, the god of the damned and the seekers' (vol. 6: 38).

Social Darwinism, Suffering and Sexuality

While Przybyszewski is obviously inspired by Michelet—in his claim that Satan was the god of the 'poor, the saddened, the despised' during the middle ages, helping them to avenge themselves on the cruel nobles who **(p.59)** treated them like cattle—he also adds an elitist dimension (vol. 6: 67).[7] Where Michelet constantly emphasizes Satan as the god of the serfs, their helper in the struggle against feudal tyranny, Przybyszewski has a quite different take on the matter. To him, Satan seems to be both a helper of the poor (we must remember Przybyszewski's socialist background) and an initiator taking an interest only in a chosen minority. He states that Satan at first appeared solely to a small number of selected magicians and is a 'dark aristocrat, who only revealed his mysteries to the few' (vol. 6: 74). This satanic elite is not, however, defined by its wealth and power in society, but is (at least here) closer to the ideas about an 'aristocracy of intelligence' that were popular among Przybyszewski's author friends, like Strindberg and Hansson.

Much of Przybyszewski's Satanism is not drastically different from conceptions of Satan as a positive figure that were in wide circulation throughout Europe at the time (see Ruben van Luijk's chapter in the present volume). The Devil as the originator of art, as nature itself, and as the patron of intellectual activity and progress in technology can be found, for example, in Michelet as well (Michelet 1939: 309, 330–331). Parallels can also be drawn to Nobel Prize winner Giosuè Carducci's (1835–1907) scandalous poem *Inno a Satana* (*Hymn to Satan*, 1865), in which Satan symbolizes free thought, scientific advancement, and modernity.[8] The enormously influential esotericist H. P. Blavatsky (1831–1891), chief ideologist of the Theosophical Society, also expressed considerable sympathy for the Devil, designating him 'the spirit of Intellectual Enlightenment and Freedom of Thought' in her gargantuan two-volume work *The Secret Doctrine* (1888, vol. 2: 162).[9] Finally, the lauding of Lucifer some socialists engaged in has already been mentioned.

Where Przybyszewski *does* differ sharply from contemporary satanic discourse is in his elitist and social Darwinist sympathies. Convention dictated that Satanism would be employed to attack the strong that oppress **(p.60)** the weak; God

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symbolizing worldly power that should be toppled by the trampled masses. However, in *Die Synagoge des Satan*, Przybyszewski explains that Satan epitomizes the glorious 'beauty, strength and splendor' nature brings forth in its creatures through the process of natural selection. The Christian church, he says, wants to destroy all this, protecting and elevating instead 'ugliness, sickness, the cripple and the castrated'. If possible, the church would have castrated all of mankind (vol. 6: 50). Here we can discern a major and original strand in Przybyszewski's satanic system: the celebration of evolution as a supreme value. Practically no one else in his era used Satanism as a way to express hatred of the weak and sickly. By breaking with the egalitarian tradition, Przybyszewski anticipates some forms of Satanism in our time that take a similar stance, propounding elitism and brash 'might is right' thinking. Though he may have been ahead of his time, so to speak, as far as satanic discourse goes, holding brutal social Darwinist opinions was not in itself something particularly odd in the artistic and intellectual environment in which Przybyszewski moved. Strindberg embraced ideologies of that type during much of his life, and Ola Hansson's wife Laura Marholm (Laura Mohr, 1854–1928) proposed establishing workers' colonies 'where that which is unfit for life shall expire of its own accord, and the viable be doubly viable' (Marholm 1897: 263)—in other words, weeding out weak individuals.

Przybyszewski's evolutionist view of the world as a place where 'survival of the fittest' is the only true law also ties in with a pronounced pessimism. In one essay, he proclaims: 'The soul knows no happiness. The happy, jubilant soul is a non-entity, a square wheel, a whip of sand; the soul is *dark*' (vol. 6: 29). Happiness, he claims, is not a natural condition in nature, and progress and evolution are intimately linked with pain and suffering. The force bringing forth ever more painful conditions of the soul is Satan, who hence also symbolizes evolution. In fact, Przybyszewski states, Satan is the very foundation of existence: 'Satan was before God, because God is goodness. However, evil is the primary, because pain is the primary; and pain and despair has created evil' (vol. 6: 37). Gordon in *Satans Kinder* voices the same opinion, in his claim that Satan is older than God (vol. 3: 321). The idea of life on Earth as something dominated by suffering, which is presided over by Satan, is close to the ideas in Strindberg's aforementioned mystery play. An influence from the pessimism of Schopenhauer can also be discerned. In his memoirs, Przybyszewski sums up his own teaching by stating: 'My Cult of Satan is the profound, sanguinary, most woeful agony of being' (vol. 7: 224).

Satan and suffering are further connected with another word beginning with an *s*: sexuality. To some measure anticipating Freud, suffering and **(p.61)** sexuality —here symbolized by Satan—are central to Przybyszewski's understanding of the human condition.[10] In *Totenmesse*, he asserts, 'Sexual desire is the primeval substance of life, the capacity for evolution, the essence of individuality. Sexual desire is the eternal creativity, the remodeling-destructive' (vol. 1: 10).[11] The

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opening words of the poem proclaim: 'In the beginning was sexual desire. Nothing outside it—everything in it' (vol. 1: 10). As Zofia Weiss points out, these lines are highly blasphemous, since they are a parody of the opening words of the Gospel according to John (Weiss 1995: 101).

Still, Przybyszewski's Satanism is not primarily a celebration of the sexual drive, but rather of the human spirit, and in his memoirs he elaborates on this theme: 'My Satanism is the belief of Slowacki [a Polish Romantic poet], that not God, but only the human spirit can work wonders' (vol. 7: 223). Such atheism is also expounded by him elsewhere: 'Why, God does not exist, and up to this day, no professor has seen a soul. Indeed, the soul is only the backside of matter; soul and matter can be likened to the glass of a watch, that has a concave and a convex part' (vol. 6: 29). His statements of this kind must not be misconstrued, though. If we consider for instance his lecture 'Über Spiritismus, Okkultismus, Schemen und Materialisation' ('On Spiritism, Occultism, Spectres and Materialization', 1920) it becomes clear that he was, at least at this stage, hardly a materialist with no belief in things 'supernatural' (vol. 6: 131–148). He merely wanted to define phenomena like astral bodies as something defying the science of the time but which could eventually be explained by a more advanced natural science to come.

Artistic spirituality and semantic inversion

In her doctoral dissertation, Justyna Drozdek (using Jan Cavanaugh for support) plainly states: 'Przybyszewski's interest in "Satanism" was not indicative of a religious doctrine' (Drozdek 2008: 110). This is, however, an oversimplification based on a narrow definition of the term 'religion'. No, he did not—to the best of our knowledge—celebrate black masses on Sundays or say prayers to the Devil before going to bed, nor did he found a **(p.62)** satanic church.[12] But he did have a fairly well-developed worldview with metaphysical dimensions, where Satan was the most important symbolic figure. He retained these ideas through a large number of fiction works and essays, not just flirting with Satan in a single text or two as most of his peers in the domain of literary Satanism did. In fact, he could be said to be the most consistent and persistent literary Satanist of all time, with only perhaps Anatole France to rival him.

Unique is also the fact that he actually more or less openly referred to himself as a Satanist, something he was probably one of the first persons ever to do. Most of the legendary supposed Satanists of earlier times—such as the so-called Hell-Fire Club in eighteenth-century England—in fact turn out to be the victims of slander or misunderstandings on closer inspection (Medway 2001: 72–86; Faxneld 2006). Certainly, none of them would have considered themselves Satanists. This goes for more or less all men of letters as well. For example, the 'Satanic School of Romanticism', as a label encompassing Shelley and Byron, was something their enemies among more conservative Romantics invented, and

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not something they themselves proudly brandished, even if their sympathy for the Devil is in plain sight in some texts (Schock 2003: 18).

Thomas Auwärter objects to viewing Przybyszewski's ideas as merely a 'private mythology', but does so mainly on the grounds that he developed them in dialogue with his Catholic background (Auwärter 2008: 141). The reliance on the religion he rebelled against indeed helps refute such a categorization. But more important is, perhaps, that Przybyszewski's Satanism is but one piece of a larger contemporary pro-Satan puzzle. As I have shown here, his ideas did not arise *ex nihilo* but were part of a satanic discourse encompassing politics, esotericism, and literature. Though given a personal spin by him, these thoughts are thus not merely a 'private mythology', but part of a current of thought putting religious myth to radical use. To further strengthen Auwärter's basic objection, it must be borne in mind that Przybyszewski exerted a vast influence on the artistic avant-garde and fed the enthusiasm for things satanic amongst its members. He may not have set himself up as a black pope of Satanism with a formal organization under him, but his ideas deeply marked the worldview of quite a few people part of a loose network. For instance, after coming under the influence of Przybyszewski, the Polish painter Wojciech Weiss (1875–1950) wrote home to **(p.63)** his parents from a trip to Paris: '*La Bohême*, Baudelaireanism, Satanism, woman as Satan, the woman of Rops. Goya. I've started to make etchings. One has to speak in this way, to *propagate Satanism among the crowd*' (quoted in Kossowsky 1995: 70; my italics). After Przybyszewski's return to Poland in 1898, a group of young avant-gardists gathered around him, proudly taking on the name 'Satans Kinder' after his novel. This does not mean they were a group of Satanists but probably does say something about their enthusiasm for the celebrations of Satan in fiction and essays that their mentor was known for. Later, from the 1910s and onwards (until at least 1925), horror author and poet Hanns Heinz Ewers (1871–1943) held wildly popular lectures with the title *Die Religion des Satan*, based almost verbatim on *Die Synagoge des Satan* (Kugel 1992: 146–148). In the 1920s, the satanic content in the teachings of the German esoteric order Fraternitas Saturni was greatly inspired by Przybyszewski's ideas (Faxneld 2006: 185–186). In short, it is clear his system had a noticeable impact on many others. For that reason and because it drew heavily on Catholic concepts (as Auwärter stresses) and on preexisting literary and political Satanism, it was anything but a 'private mythology'.

Auwärter talks of Przybyszewski's 'artistic spirituality', a term he relates to the concept of the 'naked soul' in the latter's art criticism (more of which later). It would further be illuminating to connect such spirituality with the ritualistic and sacralizing character of many artistic endeavours during the symbolist period. We can think, for instance, of Belgian symbolist Fernand Khnopff (1858–1921) and his altar to the Greek god Hypnos, and, even more relevant here, of the Bavarian 'prince of art' Franz von Stuck (1863–1928). Around the turn of the century, he built a grand villa for himself in Munich, where he designed

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everything from furniture to wall decorations. Fascinated by the dark side of mythology, von Stuck adorned floors with serpent mosaics and built a veritable altar to sin in one room, with his painting *Die Sünde* (*Sin*, 1893)—depicting a serpent-entwined woman obscured by deep shadows—as the centerpiece.[13]

Such extravagant artistic blasphemy may seem overheated and incomprehensible today but was fully logical within the framework of European **(p.64)** symbolist and decadent art. The most important precursor to this tendency is Baudelaire, who was the first to hymn Satan using a language and formal structure inspired by devotional poetry and liturgical conventions. These examples show that the boundaries between spirituality and artistic use of mythology were often blurred during the time period, and this is the tradition in which Przybyszewski clearly belongs. His writings straddle the fence not only between textual genres (making his essays in art criticism and history difficult to tell apart from his fiction) but also between art and religion.

Another distinguishing feature of Przybyszewski's texts is how he constantly inverts established values and turns the usual meanings of words and mythical figures on their head; the prime example being his glorification of Satan. In yet another move of that type, he dismisses the widely spread use of the word 'degeneration' (*Entartung*) as nonsense, and claims that this phenomenon, which nineteenth-century medical science considered a threat to mankind, is simply a recurring and necessary stage in the development of our species. Such a view of things, where an ever-ongoing evolution by itself is making things constantly better, bears a resemblance to H. P. Blavatsky's Theosophy, which also considers the cosmos as evolving in an upwards spiral rather than going downhill. Przybyszewski and Blavatsky here sharply differ from the alarmist theories of degeneration that were so popular during the period. According to Przybyszewski, the degenerate—characterized by 'nervous oversensitivity' and 'psychotic fever conditions'—is in fact a genius, a herald of progress. The real dregs of humanity are those who attack degeneracy in the species and decadence in literature and art; the case in point being Max Nordau, influential physician and author of the massive best seller *Entartung* (1892): 'The normal is Max Nordau, the brainless philosopher of the mob, the degenerate is Nietzsche!' (vol. 6: 37).

This rhetoric is not entirely singular. The obvious literary parallel is how quite a few authors chose the etiquette 'decadent' of their own accord.[14] The shock tactic of semantic inversion is, naturally, also typical of literary Satanism in general, with William Blake and Baudelaire as prominent exponents. Just like later religious Satanists, they do what Satan does in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and proclaim: 'Evil, be thou my Good!' Of course, the terms good and evil are typically redefined in the process. Accordingly, **(p.65)** Przybyszewski is an ideologue of inversion, who takes negative figures or epithets (Satan, evil,

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Decadent, etc.) and reinterprets them as something positive. When reading his texts, we should always keep this in mind.

Class warfare, feminism, and witchcraft

Let us now look at Przybyszewski's ideas concerning witches and other demonic women, and how they can be understood through the lens of the aforementioned semantic inversion. First, though, it is worth considering contemporary analogies between witches and fin-de-siècle women, which constitute a context for Przybyszewski's conceptions. As we have seen, according to Jules Michelet, who greatly inspired Przybyszewski, witches were engaged in class warfare. Such thoughts can be found in several places during the second half of the nineteenth century. One example is Moncure Daniel Conway, author of the comprehensive study *Demonology and Devil-lore* (1878), who likens the historical witch hunts to 'the recent slaughter of Communists in Paris' (Conway 1878 [1880]: 326–327). Interestingly, contemporary discourse often equated witches not only with fighters against the oppression of the ruling classes but also with feminists.

As mentioned earlier, Przybyszewski was friends with Ola Hansson and his wife Laura Marholm. In the latter's book *Till kvinnans psykologi* (*Towards the Psychology of Woman*, 1897, published in German as *Zur Psychologie der Frau* later the same year), the topic of witchcraft is treated in one chapter. It is decidedly possible that Przybyszewski could have discussed the matter with Marholm earlier than that. Marholm, who was hostile towards certain forms of contemporary feminism, writes in her book about the parallels between witches and the suffragettes of her own time: 'woman longed to be a witch, she thirsted after it, she craved the horrible martyrdom, like she today craves to enter the domains of man' (Marholm 1897: 83).[15] Both of these twisted longings, Marholm claims, have their basis in a yearning for incitation peculiar to the female gender. This yearning is a transposition of emotions that would find their 'proper' expression in being a good mother (104). Repeatedly, Marholm points out how the female servants of Satan and feminists are very much alike.

Such demonization of feminists was commonplace during the era. Consider, for instance, a satirical German drawing of 1897 where the female **(p.66)** bicyclist (a controversial phenomenon at the time and very much a symbol of female emancipation) is shown to be descended from the broom-riding witch (Stelzl 1983: 47), or the competition in the ladies' journal *Woman* in 1894, where the goal was to define the 'new woman' as wittily as possible. One of the winning contributions stated: 'Modern Woman has projected on the mists of fancy a shadow of her own personality, which, like some Brocken [the mountain where the witches' sabbath in Goethe's *Faust* takes place] specter, looms before her imagination, distorted, monstrous, but, fortunately, phantasmal' (quoted in Kline 1992: 82). The German journal *Simplicissimus*, in its June 5, 1897 issue (76–77), featured an illustration of women becoming emancipated and neurotic *Jugendstil*

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freaks by drinking from the Devil's wellspring, and pioneering American feminist Victoria Woodhull (1838–1927) was maliciously portrayed as 'Mrs. Satan' in *Harper's Weekly* back in 1872 (Johnston 1967: 141). The list could be made longer and also includes a number of instances where feminism and witchcraft (or Satanism) are connected in a manner positive or ambivalent of both (Faxneld 2010b, Faxneld, forthcoming d). These notions of Satanist women as feminists, and vice versa, make parts of Przybyszewski's depiction of witchcraft more intelligible.

Michelet's Witch and the 'Good Evil' of Przybyszewski

The most influential celebration of the witch during the nineteenth century was certainly Michelet's book. It has remained popular to this day, and has been adopted by major names in French feminism as an important text (Cixous and Clément 1996: 3–5, 32, 54–57). In some passages of *La Sorcière*, for instance in his description of the black mass, Michelet is clearly inspired by the ghastly and bizarre substrata of Romantic lyricism. Przybyszewski takes this fascination with the grotesque aspects of witchcraft even further. This is, of course, to be expected, since he was part of the decadent movement, which was largely an exaggeration of some of the more outrageous and dark features of Romanticism.

Michelet, the witches' great advocate, was not entirely positive toward his imagined Devil-worshipping women and in one passage states: 'Do not conclude too hastily from what I have said in the preceding chapter that my purpose is to whitewash, to clear of all blame whatever, the gloomy bride of the Evil One' (Michelet 1939: 89).[16] He goes on:

> **(p.67)** How should a headstrong spirit, more often than not a wounded spirit, sometimes one altogether soured by disappointment, fail to use such a weapon [her magic powers] for the satisfaction of hatred and revenge, and sometimes for the indulgence of perverse and foul proclivities? (Michelet 1939: 90)

Such reservations aside, *La Sorcière* considered as a whole unequivocally remains a tribute to the witch as a praiseworthy heroine. The situation is a bit more complicated with the depiction of the figure in *Die Synagoge des Satan*.

For the most part, Przybyszewski demonizes the witch and chimes in with the descriptions of her evil deeds found in witch-hunter manuals. Still, she is the helpmate of Satan, the god of 'evil', who is clearly idealized in the text. Przybyszewski highlights the hostile attitude of the Christian church towards woman in general, and how it rejected her as 'an unclean animal, a serpent of Satan' (vol. 6: 57). This is quite correct, he opines: she is indeed Satan's chosen one, and the prince of hell loves her for being 'the eternal principle of evil, the founder of crime, the sourdough of life' (vol. 6: 76). These are strong words, which could be taken as pure misogyny. However, we must remember that when

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Przybyszewski talks of 'evil' he equates it with evolution and life itself. She is 'the sourdough of life' precisely *because* she is evil incarnate. Przybyszewski's Satanism is chiefly an ideology of inversion, and the 'evil' of woman is therefore, in fact, something praiseworthy in this text. When a Satanist writes of the female gender's intimate ties to Satan, it naturally means something completely different compared to when a Christian does so.

Woman, Przybyszewski explains, has been Satan's beloved from the very beginning, and she has been his tool for the 'popularization and upholding of his cult' (vol. 6: 76). In fact, Satan himself was at first a female deity, but the only remaining sign of this at present is his breasts, 'hanging down over his belly like two sacks of flour' (vol. 6: 77). The idea of Satan having breasts is familiar from Christian iconography, from decks of tarot cards, and from the famous engraving of the Devil-figure Baphomet by French esotericist Eliphas Lévi.[17] A more original hermaphroditical trait is found in Przybyszewski's **(p.68)** assertion that the gigantic penis of the fallen angel has a vulva as its tip, an idea previously unheard of in demonological lore (vol. 6: 91). The feminization of his own god Satan that Przybyszewski engages in, could, perhaps, to some extent, be taken as a critique of the patriarchal character of Christianity and God the Father. Moreover, where the Christian church has only male priests, the cult of Satan is apparently run primarily by female adherents.

Przybyszewski reiterates the reasons stated in the witch-hunter's manual *Malleus Maleficarum* (*The Hammer of Witches*, 1486) for women being more liable to become servants of Satan. According to Przybyszewski, the view of women in that infamous book 'testifies of great expertise', but it is still oversimplified in his opinion. Just like Michelet in *La Sorcière*, Przybyszewski now shifts from a 'mythological' modus to a more rationalist one, and we are told that the witch was in fact the product of a mental illness of an epileptic nature. This illness gave her a number of curious physical abilities: a body that could stretch in strange ways and change shape, abnormally flexible joints, insensitivity to pain, miraculous powers of recuperation, and so on. She is also mentally aberrant, feeling 'an ecstatic pleasure when she causes pain' and experiencing satisfaction only when she 'with greedy, fluttering hands rummages around in the intestines of a murdered child' (vol. 6: 81). Przybyszewski continues to indulge in his most perverted fantasies when describing the witches' sabbath, where the witch enters a 'nymphomaniac rage' and 'filth and revulsion become voluptuousness' to her (vol. 6: 85). This transitions into blood thirst, which she quenches by killing a child. She crushes 'its soft head between her thighs and violently presses it into her genitalia with the words: Return from whence you came!' (vol. 6: 85–86). If ever there was a text that would give Freudians and Jungians a field day, this must be it. Seldom have the concepts of the *vagina dentata* and the devouring mother found such concrete expression.

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Passages like the preceding ones would seem to lay on the wickedness a bit thick even for a person who idealizes some types of 'evil'. The same must be said of the following description of the witches' satanic code:

> All the laws of the bourgeoisie and the divine are inverted in her brain, and out of itself the terrible satanic code arises. You shall love Satan, honor him as God, and no one else than him. You shall despise and besmirch the name of Christ. You shall commemorate the holy days of the synagogue, and hate your father and mother. You shall kill men, women and above all children, since you thereby most deeply will offend the one who said: let the little children come to me. You shall commit adultery, fornication of all types, preferably those going against that which is natural, you shall rob, murder and destroy, you shall commit perjury and give false testimony. (Vol. 6: 96)

(p.69) It is difficult to conciliate this image with the highly positive portrait painted of Satan in the beginning of the book. Perhaps Przybyszewski felt a pressure towards the end of the writing process to soften his Satanism somewhat and steer the text towards a more conventional view of Devil worship as being plain bad. Alternatively, maybe he allowed the decadent and gothic aspects to gain the upper hand due to their gruesome colourfulness, no doubt tempting for an author of his kind. Either way, the net effect is that the book contradicts itself and gives a highly incoherent impression. When read as a whole, it is difficult to interpret the image of the witch in the book in isolation from the idealization of Satan. The witch, being primarily a Satanist, therefore appears nobler and comes to symbolize something more appealing than merely the grotesque practices which are ascribed to her.

Evil Women, Then and Now: Modern Witches

Przybyszewski views the medieval persecutions of witches as pure self-defence on the part of society. The horrible hags were poisoners and a real threat to their fellow man, a criminal religious group comparable to the murderous *thugees* in India that the British extirpated in his time. However, he asserts that the inquisitors were less successful than the British army, and Satanism thus still thrives among us (vol. 6: 98, 103). The theme of Satanism, especially Satanism practiced by women, being very much alive in late nineteenth-century Europe is treated in more detail in *Auf den Wegen der Seele* (*On the Paths of the Soul*, 1897), nominally an essay about sculptures. In a somewhat sneaky manner, Przybyszewski here presents his own views of the opposite sex as inherently satanic by first recapitulating the misogyny of the church fathers, as well as Mani, the founder of Manichaeism, who, according to the essay, cried out: 'Woman is the wickedness, the passion, the disquiet, the mother of heresy, the witch and the sabbath, woman is Satan himself!' (vol. 6: 30) Employing this clever tactic of letting the authorities of old lay the foundation for his line of reasoning, he then implicitly says that these views are still valid by drawing a

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parallel between witches and the women of his time. Here the similarities to the previously discussed demonizing of fin-de-siècle feminists as witches become clear.

Przybyszewski claims that the modern male's desire to elevate woman to a higher level of education resulted in an atmosphere of philosophical cynicism and atheism, where her evil urges grew in strength once more. Hereby, 'The Satan of Hysteria and boredom triumphs over woman', and **(p.70)** 'New Satanic churches have arisen: the Moulin Rouges, the Orpheums, the Blumensäle [a notorious Berlin dance hall]' (vol. 6: 31). The outward form may be new, but the core of woman and her evil stays the same:

> The fantastic dance of the medieval witch was replaced by the modern cancan, the witches' poisonous aphrodisiac retired by the morphine syringe, but the basic sentiment remained, the will to transgression and sacrilege, the will to a superhuman increase of sexual desire that can only find its outlet in perversity. (Vol. 6: 31–32)

This sounds like the words of a prudish moralist, describing the evils of the modern age, but it is hardly reasonable to understand a Satanist author like Przybyszewski in such a manner. Still, his writings contain a constant tension between a more conventional condemnation of woman's vices and the celebration of evil that would make it logical to assume he is extolling witches and femmes fatales.

If we accept what he states in his memoirs, Przybyszewski was no woman-hater. He there rejects Strindberg's ruminations on whether woman is a creature of a higher or lower order than man and says that to him she is neither higher nor lower, just *different*. The man who hates women, hates the woman inside himself, and the man-hating woman the man inside her, he inculcates (vol. 7: 139). Granted, it is still obvious that Przybyszewski shows misogynist tendencies in other texts, for instance, coming up with the aphorism: 'And even the truth of woman is an unconscious lie' (quoted in Cavanaugh 2000: 46). This is in no way an aberration in the context of European decadence, a literary and artistic movement to a great extent characterized by intense fear and hatred of woman, expressed in the many monstrous depictions of her that crowded the time period: the sphinx, Medusa, Salome, witches, vampire ladies, and so on (Praz 1933[1960]: 215–345; Dijkstra 1986). But in near equal measure, the decadents were *fascinated* by these figures, just like several of them found Satan appealing. To what extent there is an all-out 'sympathy for the Devil', or the femme fatale, is often not entirely clear. In the case of Przybyszewski, we should probably not view his descriptions of woman as evil and decadent in essays and fiction as a condemnation. Decadence and evil are, after all, good things in his system. All the same, one often gets the feeling that he does not follow his own semantic

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inversion through to its logical finishing point, and that his argumentation houses more than a little genuine dread and loathing of the opposite sex.

This is reflected in the frequent portrayal of frightening femmes fatales in Przybyszewski's purely literary works, where they are often **(p.71)** described as vampires, animals, and monsters.[18] We can also think of the nightmarish fantasies about his beloved that fill the head of the protagonist in the short story 'In hac lacrymarum valle' ('In This Valley of Tears', 1896), where she kills him slowly and cruelly, using her hairpins (vol. 2: 35).

In the short story 'Androgyne' (1900)—a mystical and metaphysical narrative of hallucinations, dreams, and madness—the protagonist has visions of various times and places, where demonic women play a key role. In one of his fantasy scenarios, he is a sorcerer, performing a complicated incantation to a demonic goddess (vol. 1: 113–114). Przybyszewski provides the text of the fictitious ritual in full, and it is similar to what one would expect to find in the context of the occult revival of the late nineteenth century. It could almost as well have been words that Aleister Crowley and his cohorts would declaim in utmost earnestness in a ritual chamber. The inclusion of complete ritual texts in Przybyszewski's works of fiction serves to transpose them to a realm of 'mythical' and esoteric writing and is yet another example of how he blurs the boundaries between genres and between fiction and actual belief. Composing a ritual, albeit embedded in fiction, invoking the demonic feminine also hints at his enthusiasm for such figures.

The Naked Soul and Hysteria

Further light is shed on Przybyszewski's views on the satanic woman by the discussions of Félicien Rops (1833–1898) in his art criticism. Rops is one of the most influential artists ever when it comes to the depiction of Satanism and was particularly fond of portraying demonic women. In late nineteenth-century Europe, he was a superstar in the field of illustration, and many of the most influential avant-garde authors of the period wrote essays praising him or requested that he illustrate their books (Bade 2003: 3; Arwas 1972: 2, 4). One typical trait in his pictures is that he utilizes conventions from sacred art when depicting his demons and femmes fatales, which gives the images a uniquely numinous and blasphemous quality. Przybyszewski considers him a man with mystic gifts and hails him as an artist expressing 'the naked soul' mentioned earlier. The term refers to true artists creating their works directly utilizing the soul **(p.72)** rather than the five senses and the base and common brain. This allows them to enter the visionary state Rops was in when he created his *Les Sataniques* (1882), a series of five satanic engravings (vol. 6: 17–19). Mystics like Rops—whom he calls 'The deepest gender psychologist of the century' (vol. 6: 32)—perceive the true nature of things, for instance what woman is like at her core:

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> The Woman of a Félicien Rops is the woman who stands outside of every contingency and every time, the archetype of woman, Hecate, Medea; the woman of both apocalypse and transgression; the woman who once became ordained as priest and kissed the Devil's behind; the woman who saves mankind through virility and who drags the same humanity down in disgust, filth and degeneracy. (Vol. 6: 22).

Here we can again note the insistence on the timelessness of the wicked woman, and the split in Przybyszewski's characterization of her: she both saves mankind by bringing virility (that is, she is linked to nature, evolution, and the sexual drive) and drags it down in decadence (the decadence that Przybyszewski lovingly wallowed in and considered an integral part of his hallowed evolution). He goes on to elevate Rops as the equal of great philosophers, and claims 'his intaglio prints are a mighty philosophical system', on the same level as Schopenhauer's. This artist 'has explored woman's psychology with a boldness and a depth, in comparison to which the sick misogyny of a Strindberg looks merely like the vengefulness of sexual dissatisfaction' (vol. 6: 23).

Another trait in Przybyszewski's interpretation of Rops' woman, typical of the time, is his emphasis on hysteria and ecstasy:

> The woman of a Rops is drawn into the whirlpool, she screams, she moans, she suffers, the blood overflows her brain, so that she forgets everything around her and surrenders to the »influx« of her master, Satan: she is always a sort of satanized Saint Teresa. (Vol. 6: 32)

Przybyzewski evinces similar thoughts elsewhere as well. In *Die Synagoge des Satan*, he objects strongly to the historical scholarship that has, inspired by the Enlightenment, attempted to dismiss the witches' sabbath as nothing more than medieval superstition. That is not to say the Devil actually appeared and celebrated feasts with his followers, but the feasts themselves did take place. At these gatherings, ecstatic dancing combined with narcotic poisons brought forth a hysterical and epileptic state in the women, which resulted in hallucinations. In other words, it could be said **(p.73)** that hysteria is the essence of the central ritual of satanic witchcraft (vol. 6: 92–93).

Further, regarding information on how Satanism is practiced around the year 1900, Przybyszewski refers to decadent author J.-K. Huysmans' supposedly 'documentary' novel *Là-bas* (*Down There*, 1891) and claims it shows that one recurring trait in the Satanism of all eras is 'hysterical women with somnambular propensities' (vol. 6: 104).[19] The concept of hysteria as something that unifies medieval witches with fin-de-siècle Satanist women was in tune with contemporary scientific standpoints. In the psychiatric discourse of the time, the idea that hysteria provided an explanation for the witches and witch trials of bygone ages was highly popular, and it was propagated by major names in

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medicine like the neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893). The medicalization of witchcraft, in particular in France, must be seen in the light of the harsh conflict raging there between the Catholic Church and the developing discipline of psychiatry. The drawing of parallels between witches and nineteenth-century women in the period's psychiatric writings was not merely a product of an interest in history, it also served an important polemical purpose. By 'proving' witches hysterical, contemporary explanatory models of the church for psychic illness were undermined by being connected to a long history of 'unscientific' religious theories concerning afflicted women (Vandermeersch 1991: 149–161). As a former student of medicine with a keen interest in psychology, Przybyszewski was, of course, familiar with the theories of Charcot and others concerning this matter.

For Przybyszewski, who, as we have seen, celebrated the ecstatic 'naked soul' and was sceptical of cold reasoning and the tyranny of the brain over the soul, hysteria could hardly be a completely negative thing. Yet, he still writes as if disgusted and horrified by the orgiastic witches. What are we to make of all these contradictions? Should we take a rhetorical question of his like 'Is there a woman, who does not lend the Satan of sin a willing ear?' (vol. 6: 34) as a condemnation of women? Or should we, since he otherwise celebrates sin and Satan as vital and necessary, read this as him lauding her? The latter alternative undoubtedly seems more plausible. In general, therefore, it is probably as a tribute to woman as valuable for mankind that we should understand Przybyszewski's constant stressing of her intimate relationship to Satan.

(p.74) Conclusion

Stanislaw Przybyszewski formulated what is likely the first attempt ever to construct a more or less systematic Satanism. Unlike that of other literary praisers of Satan, his love for the fallen angel was sustained through many works. It was also explicit and open; he publicly declared himself a Satanist. Above all, and this needs to be stressed as it is a major difference in comparison with other literary Satanists, it was well-developed enough to be called a *system*. In the history of Satanism, Przybyszewski must therefore be considered a pioneer, and perhaps, in a strict sense, even 'the first Satanist'.

Przybyszewski's provocative fiction and essays—of which his Satanism formed an integral part—affected many of the great avant-garde names of his time. The bleak and pessimistic satanic worldview expressed in his writings emphasizes suffering as the main characteristic of existence, and sexuality as the very core of man. But it also celebrates mankind's artistic feats and technological progress, hailing Satan as a patron of the arts and technology. Such a function for the Devil was a well-established part of anticlerical progressive discourse at the time, where the figure was employed in a symbolic manner to critique attempts by representatives of Christianity to suppress provocative art and new

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scientific ideas. An esotericist like Blavatsky could also utilize the figure in a similar way.

Some socialists, too, found Satan useful and considered him a symbol of struggle against the socioeconomic injustices they felt were supported by Christianity. In his view of Satan as the first anarchist, Przybyszewski clearly draws on this tradition. However, he above all holds Lucifer to be the deity of evolution, and thus ultimately not really a protector of the weak and oppressed. The elitist features and hatred of the feeble found in Przybyszewski's particular brand of brutally social-Darwinist Satanism make it fairly unique in his time. Unusual is also the nihilist streak seen in his love of destruction for its own sake (rather than as a prerequisite for evolution), which is somewhat difficult to reconcile with his overall worldview, where evolution is the highest value.

Teasingly, Przybyszewski writes in his memoirs about his own adoration of the Devil: 'Satanism without the theft of sacramental wafers, without even the blood of premature babies—what a plain, boring and prosaic Satanism!' (vol. 7: 226) If we are to summarize this 'plain, boring and prosaic' teaching, the core themes are a celebration of evolution (anchored in social Darwinism), a pessimist view of human existence as bleak and painful, the primacy of sexual lust, and lastly a nihilist anarchist will to destruction.

(p.75) Przybyszewski employed a shock tactic of semantic inversion typical of the decadent movement, turning 'evil', 'degeneration', and other usually obviously negative words into designations for something positive. When we read Przybyszewski's seemingly misogynist texts about witches then and now within this framework of semantic inversion, and pay careful attention to how he views woman as playing an important role in human evolution, a plausible interpretation is that he is not at all slandering her. Rather, he pays homage to her as a vitally necessary representative of the evolutionary 'good evil' his system is centered on.

In his stressing of woman as Satan's chosen one, Przybyszewski interlocks with the contemporary demonization of feminists as witches and creatures of the Devil, and he uses similar analogies between the activities of modern women and witches (for example, the cancan as a descendant of the dance at the witches' sabbath). But when a *Satanist* writes of woman as satanic, it logically has a rather special meaning and should in all likelihood be considered a form of praise. In a radical move, Przybyszewski even feminizes his own god, declaring that Satan was originally a female deity, who still retains breasts and a vulva at the tip of his penis as signs of this. It is also possible to interpret his portrayal of the satanic cult through the ages as run primarily by women as a critique of the patriarchal structure of Christianity. In his memoirs, he explicitly distances himself from misogynist ideas. All the same, an ambivalent attitude towards women is present throughout Przybyszewski's oeuvre, and some of his

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descriptions of the gruesome crimes of medieval witches are hardly intended as eulogy. There are, in short, inconsistencies in his thinking. To a large extent, however, these seeming contradictions fade away, giving way to something quite logical and coherent, when considered as part of his Satanist worldview.

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Witt-Brattström, Ebba. 2007. *Dekadensens kön: Ola Hansson och Laura Marholm*. Stockholm: Norstedts. **(p.78)**

Notes:

(1) . The best biographical study of Przybyszewski, which I draw on here, is Klim 1992.

(2) . All translations are my own, unless noted otherwise.

(3) . For a discussion of how Przybyszewski influenced Munch, specifically pertaining to supernatural femme fatale themes, see Faxneld 2011a.

(4) . On definitions of Satanism, and how to view Strindberg's interpretation of the term, see Faxneld 2006: xiii–xvi, 134–140. Strindberg describes Satan as the evil ruler of this world, where suffering dominates, and his brother Lucifer—who brings floods, disease, war—as a good cultural hero. This probably makes it difficult for most readers to agree with Strindberg's assertions that Lucifer is 'good'. Thus neither Satan nor Lucifer emerge as even remotely benevolent, and this 'pessimist' Satanism (especially its emphasis on life as characterized by suffering and the ambiguous use of semantic inversion) has some resemblance to Przybyszewski's, as we shall see, even if the latter also gave his Devil several clearly positive traits.

(5) . Przybyszewski's wife, Dagny Juel, was Norwegian, and the couple spent much time in Norway (at the time, Norway was a part of Sweden). On the use of satanic symbolism by Bakunin, Proudhon, and Swedish socialists, see Faxneld, forthcoming c.

(6) . This idea of Przybyszewski's is close to the concept of 'de facto Satanists' utilized by Anton LaVey, which enabled him to list all sorts of historical celebrities as predecessors of his Church of Satan. For a discussion, see Faxneld forthcoming b; Petersen 2011: 87–88.

(7) . He talks of Satan as a protector of the lower classes in *Auf den Wegen der Seele* as well, calling him 'the father of the poor and the unhappy' (vol. 6: 42).

(8) . Whether Przybyszewski was aware of Carducci's poem at this time is uncertain, but he quotes from it in his memoirs, published in 1926–1930 (vol. 7: 224).

(9) . Blavatsky's Satanism, though clearly present in *The Secret Doctrine*, was not a major feature in her system of thought (Faxneld 2006: 108–117). As I have argued elsewhere, her use of the figure can be understood better if viewed as part of a broader anticlerical discourse which utilized drastic counter-readings of scripture (Faxneld, forthcoming a). The first truly dedicated esoteric Satanist

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seems to have been the Dane Ben Kadosh (Carl William Hansen, 1872–1936), who made his system public in 1906 (Faxneld 2011b).

(10) . Ebba Witt-Brattström has speculated that Freud may have read Przybyszewski (Witt-Brattström 2007: 167).

(11) . What I have rendered as 'sexual desire', *Das Geschlecht*, is slightly difficult to translate properly in this context. It could also be rendered simply as 'the sex', but Przybyszewski obviously has something more related to the sexual drive in mind.

(12) . As testified by Richard Dehmel's second wife Ida, he enjoyed sometimes slyly letting on that he had attended real black masses in Paris, but this was in all likelihood merely mischievous banter (Auwärter 2008: 141).

(13) . On Khnopff and Hypnos, see Howe 2004: 25–34. On von Stuck's home, see the opulent book about it produced by the Museum Villa Stuck (Danzker 2006), on the altar to sin especially page 40, 44, 74–81, 86–91. As Gudrun Körner points out, the columns flanking *Die Sünde* 'underscore the cultic character of the image'. On the villa's altar—which has been called an 'artist's altar'—it blasphemously occupies the position of a Christian altar panel. But somewhat deflating the temple-like appearance of this arrangement, von Stuck, in fact, used the structure to conceal a changing-room for models (Körner 2000: 157).

(14) . It must also be remembered, however, that many decadents had an ambivalent attitude towards so-called degeneration and wavered between glorifying it and depicting it as a threat to society. Many of them also simply dismissed the term, as Przybyszewski seemingly does (though what he actually comes up with in the end is rather an inversion of it).

(15) . Marholm's hostility towards some types of feminism must not be misunderstood. She was herself a feminist in many ways but of a biological-essentialist variety. On Marholm, see Witt-Brattström 2007.

(16) . I quote from the English translation by A. R. Allinson.

(17) . Przybyszewski seems to draw further on Lévi when later describing Satan as having a horn in the middle of his head which emanates a strongly shining light (though this was not really an innovation of Lévi's he was still the one who made this image popular). All the same, he never showed great enthusiasm for Lévi and even described him as stupid and ignorant in a letter (Klim 1992: 98). Whether this is an instance of 'anxiety of influence' à la Harold Bloom could perhaps be discussed. On how Satan has been given feminine traits in Christian iconography, esotericism, and popular literature, see Faxneld 2010a: 12.

(18) . For instance, a woman is described as a vampire in 'Androgyne', and the protagonist's former mistresses as various animals (vol. 1: 114, 116).

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(19) . Telling his audience to read a work of fiction—albeit a supposedly 'documentary' one—to learn the 'truth' about present-day Satanism is another example of how Przybyszewski refuses to acknowledge sharp boundaries between different text genres.

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Subscriber: York University; date: 28 June 2020

The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity
Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen

Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

(p.79) Part Two The Black Pope and the Church of Satan

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.011.0002

After covering the early history of Satanism in the first section, it is now time to turn to the most iconic figure in the satanic milieu, Anton Szandor LaVey, and his carnivalesque Church of Satan. Although the dubbing of LaVey as 'the black pope' by Californian newspapers was somewhat hyperbolic, the emergence of the high priest and his organization in the 1960s did indeed constitute a formative moment of modern Satanism, and as noted throughout academic studies, they are both well-known entities in popular culture and the satanic milieu today. By examining relevant movement texts, the three chapters in this section mainly attend to the ideological side of LaVey's creation rather than the organizational structure or matters of personal or group history. Nevertheless, church, text, and founder are intertwined, especially in the early years. Never one for theory, LaVey created a belief system somewhere between religion, philosophy, psychology, and carnival (or circus), freely appropriating science, mythology, fringe beliefs, and play in a potent mix. The core goal was always indulgence and vital existence, based on the devices and desires of the self-made man.

In what way could Anton LaVey and the Church of Satan be said to represent an epochal break in the history of Satanism? Two elements stand out: First, the combination of esoteric material, supplied by the 'occult explosion' of the 1960s (especially witchcraft, Satanism, and the traditional occult sciences), with a strong focus on the self and contemporary goals of actualization. Second, the formalization of a coherent satanic position or discourse combined with an above-ground, highly visible organization. Amina Lap succinctly argues that LaVey's early satanic 'trilogy', *The Satanic Bible* (1969), *The Satanic Rituals*

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(1972), and *The Satanic Witch* (1971, reissued 1989), all point towards contemporary ideologies of 'self-religion' as the proper context of LaVey's Satanism, rather than Western esotericism or inverted Christianity. Accordingly, LaVey appropriated as much **(p.80)** from the natural and human sciences, political philosophy, and prosperity thinking as from occultism and mythology. This stretches any question of satanic legitimacy outside Christianity or esotericism and into an engagement with the epistemology of modernity.

LaVey distanced Satanism from Satan and the Christian context by playing several cards. Satan and Satanists were consistently misunderstood. Christianity was, in fact, the great lie and stood for more evil than Satanism ever did. The enemies were idealism, self-denigration, herd behaviour, and unacknowledged irrationality, found not only in Christianity but also in Eastern spirituality, 'white light' religions (such as modern witchcraft), humanism, and liberal democracies. Satanism redressed the balance by bringing materialism, egoism, stratification, carnality, reason, atheism, social Darwinism, and other 'rational' ideas together with a strong interest in theatre, play, and magic as technologies of the self (Petersen 2011). As such, LaVey's Satanism removed the Christian-based attention on *Satan*, involving worship at black masses, sacrifice, and moral and cosmic evil, and put the spotlight squarely on the *Satanist*.

By doing this, LaVey could utilize all the standard elements of Satanism found in history and popular culture but with a twist: They had a deeper, non-Christian meaning tying in with the self-realization of the Satanist. As such, the black masses of the Church of Satan resembled those of mythic history in form and content but not in function; the ceremonies and rituals of the church praised humanity's carnal nature and frequently facilitated liberation or even transformation of the participants. Consequently, Satanism was a religion of the present; a generation of rebellious hedonists bent on getting the most out of life. Here, the aims and strategies of the Church of Satan resemble those of modern witches and magicians of the same period, by appealing heavily to human potential rhetoric.

But Satanism in the church is more than an elaborate self-help group for hedonists. In fact, LaVey stressed stratification, elitism, and cultural alterity throughout his life both in words and deeds. He consistently took a 'satanic' position to popular issues, siding neither with the status quo nor the counterculture. On the one hand, he was pro-law enforcement, antidrugs, and all about style, actively opposing the countercultural activities of the hippie movement and the radical left. On the other hand, he was occupied with magic and sexual fetishes; ran witches' workshops; and frequently appeared in men's magazines, both in interviews and in full-page spreads, upsetting the establishment. Depending on the source, extant biographies of LaVey portray him as a materialist reworking Ayn Rand, a diabolical theist who lost his faith, or

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a fraud with an overactive imagination. Perhaps all three are true. In any case, ambiguity is a keyword reflecting both ideology and organization.

(p.81) This aspect relates to the particular nature of the Church of Satan. In many ways, it was structured as a new religious movement in the early phases. It had a visible leader with a consort by his side; a headquarters (the famous Black House); doctrinal texts (first, photocopied ad hoc writings, later the three major books) and practices; distinct membership levels; active media participation; and so on. From the early 1970s, things changed dramatically, and the church transformed into a diffuse group more in line with an audience cult formed around local subgroups called ‘grottoes’, while public activity ceased in the San Francisco headquarters. In time, LaVey also shut down the local groups, and he came to rely more on the network of active members and his publications for effect. Nevertheless, the Church of Satan can be described as the first public, highly visible, and long-lasting organization which propounded a coherent satanic discourse.

To follow this lead, Eugene Gallagher’s chapter is especially relevant, because it undertakes a formal analysis of the first section of *The Satanic Bible*, The Book of Satan, to understand the hows and whys of LaVey’s construction of tradition and the battles over the actual jurisdiction of the black pope. In a wider perspective, Gallagher’s analysis tries to *reassess* the status of *The Satanic Bible* as it resembles other modern scriptures in form and composition, while also *downgrading* the academic category of ‘scripture’ from ‘inspired’ or ‘transcendent’ truth to ‘authoritative’ writings. In a very real sense, it was and is the personal charisma of the high priest and founder which holds both church and scripture together, however tentatively. This charisma is, of course, routinized today by the loose church hierarchy, elementary dogma, and satanic perspectives on every aspect of life, all of which are formulated by LaVey himself in books and interviews. As noted by Gallagher (echoing James R. Lewis, see Lewis 2002), the figure of LaVey and the purity of his work are actively defended inside the church and hotly contested outside, making the status of *The Satanic Bible* a proverbial hot potato for Satanists and scholars. That said, these discussions might be most relevant to a small minority of spokespersons and sectarians defending or attacking the church, rather than a core issue in the satanic milieu as a whole. In any case, we have to understand the motives of composing, criticizing, and using this book to understand the past and present of Satanism.

As mentioned, it is hard to conceptualize the Church of Satan without LaVey and vice versa. Apart from the intellectual legacy, LaVey authenticated the church through stylistic choices and his oft-recounted mythological biography. In other words, the legitimation of the Church of Satan cannot be understood without LaVey’s legitimation of himself as a paragon **(p.82)** of ‘satanicity’. Asbjørn Dyrendal looks at a specific theme in some lesser known texts by LaVey written

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in the 1990s, namely, conspiracy theory, bringing us squarely back into ambiguity. Contrary to the 'received' view of LaVey as a rationalist opponent to all things occult (except as playful banter for the rubes, of course), we have to understand his use of esotericism and fringe beliefs such as conspiracy in a more complex light. Dyrendal's analysis is brilliant in its failure to reach any firm conclusion, because that is the only conclusion summing up LaVey's stance on magic, religion, science, popular culture, and all the rest. Like many other 'invented' religions of the twentieth century, the lines are permanently blurred between tongue-in-cheek reference, creative appropriation, and approval of authenticity (Cusack 2010).

While Lap and Gallagher emphasize the earlier texts from the late 1960s and early 1970s, Dyrendal concentrates on the less-researched, misanthropic LaVey found in the essay collections of the 1990s. In consequence, the three chapters provide us with different aspects of a man known to role play and mirror audiences throughout his life: Amina Lap portrays an amateur psychologist, Eugene Gallagher a shrewd *bricoleur*, and Asbjørn Dyrendal a conspiracy buff with his tongue firmly planted in cheek. That very point encapsulates an anthropology and aesthetics of Satanism in the LaVeyan mode, appealing to individual taste and a sense of mystery, yet underscored by an authoritarian appeal to reason.

—J.P.

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Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

Categorizing Modern Satanism

An Analysis of LaVey's Early Writings

Amina Olander Lap

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.003.0004

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter is a thematic reading of several core texts authored by the Church of Satan's high priest, Anton LaVey. By looking closely at the anthropology found in *The Satanic Bible*, *The Satanic Witch* and *The Satanic Rituals*, the analysis substantiates the prevalent categorization of modern Satanism as a self-spirituality. The constitution of "damaged" and "satanic" selves, respectively, and how one is liberated from one to the other leads to the conclusion that LaVey indeed should be included in the company of humanistic psychology, self-religion and human potential groups; on the other hand he also differs in his materialistic and ego-driven interpretation of human potential. LaVey's Satanism is thus related more to the secularized "prosperity wing" of New Age thought than the varieties of spirituality found in the cultic milieu today, and should be considered a distinct discourse of world-affirmation.

Keywords: Satanism, Anton LaVey, The Satanic Bible, The Satanic Witch, The Satanic Rituals, human potential, self-spirituality, satanic magic, liberation, Paul Heelas

Introduction

Satanism is by its very nature a controversial topic in Christian cultures. It is therefore not surprising that Satanism has sparked numerous gloomy imaginations and has been a darling subject in Christian literature, anticult movements, and popular culture. However, in spite of this interest, academics have only recently begun to take Satanism seriously.

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The so-called *modern* Satanism, that is, the form of Satanism founded by Anton LaVey in the 1960s in the United States, has earlier been classified as a new religious movement in the same category as modern occultism or neopaganism (Moody 2008 [1974]; Alfred 2008 [1976]; Melton 1997: 608). More recent research has augmented or replaced this categorization with Paul Heelas' term 'self-spirituality', which refers to the kind of spirituality found in New Age (NA) movements or within part of the Human Potential Movement (HPM) (e.g., La Fontaine 1999; Harvey 2002; Dyrendal 2009; Petersen 2009 b; Petersen 2009c; Lewis 2010). However, modern Satanism is a rather new field of sociological interest, with only a few studies between the founding of the Church of Satan in the 1960s and the publication of the first anthologies on the subject in the last decade.[1]

(p.84) The lack of contemporary sources and sociological data from before the late 1990s is not necessarily indicative of scholarly superficiality or a lack of interest, but may be explained otherwise: LaVey's Church of Satan originally had a centralized structure, membership, and organization, similar to those found in most contemporary new religious groups. However, after LaVey ceased to conduct group rituals, workshops, and other activities in his house in 1972, and the system of local groups ('grottos') were abandoned in 1975, modern Satanism became a splintered and disorganized movement. From the mid-1970s until the mid-1990s, Satanism seemed to exist in such relative obscurity that Gordon Melton almost declared it extinct (Melton 1997: 608). This picture changed in the mid-1990s when Satanism began to appear on the Internet where it became easier for Satanists to share material, communicate, and network (Lewis 2001, Lap 2002; Petersen 2002).

This chapter presents an analysis of LaVey's early writings with respect to self-spirituality and HPM, with particular focus on his view of human nature and the self. This focus was chosen in part because human beings occupy a key role in terms of modern Satanism, HPM, and self-spirituality, and because this approach will illuminate both similarities and differences between modern Satanism and generic self-spirituality and HPM. The analysis concludes that it is reasonable to categorize LaVey's Satanism as both a self-spirituality New Age group and as a Human Potential Movement group; however, it is also proposed that LaVey's modern Satanism is more accurately described as a member of the 'prosperity wing' subclassification of self-spirituality New Age.

Primary sources

The primary sources require a brief introduction, because their differences and forms are of interest to the analysis. The primary sources are LaVey's first three books: *The Satanic Bible* (1969), *The Compleat Witch* (1970), and *The Satanic Rituals* (1972). The later books, *The Devil's Notebook* (1992) and *Satan Speaks!* (1998), as well as various magazine articles and interviews, are omitted, because

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these sources either represent a much later period in LaVey's writing or reached a much smaller audience.[2]

(p.85) Of LaVey's three books, it is *The Satanic Bible* that had a major impact on modern Satanism. James Lewis describes *The Satanic Bible* as 'a kind of quasi-scripture within the Satanic subculture' (2002: 1), and 'the single most influential document shaping the contemporary Satanic movement' (10). Both Lewis's and my research indicate that LaVey's books, in particular *The Satanic Bible*, occupy a central position in modern Satanism both in terms of market dominance and status. The research also indicates that the respondents did not consider *The Satanic Bible* a 'Bible' in the Christian sense, and that most of them knew LaVey's writings, had formed an opinion on them, and either supported or repudiated them.

The Satanic Bible (1969) is divided into four sections: The Book of Satan, The Book of Lucifer, The Book of Belial, and The Book of Leviathan. The first section, The Book of Satan, is an anti-Christian diatribe that serves as a powerful attack on Christianity and Christian morality, proposing social Darwinism as an alternative.[3] The second section, The Book of Lucifer, is a compilation of a number of short texts that explain LaVey's attitudes towards issues such as love and hate, sex, desire versus compulsion, the necessity of being able to say no, the black mass, etc. These texts refer to the so-called Nine Satanic Statements, which may be viewed as a condensed version of LaVey's philosophy. The last two sections of the book, The Book of Belial and The Book of Leviathan, describe LaVey's view on magic and include practical instructions for rituals. *The Satanic Bible* has been in print since 1969, with varying prefaces, and has been published in several languages.

The Satanic Rituals is LaVey's second-most popular book in terms of reputation within the satanic subculture. The book includes a handful of rituals inspired by real groups and religions—such as the Yezidi religion and freemasonry—and fiction. The rituals are an indistinct combination of borrowed texts and the author's writing, but in most cases the rituals are presented as authentic rituals founded in real traditions. This presentation is put in perspective in the introduction to the book, where LaVey states that the Satanist has access to all the mysteries of the world but as opposed to, for example, Christians, the Satanist admits that they are fairy tales (1972: 27).

The Compleat Witch, or *The Satanic Witch*, as it was retitled on republication in 1989, was originally published in 1970 and 1971. The book describes the kind of everyday manipulation that LaVey terms 'lesser magic' in *The* ***(p.86)*** *Satanic Bible*. It is introduced as an extension of the workshops that LaVey conducted prior to the establishment of the Church of Satan until around 1972. The book is aimed at female readers and explains how female attractiveness can be used to enchant and manipulate men. The book is based on the premises that females

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are almost entirely dependent on men and that men can be manipulated by means of sexual attraction. The book can also be seen as a deliberately reactionary commentary on the feminist and unisex movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The book concludes with a bibliography with more than 170 entries, covering genres such as psychology, anthropology, folklore, sociology, and biology, many of which deal with sexuality and body language. There are virtually no references or discussions of sources in the main text, however, leaving an impression that the bibliography serves to either fake a scientific foundation—that is, to legitimize LaVey as a learned person—or to inspire further reading (cf. Petersen 2011).

At first glance, LaVey's books are easy to read because most of the contents are written in brief and direct language. As such, LaVey's books can be seen as practical guides to satanic philosophy and rituals, with advice on how to use Satanism to obtain pleasure and success here and now. In-depth analysis of his books, on the other hand, is difficult for several reasons: many aspects of his philosophy are stated vaguely or ambiguously, leaving lots of room for personal interpretations; some passages are written tongue in cheek; others use the same formulations and wording as one would expect to find in occult literature; still others use blasphemous language seemingly intended to appeal to the reader's fantasies or emotions. The ambiguity makes it difficult to find clear explanations on how LaVey expects magic to work, what he believes happens after death (if anything), or where divine or demonic aspects fit into the equation. LaVey concludes his preface to *The Satanic Bible* with the statement that the reader will find both fantasy and truth in the book, and that both of these must be taken for what they are (LaVey 1969: 21–22). How to distinguish between the two and how to deal with ambiguity is apparently left as an open question.

A categorization of modern Satanism: introducing the terms

First, I will provide a brief introduction to New Age, self-spirituality, and the Human Potential Movement (HPM), beginning with an outline of humanistic psychology, which served as a foundation for both HPM and New Age.

(p.87) Humanistic Psychology and the Human Potential Movement

Humanistic psychology was originally an objection against the industrialization, urbanization, materialism, and environmental destruction of the 1950s and 1960s. It was also intended as an alternative to the behaviouristic and psychoanalytical fields of psychology, which humanistic psychologists thought objectified humans or focused only on illnesses. The new approach of humanistic psychology was to focus on the 'healthy' human being, humans as conscious actors, human strengths and abilities, and options for lifelong development. Humanistic psychology has been accused of promoting narcissism without social responsibility. This clashes with the self-understanding of humanistic psychology,

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however, as it describes insight, love to oneself, and love of others as inseparable and mutually reinforcing (Puttick 2000: 205).

Abraham Maslow, who represented the movement together with colleagues such as Carl Rogers and Rolly May, believed that every person possesses huge potential and a natural desire to become self-actualized. According to Maslow, the reason only about 10 percent of prosperous Western society was self-actualized was undesirable influence and upbringing; for example, when a child experienced a conflict between its feelings and the expectations of its surroundings. If an individual managed to liberate himself or herself from undesirable external influences, then not only would this individual be able to realize his or her hidden potential, the person would also reach his or her 'authentic self'. This authentic self was considered naturally 'good' and able to instinctively act properly and responsibly, to the advantage of itself and its surroundings (Schultz 2004: 461–64).

'Human Potential Movement' has been used as an umbrella term for a large array of groups, activities, people, and techniques that are found in the tension between spirituality and psychology, and which have a particular focus on furthering the physical, emotional, mental, creative, or spiritual potential that each individual is believed to possess (Wallis 1985: 129). HPM became what Elizabeth Puttick dubs the 'psychospiritual' part of the countercultural movement that grew in the 1960s in the United States with inspiration from humanistic psychology. From the onset, HPM was a protest against established psychology, organized religion, philosophical and theological intellectualism, and what was considered destructive, scientific materialism (Puttick 2000). It is difficult to distinguish NA and HPM today; some consider HPM to be a less spiritual branch of NA, while others consider HPM and NA to be partially overlapping.

HPM and NA share many traits in content and organization. Structurally, HPM resembles NA because of their widespread eclecticism and loose **(p.88)** structures. Members participate in many different contexts, and each individual selects and combines whatever makes sense to him or her. Some groups (for example, Scientology), found in the periphery of HPM, are organized as new religious movements that demand strong loyalty or maintain an orthodox belief or ritual system (Stone 1976: 94). HPM is typically less spiritual than NA, but spirituality is also found in HPM, especially in the shape of Buddhist or Eastern influences. If a god appears in HPM, typically it is not a monotheistic god as in Christianity or Islam, but is rather described as a form of cosmic energy, the person's true nature, or a shared life force (Stone 1976: 103).

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Self-Spirituality

Paul Heelas uses the expression ‘self-spirituality’ as a reference to the shared paradigm or core ideology of New Age. Self-spirituality encompasses three basic elements according to Heelas: an explanation of what is wrong with life and the world, a vision of the goal of perfection, and a set of methods to achieve it (1996: 18–20). Here, I will outline these three elements and compare the spiritual self with two other perceptions of self that we find in today’s society.

NA shares with HPM the explanation of what is wrong with society and humans: the problem is first and foremost improper socialization caused by a society that has ruined our authentic selves and induced guilt, fear, inhibitions, poor self-esteem, victim roles, unnecessary self-restrictions, and a wish to impress others. These external influences are often described as a person’s ego, lower self, intellect, or consciousness (Heelas 1996: 18–20).

Perfection or salvation, on the other hand, is believed achievable by letting go of one’s ego, by which one supposedly is able to uncover one’s authentic or higher self, and thus one’s true spiritual nature. There are varying perceptions of the spiritual self within NA, but central to many of the shared notions is the belief that it is connected to something greater than man, for example, the divine, the eternal, or cosmos. This belief is reflected in the attitude towards authority, ethics, and responsibility.

Like HPM, NA also emphasizes personal experience. Personal experience is the only or highest authority in NA, because the spiritual self promises more direct access to true knowledge than handed-down religions, gurus, scientists, or experts can offer. This prioritization of authority is reflected in the practitioner’s ethics, where his or her ‘inner voice’ or intuition is preferred to tradition and dogma. The spiritual self makes each individual fully responsible for his or her own life, because the relinquishment **(p.89)** of the ego is presumed to also have freed the person from those external influences (for example, childhood or society) that the person might otherwise have blamed for his or her shortcomings. In some NA segments, this concept of personal responsibility is extended to include responsibility for the birth of one’s parents or reality; but in a less radical form it may simply convey a sense of responsibility towards the world and one’s fellow man, or the view that everyone is responsible for his or her own life and that interference with the lives of others will only impede their ability to relinquish their egos and find their true ways that only their spiritual selves can show them.

NA offers a large number of techniques for letting go of one’s ego and realizing one’s spiritual self or hidden potential. The breadth of methods and goals are characteristic of New Age, but they may be arranged by applying Heelas’ distinction between groups that are ‘world-rejecting’, ‘harmonial’, or ‘world-affirming’ (1996: 29–32). The first category applies to those segments of NA that

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are primarily occupied with letting go of the ego and realizing a spiritual self and spiritual reality. The second category is the largest one and includes NA groups that seek to obtain the 'best of both worlds', that is, to strike a balance between the spiritual and the material or corporeal. The last category, which will prove the most interesting for this study, is the 'prosperity wing' segment of New Age. This segment of NA is the one that resembles HPM the most, and it is less concerned with letting go of the ego and more with realizing one's potential in one's professional life or realizing materialistic goals.

There is a smooth transition between those ideas found in NA and those found in society in general. Heelas notes that in some cases NA simply states common tendencies in a more radical or spiritual form. Such similarities are also found in the perception of the self. Heelas borrows Steven Tipton's distinction between the 'expressive' and the 'utilitaristic' self (Heelas 1996: 160–68). The utilitaristic individualist is focused on satisfying his or her own desires and interests, and to use his or her power, will, determination, initiative, and ability to reason, among others to maximize what the world may offer. The self is viewed as separate from family, religion, calling, authority, duty, and moral exemplars. The utilitaristic self serves as a foundation of several assumptions in society, such as the belief that there is something powerful in each individual that can be utilized and improved, enabling the person to increase his or her benefit from the material world. This utilitaristic self is most visible in New Age's prosperity wing, for example, in the shape of self-help literature and techniques employing positive thinking as methods to achieve success and financial gains. This segment of NA is often found in a gray zone between the secular **(p.90)** and the spiritual by associating psychological mechanisms (or something that resembles psychological mechanisms) with magical effects, for example, by stipulating that positive thinking alone can alter physical reality.

The expressive self, radicalized by NA to a spiritual self, contrasts with the utilitaristic self to some degree. The expressive individualist believes that there is more to life than the satisfaction of arbitrary desires, in particular those desires that are stimulated by the capitalist emphasis on economic growth and materialistic consumerism. Instead, one attempts to identify and act out an authentic self. Materialistic goals are avoided because they are assumed to lead to greed, envy, and superficiality. Values are found inside oneself, and one works on personal growth, meaningful relations, and the ability to be in touch with oneself.

LaVey's anthropology

As we have seen, Heelas operates with three basic elements: an explanation of what is wrong with life and the world; a description of the goal of perfection; and methods to reach salvation. In the following subsections, I will show how these elements can be found in LaVey's writing, and I will attempt to compare

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LaVey's perception of self to the spiritual, the expressive, and the utilitaristic selves.[4]

The Damaged Self

Keeping to the tradition of NA and HPM, LaVey identifies numerous defects and shortcomings in society that cause humans to function poorly. LaVey describes his Satanism as a religion that opposes all other religions, considering Satanism the only religion that celebrates flesh and earthly life, and embraces the entire human being whether good or evil (LaVey 1969: 52). LaVey does not only oppose Christianity; the spirituality of, for example, Eastern religions or neopaganism is also considered problematic. The modern witchcraft movement in particular is criticized intensely, indicating that LaVey considers it a contesting movement (1969: 50–52, 83–84; 1970: 12–14).

Most of LaVey's criticism against religion is aimed at Christianity, and he focuses on its historical impact on Western culture, because LaVey believes Christianity is dying (1969: 43; 1972: 33), leaving the contemporary new **(p.91)** religious movements as a more present threat to mankind. When Christianity, nonetheless, receives most of the blame for the troubles of mankind, it is, LaVey believes, because Christian teachings and Christian morality have been institutionalized and still guide people even if they have liberated themselves from the dogma of the church. LaVey believes that Christianity has demonized human nature by defining natural instincts and emotions as sinful, trapping mankind in a perpetual state of feeling guilty that serves to ensure the church its power and influence (1969: 46–54, 82–83). This demonization and guilt inducement causes a large number of impediments to human emotions, sexuality, self-esteem, interpersonal relations, chances of self-realization, and health.

Further, the Christian 'Great Commandment' is reprehended for encouraging uncritical love towards both friends and foes. LaVey does not only consider this impossible and unnatural but also highly damaging. To LaVey, both love and hate are strong, vital, and natural emotions, and only by recognizing and accepting both emotions can humans distinguish between them and use them constructively. Otherwise, humans will lose the ability to love those that deserve it, and the suppressed hate will lead to both mental and physical problems and diseases, or the suppressed hate may be directed at innocent people (1969: 64–65; 1989: 247–48).

LaVey strongly reprehends the attitude of the church towards sexuality, but also takes the opportunity to criticize the attitudes towards sexuality of Eastern religions, society at large, counterculture, and psychology (1969: 81–86). LaVey believes that Christianity has made sexuality wrong and sinful, and although Westerners in the 1960s may have intellectually accepted sex as natural and healthy, they still had feelings of guilt, especially towards masturbation and

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fetishes. LaVey advocates free sex but is not only critical against Christian norms; he also criticizes the new sexual morals proposed by the counterculture. LaVey considers all kinds of sex acceptable as long as the parties involved are responsible adults and no one is forced to act against his or her will. He also considers it important that others should not define what is natural or healthy sexuality, which he believes is the case in contemporary sexual liberation. LaVey does not limit healthy and liberated sexuality to intercourse between two or more partners, but also approves of asexuality, sadism, masochism, fetishism, masturbation, homosexuality, transsexuality, and more in his definition. He believes that it is necessary to liberate oneself from feelings of sexual guilt, even unconsciously, because otherwise it will lead to neuroses and the passing of guilt to future generations (1969: 66–74).

Relinquishing the ego and uncovering the authentic self are important themes in NA and HPM. The ego plays a similarly important role to LaVey, **(p.92)** but he defines it differently. Some of the influences that LaVey wants to free the individual from, such as internalized morals, would be considered undesired functions of the ego in other groups within NA or HPM, and in that sense LaVey agrees with the notions of NA and HPM. However, with the exception of these unwanted influences, LaVey considers the ego to be unconditionally positive and associated with qualities such as pride, self-respect, and self-realization; he sees the possession of a healthy and strong ego as necessary to treat others well. To LaVey, the ego question is therefore not limited to the influence of the ego but also the attempts of Christianity and other religions to suppress the ego or, as is the case in Eastern religions, the attempts to eliminate it. LaVey describes Satanism as a religion that believes in total satisfaction of the ego and as the only religion that advocates intensification and encouragement of the ego (1969: 94).

Feelings such as envy and greed, which are found among the seven deadly sins of the Catholic Church, and which are seen as functions of the ego by NA and HPM, are celebrated by LaVey, who sees these emotions as natural, necessary, and generally human. In LaVey’s interpretation, envy and greed become motivators for ambition (1969: 46–48), and egoism and self-respect become the necessary foundation for a vital life and for loving and respecting others. LaVey believes that the idea of dissolving the ego and rejecting material wealth was developed in areas where material success was difficult to obtain and where faith could pacify people, making them satisfied with what little they had. LaVey considers this a commendable strategy from the powers that be in such a context, but outright stupid in a society of plenty (1969: 92–93). Satanists would never willingly choose self-denial according to LaVey, and, as will be evident later in this chapter, many of LaVey’s techniques for liberating and developing the individual are aimed at developing what LaVey considers a strong, healthy ego.

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Another topic stressed in LaVey's books is the problematic interaction with other people. Edward J. Moody, who studied the Church of Satan during its early years, described its teaching as a kind of 'magical therapy' that helped the members of the church overcome their social disabilities that caused them to fail in their relations with other people (Moody 2008). Solutions to relationship problems with other people require special techniques that may exceed conventional measures, according to LaVey. Poor human relations may come in the shape of a superior that treats one badly and cannot be told off; it may be a crush on someone that is not returned; it may be a threatening enemy or competitor; or it may be the 'psychic vampire' that is draining energy and mental resources. In each example, other people become obstacles that must be conquered via magic, manipulation, or otherwise be prevented from taking advantage of you. Cooperation is **(p.93)** found as the 'modified golden rule', which is a tit-for-tat principle of treating others as they treat you. The human interaction in a love relationship also seems a game to be won, and altruism is displayed as the Satanist's acts of kindness towards those that he or she appreciates because their happiness pleases the Satanist (LaVey 1969: 51).

LaVey's ideas on various subjects—including sexuality, drives, suppressed feelings, the importance of the conscious and the subconscious, developing neuroses, and the realization of potential—are clearly inspired by both psychoanalytical and humanistic psychology. As mentioned earlier, *The Satanic Witch* includes a long list of books written by psychologists, and in a later official reading list for Satanists, LaVey mentions Freud, Jung, and Reich (Barton 1990: 163–67). The reason behind this significant interest in psychology appears to be part acknowledgment of science as authoritative and part theory that psychological insight is required because of the human intellect. Our intellect not only enables us to think rationally but also enables us to hide our true feelings from ourselves. According to LaVey, the human animal is the only animal capable of lying to itself and believing the lie, which, according to LaVey, forces us to constantly pursue self-awareness (1972: 15).

The evident inspiration from psychology is not a perfect match, however. Arthur Lyons, who wrote about LaVey's philosophy in the beginning of the 1970s, described the Church of Satan as 'anti-psychiatric' (1970: 186), and in *The Satanic Rituals* LaVey refers to psychologist Thomas S. Szasz when he identifies Satanists with the role of the mentally ill as social critics or adversaries to societal norms (1972: 16–17).[5]

In general, LaVey's critical attitude towards psychiatry is much more moderate and seems focused on a defence of sexual fetishes and addictions that parts of psychology and NA consider problematic or as signs of mental illnesses. LaVey considers fetishes and the use of alcohol positive as long as one is able to control one's desires, because according to LaVey it is exactly through liberation of emotions and drives that one avoids obsessive or self-destructive behaviour

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(1969: 81). LaVey does not wish to eliminate these ‘hang-ups’, but instead wants to transform them to ‘hang-ons’; that is, activities that supplement an individual’s personality and contribute to the individual’s satisfaction.

(p.94) The only problem, according to LaVey, is the shame that society attributes to fetishes or the use of alcohol, and the exercise is not about changing behaviour but about not feeling shameful (Lyons 1970: 178). LaVey’s criticism of established society and his view of human nature are thus based on his interpretation of contemporary psychology, but with emphasis on each person’s right to define what is best for him or her.

The Actualized Self

As was explained in the previous section, LaVey considers the authentic self to be devoid of inhibitions and guilt, with a strong and healthy ego. LaVey’s concept of human nature and the special status that he attributes to children and animals, as well as his notion of a successful life, provide an indication of his concept of the ideal human being. The seventh statement of the Nine Satanic Statements, LaVey’s condensed explanation of Satanism, explains:

> 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! (1969: 25)

The notion that humans are animals like all others and thus can be understood on the same premises as other animals, combined with the assumption that our intellect introduces all kinds of problems, is fundamental to LaVey’s view of man. LaVey’s understanding of the human animal is inspired by Darwin, among others; but it is the sociologist Herbert Spencer, who applied Darwin’s theory on human interactions, that appears on the Church of Satan’s reading list (Barton 1990: 163) and who may have influenced LaVey more than did Darwin. LaVey does not attribute any negative qualities to the carnal element that might somehow oppose a spiritual self, but it is not the fluffy, sanitized concept found in some NA circles. Humans are animals according to LaVey, with all that implies, and as such are an integral part of nature. If humans are not always kind and gentle, but also driven by hate and aggression, then it is not because there is anything wrong with humans or because humans are different from other animals; it is because humans live in a dangerous and brutal world. Hate and aggression are not wrong or undesirable feelings but are necessary and advantageous for survival.

This brutal interpretation of mankind and the world is emphasized in the first section of *The Satanic Bible*, where LaVey includes an edited excerpt **(p.95)** of the book *Might Is Right*. This excerpt declares: ‘Blessed are the strong, for they shall possess the earth—Cursed are the weak, for they shall inherit the

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yoke!' (LaVey 1969: 34). This excerpt was in part meant to provoke and challenge the reader (Redbeard 1996: 3), but it also reflects the social Darwinism and cynicism that LaVey gathered from people such as Herbert Spencer, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Ayn Rand. LaVey's social Darwinist leanings are also found in his understanding of human evolution, which he believes is on its way to unseen heights: where children of the past were born to work in the fields and in the factories, today human quality has become more important than quantity, and in the future, LaVey expects one child that can create will be more important than two that can manufacture, and more than fifty that can believe (1972: 12). LaVey not only supports eugenics but also expects it to be a necessity in the future—not to produce a specific race or a specific look but to create physically and mentally healthy and creative individuals.

According to LaVey's daughter Zeena Schreck's preface to *The Satanic Witch*, the book is in part intended as a guide to eugenics or 'selective breeding' (1989: ii); a subject that LaVey also discusses and which seems to serve two goals: First, he encourages women to find partners that are their psychical and mental opposites because he considers the 'attraction of opposites' to be a fundamental mechanism of nature that avoids inbreeding and promotes healthy individuals (1989: 62). Second, the book is largely a guide to finding the right husband, and, according to LaVey, men and women come in varying quality. Rephrasing Aleister Crowley's statement that 'everyone is a star', LaVey agrees that anyone could be a star, but Crowley and others forget that stars come in different sizes (1989: 192).

In addition to serving as a foundation for an understanding of human nature, children and animals represent an ideal that LaVey refers to as 'the purest form of carnal existence' (1969: 89). Such creatures are sacred to Satanists. Children and animals are described as 'natural magicians' that Satanists may learn from, because children and animals do not deny their natural desires and drives and are thus better suited for the pursuit of their goals (1969: 89, 122; 1979: 74). The special status attributed to children is also illustrated in the difference between adult and child baptisms: the adult symbolically casts off the falsehoods, hypocrisy, and shame of the past, but the child is celebrated as a perfect being. The child baptism is only intended for children under four years of age, because older children are assumed to have been influenced by ideas that are alien to the satanic philosophy (1972: 205).

It is also within children and animals that LaVey finds values such as emotional spontaneity and authenticity; uninhibitedness; fantasy; superior **(p.96)** senses; naturalness in terms of one's own needs; and the absence of socially induced neuroses, guilt, and shame. Many of these qualities are more difficult to find among adults than among children because of man's 'divine spiritual and

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intellectual development', which, according to LaVey, has made humans 'the most vicious animal of all' (1969: 25).

Nonetheless, LaVey appears to be somewhat undecided regarding his stance towards the intellect: our intellect may be the root of many of our problems, but our intellect is also the source of rationality and creativity that LaVey stresses in his deep respect for artists and scientists, and in his tribute to the children of the future that will create rather than produce or believe. In addition, rationality, logic, and science are considered the Satanist's weapons against Christianity and other religions, and Satan is described as 'the spirit of progress, the inspirer of all great movements that contribute to the development of civilization and the advancement of mankind' and is connected with qualities such as creativity and enlightenment (1972: 77).

In addition, intellect and creativity are highly present in the successful human being that—in departure from the philosophical ideal that is exemplified by children and animals—is the actual or realistic ideal that is used to measure people's success. LaVey declares in *The Satanic Bible* that the philosophy and techniques described in the book are the same as those applied by the most self-realized and powerful people in the world, providing examples of financial experts, industrialists, popes, poets, dictators, and opinion shapers (1969: 104). This referral to earthly success as a measure of worth is repeated in several places, including *The Satanic Witch*, where the competent witch is identified by her ability to find the right husband, a better job, and to avoid unwanted pregnancy, and in general to lead a competent life rather than be guided by 'spiritual values' (LaVey 1989:3). As discussed in the next section, LaVey's religious techniques are aimed at attaining these and other mundane goals.

Liberating Magic

LaVey refers to his techniques for changing and improving people and their environments as magic, and he defines magic as 'the change in situations or events in accordance with one's will, which would, using normally accepted methods, be unchangeable' (1969: 110). This leaves room for interpretation that is not narrowed by LaVey's explanation of magic as including a portion of applied psychology described in 'magical' terms, combined with a component that cannot (yet) be explained scientifically **(p.97)** (1969: 119). Such a description of magic makes it difficult to determine when LaVey believes to be supported by psychology and when he believes to be using magic in a more classical sense.

LaVey divides magic into 'greater magic' and 'lesser magic'. Lesser magic is LaVey's term for various types of manipulations such as body language, scents, looks, and strategic flashing, and it is mostly this kind of magic that is found in *The Satanic Witch*. The use of lesser magic in this book is derived from LaVey's 'personality clock', which is a model that divides humans into twelve different

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types of people (1989: 26–73). These types combine body shape with various personality traits; for example, the skinny 'three-o'clock' is associated with abstract thinking and asocial behaviour, while the chubby 'nine-o'clock' is associated with action rather than with thinking and a sense of humour. The model is intended to aid the witch in identifying the type of her quarry. Once identified, she may apply LaVey's principle of the 'attraction of opposites' to spellbind the quarry by assuming the quarry's opposite role in terms of personality and physique. This 'role play' may imply a change of weight, hair colour, gait, voice, use of colours, and name. For example, if the quarry is a dominant person, the witch must be submissive, and if he is loud, she must be quiet.

In addition to this use of the model, where the goal is to find a partner or to manipulate men by attraction to the witch, the personality clock has another function with respect to the personality of the witch herself: by finding her natural position on the clock dial, the witch is able to change her position or perfect it. LaVey believes that if the witch perfects her type so that hair, body shape, voice, and scent are harmonized, she will arouse more interest and hence more success. According to LaVey, his personality typification is based on models created by the psychologists William Herbert Sheldon (1898–1977) and Ernst Kretschmer (1888–1964). LaVey appears aware that these models were abandoned because of a lack of scientific evidence but defends his model with references to personal experience and to people who have applied the model successfully (LaVey 1989: 25f; cf. Petersen 2011: 82–85).

LaVey subdivides greater magic into rituals and ceremonies. He describes ceremonies as rites intended to celebrate or remember a particular event, an aspect of life, a role model, or to declare one's faith (1972: 17). This principle is seen in LaVey's satanic baptism that, in contrast to the Christian baptism, is only intended as symbolic recognition of the child as a born Satanist or as a declaring of the person's faith in the case of the adult baptism, and not as acts expected to cause change. Rituals, on the other hand, are rites that are intended to cause change (1972: 17). It is difficult to find any clarification on how these changes are to occur. LaVey describes the **(p.98)** rituals as psychodramas in the psychological sense, where the purpose is to change the practitioner's own psyche and as a way to change the outside world or other people. This change is assumed to be caused by bioelectric energy discharged through strong emotions, such as blind hate or sexual orgasm (1969: 88), and via deeply felt wishes, such as when a child strongly desires something (1969: 122). Rituals are thus intended as tools that an individual may apply therapeutically against old problems and as a way to obtain future goals on both a psychical and a material level.

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An example of the former is found in LaVey's version of the 'Black Mass', which he considers a psychodrama that is intended to free the practitioner from feelings of guilt and religious beliefs, or to free the practitioner from unnecessary faith in contemporary dogma and values (1969: 100–105; 1972: 31–36). The other type of ritual, which is directed at obtaining specific goals, is divided into three types based on feelings of lust, hate, or compassion (1969: 114–17). In each type, the rituals are used to focus emotion and energy on the desired goal. In addition to enabling the possibility that the ritual may have the desired effect, the ritual is also expected to make the practitioner function better afterwards because the pent-up emotions have been released. That is, if a hate ritual does not kill the victim, at least the Satanist's aggressions have been released, and the Satanist can get on with his or her life.

LaVey's rituals are somewhat difficult to analyze as rituals in a classical sense. LaVey sees many similarities between his rites (and perhaps in particular the ceremonies) and modern theatrical plays, and he also feels a need to distinguish them from contemporary encounter groups.[6] LaVey believed that Satanism filled an important void between psychology and religion, because psychology did not meet the human need for rituals and dogma (1969: 52–53). In the context of this goal and the desired function of the rituals, they are perhaps better understood as therapeutic techniques than as classic, religious rituals. This view is supported by the role that LaVey ascribes to magic in practice: magic may be a powerful tool, but he stresses that success is not achieved by positive thinking alone; a combination of positive thoughts and positive action is required (1969: 41). In addition, LaVey introduces the term 'the balance factor', an ability to set realistic goals, as a key element in magic (1969: 127ff). A regular person should not expect even the most powerful magic to suffice to attract a popular actress, and magic is not expected to help a person gain success if the person does not already have tangible talents.

(p.99) The Satanic Self

The spiritual self, where the spiritual or divine has fused with the self, is a central theme in self-spirituality. In LaVey's Satanism the relationship between self and divinity is not trivial, however. LaVey appears to use several different concepts of the divine and its relationship to life without attempting to unify them. The divine is thus described as nonexistent, as a kind of force in nature, as a symbol, and as a person's own ego. Furthermore, the rituals provide ample opportunity for a theistic view of Satan and other beings. This wide array of options was later narrowed by LaVey and his Church of Satan after the theistic Temple of Set broke off from the Church in 1975, after which the Church of Satan felt compelled to clarify that it is founded on atheism. Beyond this clarification, the Church encouraged its members to each find their own concept of Satan, and today there are, indeed, many different interpretations of Satan among Satanists that were inspired by LaVey (Lewis 2001: 8–10).

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LaVey rejects the existence of all gods by default. To LaVey, gods are an externalization of the human ego, which was created because humans would not acknowledge their egos and instead placed their forbidden wishes in the hands of their gods. The gods are thus created in man's image rather than vice versa, and by worshiping the gods of the existing religions, according to LaVey, one worships by proxy those people that externalized the ego and created the god (1969: 44–45). In the same vein, LaVey interprets religious concepts involving the killing of a god as an expression of self-hate (1969: 89). LaVey believes that dogma and rituals are necessary for humans and proposes that we create gods according to our own emotional needs, or promote ourselves to gods, so that the worship of gods becomes ego-affirming rather than ego-suppressing. He believes that the externalized gods thus become internalized, and that humans will realize that there never was a difference between the spiritual and the physical worlds, which have at all times been physical only (1969: 44–45, 96).

The concept of the spiritual existing independently of the body is thus rejected. The role as god does not imply any divine characteristics, except the right to define good and evil and thus replacing religious dogma and morality and to view oneself as the centre of one's personal universe, an egocentric focus also seen in selecting the Satanist's birthday as the most important holiday (1969: 96). LaVey's Satanism can thus be considered a pure veneration of the ego where gods are not united with the ego but rather replaced by it. At the same time, it is Satan (and other demonic entities) that are addressed in the actual rituals, and it is Satan that is associated with a set of values and qualities in the Nine Satanic Statements that **(p.100)** LaVey considers material to Satanism. As such, the rituals can be seen both as a celebration of the person's ego and the satanic values, and as a celebration of an *idealized* self.

Other concepts indicate theistic leanings: the gods are rejected as an externalization of the human ego, but LaVey states that it is wrong to believe that Satanists do not believe in God. Instead, Satanists believe in God as a dark force that permeates and balances nature, and which can neither be explained or used by religion or science, and which is too impersonal to care about life on Earth (1969: 40, 62). This dark (presumably meaning 'unknown') force appears to be connected with Satan, but it does not appear to play an independent role, perhaps because the divine is defined as something that has no practical implications for the earthly life that occupies LaVey. LaVey's Satanism thus includes a variety of characteristics that indicate spiritual leanings, but in practice it is the material and utilitaristic facets that dominate.

Conclusion

LaVey believes that his Satanism distinguishes itself from other religions by focusing on the physical instead of the spiritual. In contrast to NA, LaVey does not consider humans spiritual beings or as possessing a duality between body and soul, but as animals, for better or for worse. LaVey's understanding of the

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divine is open to a wide array of possible interpretations, however, which harmonize with those interpretations that are found in the less spiritual segments of NA and HPM.

Children and animals occupy a special place in Satanism because of their unspoiled nature, while LaVey, similarly to NA, considers the adult person's intellect to be problematic. In spite of the intellect's ability to lead humans astray from their carnal nature, it is the same intellect that LaVey cherishes when he stresses man's rationality and creativity, and unlike NA, LaVey sees indulgence, material success, and power as the highest goals.

In contrast to NA and HPM in general, LaVey does not consider Eastern spirituality a viable alternative to the established religions and is generally highly critical towards other religious and spiritual groups and techniques.

LaVey's use of magic can be seen as therapeutic rather than religious; however, this view is refuted when LaVey attempts to borrow scientific authority for the magical processes—for example, by including theories about bioelectrical energy to explain how magic works. The tendency to attribute a magical effect to mechanisms that presumably are psychological is a characteristic of the segment of self-spirituality that Paul Heelas terms **(p.101)** the prosperity wing. LaVey's Satanism fits into this segment in particular because the goal of magic is nonspiritual, and instead seeks to liberate the practitioners from their inhibitions to develop their potential and thus obtain their goals of power and influence.

My analysis indicates that although LaVey's Satanism is clearly consistent with general characteristics of world-affirming HPM and self-spirituality NA, the Devil is in the details in terms of some significant differences. Most important, LaVey's Satanism is largely materialistic and antispiritual, and embraces the ego rather than attempts to suppress it. It is meaningful to categorize LaVey's early Satanism as a self-spirituality group based on the general similarities. However, it seems relevant and important to further categorize LaVey's Satanism as belonging to the prosperity wing, because this placement explains many of the differences between LaVey's Satanism and the general characteristics of self-spirituality. It is also rewarding to categorize LaVey's Satanism as HPM, but since HPM largely overlaps with the less spiritual segment of self-spirituality where the prosperity wing is also found, the additional categorization as a part of the HPM does not offer new insights into LaVey's Satanism to warrant a dual categorization.

LaVey's Satanism has traditionally been grouped with modern witchcraft and occultism. However, a categorization as part of the prosperity wing indicates that material for comparison may be found in the self-help literature and groups

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that focus on improving human interaction, and psychological techniques aimed at achieving material goals.

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Notes:

(1) . See Lewis and Petersen 2008; Petersen 2009.

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(2) . Amazon's sales rank provides an indication of the respective popularity of the books. On May 26, 2008, *The Satanic Bible* ranked no. 5,608; *The Satanic Witch* at no. 19,979; and *The Satanic Rituals* at no. 26,499; while books such as *The Devil's Notebook* ranked 43,230, and *Satan Speaks!* at 93,323. *The Satanic Witch* has a higher sales rank than *The Satanic Rituals*, but this may be explained by the fact that *The Satanic Witch* is also read outside of the satanic subculture.

(3) . For an in-depth analysis of the *The Book of Satan*, see Eugene Gallagher's chapter in the present volume.

(4) . See also Dyrendal 2009; Harvey 2002; and Petersen 2011 for similar comparisons.

(5) . Szasz became associated with the antipsychiatry movement in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, and was known for considering psychiatry a pseudo-scientific movement that used diagnosis of mental illnesses to control the population. Today, the antipsychiatric movement is remembered for its postulate that schizophrenia is the healthy reaction to a sick society, and Szasz's ideas have found their way into Scientology.

(6) . Encounter groups are a form of group therapy developed by the humanistic psychologist Carl Rogers.

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The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity
Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen

Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

Sources, Sects, and Scripture

The Book of Satan in *The Satanic Bible*

Eugene V. Gallagher

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.003.0005

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the contexts of production and reception related to the most popular and recognized book on Satanism today, Anton LaVey's *Satanic Bible*. Through a thorough compositional analysis of the first part, called The Book of Satan, the chapter redefines both *The Satanic Bible* and the category of scripture to explain the form and function of LaVey's book. First, a particular attention is given the appropriations, exclusions, and revisions undertaken by LaVey to compose the work. This analysis is subsequently used to discuss both satanic and scholarly engagements with *The Satanic Bible* as well as the specific schismatic claims to authority furthered by criticizing LaVey's strategy of appropriation. As such, the analysis questions both the scholarly (mis-)uses of the term scripture and the various intentions of charging LaVey with plagiarism, hence opening up modern Satanism to broader comparative studies.

Keywords: Satanism, Anton LaVey, The Satanic Bible, The Book of Satan, redaction criticism, scripture, Michael A. Aquino, Might Is Right

Introduction

Observers generally credit *The Satanic Bible* by Anton LaVey with substantial influence throughout contemporary Satanism, not only in LaVey's own Church of Satan (Petersen 2009: 232). But Michael Aquino demonstrated in 1987 that in the composition of the first portion of *The Satanic Bible*, LaVey had borrowed extensively from an earlier text, *Might is Right*, attributed to the pseudonymous Ragnar Redbeard. Aquino also showed that LaVey had borrowed wholesale from

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John Dee's 'Enochian Keys' for another section. In fact, the compositional history of *The Satanic Bible* can be pretty well pieced together from a variety of sources (Lewis 2009: 48). The discovery of LaVey's reliance on earlier sources has diminished the legitimacy of *The Satanic Bible* in the minds of some vocal critics both within the general orbit of contemporary Satanism and outside it. In his recent survey of contemporary Satanism, for example, Chris Mathews asserts that LaVey 'stole selectively and edited lightly' (2009: 77). For Mathews, LaVey's evident plagiarism thoroughly undermines the credibility of his text.

While Mathews was correct to follow Aquino and raise the question of what effect LaVey's heavy indebtedness to earlier sources had on the legitimacy and authority of his new Bible, Aquino's claims provoke other substantive questions that have gone largely unaddressed. One concerns whether LaVey's actual **(p. 104)** editorial practice in borrowing from his sources is adequately described simply by dubbing it plagiarism; a second concerns the impact of the information about LaVey's borrowings on both Satanists' and scholars' understandings of the scriptural status and authority of *The Satanic Bible*; and a third concerns Aquino's motivations for unmasking LaVey's reliance on earlier sources. I will address each of them in turn.

Although Aquino provides a list of passages that LaVey used from *Might Is Right*, neither he nor any other commentator has offered a systematic and detailed account of what LaVey took, changed, and omitted from his source text. By implication, Aquino (and those who are dependent on his source analysis) presents LaVey's editorial activity as meaningless or simply evidence of his hurried and haphazard approach to the writing of *The Satanic Bible*.

LaVey's comments on his use of *Might is Right* do little to clarify matters. In a 1997 interview, he praised Redbeard's work as 'one of the most inflammatory books ever written' and conceded that 'it was only natural that I excerpted a few pages of it for *The Satanic Bible*' (Bugbee and Bugbee 1997). LaVey gave a fuller account in the introduction he wrote in 1996 for a republication of *Might is Right*. He recounted how the book's blasphemy 'charged' him on his first encounter with it and that he began 'to incorporate sentiments from the book into my vocabulary' (LaVey 1996: 4, 5). Then, when he was hastily assembling *The Satanic Bible*, he naturally included 'selected passages' and 'a fractional content' (1996: 5, 6) of the source that had such a profound impact on him.

LaVey justifies his borrowing in two distinct ways. First, in an attempt to avoid legal culpability, he claims that 'the copyright, even with renewal, would have recently expired' (1996: 5); and that, consequently, he and his publisher held new copyrights on the portions of Redbeard's original work that were included in *The Satanic Bible*. But LaVey also pays homage to a book that, he claims, 'in many ways spoke for me' and he asserts that his borrowing from the text represents an effort to 'immortalize a writer who had profoundly reached

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me' (1996: 6). Those comments indicate that LaVey's borrowings were conscious and intentional even in the midst of his hurried efforts to send a book-length manuscript to his waiting publisher. They leave unanswered, however, the fundamental questions of precisely what he took from *Might is Right*, to what extent he exercised any editorial discretion in his borrowing, and why he chose what he did, changed what he did, and left out what he did.

Such questions about the use of sources have long animated the work of biblical scholars, under the general heading of 'redaction criticism'. As Bart Ehrman describes it, redaction criticism 'is the study of how authors have **(p.105)** created a literary work by modifying or editing their sources of information' (2000: 76). It is precisely that attention to the 'how' of LaVey's borrowings from *Might is Right*, let alone the 'why' or the motivation for his specific editorial activity, that has been missing from scholarly analysis of the composite nature of *The Satanic Bible*. That is all the more unfortunate since such an analytical approach, according to Ehrman, 'provides a kind of shortcut to seeing what really matters to an author' (2000: 83). From the perspective of biblical redaction criticism, simply noting the fact of LaVey's dependence on earlier texts, as Aquino does, is only the beginning. It remains to be determined just what LaVey did with what he borrowed and, as far as possible, how and why he accomplished what he did.

Ehrman's helpful characterization of the redactor's work sets an agenda for further analysis. He suggests that 'the redactor has actually made two kinds of decisions: not only about what to change but also about what to keep. Sometimes it is just as important to know what an author has decided to leave intact as to know what he or she has decided to alter' (2000: 103). A careful analysis of LaVey's dependence on *Might is Right* must then pay close attention to what he borrowed intact from his source, what he changed in what he borrowed, and what he declined to incorporate in his text from his source. Regularities and patterns in LaVey's inclusions and omissions will point towards his own point of view, especially as it differs from Redbeard's, even as he strives to make *Might is Right* 'speak for' him as elements of the earlier work are transplanted into *The Satanic Bible*. From the perspective of redaction criticism, that LaVey incorporated large sections of his source into his text and 'added in a few sentences of his own' (Lewis 2009: 49) and that he demonstrably omitted large sections and quite telling smaller portions of his source will both be taken as evidence of his distinctive point of view. Rather than a sloppy, hasty plagiarizer who couldn't be bothered to document his borrowings and who by his own admission is not much of a writer (LaVey 1996: 5), the LaVey that emerges from this analysis is more a creative and even systematic compositor who makes something new and distinctive out of the sources available to him. In doing that, he resembles—much more than many might like to acknowledge—the authors of many other, more hallowed, scriptural texts. In assembling his Bible, inadvertently or not, LaVey employed a mode of composition used for more than

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two thousand five hundred years in the West to produce texts that have come to be regarded as scripture.

Michael Aquino's statement that LaVey is not at all 'the true author' of The Book of Satan (2009a: 54) while superficially plausible, needs to be modified to the extent that LaVey can be shown to be an engaged and intentional editor of his source material. In fact, in his use of sources, **(p.106)** LaVey engaged in a dynamic process of appropriation and innovation to create something new, a work of his own that can claim its own validity and authority. That LaVey settled on the title of *The Satanic Bible* in another last minute decision cannot be taken as weakening the effect he intended the title to have since the other options for a title apparently all included the term 'Bible' (Lewis 2009: 53). LaVey intentionally set out to create a new scripture for his new religion.

Admittedly, the category 'scripture' does not figure prominently in the ways that contemporary Satanists talk about *The Satanic Bible*, though it crops up occasionally, as in Peter Gilmore's recent collection of essays entitled *The Satanic Scriptures*. But it is used here to initiate a process of 're-description' that is designed to facilitate understanding both the ways in which *The Satanic Bible* functions in various contexts and comparison of LaVey's new Bible with other texts that work in similar ways for other communities. Of that second type of comparison, Jonathan Z. Smith asserts that 'the aim of such a comparison is the redescription of the exempla (at the very least, each in terms of the other) and a rectification of the academic categories in relation to which they have been imagined' (2004a: 198). LaVey was far from the only contemporary person to produce a new scriptural text, and comparisons of his new Bible with others—like Sun Myung Moon's *Divine Principle*, Claude Vorilhon's (Raël's) *Intelligent Design: Message from the Creators*, or Mary Baker Eddy's *Science and Health With Key to the Scriptures*—might prove mutually illuminating, while, at the same time, they contribute to a reconceptualization of the category 'scripture' itself. In *What Is Scripture?* Wilfred Cantwell Smith noted that consideration of such texts might well enlarge and complicate the category of 'scripture', but he did not develop his insight (1993: 210). Such comparisons, as Jonathan Smith notes, 'work with difference, relaxing it, but never overcoming it. Because nothing is ever quite the same as another, these efforts require judgment and criticism' (2004b: 383). Thus, appeal to the category of 'scripture' is not intended to render accurately the conceptions that actual Satanists have of *The Satanic Bible* but to re-describe that text in terms from the academic study of religion that increase the possibilities of developing new insights about LaVey's text through considered acts of comparison.

The Book of Satan

LaVey's borrowings from *Might is Right* are concentrated in The Book of Satan in *The Satanic Bible*. Although it is one of the four 'books' in LaVey's Bible, The Book of Satan scarcely occupies six-and-a-half printed pages out **(p.107)** of 272

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in the American paperback edition (LaVey 1969). Nonetheless, the 'infernal diatribe' of those six pages expresses LaVey's perspective in a vivid, concentrated form. LaVey was quite impressed with his accomplishment, claiming that 'each verse is an inferno. Each word is a tongue of fire' (LaVey 1969: 29). As Aquino has indicated, The Book of Satan relies quite heavily on Redbeard's work for its substance. But the first thing to be noted is that The Book of Satan clearly represents a *selection* of passages from its source. A simple comparison demonstrates the degree to which LaVey was selective. The republication of *Might is Right*, to which LaVey added a forward, runs to nearly two hundred printed pages, not counting LaVey's contribution and Peter Gilmore's afterword. If LaVey's comments that *Might is Right* made a deep impression on him are taken at something like face value, it appears that he decided that only certain portions of the work were worth including in his Bible. His selectivity highlights the question of why LaVey included what he did and omitted so much of the rest of his source.

LaVey's selectivity is evident in other choices that he made. He does not, for example, consistently follow the order of his source material. Though individual sections of The Book of Satan follow their sources in order, there are multiple interruptions in the sequence, as well as displacements of the order of the source material. For example, the fourth section of The Book of Satan uses and adapts material from chapter 3, section 13 of *Might is Right* and then the concluding, fifth section of The Book of Satan returns to chapter 2, section 12 of its source material. Even when LaVey does follow the order of his source material, he makes smaller additions, omissions, and changes in its wording or sequence, such as substituting one word for another, omitting words or whole sentences, adding words or sentences, and paraphrasing. While any one of those examples cannot bear substantial interpretive weight, taken together they lend support to the contention that LaVey's adaptations were *intentional* and generally in the service of a broader editorial agenda. LaVey has also broken all five 'chapters', or sections, of The Book of Satan into numbered verses, sequential within each chapter. That structuring device is entirely missing from the printing of *Might is Right*, for which LaVey provided the forward, and other printings of the text. It is possible that LaVey, or his partner Diane, in the process of compiling and typing the manuscript (Lewis 2009: 49), added the verses to make The Book of Satan appear more 'biblical' or scriptural. Some support for that idea can be gleaned from the rest of *The Satanic Bible*, which sustains neither the occasionally archaic diction nor the chapter and verse structure of The Book of Satan.

Overall, the number and character of the changes that LaVey made to his source material from *Might is Right* support the conclusion that The **(p.108)** Book of Satan was much more an intentional construction than simple, haphazard plagiarism. Undeniably, LaVey relied very heavily on the contents of Redbeard's earlier work. But it is also undeniable that LaVey worked with that source

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material to make something that is his own creation, distinct from its source material. LaVey's editorial relationship to *Might is Right* is justifiably reminiscent, for example, of the relationships of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke to their sources in the Gospel of Mark and 'Q'. In each instance, authors created new works by creatively adapting extensive material from their sources. In each instance, the authors' relationships to their sources are complex. Sometimes they adapt without modification substantial portions of the preexisting sources, at other times they adjust them by various tactics of addition, omission, paraphrase, and other modifications. In each instance, what emerges is a text that bears evident relationship to its source material but also stands distinct from it, expressing its own point of view. Blanket assertions of plagiarism are rarely levelled against the New Testament Gospels of Matthew and Luke. If similar assertions about *The Satanic Bible* by critics like Mathews are dismissed as lacking the self-evident force they are apparently intended to have, it becomes possible, even necessary, to investigate what LaVey's redactional activity reveals about what he wanted to accomplish in The Book of Satan and *The Satanic Bible*.

LaVey's preface to The Book of Satan appears to be his own work. In it, he describes what follows as an act of 'diabolical imagination', introduces what will become a familiar critique of 'pulpit-pounders' and other representatives of established Christian religion, and asserts that it is time for the 'allegorical personage' of 'His Infernal Majesty' to be given his due (1969: 29). When the first chapter of The Book of Satan begins, however, the text starts to follow its primary source very closely. Aside from slight differences in punctuation and layout on the page, The Book of Satan 1:1 follows its source in the first chapter of *Might is Right* verbatim. The second verse makes two minor word changes and the next three verses reproduce their source in sequence and verbatim. Between verses 5 and 6, LaVey skips a sentence in his source, and in verse 6, he makes a significant editorial decision in a provocative assertion. Where *Might is Right* has, 'I dip my forefinger in the watery blood of your impotent mad-redeemer (your Divine Democrat—your Hebrew Madman)', The Book of Satan omits the material in parentheses (Redbeard 2006: 12; LaVey 1969: 30). LaVey's editing of his source introduces a theme that will be consistent throughout his Bible. Although some contemporary Satanists and members of the Church of Satan have gotten entangled with the racist and anti-Semitic radical right (cf. Mathews 2009: 139–157), LaVey took pains to edit out of his text the **(p.109)** many anti-Semitic passages from *Might is Right*, and, in this case, some of Redbeard's more pointed political critiques. The next significant alteration in the first chapter of The Book of Satan occurs in verse 8, where LaVey follows his source in asserting, 'I break away from all conventions' but adds the qualifying phrase 'that do not lead to my earthly success and happiness' (LaVey 1969: 30). That editorial addition certainly continues the emphasis of the first of the Nine Satanic Statements that 'Satan represents indulgence, instead of abstinence',

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indicating that LaVey has taken the opportunity to add to his source material a clarification that links it more directly to his distinctive perspective.

In the first chapter of The Book of Satan, then, LaVey gives two examples of having consciously adapted his source material. On the one hand, he intentionally mutes the strong anti-Semitism of his source; on the other, he supplies an editorial addition that links the source material more closely with his own perspective, particularly as it is articulated in the Nine Satanic Statements. Further evidence that he feels free to transform his source material occurs in chapter 2.

Chapter 2 begins with a forceful statement against Christianity taken verbatim from *Might is Right*, but from a section several pages prior to where LaVey had left off. Because LaVey returns in verses 2 and 3 to the sequence of statements he had been following from *Might is Right*, it is necessary to consider why he broke that sequence for the opening of chapter 2. The extremity of the sentiment, ‘Behold the crucifix, what does it symbolize? Pallid incompetence hanging on a tree’ (Redbeard 2006: 10; LaVey 1969: 31), certainly makes for an attention-getting opening gambit. It is at least possible that LaVey intentionally arranged his source material to put the most forceful statement first. That LaVey was willing to ignore the sequence of *Might is Right* becomes more fully evident later in chapter 2. Between verses 3 and 4, LaVey stops following his source and entirely omits the end of its first chapter, all of its second chapter, and the beginning of its third chapter, about four pages of text. When LaVey returns to his source, he follows its sequence through to the end of chapter 2 of The Book of Satan. Perhaps the only significant editorial alteration occurs in verse 10. The source for that verse in *Might is Right* reads, ‘wherever, therefore, a lie has built unto itself a throne, let it be assailed without pity and without regret, for under the domination of a falsehood no nation can permanently prosper’ (Redbeard 2006: 18; LaVey 1969: 31f.). In the final clause, LaVey substitutes the singular and individualistic ‘one’ for the corporate entity ‘nation’. Such a change is certainly in harmony with LaVey’s insistence on ‘controlled selfishness’ (LaVey 1969: 51) in his distinctive form of ‘self-religion’ (Dyrendal 2009; Petersen 2005, 2009).

(p.110) Between the end of chapter 2 and the beginning of chapter 3 of The Book of Satan, LaVey again omits a substantial portion of his source, skipping from section 3 of chapter 1 of *Might is Right* to section 4 of chapter 2, around fourteen pages of text. As he did in his second chapter, LaVey leads off chapter 3 with a passage that directly attacks Christianity, this time the exhortation, attributed to Jesus and also present in the Pauline letters, to love one another (see e.g., John 13:34–35; Romans 12:10, 13:8; Galatians 5:13). Blending that statement with the injunction in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:44) to love your enemies, LaVey repeats Redbeard’s question about the rational authority on which such advice rests. The clear implication that hating one’s

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enemies is much more preferable to loving them echoes the fifth of the Nine Satanic Statements, ‘Satan represents vengeance, instead of turning the other cheek’ (LaVey 1969: 25). LaVey then follows his source closely in the next three verses. In the fifth verse, however, he interrupts his borrowing to add a statement that is distinctly his. Turning the discussion of the biblical ethic of love to matters more congenial to his way of thinking, he asks:

> Is not ‘lust and carnal desire’ a more truthful term to describe ‘love’ when applied to the continuance of the race? Is not the ‘love’ of the fawning scriptures simply a euphemism for sexual activity, or was the ‘great teacher’ a glorifier of eunuchs? (LaVey 1969: 33)

LaVey, after all, was much more interested in erotic love—witness his claims about dalliances with both Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield—than he was in the *agape* that so interested the early Christians or, at least, the early Christian texts that recommended to the faithful certain types of behaviour. Elsewhere in *The Satanic Bible* he professes that ‘Satanism encourages any form of sexual expression you may desire, *so long as it hurts no one else*’ and describes the ideal Satanist as a sexual connoisseur (1969: 69). While LaVey’s source negatively discusses a certain type of love, exercising his editorial freedom, LaVey makes the connection to another type of love. The only thing that links verse 5 to those that come immediately before and after it is the presence of the word ‘love’. But LaVey gives the term a very different meaning. His introduction of ‘lust and carnal desire’ colours the rest of the chapter, colouring the meaning of the term in every other verse. In the process, LaVey directly contrasts himself to the Jesus of the Gospels. Far from a ‘glorifier of eunuchs’ (see Matthew 19:12), LaVey is a religious leader who encourages and celebrates human sexuality in all of its manifold variations.

In chapter 3 of The Book of Satan, LaVey’s inclusion between verses that have been taken from *Might is Right* of an extensive passage that represents **(p.111)** his own perspective shows that he has *adapted* rather than simply *adopted* the message of his source. In tone and topic, verse 5 clearly stands out from the four that precede it and the four that follow it. Taken together with LaVey’s muting of Redbeard’s anti-Semitism, the interjection into his source material of both brief and longer segments of his writing shows that LaVey was intentionally shaping the text on which he depended to suit his different and distinctive purposes. If LaVey is plagiarizing, and it is true that the most he ever did was mention Redbeard in the original extensive list of dedications that quickly disappeared from subsequent printings of *The Satanic Bible* (Aquino 2009a: 510), he is doing something different than simply claiming another’s work as his or even attempting to have an earlier work ‘speak for him’. He has adapted the material from *Might is Right* to a new purpose, both consonant with and distinct from the purpose of the earlier text.

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In beginning of chapter 4, LaVey again passes over large swaths of his source material. Having followed his source in chapter 2, section 4 of *Might is Right* for most of chapter 3 of The Book of Satan, LaVey leaps all the way to chapter 3, section 13 of Redbeard's text, some forty-eight pages away. LaVey's use of his source material in the five verses of chapter 4 of The Book of Satan is a mix of paraphrase, direct quotation, selective omission, and pointed addition. He begins with what amounts to a gloss on the first of the Nine Satanic Statements: 'Life is the great indulgence—death, the great abstinence' (1969: 33) followed by a direct quotation of material from his source. LaVey's second verse is a composite of several of Redbeard's statements that reduces the source material by about half. The concluding three verses also reveal minor editorial activity. Perhaps LaVey's most significant change in the chapter occurs in the final portion of verse 5. The chapter pivots on the exhortation in verse 3, endorsed by both Redbeard and LaVey, 'Say unto thine own heart, "I am mine own redeemer"' (Redbeard 2006: 81; LaVey 1969: 33). But where Redbeard has the rhetorical question, 'Have I not delivered myself by mine own brain?' LaVey makes a small but important addition, writing, 'Have I not delivered MYSELF by mine own brain and body?' (Redbeard 2006: 81; LaVey 1969: 34). LaVey's addition in this example is consistent with his practice elsewhere. He again takes the opportunity to emphasize the carnal, embodied character of his Satanism; deliverance for LaVey is a matter of both brain and body. Unlike Redbeard, LaVey strives to give his readers licence to enjoy whatever carnal pleasures they desire. In chapter 4, LaVey has indeed just 'added in a few sentences of his own' or even less, but the additions decisively change the emphasis of his source material, thus expressing his particular message.

For the conclusion of The Book of Satan, chapter 5, LaVey again returns to his source material, but he leaves chapter 3, section 13 of *Might is Right* **(p.112)** to return to chapter 2, section 12, about thirty-six pages earlier. There LaVey finds an extended parody of one of the most widely recognized texts from the Christian New Testament, the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel according to Matthew and the Sermon on the Plain in Luke's Gospel. Redbeard seized upon the form of the beatitudes as a way of getting across his message of social Darwinism and highlighted its contrast to prevailing Christian religious wisdom by reversing the value in each of the antitheses. For example, Redbeard, and LaVey after him, proclaimed, 'Blessed are the Strong for they shall possess the earth. Cursed are the Weak for they shall inherit the yoke' (Redbeard 2006: 45; LaVey 1969: 34). LaVey embraces the blasphemous potential of Redbeard's inspired riff on an old standard and uses the material to cap the argument of his Book of Satan. The change of location from the middle of an early chapter in *Might is Right* to the end of The Book of Satan, by itself indicates the provocative freight that LaVey intended his new Beatitudes to carry.

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LaVey's editorial treatment of Redbeard's Beatitudes displays the same characteristics as the rest of his redactional work. He changes a few words to bring the source material more closely into alignment with his view, noting, for example, that the 'righteously humble' will be trodden under not just by plain old hoofs but by *cloven* hoofs (1969: 34). He omits several of Redbeard's antitheses, including 'Blessed the man whose foot is swift to serve a friend' (Redbeard 2006: 46), possibly for fear that it would undermine his message of individualism and empowerment of the self. He also omits 'Cursed are the unfit for they shall be righteously exterminated', perhaps because it bore more than a whiff of an endorsement of eugenics. LaVey again makes a small but telling alteration that wrestles his source into closer agreement with his point of view. Where Redbeard proclaims 'Blessed are they who believe in Nothing', LaVey substitutes 'Blessed are they who believe in what is best for them' (Redbeard 2006: 46; LaVey 1969: 34). LaVey, of course, has no doubts about what is best for human beings, since he later counsels the Satanist to exclaim, in capital letters and with exclamation points: 'I AM A SATANIST! BOW DOWN, FOR I AM THE HIGHEST EMBODIMENT OF HUMAN LIFE!' (1969: 45). LaVey concludes The Book of Satan with a statement that does not occur in his source. He asserts that 'the angel of self-deceit is camped in the souls of the 'righteous'—The eternal flame of power through joy dwelleth within the flesh of the Satanist!' (1969: 35).

Although LaVey has clearly altered his source in various ways in his composition of the final chapter of The Book of Satan, the most significant **(p.113)** part of his editorial activity is the placement of his adapted source material in chapter 5. Through a number of devices, including the adoption of chapter and verse divisions; the preservation and occasional enhancement of the archaic, 'biblical' diction of portions of *Might is Right*; and the parodic use of biblical literary forms, such as the Beatitudes and woes of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount/Plain, LaVey endeavoured to give The Book of Satan a scriptural form, tone, and even substance. The placement of the satanic Beatitudes at the conclusion of the first book of *The Satanic Bible* consolidates and culminates LaVey's various gestures towards biblicizing his message. His efforts in that direction are much more consistent than those of his source, where Redbeard's parody of the Beatitudes and Woes appears as a fugitive riff within a much large composition. At least in The Book of Satan, LaVey consistently strives to give his new Bible a distinctively 'biblical' look and tone. To be sure, LaVey is either unable or unwilling to maintain that effort in the three subsequent books of *The Satanic Bible*, though the division into four books itself has at least a distantly biblical ring. Any reader of LaVey should also be aware of his apparently limitless capacity for exaggeration, fabulation, gests, and tongue-in-cheek gestures. Nonetheless, the compositional process of The Book of Satan, its form, and its content, even in parody, combine to reinforce the impression that it was intended, with some degree of seriousness, to stand as an authoritative text, a

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scripture, for the new religion of Satanism. As W. C. Smith appropriately notes, ‘The line between what is scripture and what is not, between what should be so considered and what should not be, is tenuous’ (1993: 203). Such a reading of the implications of the form and content of The Book of Satan accords well with LaVey’s own statements later in *The Satanic Bible*. He writes, for example, ‘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’ (1969: 48). LaVey’s comments throughout his Bible make it clear whom he has in mind when he conjures up that oppositional ‘THEY’—primarily the Christian churches. Indeed, both LaVey’s biblicizing of his own message in *The Satanic Bible* and his frequent negative references to the Christian church or churches indicate that his implicit model for a religion is based on Christianity. From that angle, a proper religion must have its own authoritative or scriptural text and its own founder who can serve, at least, as an exemplary prophet of the new dispensation. LaVey’s Satanic Bible becomes the authoritative text, and he becomes the paradigmatic Satanist, particularly in the hagiographic biographies of Burton Wolfe and Blanche Barton (Wolfe 2008; Barton 1992).

(p.114) The Book of Satan and *The Satanic Bible* as scripture

My analysis of the redactional processes that shaped The Book of Satan in *The Satanic Bible* leads me to take seriously its status as scripture. That position needs to be evaluated in light of other comments on the scriptural status of LaVey’s text. Both participants within contemporary Satanism and external scholarly observers have addressed the topic.

Michael Aquino rendered a carefully considered judgment about LaVey’s text. He stated that ‘despite the implications of its title, the *Satanic Bible* was not represented as a revelation authorized or authenticated by the Prince of Darkness’ (Aquino 2009a: 52). But soon after making that observation, he acknowledged that the text ‘cloth[es] itself in the supernatural authority of the Prince of Darkness and his daemons’. Aquino concluded that ‘despite the haphazard nature of its assembly, therefore, 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 2009a: 53; emphasis in original). Aquino’s evaluation of the text is complicated by the substantial gap between his and LaVey’s understandings of Satan. LaVey asserts that ‘most Satanists do not accept Satan as an anthropomorphic being with cloven hooves, a barbed tail, and horns. He merely represents a force of nature—the powers of darkness which have been named just that because no religion has taken these forces *out* of the darkness’ (1969: 62). But Aquino is not willing to accept either Satan or Set as metaphors. Consequently, Aquino’s description of *The Satanic Bible* as ‘inspired writing’ begs the question of precisely who or what provided the inspiration. LaVey, or an ‘orthodox’ LaVeyan Satanist who also denies the existence of any transcendent realm, might well attribute all the inspiration to the ‘Black Pope’ himself. But Aquino, conforming

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to his sectarian reading of the history of the Church of Satan, keeps open an alternative possibility of which LaVey himself was not aware, that is, the Prince of Darkness actually did speak through LaVey despite his protestations to the contrary.

Also important in Aquino's account is his implicit model of what constitutes scripture. He apparently uses 'inspiration' as the key distinguishing characteristic. Even though LaVey does not claim to be inspired by any supernatural entity, Aquino chooses to read *The Satanic Bible* as the product of some sort of inspiration and hence, at least potentially, as a scriptural text. Aquino's position fits well with his early statements in his history of the Church of Satan that LaVey's church was generally unaware of the depth and implications of its own insights (Aquino 2009a: 8, 52). Aquino's positive appraisal of *The Satanic Bible* is thus more a product of the reading **(p.115)** strategies that he adopts than a result of any explicit claims in the text itself. He is arguing that *conceived and used properly*, that is, from a Setian perspective, LaVey's Bible can be understood as an inspired text. In Aquino's construction the status of the text is dependent on how it is read.

In a different way, James R. Lewis focused on how *The Satanic Bible* has been used. On the basis of surveys of contemporary Satanists, he concluded, '*The Satanic Bible* is still the single most influential document shaping the contemporary Satanic movement' (2009: 52). For many, LaVey's text functioned as the gateway through which they moved into Satanism. Lewis reports that 'in response to a questionnaire item asking how they became involved, a number of people simply wrote, "I read the *Satanic Bible*"' (2009: 52). He describes the text as a 'doctrinal touchstone' for many in contemporary Satanism, particularly members of the Church of Satan for whom it serves not only as a compendium of generative ideas but also as set of criteria against which the authenticity of someone's claim to be 'Satanic' can be measured (2009: 52–56). Lewis concludes that the text functions as 'a kind of *quasi*-scripture' within contemporary Satanism (2009: 41, 57). As with Aquino, it is worth attempting to discern the implicit view of scripture that in this case leads Lewis to back away from his initial unqualified description of *The Satanic Bible* as 'authoritative scripture' to a more hesitant and distanced characterization of the text as 'quasi-scripture'.

Although Lewis does not explicitly explain why he tacks on the qualifier 'quasi', some of his reasoning may be recovered from his description of Satanism as 'a loose, decentralized movement that coheres as a distinct religious community largely by virtue of participant's adherence to certain themes in the published words of Anton LaVey, particularly in *The Satanic Bible*' (2009: 56). He implies that a true scripture would have a more effective and powerful centralizing force that would enable the Satanist community to police and maintain its boundaries more effectively and enforce a greater cohesiveness in the community. Also contributing to Lewis's hesitation may be the various ways in which self-

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professed Satanists have appropriated LaVey's Bible. While some solitary practitioners focus their thought and practice entirely on the text, and other Satanists frequently cite it as an authoritative source, still others describe it as containing nothing that they didn't already know or simply as a helpful introductory text (Lewis 2009: 53f.).

But other authoritative, scriptural texts have received diverse interpretations, as the history of the interpretation of virtually any book of the Bible or surah of the Qur'an quickly indicates. And, in practice, the authoritative status of some texts is enhanced while the status of others fades **(p.116)** away. In fact, one should expect varied assessments of any authoritative text rather than be surprised by them. Also, it is helpful to distinguish between the intentions expressed in the text and by those who see themselves as its custodians (as the current hierarchy of the Church of Satan does) and the ways in which those claims made by and for the text are received by various audiences. As Wilfred Cantwell Smith has argued about any text that is recognized as scripture, 'It is the people who make it, keep making it, scripture' (1993: 19). Rather than a static, essentialist category, scripture for Smith is an ongoing human activity. In a fuller statement of his position, Smith proposes that 'for a work to be scripture means that it participates in the movement of the spiritual life of those for whom it is so. At times they poured into it, but also then they got out of it, the highest, best, fullest to which their mind or imagination or heart could rise' (1993: 36). From that perspective, it does not appear necessary to distinguish something that somehow functions *like* scripture from something that actually does function that way. Accordingly, Lewis's 'quasi' may not be a helpful distinction. Particularly since Smith emphasizes that 'the line between what is scripture and what is not, between what should be so considered and what should not be, is tenuous' (1993: 206); it is clearer, simpler, and more economical to classify *The Satanic Bible* as scripture and then to proceed to describe and analyse how and why it works that way for certain people and what similarities and differences there might be between that particular scriptural text and other examples.

Categorizing *The Satanic Bible* as scripture leads to not only considering what the text says about itself or what its author or current custodians say about it but also to considering the various ways those who take it seriously as a source of information, inspiration, and even revelation (LaVey 1969: 39) work with it to give their lives meaning, shape, and direction. Moreover, by exercising a scholarly re-description that includes *The Satanic Bible* without qualification within the category of scripture, multiple opportunities for instructive comparison are opened, so long as they focus on the processes of inspiration, composition, proclamation, and reception of scriptural texts rather than on their substance. It appears to be such a focus on substance that led Jesper Aagaard Petersen to assert concerning LaVey's various publications that 'it is important to bear in mind that these sources are manifestations of Satanic philosophy, *not* scripture, even though the CoS sometimes treat them as such. They are not

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transcendental truths but statements of the Satanic worldview and ethos' (Petersen 2005: 431). In that statement, Petersen mixes substantive and functional criteria for determining what counts as scripture **(p.117)** and implies that scripture must claim to communicate 'transcendental truths'. So, since LaVey denies the existence of the transcendent, his Bible cannot be described as scripture. But, the implicit suggestion that a scriptural text must contain or, better, claim to contain 'transcendental truths' cannot be accepted without further consideration. Smith's reference to the 'highest, best, fullest', for example, need not be taken to imply that a scriptural text must necessarily refer to transcendental truths. Substituting 'authoritative' for 'transcendent' and leaving substantive theological and philosophical questions to the side would make 'scripture' a category broad enough to encompass *The Satanic Bible* along with other texts that may function similarly despite their lack of reference to the transcendent.

The statements from Satanists collected by Lewis, for example, indicate that many of them have found in *The Satanic Bible*, in the distinctly nonsatanic vocabulary of Smith, 'the highest, best, fullest to which their mind or imagination of heart could rise'. Their hearts simply do not rise out of this material, carnal, human world. The second part of Petersen's statement, however, is more on target. It is how people 'treat' *The Satanic Bible* that should determine whether scholars should classify it as scripture. In analyzing *The Satanic Bible* or any other texts that either have or seek scriptural status, therefore, it is wise for historians of religion to follow the comments of Jacques Berlinerblau about the study of the Hebrew Bible: 'The objective existence of God—as opposed to the subjective perception of Him—is not a legitimate variable in scholarly analysis. The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament is a human product *tout court*' (2005: 8). Berlinerblau and Smith agree that, whatever else it might be, scripture is the product of human activity; people make texts scripture by the ways in which they receive them and work with them. In that complex process, it is not only the intentions of the author that matter (to the extent that they can even be recovered) but also the ways in which readers appropriate the text, often for their own innovative purposes. Because of its denial of the transcendent, LaVey's Bible constitutes a distinctive kind of scripture, and that may be what led Lewis and Petersen to hesitate to classify it as scripture or to reject the classification outright. But both its author's pretensions regarding it and the ways in which it is used by a number of Satanists demonstrate that it is scripture nonetheless. As Smith puts it, 'Being scripture is not a quality inherent in a given text, or type of text, so much as an interactive relation between that text and a community of persons' (1993: ix). The uses to which LaVey's Bible have been put, especially by sectarian dissidents such as Aquino, secure its scriptural status.

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(p.118) Sources, sects, and scripture

This reconsideration of the scriptural status of *The Satanic Bible* was largely provoked by Aquino's investigations into LaVey's use of preexisting sources. Subsequent discussions of the composite nature of LaVey's text, such as those by Mathews and Lewis, are explicitly indebted to Aquino. In those discussions, Aquino is implicitly portrayed as a disinterested researcher who unearthed LaVey's dependence on Redbeard's text through diligent effort. That view of Aquino, however, minimizes the larger points that he was trying to make. Aquino's unmasking of the compositional history of *The Satanic Bible* was part of a much larger effort to discredit LaVey and the Church of Satan and to portray his own Temple of Set as the legitimate successor of the original Church of Satan. That is, Aquino's source-critical analysis of *The Satanic Bible* is part of the legitimation strategy of his sectarian movement (cf. Petersen 2009: 234–38).

The key to Aquino's strategy is his assertion that the Church of Satan possessed a 'deep, ultimate authenticity' that the general public, its members, and perhaps even its founder failed to grasp fully (2009a: 8). Consequently, he describes his founding of the Temple of Set as more a metamorphosis than sectarian break. His new organization was the 'latent, always implicit but never predefined promise behind the Church of Satan' (2009a: 8). Like many other sectarians, Aquino espouses what Roy Wallis called an 'epistemological authoritarianism' that depicts himself and his faithful acolytes as an elite group in possession of a special gnosis that sets them apart not only from their parent group but, most decisively, also from the general public (Wallis 1975: 43; cf. Petersen 2009: 220–22, 242–43). Aquino's authoritarianism is effectively conveyed in the formal, almost liturgical, language of his official letter of resignation from the Church of Satan. In it, apparently speaking on behalf of Satan himself, he informs Anton and Diane LaVey that 'since you—Satan's High Priest and High Priestess—have presumed to destroy these standards [for advancement through the ranks in the Church of Satan] and replace the true Church of Satan with a "Church of Anton," the Infernal Mandate is hereby withdrawn from the organization known as the "Church of Satan, Inc." and you are no longer empowered to execute your offices' (2009a: 851). In Aquino's construction of his 1975 split from the Church of Satan, it was LaVey and his supporters who deviated dramatically from authentic Satanism; Aquino felt driven by their foolishness to found a new organization that would preserve and advance the pristine message that even LaVey may have only dimly perceived at the founding of the Church of Satan in 1966.

(p.119) Recognition of Aquino's central part in the sectarian struggle that produced the Temple of Set, places his comments on LaVey's extensive borrowings in *The Satanic Bible* into a more enlightening context. Aquino's ambivalent attitude towards that text, claiming both that LaVey cannot be considered the 'true author' of The Book of Satan and that the text nonetheless represents 'inspired writing', is part of his complex effort to leave behind LaVey

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and the organization of the Church of Satan even as he preserves whatever worthy insights he gleans from *The Satanic Bible*. His source criticism is designed to damage the legitimacy and credibility of the messenger and the organization that he started, while at the same time holding out the hope that at least part of the message may give voice to what Aquino would count as genuinely satanic insights.

From another angle, what Aquino does to *The Satanic Bible* is similar to what the Christian scriptures do to the Hebrew Bible or what the Qur'an does to both the Christian scriptures and Hebrew Bible. Aquino exposes LaVey's Bible as flawed and incomplete, yet possessing real religious insight when it is read from the correct perspective. Only from the vantage point of the Temple of Set and its own textual corpus can *The Satanic Bible* be understood correctly. Its external trappings and affiliations—the work of the plagiarizer LaVey and the central text of the wayward Church of Satan—must be jettisoned in order to appreciate its true message. When one does understand *The Satanic Bible* properly, Aquino implies, it merges seamlessly with the subsequent revelations in the new Setian literature.

The form of some of that Setian literature may also clarify Aquino's comments about the inspiration of *The Satanic Bible*. The generative text for the Temple of Set, *The Book of Coming Forth by Night*, recounts Aquino's visionary experience with Set himself. The supernatural source of the message he receives is not left to any doubt, when Set in the very first line proclaims that he is now 'revealed in [his] Majesty' (Aquino 2009b: 133). Situating the new organization in relation to the Church of Satan, Set announces that 'a new Aeon is now to begin, and the work of Anton Szandor LaVey is done' (2009b: 134). Set commissions Aquino as the Magus of the new Aeon and directs him to 'reconsecrate my Temple and my Order in the true name of Set. No longer will I accept the bastard title of a Hebrew fiend' (2009b: 135). Aquino's text thus claims supernatural support for severing connections with the Church of Satan and for establishing a new focus on the individual's relationship with the supernatural figure of Set, yet it retains some relationship with its predecessor organization by enjoining that 'the years of my Aeon be counted from the conception of the Church of Satan' (2009b: 137). It appears, then, that Aquino believed that Set spoke, distantly and somewhat indistinctly, through LaVey in the composition of *The* ***(p.120)*** *Satanic Bible*. To the extent that is true, the message of LaVey's Bible still needs to be taken seriously. But to the extent that LaVey mis-perceived the true forces of darkness, mis-stated their relationship to humankind, and mis-appropriated earlier traditions that he did not understand fully, the message of his Bible is distorted, incomplete, and in need of correction. The ongoing revelations received by Aquino and other Setians are essential in the rectification and extension of the worthwhile dimensions of LaVey's original message.

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Conclusion

Without a doubt, LaVey took much of the material for The Book of Satan in *The Satanic Bible* from Redbeard's *Might is Right*. But his appropriation of that source was not without intention. LaVey edited his source material with some care in order to make it fit more seamlessly with his message. He did not hesitate to omit large sections of his source or comments in it with which he did not agree; nor did he hesitate to change significant words and passages in order to align Redbeard's message with his own. In addition, LaVey felt free both to change the sequence of his source material in order to maximize the effects he wanted to achieve and to insert material that was wholly his own into the flow of his source. The result is something more complex than the mere plagiarism to which Mathews, for example, refers, and it is something more purposeful than the rote repetition that Aquino implies. LaVey produced his own creation by writing *with* his sources rather than simply reproducing them. His editorial activity clearly displays his primary motivations and emphases in proclaiming his new religion of Satanism. In addition, his editorial work bears marked resemblances to other writers, such as the authors of Matthew and Luke, who, as Ehrman put it, 'created a literary work by modifying or editing their sources of information'.

Just as LaVey's Bible played a primary role in legitimating the fledgling Church of Satan, so also did Aquino's investigation into the sources of *The Satanic Bible* serve to legitimate his nascent religious organization, the Temple of Set. Far from being disinterested, Aquino's source criticism was essential to his efforts to portray his own group as the legitimate successor of the Church of Satan. Aquino's sectarian motivation is evident in his attempts to preserve a kernel of the message of *The Satanic Bible* at the same time that he impeaches its author and the organization that sees itself as the custodian of the text. Despite the uses to which scholars have subsequently put it, Aquino's careful recovery of the sources behind **(p.121)** LaVey's Bible was born in his desire to legitimate his 1975 break from LaVey and the Church of Satan and his subsequent establishment of the Temple of Set.

Without quite intending to, Aquino also demonstrated the complexities of the composition and reception of a text that purports to be contemporary scripture. W. C. Smith himself recognized the potential importance of the study of such 'new emergents' for deepening, diversifying, and challenging conceptions of scripture in the history of religions (1993: 210). Smith explicitly mentioned the *Book of Mormon*, the *Divine Principle* of the Unificationist movement, and Mary Baker Eddy's *Science and Health, With Key to the Scriptures* among the texts that he had in mind (1993: 357). To the extent to which my analysis is persuasive, *The Satanic Bible* needs to be included with them as another example of a contemporary text that has attained scriptural status for an identifiable group, no matter what its sources.

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The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity
Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen

Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

Hidden Persuaders and Invisible Wars

Anton LaVey and Conspiracy Culture

Asbjørn Dyrendal

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.003.0006

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter discusses a long neglected dimension of Anton LaVey's work, namely his ambiguous play with conspiracy theories. Through a close reading of two texts, two major strands of conspiracy thinking is isolated in LaVey's Satanism. On the one hand is the straightforward incorporation of conspiracies and conspiratorial agents as a negative Other or positive exemplar. On the other hand is an ambiguous postmodern duplicity concurrent with LaVey's insistence on a "third side" or "satanic alternative" to traditional dichotomies. The former is found in his early writings as well as later texts such as "The Invisible War"; this is reminiscent of the agency panic prevalent in conspiracy culture broadly conceived. The latter is visible in "Insane Ramblings" and illustrates that LaVey should be read carefully and understood with tongue firmly in cheek. In both cases LaVey's focus in on the individual, using conspiracy as a resource for developing a satanic anthropology.

Keywords: Satanism, Church of Satan, Anton LaVey, conspiracy culture, agency panic, Invisible War, the third side

> This is the age of conspiracy, the age of connections, links, secret relationships.
>
> —Don DeLillo, *Running Dog*

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‘The way a pyramid looks’, quipped Anton LaVey in one of his essays, ‘doesn’t really upset anybody except conspiracy theorists’ (1992: 112). Famously direct in his confrontations with esotericists in the satanic milieu, he decried the writings of their older idols as ‘sanctimonious fraud—guilt-ridden ramblings and esoteric gibberish … the brittle relics of frightened minds and sterile bodies, metaphysical journals of self-deceit’ (1969: 21). He was similarly caustic about supernaturalist, simplistic ideas of magic: ‘All you dirty old men out there that think you’re going to get a sexy young girl just by saying a magical incantation or buying a do-it-your-self voodoo kit have another think [*sic*] coming!’ (1969a). *Real* magic was materialist: ‘magic with both feet on the ground’ and looked a lot like ‘applied psychology’ (1969: 109, 110).

Presented thus, LaVey may look simply like what Jesper Petersen (see 2005, 2009) and I (e.g., Dyrendal 2004, 2009) have called a ‘rationalist Satanist’: in opposition to the esoteric heritage, trying to cleanse his new construction from superstition and supernaturalism.

(p.124) ‘Insane Ramblings’: Satanism and conspiracy

We may continue this reading of him: LaVey devoted a full essay to conspiracy theories and called it ‘Insane Ramblings’ (1992: 108–110). Browsing through it, we note that he groups the topic of the essay with myths and states that ‘wars, plots, inquisitions, dilemmas of all sorts … must be contrived, nourished, and above all, self-sustained, for they are essential to man’s emotional needs’ (108). He then exemplifies the mob craving for scandal by constructing a rambling account of an ever-widening conspiracy surrounding the death of JFK, with the resulting cry from the mob:

> ‘Give us MYTH!’ A still, small voice is heard among them that whimpers, cajoling, ‘Truth, make the myth be true’. But a deafening roar ascends, reiterating, elaborating, ‘Tell us a scandal—of mafia and CIA!—of Watergates and chaos and assorted crises!’ (109)

Aware of LaVey’s deep contempt for the masses and of conformity, we might be inclined to read this example of mass self-deception and gullibility as another clear indication of his removal from the conspiracy culture of his age. But as with simple readings of his rejection of much of the esoteric heritage, we would be amiss. Using the term ‘rationalist Satanism’ was never meant to make that kind of claim; his relation to conspiracy culture was, as his relation to esotericism, more complex.

The relation of Satanism to conspiracy theories has generally been portrayed as a one-way street: Satanism has been and still is the topic of multiple conspiracy theories. But there are other ties into conspiracy culture than being the *object* of other people’s theorizing. During my research on conspiracy theories about ‘Satanic Ritual Abuse’ (e.g., Dyrendal 2000, 2003), I noticed that a few Satanists held open the possibility that small pockets of secret, ‘traditional diabolists’

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might sometimes do something vaguely related to some of the allegations. While this was rare, the ideas about hidden history and manipulative agents working through secret means did seem to resonate with many more.

This is not uncommon in esoteric circles, where imaginative historiographies about secret societies abound. However, in the case of Satanists, it seemed not to be confined to those drawing most explicitly on the esoteric heritage of Satanism. When we look closer, we find elements of conspiracy culture linked to satanic ideals of man and central notions about agency and society. And it starts with the very founder of modern Satanism. Although LaVey wrote texts which openly communicated that he despised those he dubbed *conspiracy theorists*, he both applauded and encouraged **(p.125)** *conspiracy*, and he intimated a history of the Christian church's success that would seem conspiratorial. Moreover, some of his texts seem to show traces of both mainstream contemporary conspiracism and more marginal, 'occultural' theorizing about conspiracy. He may have made fun of 'conspiracy theorists', but looking closer (as we shall later) at the essay cited earlier, we find ambiguities and 'third position' readings that may modify our views about just who the joke is on.

Sometimes, he seems to openly speak as a conspiracist. In her very authorized biography *The Secret Life of a Satanist* his partner Blanche Barton wrote:

> La Vey sees that we are presently enmeshed in a consumerist-oriented 'Invisible War', complete with technologically advanced chemical and electromagnetic weapons, crowd control, weather control and misdirection to mask the entire operation. He claims there is no need for conspiracy theories—that private interests make such theorizing unnecessary. But the results far surpass any conspiratorialists' worst nightmares of secret government agencies, CIA plots, UFO's, or MIB's. (Barton 1992: 183)

Although disclaiming the 'need for conspiracy theories', this version of what occult historian Stephen Flowers called a 'comprehensive vision' of consumer society (1997: 196) obviously goes beyond most nonconspiracist's critical visions of the same. Indeed, if 'they' control the weather, information, and crowd behaviour, as well as have a host of hidden, effective weaponry, it really does not matter very much whether 'they' represent private or government interests.

But is it really this straightforward? How does 'the invisible war' fit into LaVey's general thinking? In this chapter, I use two of Anton LaVey's essays, 'The Invisible War' and 'Insane Ramblings' as lenses to look at his entry into conspiracy discourse. Both enter into the discourse of conspiracy culture, but as we shall see, they do so in different manners, and they may be used to show different aspects of LaVey's ideas about society and agency. In examining the connection between the ideas of agency and conspiracy, I also attempt to show how LaVey's *textual* satanic 'rationalism' is impacted by both an esotericist

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heritage and, more centrally, a pervasive American suspicion of consumer society where the lines between conspiracy culture and mainstream can be fairly thin. The latter point makes LaVey's balancing act between 'respectability' and 'outrage' easier, and we shall see him involved in what Jesper Petersen (2011) has called a sanitization process, whereby stigmatized and 'blasphemous' activity is re-presented in less unpalatable form, while keeping some of the 'shock effect'.

(p.126) First, however, we need to place 'conspiracy theory' and 'conspiracy culture' in a broader perspective. I suggest that concern over *agency* is one of the central aspects through which to look at both terms and phenomena.

Agency and conspiracy

The idea that agency is central to conspiracy theory and conspiracy culture is, of course, not mine. It has been a common observation for decades. Agency is central to conspiracy theory in two main ways that interest us here: From the earliest conceptions of conspiracy theory, the concern that hidden agents are influencing social life in a destructive manner, for deliberately destructive purposes is recognizable. The conspiracy has powerful agency for achieving nefarious effects. One may see this in conspiracy theories about Satanism: Evil agents doing evil for the purposes of evil belong to the mythology of Satan and Satanism projected from the outside (cf. Frankfurter 2006). But when appropriated, sanitized, and transformed in 'the satanic milieu' (cf. Petersen 2011), evil changes shape.

This does not necessarily mean that it changes its deeper content, something recognizable mainly when looked at through the *second* way agency is central to conspiracy theory: personal agency as the 'sacred' that is threatened by the evil forces of the conspiracy (e.g., Melley 2000). Both conspiracy culture—broadly *and* narrowly defined, I shall return to that briefly—and Satanist philosophy are obsessed with individual agency and powerful, hidden, and often collective agency that may threaten it. The topic of personal agency may, indeed, be seen as one of the central concerns in LaVey's writings, although his ideas about human selfhood and society were rarely developed in detail. That was a matter of style and strategy. His strength as a writer was not the deliberative argument of the dissertation but combining a quick observation and punch line with just the right amount of ambiguity to appeal to a varied satanic milieu. In ideological matters, he was the master of the catchphrase, allowing others of satanic inclination to read (almost) whatever they liked into it (e.g., Petersen 2009: 232–33.).

In order to effect that appeal, certain topics stand out: a clear, negative view of Christianity; a strong, aristocratic sense of individual liberty; and that sensual man lives in a material world—which should be appreciated and enjoyed as such. With regard to society and self, we find an elitism of a popularized Nietzschean

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bent, a penchant for social Darwinist arguments that life favour the strong, and that 'might is right'. All this obviously has implications for ideas about agency. Most specifically it presents **(p.127)** important ideas about Satanists as agents: The idealized, satanic self LaVey presents is the model of a person able to live and thrive in such a world—outgoing, dominant, creative, and achieving. It is the rugged, 'male' self of the Western film; the men who won the West. Inner directed, independent, self-reliant, and strong.

It is the view of man and selfhood that has a long history of having been seen as contradicted and assaulted by modernity or by 'mass society' (e.g., Melley 2000). The fear of 'brainwashing' in particular has grown deep roots in American culture (e.g., Seed 2004). The idea of brainwashing shows family resemblance to deeper concerns about deindividualization from modern society's alleged collectivizing and homogenizing forces. These are supposed to work through mass culture, mass media, and workplace demands to make conformist 'organization man' or 'mass man' instead of Real Men™. The fear of this effect makes up a central portion of what Melley (2000) usefully dubbed 'agency panic', or panic over alleged loss of individual autonomy and agency. This fear resonates particularly with an 'antireligion' for creative misfits, where nonconformity and autonomy are defining traits.

It is the perceived threat from hidden—*or* systemic and pervasive—influence to individual agency that has become central to how 'agency' features in many more recent studies on conspiracy culture. A focus on the systemic and less than intentional has partially changed the concept of conspiracy in such studies. Some, and I agree, tend to cling to the idea that 'conspiracy theory' demands deliberate conspiracy made by conscious agents (e.g., Barkun 2003). But with the infusion of culture studies into studies of conspiracy culture, the understanding of what 'conspiracy theory' and 'conspiracy culture' may usefully include has broadened. After the Hofstadter school's focus on paranoid-rhetorical styles connected to extremist groups and spokespersons (Hofstadter 1965; Lipset and Raab 1970; Pipes 1997), much current research has focused more on cultural products and anxieties about external control. Conspiracy culture, in this perspective, thrives on the *suspicion*, not the certainty, of powers that (might) be. 'Conspiracy' becomes a metaphor for, among other things, a felt loss of autonomy; it is a metaphor hovering on the threshold of literalist understanding. Writes Peter Knight:

> The figuration of conspiracy articulates otherwise uncoordinated suspicions that daily life is controlled by larger, unseen forces which cannot be the result of mere coincidence. These fears hover somewhere between the literal and the metaphorical, between the conviction that nothing short of a conspiracy theory could account for the present

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situation, and the doubt that there is actually a conspiracy at work. (2000: 117)

(p.128) A hallmark of postmodern conspiracy culture may be found in rhetorical uncertainty, a movement between "passive" entertainment and active play and/or serious regard, between mocking and belief. This uncertainty and play separates it from the aggressively certain rhetoric about internal or external enemies of the classic nativist and politically extremist rhetoric. The change is partially related to a general social condition of doubt and anxiety. It also relates to a contested point of 'definition', in the elimination of the idea that a conscious conspiracy and conspirators are necessary for a conspiracy theory. Focusing more on a wider suspicion that hidden power is manipulating events from behind the scenes, it matters less to such theories whether it is *intentional* or 'cybernetic', a feature of 'the system'. The point is still that 'we' are being robbed of self-control; 'we' are pawns in a game we do not understand. And 'the figuration of conspiracy' expresses this as a way of explaining, in terms we may half-believe (e.g., Campbell 1996) rather than believe fully, to ourselves our condition. But not least, it also expresses this as a way of figuring the condition of society in narrative terms that are sellable as popular culture and news.

The central theme, this *loss of agency*, connects diverse figurations of conspiracy. Conspiracy is one of several structures that are seen to curtail individuality (Melley 2000: 10). This means that there is a family resemblance in certain areas where more impersonal, structure-related and more personalized, intentional, agency-related explanations for loss of individual autonomy may be bridged. Timothy Melley puts it like this: 'If conspiracy begins with self-repression, the conspiracy *theory*—the apprehension of conspiracy by those *not* involved in it—begins with individual self-protection, with an attempt to defend the integrity of the self against the social order' (2000: 10).

This defensive action on behalf of the threatened self is what Melley coined the term 'agency panic' for. And this is one of the locations where I find it meaningful to look with regard to conspiracy theory in LaVey's writing, with his answers to an 'invisible war' against satanic agency.

'The Invisible War'

Anton LaVey, throughout his authorship, repeatedly addresses what he sees as attacks on personal agency, gives advice on how to maintain it, and expresses disgust for those who are without.

In his life as well as with other people, the Satanist is to be an effective agent, or he is no Satanist. In the essay 'Nonconformity, Satanism's Greatest Weapon', LaVey writes: 'A true Satanist, even if unspoken, must be **(p.129)** responsible for reaction and change' (1992: 63). This goes together with a concept of the 'born Satanist' who is a natural outsider to mass society, a creative misfit

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thriving on his own and living as he sees fit. This satanic nature is denied by a society craving conformity and allegiance to consumerism, but a

> Satanist should not allow himself to be programmed by others. He should fight tooth and nail against it, for that is the greatest enemy to his freedom of spirit. It is the very denial of life itself, which was given to him for a wondrous, unique experience—not for imitation of the colorless existence of others. (1992: 63)

Vital, satanic life is presented as the opposite of conformity to 'the colorless existence' mass society attempts to impose. Thus central values about life, Satanism, and volition are presented as opposition to the 'programming' from society and other, private agents. Agency should be as individual and complete as possible.

LaVey also chose a common metaphor from the language of conspiracist mind-control theories—'programming'—to present unwanted outside influence. This was neither the first nor only time he raised that spectre. Another version was expressed in connection with 'subliminal persuasion'. This was well known as a common concern in 1980s conspiracy theories; rock musicians and others might put hidden messages in music and pictures that influenced the audience's actions effectively without engaging the conscious mind, thus circumventing the will and rational thought. However, the concern was far older, originating in a 1957 book on advertising techniques (Packard 1957), a book LaVey already referred to in *The Satanic Witch* (LaVey 1988 [1971]). In this regard, he was close to mainstream: Subliminal persuasion was a common theme in folklore about how media, marketers, and others sought to influence the public, against their better interest. It resonated with the public, and in LaVey the concern echoes his dire views on both persuasion and mass culture (cf. Flowers 1997: 195–96).

It is against this background that we the may read LaVey's warning: 'Don't be a slave to (other's) subliminals' (1998: 79–80.). LaVey's advice was that one should create one's own instead, in order to dominate one's own life with one's own thoughts. Otherwise, the hidden slave masters of the cabal would control them: 'The only thing worse than idle hands is an idle mind. Your Masters have eliminated that possibility' (1998: 80). One of the ways these 'Masters' have done so, is precisely the construction of subliminal messaging penetrating your unconscious mind to affect your behaviour more thoroughly:

> **(p.130)** The producers of those entertainments are unconcerned that you sleep through their commercials. In fact, if you do; all the better. You're more receptive that way. (1998: 80)

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Both the concept of hidden masters and their penetration of the passive mind go further towards conspiracy culture than some of LaVey's related ideas that move closer to the well-documented effects of priming. His message here has a close fit to the then current 'self-development' industry's meaningless claims that hidden messages on tapes, for example, would help you get slimmer, quit smoking, exercise more, and all manner of good things: while you were sleeping, driving, or cooking, the subliminal message would do its wonderful work. LaVey adopts it partially but looks, as he often did, towards the darker side of the occulture he belonged to: If it influences you when you use it on yourself, someone may also turn something similar against you so *their* influence can come through. This was precisely the fear presented by consumer advocates and conspiracy theorists alike, albeit with different targets.[1]

If all this has a close fit to conspiracy culture in both the wider sense of a milieu plagued by agency panic and to specific traditions of explicit conspiracy theory, it is in 'The Invisible War' that LaVey takes it furthest. He starts the essay by declaring:

> We are engulfed in war. Not simply a war fought with guns and bombs 'somewhere out there'. The skirmishes take place in the region of one's own mind. The less one is aware of the invisible war, the more receptive one is to its ongoing process of demoralization, for the insensate human is vulnerable, malleable and ripe for control. (LaVey 1990: 193)

The war LaVey outlines is fought with secret weapons. They may amplify each other, as when 'weather control' assists 'the incubation of viral and **(p.131)** bacterial agents' LaVey suspects of being used to make people weaker and more malleable (193). Ultrasonic and subsonic weapons are used to 'jam volitional thought' and thus increase suggestibility, drive people together, and create anxiety and stress—and 'can also be employed to induce earthquakes' (194). Microwave radiation is transmitted by invisible receivers and cause 'respiratory ailments, circulatory problems, mucous membrane and kidney dysfunction, excessive thirst, mental retardation, memory loss, forgetfulness' (ibid.). 'Urban warfare' and heavy drug use is employed to thin the population and keep people 'malleable and satisfied' (195). To give but a few examples.

Looking closer at the text, we find that the centre of concern is not the culprit behind this catalogue of misused power. Nor is it, as was common in conspiracy theories as studied by Hofstadter, the sacred values of the collective. It is, rather, the individual at risk of being *influenced* by destructive agency. These individuals are 'informed' of the threat against their own individuality:

> These are the major weapons in use today … Becoming aware of these agents can minimize unnecessary demoralization in those who wish to preserve their instinct for survival. (1990: 195)

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This message is primarily directed at the 'creative misfits', a small amount of those who wish to know and want to keep 'their instinct of survival', rather than the mass of humanity. The information is a weapon in their fight against being unduly influenced, psychologically and physically, by the unknown (corporate and other) perpetrators in this war. For, to repeat the initial message, 'The less one is aware of the invisible war, the more receptive one is to its ongoing process of demoralization, for the insensate human is vulnerable, malleable and ripe for control' (1990: 193).[2]

The topics and many of the factual claims in the essay are mainstays of conspiracy culture: fear of hidden devices spreading radiation, claims that subsonic sounds may induce earthquakes, that food additives are used **(p.132)** deliberately to 'foster mental incapacity' in conditioning, bacteriological warfare, and weather control. However, LaVey's particular spin on these theories is not. His central concern is the freedom and energy to act volitionally, the avenues of influence and control he sees these 'weapons' as opening with regard to individual agency. Where common, extremist versions of these conspiracy topics relate them to totalitarian repression and mass murder on a grand scale; LaVey insists that the 'skirmishes takes place in the region of one's own mind' (1990: 193). Thus partially sanitizing the theories of their most extremist connotations, he also throws in modifiers weakening several statements—'perhaps', 'if', 'could be'—although without presenting any such doubt when concluding. He also relates several of his ideas to confirmed political and social practices such as 'non-lethal weaponry', scare tactics, and constructing 'alien Others', while giving other confirmed phenomena ('drug wars') conspiracist interpretations, thus giving them the air of plausibility to a public primed to accept them.

Read literally, the ideas presented in 'The Invisible War' belong to the extreme expressions of LaVey's conspiratorial ideas, but the ideas are more the logical end of a continuum than statements without context. We may see, for example, briefly how priestcraft is presented as having constructed the repressed and emasculated state of man that makes Christian dominance possible. In *The Satanic Bible* and other early texts, we find religion given the role of keeping man down, complete with the deliberate, conscious agency to fulfil the role.[3] For instance on the sinfulness of sex:

> In order to insure the propagation of humanity, nature made lust the second most powerful instinct, the first being self-preservation. Realizing this, the Christian Church made fornication the 'Original Sin'. (LaVey 1969: 47)

This is the manipulation of priestcraft, the Christian cabal: 'The religionists have kept their followers in line by suppressing their egos'. And this is why Satan is 'the best friend the church has ever had' (1969: 94, 25). The threat of damnation

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combined with suppression of natural tendencies manipulates followers—and the result is the rule of the weak and the suppression of vital life. A few successful manipulators thwart the rule of natural law, showing that human agency may be powerful indeed.

(p.133) But since these were effective, others, like the 'real Satanists' should also have been, according to LaVey's scheme of things. And in constructing a lineage of 'de-facto' Satanists, he at times also creates a counter-'current' of creative manipulators shaping history around themselves. This comes out quite clearly in *The Satanic Bible*, when LaVey marshals the rhetorical powers of simplistic Christianity and turns it on its head:

> If the love of money is the root of all evil; then we must at least assume the most powerful men on earth to be the most Satanic. This applies to financiers, industrialists, popes, poets, dictators, and all assorted opinion-makers and field marshals of the world's activities. (1969: 104)

From being a marginal antireligion at its very outset, Satanism suddenly acquired a most powerful and imaginative following. Without, unfortunately, the followers being quite aware of their satanic nature, something the usual suspects in conspiracy culture were quick to remedy (e.g., Griffin 1976; 1980).[4] Nevertheless, they were powerful, and, truly, satanic, according to LaVey:

> Occasionally, through 'leakages', one of the enigmatic men or women of earth will be found to have 'dabbled' in the black arts. These, of course, are brought to light as the 'mystery men' of history. Names like Rasputin, Zaharofff, Cagliostro, Rosenberg and their ilk are links—clues, so to speak, of the true legacy of Satan … a legacy which transcends ethnic, racial and economic differences and temporal ideologies, as well. The Satanist has always ruled the earth … and always will, by whatever name he is called. (1969: 104)

The main strategy here, as when he similarly adopts classical musicians, writers, and artists, is to demonstrate important values by pointing to examples to follow. Constructing a 'true' lineage of Satanism—as he would like it to become perhaps more than he believed it to be, and quite possibly slightly tongue-in-cheek and rhetorically self-aware—LaVey mirrors and reinvents the lore of conspiracy culture: the powerful truly *are* Satanists, but that is because living life by satanic stratagems makes you successful, and that is a good thing, worthy of emulation. But already at this point in time, LaVey touches conspiracy culture with a nod. And looking at the later arguments and foci on effective manipulation, it seems less than strange to **(p.134)** read it as the conclusion that since hidden manipulation works and makes you powerful, the powerful must use it.

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Indeed, his postulation noted earlier that subliminal persuasion works best when its victims are ‘sleeping through’, echoes passages on his satanic, materialist magic from *The Satanic Bible*. Here, LaVey *also* argued that the receptivity of the victim was at its highest when consciousness and thus volition was absent; thus, ‘the best time to throw your magical energy towards your target is when he or she is asleep’ (1969: 122). This is no minor point when considering LaVey’s ideas about magic: volition, emotion, and hidden modes of persuasion play a central role. Looked at in this way, there is a clear continuity between practices: the ‘hidden masters’ practicing hidden persuasions are masters of satanic magical techniques. Just like one would expect if they really *were* the (satanically adept) conspiracy LaVey’s tongue-in-cheek historiography made them out to be.

The elements noted from ‘The Invisible War’ come closer to the main themes of conspiracy beliefs than most of LaVey’s texts. But he deals with the theme in other ways as well. Like contemporary chaotic occulture, LaVey also *plays* with the subject matter. The way he does so, I submit, again demonstrates both his knowledge of conspiracy culture and his assumptions of his readership’s acquaintance with it. But he also demonstrates its ambivalence with regard to claiming anything as true, making facile, literalist readings more problematic as a consequence.

Mockery, play, and esoteric episteme

To see this, we return to LaVey’s essay ‘Insane Ramblings’ from *The Devil’s Notebook* (LaVey 1992: 108–110). Although the playful spirit is clearly present in the essay as well, we should include LaVey’s caveat from the preface: ‘Each segment is an indulgence of a whim or fancy’ (ibid.: 10). It is important to recognize this attitude, both as expressions of LaVey’s variable intentions with his texts, with different *parts* of his texts, and as regarding the specific play of meaning, which we shall now examine.

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'Insane Ramblings' is, as noted previously, among other things, explicitly about the need for myths, because 'they are essential to man's emotional needs'. More precisely, they are necessary for the mob, to 'alleviate the boredom of a meaningless existence' (1992: 108). From that introduction, LaVey segues into illustrating the point in the main parts of the essay, what we may suspect are the 'insane ramblings', by way of the following passage: 'What begins as a seedling of reality germinates into a full-blown myth, which in turn picks up constituents along the way who confer substance to **(p.135)** it' (ibid.). LaVey goes on to describe first neutrally, albeit in 'code', then in an increasingly 'rambling' manner, the murder of JFK, connecting it, as per description, to a host of 'constituents … who confer substance to it', transforming it to a 'full-blown myth', with Knights Templar, masons, assassins, and esoteric secrets. It all ends by neatly going back to 'the mob' that is crying for myth, distraction, meaning, but ending thus:

> I have told enough for one night
> The dawn is breaking
> You have had
> enough scandal
> to think about.
> But remember, all this is madness … (1992: 110)

On the surface (and as central meaning), this is clearly mockery. LaVey mocks conspiracy theory by first explaining what it is, then exemplifying it in a rambling state with disembedded elements of common conspiracy theories woven into clearly 'insane ramblings'. It is, at first reading, just another instance of a rationalist LaVey mocking the moronic search for esoteric meaning by both the multitude and the lone truth seeker.[5]

Thus, quite clearly, the obvious reading of the essay should be that it *is* mockery. But there is more to it than immediately meets the eye. As so often with LaVey, there are multiple readings: Who is creating myth? What exactly is the fantasy, and what does the label 'insane ramblings' actually do?

Like the label 'conspiracy theory', a label of 'insane rambling' serves to disarm truth-claims, to stigmatize, to signal otherness. And this is where the satanic, 'non-dualist' uncomfortable 'third side'-reading may be introduced by ending the joke, as does LaVey, with the 'comforting' words: 'But remember, all this is madness …'

Following closely as this ending does on 'apocalypse culture' issues of 'depression and inflation and the impending collapse of social structures and economic extinction', and a 'police state' (1992: 110), topics LaVey tended to present much more seriously both with regard to 'the invisible war' and elsewhere, the comforting assurance is anything but. Rather, it seems to suddenly reverse the meaning of what has gone before. Mockery **(p.136)**

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overlaps with the element of play, introducing epistemic uncertainty. Perhaps 'insane rambling' is merely the label of 'sheeple' and a manipulative elite? Just who is the joke on?

Certainly, the mockery is there in both readings, but by introducing the edge of uncertainty, LaVey opens the text for seeing the mockery as cutting several ways. Thus the small, innocent remark—quoted earlier—from the beginning of the essay takes on a more prominent position: 'What begins as a seedling of reality germinates into a full-blown myth' (1992: 108). This, of course, is the membership question from conspiracy culture that spreads outside it: what is true about this story, where is the core of truth? Like a lot of postmodern conspiracy culture, LaVey thus defers the knowledge of truth, asserting merely that 'there may be something to it' while mocking the excesses—recognizes (and makes fun of) the myth-making, while adopting it as a strategy without claiming it as a true story.

Looking at the particular event the story spins around, LaVey thus opens the way for a JFK conspiracy while making fun of excesses—no one should believe that it was done by order of 'the Grand Master of a sect of the Knights Templar' (1992: 108). This, again, is a mainstay of conspiracy culture: making light of other people's 'excessive conspiracy mongering'. After all, they *are* the competition. And the assertion that there is a core of something important in any particular conspiracy theory, although it may be seen as largely false in its details (often due to manipulative disinformation campaigns the others have fallen for and/or are part of), is similarly a common trait in conspiracy culture's reception of theories.

LaVey thus plays on *many* aspects of conspiracy culture in brief space. He alludes to popular conspiracy themes and actors, and these are woven into a central conspiracy topic that is both transparent and transparently obscured by esotericizing language (serving to give a quick boost of being 'elite' by seeing through it). He transforms the mockery to epistemic uncertainty, hinting of partial truth, and he hints at particular partial truths more in keeping with the particular version of conspiracy culture hiding among his likely readers. Thus, all readers are made to feel like winners: the rationalists see the transparent mockery; the idiots feel clever merely by identifying the correct topic; and the more esoterically inclined in the corner of dark occulture may feel superior by identifying the hints directed at them.[6]

One possible question then becomes which, if any, of these readings is more correct. Like the truth-claims of postmodern conspiracy theory, the **(p.137)** answer to this question seems to slip between our fingers, suggesting it might not be the right one. After all, it is primarily an 'indulgence of a whim or

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fancy' (1992: 10). It is play, by a man who self-admittedly mirrored himself to his chosen audience.

Inconclusive remarks

I have tried to make the case for Anton LaVey as a participant in conspiracy culture, to the degree that he adopted and adapted conspiracy theories to his ideology. The idea of mass culture and society as a threat against the individualist's ability to maintain autonomous agency permeates several of his texts, is in line with his general ideology, and mirrors conspiracy culture's 'agency panic'. Conspiracy culture's interest in and fear of hidden sources of influence and persuasion are where LaVey takes the clearest step into conspiracy culture as believer. LaVey's connections with individuals and groups on the Far Right make the lines of convergence social, as well as ideological and textual. Such a reading of him should thus ring plausible.

However, the problem with LaVey is determining to what degree he enters *anything* as believer. A simplistic case may be made for his remarks about 'other people's subliminals' to be taken seriously, because they fit well into the conspiracy lore prevalent in both the counterculture and the extremist groups he wooed in the 1980s. It may be that simple. It probably is less clear-cut. Looking at earlier instances of LaVey's relation to explicitly neo-Nazi groups flirting with Satanism, he presents clearly manipulative and transformative intentions in a letter to then close ally Michael Aquino—the neo-Nazis were to become stooges for the Church of Satan (see Aquino 2002: 368–69.). As so often else, it seems, he fitted an image of himself to the audience he sought. This is also more than clear with his self-presentation in Barton's biography and in other texts. But if he played mirror to neo-Nazis, why not mirror others asking questions about his interest in them?

Looking yet again at his introduction to 'Insane Ramblings', this time using it as a lens for reading 'The Invisible War', the following passage may now bring another meaning to the fore: 'What begins as a seedling of reality germinates into a full-blown myth, which in turn picks up constituents along the way who confer substance to it' (1992: 108). In 'Insane Ramblings', LaVey exemplified this by accruing ever more esoteric add-ons to a simple assassination theory, but it works for the threats to individual autonomy in 'The Invisible War' as well. Some of them are clearly in line with well-established topics (e.g., white noise, psychological smokescreens) **(p.138)** in LaVey's authorship, but others (e.g., weather control, microwave radiation) seem out of place, like 'constituents … who confer substance' to a myth. Although his argument how 'the extended weekend' leaves room for even more 'indoctrination' through passive entertainment (1990: 195) is clearly in line with his general views on television and mass media, it is hard to read as anything but tongue-in-cheek the warning that it is getting so much worse that 'we may yet see six day weekends' (ibid.).

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'Insane Ramblings' thus reminds us that we should not be too literal in reading LaVey. His 'materialist magic' included inventing an autobiography and involved using his texts as tools: for emotionalizing, for persuasion, and to 'challenge the self-evident and decondition the self' (Petersen 2011: 353). LaVey's texts challenge to present what he calls the 'third side' to an issue or a dilemma, the overlooked and satanic side, which 'can be the crackpot stuff of conspiracy theories, or it can be the most logical and simple, yet *deliberately neglected* conclusion' (LaVey 1998: 30). We could perhaps, heed the advice of Danish humorist Piet Hein, that one who takes a joke merely as joke and serious words merely seriously, tends to lack understanding of both. LaVey said early in *The Satanic Bible*, 'Herein you will find truth—and fantasy. Each is necessary for the other to exist; but each must be recognized for what it is' (1969: 21–2.).

In that spirit, I offer a hypothetical historical development: From slightly interested in conspiracy theory with a central focus on rationalist manipulation based in diverse psychologies, LaVey moved closer to conspiracy culture as his misanthropy grew deeper. His involvement is complex, often ironic and negative; but at the same time, it is real, and it reflects genuine common interests in, among other things, 'apocalypse culture', elitism, disgust with modern society, and society's perceived theft of agency. His involvement with conspiracy culture also included overt contacts with right-wing political movements of a somewhat esoteric inclination. But at the same time, LaVey continued to criticize the simplistic racism, the naïve romanticism, and the conspiracism of extremists he dallied with, becoming more isolationist and individualist, rather than activist; thus, in effect, attempting to sanitize the theories and the milieu at which he directed his texts.

There is always a third side. But this third side may be presented—as in 'Insane Ramblings'—in ways that show the ambivalence of play, statements that may be denied as simplistic readings. Less direct, still open to different readings, and working as mirror to readers and listeners. This is the complex participation in conspiracy lore by LaVey. It is serious play, showing both interest and distance, appealing without committing. Just like conspiracy **(p.139)** culture did when moving into the postmodern era dominated by the programmed mass culture LaVey detested, yet reflected so well.

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Notes:

This chapter benefitted from discussion with colleagues at the conference *Satanism in the Modern World*, which took place in Trondheim, Norway, on November 19–20, 2009. Special thanks to Jesper Aagaard Petersen for suggestions, discussion, and tips. His contributions as sparring partner have been invaluable.

(1) . Subliminal persuasion as part of hidden influence with hidden masters limiting other's agency in one way runs through LaVey's authorship, uncovering deeper issues. When we look at his ideas about lesser magic, we find that some of the less obvious behavioural elements are geared precisely towards persuaders that lie beyond conscious reception—except for the few aware: smells, imagery, body postures, sounds, etc. (LaVey 1988 [1971]). Ideas about automagic effects on the psyche also permeate LaVey's ideas about both music

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and art as magical tools of influence, placing him in line with consumer advocates and overhyping hypnotherapists, selling priming effects beyond their range.

(2) . In Lisa Carver's amusing 'post-punk memoir' *Drugs are Nice*, she narrates a visit to LaVey's black house in the company of Boyd Rice. In the kitchen, LaVey launches an extended lecture on how DNA in semen penetrates the recipient's brain, thereby altering the personality: 'Fluoride, it would appear, has a similar seeping-in effect, and is part of a conspiracy foisted upon us by the American Dental Association. "Which is why we drink from a well," Blanche pipes in' (Carver 2005: 167). She continues: 'Mysterious (mostly liquid) forces are at work, penetrating flimsy boundaries of the human mind, and we can either throw a saddle on these forces and do the penetrating, or we can lay back, ignorant and trusting, and get fucked' (ibid.).

(3) . It should probably be read as a rhetorical posture rather than a precise explanation. LaVey later made other stories explain more or less the same (e.g., 1992: 84ff.) Further, we see that consumer culture absorbs more of his interest in later years.

(4) . This recalls the joke about the wartime Jew seeking refuge in *Der Stürmer* to find solace in their descriptions of how all-powerful the Jews *really* were …

(5) . The latter is exemplified by the lone voice in the choir screaming for myth: 'A still, small voice is heard among them that whimpers, cajoling, "Truth—make the myth be true."' (1992: 109) A still, small voice that whimpers and cajoles is clearly not showing a satanic take on the world, nor is the wishful thinking and beggarly attitude in that category.

(6) . The only losers are those who are both stupid and conspiratorially esoteric. Then again, LaVey never had any patience with them.

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The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity
Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen

Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

(p.141) Part Three The Legacy of Dr. LaVey

The Satanic Milieu Today

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.011.0003

After covering the historical issues of modern Satanism in the preceding sections, we now attend to the present. Satanism today is a bewildering chaos of texts, images, groups, participants, and spokespersons, especially in the online environment. Inspired by the research of Colin Campbell and Christopher Partridge, Jesper Aa. Petersen has suggested that we see the entire field through the metaphor of a milieu (Petersen 2011), connected on the one hand to satanic discourses and practices articulated by self-declared Satanists, and on the other hand to the wider field of contemporary 'occulture', including mainstream use of satanic imagery and mythology. In this sense, modern Satanism ceases to be one thing and becomes a lot of ways to imagine the satanic, from local informal groups over formal networks and published material to the existence of stereotypes in popular culture, all of which are interrelated and embedded in the wider context of late modernity. By focusing on the milieu as a whole, we can discover vectors of inspiration and more general dynamics as a supplement to traditional methods focused on single groups and analysis of texts.

Both the heterogeneity and diffusion of Satanism has intensified through the introduction of the Internet, especially Usenet's special interest groups and the World Wide Web. This affects Satanists, satanic groups, and researchers. On the one hand, it is now possible to locate source material in the shape of printed books and magazines, self-published manuscripts and essays, art and music, websites, and so on through the Internet. In addition to these written sources, we also have interaction on discussion boards and across websites, as well as access to Satanists of all stripes. Using the Internet Archive and the associated 'Way-back machine' (www.archive.org), we can recover material thought lost or

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even hidden. As such, **(p.142)** both individual Satanists and networks of community and communication are present in the online environment, making it easier to find like-minded allies or informants.

On the other hand, much of the information we find online exists outside established channels of authority, challenging the hard-fought homogeneity of offline groups, especially the Church of Satan. While these aspects of mediatization and fragmentation might not be wholly new or unique, the nature of Satanism has nevertheless diversified enormously since the period when LaVey’s Church of Satan was founded. Hence, discursive processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization work alongside detraditionalization and retraditionalization to establish many local centres in Satanism today, much like they do with comparable movements in the global world of instantaneous communication (Appadurai 1996; Heelas, Lash, and Morris 1996). Simply put, Satanism has expanded well beyond the reach of the good doctor and his successors, a fact demonstrated by the three papers included here.

One persistent observer of these developments is James R. Lewis. Through an evolving set of ‘Satanism Surveys’, Lewis has provided quantitative data on the satanic milieu and individual participants for a decade. In his contribution, he argues that conversion to Satanism should be understood as an alignment with a shared cultural orientation (an ‘ideological fit’), as well as an individual sense of belonging and meaning. Similar to other detraditionalized movements based on individual appropriation and authority rather than established doctrine and physical presence in church, mosque, or temple, modern Satanism thus exists somewhere between the agency of the individual Satanist and a preexisting cultural context. This guarantees a certain level of unity and community in spite of the individualized and virtual nature of commitment to ‘Satanism’ per se. At the same time, the dual nature also stimulates conflict and constant change, as the deterritorialized cultural context is reterritorialized in small groups and individual meaning-making online and offline.

But how does this appropriation actually work? A recurrent theme in the three studies is the dynamic tension between individual meaning and community building, which can be translated into a wider tension between particularity and mainstreaming within the satanic milieu. As mentioned in the introduction, the concept and role of ‘Satanist’ has been partly deotherized and charged with positive connotations just like ‘witch’ and ‘vampire’, for example. This deotherization has historical roots beyond LaVey and the occult explosion of the 1960s, but it, nevertheless, depends on both choices within the nascent milieu and available resources outside, such as increasing visibility and ambiguity of these revaluated stereotypes in popular culture.

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(p.143) One way to study these complex dynamics is to follow one element of identity building. Jesper Aa. Petersen charts the interrelated concepts of transgression and antinomianism, prevalent as one dimension of the satanic throughout the milieu, in order to understand how difference is constructed and performed. However, difference has to be carefully negotiated in order to maximize impact *and* recognizability. In other words, what we find is a play with satanic stereotypes that is also a distancing from them as demonologies or mimetic playacting. Consequently, all Satanists access and use ‘registers’ of transgression in identity and tradition building, taken from religion, ethics, and politics in particular. Yet, a balance has to be struck between such ‘satanization’ and the sanitization necessary to be different enough without being inexplicable. Most established groups today combine traditional occult and anti-Christian modes of the satanic with more psychological and secular modes of late modernity. On the other hand, every local centre considers itself ‘true’ Satanism, forcing us to look beyond reactive anti-Christianity *and* LaVey’s more rationalist interpretation to understand the complex nature of contemporary Satanism.

Using discourse theory and the double notion of mechanic and organic solidarity taken from Durkheim, Rafal Smoczynski contributes further to comprehending the tension between individuality and community, as well as particularity and mainstreaming. Using Polish cyber-Satanism as a testing ground, he argues that Satanism has developed in dialogue with and opposition to other elements in society: Christian and Enlightenment discourse, anticult claims, and so on. By choosing an antitheistic Satanism in line with LaVey and the Church of Satan, Polish Satanists have carved out a particular discursive position based on secular emancipatory ideals of human potential. This has, in turn, stimulated a ‘mechanical’ solidarity based on a unifying discourse of commonality, distancing both external and rival understandings of Satanism. As rightly argued by Smoczynski, this has become a fixed position in itself, which is now challenged by other actors bent on narrative projects of a more individual kind. Thus, likeness and difference are manifested along various latent fault lines within the milieu.

As a closing reflection, general arguments on alignment and appropriation spur the important question of representation and anonymity—there might be many online groups and virtual voices, but how many individuals do they actually represent? Is this even a meaningful question to ask today, as one voice might hold an influence in the virtual realm far above what would be expected by offline dynamics? For example, in James R. Lewis latest ‘Satanism Survey’ (2011), there seems to be a growth of ‘theistic’ Satanism. Is this an artefact of these Satanists’ willingness to participate **(p.144)** compared with the active rejection of the Church of Satan? Or is it that the Internet is revealing something which has existed all along behind the apparent homogeneity of LaVey’s organization and a few notable competitors? Or is there in fact a shift occurring from a more rationalist and secular mode of articulating Satanism to a

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more esoteric and mystical? Whatever the answer, it shows how important it is to anchor studies of abstract territories and individual meaning-making in contextualized practice. Flame wars and party lines notwithstanding, modern Satanists navigate the cultural context of the satanic milieu with a variety of aptitude, and we should always ask where we are, who we are speaking to, and how they will benefit from the scholars' gaze.

—J.P.

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The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity
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Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

Conversion to Satanism

Constructing Diabolical Identities

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DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.003.0007

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines conversion experiences in Paganism and Satanism. The goal is to address the common misconception that people joining such movements are either passive, confused or adolescent. Through a theoretical discussion and a presentation of empirical data, the chapter criticizes both external and internal stereotypes of conversion. Thus explanations based on cult behaviour, adolescent crisis, and the metaphor of "coming home" are incomplete accounts for engagement in loose networks such as the pagan or satanic milieu, let alone the groups arising from them. Further, the chapter advocates investigating "ideological fit" as a supplement to sociological approaches like social pull and affective experience, especially when confronted with decentralized networks propagated mainly through books, popular culture and the internet. Accordingly, a terminological shift from conversion to identity construction is suggested to highlight the transformation of both self and community today.

Keywords: Satanism, satanic milieu, conversion, Paganism, Satanism Survey, identity construction, ideological fit

> I read a website briefly describing the ideals put forward by Anton LaVey and found that they mirrored my own, almost in their entirety. I looked into Satanism in more depth, read some books, discussed it with some people

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and realised I was already living as a Satanist and had arrived at my mindset independently. The label simply fits.

—Respondent to SS-2

In the late 1960s, Anton LaVey founded the Church of Satan. LaVey created relevant literature and ceremonies, and for several years propagated the movement via rituals held in his home in San Francisco and via ‘grottos’—his designation for branches of the Church of Satan in other cities. He also wrote a number of books, including his influential *The Satanic Bible* (1969), and was able to attract considerable media attention. It was not long, however, before Satanism had expanded well beyond the Church of Satan.

The pace of the decentralization of the satanic movement accelerated after LaVey disbanded the grotto system in the mid-1970s and went into semiretirement. In addition to numerous splinter groups, a decentralized, anarchistic milieu emerged that was shaped by the central themes in LaVey’s thought. Within this decentralized subculture, new varieties of Satanism proliferated, some of which claimed to worship Satan as an independent, self-conscious being (a sharp departure from LaVey’s atheistic Satanism). At present, Satanism exists primarily as an Internet religion, built around websites, blogs, and online discussion groups.

(p.146) Before the explosion of the Internet in the mid-1990s, Satanism was propagated almost entirely by *The Satanic Bible*, which has continuously been in print as a widely available, mass market paperback. Rather than blood sacrifice and Devil-worship, LaVey’s work advocates a blend of epicurean hedonism and Ayn Rand’s philosophy, critiques mainstream culture, and provides guidelines for satanic rituals. Couched in iconoclastic rhetoric, *The Satanic Bible* has held particular appeal for rebellious adolescents, and the great majority of self-identified Satanists are young males. Though many contemporary Satanists assert that they have moved beyond LaVey, *The Satanic Bible* continues to be a philosophical touchstone for the satanic subculture.

When I first began researching contemporary Satanism a decade ago, no serious academic books had been written on this milieu (at least not in English; refer to Schmidt 1992; Introvigne 1994). What existed were a few articles and book chapters (e.g., Moody 1974; Harvey 1995), plus a number of good scholarly volumes on the ritual abuse scare (which is a completely different phenomenon), such as Jeffrey Victor’s *Satanic Panic* and James T. Richardson et al.’s *The Satanism Scare*. Within the past ten years, however, so-called religious Satanism has finally attracted the serious attention of academic researchers, resulting in a modest-but-expanding body of studies (in chronological order, Lewis 2001; Petersen 2002; Lewis 2002; Petersen 2005; Faxneld 2006; Dyrendal 2008; Lewis and Petersen 2008; Bobineau 2008; Petersen 2009a; Petersen 2009b; Fügmann

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2009; Partridge and Christianson 2009; Hjelm 2009; Faxneld 2011; Petersen 2011).

The principal reason for the initial lack of scholarly attention appears to have been that academics consciously or unconsciously perceived Satanism as a trivial phenomenon rather than as a serious religious movement. The tendency seemed to have been to regard Satanists as mostly immature adolescents who adopted a diabolical veneer as a way of acting out their rebellion against parents and society. This view has been explicitly expressed in a number of professional publications, such as in Anthony Moriarty's *The Psychology of Adolescent Satanism: A Guide for Parents, Counselors, Clergy, and Teachers* (1992), and in Allen Ottens' and Rick Myers' *Coping with Satanism: Rumor, Reality, and Controversy* (1998).

Both of these publications present contemporary religious Satanism as a social problem that must be addressed and 'coped with'. Moriarty asserts that the great majority of adolescents involved in Satanism are 'dabblers' who tend to fall into one of three categories: psychopathic delinquents, angry misfits, and pseudo-intellectuals. Though Ottens and Myers appear to agree with Moriarty's classification—a classification implying that young people consciously (though inauthentically) adopt a satanic identity—they go on to **(p.147)** discuss how adolescents are 'lured into Satanism', which implies that sinister individuals somehow trick young recruits into becoming involved in Satanism:

> Many methods are used to lure young people into joining satanic groups. Sometimes the appeal is to curiosity, at other times to the carnal, fun-loving side of life or to the promise of having power. Still other methods involve manipulative and criminal activities. Recruitment is usually very subtle and can seem innocent. You can become deeply involved quickly without realizing that you have joined. (1998: 76)

According to Ottens and Myers, the methods used by satanic recruiters include addiction (the lure of alcohol or drugs), blackmail, the promise of power, brainwashing, and hypnosis. This portrayal of satanic recruiters enticing youngsters into becoming involved in diabolical activities appears derived entirely from the paranoid vision of Satanism that was propagated during the peak of the Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) scare and from the more general stereotype of how 'destructive cults' recruit members. In other words, Ottens and Myers' portrayal of conversion to Satanism is completely disconnected from real-world Satanism.

Findings from the Satan surveys

Though Moriarty's approach is no less dismissive of contemporary Satanists than Ottens and Myers', it has the virtues of not resorting to SRA fantasies and of portraying satanic conversion as an active rather than as a passive process. And while his analysis is highly tendentious, the basic phenomenon Moriarty

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points to—adolescents adopting Satanism as a strategy for dealing with the crisis of maturation—is real enough. Does this pattern, however, exhaust the significance of religious Satanism? While many youthful Satanists undoubtedly fit this profile, I came to feel that this was, at best, only a partial picture. Instead, I reasoned, there must be a core of committed Satanists who—for whatever reasons they initially become involved—had come to appropriate Satanism as a mature religious option.[1]

(p.148) In order to test this hypothesis, I decided to collect basic demographic data on contemporary Satanists. To this end, I constructed a simple, 20-item questionnaire—which I will refer to as 'Satan Survey One' (SS-1)—that could be answered in a relatively short period of time. Through e-mail addresses posted on Satanist websites, I began sending out questionnaires in early August 2000. Also, a number of Satanists posted the questionnaire on their websites. 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. Constructing a statistical caricature from this data, I stated that the 'average' Satanist was:

> An unmarried, white male in his mid-twenties with a few years of college. He became involved in Satanism through something he read in high school, and has been a self-identified Satanist for seven years. Raised Christian, he explored one non-Satanist religious group beyond the one in which he was raised before settling into Satanism. His view of Satan is some variety of non-theistic humanism and he practices magic. His primary interaction with his co-religionists is via e-mail and internet chat rooms. (Lewis 2001)

In late June of 2009, I initiated a more ambitious, 40-item survey of contemporary Satanists—which I will refer to as 'Satan Survey Two' (SS-2)—using an online survey service, Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). My goal was to determine if and how the satanic subculture had evolved, as well as to gather other kinds of information. By the fourth of November, the questionnaire had received 260 responses. I continued to collect responses until the end of 2009, but I will refer to my November tabulations in this chapter.

Though members of both samples were predominantly white males raised in Christian households, the average age of respondents rose from twenty-five to twenty-nine. Partly as a consequence of higher average age, the new sample exhibited more diversity—in terms of having a broader range of educational backgrounds, an increased likelihood of being a parent, and the like. Similarly, while the majority of respondents to SS-2 were still broadly in the LaVeyan tradition, a far greater percentage than respondents to the SS-1 professed some variety of theistic Satanism. When contrasted with the first questionnaire, the picture that emerged from the second questionnaire could be summarized as

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'Little Nicky grows up'. For my purposes in the present paper, I will focus on those aspects of the data relevant for understanding conversion to Satanism.

(p.149) Conversion research

When new religious movements (NRMs) first became the subject of serious social-scientific inquiry in Western countries in the 1960s and 1970s, researchers initially focused on trying to understand how and why members became involved. It is not difficult to understand why this issue became a focal point for scholarly attention: in the less-than-objective words of one anticult psychiatrist, the question motivating this work was, 'What kind of nutty people get into these crazy groups?' (Cited in Bromley and Richardson 1983: 5) Though the topic of conversion was gradually displaced from the centre stage of NRM studies, it never completely disappeared as a topic of research. In fact, conversion is still the single most discussed subject in the field.

Studies of conversion to alternative religions have focused on conversion to high-demand groups such as the Family Federation (formerly the Unification Church), the Family International (formerly the Children of God), and the Hare Krishna movement. Earlier studies portrayed conversion as something that happened to a passive self. This approach appears to be a residue of Christian discussions of conversion that took Paul's Damascus road experience as the paradigm for all conversions. Later studies have stressed that converts are active agents, 'the prototype for which is the "seeker"' (Reid 2009: 173).[2]

Social scientists studying conversion to nontraditional religions have also reached certain conclusions regarding the question of 'Who Joins New Religions and Why?' (Dawson 2003). There is general agreement among researchers that such converts are disproportionately young, white, middle class, and educated. They tend to be 'seekers' and to have fewer social ties than nonjoiners; yet, perhaps paradoxically, they are often recruited through family and friendship networks. Additionally, involvement in NRMs 'seems to be strongly correlated with having fewer and weaker ideological alignments' (Dawson 2003: 120). In Dawson's survey of NRM conversion studies, he briefly covers the psychology of why people join alternative religions. Both of the studies he summarizes—Eileen Barker's study of the Unification Church (1984) and Saul Levine's longitudinal study of NRM members (1984)—explain involvement as a crisis of youth.

(p.150) Data from my and Nicholas Levine's recent (2010) study of a high-demand group, the Order of Christ Sophia (OCS), aligns well with certain themes in this picture of NRM recruitment, and, at the same time, calls other generalizations into question. In common with studies of other alternative religions, we found that OCS members were predominantly white, middle-class, educated 'seekers'. However, the average recruit was middle-aged rather than youthful, and, at the same time, not old enough to be a baby boomer—a generation that had been overrepresented in the new religions of the 1970s. In

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an earlier article reporting on the demographic data from my OCS research, I speculated that

> if one gathered data on people who joined new religions during the past five years, one would find the average new member to be in their thirties rather than in their twenties. Although I do not have relevant statistical data, I have had regular contact with members of groups like ISKCON, Eckankar and the Raelian movement since 1999, and I have met enough new recruits to confirm that impression informally. (Lewis 2005: 23)

I further asserted that if this observation about the increasing age of recent recruits to NRMs was correct, then any kind of youth-crisis approach was much less applicable to current new religions than it was in the 1970s and 1980s when Barker, Levine, and others gathered their data.

Another item of conventional wisdom about NRM conversion that was called into question by the OCS data was the point cited earlier about converts having ‘fewer and weaker ideological alignments’. As a general rule, this generalization did not apply to Order members because, I argued, weak ideology is less characteristic of older recruits. It should also be noted that, even for younger recruits, not all the available empirical evidence supports the youth-crisis generalization. (e.g., Richardson and Stewart 1977; Tipton 1982; Neitz 1987) Additionally, Barker’s oft-cited study of the Unification Church makes the infrequently noted, but extremely important point that recruits who end up staying with that organization are often individuals for whom Unification teachings and the lifestyle of church members address issues they were concerned with before coming into contact with the Unification Church.

For example, Barker relates the story of a Sunday-school teacher who had been having problems understanding certain parts of the Bible. He was also experiencing frustration at not finding the ideal romantic relationship. After he came in touch with the Unification Church, he read Rev. Moon’s *The Divine Principle*, which ‘cleared everything up’ about scripture. This individual was also struck by the Unification’s solution to relationship issues, which corresponded with his own conclusions:

> **(p.151)** The idea of perfect marriage, where it’s God who brings people together: that really struck me because that [was the] sort of conclusion I’d reached after a lot of struggle. I’d reached the stage where I’d say, ‘OK, God, it’s up to you.’ … So the idea of the perfect marriage really excited me. (Cited in Barker 1984: 256–257)

I have come to refer to this affiliation factor as ‘fit’. (I derived ‘fit’ from some of the questionnaire respondents’ affiliation accounts; I was also partly inspired by Barker’s phrase ‘non-conscious fit’ [1984: 258], though the ‘fit’ I analyse here is mostly *conscious* and discursive.) Susan Palmer makes a similar point about

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women who joined the Rajneesh movement when she observes that ‘women choose to participate in this particular NRM … because it offers an alternative philosophy of sexuality which is consistent with their previous lifestyle, and which validates their life choices’ (1993: 105).

Based on OCS respondents’ conversion narratives, ‘fit’ was one of the most important considerations attracting them to the Order. Asserting that ideological fit is a significant factor in conversion represents a fundamental departure from prior theorizing in studies of new religious movements. For example, Philip Lucas’s study of OCS’s parent group, the Holy Order of Man (HOOM), concluded that after the ideological core of HOOM was jettisoned, most members remained with the group because of affective ties (1995: 238). Fit, as we shall see, was also a central theme in the narratives of SS-2 respondents. However, before proceeding to discuss the narratives, I will examine several analyses of ‘conversion’ to contemporary Paganism that throw light on ‘conversion’ to modern Satanism.

‘Coming home’ to Paganism

Similar to modern Satanism, contemporary Paganism became increasingly decentralized in the decades following its founding. In particular, well before the Internet took off in the 1990s, Paganism had been experiencing increasing fragmentation due to the growing number of ‘solitaries’—individuals who, for the most part, practice their religion alone (though they might occasionally participate in group rituals, particularly at festivals). Also parallel to Satanism, the Pagan subculture was substantially impacted by the Internet. The Internet did more than simply bring new people into the movement; it also dramatically altered the overall social organization of the Pagan subculture via the emergence of Internet Paganism. The Internet allows Pagans—and Satanists as well—to participate actively in a lively online community without ever getting together in the non-Internet realm.

(p.152) The widespread availability of how-to Pagan books—and, later, information readily available on the Internet—meant that new, solitary Witches had abundant sources of information for hand-crafting their own individualized forms of Paganism (Ezzy and Berger 2007b: 42). They could also choose to undertake, or not to undertake, certain rituals and celebrations, such as the rites associated with the Wheel of the Year. There were no authorities above them dictating what was and what was not ‘proper’ Paganism, and no enforceable criteria for determining who was and who was not a ‘real’ Pagan. Given this movement’s lack of hierarchical authorities and its lack of sharp boundaries, how do we understand ‘conversion’ to Paganism?

In her influential book, *Drawing Down the Moon*, Margot Adler rejects the idea that most participants ‘convert’ to Paganism. Rather, people discover Paganism and feel that it merely confirms

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> some original private experience, so that the most common feeling of those who have named themselves Pagans is something like 'I finally found a group that has the same religious perceptions I always had'. A common phrase you hear is 'I've come home', or as one woman told me excitedly after a lecture, 'I always knew I had a religion, I just never knew it had a name'. (1979: 14)

Expressing a similar perception, Graham Harvey has asserted that Paganism contains no conversion narratives (1999:234).

This portrayal of Paganism as 'a religion without converts' has been criticized by a number of different scholars (e.g., Gallagher 1994; Berger and Ezzy 2007a; Ezzy and Berger 2007b; Reid 2009). In their study of teenage Paganism, Helen Berger and Douglas Ezzy offer a compelling analysis of why so many new Pagans can seriously assert 'that they did not so much convert to a new set of beliefs as find a name for the beliefs they always had' (2007a: 56). Though these individuals feel that they have been led to Paganism by 'some internal compass that has not been influenced by the larger culture', in fact, the larger, nonpagan culture holds many ideas in common with Paganism—ideas about ecology, the paranormal, and individualistic discovery.[3]

The mass culture also contains many positive representations of Witches, as in the television program *Charmed*. 'These broad cultural factors on their **(p.153)** own do not result in conversion to Witchcraft, but they do provide a cultural context in which seekers can feel as though they have 'come home' to Witchcraft' (ibid.: 58). One of the virtues of Ezzy and Berger's analysis is that, while analyzing the 'coming home' experience in terms of a shared cultural orientation, they go further and emphasize that conversion to Paganism also involves the active agency of the individual seeker (2007b: 42).

In an important anthology on the phenomenon of teen Witches (Johnston and Aloi 2007), several contributors emphasize that the attraction of Paganism for adolescent girls is often the sense of empowerment they receive from self-identifying as Witches:

> Calling themselves Witches and practicing spells seemed to give the girls a sense of identity, made them feel special, was part of their group friendship, helped them deal with their problems, was fun, and most of all gave them a sense of control over, and meaning in their lives. (Cush 2007: 148)

These observations can be extended to Pagans more generally and to Satanists as well.

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Natural born Satanists

Like many Pagans who claim to be 'born Pagans' a significant percentage of respondents to SS-2 expressed the opinion that they were 'born Satanists'—that they were already Satanists before they knew anything about the religion. To quote from a handful of representative responses:

> Read the 'Satanic Bible' about 19 years ago, and found that I have shared the ideals of the book all of my life, without having been able to put a label on my belief system. It was as if I could have written the book myself.

> On some level I think I always knew what I was. It took me years to accept it because of all the Christian propaganda about Satan being evil. I still felt drawn to it, somehow, and when I found other people who felt the same as I, I felt that I had come home.

> Here is the bottom line, when you have to change to be part of a religion it is the wrong religion. When you feel your religion swarming around you as if it comes directly from you, then it's the right one. Either one will cause changes in you, but only one will cause the changes effortlessly.

Parallel to the pattern of responses to the Order of Christ Sophia questionnaire, respondents to SS-2 often articulated the idea that they became **(p.154)** Satanists because satanic philosophy fit with the conclusions they had already reached. This was stated explicitly by forty members (15 percent) of the sample. Eight people even used the word 'fit' in their responses; to quote a selection of examples:[4]

> My friend's dad accused her mom of turning her into a Satanist because she didn't want to visit him, and she told me about it. I had heard it mentioned negatively before, and starting wondering what was so bad about it, so I did my research. Everything seemed to fit me.

> Over the next few years I studied different religions and philosophies, and eventually found LaVeyan Satanism to be attractive—I already believed most everything in *The Satanic Bible*, so it fit like a glove.

> I was looking for something deeper, and darker, however, what I found was not that for which I sought. It did 'fit' correctly enough, though.

> It just fit. When I became acquainted with the philosophy, it wasn't a matter of conversion, it was a reflection of what I am.

This view of conversion—that Satanism is simply a label for what one already is—resonates with the academic analysis of Satanism as a variety of 'self-religion' (Petersen 2005; Petersen 2009a; Harvey 2009; Dyrendal 2009).[5] In his

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discussion of New Age spirituality, Paul Heelas describes what he terms life spirituality or self-religion:

> 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, 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. (2002: 362)

Though Satanism has little in common with the New Age, both describe the individual's 'true' self as having been subverted and obscured by **(p.155)** socialization at the hands of the dominant culture (as well as at the hands of *traditional* religions). Satanism and the New Age (in large part) also share the idea that the individual should throw off these external influences and seek to realize her or his real nature. The Pagan view of the human condition replicates this pattern. Like Satanism, a goal of Paganism is to throw off one's (by implication artificial and harmful) socialization, and 'come home to' and revive one's natural self. Satanism's and Paganism's views of the natural self are, of course, quite different, but at a broad level, their otherwise divergent portrayals of the human condition are strikingly similar—which may account, in part, for other parallels.

Berger and Ezzy analysed Pagan expressions of 'coming home' in terms of the cultural orientation shared by contemporary Paganism and the individuals who found in Paganism everything they had already believed. One can make a comparable argument for the parallel experiences of individuals who convert to Satanism. Some of the points of the shared cultural orientation between the 'philosophy' of Satanism and converts to Satanism are not, of course, shared with modern Paganism. In the case of the Church of Satan, LaVey drew much of his inspiration from social Darwinism and the iconoclastic philosophy of Ayn Rand. Though often explicitly rejected in official cultural discourses, these kinds of ideas, nevertheless, constitute significant strands within contemporary society and are particularly appealing to rebellious adolescents. One could also point to the often attractive images of the Devil as a clever, powerful being in horror films, certain types of music, and other entertainment media as a factor in the attraction of Satanism. As Asbjørn Dyrendal observed in a recent article, 'satanic identity does seem to be mediated and partly learned through popular culture' (Dyrendal 2008: 80).

Though in one way many of the responses to SS-2—in combination with evidence from studies of Pagan conversion—give added support to my argument for the importance of fit in understanding conversion to groups like the Order of Christ Sophia, in another way they undermine my original argument. Specifically, I

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argued that the increased importance of ideological fit for the seekers attracted to OCS could be explained as a function of the fact that they were older than the youthful participants in the NRMs of the 1960s and 1970s. However, fit appears to be of paramount importance for many of the youthful recruits to contemporary Paganism and Satanism, which clearly undermines this component of my prior argument.

At present, I am not prepared to completely revamp my thinking about NRM conversion into a systematic explanation that attempts to account for every variable. It is clear, however, that a major factor that needs to be considered is the organizational difference between, on the one hand, **(p.156)** decentralized, anarchistic movements and, on the other, highly structured groups with hierarchical authority structures and sharp boundaries. It may well be that my generalization about recent recruits to NRMs holds true for high-demand groups but not for decentralized movements.

One of the ways in which the differences between the two manifest in the conversion process is that conversion to structured religious groups 'happens primarily through preexisting social networks and interpersonal bonds' (Dawson 2003: 119). 'Witches do not fit this model' (Berger and Ezzy 2007a: 85). Neither do Satanists. Pagans and Satanists overwhelmingly become involved in their respective movements through something they read, either in books or on websites:

> Most do not come to the religion through friendship networks, but to the contrary find out about Witchcraft primarily through books and secondarily through the Internet. Young Witches do not join because of growing affective ties with other Witches, and they typically maintain their friendships outside the religion. (2007a: 84)

Berger and Ezzy's findings about the conversion patterns of young Witches apply equally well to Satanists. The contrast between high-demand groups and decentralized movements like Paganism and Satanism on this particular point is easy to demonstrate.

Gateways to involvement

The discussion of how people become involved in alternative religions was stimulated by the Lofland-Stark model of conversion, which was developed in the context of a study of the early Unification Church in the United States in the 1960s (1965). This model has been heavily criticized, but it has been quite useful because it put forward a set of variables involved in affiliation that were subsequently scrutinized by later researchers. The variable with the most empirical support is that new members most often become involved through family and friends.[6] This generalization applies to the Order of Christ Sophia, though the picture is a little more complicated regarding other new religions. Based on evidence from a variety of **(p.157)** studies, Dawson notes that 'the

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majority of recruits to the majority of NRMs come into contact with the groups they join because they personally know one or more members of the movement' (2003: 119). If, however, we confine the OCS data to relatives and friends, the total percentage is 42.9 percent—or less than half. Alternately, if we add co-workers and professional contacts to the 'personal' category, the total percentage rises to 57.2 percent—more than half. So the question of whether the order fits the 'majority' pattern noted by Dawson depends on how one interprets the data (refer to table 7.1).

Table 7.1 Introduction to OCS

Initial Point of Contact	%	No.
Relative or partner	11.7	9
Friend	31.2	24
Co-worker	3.9	3
Professional contact	10.4	8
Public event	11.7	9
Giving Birth to God *	6.5	5
Newspaper ad	5.1	4
Flyer	5.1	4
Website	0.0	0
Other	13.0	10
No response	1.3	1

(*) Book by Mother Clare Watts, one of the Order's co-leaders.

I was frankly surprised to find that so many respondents' (28.4 percent) first point of contact with the order was via flyers, ads, publications, and public events like Body, Mind, Spirit expos. By comparison, only 3.6 percent of the people who became involved in the Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness did so via impersonal media (Lewis 1997:183; refer to table 7.2).

Table 7.2 Introduction to MSIA

Initial Point of Contact	%	No.
Impersonal/media	3.6	18
Friends/relatives	55.4	227
Insight seminar*	28.4	142

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Initial Point of Contact	%	No.
MSIA book(s)	0.4	2
Website**	0.0	0
Other	5.8	47
No response	2.8	14

(*) An MSIA-inspired weekend seminar similar to est and Lifespring.

(**) At the time of my questionnaire research on MSIA in the mid-1990s, the Internet was a negligible phenomenon.

We might also point out that, in questionnaire research on a sample of five hundred current and former members of MSIA, only two respondents (0.4 percent) mentioned the movement's books (some of which had been on the *New York Times* best-seller list) as being primary factors attracting them to MSIA (Lewis 1997:105).

The pattern of responses to a similar question in SS-1 and SS-2 was significantly different. If we combine book and website readings, more than half the respondents to SS-1 (57 percent) indicated that they were introduced to Satanism by something they read. This figure jumps to 79 percent for respondents to SS-2 (refer to table 7.3).

Table 7.3 Introduction to Satanism

Initial Point of Contact	%	No.
SS-1—Friend	17	24
Satanic Bible	21	30
Other reading	24	34
Website	12	17
Music	1	2
Other	20	28
No response	4	5
SS-2*—Friend	18	45
Co-worker	2	4
Relative	2	5
Website	34	86
Book	45	113

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Initial Point of Contact	%	No.
TV or movie	0.4	1
Music	12	31
Other	22	56
No response	4	9

(*) In SS-2, this questionnaire item permitted respondents to check more than one answer, thus the total percentage adds up to more than 100%.

(p.158) I am currently conducting similar questionnaire research on Paganism with Helen Berger, the primary author of *Voices from the Pagan Census* (Berger, Leach, and Shaffer 2003). As of February 19, 2010, the number of respondents who had completed the questionnaire was 6,877. The Pagan questionnaire contains a similar item regarding how one was introduced to Paganism (refer to table 7.4).

Table 7.4 Introduction to Paganism*

Initial Point of Contact	%	No.
Friend	30.3	2,013
Co-Worker	2.1	140
Partner/Spouse	4.7	310
Relative	7.7	514
Website	16.9	1,121
Book	36.7	2,433
TV or Movie	2.8	183
Flyer; Poster	1.6	109
Student group	2.5	164
In prison	0.3	19
Other	21.6	1,433

(*) This questionnaire item permitted respondents to check more than one answer, thus the total percentage adds up to more than 100%.

(p.159) Though the pattern of responses is less marked than responses to the parallel item in SS-2, more than half the Pagan sample indicated book and website readings played a central role in introducing them to Paganism.

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In SS-2, I also asked how frequently and by what means respondents communicated with other Satanists. The pattern of responses supports the observation that Satanism is predominantly an Internet religion (Petersen 2008; Petersen, forthcoming; refer to table 7.5). The heavily web-oriented nature of the satanic subculture at least partially explains why the initial point of entry for new ‘converts’ is *in*frequently a face-to-face contact.

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Table 7.5 How often do you communicate with other Satanists?

Method of communication	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Never
In person	12.8% (31)	13.6% (33)	13.2% (32)	14.9% (36)	45.5% (110)
By telephone	9.2% (22)	11.3% (27)	13.0% (31)	10.9% (26)	55.5% (132)
Public Internet*	39.6% (99)	4.4% (61)	5.6% (39)	6.8% (17)	13.6% (34)
Private Internet**	31.6% (79)	26.0% (65)	14.8% (37)	6.4% (16)	21.2% (53)

(*) Blogs, message boards, etc.

(**) E-mails, Private messages, etc.

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This same item appears in the Pagan questionnaire. Pagans engage in much more face-to-face interaction than Satanists, though Pagans also **(p.160)** tend to do a significant amount of communications via electronic means (refer to table 7.6).

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Table 7.6 How often do you communicate with other Pagans?

Method of communication	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	Never
In person	20.0% (1,313)	30.3% (1,989)	23.4% (1,535)	11.3% (739)	5.0% (987)
By telephone	18.4% (1,196)	28.8% (1,874)	19.3% (1,254)	7.0% (457)	26.5% (1,720)
Public Internet*	51.7% (3,416)	22.6% (1,493)	12.0% (792)	3.7% (243)	10.0% (661)
Private Internet**	46.5% (3,087)	26.2% (1,738)	13.4% (886)	4.0% (263)	10.0% (661)

(*) Blogs, message boards, etc.

(**) E-mails, Private messages, etc.

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Additionally, respondents to SS-2 were asked if they ever gathered with co-religionists for religious or ritual purposes. The great majority (78.6 percent) replied 'Never or almost never' (refer to table 7.7).

Table 7.7 How often do you meet with other Satanists for "religious" or ritual purposes?

Frequency	%	No.
Daily or almost daily	3.1	9
Weekly	3.4	10
Monthly	6.5	19
Yearly	8.5	25
Never or almost never	78.6	231

The parallel item in the Pagan questionnaire received a much greater diversity of responses. Nevertheless, a full third of the sample (33.5 percent) never or almost never met with co-religionists for religious or ritual purposes, while another 14.7 percent responded that they met with other Pagans only once per year (refer to table 7.8). The former would in all probability self-identify as solitaries, while the latter are likely solitary practitioners who occasionally attend Pagan festivals. Taken together, these two groups of respondents add up to almost half (48.2 percent) the sample.

Table 7.8 How often do you meet with other Pagans for religious/spiritual/ritual purposes?

Frequency	%	No.
Daily or almost daily	3.6	242
Weekly	15.4	1,037
Monthly	32.9	2,219
Yearly	14.7	990
Never or almost never	33.5	2,261

What we end up with for Satanism, then, is a movement whose members rarely if ever meet face-to-face, and who almost never engage in **(p.161)** group religious activities. The primary activity of contemporary Satanists appears to be e-mailing or otherwise engaging in online discussions with other Satanists.[7] Though a much larger percentage of contemporary Pagans gather together with co-religionists for festivals and the like, there is still a significant percentage

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whose Paganism consists primarily of e-mail communications and other web-based interactions (Cowan 2005).

Conversion or identity construction?

In 2003, I recruited Pagan students from some of my courses at the University of Wisconsin for several group independent studies on Paganism. Six students eventually signed up in the spring of 2003. In the subsequent term, I organized a second independent study with seven students. We met once a week for two hours and discussed assigned readings. What I sought to gain from these classes was a clearer sense of what might be referred to as 'new generation' Pagans. The students provided me with feedback and constructive criticism, and coming to know them as people and observing them in the context of our discussions was enlightening.

All were self-taught solitaries. I had assumed, based on my familiarity with the growing body of literature directed to teen Witches, that magic would be a major component of their practice—but it was not. When asked questions about 'spells' and such, all of the students stated they hardly ever worked magic. What seemed to be most important for my students were **(p.162)** not the practices associated with Paganism, but rather that Paganism confirmed their personal attitudes towards life and their beliefs about the nature of reality. Thus when we read *Drawing Down the Moon*, they completely concurred with Adler's notion that people who become Pagan experience a sense of 'coming home' rather than a traditional conversion experience.

My students also identified with the pre-Christian peoples and religions of ancient Europe—a self-identity which gave them the sense that they were not participating in a marginal movement. Thus, for example, during a discussion in which we talked about the discrimination that some modern Pagans had experienced at the hands of Christians, one of my students commented, 'Well, back in the days of the Roman Empire, we persecuted them!' This was a striking remark, reflecting a strong sense of solidarity with ancient Paganism—a solidarity this student felt despite the fact that earlier in the semester we often critiqued the notion that modern Paganism was a lineal descendant of the pre-Christian religions of Europe.

It is obvious that what these youthful students gain from Paganism—and what other individuals gain from Satanism—is a sense of identity. The drive to forge a self-identity is particularly acute in adolescence and young adulthood, but constructing and reconstructing 'the story or stories by means of which self-identity is reflexively understood' (Giddens 1991: 244) is peculiarly characteristic of the modern world and is by no means confined to adolescents.[8] However, if adopting a Pagan self-identity or a Satanic self-identity involves neither ritual practices nor non-Internet communities of co-religionists, is it really valid to say that one has *become a member of* a particular religion?[9]

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Let us consider a contrasting example: someone who happens to come across information about Zoroastrianism on the Internet, decides Zoroastrian ideas align almost perfectly with what she already believes, and decides that she is a Zoroastrian. If this hypothetical individual subsequently never engages in Zoroastrian rituals nor communicates with any other Zoroastrians except via Internet chat rooms, would she legitimately be regarded as a convert to Zoroastrianism? Or would she be regarded as someone who had simply adopted the label, and who was not 'really' a Zoroastrian?

(p.163) My purpose in raising this question is not to dismiss either Internet Paganism or Internet Satanism (or, for that matter, Internet Zoroastrianism) as inauthentic. Rather, this line of questioning arises from, on the one hand, how fundamentally the virtual environment has problematized what we traditionally regard as religious communities and religious conversion. On the other hand, the idea of conversion to online Paganism and to Satanism as a project of identity construction prompts me to consider how conversion to 'traditional' religions is also a form of identity construction. Given that identity construction has become such a significant topic within the social sciences in recent decades (e.g., Cerulo 1997; Magliocco 2004, 9; Turner 2006, 277–278; McLean 2008, 1–18), this should be a fruitful direction for future research and theorizing.[10]

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Notes:

This chapter is based on my ‘Fit for the Devil: Toward an Understanding of “Conversion to Satanism,”’ which originally appeared in the *International Journal for the Study of New Religions* 1(1) (2010): 117–138. In addition to thanking the anonymous individuals who responded to various questionnaires over the years, I would like to thank Helen Berger and Asbjørn Dyrendal for their critical feedback on this paper.

(1) . In his recently published *Modern Satanism: Anatomy of a Radical Subculture* (2009), Chris Mathews seems to take affront at my suggestion in ‘Who Serves Satan?’ (Lewis 2001) that conversion to Satanism might represent a ‘mature religious option’. I have responded to Mathews’s critique in my review of *Modern Satanism* (Lewis 2010).

(2) . James Richardson has been influential in promoting a more active view of conversion (Richardson and Kilbourne 1988).

(3) . In chapter 6 of his influential study of the New Age subculture/cultic milieu (which he refers to as ‘occulture’), Christopher Partridge describes the process by which producers of popular culture are influenced by occult/New Age ideas, which subsequently influences popular culture to become the bearer of occulture, which in turn spreads these ideas to consumers of popular culture (2004: 119–142).

(4) . At least one of the respondents in Ezzy and Berger’s study explicitly used the term ‘fit’, where she said that when she ‘picked up that RavenWolf book, everything fit’ (2007b: 49). Similarly, at least one respondent to the OCS questionnaire used the term ‘fit’ in his account of how and why he joined OCS: ‘OCS was a natural fit for my spiritual searching. I had come home to a place where I could begin to “practice” all of the theory that I had wrestled with for most of my life’ (Lewis and Levine 2010: 78).

(5) . It also resonates with LaVey’s idea that Satanists are ‘born, not made’ (Barton 1990: 82).

(6) . Though note James Coleman’s finding that the majority of American converts to Buddhism report that they were initially attracted to Buddhism because of its teachings (Coleman 2001).

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(7) . In his *The Re-Enchantment of the West*, Partridge notes in passing that some emergent groups within the cultic milieu meet ‘only in the chat rooms of cyberspace’ (2004: 43).

(8) . There is a useful discussion of Pagan identity construction in terms of Anthony Giddens’s analysis of identity construction in Reid’s article (2009).

(9) . The ambiguity between ‘joining’ Paganism, creating one’s own version of Paganism, and constructing a Pagan self-identity is evident in Magliocco’s discussion in the second chapter of her *Witching Culture* (2004: 57–92).

(10) . There are some discussions in which researchers have explored this connection, though in a somewhat different manner than I indicate (e.g., Chue 2008; Engberg-Pedersen 2000).

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The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity
Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen

Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

The Carnival of Dr. LaVey

Articulations of Transgression in Modern Satanism

Jesper Aagaard Petersen

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.003.0008

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter follows the theme of transgression from Anton LaVey and into the plurality of expressions and practices in the satanic milieu today. Questioning any simple correspondence between modern Satanism and engagement with transgressive practices, the chapter compares various antinomian registers of transgression within modern Satanism to understand the relative use of satanization and sanitization as strategies of constructing satanic discourse. Given their origin, satanic articulations of blasphemy, political extremism, violence and obscenity certainly relate to and appropriate from anti-Christian and antinomian discourse. Nevertheless, there is ambiguity involved, stretching actual transgression from prank and play with grey to religious commitment. As such, adversarial or antinomian discourse is a resource for Satanists both in relation to mainstream values and as boundary markers within the satanic milieu.

Keywords: Satanism, Anton LaVey, Satanic milieu, The Satanic Bible, transgression, antinomianism, satanization, sanitization

Introduction

> Suck the blood from this unholy knife
> Say after me: my soul belongs to Satan
> Now, now you're into my Coven
> You are Lucifer's Child.
> —Mercyful Fate, 'Into the Coven', 1983

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With these words, the Danish band Mercyful Fate closes the song 'Into the Coven', detailing a rather simple process of initiation more akin to a Hammer horror movie than recorded satanic practices. In the 1980s, this band stirred some controversy with their blatantly satanic lyrics, outrageous stage shows, and unashamedly anti-Christian stance, appealing to many a young adolescent searching for something to belong to which could offend and shock. The two first full-length albums *Melissa* (1983) and *Don't Break the Oath* (1984) exhibit a funky metal sound with almost progressive ambitions and a developed world of ideas and motifs; combined with singer King Diamond's operatic screams and odd voices, we are offered a satanic metal music quite different from, for example, Venom's more brutal assault or the later minimalist chaos of Mayhem.

For thirty years, King Diamond has entertained his fans with both Mercyful Fate and as a solo artist. Several elements have been stable throughout his career: The black and white 'corpse paint' reminiscent of KISS or Alice **(p.168)** Cooper; the interest in history and myth, especially surrounding witch trials, asylums, and the occult; stage shows filled with mock beheadings, black masses, and child sacrifices; and, of course, the satanic ambience cementing it all. Contrary to his solo albums, quite a few Mercyful Fate songs deal directly with Satan worship; early examples on the two first albums include 'Into the Coven', 'Black Funeral', 'Melissa', 'The Oath', 'Welcome Princes of Hell', and the concert closer 'Come to the Sabbath'—and these are only the obvious ones.[1] Combined with the excessive onstage theatrics, this Satanism seems to mimic and even confirm all of the stereotypes found in Christian culture. Just look at the lyrics quoted earlier: blood, knife, soul, Satan. It might as well be an evangelical testimony.

However, King Diamond is also an outspoken representative of Satanism of a more sophisticated sort. As a self-declared Satanist and member of the Church of Satan, he has debated with priests, journalists, and worried parents, advocating a strong separation between horror show as entertainment and satanic religion (Baddeley 2000: 123–24, 127–28; Moynihan and Søderlind 1998: 14–16). For King Diamond, as for his mentor Anton LaVey, Satanism is about expressing individuality and living for oneself; all the rest is just good, clean fun or at most ritual trappings for instrumental ends. This provides an extra layer of available meaning behind the manifest Devil worship of the surface. For example, amidst all the inverted crosses and denials of the Christian faith, we find lyrical passages heavily inspired by the 'liturgy' in LaVey's *Satanic Bible* (1969):

> In the name of Satan, the ruler of Earth / Open wide the gates of Hell / And come forth from the abyss / By these names: Satan, Leviathan, Belial, Lucifer / I will kiss the goat. (Mercyful Fate, 'The Oath', 1984)

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Nevertheless, while we find an intricacy of expression in 'The Oath' that is missing in the earlier 'Into the Coven', both songs depend heavily on an established Christian context to work properly. Consequently, there is a **(p.169)** play with stereotypes and grey areas between horror and reality which can be enjoyed on multiple levels for those in the know.

Within the wider satanic milieu of contemporary, self-designated Satanists, the strategies of appropriation are parallel to those utilized by Mercyful Fate and King Diamond. In many cases, we can be excused for mistaking the imagery and even ideology used in articulating satanic discourse for inverted Christianity or fascism, for example. There is often a conscious and deliberate play with good manners, common sense, and proper taste intermingled with borrowings from forgotten or suppressed political tracts, religious dogma, and artistic practices. Sometimes, it is a serious adoption. Other times, it is naïve mimicking. But it can also be something else, both serious and playful, blasphemous and adversarial, using stereotypes and established truths as cultural critique or religious subversion.

Here, I will discuss the theme of antinomian transgression in various satanic contexts, from Anton LaVey's church and into the plurality of expressions and practices in the satanic milieu today. By comparing sample positions within modern Satanism, I question any simple correspondence between modern Satanism and an engagement with transgressive practices of a specific sort. Given its origin, Satanism certainly arises from and frequently utilizes antinomian discourse taken from well-known 'registers' of transgression, most notably anti-Christianity. Nevertheless, there is ambiguity involved, stretching transgression from prank and play to religious commitment (and frequently mixing the two poles). One recognizable strategy is a context-dependent use of 'satanization' and 'sanitization' of these registers in their appropriation into satanic discursive practice. As such, adversarial or antinomian discourse is a resource for Satanists both in relation to mainstream values and as boundary markers within the satanic milieu, and various appeals to art, tradition, and individuality frame the same material in different ways.

The carnival of Dr. LaVey

> The Satanist maintains a storehouse of avowed fantasy gathered from all cultures and from all ages. With his unfettered access to logic as well, he now becomes a powerful adversary of Satan's past tormentors. (LaVey 1972: 27)

The ambiguity we find in King Diamond can be examined in more detail by another well-known example, namely Anton S. LaVey's diabolic paperback, *The Satanic Bible* from Avon Books (1969). It is held in black, with the title, **(p.170)** author and a so-called Baphomet sigil in white and red on the front. On the back, a corresponding red-tinted picture of the author doing the Devil's horns

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superimposed over the same goat's head and pentagram fulfils the promise that this will indeed be a wicked tome. Not even the barcode or fixed price tag printed at the bottom takes away the powerful *look* of the book.

This first impression is confirmed by a quick look inside: The four parts (subtly blaspheming the four Gospels?) are dedicated to four arch-Devils: Satan, Lucifer, Belial, and Leviathan, representing the four elements and four aspects of LaVey's satanic religion. Skimming the table of contents, we are introduced to hate, sex, vampires, human sacrifice, the black mass, satanic magic, as well as invocations of lust, compassion, and destruction, to name a few eye-catching topics. With this in mind, it is not surprising that this book frequently pops up in sensationalist documentaries, faith-based television programs, and in the possession of occult-minded adolescents and serial killers, all whom treat it more as a *monument* of Satanism than a *compendium* of satanic lore (Gunn 2005a, 2005b; Lewis 2002).

Of course, this interpretation seldom moves past the cover or at most The Book of Satan, the short and intensely blasphemous initial 'diatribe' occupying seven pages of almost three hundred. Granted, The Book of Satan *is* anti-Christian, violent, and social Darwinist; a pastiche on the Christian Bible dressed in pompous rhetoric (Mathews 2009: 53–57, 61–67).[2] But it should also be seen in the light of the following texts, as an opening or manifestation and not the full message (LaVey 1969: 29). To use LaVey's own words, ritual blasphemy, including The Book of Satan, is a cathartic purification to clear the way, a 'first level' Satanism leading to more advanced applications independent of inverse Christianity (Barton 1990: 16–17, 119–123).[3] As such, the book mirrors the many transgressive antics of the early Church of Satan with a decidedly erotic and hedonistic charge, like satanic rituals of initiation, witches' workshops, and appearances in men's magazines. The Book of Satan is thus closer to the old *Lesemysterium*, a text which should be experienced as a concrete practice, rather than a specific summary of LaVey's dogma.[4]

(p.171) As with all phase ones, the diabolic veneer of *The Satanic Bible* and The Book of Satan is then only a starting point. Yet this does not mean it is insincere. As LaVey puts it, Satanism is 'nine parts social respectability to one part outrage' (Barton 1990: 16), a phrase combining the new specific understanding of Satanism espoused by LaVey with another important point, namely the 'third side' or 'satanic perspective' discussed in full in later essays (e.g., LaVey 1972: 16–17; 1992: 63–65; 1998: 29–32).[5] This integration of apparent opposites goes beyond the dilemma and presents a novel solution based on a norm *outside* the norm. The antinomian stance enables the Satanist to appropriate the stereotypes for his own ends, no matter how they are perceived in wider culture. Thus the deotherization of Satan is also a sanitization and positive reorientation of the Satanist, both clearing the air of any necessary

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connection to anti-Christianity *and* retaining the value of good old-fashioned blasphemy.

In Blanche Barton's *The Church of Satan*, somewhat hyperbolically called 'A History of the World's Most Notorious Religion' on the back cover, LaVey passionately argues for the right to 'insularize oneself within a chosen social milieu' or 'carefully cultivated illusory world' (Barton 1990: 88). This is part of a wider social program of 'Pentagonal Revisionism' outlining significant areas of change to align society to satanic principles, covering stratification, taxation of all churches, responsibility to the responsible, and a focus on the positive value of the artificial through the production and consumption of 'artificial human companions' and 'total environments' (Barton 1990: 79–91). As such, 'Satan's Master Plan' intertwines political and ethical dimensions with an advocacy of the aesthetic, psychological, and even magical value of the artificial as a realm of exclusivity, isolation and control (Petersen, 2012).[6]

In the companion biography *The Secret Life of a Satanist*, LaVey further elucidates the power of choosing your own world, and popular culture plays an important part in this equation as both a positive and a negative component. On the one hand, LaVey has nothing but disdain for everything **(p.172)** 'mainstream' and 'conformist': 'Satanists … are those rare individuals who (among other things) natively avoid contact with masses of people, whether in thought, dress, taste in music, entertainment, or automobiles' (Barton 1992: 132). As a consequence, television, most contemporary music, and standard Hollywood fare are all 'dictating' and 'desensitizing' culture (132, 147, 155, 157). On the other hand, LaVey's tastes in consumption includes popular culture of *older* eras, whether in dress, music, movies, art or books, as well as the outré and uncanny of all ages: 'Antique and unusual cars, sleazy paperbacks, pulp magazines … LaVey is a collector of "bizarrary" that others overlook, cast aside or shun as disturbing or disgusting' (133–34). As both a producer and consumer of such marginal objects and rejected ideas, he recognizes their value as building blocks in total environments and as vehicles for empowerment (135, 138). What matters is the emotional connection the individual or people of the past have had with these 'orphaned items': 'Something that once had importance might be forgotten by most people but because millions of people once knew it, a force is present that can be harnessed' (138).

In this sense, the aesthetics and poetics of LaVey hinge on an ambiguous view of the popular as well as the antinomian, challenging received interpretations of both. Contrary to the 'high' culture of the social elites, he is an aficionado of anything carnivalesque, sleazy, occult and fringe, especially of generations past. This does include the 'popular': Genre movies such as film noir, science fiction, adventure, and horror (Barton 1992: ch. 12); 'lyrical, evocative music' from the 1920s to the 1960s played as in 'Las Vegas supperclubs, Italian picnics, Jewish weddings … and junior high bands' (144, cf. ch. 11); and pulp magazines,

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macabre tales, and speculative fiction fanning out into stories of the mystical, occult, and paranormal (ch. 13). On the other hand, contrary to the 'folk' culture of the people and the popular culture of mass media, LaVey is very aware of the importance of 'satanic' substance and education, especially of a carnal sort, listing classical music, serious literature, philosophy, art, and science as pursuits for the 'alien elite' (see the appendices in Barton 1990: 149–167).

This position can be used to understand the diabolic presentation of *The Satanic Bible*. Under the powerful symbol of Satan, 'the personification of the Left Hand Path' (LaVey 1969: 52), LaVey taps into a reservoir of common culture, 'the myths immemorial of all peoples and all nations', to construct an authentic satanic 'culture' that is both distinctly modern and has ancient roots. On the one hand, he lauds the disenchantment of 'modern man' from the 'nonsensical dogmas of past religions' and potential for self-reliance in this 'enlightened age' (ibid.: 41, 44, 52); on the other, he frequently points to the 'avowed fantasies' **(p.173)** and 'fairy tales' of evil beings and sinister ceremonies as useful material for 'good, honest emotionalizing' (53). To create mythical realities of sufficient impact, especially for ritual work that demands 'intellectual decompression' in 'a subjective state' (1969: 120; 1972: 15), LaVey appropriates material from a variety of times and places. This includes German expressionistic film, Slavonic and Yezidi mythology, and Christian demonology, for example, although the inventory is frequently updated or revised with a certain degree of 'satanic license', as any given fantasy cannot 'elicit sufficient emotional response from today's practitioner' in their original form (LaVey 1972: 25).[7]

Thus, LaVey's claim that 'the basics of Satanism have always existed' (LaVey 1969: 53, cf. 104) rests not on the veracity of an inverted Christian tradition or the worship of pre-Christian deities, but on the claim that man and nature are the essential constituents of reality, and that any religion should build on these fundamental principles. Further, as man consists of both body and mind, any religion should cater to both through philosophy and performance. The Satanism of LaVey as encapsulated in the Church of Satan is thus both a carnival of the grotesque and a world of refined tastes, a modern day Rabelaisian Abbey of Thelema preserving the best of all pasts.

On the one hand, whatever the intentions of the author, the ritual blasphemy and inverse Christianity found in *The Satanic Bible* (in particular in The Book of Satan and the ritual parts) remain as artefacts to be appropriated and interpreted by Satanists as well as outsiders. Hence it is possible for successors, critics, and rivals to see atheistic and theistic, as well as religious and reactive currents in LaVey's work. On the other hand, with regards to the transgressive thrust of The Book of Satan and the ambiguity of LaVey's project, all expressions must be related to genre, context, and intention. Any diabolical content or stereotypical practice can be a dogmatic position, but it can also be a product of

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the chosen genre or a deliberate play with grey, where irony, conscious ambiguity, or relative communication related to audience adds an extra layer of confusion on the thorned issue of representation.

Registers of transgression

> Whenever, therefore, a lie has built unto itself a throne, let it be assailed without pity and without regret, for under the domination of an inconvenient falsehood, no one can prosper. (LaVey 1969: 31–32)

(p.174) Extending on this basic framework, LaVey's understanding of the satanic can be seen as one influential articulation of a general ideology within contemporary religious Satanism: a dynamic between negotiations of individuality and negotiations of the satanic. Both have a positive and negative side; individuality is simultaneously self-assertion and nonconformity, and the satanic is at once a positive content and defined against the 'pseudo-Satanism' of others. This project of self-religion and antinomianism, when formulated in the shared cultural orientation of language and emic genealogies, constantly moves between the margins and the mainstream for authenticity and legitimacy. Here transgression plays an important role between particularity and commonality.

I have previously discussed antinomianism via the simple dichotomy of transgression 'to' and 'from', highlighting the difference between transgression that confirms the norm by going to the limit, as in most rites of passage and ostensive acting; and transgression that affirms a new order (or even the permanent lack of order) by interrogating the limit, as in much of the aesthetic and magical practice in rationalist and esoteric Satanism (Petersen 2011b). In a sense, the practice of transgression emphasizes the relative productivity of antinomianism as means to an end, whether posited by society or the Satanists themselves, in contrast to transgression as an end in itself. In both cases, cherished ideals are questioned and unspoken rules wilfully ignored; however, there is a difference between liberation of the satanic self and mimetic role play.

Although the actual transgressive practices of self-declared Satanists are varied, they frequently target the popular holy cows of sexuality and the body, religion and politics, and violence, channelling self-work through ritual, performance, and art. What is most telling is that rationalist artists such as Boyd Rice, esoteric avant-garde icons like Genesis P-Orridge, and the reactive black metal of the early 1990s use parallel registers of transgression in their antinomian projects. What is different is the underlying ideology, shading nonconformist lifestyles, bohemianism, and stage antics in very different directions. As such, the specific acts might look alike, yet the ideology of transgression can be nonexistent or elaborate. Apart from merely existing or not, such ideologies are also very different in their understanding of Satanism as an end in itself or means to a new end, reflecting the degree to which Satanism is distanced from

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demonological stereotypes. Consequently, the discursive articulation of satanic transgression marks a continuum of transgression from the vulgar to the refined, from ostension to a 'third side' beyond norm and counternorm. This distinction marks a clear yet permeable boundary between reactive and religious Satanism, even though, as we saw with King Diamond and Anton **(p.175)** LaVey, reactive discourse is used by all Satanists in their transgressions, further complicating the emic distinctions at work.

I have already discussed one such register, namely *religious blasphemy*, especially anti-Christianity. Whether it is the black mass of the early Church of Satan or the hooded figures on man-sized crucifixes dotting the concert stage of Norwegian black metal band Gorgoroth, paradigmatic elements of external discourses on the satanic are appropriated in the articulation of satanic discourse. Here, it is important to recognize the difference between blasphemy as an end in itself, as aesthetics or identity, and blasphemy as a source of necessary deconditioning. In the first instance, the use of anti-Christian words and images are instrumental in constructing a diabolical image, whether the goal is group cohesion, selling records, or notoriety. For example, when compared, the playful Satanism of commercial metal bands and the small community of teenagers studied by sociologist Kathleen Lowney exhibit the same traits, as it is a reactive engagement with satanic imagery (Lowney 1995). Of course, such a use can mask a more sophisticated understanding of the satanic identity project as we saw with King Diamond (and exhibited by Abaddon of Venom in Gavin Baddeley's interview; see Baddeley 2000: 129–130); nevertheless, it is self-contained, using the monstrous to shock and offend, stimulating the tension needed for collective and individual identity.

In contrast, blasphemy as a tool for deconditioning is widely used by both rationalist and esoteric Satanists to liberate individual participants from religious dogma, practice, and morality. In this sense, blasphemy is a transformatory device, only useful in conjunction with other, more 'constructive' pursuits, turning the necessary shock and offense into a psychodrama or mystical experience. This focus also extends the applicability of blasphemy from Christianity as such and into other religions and ideologies. For example, LaVey famously describes how drugs and gurus can be incorporated into a black mass in order to challenge (or even exorcise?) the influence of hippie mentality (LaVey 1969: 101; cf. LaVey 1972: 31–36). That said, Christianity remains a central concern for LaVey as the hegemonic ideology with which his satanic religion is in conflict, at least on the 'first level'; as such, Christian socialization occupies a role of primary hindrance for a carnal life of satanic indulgence alongside the forced consumerism and egalitarianism of late modernity. In contrast, many of the more radical esoteric groups and individuals go a great deal further in their 'deconditioning' of *all* morality and social structure.[8] **(p.176)** Needless to say,

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such activities can also be performed for the hell of it, so to speak; the main point is that blasphemy is a tool rather than dogma.

Another widespread register is *political extremism*, fascism and Nazism in particular. Observers have frequently commented on the associations between Satanism and radical political ideologies, both in the Church of Satan, in more esoteric groups such as the Temple of Set and the Order of Nine Angles, and in black metal (e.g., Baddeley 2000: 148–166, 176–227; Gardell 2003: 284–324; Goodrick-Clarke 2002: 193–232; Mathews 2009: 101–195; Moynihan and Søderlind 1998: 301–332). As with blasphemy, such affinities can be aesthetic or instrumental. They can also be quite serious, as with the Sinister Tradition discussed elsewhere in this volume. Yet, contrary to the shrill warnings of Chris Mathews, who echoes other, less informed critics here, there is no 'slippery slope' from a leather jacket or an interest in runes to a commitment to anti-Semitism and full-fledged Nazism. For example, the common interest in ariosophy and Nazi mysticism exhibited by Michael Aquino, Stephen Flowers, and Michael Moynihan, among others, which leads to an engagement with Nazi literature like Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and Karl Maria Wiligut's esoteric fabulations, does not necessarily entail an endorsement of the ideology (Aquino 2010: 413–22; Flowers and Moynihan 2007; cf. Mathews 2009: 86–87, 148–149). The 'legitimate purpose' which Mathews strains to find is more in line with the 'satanic perspective' and appropriation of 'orphaned items' discussed earlier regarding LaVey. While this might be distasteful to mainstream sensibilities, it is felt by Satanists to be a source of power and knowledge for the discerning individual.

In the same vein, LaVey himself has uttered some pretty harsh social Darwinist slogans when discussing eugenics, stratification, and the 'herd' (e.g., Barton 1992: 177–184, 209–220; cf. Mathews 2009: 132–135, 148–152). Mathews and others build a case against LaVey based on his use of the obscure political tract *Might is Right* by Ragnar Redbeard when composing the aforementioned Book of Satan. This has its origins in Michael Aquino's attempt at delegitimizing LaVey. However, while it is not untrue that LaVey used this book and even supported the general gist of the work, he did not use it uncritically; in fact, he steered clear of precisely the anti-Semitic tone of the work, exchanging Judaism and Jews with Christianity and Christians to give it a more satanic thrust.[9] Again, we have to exercise caution; what one leaves out might be as telling as what is included, and genre and context do play a role in the appropriation of **(p.177)** transgressive political tropes. The same thing can be said regarding LaVey's brief courtship with neo-Nazi and Far Right groups; apart from the cultural critique and shock effect, they seemed most valuable as foils for the church (Aquino 2009: 374–386, 885; Lyons 1988: 117–119).

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In consequence, there is no doubt that LaVey had a right-wing libertarian political view indebted to Ayn Rand and Herbert Spencer, among others. He might have harboured sympathies for Hitler and the Third Reich, or he might have dropped the occasional Nazi reference as a sinister prank or to strengthen his satanic persona. In any case, we must acknowledge division within individual groups and heterogeneity in the satanic milieu as a whole. As recent studies have shown, there is no one-to-one congruence between a specific political program and modern Satanism (Lewis 2011).

A similar argument can be presented regarding the use of radical political imagery in black metal, post-punk, neo-folk, and industrial music (e.g., Mathews 2009: 177–195). From the late 1980s to today, some groups and front figures have used fascist and Nazi aesthetics or expressed such sympathies, either in combination with satanic or more heathen aspirations. However, even a cursory engagement with these subcultural scenes reveals just as many groups and fans actively distancing themselves from political radicalism. While some groups are almost certainly explicitly Nazi or traditionalist, this cannot be extended to the scenes in toto. As stated by Ihsahn of the Norwegian band Emperor in regards to black metal:

> There are of course racist and Nazi views within the Black Metal scene, all over the world. People have strong views … If someone is a Nazi and plays Black Metal, that doesn't mean that everyone into Black Metal is also a Nazi. I don't see Nazism having much to do with Black Metal in general, except maybe in terms of the similarities between Satanism and Nazism about the strong individual. (Ihsahn, quoted in Moynihan and Søderlind 1998: 308)

Most groups use such imagery to offend mainstream sensibilities, another similarity between Satanism and neo-Nazism, I might add. As with old-school punk, a swastika might be a hakenkreuz, or it might be just the thing to stir things up. In any case, we should be extremely careful not to systematize and homogenize what are in effect very heterogeneous fields.

In the case of industrial musicians Boyd Rice of NON, Michael Moynihan of Blood Axis, and Nikolas Schreck of Radio Werewolf, all of whom are self-declared Satanists and participants in the so-called apocalypse culture of the late 1980s, the active use of fascist aesthetics seemed more in tune with a general program of situationist 'culture jamming' (Cusack 2010: **(p.178)** 95–96) than a political statement.[10] For example, the event named the '8-8-88 rally', nominally a concert with Boyd Rice's NON and a screening of the Charlie Manson movie called *The Other Side of Madness*, was a cross between political rally and performance art that celebrated the death of the 1960s (Baddeley 2000: 148). Judging from interviews with participants, it seems much of the content was chosen to 'mak[e] people anxious' (Adam Parfrey in Petros 2007:

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199), indicating a significant amount of ambiguity in the actual ideological investment. Further, in the 1980s, both Boyd Rice and Nikolas Schreck appeared on Tom Metzger's TV show *Race and Reason*, and Rice and Moynihan participated in Bob Larson's *Talkback* radio show alongside neo-Nazi James Mason (Mathews 2009: 186–190; cf. Petros, 2000: 190–197). In both cases, I have trouble finding *ideological* commitment. Regarding the latter, I find it somewhat intriguing that Chris Mathews fails to see anything other than deception in the following:

> Moynihan and Rice, for their part, support an identical assessment of cultural decay and coming apocalypse, with one simple difference: in place of Mason's undisguised racial paranoia, Moynihan and Rice substitute self-satisfied evasiveness. Despite advancing the same analysis as Mason and consistently supporting and echoing his calamitous claims, both avoid making a single explicitly racist comment. (Mathews 2009: 189)

Contrary to Mathews, I see Moynihan and Rice's silence as rather telling. Just like The Book of Satan, it seems a radicalization of LaVeys's tongue-in-cheek cultural critique rather than an ideological investment in the Far Right as a political project. In all cases, one is left wondering, which is probably exactly the point. Naturally, aesthetization and ambiguous play *can* result in ideological desensitization, but we cannot extend individual cases without reasonable reflection on difference in style and substance.

A third common register of transgression is *violence and obscenity*, especially as it is connected to the body and to articulations of gender. Gry Mørk has convincingly argued that black metal of the early 1990s was a cult of masculinity, using a developed and agreed upon anti-aesthetic, a language of evil, nature, and darkness, as well as a range of self-mutilating and destructive acts to reassert power in a contested field of gender and body (Mørk 2009). There is no doubt that the use of medieval weapons and armour, black clothes, spikes, and corpse paint demarcates a pervasive **(p.179)** style associated with extreme actions, which is often reinforced by the use of self-mutilation and animal remains on stage, not to mention the acts of church burning and homicide (Baddeley 2000: 189–212; Moynihan and Søderlind 1998). Nevertheless, as with political extremism, we have to first distinguish between style, milieu, and individuals. Second, although the violence and obscenity was ostensibly real, it was also symbolic in the vast majority of cases; aside from the crimes committed by a small minority, violence usually took a sonic form, with blast-beats on grotesquely distorted guitars, growling or shrieking vocals and fast-paced drums. Both the performances and lyrics supported the satanic style, with pyrotechnics and inverted crucifixes to underscore the violent message.

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Such violence between symbolic and real resembles the 'aesthetic terrorism' of the historical avant-garde, post-punk, and industrial groups (Petros 2007), and there is often no real distinction to be made on the surface between 'pure' aesthetics and a more instrumental use. Keith Kahn-Harris's study of extreme metal (2007) provides a useful analytical framework for understanding the use of violence through transgression, both as a negotiation of 'transgressive' and 'mundane subcultural capital', and as 'reflexive anti-reflexivity' or 'knowing better but deciding not to know' (ibid.: 145). Regarding capital, the use of ostensive violence through enacting cultural scripts must be understood as an interaction between members of the scene and the wider public; transgression thus becomes a way of gaining status through asserting individuality (ibid.: ch. 6). Reflexive anti-reflexivity, while primarily used to understand the ironic play with radical politics, can then be said to be constitutive of the ambiguous use of cultural Others to express the values of the scene (ibid.: ch. 7).

However, contemporary black metal groups have evolved considerably, now spanning the entire range from underground extremism over esoteric practice to mainstream business. In addition, when we turn to rationalist and esoteric Satanists, there is seldom the same pervasive focus on explicit acts of violence but rather more subtle acts of subversion. For most spokespersons, they are instruments of expression, initiation, or gnosis, making it yet another example of culture jamming as a tool for deconditioning and transformation. Still, we should not forget the ritual component discussed earlier. Even though she is not a Satanist, Cosey Fanni Tutti, a frequent collaborator with Genesis P-Orridge from the 1970s onwards, has described the difference between violent transgression as practice and analysis in a way that captures the creative and anti-intellectual component:

> It's great as you're going along and learning and finding reasons why you like the aesthetic of it, the feel of it, and the ideas it provokes. I think improvisation will **(p.180)** always be there for me rather than sitting down and trying to analyze things and make something from that analysis. By that point it's become a totally empty gesture. I like charged gestures, so the more real it can be, even if you use fake blood to try and enhance that feeling, then that's fine with me. It's about vulnerability as well. You're laying yourself open completely and then seeing what happens. And that's what you learn from. You learn from mistakes as well as from positive experiences. You don't learn by playing it safe, that's for sure. (Cosey Fanni Tutti in Sprott 2009)

Such performative 'charged gestures', feeding off the audience and the immediate experience of the situation, precisely transcends the division between 'real' and 'symbolic' just like the blasphemy of the ritual chamber.

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Turning briefly to gender and sexuality, we can find many examples of appropriation which, on the one hand represent an inversion or negation of Christian morality, but on the other claim to be truly post-Christian in the sense of using stereotypes to subvert and transcend. These are, of course, obscene in a different way. For example, *The Satanic Bible* argues for real sexual liberation (including a liberation from the unhealthy equation between identity, happiness, and sex in late modern society) and an embracing of your fetishes without guilt (in contrast to the removal of fetishes), which seems a common sentiment throughout the satanic milieu (LaVey 1969: 66–75, 81–87). Simultaneously, Satanists of all stripes often utilize stereotypical sexual roles attributed to the witch and the Satanist, which reaffirm rather essential gender roles (see e.g., LaVey 2002 [1971] for a (contested) example). Nevertheless, the 'third side' seems at work, addressing the balance claimed to be lacking in modern culture. In addition, any appropriation of roles is instrumental in getting what you want, as the natural (body, drives, needs) is negotiated through the artificial (LaVey 1969: 110–113). Liberation through the unification of opposites, which includes accessing the pigeonholes of culture, also seems a driving force behind the common interest in sexual magic amongst the esoterically inclined. Such practices not only contradict the perceived system of Christian morality, it actively performs transgression (e.g., Schreck and Schreck 2002; Dawn and Flowers 2001).[11]

Returning to the transgression 'from' of reactive Satanism and the transgression 'to' of religious Satanism in the light of these registers, we see two distinct positions that are both interrelated and in contest. In *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White calls the mimetic use of transgression 'from' 'inversion' and 'world-upside down', something that reorders values and worldviews, but does not alter them (1986: 31–59). **(p.181)** This reversal is actually the mirror image of societal demonization; what society excludes as demonic, is celebrated as the inverse, confirming that we are still within the norm itself. In contrast, transgression 'to' is not merely inversion, it is hybridity, a blend of strategies to actively shift 'the very terms of the system itself, by erasing and interrogating the relationships which constitute it' (ibid.: 58). Thus the symbolic polarities of societal demonization and countercultural inversion are countered by a 'terrorist' perspective from the outside, where a political or mimetic rationality is subsumed by a satanic one, whether this is expressed in esoteric or aesthetic terms. Nonetheless, they look alike, spurring the further question of how similarity and difference is articulated.

Sanitization and 'satanization' of the satanic

> It would be foolish to ignore symbols that have potency amongst the herd—we leverage them to our advantage. It doesn't matter what their origins might be—from sacred scriptures to pop culture. (Peter H. Gilmore quoted in Farren 2006)

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The ambiguous role of reactive Satanism is as much due to mutual exclusion processes understood as a process of sanitization not in time but in space. This returns us to the point of sanitization, because it is obvious that the mutual exclusion of, for example, black metal from a rationalist discourse or Anton LaVey from a radically reactive genealogy points to different traditions of excess —where reactive Satanism is directly related to the negotiation of masculinity and subversive spectacle found in theatre metaphor, there is no explicit ideology of transgression, only an agreement on opposition. On the other hand, this ostensive practice is more of an ambiguous 'other' in the traditions constructed by rationalist and esoteric Satanists, as it is not the opposition in itself but the direction is takes that is judged wrong. To understand this, we have to understand reactive satanic discourse as a mode of discursive practice constantly tempered by strategies of 'satanization' and sanitization in the articulation of a satanic position. I will discuss each strategy in turn.

Satanization

In general, 'satanization' refers to the ascription of a 'satanic' mode to the discourse and practices of self or other. In its *negative* aspect, it is a particular version of the well-known strategy of 'othering'. By ascribing the terms **(p.182)** Satanist, Satanism, and satanic and related cognates to discourses, practices, and communities of the unwanted or perceived dangerous, the cohesion of the community is strengthened by exclusion. In this case, 'Satanism', of course, refers to societal and moral evil, often equal to the Christian demonological model or the secularized version proposed by secular agencies. As such, negative satanization is related to David Frankfurter's analysis of direct and indirect mimesis or the living out, directly or by proxy, of social narratives of evil, with the specific intention of explaining and overcoming it, thus cleansing oneself of any taint (Frankfurter, 2006).

Outside the satanic milieu, this strategy can be followed from large-scale social othering of pagans or witches to the smaller-scale othering within the pagan or Left-Hand Path milieux of those who are perceived to dabble in black magic, radical politics, or perversion (Evans 2007: 116–22, 175–76). As such, there is always a smaller fish to point to, an 'us versus them' tactic both isolating an unwanted other through estrangement and building a wanted sense of community through affinity (cf. Lincoln 1989).[12] What is important here, is that the ascription rarely refers to real discourse and practice, but rather to what is *perceived* as satanic in the unwanted other, thereby cleansing oneself of any association with it. Stallybrass and White describe this as a dynamic of 'high' and 'low', where both elements are actively defining the other as unwanted or lacking. However, when correlated to social power, the 'high', with its satanization (called 'demonization') of the 'world upside down', is in fact dominating the 'low', but also selectively engaging with it (1986: 4, 31, 56–59). Conversely, the 'low' can position themselves in relation to someone even lower,

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becoming a temporary and relative ‘high’ in the process, or they can shift from inversion of the symbols of the ‘high’ to a ‘hybrid’ mode of invention.

Negative satanization is also employed by satanic groups and individuals to distance oneself from naïve, adolescent, or simply dangerous interpretations of Satanism, which fit as symbolic ‘lows’ of the milieu with their mimetic and inversionary strategies. As such, the recurrent strategy of the Church of Satan of dubbing other types of Satanism ‘pseudo-satanic’ or as Devil worship (e.g., Barton 1990: 31, 49, 70), is exactly mirroring the satanization of society while recovering and retaining unqualified Satanism to the ideology and practice of the church. By saying ‘we are satanic, they are Devil worshipers’, the church is effectively upholding the demonological frame for other Satanists while reforming it for themselves. This is actively repositioning ‘Satanism’ as a new ‘high’ in relation to other ‘lows’, **(p.183)** thereby distancing the low of ‘pseudo-Satanism’, which is kept outside Satanism proper, and defining the church through comparison. Conversely, the counterstrategy of dismissing the Church of Satan as a self-help group or a benign philosophy is an inverted variant of the satanization theme used by black metal groups in the early 1990s and many esoteric Satanists today, in effect negating the rationalist interpretations of the church from the standpoint of ‘true’ Satanism.

In the satanic milieu, where Satan and Satanist is redefined as something positive, satanization is also used to recruit or reassess wanted allies to the cause. This *positive* satanization refers to the strategies of emic historiography and ‘emic sociology’ (cf. Hammer 2001), where marginal or misunderstood actors are reinterpreted as satanic, which now naturally refers to something good. This strengthens the cohesion of the community by inclusion. Sometimes this is done by accepting the previous satanization of others, but now in an ironic mode; in other cases, it is wholly new. For example, LaVey’s *Satanic Bible* and *Satanic Rituals* are peppered with rereadings of significant ‘others’ all recruited as satanic in the specific articulation espoused by LaVey: freethinkers, renaissance men, romantics, Decadents, scientists, bankers, leaders, entrepreneurs, avant-garde artists, and so on (Petersen 2011a; Faxneld, forthcoming). Mirroring the strategy of negative othering as a strategy of appropriation, satanization now sets new boundaries of affinity down through the ages or within marginal groups, bolstering ‘Satanism’ as something widespread, powerful, and naturally recurring, even without the name. Accordingly, a satanic ‘tradition’ is built by appropriating all groups with positive attributes as satanic, in effect discursively equating ‘satanic’ with whatever is congruent with the collective identity.[13]

But this is not done only by LaVey and the Church of Satan. The appropriation of Advaita Vedanta and other ancient philosophical systems of antiduality by the group Satanic Reds works as a satanization of the exotic, as does the very prevalent appropriation of Tantra and tantric discourses and practices in the

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satanic milieu. Perhaps the best example is the widespread adoption of the term 'Left-Hand Path', which in the West is traditionally associated with evil and perversion, but now adopted by a host of groups as a self-designation (see e.g., Evans 2007). In the nomenclature of Stallybrass and White, 'hybridization' facilitates the creation of modern Satanism as something 'satanic', which is both de-otherized as a positive identity in emic discourse, yet still connected to demonologies as **(p.184)** something threatening, which gives it power through tension. This ambiguity is, of course, based on misunderstanding or misrepresenting the actual nature of the threat by both parties, a fact that leads us to the other side of the coin, namely sanitization.

Sanitization

As a general term, sanitization refers to the cleaning tactics of discursive articulation, for example through symbolization, psychologization, secularization, and aesthetization. All above-ground, formal Satanist groups reinterpret the satanic as something ambiguous and morally 'sinister', yet legally 'clean'. LaVey and almost all successors stress that Satanism has nothing to do with child abuse, animal or human sacrifice, and other stereotypical practices of mythical Satanists (e.g., LaVey 1969: 89). As such, LaVey, and by extension the Church of Satan, is rather famous for the 'law-and-order' position, combining an adversarial stance of antinomianism, elitism, and social Darwinism with a distinctly conservative respect for the body politic. This is, of course, a matter of self-preservation, in itself cited as a satanic virtue across the satanic milieu. The latent demonology of society, periodically activated as with the satanic panic of the 1980s, makes it imperative to disassociate from criminal acts as a matter of survival. But in a wider perspective, sanitization underlies the basic movement from Christian to non-Christian legitimation and so the specificities of the antinomian self-religions of the milieu.

Again, this strategy has both a positive and a negative aspect, or self and other. In its *positive* aspect, sanitization is the natural correlative to positive satanization, effectively cleansing the satanic of any unwanted connotations, practices, or aspects. As such, sanitization is a basic strategy of identity work and a basic tactic in the construction of tradition. One particularly good example is the aesthetization and symbolization techniques previously discussed. Here the political extremism or obscene violence associated with the satanic is aestheticized as an artistic style or symbolized as a satanic practice that can be *misrepresented* as violent. Thus 'violence' is sanitized into transgression as an artistic statement or symbolic undertaking. It is not really violent, but only acting or looking as such; alternatively, it is only violent when looked at from a 'binary' or normative position—metaphysically, it is a wholly other, using antinomian violence as a means to an 'a-nomian' end. In any case, violence becomes *aisthesis* and *poiesis*, creative production through symbolic violence, rather than physical violence. That said, the second generation of 'apocalypse' **(p.185)** Satanists like Boyd Rice and Nikolas Schreck did not care to sanitize

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anything, making the division between reactive ostension and rationalist Satanism rather slim.

Another example is the secularization and scientification strategies used by LaVey, Gilmore, and other rationalist groups, effectively sanitizing the satanic of any *altmodisch* connections to Goetic magic, pacts, black masses, and sacrifices (Petersen 2011a: 76–91). What was traditionally perceived as ‘of the Devil’ or supernatural, is now explainable in scientific, secular, psychological, and/or natural terms, either as something fully understood, such as psychological venting of emotions, or as something soon to be explained. Thus, anything esoteric and occult is sanitized of the connection to the naïvely ‘real’, which again aids the satanization of various reinterpreted predecessors. Combined with violence, LaVey, for example, reinterprets sacrifice as energy work, thus transposing the ‘simple’ sacrifice into more ‘advanced’ modes such as masturbation, discarding the violent blood sacrifice as unnecessary (LaVey 1969: 88, 132). In the same vein, the Devil is disembedded from a diabolical frame and reinserted into the self-religious discourse of empowerment and self-actualization.

Inversely, we can also see the appropriation of esoteric material by LaVey, Aquino, and countless others as a sanitization technique, as they re-describe Satanism as something outside the purview of the Christian, demonological view. Satanism becomes something ‘clean’, exactly because it is misunderstood, just like Paganism, witchcraft, and other ‘occult’ and ‘deviant’ movements. Here the prevalent appeal to the Left-Hand Path is a case in point, redefining Satanism as species of antinomian religion predating Christianity. Combined with the exoticism of Tantra, Advaita Vedanta, and so on, Satanism is transposed from the fixed moral standpoint of Western Christianity to a religious discourse embracing both good and evil, but from a ‘third’ or ‘evolved’ perspective of nonduality. This is a common strategy across the cultic milieu.

As a *negative* aspect, sanitization can be ascribed to the ambitions of others as diluting, ironic, or half-assed. In other words, within the satanic milieu, some groups see the sanitizing strategies of the organized rationalist and esoteric groups as weak attempts at explaining the true force of the satanic away, namely the satanic itself: evil, transgressive, and grotesque. LaVey’s ‘law-and-order perspective’, for example, while clearly functioning as a role model for countless formal and informal groups in the satanic milieu, is denigrated by many reactive Satanists as humanism devoid of any diabolical essence, as witnessed in the Scandinavian black metal subculture of the 1990s. This position is also echoed by esoteric groups on the fringes of the margins, so to speak, where the antinomianism of the Left-Hand **(p.186)** Path is invoked as a guiding principle, challenging more ‘tamed’ rationalist and esoteric Satanists to reassess their adversarial stance. Even so, they seem to be either small minorities or mainly literary, both because of a self-professed elitism and because of the untenable

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nature of such articulations. Given that this reactivation of the sinister plays into the social demonology, it is impossible to tolerate in the milieu as a whole.

Conclusion

> Darkthrone is certainly not a Nazi band nor a political band, those of you who still might think so, you can lick Mother Mary's asshole in eternity. (Sleeve notes on the album *Panzerfaust* 1995)

By examining one element of satanic discourse as identity and community building, the interrelated concepts of transgression and antinomianism, we have seen how transgression has to be carefully maintained and negotiated in order to maximize impact and recognizability. Accordingly, from the Church of Satan to black metal devotees, common registers of transgression from religion, ethics, politics, and decent manners are accessed and used. However, a balance has to be struck between satanization strategies and the sanitization necessary to be different from less hybrid understandings of Satanism. In other words, there is often a play with satanic stereotypes that is also a distancing from them as demonologies or purely mimetic playacting. Most established groups today combine traditional occult and anti-Christian modes of the satanic with more psychological and secular modes of late modernity, and they take offence at outsiders placing Satanism within the purview of moral panics and insiders performing a purely reactive Satanism through cemetery vandalism, church burnings, and crime.

Further, both particularity and mainstreaming can work for transformative and liberatory ends. On the one hand, the negative element of difference and particularity is aimed at both the perceived mainstream and rival groups and discourses within the satanic milieu. On the other, there is a constant flux between margin and mainstream producing new ways of expressing the satanic, making the relationship between the satanic milieu and the mainstream of late modernity more complex than simple hypotheses of adoption or rejection implies. Both difference and sameness are constructed and performed. Consequently, it is important to recognize that every local centre considers itself sophisticated, original, or authentic, making it imperative to look beyond reactive anti-Christianity and LaVey's more rationalist interpretation to capture the many-sided nature of contemporary Satanism.

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Notes:

This chapter expands on material from ‘“Smite Him Hip and Thigh”: Satanism, Violence, and Transgression’, in *Violence and New Religious Movements*, ed. James R. Lewis, 351–376, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011; and ‘Heart of Darkness: A Topography of Modern Satanism’, the introductory chapter of my PhD thesis ‘Between Darwin and the Devil: Modern Satanism as Discourse, Milieu, and Self,’ NTNU Trondheim, Norway, 2011. I would like to thank my co-editor Per Faxneld for important comments and corrections.

(1) . With their return in the 1990s, Mercyful Fate continued with the theme of Devil worship in songs like ‘Angel of Light’ and ‘Witches Dance’ (*Time* 1994); ‘Lucifer’ and ‘Holy Water’ (*Into the Unknown* 1996); ‘The Night’ (*Dead Again* 1998); and ‘Sold My Soul’ and ‘Kiss the Demon’ (9 1999).

(2) . See also Eugene Gallagher’s contribution in the present volume.

(3) . This is comparable to LaVey’s consistent assessment of *The Satanic Bible* as a whole being a primitive ‘primer’ (Moynihan and Søderlind 1998: 233–234) or a book ‘with too many exclamation points’ which ‘won’t strain people’s intellects too far’ (Baddeley 2000: 75).

(4) . For that, both LaVey and his church successors refer to the ‘Nine Satanic Statements’ and the entire Book of Lucifer (LaVey 1969: 25 and 37–107 respectively; cf. Gilmore, 2007: 26–27).

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(5) . See also the chapters ‘Satanism in Theory and Practice’ and ‘How to Perform Satanic Rituals’ in Barton 1990, especially pages 62–63, 94, 98; for more recent treatments by successors and devotees, see Gausten, 2009; Gilmore, 2007: 186–194; Paradise, 2007: 29–35.

(6) . Whether this was what LaVey intended when he founded the Church of Satan in 1966 is doubtful, as the book of retrospection clearly antedate and systematize a progressive development into a planned process. Nevertheless, LaVey seems to be true to his own vision throughout, even if he moves from the cathartic blasphemies of the 1960s to an isolated misanthropy of the 1970s and 1980s and a brief return to the spotlight in the 1990s.

(7) . For more on this construction of tradition, see Faxneld forthcoming; Petersen 2011a, 2012. See e.g., LaVey 1969: 55–63, 96–105, 107–272; and the whole volume of LaVey 1972 for examples.

(8) . See, for example, Jacob Senholt’s chapter on the Order of Nine Angles in the present volume, or the interview with Genesis P-Orridge in Vale and Wallace 2001: 122–127.

(9) . This is examined thoroughly by Eugene Gallagher in the present volume.

(10) . This scene is amply documented by Adam Parfrey 1990 (1987), 2000; and GeorgePetros 2007. See also Baddeley 2000: 148–166; Mathews 2009: 142–145, 187–190.

(11) . See Amina O. Lap’s contribution in this volume for more on LaVey’s views on sexuality and gender.

(12) . In the present volume, Rafal Smoczynski has discussed this as ‘they-’ and ‘we-frameworks’.

(13) . For reactive and esoteric examples of tradition building, see e.g., Petros 2007 and Schreck and Schreck 2002.

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The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity
Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen

Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

The Making of Satanic Collective Identities in Poland

From Mechanic to Organic Solidarity

Rafal Smoczynski

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.003.0009

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter examines the recent developments of modern Satanism in Poland through the lens of post-structural theory. A central thesis is that the collective identities of Satanists, especially online, are formed in dialogue with prevalent public articulations of moral panic. The anti-cult and anti-satanic stereotypes thus form an important symbolic background for identity work, forcing Satanists to define what they are not. This in turn is reflected in the positive ascriptions of Satanism, understood as an adversarial space appropriating well-established ideologies of emancipation and reason in contrast to the transgressions of "anti-Christians". The chapter further relates these developments to post-foundational theory and asks the question whether this is Satanism at all, and whether the collective identities can be elaborated by turning to theories on new social movements. To discuss this, Durkheim's concept of solidarity is invoked to explain the move from "mechanic" groups espousing LaVey to more heterogeneous "organic" networks of post-Satanism.

Keywords: Satanism, Poland, cyber-Satanism, anti-cult idiom, satanic identities, discourse analysis, post-foundational theory, Emile Durkheim

Entering the problem

Satanic collective identities in Poland coalesced in the context of mid-1990s postcommunist anomie, a time when moral panics alarmed the public sphere, leading to construction of various folk devil categories. Collective moral

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certainty was being defined at that time. Moral panics, including anticult moral panic, functioned as struggles to impose a strict definition of collective normative structures, as well as attendant religious and national identities (Hall and Smoczynski 2010). The 1999 survey 'New Religious Movements in Poland', with a representative sample of 1,040 respondents over fifteen years old, showed Satanists were attributed the most negative image of all religious groups. Ninety-six percent of respondents used the 'sect' label for Satanists (Hare Krishna monks followed with 28 percent), and respondents declared the most hostile attitude towards them. According to the survey authors, Satanism constitutes the prototypical model of a destructive sect (Doktor 2002).

During this heated period, social-control agents identified and aligned new religious movements (NRMs) with satanic cults. Such anticult moral panic articulations were located in institutional settings (for example, mass media), which affected the way the public identified enemies of the normative system. Usually, influenced by Catholic social **(p.190)** agents' articulations, local authorities, central governmental bodies, law enforcement agencies, and other public figures used an anticult idiom originally formulated by anticult movements (Mikulska 2002). One of the most potent symbols used by moral panic proponents was the antisatanic stereotype, structured according to the logic of counter-subversive ideology as defined by David Bromley (1991). This ideological pattern places cult members outside the conventional social order; endows subversives with destructive and corrupting power, including mind-control techniques; and claims cultists employ their eerie powers to undermine the social order. Polish anticult reports contain numerous examples that claim sects are active in every possible social sphere (Goldberger et al. 2010). This 'gothic' idiom clearly mirrors widespread antisatanic imagery. Eventually, the anticult discursive project constructed an effective institutionalized framework of power knowledge (specializing in, for example, framing issues, setting agendas, and introducing certain policies), which managed to alter public regulations on NRMs. By the end of the 1990s, officials passed stricter laws to regulate the relationship between religious organizations and the state because of rapidly growing social concern over NRMs (ibid).

I begin my review of the problem with this introduction because the anticult idiom is the crucial symbolic background that oriented newly emerging Polish satanic collective identities. Thus, as one Polish Satanist made clear, the hostile environment of the 1990s constrained the attempts of satanic adherents to form a registered religious community:

> Society does not want to see its shadow and each organization pretending to be called a 'social accuser' will be deemed the enemy and used as a scapegoat. The satanic movement is not a cult of martyrdom, thus I see no reason why we should become martyrs of faith, which clearly would be the case if we were about to make our activity officially visible … I do not see

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> the possibility of organizing a nationwide satanic front; I cannot conceive of any objective this organization could possible serve. It is hopeless to fight with the image of Satanism, and I do not think this stereotype would be rejected in the foreseeable future. The future of Satanism online means chaos. We are supposed to create individual web pages, and we should start setting up local communities outside the internet, whose members know each other personally and have the option of regular meetings. (Kvik 2009; my translation.)

As in many other places in the Western world, Polish Satanism is generally a cyber community (cf. Petersen 2002). In this chapter, I therefore focus on cyber Satanism, especially as related to Poland's largest and oldest satanic website, satan.pl. (cf. Smoczynski 2009). I further explore how the mid-1990s **(p.191)** anticult moral panic triggered complex counter-stigmatization strategies among Satanists, who eventually instituted a discursive surface of inscriptions for their collective identities. To better understand the structure of discourse that oriented social interactions, it is important to outline crucial themes resonating with Polish Satanists from 1990s to the present.

Evoking satanic subjectivities

In analyzing these discursive strategies, I am concerned with a tangible social ontology, not merely textual descriptions. Here, I draw on the assumptions of linguistic turn in social sciences, inspired first by De Saussure (1955). These extend language to any meaningful elements of the social field, not narrowly limited to linguistic acts.

In this regard, I especially follow the Wittgensteinian (1953) approach as developed for social theory by Laclau and Mouffe (1985), which states that language games comprise both linguistic exchanges and the social actions in which they are embedded. Thus, I will not separate satanic cyber discourse from this community's social performances here. In such a context, Satanists' discourse is a practice of articulation; that is, instituting meaning for all given social objects. Accordingly, the analysis strives to determine the ideological frameworks through which the Polish satanic movement shaped its collective identities, legitimation strategies, and variety of ideological structures that were capable of interpellating subjects during the antagonistic period of the 1990s (cf. Howarth 2000).

This chapter stresses emancipatory themes, which seemingly functioned as crucial signifiers that formed the subject positions of Polish Satanists during the initial period of satan.pl. In line with a post-Marxist philosophical position, I refer here to the constitution of ideological substance that acted as an effective instance to evoke satanic subjectivities. This follows the classic Althusserian concept that the advent of any subjectivity must analytically contrast with the emergence of ideological structures (Althusser 1994: 128–131). Inchoate social

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agents assume specific social roles in the intersubjective network because of ideological interpellation exercised by external agents or through the act of self-interpellation.

Following the Althusserian concept, I am, nevertheless, perfectly aware of modifications to post-Marxist scholarship; consequently, I pay special attention to developments which argue that ideologically interpellated subjectivities are fixed by floating signifiers, meaning they cannot be defined as stable entities, because such precarious subjectivities are always open to new rearticulations, insofar as they are not guaranteed by any **(p.192)** prediscursive transcendental instance (see Laclau 1990: 39–41; Howarth and Stavrakakis 2000: 14). Hence, the satanic ideological formation analysed in the following represents a contingent social phenomenon, which, as it is contended, was harmonized by emancipatory signifiers.

There is another point to clarify before proceeding. Although scholars of discourse theory emphasize that the performative act of naming triggers the emergence of social formations, I will avoid the confined box of textual idealism. Following recent elaborations of Laclau (2005) and other scholars related to this current of discourse theory, I instead state that cohesion of the satanic formation cannot be reduced merely to its symbolic identification based on linguistic elements (cf. Stavrakakis 1999; Howarth and Torfing 2005). Here, affectivity enters the ensuing analysis.

If we intend to survey the complete picture of Satanism understood as a social formation, we should acknowledge the particular importance of satanic acts of ostentation, transgressions, adversarial and antinomian performances, practices found in the satanic milieu (cf. Petersen 2009). This is not to deny that the scale and intensity of ostentation exposed in a given satanic group may vary to a great extent, however, if not in equal degree, in degrees that approximate; all satanic groups possess the capacity of affectivity crucial for establishing coherent social ontology. According to Laclau (2005: 111), affect is indispensable if signification and consequently any social structure are possible.

On the other hand, we should not make the mistake of the proponents of 'affective idealism': affect does not constitute any substance that could exist independently of language; affect operates precisely through cathexical investments in the chain of signifiers (Laclau 2005: 111). Collective identities are forged through the practice of naming—a performative act of deploying certain signifiers that are supplemented with the affective components. We may add that while Satanists contingently select signifiers, that is to say, particular themes come and go, affectivity is a necessary component for any social formation to be effective. Thus, I contend, in the Polish satanic movement, affectivity's negative

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potential underpins its unity, and this potential is not subordinated to any positive and at the same time contingent ideological themes.

Return to enlightenment

As may be expected, overwhelming moral panic pressure caused a significant number of discursive strategies deployed by Satanists from satan.pl to revolve around defining what 'Satanists are not'. The making **(p.193)** of satanic identity has involved constant attempts to challenge widespread 'gothic' anti-Satanist stereotypes, which were usually triggered by media coverage related to legend trips (for example, grave desecrations or animal mutilations) practiced by adolescent Satanists. Paradoxically, the opposition to adolescent or reactive Satanism (Petersen 2009: 6–10) introduced the most vivid 'they' framework, which served as a negative point of reference against which Satanists from satan.pl could demonstrate an affirmed 'we' framework.[1] This quote from satan.pl by Neron, where he condemns the acts of cemetery vandalism, is representative: 'The pseudo-Satanists are ordinary criminals who should be eliminated; they harm the reputation of genuine Satanism' (Neron 2004; my translation).

Rebuking reactive Satanism is not only limited to condemning legend trips. Satanists from satan.pl often emphasize their authenticity by confronting adherents of Satanism who follow primitive patterns of anti-Christianity. Kvik, the leading figure of the Polish cyber community, argues the anti-Christian attitude of many Satanists is pointless:

> Your idea of Satanism is too narrow to encompass today's complex world. It is much more convenient to define a single enemy, and identify yourself based on that … I ask you, what distinguishes you from the rest of humanity, which you scornfully call a flock of sheep? Nobody can answer this question. (Kvik 2003; my translation.)

Kvik notes 'pseudo-Satanists' use outdated interpretative schemas, which identify Christianity as the major enemy for satanic liberated spirits, while he finds it a vivid example of attacking an imaginary enemy. Instead, Kvik highlights the secularization tendencies undermining the powerful position of Catholicism in Poland, making aggressive anti-Christianity useless:

> Times have changed … You know very well the average Polish citizen has no idea about religion nor does he or she care about it. Religion is over. People who are taking part in surveys instinctively confess Christianity, though most of them are not able even to name the Ten Commandments. Your Satanism is a tilting at the windmills; you want to attack an object that is powerful only in your imagination. You are blind. (Kvik 2003; my translation.)

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(p.194) Another satan.pl online author, Acheront, argues, along similar lines, that even if Satanists' hostility towards Christianity is justified to some extent, in most cases it distorts their autonomous identity:

> Blinded by hatred toward the Church, the clergy and all that goes with it, the hatred expressed in active aggression, either verbal or physical, represents the pathetic attitude of those who are doing this and it clearly manifests a symptom of their lack of knowledge of Satanism, which places greater emphasis on improving yourself than harm to the enemy. (Acheront 2002; my translation)

These excerpts are empirical examples that demonstrate the relevance of Petersen's theoretical elaborations, developed in this volume on satanic legitimization strategies, that is, 'transgressions from' and 'transgressions to'. The latter category would probably be accurate to describe one of satan.pl's major strategic goals, that is, their attempts to find an affirmative locus to inscribe satanic collective identities defined by its own principles of transgression. However, whether Polish Satanists have managed to build an alternative space governed by distinctive premises of transgression is a matter of dispute. It seems the Satanists from satan.pl have not attained 'something else' or 'something more', they instead contribute to a well-established emancipatory tradition usually not associated with the occult. Namely, their adversarial stance shares common traits with existing cultural patterns embedded in the individualistic current of the Enlightenment tradition that attacks the primacy of groups over the individual.

Satanists oppose all elements criticized by the liberated individuals of the Enlightenment. They take issue with all the traditions of the former regime: collective moral order, hierarchy, the primacy of society over individuals, religious power. With respect to contemporary Satanists, the Roussauian anticollectivist stance that 'everything is good … in the hand of men degenerates' (Rousseau 1964: 55) particularly applies to religious ideologies that are perceived as the embodiment of the social; that is the very reason why Satanism embraces a critical stance towards religious commitment, and this secular attitude applies to all forms of religious affiliations:

> Satanism, instead of worshiping evil, hatred, perversion, blasphemy and crimes against humanity appears to be something radically different. It allows man to liberate himself from the narrow prison of religious dogmas; it helps to perceive all religions and philosophies with the open eyes. Satanism says, 'Go and search, investigate, and listen to those who have something interesting to say, even if they are the most fanatic Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, etc.' (Nadah 2009a; my translation.)

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(p.195) In short, Polish Satanists' various transgressions do not construct another norm. Their declarations of liberation and empowerment mark an ideological return to the established tradition of radical secular persuasions.

This is evident, for example, in their criticism of metaphysics. For satan.pl author Nadah, 'Religions explain in their terms the origin of the world in which we live. A Satanist accepts as true only scientific explanation, not myths' (Nadah 2009b; my translation). Yet another contributor to the page, Lectus, demonstrates a different example of this ideological trend, almost mirroring Comte's (2009) thesis from *Positive Philosophy* on 'The Law of Three Stages', underlined by a rather naïve assumption about the inevitability of scientific progress and secularization. He asserts atheism is a higher form of development because it emerged at a more mature stage of humankind's history. 'The progress represents the pure law of evolution: the more perfect arises from the less perfect' (Lectus 2009; my translation). These slightly Darwinist passages identify Satanists as prophets of the future perfectibility of man since they have discovered the rational principle governing the course of history: after rejecting superstition and collectivist religious domination, all men will be like Satanists—free and rational.

Testing satanic identities

Such articulations of Satanism from satan.pl, that are more in line with certain circles in Scandinavian countries, constitute a local variation of rationalist Satanism, which does not build its core identity with the occult or esoteric components (cf. Petersen 2009; Søderlind and Dyrendal 2009). Further, aesthetization of violence, masculine brute force, or neopagan elements blended with occult symbols occur extremely rarely in the Polish satanic community (as opposed to black metal culture). Does this mean Polish Satanists do not need any religious commitment or religious symbolic ostentation?

Not necessarily. According to Nadah, Satanism constitutes a specific *secular* meaning of religion, not oriented toward transcendental God but with a focus on man; the humanistic potential is the object of worship for many individuals from satan.pl:

> Do we need a religion or not? If religion means my existence, I will answer, 'Yes, I need such a religion'. On the other hand, by that broad interpretation I can say, 'No, I do not need any religion'. What I really need is my mind, my free will, self-improvement, the revolt against every force that opposes my nature. I do not need any gods; I am God for myself … Is this Satanism? I think so. (Nadah 2009b; my translation.)

(p.196) I am not arguing the term 'Satanism' should be abandoned in analysis of satan.pl participants' ideological profile. Naturally, their emancipatory tones represent a variation on the mainstream satanic heritage codified by Anton LaVey, marked, however, with local flavours that do not comport with the clear-

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cut box of LaVeyan doctrine. When satan.pl's identity is tested, Polish Satanists rework the self-reflexive project only partly influenced by the Church of Satan's dominant narrative.

Briefly stated, the discursive strategies of satan.pl's members demonstrate the LaVeyan project has a limited hegemonic position in providing a central point of reference for constituting their subjectivities. Individuals from satan.pl selectively form their distinctiveness using a variety of interpretative schemata proposals. In practice, these self-reflexive language games contribute to develop a loose fragmented identity, which seems to revise the concept of institutionalized Satanism itself:

> Satanism does not say, 'Go and become this and that'. It does not offer a specific purpose. It says only, 'Go and stand up'. For unconscious and weak people, the lack of aim means disaster. For those who are strong it is a blessing. Here we are at the beginning of the road and you can choose from several options … If your definition of Satanism places emphasis on freedom, then Satanism means the rejection of ballast that is unnecessary and embarrassing. This ballast could be also Satanism itself. (Góra 2001; my translation.)

Testing satanic identities sometimes brings peculiarly hybrid constructs, as articulated by Kvik, who admits that while forging his satanic self, he drew inspiration from Buddhist texts. Buddhism, as he claims, provides the most valuable intellectual offer for Satanists striving to expand their sovereignty (Kvik 2003). These dynamics of identity testing represent postmodern logic of constructing self-reflexive narrative projects, which might offer another example of 'imagined community' (cf. Anderson 1991).

To some extent, these ideological themes confirm Kennet Granholm's insights, published in this volume, discussing the limited cognitive relevance of the Satan figure in the contemporary dark milieu. Granholm argues that instead of using the satanic label, it would be analytically more relevant to employ terms related to the Left-Hand Path, which, on the one hand, highlight antinomian discursive strategies and, on the other, open up possible lines of comparative studies on the interplay between Satanists and other individualistically oriented movements. There are clear similarities among Polish cyber Satanists and the indicators proposed by Granholm: the ideology of individualism, the view of man as a psycho-physical totality, a concern with mundane aspects of life, self-deification **(p.197)** tendencies, and antinomian ideology. Though this might properly describe different currents in postsatanic or rational satanic groups in various countries, I am not convinced it applies to the Polish satanic milieu, at least not the one described in this chapter, which demonstrates negligible interest in the occult. Having said that, there is a clear relevance to a different Granholm argument mapping the possible interpretative frameworks by looking at how and

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why Satan is used and comparing across fields and milieus (cf. Petersen 2009: 4). Indeed, it might be fruitful to point to the broader socio-theoretical context that Polish cyber Satanism is a symptom of, which should be located in another current of the contemporary debate than the one related to the Left-Hand Path milieu.

Postfoundational turn

Consider, for example, the typical criticism of theism, which marks a significant trend in satan.pl's ideological stance:

> Restrictions imposed by theistic morality must be turned to rubble to render man free … For centuries, people have fed themselves with various divine revelations, which limited their mental freedom. Enough! We live for ourselves, not for gods. We are creating our own reality … Take a look around and notice that the supposed 'divine' justice exists nowhere. Man is as fair as he understands justice; there is no global judge, who would teach us how we should act. (Haal 2001; my translation.)

Satan.pl's participants perceive traditional assumptions of theistic religions as oppressive conditions that limit human creative potential. Hence, a common interpretation of Satanism suggests the opposition towards religion or dominant normative systems should be read as a manifestation of Nietzschean joyful nihilism, which announces the death of God understood as the end of the false consciousness of the premodern era and the advent of the modern age when rebellious emancipatory forces have been unleashed (see Mathews 2009: 31–38). I propose a slightly updated version of this interpretation, which draws on recent developments in postfoundational social theory, which, according to Marchart (2007: 2), should be defined as a 'constant interrogation of metaphysical figures of foundation—such as totality, universality, essence, and ground'.

I would argue that it might be appropriate to interpret this God-abolishing notion not merely as an ostentation of the rebellious gothic subculture or another instance of Nietzschean criticism, but we could inscribe these **(p.198)** themes into a context of contemporary debate about the lack of 'ultimate ground' that would constitute the base for universalist ethics and consequently homogenous social regulations. As Marchart continues (2007), deconstruction of the metaphysical central point of reference, which in classic Western thought was embodied by many names of essence with the most prominent one being God (cf. Derrida 1978), introduces the salient features of the postfoundational era when social is not determined by any immutable principle and social relations are profoundly contingent.

The dissolution of the ultimate ground opens new perspectives for emancipatory language games that are not searching for the absolute normative foundation for their performances. Rather, this search leads to a situation in which any

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legitimating decision must be contingent and temporary. The postfoundational scene should be perceived as the field of language, which comprises merely equal negative differences and so opens up a space for plurality of social forces. This is precisely the moment of emergence of new emancipatory voices calling for inclusion of formerly marginalized groups. The advent of new emancipatory possibilities for social groups claiming their rights, usually associated with the new social movements (Offe 1985; Melucci 1985; Touraine 1985; Olofsson 1988; Steinmetz 1994; Pichardo 1997), was clearly perceived by Laclau (1988: 79–80), who, among others, claimed that inasmuch discourse overlaps with the social, its irreducible difference becomes the source of radical libertarianism:

> Humankind, having always bowed to external forces—God, Nature, the necessary laws of History—can now at the threshold of postmodernity, consider itself for the first time the creator and constructor of its own history. The dissolution of the myth of foundations … further radicalizes the emancipatory possibilities offered by Enlightenment and Marxism.

It would be premature to classify cyber Satanists as a well-defined example of a new social movement without verification through rigorous empirical procedures. Nevertheless, some satanic communities, including satan.pl, share significant aspects of the postfoundational language games, for example, recognition of normative pluralism and social contingency as major features of the postfoundational turn in contemporary late modern societies or criticism of the subordination to dominant patterns of essentialist culture that embrace the logic of new social movements. However, if we accept the post-Gramscian premise that discursive strategies might constitute a field of inscriptions for social demands, it is appropriate to analyse these cyber narratives as an ideology resonating with Polish Satanists, converting them into groups, providing them with a sense of **(p.199)** common identities, and introducing interpretative schemes for grasping the meaning of social reality (see Smith 1998). This ideology locates them in the broad emancipatory family resemblance of language games also used by new social movements (for example, LGBT, ecologically oriented movements) emphasizing symbolic codes or expressive claims. These games are precarious and socially constructed rather than deduced from the group's stable structural location (Buechler 1995).

Conclusion

The cultural change explored in this chapter suggests that one should analyse the figure of Satan as a floating signifier with many possible ways of rearticulation. Thus, the concepts of Satan and 'Satanism' might interpellate hybrid subjects with their possible linkages to varieties of interrelated discursive formations that do share a common background in satanic or Left-Hand Path milieux (cf. Petersen 2009: 6, 11). This process of symbolic deconditioning of the Polish satanic community—with major features of growing self-reflexity, pluralism of philosophical stances, and loose discipline—points to another

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structural aspect that might be highlighted from a Durkheimian point of view. The proposed approach may be especially useful while analysing transformation of the principle of a satanic group's coherence, which metaphorically marks the shift from the stage of 'satanic mechanic solidarity' to 'satanic organic solidarity' (Durkheim 1997).

This typology, usually applied to studies exploring the distinction between 'modern' and 'primitive' societies, has a theoretical benefit here. It would be a gross simplification to consider Durkheimian binary opposition irrelevant in examining modern societies. Although mechanic solidarity was more prevalent in traditional societies, it is not absent in modern societies. In addition, modern societal degrees of differentiation are not permanent positions—they fluctuate, with the contingent dynamics marked by episodes of functional regresses as well. Relapses to defensive traditional social structures of mechanic solidarity are especially likely to occur during periods of anomie and rapid social change, which was the case in postcommunist Poland (see Sztompka 1999). When the social fabric is in a state of dislocation (see Laclau 1990: 39), individuals tend to replicate structures of likeness and oneness crucial in maintenance of collective order. Hence, it is not surprising that after the fall of communism, Polish Satanists mostly imitated the discourse of the Church of Satan and represented the more or less disciplined community of beliefs common to all its members.

(p.200) It might sound ironic when dealing with Satanists, but this type of social bond, no matter how often group members announced their commitment to a philosophy of individualism, represents a typical collective structure of mechanic solidarity. This totality of beliefs naturally does not have 'a specific organ as substratum', but is diffused in the community as 'systems of representations and action' (Durkheim 1997: 39). In line with discourse theory, we might translate these categories to ideological frameworks through which Satanists are involved in intersubjective networks. Thus, 'satanic mechanic solidarity' ideology imitating orthodox LaVeyan Satanism produced a state of likeness in its members. However, that is also when the decline of satanic individuality began: 'What constitutes our personality is that which each one of us possesses that is peculiar and characteristic, what distinguishes it from others', and when mechanic solidarity rules, 'our personality, it may be said by definition, disappears, for we are no longer ourselves, but a collective being' (Durkheim 1997: 84).

The differentiation processes among the Polish satanic community described in this chapter mark the very beginning of the satanic era in Poland. This is the moment when Satanists' individual personalities are emerging without being absorbed into the collective ideology of 'individualism'. A Polish Satanist conditions the 'satanic organic solidarity' enabling him or herself to have a sphere of action which is peculiar to him or her. Necessarily, the collective ideology is fragmented and consequently a variety of beliefs and lifestyles are

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emerging. The crucial indicator marking a shift in the group's cohesion principle relates to the changing discourse about the 'Christian Other' against whom the traditional members of 'satanic mechanic solidarity' had defined their collective identity. Thus, the revaluation of anti-Christianity as analysed in this chapter makes visible how the mechanic collective consciousness is losing its ability to direct Satanists' individual behaviours. When 'collective ideas and sentiments' decline in confluence with a lack of need to emphasize the importance of a common enemy, there is no necessity to produce a collective representation of 'Christian deviance', which in turn shapes the consistency of the cherished 'anti-Christian normative boundaries'.

Interestingly, division of Durkheim's 'satanic mechanic solidarity' does not necessarily lead into the dispersion of the social bond. To the contrary, the more relaxed social discipline and various ideological proposals that emerged within the 'satanic organic solidarity' constitute hybrid subjectivities leading to a stronger social cohesion of Polish Satanists. This confirms Durkheim's notion that 'the greater the unity of the organism, the more marked the individualization of the parts' (1997: 85). This is why the satanic community, through evolution of the space for free play of discursive strategies, may have **(p.201)** linked itself with broader social contexts and different discursive formations (that may have little or nothing to do with Satanism), which retroactively strengthened its collective identities. This is precisely what I have been trying to analyse in this chapter by showing possible links of contemporary satanic ideology with new social movements that obviously do not adhere to explicit Satanic labels, especially those articulated during the 'satanic mechanic solidarity' era.

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Notes:

I wish to acknowledge that the significant parts of this chapter were produced during the Kosciuszko Foundation scholarship at the University of Portland (2006–2007).

(1) . See also the contribution by Jesper Aa. Petersen in this volume.

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The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity
Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen

Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

(p.205) Part Four Post-Satanism, Left-Hand Paths, and Beyond

Visiting the Margins

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.011.0004

Satanism beyond Satanism is the topic of the book's last section. For over a decade, Kennet Granholm has argued against the use of the label Satanism to categorize groups like Dragon Rouge or the Temple of Set. These organizations may display a fairly prominent use of satanic symbolism (though the internal importance of it can be discussed, and different scholars have made different assessments of it), but they are also highly eclectic and do not self-designate as Satanists. More radically, Granholm comes close to completely dismissing 'Satanism' as a useful term in research, even when dealing with groups that explicitly profess such an ideology, because it has such strong pejorative connotations. Granholm asserts that using a different name, like the less known 'Left-Hand Path' (which is not defined by the inclusion of Satan but takes an antinomian 'adversarial stance' similar to that in Satanism), makes it easier to start from a clean slate, thus dodging the prejudices of both professors and the public. Further, shifting the focus away from the figure of Satan makes visible a wider field of structurally and functionally similar movements. In his chapter, he also proposes the term 'post-Satanism' to be used to designate groups which include elements of Satanism but do not self-designate as such, as well as those who have such a background but have abandoned the term along with the earlier prominence of Satan himself. As can be seen, the self-image of the groups is a moot point.

The question of defining groups and writers who do not think of themselves as Satanists, but still utilize the figure, is a main concern in Fredrik Gregorius's

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chapter as well. The Luciferian witchcraft he discusses is to a great extent a spin-off from the Wicca movement but with a satanic **(p.206)** twist. His reflections concerning Wicca as having created a 'medium tension' towards society, by utilizing the negative witch figure as its central metaphor, raise questions pertaining to where to delimit Granholm's suggested wider focus. Since Wicca, then, uses an 'adversarial' trope, the witch, does it perhaps have more structural likeness to Satanism than previously assumed? After all, Satanists typically reinterpret Satan as a good guy in the same way Wiccans reinterpret the witch. As Gregorius writes, both are 'part of a larger movement where renegotiations of cultural symbols are being conducted', and perhaps focusing on Granholm's 'adversarial stance' could point the way towards an understanding of some of the mechanics behind both. Here, however, it clearly becomes necessary to put Granholm's stressing of emic perspectives to the side for a while, since most Wiccans would likely vehemently deny any such similarities (cf. Pearson 1998: 55).

While Wiccans admittedly have done more to whitewash their adversarial emblem, the witch, and Satanists retain more 'dark' aspects of their chosen symbol, this is to some extent an oversimplification. As Gregorius shows, Wicca has been stereotyped as more white-light oriented than it actually is, at least today (perhaps due to an influence from its Luciferian witchcraft subcurrent). Given the increasing popularity of figures like Hecate and Lilith among Wiccans, and the aforementioned structural similarities in reinterpreting negative cultural symbols, as well as the fact that Luciferian witchcraft remains firmly rooted in Wicca and is propagated in books put out by Wiccan publishers, the demarcation against the dreaded Satanists begins to crumble. The crumbling intensifies when a figure like Michael Ford, who is a black metal musician and comes from the Satanist scene, draws on ideas from Luciferian witchcraft in his writings.

Gregorius considers Luciferian witchcraft an example of the difficulties of 'positioning Satanism as an autonomous milieu within the larger dark magical subculture', but it could further be viewed as an example of how that subculture, which Granholm designates 'dark spirituality', also encompasses some forms of Wicca and neopaganism. The demarcation problem is thus not unique to Satanism studies and applies in some measure to pagan studies as well. 'Dark spirituality' would, on the other hand, hardly be an appropriate label for many forms of Wicca. Perhaps we need to look for broader terms. As Amina Lap's chapter in the present volume shows, LaVeyan Satanism can fruitfully be analysed in terms of Paul Heelas' concept 'self-spirituality'. This is obviously relevant for other types of Satanism as well (Petersen 2005) and for the Left-Hand Path as defined by Granholm. When it comes to putting this label on Wicca, however, some scholars have objected strongly (Pearson 1998: 46–55).

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(p.207) Whether Wicca should be considered 'more successful'—as Gregorius claims—for liberating their practice entirely from the stigma of Satanism could be discussed, because Satanists, to some extent, seem to relish being feared and stigmatized, if only within reasonable limits. As LaVey put it, the goal is typically 'nine parts social respectability to one part outrage' (which is not that far removed from the Wiccan medium tension towards society). Not so for the Order of Nine Angles (ONA) discussed in Jacob Senholt's chapter.

The ONA despises ethical behaviour, and its main ideologist David Myatt has actively participated in violent neo-Nazi and Islamist terrorist groups. The motivation for those acts is a wish to bring down the 'old order'. The fact that a manual on Aryan revolution written by Myatt seems to have inspired nail-bomber David Copeland's deeds drew massive media attention to the former. Soon after, Myatt announced his conversion to Islam. His text defending suicide attacks was featured on Hamas' website, and he was invited to talk at extremist mosques. Even more astonishing than this transition, is that it seems both his Nazism and Islamism are merely instruments for the ONA's underlying sinister esoteric plots.

The ONA claims to have grown out of a Wiccan group, which, if this is true, further demonstrates the overlap between different types of 'adversarial' religious discourses. The ONA represent a dangerous and extreme form of Satanism, and it would, of course, be very alarming and offensive for Wiccans if scholars were to suggest a continuum from their beliefs to such groups. It could also potentially be very harmful for individuals. Theoretically, a scholarly text discussing parallels between Wicca and the ONA could, for example, be used against a Wiccan parent in a custody trial. Therefore, we must tread carefully, because our writings may have consequences in the world outside the scholarly ivory tower. We also have, to a limited extent at least, a responsibility not to make people feel our research misrepresents them. All said, we should never compromise our integrity as scholars on such grounds and respect for the emic perspective must not be allowed to impinge on what terminology we choose to employ in academia. Yet, we must make certain to avoid misunderstandings—such as implying Wicca is some sort of slippery slope that typically leads to involvement with ONA-type groups. The interesting similarities must also be contrasted with the vast differences at hand, even if these seem boringly obvious to the specialist and therefore less exciting to write about.

The ONA's description of their teaching as 'Traditional Satanism' mirrors how practitioners of Luciferian witchcraft typically designate their ideas 'Traditional Witchcraft'. Both wish to differentiate themselves from the dominant form of Satanism (LaVeyan) and witchcraft (Wicca) **(p.208)** respectively, which they perceive as a modern 'corruption' of the original form. In a religious context, invoking tradition—claiming to be 'more traditional than thou'—is of course a classic legitimating discursive manoeuvre (cf. Faxneld 2011). The importance

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attached to lineages in both groups mirrors this, but there is little evidence to convince the scholar about the supposed deep historical roots. The only sense in which claims to being a more pristine and well-preserved form holds true under scholarly scrutiny, is that both groups more closely mirror old notions in, for example, folklore and fiction about what witches and Satanists do. The presence of actual practitioner predecessors is, to say the least, doubtful.

—P.F.

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Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

The Left-Hand Path and Post-Satanism

The Temple of Set and the Evolution of Satanism

Kennet Granholm

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.003.0010

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter argues against the use of the label Satanism to categorize groups like Dragon Rouge or the Temple of Set, which, though they may display a fairly prominent use of satanic symbolism, are also highly eclectic and do not self-designate as Satanists. The term Satanism, the chapter suggests, might be of limited analytical usefulness in research even when it comes to groups who themselves profess to such an ideology, since it has such strong pejorative connotations. Using a different name, like the less known “Left-Hand Path” (originally an emic term, derived from Indian Tantra, which is not defined by the inclusion of Satan, but takes an antinomian “adversarial stance” similar to that in Satanism), makes it easier to start from a clean slate, thus dodging the prejudices of both professors and the public. Further, shifting the focus away from the figure of Satan makes visible a wider field of structurally and functionally similar movements. Another term this chapter suggests is “post-Satanism”, to designate groups which include elements of Satanism, but do not self-designate as such, as well as those who regards themselves as Satanists but have chosen to promote mythological figures and traditions other than the Christian one.

Keywords: Satanism, post-Satanism, Left-Hand Path, categorization, Temple of Set, Michael A. Aquino

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Introduction

In all human communication, ‘names’ have many different connotations, the number of which often depends on their relative popularity and familiarity. The thought that scholars can remain entirely unaffected by lay connotations of a term or ‘neutralize’ value-laded terms for a general readership is naïve. It is not uncommon for scholarly terms to be adopted by nonscholars and given different connotations. The word ‘cult’ is a good example. From having been a sociological term for a distinct type of religiosity and its social organization, it was adopted by opponents of unorthodox, alternative religions to mean, more or less, ‘bad religion’. This connotation is difficult to escape and is one of the reasons why sociologists of religion have all but abandoned use of the term. ‘Satanism’ is a word which, similar to the word ‘cult’, evokes various, mostly negative, and often emotive, associations in listeners and readers (cf. Petersen 2011).

Early on in my academic career, I expressed doubt about the analytical usefulness of the term ‘Satanism’ (Granholm 2001). With time, my position on the issue has not changed, but it has become more nuanced. In this article I present some problems I see with the scholarly use of the term, as well as some possible solutions to these problems. In particular, I will present the categories and approaches of the Left-Hand Path and post-Satanism and discuss how we, by using these approaches, can enrich the study of Satanism (and other similar phenomena) with increased theoretical and methodological **(p.210)** depth. I will demonstrate the usefulness of the latter term in particular by applying it to the Temple of Set, a group which, although it has the Egyptian deity Set as its main focus, is often labelled a satanic organization.

The disadvantages with the term Satanism

As noted, Satanism is a value-laded term which often invokes very negative connotations among scholars and nonscholars alike. Most people will have some kind of presumptions of the content of the term, but these presumptions seldom have much to do with the reality of Satanism. Satanism is usually seen as having to do with child and animal sacrifices, evil, deviance, and fascism, among others, even though research shows that this is not the case.[1] A situation where the term Satanism could be divorced from any pejorative connotations is difficult to imagine.

The discursive approach to the study of Satanism presented by Jesper Aagaard Petersen is interesting. As a complementary perspective to substantive definitions, Petersen proposes that the utterance ‘I am a Satanist’ can be regarded as a speech-act declaring and practicing an adversarial stance (Petersen 2009: 3). Further, he offers a definition of modern Satanism as a ‘fuzzy’ satanic milieu of key terms, practices, and ideas, as well as individuals and groups shading out into the cultic milieu. Within this polythetic entity, satanic discourse is defined through four main traits: self-religion, antinomianism, the use of *S* words, and a ideological genealogy (ibid.: 5–8).

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While very useful, this approach does not provide solutions to the problems the use of the term 'Satanism' evokes. I agree that the focus should be on discourse rather than on belief in Satan, and that this discourse is indeed concerned with practicing an adversarial stance—something I return to when I discuss both the Left-Hand Path and post-Satanism. There are, however, speech-acts which do not refer to Satan or Satanism but, nonetheless, can be regarded as part of the same adversarial discourse. Conversely, I would argue that the speech-act of claiming to be a Satanist does not necessarily need to be part of an adversarial discourse. Thus, with a focus on Satan and related mythological beings—something which by necessity is inherent in the term Satanism—several structurally and functionally similar movements and discourses would need to be left out.

(p.211) I am also unconvinced that the approach of broadening our perspectives on what mythological figures should be considered to represent the satanic is a good one. Petersen (2009: 8) describes the word Set as related to the words Satan, Satanism, Satanic, and Satanist (when used as 'emic self-designation' within 'antinomian self-religions'). While Petersen does not propose a structural equation of Satan and other mythological beings, it still subsumes them under the general heading of 'Satan'. Where do we draw the line regarding which words should be considered related to the words Satan, Satanism, Satanic, and Satanist? Is the word Odin, from Old Norse mythology, also related to Satan? Should references to entities such as Set and Odin be regarded as essentially satanic in some way or only when combined with other aspects of 'satanic discourse'? Are utterances such as 'I am a Setian' or 'I am an Odinist' considered speech-acts that declare and practice an adversarial stance and *therefore* label a person a Satanist? While I can agree that considerable structural and functional similarities can be found in the uses of figures such as Satan in the Church of Satan, Set in the Temple of Set, and Odin in the Rune-Gild, labelling all these groups as Satanism is imprecise.

Moving outside the specificities of Petersen's approach, the focus on 'words related to the words Satan, Satanism, Satanic, and Satanist' in discussing modern religiosity has scholarly implications. For example, in the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Esotericism in Scandinavia*, edited by Olav Hammer and Henrik Bogdan, the Temple of Set is included in the category 'Satanism' whereas the Rune-Gild and Dragon Rouge are included in the category 'Occultist Groups'. What are the essential differences between, for example, the Temple of Set and Dragon Rouge that firmly positions the former as Satanism but not the latter? Neither group defines itself as a satanic organization, and it is actually the latter that makes more frequent use of certain words such as Satan and Lucifer. Other than the Temple of Set being a direct descendent of the Church of Satan, whereas Dragon Rouge is not, I see no reason to include these two groups in different categories. Perhaps one could argue that it is the Temple's predominant focus on the figure of Set—contrasted to the extremely eclectic approach of Dragon Rouge—which makes it accurate to designate it as satanic.

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However, due to its eclectic approach, Michael W. Ford's Luciferian witchcraft (see Ford 2005) would then be disqualified from being included under the banner. This would also disregard the fact that the Temple of Set does indeed include other deities than Set on its menu, albeit generally in less prominent positions. The categorization of an organization such as the Rune-Gild (see Granholm 2010) is another thorny issue when using definitions of Satanism similar to the above one. The founder of Rune-Gild, Edred **(p.212)** Thorsson (Stephen E. Flowers), is a longtime member of the Temple of Set. The Gild also operates on much the same basic premises as the Temple. For example, both organizations have the same basic notions of natural and non-natural evolution, of the objective and subjective universes, and of the role attributed to the main deity in respective organization. By this logic then, particularly as the vocabulary used in reference to the Gild's central deity—the Old Norse Odin—is very similar to the vocabulary used regarding Set in the Temple, the Gild should be defined as a satanic organization. However, most scholars would probably agree that using this label on a heathen group focused on Germanic/Old Norse mythology and religion, which does not engage in discussion on Christianity to any noteworthy extent, is problematic.

The Left-Hand Path as an alternative

I use the term Left-Hand Path to denote the milieu of 'dark spirituality' that includes many forms of modern Satanism. The term has the benefit of being fairly unknown to the general population (other than in occultist circles of course), and therefore it lacks many of the negative connotations and presumptions that are actuated by the term Satanism. However, and more important from a theoretical and methodological standpoint, the terms have different foci. As I see it, the term 'Satanism' by necessity highlights the figure of Satan and an increasingly dubious collection of other mythological figures that are meant to be, in some way, analogous to the Christian Devil. The term 'Left-Hand Path' has less baggage, and, thus, it is easier to shift the focus to specific discursive strategies and practices. It could be argued that the choice of the figure of Satan in the original Church of Satan is in itself based on an antinomian ethos. It could also be argued that the figure of Satan, at least for certain actors in the wider occult milieu, has become too familiar and overused to be of sufficient value in antinomian practices.

To summarize, I do find Jesper Aagaard Petersen's discursive approach very compelling. However, we need to escape the connection to the figure of Satan that the use of the term Satanism unequivocally brings with it. What should be under investigation are the structures and functions of discursive practices, and nothing should distract from this. Thus, saying 'I am a Satanist' can function as an adversarial stance in some contexts, whereas in others it can represent something else. Similarly, the claim to being a Setian, an Odinist, or a black magician can have the same basic function. The notion of Satan is simply not the most relevant here, but **(p.213)** rather the overall discursive constructs which

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may or may not be Satanist in a strict sense. Consequently, this focus on discursive practice is where Petersen and I converge (Petersen, 2009: 2–3, 7–8).[2]

The Left-Hand Path can be considered a distinct esoteric current, informed by the specific combination of the following three discourses:[3]

- The ideology of individualism; where the individual is positioned at the absolute centre of that person's existential universe.
- The goal of self-deification; interpreted in a wide variety of ways, but always involves the individual assuming full and absolute control of his/her own existence.
- An antinomian stance; in which the individual questions and breaks societal, cultural, and religious taboos in the quest for personal liberation.

The above description presents the Left-Hand Path-current in its 'pure' form, something rarely seen in real life. Instead, esoteric currents—or discursive complexes—are commonly influenced by other discursive complexes and 'freestanding' discourses. Dragon Rouge, for example, is, while being a Left-Hand Path movement, strongly influenced by several neopagan discourses as well (some of which I earlier erroneously placed within the Left-Hand Path discursive complex, see Granholm 2009). It should also be noted that this construct is not to be regarded as a checklist that can be used to determine whether a specific movement, philosophy, or phenomenon is Left-Hand Path or not. Rather, it represents a number of discursive traits that are in a central position in a number of philosophies that I have chosen to group together due both to their historical relation to each other and their structural and functional similarities. These traits are based on emic self-understandings, as well as an ongoing analysis of various movements. That this construct is posited on the level of discursive traits rather **(p.214)** than as aspects of doctrine and philosophy is of significance. We are here then looking at practices rather than thoughts, expressed on the levels of text, speech, and other symbolic systems. That this construct represents historical developments, particularly in the realm of the esoteric and the occult, helps us position the phenomena in a greater continuum of discursive practice and helps us examine their birth and development, as well as context and relation to and within other esoteric discourses (see von Stuckrad 2005 for the discursive take on the esoteric that my formulations are based on).

In particular, the discursive components of individualism and antinomianism play a significant part if we are to examine the phenomenon of modern religious Satanism (cf. Petersen 2009: 8). Here the speech-act of saying 'I am a Satanist' can be put in a context that helps to compare it with other speech-acts occurring within the same discursive complex and helps us understand how and why such speech-acts change through time while still remaining firmly within the same

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discursive tradition. In short, by examining contemporary Satanism through the notion of the Left-Hand Path we can include broader historical perspectives, as well as be able to grasp the larger societal phenomenon that it is a part of. As an added bonus, we will, at the same time, escape the problematic notion that figures such as Set, Odin, Ahriman, and Shiva, among others, would be in some way related to the Christian Devil outside emic discourse. This brings me to my earlier question of whether references to mythological entities such as Set and Odin should be considered satanic in some way. I say no. However, in looking at the discursive complexes in which these references are made, we may find that they are, in fact, expressions of the same general discourse that the speech-act of claiming to be a Satanist is. Clearly, then, this discourse should not be labelled satanic or Satanism but rather adversarial or antinomian.

Introducing a new concept: post-Satanism

In addition to the term 'Left-Hand Path', the concept of 'post-Satanism' provides some interesting analytical benefits. From having been somewhat dismissive of these benefits in my essay in the volume *Contemporary Religious Satanism* (Granholm 2009), I have come to regard them more positively. When dealing with the methodological and terminological problems that the scholarly use of the term 'Satanism' brings up, the concept of 'post-Satanism' is very useful indeed. It highlights both continuity and change in the realm of 'dark spirituality', while providing a way to avoid the **(p.215)** inescapable connection to the figure of Satan that I argue goes hand in hand with the use of the term Satanism.

The term 'post-Satanism' can be used in two complementary ways. One way is to use it to refer to groups and individuals that relate to the idea of Satanism in some manner but reject the term as a self-designation. Commonly, it would then be about seeing Satanism more as a 'thing of the past'. This would include a group such as Dragon Rouge, where some members have expressed views on Satanism as potentially interesting at the start of one's initiatory career, but which will eventually give way to 'more mature' alternatives (Granholm 2005, 165). Looking at the use of transgressive symbols in Dragon Rouge, particularly the absence of such a 'traditional' satanic symbol as the inverted pentagram in any official capacity, the desire not to be defined as a satanic organization is evident (see Granholm, forthcoming a; forthcoming b). The second way to use the term post-Satanism is to relate it to movements, groups, and philosophies that have an established satanic pedigree but have abandoned satanic self-definition as well as the attribution of specific importance to Satan or related words. This would include a group such as the Temple of Set. Although the Temple is an outgrowth of LaVey's original Church of Satan, the deity Set is given prominence, and the words Satan and Satanism are as good as absent in internal material and discussion (but still used in publically available material, which is interesting in itself). An author such as Michael W. Ford and his 'Luciferian witchcraft' could possibly also be included here; self-identification

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with Satanism is present but deities such as the Zoroastrian Ahriman are given prominence. One could also discuss the Rune-Gild and the rune magical publications of Edred Thorsson as postsatanic, because they represent developments of discourses contained within the Temple of Set.

The focus here is on processes of transformation, that is to say, processes through which satanic discourse has changed both in relation to the occult milieu and broader societal, cultural, and religious contexts. The key question then becomes how and why 'Satanism has evolved beyond Satanism'. What variables have changed so that the speech-act of saying 'I am a Satanist' is, for some people, no longer regarded as having the same power and appeal as an adversarial practice as it once did? In this, I feel it is beneficial to again look at the central components of the Left-Hand Path. If we examine the processes involved in the discursive trait of antinomianism, we can observe that self-identifying as a Satanist is unlikely to contain its antinomian power indefinitely. The loss of antinomian power the term has suffered is in part due to societal transformations involving increased tolerance for (certain) religious pluralism, and a situation where Christian concepts such as Satan no longer hold the same **(p.216)** sway. This, in turn, could be partly due to the visibility of the word due to the (over)use of it by self-proclaimed Satanists such as those of the Church of Satan.[4] Other symbols and words, such as black and/or dark magic, seem to present higher levels of antinomian power. This could be due to the lesser prominence and unfamiliarity of these words. The same applies to a symbol such as the inverse pentagram. In the Temple of Set, the more 'classically' and openly satanic elements of the pentagram (such as Hebrew letters spelling out Leviathan and a goat's head) are discarded. The pentagram then becomes more a symbol of personal liberation and esoteric mystery (see Granholm, forthcoming c).

The Temple of Set

The Temple of Set is a magic order which has been both vilified and placed under the label Satanism, two factors that regularly go hand in hand and demonstrate the negative connotations and repercussions of the term Satanism. The group came under much fire particularly during the satanic panic of the 1980s and 1990s (Best, Bromley, and Richardson 1991; Victor 1993). For example, leading members of the Temple were accused of everything from child abuse (Goldston 1988) to fascism and racism (Maroney 1990). The group was even the subject of a sensationalist book that presented a 'chilling expose' of the Temple's vile secrets (Blood 1994). The Temple sued, however, and the book was deemed libellous and was quickly withdrawn from the market.

When it comes to scholarship on the Temple of Set, much of what can be found is very short (e.g., Harvey 2008: 613–620) and/or dreadful in quality.[5] A good example of the latter is Gini Graham Scott's book-length study *The Magicians* (Scott 2007 [1986]). The book is based on ethnographic research and focuses on

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The Temple of Set under the pseudonym ‘Church of Hu’, as well as an unnamed Wiccan group. The study is certainly not short, but is made nearly unusable by the numerous errors in regard to almost every aspect of philosophy, practice, and administrational and initiatory structures of the Temple. Furthermore, Scott’s understanding of magic in esoteric contexts is critically limited, and she uses outdated anthropological studies **(p.217)** of ‘primitive magic’ in non-Western societies to explain magic in the context of the Temple. As Fredrik Gregorius notes, when studying magic, different historical contexts cannot be dismissed (2009: 25; see also Lehrich 2003: 3–11; and Pasi 2007). A result of Scott’s use of outdated sources, neglect for the distinctiveness of different cultural contexts, and serious misunderstandings regarding both her chosen field and esotericism in general is that she regards, or at least presents, magic as ultimately based on false premises, the classic Frazerian notion of magic as ‘primitive science’.[6] Thus, Scott can only reconcile the existence of magic in the communities she studies as being based on the attempt to gain social power amongst individuals who have none.[7] These factors necessitate a brief overview of the Temple of Set in this context.

Early History

The Temple of Set was founded in 1975 but is a direct descendent of the Church of Satan. Michael Aquino, a lieutenant and specialist in psychological operations in the U.S. military, joined the Church of Satan in 1969 (Aquino 2009: 41–44). Aquino was an active member and quickly rose in rank in the church. He was the editor of the church’s internal newsletter *Cloven Hoof*, established one of the first local chapters (called grottos), and was initiated into the fourth (second-highest) degree in the church’s initiatory system (the fifth and final degree was reserved solely for the high priest). In 1975, LaVey instituted some changes that Aquino and a number of other members were dissatisfied with, and which they felt represented a betrayal of the core principles of the church (Aquino 2009: 412–427). On June 10, 1975, Aquino therefore decided to relinquish his membership in the church, and on the summer solstice of the same year he performed a **(p.218)** magical working in order to seek guidance on what to do next. He invoked Satan, but came instead into contact with an entity that identified itself as the ancient Egyptian deity, or *Neter*, Set. Similarly to Aleister Crowley and his reception of the *Book of the Law* seventy-one years earlier, Aquino wrote down the text *The Book of Coming Forth by Night* as a result of the working. In the text, which is structured as a message from Set, the Egyptian deity identifies itself as the archetype that functioned as model for the creation of the Christian mythological being Satan. The entity also informs that the Aeon of Set has now begun, with the 1966–1975 Age of Satan as a preparatory period, and that it is up to Aquino to continue the work that had started with and in the Church of Satan (Aquino 2010: 170–175).

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Philosophy and Core Practices

The post-1975 Church of Satan claims that it has always understood Satan as a symbol rather than a real being (Gilmore 2005). Aquino, on the other hand, claims that the early church did in fact treat Satan as an actually existing entity (Aquino 2010: 10). In the Temple, Set is regarded as a real being, and, as written in *The Book of Coming Forth by Night*, the only god not created by humans (Aquino 2010: 171). In contrast to many contemporary depictions, Set is not regarded as an evil god, but instead as the origin of 'isolate intelligence', that is, the possibility of a human being to reach true individuality and spiritual perfection. The idea is that Set is the origin of a human being's self-consciousness, something which in the Temple is called 'the Black Flame' and 'the Gift of the Prince of Darkness' (Kotkavuori 2007: 22).

The most central concept in the philosophy of the Temple of Set is *Xeper*. This Egyptian term is translated as 'becoming' (Aquino 2005: 21) and refers, according to Aquino, to 'the transformation and evolution of the Will from a human to a divine state of being—by deliberate, conscious, individual force of mind' (ibid.: 114). Put simply, *Xeper* refers to processes through and in which the individual magician furthers his or her spiritual development. The term is also used as a phrase of greeting among members of the Temple.

The worldview of the Temple of Set is anchored in the concepts of 'objective' and 'subjective universe'. The former refers to the natural world and collective belief-and meaning-systems. The latter refers to the individual's personal meaning-system and experiential world, and there are as many subjective universes as there are individuals (Kotkavuori 2007: 17–21). These intertwined concepts are central to the two main forms of magic **(p.219)** practised in the Temple, Lesser Black Magic (LBM) and Greater Black Magic (GBM). In practicing LBM, the magician manipulates the objective universe, in Aquino's words LBM 'is the influencing of beings, processes, or objects in the objective universe by the application of obscure physical or behavioural laws' (2005: 72). One way of doing this is in real-life situations where the magician manipulates the perceptions of other people by consciously presenting a specific image of him or herself; for example, convincing a potential employer that he or she is the right person for the job. LBM can, however, also be employed in more traditional ritual contexts. Because both ritual and ceremony are, in the Temple, considered to imply unconscious acts, the term 'working' is preferred.

GBM is, according to Aquino (2005: 88), 'the causing of change to occur in the subjective universe in accordance with the will'. The effects are, however, more extensive than in LBM as 'this change in the subjective universe may cause a similar and proportionate change in the objective universe' (ibid.). The core idea is that the magician transforms his or her own experiential universe, which in turn may affect the experiential universes of other people around him or her, and these two factors in conjunction have a concrete effect in the objective universe.

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A good example can be found in the work of *Arkte*, discussed in more detail later, where the participants work for animal liberation. The magicians changed their perceptions of human-animal relations, which led many of them to adopt vegetarian diets and/or do volunteer work in animal shelters, which in turn had concrete effects on both the physical world and the sentiments of people the magicians come into contact with.

Organization and Structures

In the United States, the Temple of Set is registered as a nonprofit organization and is thus entitled to tax benefits (Aquino 2010, 34, 256–288, 469). The organization is officially led by a high priest/priestess who is the public face and spiritual leader of the Temple (Aquino 2010: 273–274).[8] This person is elected from among fourth or higher degree members by the chairman of a ruling council called the Council of Nine (Aquino 2010: 269–273). This ruling council consists of nine members elected from **(p.220)** among the priesthood of the Temple; that is, members of degree three and higher in the Temple's initiatory system, and the mandate is for nine years with a new member being elected each year. The council is lead by a chairman who is chosen from among the council members each year. The council has ruling power in issues regarding the Temple, and even the high priest/priestess is ultimately responsible to it. In addition to the council and the high priest, the Temple also has an executive director—nominated by the council from among members of the priesthood—who deals with administrative tasks (Aquino 2010: 274–275).

The Temple of Set is an initiatory order, meaning it has a degree structure that indicates the level of spiritual development and skill in magic of the individual members. The initiatory structure is based on the Church of Satan, which in turn was based on the structure developed by the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (see Howe 1972; Bogdan 2007: 121–144). Whereas the Church of Satan has five distinct degrees, the Temple has six.[9] When joining the Temple, a person needs to contact a member of the priesthood and engage in premembership negotiations with him or her. If personal contact with a member of the priesthood is impossible, one sends an application along with a letter of introduction to the executive director of the organization (Temple of Set 2010). If both the Temple representative and the applicant agree that the Temple is suitable for the applicant, and the applicant suitable for the Temple, the person is accepted as a member of the first degree. The process of scrutiny is quite rigorous, and not all who apply for membership are accepted. Furthermore, a new member has two years time in which to qualify for the second degree or have his or her affiliation with the Temple severed. In essence, this means that the member needs to demonstrate a basic knowledge of Setian philosophy and skill in magic. The new member gets a diploma, a white medallion with an inverse pentagram in silver for use in magical workings, and access to the 'Crystal Tablet of Set'—a collection of documents detailing the Temple's approach to magic, among other things. Each subsequent degree has a

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medallion of a different colour (II°—red, III°—black, IV°—blue, V°—purple, VI°—gold), where each colour has a distinct symbolism, and its own 'Jewelled Tablet of Set' with material relevant to that particular degree. The 'Ruby Tablet of Set', for second-degree members, is the most sizeable and contains the most diverse material.

(p.221) Initiations in the Temple regime are termed recognitions. The explanation for the choice of term lies in the Temple's philosophy, which holds that no organization can provide spiritual development, that is, initiation. Instead, it is the individual member who initiates him or herself, and the Temple simply acknowledges the member's new state of being (Aquino 2005: 20–22). Most members of the Temple never advance beyond the second degree nor are they expected to (Aquino 2005: 29–30).

On recognition into the third degree, something which can be acknowledged by a fourth or higher degree member (Aquino 2010: 265), the initiate is considered part of the priesthood of Set. This involves greater responsibilities towards the organization, such as the preparedness to act as a teacher to more junior members. While first- and second-degree members primarily use the Temple as a tool to advance their own spiritual development, priests and priestesses are official representatives of the Temple. It is also the priesthood that has the power to recognize the adepthood of a first-degree member, and sponsor second-degree members in the founding of local groups, called 'pylons' (Aquino 2005: 30–31).

The fourth degree, which is acknowledged by the high priest/priestess and reified by a majority by the Council of Nine (Aquino 2010: 266), entails that the member has advanced far enough on his or her initiatory path to found his or her own school of magic, represented in an Order. The fifth degree, which is acknowledged by the high priest/priestess and requires the unanimous consent of the Council of Nine (ibid.), entails that the member has '"stepped outside" the totality of the existing Æonic formula to alter it in an evolutionary way' (Aquino 2005: 31). In practice, this means that the member utters and defines a concept which in some way transforms and affects the philosophy of the Temple. An example of such a concept is *Xeper*, discussed previously, and uttered by Aquino himself when founding the Temple. Another example is *Arkte*, uttered by Lilith Aquino in the year 2000 and which 'calls upon the initiatory capacity of humankind to realize that animal intelligence must be measured against its own benchmark, not ours, and that as such it goes beyond mere "instinct" to various forms of metaphysical awareness pertinent to each species' (Aquino, L. 2000). Only a handful of members have reached the fifth degree and even less 'fifth-degree words' are still actively treated. This is due to a few of the fifth-degree members having left the Temple at some point, which makes them unable to elaborate on and develop the concepts they originally uttered. The sixth and final degree, defined concisely as representing 'a "successful magus": one who's

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Task is complete' (Aquino 2005: 32) is only held by a very select few within the Temple. Any fifth-degree member may make the assessment to assume the sixth degree on his or her own (Aquino 2010: 267).

(p.222) The initiatory work of the Temple's members is conducted primarily on an individual level. In order to facilitate this work, however, the Temple has a number of pylons in different parts of the world (Aquino 2010: 282–283). A member usually joins the pylon closest to his or her location but applying for membership in a different pylon is possible. There also exist correspondence-based pylons, which, nowadays, commonly operate over the Internet. This provides support for members who do not have a local group in their immediate vicinity. Pylons are supervised by second or higher degree members who are called 'sentinels'. Although second-degree members can found pylons, a local group needs to secure the sponsorship of a member of the priesthood. Individual pylons have specific foci and the diversity is considerable. The common conduct is, however, that meetings include both theoretical and conceptual discussion and practical magical work.

In addition to the individual work and the pylons, initiatory magical work is also conducted in the Temple's elements and orders. 'Elements' are loosely structured interest groups where very specific issues and themes are treated (Aquino 2010: 110, 281–282). They can be available for nonmembers and are commonly operational only for short periods, although there are exceptions. One of the most significant of these exceptions is the *Arkte* element, where the focus lies on the examination of 'the Gift of the Prince of Darkness', that is, self-consciousness, in nonhuman animals. A major part of the activity of the element involves different forms of animal rights work on a practical level (see Granholm 2008). The 'orders' of the Temple can be likened to schools focusing on specific aspects of magic and providing different paths to initiation. A member I spoke to likened the Temple as a whole to a university and the Temple's orders to different departments with specific research interests within the university.[10] The most important order, as well as the oldest, is the 'order of the trapezoid', which has a focus on runes and Grail mysticism. Another important one is the 'order of the vampyre', which deals with the vampire as an initiatory model for the magician. Orders are founded by members who have reached the fourth-initiatory degree and represent these members' distinct approach to magic and spiritual development. Orders are led by grand masters, who often are the founder of the order in question. In the longer-lived orders, however, others than the original founder normally function as the grand master. When a member of the Temple reaches the second-initiatory degree he or she is expected to apply for membership in an order of his or her choice. In actuality, it often takes **(p.223)** quite some time before a new second-degree member applies for membership. While a person can get special exemption to join more than one order, it is normally discouraged (Aquino 2010: 280–281).

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Because the Temple is a relatively small organization, with around two hundred members in 2007, spread throughout the world, the Internet is one of the most important channels for communication.[11] The Temple has its own closed Intranet with various discussion groups. They also contain membership material accessible for the different levels of membership and electronic versions of the Temple's newsletter *Scroll of Set*, published four to six times a year.

The Temple of Set and the concept of post-Satanism

In this final section, I look at how the concepts and denominators of Satanism, the Left-Hand Path, and post-Satanism can be applied to the Temple of Set, as well as their relative usefulness. The predominant focus will be on the concept of post-Satanism.

Whichever way one looks at it, Satanism is not a proper way to describe the Temple of Set (cf. Gregorius 2006: 20). The word Satan and closely related ones, such as Lucifer and the Devil, receive almost no exposition whatsoever in internal Temple material. Certainly, the figure of Satan is not in a prominent position in Temple philosophy and practice. However, the Temple's relation to the greater 'satanic milieu' (cf. Petersen 2009) is a more complex issue. Temple writings include relatively much elaboration on the Church of Satan, as well as some discussion of the Setian as an 'evolved Satanist' (see Granholm 2009: 96). Due to this engagement with Satanism, the Temple can, in a general sense, be described as an actor in the satanic milieu.

Because the Temple of Set is one of the central movements examined when determining the key discursive components of the Left-Hand Path current, it quite naturally fits into this category. The discourses of individualism, self-deification, and antinomianism—the latter both in the use of transgressive symbols, such as the inverse pentagram and sentences such as 'the Prince of Darkness', and as an expressed ideology facilitating the liberation, individuation, and deification of the practitioner—are all explicitly present in Temple philosophy and practice. No more exposition is really needed in this context.

(p.224) The Temple of Set is a textbook example of post-Satanism. It has a clearly identifiable and acknowledged background in a self-identified satanic group, the Church of Satan. The Satanism of the Church is readily acknowledged, as is the Temple's background in and reliance upon the Church. The Temple is also, however, a group which has forgone the use of the self-identifier 'Satanism'. 'Abandoning' the satanic goes through every level of the Temple's philosophy. Instead of Satan, or other closely identified biblical devil-figures such as Lucifer, the Temple has chosen the non-Christian Egyptian deity Set as its main focus. As discussed previously, the Temple's use of the inverse pentagram is also an illuminating example. While the inverted pentagram is a key symbol in the Church of Satan and many other forms of contemporary Satanism, the Temple has stripped the symbol of the overtly satanic add-ons that

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can be found in the Baphomet sigil of the Church of Satan. The Temple has also gone to lengths to motivate the meaning and significance of the pentagram in nonsatanic ways, referring to Pythagorean ideas and 'mathematical perfection' rather than to demonology or the Devil. The same goes for the trapezoid symbol, used in both the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set. In the church, the symbol has a pitchfork/trident and flames included in it, whereas the Temple's version has replaced this with a left-facing Egyptian *Tchām* sceptre. While some versions of the Temple of Set's trapezoid have the number 666 included, it is in the form of stylized geometrical shapes rather than clear numbers; the latter is used in the Church of Satan version of the symbol (see Granholm, forthcoming c).

The Temple's close relation to, but rejection of, self-designated Satanism is what marks it as a postsatanic group. In using this concept then, we can focus on the processes by and through which the Temple has diverged from the Church of Satan. In particular, the changes in the discourse of antinomianism would be under scrutiny. While it is impossible to provide any conclusive answers as to why the Temple's antinomian discursive practices differ from those of the Church at this point, it is possible to speculate. One part of the explanation is the Temple's need to distinguish itself from its parent organization. By choosing a different symbol than Satan, the Temple staked out its own space in the contemporary occult milieu. Furthermore, in the Church of Satan, Anton LaVey had created a carnivalesque over-the-top entity in which both the church's public portrayal and LaVey's circus-like presentations of himself as the 'black pope' to an extent positioned Satan and Satanism as something more eccentric than dangerous and transgressive. By going in another direction, both in adopting a less well-known figure than Satan as its main symbol and in consciously refraining from cultivating an actively visible public presence, the Temple could **(p.225)** focus on 'inner antinomianism' in the form of psychological crossing of personal, but socially constructed, taboos, instead of public performances of transgressiveness.

This relates to Petersen's distinction between 'transgression from' and 'transgression to' (Petersen 2011). The former refers to a sort of 'rebellion for the sake of rebellion', a reactive transgression which confirms the norms transgressed. The latter, where the aim is to achieve personal liberation, is expressed in the 'inner antinomianism' common in groups such as the Temple of Set. In some ways, the Church of Satan represents both these forms of transgression. The early Church of Satan's approach to antinomianism, much of which could be termed public performances, did, in fact, play a part in making the figure of Satan less threatening. By this I do not primarily mean that the Church 'devalued' the symbol of Satan, but instead that it helped secure a space where later Left-Hand Path groups did not need to act antinomian performances of this kind. Of course, other societal processes, particularly an increasingly pluralistic atmosphere where the loss of hegemonic dominance of Christian

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institutions creates more space for other religious alternatives (see e.g., Granholm 2013), played a major part. However, these societal processes are not the focus of this chapter. All in all, the Church of Satan's 'mainstreaming' of Satanism led to both a loss of antinomian power of the symbol of 'Satan' and a situation where the need to invoke such an overtly antinomian symbol is deemed obsolete. This, in turn, led to the 'Satanism evolving beyond Satanism', discussed earlier.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I dealt with the categories and concepts of Satanism, the Left-Hand Path, and post-Satanism and concretized the discussion in the example of the Temple of Set. My point has not been that the label Satanism should be abandoned altogether, but that it needs to be applied more carefully. Satanism is indeed a valid denominator for groups and philosophies which appropriate the figure of Satan and attribute significance to it, and that identify as Satanist. However, it is not a particularly useful analytical category. With the focus on the figure of Satan as the core of a spiritual and/or religious current, other structural and thematic components of groups that include this appropriation are relegated to a lesser role. Furthermore, movements, groups, and philosophies that share other thematic, functional, and structural similarities with satanic ones but do not give the figure of Satan a prominent position should, by the dictates of logic, be excluded.

(p.226) Analogous to Petersen, I suggest that a more useful approach is to focus on *how* and *why* the figure of Satan is used (Petersen 2009: 4), and then compare these discursive elements with the elements in groups that include similar themes but that do not include the figure of Satan. The focus is then unavoidably shifted away from Satanism in a strict sense, which becomes simply one element of a broader esoteric milieu. This discourse-focused approach lets us analyse foundational aspects of a greater variety of religiosity than simply those that make use of Satan. One such function is the use of Satan in an antinomian approach and a suitable label could be the Left-Hand Path. Again, this does not conclude that the term Satanism should be abandoned, but it should be relegated to a secondary level subjugated to other, more analytically useful, labels. A further problem addressed by this shift is the widespread focus in scholarly discussion of Satanism on the satanic panic of the 1980s and 1990s, as apparent in, for example, *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook on Satanism* (Lewis and Petersen 2008) and the entry on Satanism in *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (Bromley 2005). This overshadows research on Satanism as a practiced religion, philosophy, and spirituality, something we cannot neglect. A new terminology might stimulate new research.

A theoretically and methodologically solid approach is to examine later developments in the Left-Hand Path milieu by reference to the concept of post-Satanism. Here, the focus is on movements with roots in modern Satanism,

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particularly in its LaVeyan variant, and on how shifts have occurred away from the Christian Devil and to other mythological figures. The key themes would be how and why such shifts have occurred, and, again, a useful approach is to look not simply at the 'satanic figures' in themselves, but rather how and why they were appropriated and used in the first place (cf. Petersen 2009: 10–16). Groups included would be those that do not give an exalted position to Satan but include a strong antinomian ethos, such as the Temple of Set and Dragon Rouge, as well as groups that do regard themselves as Satanist but have chosen to promote mythological figures and traditions other than the Christian one, such as the Luciferian witchcraft of Michael W. Ford.

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Notes:

(1) . See e.g., Granholm 2008 for the ecological and animal rights developments in the Temple of Set and Dragon Rouge; as well as Petersen 2011 and his contribution in the present volume on various discourses of evil and transgression.

(2) . The word 'discourse' is much used in the social sciences, but this has unfortunately led to its meaning often being obscured. I employ the term in a social constructionist, discourse analytical context. Here, the term refers to 'a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events' (Burr 1995: 48); or, put more simply, to 'a fixed way of talking about and understanding the world (or a section of it)' (Jørgensen and Phillips 2000: 7 [my translation]).

(3) . I construe esoteric currents as discursive complexes, i.e., collections of specific discourses which in combination produce specific practices, 'beliefs', worldviews, etc. (see Granholm, forthcoming d). Particular discursive complexes focus general esoteric discourse, i.e., claims of higher knowledge and ways of accessing this knowledge (von Stuckrad 2005) in specifying *what* the higher knowledge sought is, and *how* it can be accessed.

(4) . This point, however, should not be overstated. It is fairly safe to claim that various popular cultural products have played a much more important part in 'de-antinomianizing' Satan.

(5) . For accounts of the Temple by members see e.g., Flowers 1997; Webb 2004; Kotkavuori 2007; Aquino 2010.

(6) . The question of how Scott herself regards magic is difficult to answer, because her critical view of it is confounded when considering later books she

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wrote and published, such as *Mind Power: Picture Your Way to Success in Business* (1987) and *Shamanism for Everyone* (1989).

(7) . This is an additional problem with the study, as several members of the Temple of Set do, in fact, wield significant amounts of societal and social power. They are e.g., high-ranking military officers, successful academics, and fairly affluent businessmen. This is however a whole other subject, and one beyond the scope of the present study. My attempt is not to fuel the fires of any satanic conspiracy theory. These people do not control the world, nor do they wish to. For an interesting take on these matters, see Dyrendal's contribution to the present volume. With regards to social 'deprivation' theories and Satanism, see also Moody 1974.

(8) . High priests/priestesses since the beginning have been Michael Aquino (1975–1979, 1982–1996, 2002–2004); Ronald K. Barrett (1979–1982); Don Webb (1996–2002); Zeena Schreck (the daughter of Anton LaVey, 2002); and Patricia Hardy (2004–) (Aquino 2010).

(9) . The degrees are: I°—Setian, II°—Adept, III°—Priest/Priestess, IV°—Magister/Magistra Templi, V°—Magus/Maga, and VI°—Ipsissimus/Ipsissima (Aquino 2005: 24–25).

(10) . Interview with Finnish male member of the Temple of Set, by author. Turku, Finland, March 9, 2007. Stored at the folklore archive at Åbo Akademi University.

(11) . Interview with Patricia Hardy, high priestess of the Temple of Set, by author. Amsterdam, the Netherlands, September 30, 2007.

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The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity
Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen

Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

Luciferian Witchcraft

At the Crossroads between Paganism and Satanism

Fredrik Gregorius

DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.003.0011

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter discusses Luciferian Witchcraft, which is to a great extent a spin-off from the Wicca movement, but with a satanic twist. While Wicca has created a "medium tension" towards society, by utilizing the negative witch figure as its central metaphor, Satanism has generated a stronger such tension by focusing on the strongly negative figure Satan. Both, however, are part of a larger movement where partly similar renegotiations of cultural symbols are being conducted. The interpretation of Lucifer is of central interest, as Lucifer can be seen to act as a crossover deity that appears with different meanings both within non-satanic as well as satanic interpretations of witchcraft. The chapter concludes that Luciferian Witchcraft can be seen as an example of the typological difficulties of positioning Satanism as an autonomous milieu within the larger Dark Magical subculture.

Keywords: Satanism, Wicca, Paganism, Luciferian Witchcraft, Lucifer, typology, Charles Godfrey Leland, Robert Cochrane, Andrew Chumbley, Michael Ford

Introduction

The concept of witchcraft has historically been one of the more visible and powerful images of satanic activities in Christian culture. The witch has been an archetypal representation of the outcast; the person ostracized by the larger community; the scapegoat for the failure of crops and other ills that befell man. In the fourteenth century, witchcraft was increasingly combined with ideas about a satanic conspiracy that was a threat to the soul of man. The image of the

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sabbath that developed in the wake of the witch trials held between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries was one of blasphemy and terror, combining folk magical images of flying witches with ecclesiastical descriptions of heresy that included allegiance to the Devil (Hanegraaff 1995: 214). While witch trials, during the Enlightenment, came to be considered a manifestation of superstition and religious bigotry, the cultural image of the witch would remain negative as the witch entered popular culture, despite the fact that few believed in the existence of witches. Their new use was as a means for suspense in fiction rather than a reference to an actual social and spiritual threat. An example is the folk tales popularized by the Grimm brothers (Hanegraaff 1995: 216–17).

Since the 1900s, the image of the witch has changed. While a slow cultural process, the negative portrayal has gradually been complemented by positive images of witchcraft in mainstream media, although the negative image still remains strong. A significant reason for this development has to **(p.230)** do with the popularity of neopagan witchcraft and its developing hegemony over the definition of witchcraft as a pagan, ecological, and feminist religion. Particularly in the United States, witchcraft became a part of the counterculture of the 1960s, where the image was used by both religious and nonreligious groups as a symbol of opposition towards the establishment (Clifton 2006: 98ff). In the 1970s, Anton LaVey wrote:

> We are living in the only period in history in which it is considered fashionable to be a witch. Given this complete public acceptance, an understandable tendency towards faddism develops. The once-stigmatized label of ‘witch’ has become a title of positive intrigue and has attained a status never before realized. (LaVey 1989: 1)

LaVey’s attempt to make his mark on this new discourse of witchcraft was a project doomed to fail from the start. Both Satanism and the modern witchcraft movement were based on reinterpretations of images, symbols, and names considered diabolical by mainstream culture, but the modern witchcraft movement was more successful in that they created a counternarrative that liberated their witchcraft completely from the stigma of Satanism, while still maintaining many of its tropes. Witchcraft, as it is known in the West after the fourteenth century, is, after all, based on Christian diabolic concepts where a pact with Satan is seen as central. Rather than being separate movements, it can be argued that Satanism and witchcraft are both part of a larger movement where renegotiations of cultural symbols are being conducted (see e.g., Hanegraaff 1995: 214–15; Partridge 2004: 78–84).

While the topic is still controversial, the following chapter will show how diabolical concepts are being used in modern witchcraft. The interpretation of Lucifer has been of central interest, because Lucifer can be seen to act as a

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crossover deity that appears with different meanings both within nonsatanic and satanic interpretations of witchcraft.

Some notes on terminology

To understand the role of diabolic imagery in contemporary witchcraft and the recurring role Lucifer plays in traditions that cannot be regarded as satanic, I have opted to use the term 'Luciferian' rather than satanic in describing movements and traditions where Lucifer plays a positive and significant role but where the conceptions of Lucifer, although based on the Christian legend, are placed in a radically different context. While this is **(p.231)** also the case for modern Satanism, one difference is that Luciferianism, as the term is used here, places Lucifer in a more clearly non-Christian setting, often incorporating him into new mythological and religious structures. This, it should be noted, is an ideal type used to find a language to analyse the role Lucifer has in modern witchcraft, rather than reference to an actual self-aware 'tradition'. One should also note that nearly all types of contemporary Satanism are based on a post-Christian interpretation of Satan, though it could be argued that in Luciferian witchcraft the figure is more obviously placed in a new and often pagan context (cf. Petersen 2009; Granholm 2009). Still, there is no way to make a clear division between Luciferianism and Satanism. In this chapter, 'Satanism' and 'satanic' are used to describe groups that define themselves as such, like the Church of Satan. In parallel, 'witchcraft' refers to those who use the term as an emic definition of their own practice or belief system. I will not discuss the present meaning of witchcraft or the history of the concept, because we are dealing with new religious movements and their use of the term.

Lucifer and *Aradia*

While it is difficult to find evidence of a movement that applies the label witchcraft to themselves before the 1940s, we do find the ideological foundation in texts produced in the late nineteenth century. One of these foundational books of contemporary witchcraft is Charles Godfrey Leland's *Aradia: Or the Gospel of the Witches* from 1899. The origins of the book are disputed. Leland, who was an amateur folklorist, claimed that the book is based on ancient teachings found among witches in Tuscany, Italy. Most of the information is based on the reports of Leland's associate, a woman called Maddalena, who according to Leland was a witch. It is evident that Maddalena was a real person who worked with Leland when he wrote *Aradia*, but most other details are open to dispute (Hutton 1999: 142–43).

One of the main areas of conflict, often between scholars and believers in the authenticity of the text, is the question of whether the text is a genuine reflection of folklore in Tuscany or the invention of Leland or Maddalena. The British historian Ronald Hutton has summarized three different positions in regards to the authenticity of the text. The first position is that it is an authentic document of a previously unknown religion; second, that it was a forgery by

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Maddalena who wrote the text without Leland's help; third, that Leland wrote the text himself (Hutton 1999: 145ff). The first position is particularly problematic because no trace of the particular religious myths and beliefs that we encounter in *Aradia* has been **(p.232)** found. Whatever the origins of the text, the early witchcraft movement in England considered the document authentic, and Gardner quoted several passages in his rituals.

Aradia presents a religion far from the benign version that Gardner would later propagate as witchcraft. Rather than following karmic laws, there are several rituals oriented towards cursing, and Aradia, daughter of Diana, is presented as a demigoddess who came to the world to teach witchcraft to help the poor against the rich and powerful. In the beginning of the text, before Diana sends her daughter to the world, she makes a long proclamation regarding the purpose of Aradia's descent:

> And thou shalt be the first of witches known;
> And thou shalt be the first of all i' the world;
> And thou shalt teach the art of poisoning,
> Of poisoning those who are great lords of all;
> Yea, thou shalt make them die in their palaces;
> And thou shalt bind the oppressor's soul (with power);
> And when ye find a peasant who is rich,
> Then ye shall teach the witch, your pupil, how
> To ruin all his crops with tempests dire,
> With lightning and with thunder (terrible). (Leland 1996: 4)

One group particularly singled out is priests but also the Christian religion. 'Your God, The Father and Maria are Three Devils' (Leland 1996:5). It is easy to see parallels between *Aradia* and Jules Michelets *La Sorciére* (1862) because both present the idea of an underground counterreligion in opposition to the powerful and wealthy. Also, both Leland and Michelet have a tendency to romanticize the 'people' and the oppressed.

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The text contains elements that are rather particular, such as the references to Cain's daughters and the invocations to Cain who is imprisoned in the sun (Leland 1996:12). Leland sees the reference to Cain's imprisonment in the sun as probably a mistake; it should be the moon. The text does not use purely pagan imagery and is often mingled with images from Western diabolism. Lucifer appears as Diana's brother, the god of both the sun and the moon. In later interpretations of the text, this has been used to see Lucifer as a pagan solar-deity. Still, the presentation of Lucifer has not completely divorced itself from the Christian background. In the first chapter, we find references to Lucifer's exile from paradise because of his pride (Leland 1996:1). Also, Lucifer is the father of Aradia, and later in the text we find an invocation that further identifies the Lucifer of *Aradia* not with a pagan deity but with the Christian Devil:

> **(p.233)** Aradia! my Aradia!
> Thou who art daughter unto him who was
> Most evil of all spirits, who of old
> Once reigned in hell when driven away from heaven,
> Who by his sister did thy sire become,
> But as thy mother did repent her fault,
> And wished to mate thee to a spirit who
> Should be benevolent,
> And not malevolent! (Leland 1996:16–17)

The invocation displays a surprisingly negative view of Lucifer in the context of the book, and indicates that Diana had regrets in regards to her union with her brother. This view is starkly contrasted in chapter 3, which deals with the union between Diana and Lucifer. Here Diana is first, and Lucifer is created from her as both her twin brother and as her reflection. Diana grows with lust for her brother and both descend to earth. While the story has little to do with the Christian legend of Lucifer, we still find references to Lucifer's fall due to his pride (Leland 1996: 18–19). After chasing her brother and finally managing to charm him, Lucifer and Diana appear to become a pair of deities controlling the fate of mankind:

> So *Diana* with her wiles of witchcraft so charmed him that he yielded to her love. This was the first fascination, she hummed the song, it was as the buzzing of bees (or a top spinning round), a spinning-wheel spinning life. She spun the lives of all men; all things were spun from the wheel of *Diana*. Lucifer turned the wheel. (Leland 1996: 19)

There are several discrepancies in the text. Cain is both imprisoned in the moon and the sun. Lucifer is not only the sun but sometimes also the moon, and it would be hard to make a clear theological system of the text. That Leland did not seem aware of this could be an indication that the text was not wholly his creation. Leland identifies Lucifer with Apollo, making him more of a pagan

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deity than the actual text indicates. Aradia is identified with Herodia, whom Leland sees as a form of Lilith (102).

Even though Lucifer plays a small but significant role in the text, it is clear that *Aradia* was inspired by the same social and religious critique that we find among some writers that are considered examples of Romantic Satanism (Faxneld 2006: 88ff). The text can be read as an example of the reinterpretation of diabolical imagery and symbols that the modern witchcraft movement is a part of *Aradia* was regarded as an authentic text in the early phases of the development of Wicca and is still a central foundational text for the religion. **(p.234)** The influential Wiccan author Doreen Valiente (1922–1999) considered quotes from *Aradia* traditional when she began rewriting Gardner's *Book of Shadows* in the 1950s, and the legend of Diana and Lucifer became a part of early Wiccan lore (Valiente 1989: 61). Still, the more diabolic aspects of Lucifer were ignored, and he was considered a wholly pagan deity—a manifestation of the god of their duoteistic system (Valiente 1989: 22; Farrar 1989: 198).

While most Wiccans would focus on other names than Lucifer for their god, like Cernunnos, Lucifer has remained. In the lectures of Wiccan leader Alex Sanders (1926–1988) Lucifer is given a central role as the horned god, and Sanders elaborates the myth of Aradia by making Lucifer the god of the shadows. Here Aradia descends to the netherworld to meet Lucifer:

> Naked and bound she was brought before the lord of shadows, who was Lucifer, his light shrouded in darkness. He recognized her and desired her for his queen would have laid down his might and dominion for her, yet she would not have him. She, the most beautiful of all created things saw only ugliness in his dark face. Thus it was that she was taken and made to kneel to death's scourge. This scene may be seen depicted in the paintings of the villa of the mysteries of Pompeii. The pain of this chastisement opened her eyes to the truth and she knew the hidden wisdom. She perceived the veil that covered the radiance of Lucifer, and seeing him to be that which she sought, they made love and were one. (Sanders 1984: 72)

The interpretation of Lucifer as a primarily pagan, often Roman, deity is not only found in Wiccan literature but also in satanic writings. As we see in the following quote, Anton LaVey would make similar claims about Lucifer in *The Satanic Bible* to those found in *Aradia* and in the subsequent elaboration, making the distinction between nonsatanic and satanic interpretations of Lucifer less than clear cut:

> The Roman god, Lucifer, was the bearer of light, the spirit of the air, the personification of enlightenment. In Christian mythology he became synonymous with evil, which was only to have been expected from a

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religion whose very existence is perpetuated by clouded definitions and bogus values! (LaVey 1969: 39)

Gerald Gardner and Wicca

Despite claims among different witchcraft groups that their traditions or ideas about the 'craft' are older than Wicca, there is very little concrete evidence of any systematic attempt to create a self-defined version of witchcraft before Gerald Gardner (1884–1964) (Hutton 1999: 287–308). While it is not **(p.235)** unlikely that someone besides Gardner tried to do it in a systematic manner—reinventing ideas about witchcraft was somewhat in vogue during the early decades of the last century—the evidence we have usually points only to theoretical ideas or personal systems of magic, such as those found in the writings of Jack Parsons, Austin Osman Spare, and Rosaleen Norton. While all are significant people in the history of modern witchcraft, none of them generated a continuing movement comparable to Gardner's.

Gardner was, of course, not the only person to have read the writings of Margaret Murray or Charles Leland's *Aradia*. Ideas about what witchcraft might have been were abundant. Following Gardner's public announcement about the existence of witchcraft, with his publication of *Witchcraft Today* in 1954, others who claimed to be witches—more authentic witches than Gardner and his tradition—emerged. As Ronald Hutton has shown, most of these other traditions of witchcraft were clearly based on the writings of Gardner—sometimes on stolen or copied versions of his *Book of Shadows* (Hutton 1999). Rather than marginalizing Wicca, these groups and individuals made Wiccan ideas more prominent because they rarely questioned the ideological foundation of Wicca. This is important in order to understand the context of the following non-Wiccan ideas about witchcraft. Despite the negative view of Wicca that we generally encounter among practitioners of Luciferian witchcraft, they must deal with the highly dominant position held by Wicca today, just as the competing 'traditional witches' during Gardner's time, and has been, in a similar manner, unable to escape its impact.

It was Gardner who brought the concept of witchcraft from the field of speculation among scholars and esoteric writers and made it an actual initiatory tradition that would become one of the most successful new religious movements of the twentieth century. While most data indicates a certain stabilization and possibly even a decline in some countries, Wicca remains one of the most important and quantitatively significant new religions to have emerged in the twentieth century (for an example of this see Lewis 2009: 124–25). While this is not the place to delve into a deeper discussion about why Wicca has become as successful, there are some aspects of the Wiccan religion that are of interest as it relates to Luciferianism.

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Even if there is nothing in Wicca that can be considered Satanism as such, it is undeniable that Wicca made use of images and ideas that historically have been regarded as satanic (Hanegraaf 1995: 214–15). First of all, calling oneself a witch connects one's identity with sinister imagery and a focus on nocturnal rituals. The horned god of Wicca is also, from an iconographic perspective, based on the Devil, even more so than it is based upon Pan. However, what Gardner and later Wiccans did was reinterpret **(p.236)** the meanings of these symbols. Based on the writings of Egyptologist Margaret Murray, witchcraft was reinterpreted as an old fertility religion, but the focus on human sacrifice that is prominent in Murray's writings was discarded together with other controversial aspects relating to sacrificial practices (see, for example, Murray 1962: 152). Following Murray's reasoning, the Devil of the sabbath was transformed into an ancient pagan deity, sometimes a universal deity that was man's oldest image of the divine (Valiente 1986: 181ff; Buckland 1995: 3–4). Gardner did not deny that witches in earlier periods would have called their god Satan or the Devil but only as a name used when dealing with hostile outsiders:

> I trust I have made myself clear. The Devil is, or rather was, an invention of the Church. Witches found that the popular view that Satan was one of them added to their power, and rather adopted it, though they never called him by that name except, perhaps, on the rack; and even then, as Dr. Murray has pointed out, sometimes a confession made under torture would name him as their god, but a transcript produced in court would substitute the word DEVIL. (Gardner 1954: 132)

However, the god was for all intents and purposes not Satan, and Wicca thus cleansed itself of the name of the Devil and the identity of the religion as satanic but without giving up the oppositional imagery. If we use the ideas from Rodney Stark, as developed by James Lewis, we can argue that this created a medium tension towards the rest of society (Lewis 2009: 131–32). Using oppositional imagery gave Wiccans a sense of being apart from society, but having made these images nonsatanic gave them a way of defending themselves against accusations of being practitioners of evil, furthering the sense of moral legitimacy.

While there are several other reasons why Wicca became as prominent as it did, I would argue that the use and reinterpretation of diabolical imagery is a factor that has yet to be studied in regards to Wicca's development. Without the same secularization process of religious symbols in the Western world that would make a phenomenon like romantic Satanism possible, Wicca could not have emerged. Just as the belief in the Devil had to become more relativistic so did popular ideas about magic and witchcraft.

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Cochrane and Tubal-Cain

While Gardner's construction of witchcraft was the most successful, he was not the only one to assert knowledge of witchcraft, and soon the esoteric scene in Britain was filled with competitors all claiming to represent **(p.237)** the most authentic tradition. Many were clearly inspired by Gardner's writings, but some were more original. One of the more vocal opponents of Gardner was Robert Cochrane (1931–1966). It was probably, according to Doreen Valiente, Cochrane who coined the term 'Gardnerian', as an insult towards those following Gardner's line (Valiente 1989: 122). Little is known about Cochrane, and in the opinion of Doreen Valiente, who worked with him for a while, he had a loose relationship with the truth (121). What is known is that he was raised in a Methodist family and came from a fairly poor background. At the time he led his coven he was working as a typeface designer. Cochrane himself, however, claimed that he came from a hereditary line of witches. Regardless of the truth of the statement, Cochrane developed a tradition of witchcraft that was partially based on Wicca but in many ways different.

Cochrane's approach was more shamanistic and the rituals less formal. The coven worshipped, as in Wicca, a triple goddess, called the White Goddess, and a horned god, but the god was related to only fire and the goddess to the other elements. Like in Wicca, the god was one of fertility and death. From the union between the goddess and the god sprang the Horn Child, an element that is lacking in Wicca (Howard in Cochrane and Jones 2001: 17). Cochrane called his coven the Clan of Tubal-Cain, referring to the son of Cain in the Bible who was considered the first blacksmith. This indicated another difference, as Cochrane's tradition was more focused on folklore and local magical traditions—in this instance lore surrounding the craft of the blacksmith. Further, Cochrane does not appear to have shared the focus on ethics found in Gardnerian Wicca; Cochrane's system was generally darker in its focus and practice.

To call Cochrane's version of witchcraft a complete magical system would be wrong. He wrote little, and apart from letters and a few articles not much is known about his thoughts. In 1966 he committed suicide. The reasons are disputed. In Doreen Valiente's view, the whole thing may have been a mistake. Rather than wanting to kill himself, it might have been an attempt to get attention (Valiente 1989: 134–35). After his death, the tradition he founded would become more and more divided. Different groups developed his teachings that were more or less connected to Cochrane. One of the most important was the '1734' tradition founded by Joseph Wilson (1942–2004). 1734 is a reference to a numerological symbol for the goddess and the mysteries of the tradition (Howard in Cochrane and Jones 2001: 14). Wilson, who was American, never met Cochrane, but they exchanged letters between 1964 and 1966 and these formed the basis of the tradition.

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(p.238) Another tradition is based on the work of Evan John Jones (1937–2003), who worked in Cochrane's coven. Jones would continue to lead one line of the Clan of Tubal-Cain until he retired in 1999 or 2000. After his retirement and later death in 2003, there were controversies around who held the rights to lead the Clan of Tubal-Cain. Today there are three different lineages: Two British, one being lead by Carol Stuart Jones and the other by Shani Oates; and an American linage, lead by Ann and David Finnin, which also goes by the name the Ancient Keltic Church. The latter Jones's and Finnin's traditions are oriented towards Celtic Paganism and have little interest in Lucifer; nevertheless, there are internal conflicts regarding who is considered the most authentic Clan of Tubal-Cain. Among these three, the one lead by Shani Oates and Robin the Dart seems to be the clearest continuation of E. J. Jones's linage, because Jones made Shani Oates the new leader or Maid of Tubal-Cain (Oates 2010: 11). Interestingly, in the writings of Oates we find a focus on Lucifer that we do not find in other lineages of Tubal-Cain.

Cochrane does not mention Lucifer by name in his correspondence, and while it is possible that Lucet—a name used by Cochrane—might be the same as Lucifer, this is an interpretation by Michael Howard and one should be careful not to draw to any certain conclusions (Cochrane 2002: 164, 167). Cochrane generally seems more interested in the goddess than in her male counterpart. It is possible that references to Lucifer were there early on but were not made public until later. The American pagan writer Ann Finnin, who leads of one of the other lineages of the Clan of Tubal-Cain together with her husband, also mentions Lucet as a name for Lucifer. She interprets this as being partly an influence from freemasonry and decided to discontinue use of the name (Finnin 2008: 43). The reference does however substantiate the hypothesis that the Lucet-Lucifer connection was part of the Cochrane system during its development, even if it was not made public.

Shani Oates is clearer in her use of Lucifer and Luciferianism. In *Tubelo´s Green Fire* from 2010, several references to Lucifer are found, and she also uses the term 'Luciferianism' regarding her system. To what degree this derives from Cochrane is hard to tell. Oates considers herself part of his linage, though one can also see inspiration from Michael Howard and Andrew Chumbley (discussed later). While dismissing the Christian interpretation of Lucifer as Satan, their image of Lucifer is clearly based on myths found in Christianity. Lucifer is 'a composite form, an archetypical figure of pre-and non-Christian prominence based on an amalgam of Middle Eastern myths and beliefs concerning the "fallen" angels' (Oates 2010: 19).

(p.239) Of central importance is the 'fall of the angels' that is seen as a universal myth. Using a quote from W. E. Liddell, author of the controversial *The Pickingill Papers—George Pickingill & the Origins of Modern Wicca* (1994) as foundation, the fall of the angels is interpreted as a symbol of the incarnation of

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divinity in carnal flesh (Oates 2010: 18). This is further connected to the Grail myths and other legends. Lucifer becomes an intelligence guiding the evolution of man, an aspect correlated to the role of Cain (Oates 2010: 22). This is not only related to the role of the evolution of mankind and the bringing of culture and 'the hidden light and Gnostic principle of pleromic transformation' (Oates 2010: 29). It is also connected to the transference of authority within the traditional forms of witchcraft in Oates's view. She writes, again in reference to Liddell: 'The allegiance to Lucifer as the indwelling mechanism of evolution and the sole transfer of Virtue to a chosen successor and spiritual heir … distinguish Traditional Craft practices from those of Wicca' (246–47). What effects her writings will have on the larger witchcraft scene remains to be seen as the book is still new as of this writing (2010), but it has generally received positive reviews.

The witches' Devil in the United States

Despite that fact that most people interested in non-Wiccan versions of witchcraft look to Europe, and particularly England, for inspiration, it is in the United States where we find some of the more important new interpretations of witchcraft. After Gardner became increasingly public in the 1950s and 1960s, and following the later public stunts of Alex Sanders, the self-proclaimed 'King of the Witches', there was a growing interest in witchcraft. In the 1960s, with the development of the countercultural movement, this interest grew, but few if any books on the subject were available, and Wicca had not come to the dominant position it would later have in defining witchcraft. What became popular was the image of the witch—often, it seems, in a sexual context (Clifton 2006: 95). Because of this, there were a number of books produced and sold under titles like *Naked Witch* that, as Clifton puts it, were 'bringing the *Cosmo* girl spirit to how-to occult books' (102). Most of these were about different kinds of manipulation or basic spell-casting, mainly for women, and few had any theological or metaphysical ideas.

One prominent exception in early non-Wiccan literature about witchcraft was Paul Huson's *Mastering Witchcraft* from 1970. While important in its time, the book was forgotten for years but has gained a new following **(p.240)** due to the increasing interest in alternative interpretations of witchcraft. Most of the book has a Wiccan feel, and Huson refers to Margaret Murray, Gerald Gardner, and Doreen Valiente among others. Some aspects of it, however, are significantly different. Among the more controversial ideas found in the book are a ritual of self-initiation based on reading the Lord's Prayer backwards (Huson 1980: 20–21). Huson also constructed a type of theology based on a mixture of *Aradia: Gospel of the Witches* and the fall of the angels. In the introduction, he writes, after a description of the introductory myth in *Aradia* regarding the relationship between Diana and Lucifer:

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> In this legend of Diana with its Gnostic overtones, there are reflections of the Cabalistic tradition of Naamah, the seductress of the Fallen Angel Azael. Naamah is synonymous with Babylonian Lilith, and Azael is none other than Babylonian Shamash, the Sun God in his underworld aspect as Lord of the Riches and Artificer of Metals. In fact he is the alter ego of Tubal Cain himself, Naamah's own brother. Azael or Azazel, is in fact one of the modern witches' gods. (1980: 9–10)

The quote and the following description of the role of the fallen angels will recur in later non-Wiccan witchcraft and the use of the name Tubal Cain indicates an inspiration from Robert Cochrane that Clifton also mentions (Clifton 2006: 96). Even though it would be easy to suggest that the book was primarily written to satisfy the commercial need for how-to occult books—Huson was working as a screenwriter at this time—he did have a background in different esoteric, but hardly satanic, groups like Dion Fortune's Christian order Servants of the Light and was further familiar with Gardnerian Wicca and the traditions of Cochrane (Clifton 2006: 96). The ideas expressed by Huson were later integrated into Luciferian ideas about witchcraft, and the book must be seen as having a stronger influence on the Luciferian witchcraft milieu than the openly satanic book by Anton LaVey, *The Compleat Witch* from 1971, that rather belongs to the same category as *Naked Witch*. Still, considering the impact LaVey had on most parts of Satanism a short presentation of his ideas on witchcraft is necessary.

LaVey's writings contain several negative references to Wiccans based on their rejection of witchcraft as being a part of Satanism (LaVey 1969: 50ff). However, there is hardly any attempt by LaVey to create ideas about witchcraft that go deeper than a type of lesser magic. The term 'witch' was often used by LaVey as synonymous with a female Satanist. The second degree in the Church of Satan is, for example, called 'witch' for women. According to Michael Aquino, one of the books that inspired LaVey and the **(p.241)** Church of Satan was Elliot Rose's *A Razor for a Goat* (1962)—a book that opposed Margaret Murray's ideas about witchcraft being pagan and rather looked on it as a manifestation of popular Satanism opposed to the ruling classes similar in a sense to Michelet and Leland (Aquino 2010: 376; cf. Rose 2003). In an editorial for the *Cloven Hoof* in 1970 called 'The Shame of the New Witch Cult', LaVey addressed the issue of the new witches denying the name for whom their forbearers where tortured and killed, adding 'Satan's name will not be denied! Let no man shun or mock His Name who plays His winning game—or Despair, Depletion and Destruction await!!' (Aquino 2009: 69). Considering the elitist view of what a Satanist should be, it is hardly surprising that ideas like those of Rose, while accepted and embraced because they gave a type of authenticity, did not become a prominent part of LaVey's Satanism. It did however create a basis for condemnation of the growing Wiccan movement.

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Following the 1970s and the 1980s, the satanic idea about witchcraft seems to become further marginalized. While Wicca experienced problems in the wake of the ‘Satanic panic’, it had emerged as an increasingly stable new religious movement. A substantial increase of followers of Wicca seems to have occurred in the 1990s and the early years of the twenty-first century (Berger 2003). At the same time, Satanism remained a marginal movement, and the fact that Wiccans, from time to time, used rhetoric to defend themselves against accusations of Satanism that included indictments against Satanism also further created hostility from Satanist groups towards Wicca (Vera 2011). As a general rule, within satanic groups, opinions about Wicca have been negative and authors often show signs of irritation when writing about it.

Andrew Chumbley

The single most significant author to popularize ideas about a traditional dark way of witchcraft in the new millennium was the British occult author and founder of the Cultus Sabbati, Andrew Chumbley (1967–2004). Chumbley claimed to have been initiated into a traditional witchcraft group and his small network called Cultus Sabbati was, in a way, following this. Chumbley produced several articles in different British occult and pagan periodicals, most notably in *The Cauldron*, edited by fellow Cultus Sabati member Michael Howard (discussed later). Most important was his book *Azoetia* (1992), which has become something of a modern classic in esoteric circles.

Chumbley presents himself as a follower of traditional witchcraft, also called ‘the sabbatic craft’, and positions himself against the modern **(p.242)** Wicca-religion. His ideas are highly eclectic and mix traditional folk magic with modern chaos magic, Western esotericism and Western Orientalist ideas about Sufism and Yezidism. His main source for the latter two appears to have been the eccentric writer Idres Shah (1924–1996), who, ironically, was a close friend of Gerald Gardner and the author of Gardner’s first biography *Gerald Gardner: A Witch* (1960); though the author was presented as Jack Bracelin. A representative example of Chumbley’s reasoning is found in his book *Qutub* (1995):

> The Daemon, as Shaitan, is literally ‘the Adversary’—the Reverse One. He is the Image of the First God, manifest in double-form, as both the Black Man standing at the Crossroads of all Existence and as Melek Ta’us—the Peacock Angel, Sovereign of the World’s Djinn. As the ‘Black Man’ he is the anthropomorphic ‘Body’ of Darkness, the Lord of the Sabbat, the Overseer of the Primal Rite of Magick. In this form he embodies Death as the Gateway to the *Other*. In assuming the god-form of *Al-Aswad*—the Man-in-Black—the Adept places himself upon the interstitial ‘Point’ of the crossroads and thus within ‘Death’: the singular *inbetweenness* ‘twixt every Stasis of Being. He thus becomes the embodiment of the Gate at the centre of the cross-roads, the Portal where-by Power has ingress to the

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World of Manifestation and through which the Seeker must pass in order to transcend the 'Form' of the Manifest. (Chumbley 1995: 44)

Still, ideas about witchcraft as a duoteistic cult where the male is balanced by the female can be found in the writings of Chumbley as well, and the quote is later followed by a description of Lilith as the bride of the lord of the Black Man.

It is difficult to create a clear description of Chumbley's work. While Chumbley claimed to have been part of an older witchcraft tradition, it is easier to recognize contemporary sources like Austin Osman Spare, Kenneth Grant, Robert Cochrane, Idres Shah, and Chaos Magic. Despite the rather modern flair of Chumbley's writings, Ronald Hutton has argued in favour of some of his claims to authenticity (Hutton 1999: 306–07). Chumbley's ideas cannot be considered pure Luciferianism, but it would be wrong not to acknowledge a strong Luciferian element in his works. Among those that have attempted to create a traditional way of witchcraft, Chumbley is by far the most respected, and after his death his books have become highly sought-after collectors' items. The difficulty in acquiring his books makes the mystery around him all the stronger.

Among the most important ideas we find in Chumbley's works are the assertion that there is a more authentic version of witchcraft clearly articulated in his tradition, the rejection of the fertility aspect and more a focus **(p.243)** on the spiritual and, finally, witchcraft as a dark magical system based on ideas about the adversary. Many of these ideas, with the exception of the last point, are also found in the writings of Robert Cochrane.

Michael Howard and the fallen angels

The boundary between Luciferian witchcraft and Wicca becomes blurred when we encounter people like Michael Howard and his writing partner Nigel Jackson. In their most famous joint book *The Pillars of Tubal-Cain* (2000), as well as in Jackson's *Masks of Misrule* (1996) and *The Call of the Horned Piper* (1994) and Howard's *Book of Fallen Angels* (2004), we find ideas that cross the boundaries between neopaganism and Luciferianism. To what extent Howard's ideas in his published books are the result of his interaction with Chumbley is difficult to ascertain. Chumbley is, however, quoted continuously. Both Howard and Jackson have a background in Gardnerian Wicca and have published traditional Wiccan books. In the 1960s, Howard was also a member of Madeline Montalban's Order of the Morning Star, a group whose ideas are also interpreted as Luciferian by Howard (Howard 2009: 4).

In the aforementioned writings, the focus shifted towards a Luciferian interpretation of witchcraft. Howard, in particular, focused on the role of Lucifer in both his books and articles, sometimes making the claim that Lucifer reflects an older deity called Lumiel (Howard 2004: 18). The main theme of Howard's books is the fall of the angels and the role of the Nephilim, indicating ideas that

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go back to the *Book of Enoch*. These ideas are also found in Huson's work, and Howard does acknowledge that Huson is used as a reference (Howard 2004: 192). Similar ideas are also found in the writings of Chumbley. One of the most important deities, apart from Lucifer, is Azazel, the leader of the rebel angels in the *Book of Enoch*. He appears as the primary witch-god in both Howard's and Jackson's writings, just as he did in Huson's. They also give a central role to Cain, which is, as we have seen, a recurring theme. In their joint collaboration *The Pillars of Tubal-Cain* they write, in a section called 'The Gospel of Cain':

> When the Great Serpent, Lucifer-Zamael, the Father of all Witcheries, begot Cain upon Eve, the Mother of All Living bare a serpent-eyed child, a kinsman of the Nephilim. And Naamah, the sweet kinswoman of owls, was born also; from their incest are [*sic*] the Children of the Dark Angel sprang. (Howard and Jackson 2000: 269–70)

(p.244) What is of interest is not only the ideas that we find in the writings of Howard and Jackson but also the setting within which they are presented. Most of their books are published by the British independent publisher Capall Bann, which primarily prints books about Wicca, Arthurian mysteries, Celtic druidism, and so forth. The very notion that a primarily pagan publisher would publish books that by many definitions are if not satanic then at least close, do indicate a change in attitude in the pagan community in Britain since the early 1990s. The works of Howard and Jackson are also interesting because the idea of a clear-cut border between the so-called traditional witchcraft and Wicca hardly exists even in the personal sense. Still, it should be noted that Howard describes how he remained silent about his Luciferian beliefs due to the Wiccan communities' hostile attitude (Howard 2004: 13). Apart from representing their own ideas, Jackson and Howard have been important in furthering an interest in the writings of Robert Cochrane and Madeline Montalban.

Michael Ford

The above mentioned groups belong to what we can interpret as Luciferian witchcraft. Still, there are openly satanic interpretations of witchcraft. It is difficult to state when ideas about witchcraft became more prominent within satanic and Left-Hand Path groups, but it does seem to have happened during the 1990s and early 2000s. As a hypothesis, I could say that the development of satanic witchcraft seems to coincide with the development of esoteric and spiritually oriented interpretations of Satanism and Left-Hand Path traditions, who rather than looking at the Devil as merely a symbol, like LaVey did, started to see a spiritual aspect of Satanism (cf. Petersen 2009; Granholm 2009). While LaVey had abandoned public rituals and the traditional tropes of magic, this new, small, heterogeneous movement shifted towards practice. With the use of the Internet and web communities, people from different orders and solitary practitioners could interact in more direct and informal ways.

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Among those who have written on the subject of Luciferian witchcraft, and who could be said to belong to the satanic milieu, the American Michael Ford is a prominent name. His book *Luciferian Witchcraft* (2005) is one of the more famous books dealing with the topic. Despite that he doesn't hold the same position as Chumbley and has been criticized by other followers of Luciferian witchcraft, it is most likely the quantity and availability of Ford's material that makes him equally, if not **(p.245)** more, important as an ideologist. Ford is the leader of a magical order called the Order of Phosphorus that describes itself as:

> an initiatory guild dedicated to empowerment of the individual through willed activation of the Luciferian Path. Accomplishment on the Luciferian Path creates an opportunity for Prospective initiates to join the Black Order of the Dragon, a companion initiatory organization propagating Adversarial Magick and Vampyrism. There are numerous sub-orders within TOPH including 'The Order of Set-Aapep' [*sic*], exploring Adversarial Egyptian and Luciferian Magick, 'Ordo Azariel', a Vampyric-Qlippothic guild, 'Ordo Algol', a Satanic-Chaos inspired magickal order and many others.[1]

The Order has an eclectic approach, not only to the different traditions they work with but also to the ideas about the forces of darkness, as they try to embrace those both with a spiritual goal and with a material one. Ford calls his system the path of the adversary, recalling Chumbley's ideas, and, as in most similar groups, the goal is self-deification (Granholm 2009).

In contrast to many other forms of esoteric Luciferianism, Ford maintains a more symbolic attitude towards Lucifer. In a comment posted on the Order of Phospohorus mailing list he wrote:

> A Luciferian recognizes self-divinity and strives to become more. You approach a wide variety of deific masks based on your inner instinctual approach and affinity. You don't believe in 'Lucifer' per say [*sic*], that relates to power and energy as adaptable and experience oriented specific to the initiate.[2]

The ideas used by Ford are diverse, but some ideologists are clearly recognizable like Anton LaVey, the Temple of Set, Aleister Crowley, Andrew Chumbley, ONA, and Dragon Rouge.

Ford's Church of the Adversarial Light was founded in 2007. To what degree any of these groups and/or subgroups exists in an actual sense is beyond the scope of this chapter. What we do have is an ideology that has probably been more influential outside his order, and Ford does seem to be one of the most important and influential Luciferian authors at present. The Yahoo group of the Order of Phosphorus has a little bit over 1,100 members and is fairly active at the time of this writing (2012). While Ford **(p.246)** claims to have been a practitioner of

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magic for over sixteen years, it is primarily in the new millennium that he has been a very busy author. During this period he has produced fourteen books and a Luciferian tarot deck. Before he started to produce books he printed smaller pamphlets, most of which are centred on the same themes as his later works. Most of his books follow themes relating to Luciferian magic and the path of the adversary. Two deal directly with witchcraft, although the ideas are present in most of his other books and there does not seem to be a clear border between witchcraft and other forms of magic.

Among the most important of his books is the aforementioned *Luciferian Witchcraft* that originally seems to have been printed in 2005. While it is difficult to extract what is witchcraft and what represents other types of magic, it seems clear that witchcraft represents a magic oriented towards balance between a male force and a female force (for example Lucifer and Lilith). In addition to these forces, Cain is introduced as a son to the primary forces. Ford uses a diverse system of names to describe his system, and it is not always clear what he means or if there is any actual structure involved. Cain is both the son of the Lord of the sabbath and the Lord of the sabbath himself.

Rather than trying to force Ford's ideas into a coherent structure, what is of interest is the use of Cain as a god of witchcraft. This seems to be one of the more novel ideas that we find in the Luciferian witchcraft scene, not only in the writings of Ford but also in the writings of Chumbley, Howard, Oates, and others. While the idea of a divine pair is older than Wicca in itself, the idea of a strong connection of witchcraft with a male/female pair of divinities is clearly Wiccan. Ford recently republished an older essay on his Yahoo group that provides some interesting insight into his early thinking and proves his continued adherence to similar ideas. In the essay, titled *Black Witchcraft*, Ford wrote:

> The nature of 'Skir-hand' Witchcraft in the ancient and modern world is of anti-nature, or rather the word 'Antinomian' is a greek form meaning 'against the law'. This word makes reference to rebellion from a structure or spiritual design of the masses, the majority and whatever the current ideological mainstream may be at that time. Witchcraft, no matter for what intent or form, has always stood outside any conventional acceptance within society—either by the religious hierarchy (even though it keeps their organizations called Church together and making money) or even governmental ones.[3]

(p.247) Still, witchcraft is only an aspect of the Luciferian path we find in this context, not the core. This approach is typical of the occult traditions and practitioners active today, where there is a large flexibility as to what type of system one is working within. Usually what unites the different strands is some trope. In Ford's case, the trope is the adversary, in Wicca the trope would be

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witchcraft. Thus, we can in this example see one of the reasons why witchcraft seems to be a weaker signifier in Satanism than it is in Wicca. In the former it is an aspect, but in the latter it is central to the practitioner's identity.

Conclusions

The submilieu of Luciferian witchcraft can be said to be a good example of the problem of positioning Satanism as an autonomous milieu within the larger dark magical subculture and one of the reasons for using the term 'Luciferian' rather than satanic in this chapter. Few of the groups or authors found here have ideas that can be considered completely satanic, but equally true is that few, if any of them, can be seen as nonsatanic in their conception of Lucifer. In many ways, the idea of witchcraft as intimately connected to Satan is quite logical with regards to the history of the image of the witch in Christian cultures. This would, in a sense, make the argument for a pure satanic witchcraft as traditional somewhat valid. However, when using witchcraft, Satanism—just like Wicca—makes a reinterpretation of the available symbolic structure to make it fit into its contemporary ideology.

Still, as a product on a spiritual commodity market, it does have its limits, and in relation to the Wiccan community the satanic witchcraft scene is marginal. Neither is there any indication of whether modern satanic witchcraft will grow to become a central part of satanic practice or if it will become a marginal part even in that area, but considering the potency of the image of the witch in our culture it may well have a significant part to play.

It is also interesting to see how dominating Wicca has been regarding the idea of what witchcraft is. While most Luciferians reject the moral orientation of Wicca, many of the basic premises—like the theology of a horned god and a goddess, and the focus on the moon—remain. Rather than challenging the structure of Wicca, Luciferian witchcraft often reinforces it. It also has an impact on it. Wicca today can hardly be described as the white-light variety that is presented in many Satanist publications, and the individuals considered predecessors by Luciferian witches are often significant within Wicca as well, like Spare, Cochrane, and Chumbley.

(p.248) In many ways, the ideas about Wicca found in the darker traditions of witchcraft are based on a rather shallow understanding of Wicca. While there is nothing satanic in contemporary Wicca, it is still undeniable that the movement used and reinterpreted symbols and cultural narratives that were originally seen as satanic, but did so in a manner that made it possible to approach these symbols in a way that made it seem empowering and morally justifiable rather than evil. They thus managed to take demonic images and transform them into benign pagan divinities. As such, Wicca's use of satanic imagery deserves more study and might prove to be a fruitful path to understanding the changing role religious symbols play in society.

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(2) . Ford, post on the message board psychonaut 75, January 30, 2006.

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The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity
Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen

Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

Secret Identities in the Sinister Tradition

Political Esotericism and the Convergence of Radical Islam, Satanism, and National Socialism in the Order of Nine Angles

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DOI:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.003.0012

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter analyzes The Order of the Nine Angles (ONA), a Satanist group which for the last three decades has moved in and out of the public sight, while its main ideologist David Myatt has actively participated in violent neo-Nazi and Islamist terrorist groups, hoping to bring down the “old order”. A manual on Aryan revolution by Myatt inspired nail-bomber David Copeland's deeds, and a text by Myatt defending suicide attacks was featured on Hamas' website. Both his Nazism and Islamism, the chapter demonstrates, are however merely instruments for the ONA's underlying sinister esoteric plots, ultimately aiming to create an “Imperium” based on a species of satanic god-men. Myatt's writings contain a blueprint for fusing disparate ideologies such as National Socialism, Satanism and Radical Islam, resonating with similar ideas in the larger context of religion and politics—such as the critique of modernity and the West as it has been presented both by the European radical Right and by fundamentalist Muslims—which makes it potentially dangerous to ignore a group like the ONA, however limited its membership might be.

Keywords: Satanism, terrorism, National Socialism, Radical Islam, The Sinister Tradition, Order of the Nine Angles, David Myatt, Satanic magick

Introduction

Since the emergence of ‘modern’ Satanism in the 1960s, with the foundation of the Church of Satan in 1966 and the Temple of Set in 1975, a specific branch of

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the so-called Left-Hand Path has emerged. This branch distances itself from the groups just mentioned; its adherents identify themselves as followers of the 'Sinister Tradition' and are proponents of what they call 'Traditional Satanism'.[1] The primary organization behind the concept of 'Sinister Tradition' is the Order of Nine Angles (ONA). This order has for the last three decades moved in and out of the public sight, producing a steady flow of manuscripts outlining their idea of the Sinister Tradition, thus establishing a tradition within the satanic and Left-Hand Path milieux, which has hitherto been overlooked and possibly **(p.251)** underestimated. Whereas established satanic or Left-Hand Path organizations such as the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set are primarily concerned with aiding individuals to self-awareness and realization of their full 'potential', without professing any specific political ideology, the ONA is much more overt and politically extreme in its aims, including infiltrating and destabilizing the current society and civilization through a combination of magickal and practical means.[2] In consequence, the Sinister Tradition is not only a phenomena that is related to esotericism and the occult, but also something inherently connected to extreme politics, as adherents to this tradition ultimately hope to create an 'Imperium' based on a new species in the human evolution, a species of satanic god-men.[3]

The ONA has, with a few exceptions, received little attention by scholars in the past. But, in recent years, ONA-inspired activities, led by protagonist David Myatt, managed to enter the scene of grand politics and the global 'War On Terror', because of several foiled terror plots in Europe that can be linked to Myatt's writings and, as this chapter will document, also directly to the ONA via Myatt. In addition, the general increase of activities and recent formation of several prolific splinter groups make a scholarly examination of this group both necessary and important.[4] The ONA is unique in its overt combination of esotericism and extreme politics (initially National Socialism, but now also Radical Islamism[5]), and several order manuscripts describe the order's preferred method of influencing world politics, namely the adaption of political insight roles.

(p.252) This chapter will first present the 'Sinister Tradition' and examine the ONA, its origins, history and ideas. Second, it will examine the concept of insight roles according to the ONA, as well as provide concrete examples of how the order has influenced the political discourse through both National Socialism and Islam via its *alter ego* David Myatt. Finally, I will compare ONA to historical and contemporary cases in the development of political esotericism.

The Sinister Tradition

Before we go into details, let us first look at the concept of the 'Sinister Tradition' and what warrants defining such a tradition as distinct from existing Left-Hand Path and satanic groups. Let us initially identify some characteristics,

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an *air de famille*, that are shared by groups belonging to the ‘Sinister Tradition’. The characteristics are as follows:

1. *Anti-ethics*: Contrary to ‘mainstream’ Left-Hand Path groups such as the Temple of Set and Dragon Rouge, some of whose members advocate animal rights and vegetarianism (Granholm 2009: 14ff), followers of the Sinister Tradition despise any kind of ethical behaviour which they see as remnants of a Judeo-Christian worldview. Ritual sacrifice of animals is part of accepted magickal practice, and within the ONA, there exists rituals including both symbolic and actual human sacrifices.[6]
2. *Right wing*: All groups related to the Sinister Tradition contain political elements, such as appraisal of National Socialism, race theory, social Darwinism, and the infiltration or disruption of political powers in society (ONA 2004).[7]
3. *Emphasis on physical training*: Physical training is emphasized and is often a requirement in the curriculum of the initiate; it is needed to **(p. 253)** advance in the grade system and includes, for example, long-distance running, as well as long periods of seclusion from the rest of the world under primitive conditions (Black Order 1994).
4. *Direct action*: The Sinister Tradition is highly practical, requiring members to perform ‘magickal’ acts by working undercover in society or by opposing society by means of direct action such as infiltration, intimidation, or assassination of key opponents (ONA 2004; ONA 1994).
5. *Distinct ‘sinister’ vocabulary*: A certain common vocabulary, which differs from the one used by the rest of the Left-Hand Path, is used. Key words are Sinister (often in combination with words such as dialectics and pathworkings), the Septenary System, Aeonics, causal/acausal, Nexion, connexion, Homo Galactica, dark sorcery, presenscing, and the dark gods (DarkLogos, 2005).[8]
6. *Advocate ‘Traditional’ and theistic Satanism*: Groups belonging to the Sinister Tradition advocate what they call ‘Traditional Satanism’ which is theistic, positively believing in and using supernatural forces (Long 1994).
7. *Non-Semitic tradition:* All followers of the Sinister Tradition are characterized by the conscious avoidance of any Semitic and Christian influences, such as Kabbalah, Qlipphothic, and Goetic magick. Instead non-Christian mythologies and sources are used such as the ‘Tree of Wyrd’, also called the Septenary system, as a replacement for the Kabbalah.[9] Likewise Lovecraftian myths of the ‘Dark Gods’ and gods from the ‘shadow-side’ of non-Semitic religious traditions (e.g., Loki and Wotan from the Norse tradition) are used for their mythical propensities as tricksters and magicians (Loki 1996; Black Order 1993: 30).[10]

(p.254) The Order of Nine Angles

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Before moving on to describe the history of the ONA in greater detail, let me first give an assessment of existing scholarly research on the ONA. A few pages are devoted to the ONA in Jeffrey Kaplan and Leonard Weinberg's *The Emergence of a Euro-American Radical Right* (1999), which is one of the standard works on the radical Right in Europe and the United States. The book has its merits especially with regards to the historical material before 1990. The material on the ONA, however, is both dated and incorrect. It appears as if Kaplan and Weinberg are uncritically buying into the information provided by their informants. It is claimed that Anton Long and David Myatt are two different persons, which is untrue, as will be documented later in this chapter. Secondly, they accept that Myatt's Reichsvolk organization and the ONA are simply 'like-minded' and 'agree on some areas and disagree on others', instead of using the fact that these organizations share the same post-box as evidence for Reichsvolk being another 'front' for the ONA (Kaplan and Weinberg 1999: 143–44).[11] Likewise, they do not connect the ONA to the Black Order led by Kerry Bolton, despite Bolton's appearance as an ONA adept in the published letter-correspondence of the ONA (ONA 1992: 19).

A more recent scholarly contribution is *Gods of the Blood* by Mattias Gardell (2003), who also devotes a few pages to the ONA. It gives a few more details with regards to the ideology of the ONA, using, almost exclusively, material published online, which was not available to Weinberg and Kaplan. However, it also contains several glaring omissions and mistakes. Most important, the pseudonyms Anton Long and Christos Beest are repeated, without questioning who is behind them. As a result, David Myatt is not mentioned once, and the many connections Myatt's name would invariably create are lost, creating a big hole in the picture painted by Gardell (2003: 292–295). As we will see later, the role of David Myatt was and is essential to the creation and existence of the ONA. In addition, it is worth mentioning that Gardell's book was published *after* the publication of *Black Sun* by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke but does not refer to it and the details concerning David Myatt.

Goodrick-Clarke's *Black Sun* (2003) is the most complete and accurate scholarly work, providing for the first time a brief history of the order, using actual printed sources. It contains a few minor mistakes, such as an incorrect date of birth on Myatt, but still provides a fairly good overview of the order and its teachings. It is also the first time that a scholarly work connects **(p.255)** Myatt to the ONA. In spite of this, Goodrick-Clarke provides no evidence to back up his assumption that Myatt is Anton Long. He merely states it as if it were a well-known fact. Goodrick-Clarke is also alone in describing some of the remaining 'Sinister' groups such as the Black Order, Order of the Jarls of Baelder, and the Fraternitas Loki. However, he fails to connect these groups with one another except on a superficial level of 'like-minded'-ness, without exploring the actual personal and ideological links among the groups and the ONA (Goodrick-Clarke

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2003: 216–231). It is the aim of this chapter to remedy this by providing evidence to document that Anton Long is in fact David Myatt.

The History of the Order of Nine Angles

It can be very difficult, if not impossible, to obtain exact and verifiable information about the origins of an order if secrecy is its hallmark. Occult orders have a tendency to weave themselves into mythical narratives of decades and centuries of occult tradition and practice, predating the actual appearance of a specific group. Historical examples of this are numerous, a prominent one being the ostensible appearance of the Rosicrucian manuscripts *Fama Fraternitatis* and *Confessio Fraternitatis* in the beginning of the seventeenth century, only to see the development of actual 'Rosicrucian' orders in the eighteenth century and the appearance of modern Rosicrucian orders such as AMORC (Ancient Mystical Order Roae Crucis) much later (ca. 1910). The history of the ONA is no different and shrouded in mystery and legend. The ONA claims to be part of a thousand-year-old tradition, worshipping 'dark gods' from Albion (England), although the order in its current form has its roots in 1960s and 1970s Britain.

In 1968, an 'Anton Long' made contact with a coven in Fenland and later moved to London where he joined 'secret groups … practicing the magic of the Golden Dawn and Aleister Crowley' (Goodrick-Clarke 2003:116). Five years later, Long met a woman or 'mistress' leading the Order of Nine Angles, which at that time was a 'satanic' Wicca group practicing pagan rituals at various henges and stone circles around equinox and solstice (Goodrick-Clarke 2003: 216–17).[12] In the 1960s, this **(p.256)** woman united three different 'temples', or groups, called Camlad, the Noctulians and the Temple of the Sun.[13] The woman behind the ONA initiated Anton Long: 'He was initiated into this Tradition (at the time, the first to be initiated for five years) and went on to become Heir. He implemented the next stage of Sinister Strategy—to make the teachings known on a large scale' (OSV 1994). The woman subsequently emigrated to Australia, and Long took over the order, developing a full initiatory system of training and practice, resulting in thousands of pages in ritual books, occult novels, and esoteric tracts (Goodrick-Clarke 2003: 218; DarkLogos 2009).[14]

The ONA continued to spread its message through various magazines in the 1980s and 1990s and also published its own magazine *Fenrir*, which is still printed as of this writing. In 1990, a 'Christos Beest' took over as the outer representative of the order after Long but left the ONA in 1999.[15] The late 1990s is probably the period in which the ONA received the most notoriety, after the left-wing magazine *Searchlight* published an article on them in the April 1998 issue. The article revealed the identity of leading order members, exposing Anton Long as David Myatt's hidden pseudonym, and also put forward accusations of the ONA being affiliated with paedophiles. The exposure caused internal strife in the National Socialist groups that Myatt was involved in at the time, not all of whom were aware of Long's real identity as Myatt (*Searchlight*,

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1998). Since 2000, the ONA has been present online, and it is clear that the order increasingly uses the Internet to communicate and distribute new manuscripts. The ONA is thus a good example of the increasing transnationality and translocality manifesting in the world of esotericism, with online relations across continents, replacing **(p.257)** national and local units of practitioners (Granholm 2007; cf. Hannerz 1996; Peter Smith 2001).[16]

It is difficult, if not impossible, to estimate the number of ONA members, because the initiatory system has developed as a highly personal journey with little help, no official membership, and only sparse instructions. The ONA admits that only a few individuals have risen to the level of master and grand master (fifth and sixth degrees). The ONA thus conveys the idea of being an elitist occult group, requiring many years of hard work to pass its tests. A rough estimate of the total number of individuals involved over the period 1980–2009, based on the amount of magazines and journals printed and circulated, and the number of members in public discussion groups, is a few thousand. Of course, the number of longtime adherents is much smaller. Most journals such as *Fenrir*, *Baelder*, and *Crossing the Abyss* each had a circulation of 200–400 copies, and they attracted different 'subcultures' as their main reader base, such as satanic (*Fenrir, Suspire*), neopagan (*Baelder*), and right-wing esoteric (*Crossing the Abyss*). Accordingly, many more have read or heard about the ONA without agreeing with or following the doctrines of the order. This is evident from official correspondence available between the ONA and 'established' Left-Hand Path groups such as the Temple of Set (ONA 1992), the notoriety that the order received from books such as *Black Sun* by Goodrick-Clarke, as well as the many online discussions on various usernet groups, forums, and discussion lists on magick and esotericism in general.

The ONA continues to publish new material online and in its printed journal *Fenrir*; in this regard, the order is still active, although, it is impossible to know to what extent members meet and practice rituals. Some of the recent texts are supposed transcriptions from meetings held at different lodges, so at least some non-Internet activity should be presumed.

The Initiatory Grade System of the ONA

The 'sinister' goal of the ONA is to create a 'new individual' through direct experience, practice, and self-development (ONA 1990). The system of the ONA, often referred to as the 'Seven-Fold Sinister Way', is reflected in the initiatory system of the order with seven grades and is connected with **(p.258)** the 'Tree of Wyrd' or Septenary System, which is also sevenfold.[17] As mentioned, this system is somewhat similar to the Sephirot of Jewish Kabbalah, an elaborate system of correspondences. Most, if not all, of the requirements for each step or grade are openly revealed by the order in its introductory material, which is quite unique, considering that we are dealing with an esoteric order.[18] The esoteric element lies in the tasks themselves; true understanding of what these

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grades entail will supposedly only be attained by actually doing the required tasks.

The focus throughout the grades is on practical experience and attainment of god-hood, and not just symbolic or magickal actions. The ONA describes real-life initiations, reminiscent of old warrior initiations as they are thought to have been performed in ancient tribes, for example in the Germanic warrior-bands, the *Männerbünde*. In the Nordic tradition, a nightly ritual called 'utesita' (sitting out), required the participant to go in the woods and sit in the dark all night without falling asleep to provoke thoughts and vision in this isolated stage.[19] A similar practice has been observed among Native American tribes, where an initiation ritual requires initiates to seek isolation and hardships by prolonged outdoor nightly stays (Irwing 1996: 76–83). A similar experience is part of the ritual for the 'external adept', which requires one to lie still on the ground and stay awake the whole night (West 1996: 22). Even more demanding is the grade ritual of internal adept, which requires the initiate to isolate oneself in the wild for a period of three months (that is, from equinox to solstice); contact with civilization at all and use of modern conveniences, including light or a watch, are not allowed (West 1996: 44; ONA 1994). Other requirements include starting and running your own magickal temple (which is one of the reasons why so many offspring groups built on ONA teachings emerged); conducting various rituals; and performing physical tasks such as marching, running, and cycling long distances. Finally, people within the ONA are also required to assume so-called insight roles in order to act out **(p.259)** various roles in opposition to their natural self to transgress limits and boundaries of the mind.

This system of initiation is claimed to be very elitist, allowing only a few to ever reach the final grades, and in the texts of the ONA no room is left for compromise. Either you perform the challenges set forth by the order, or you don't advance. The ONA stresses that it does not award titles as mere 'tokens of gratitude', as was the habit in the Church of Satan, where people prominent in the 'scene' and in the media, such as Marilyn Manson and Michael Moynihan, were awarded the degree of priest by LaVey.[20] Reaching the fifth grade of master can take ten or even twenty years (Long 1994a: 3); according to an article written in 1989, only four masters are currently in existence in the West (ONA 1989: 4). It is difficult to verify how many people have actually completed the tasks presented by the ONA and thus confirm the number of 'masters' within the order. Supposed diaries and reports describing longer rituals, such as the three-month isolation ritual, are available online (CB, n.d.), and although they appear authentic, they cannot be verified as factual.

ONA and Magick

Having described the initiatory system used in the ONA, we now move on to look closer at the magickal practices and methods used within the order, with special

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attention to the 'aeonic magick' which is a unique element in the Sinister Tradition. According to the ONA:

> Magick is essentially the opening up of areas of consciousness latent within all—a means of changing the individual and the world. The techniques of magick (for example, rituals) are simply means to achieve this. For too long magick has been mis-understood as 'spells, conjurations' and the like, and while such things are magick, they are only a beginning, a mere intimation of what real magick is all about. (ONA 1989: 1)

Thus magick according to the ONA goes beyond mere ritual and is instead understood as the manipulation and control of energies:

> **(p.260)** Essentially, magick—according to the Sinister tradition of the ONA—is defined as 'the presencing of acausal energy in the causal by means of a nexion.' By the nature of our consciousness, we, as human individuals, are one type of nexion—that is, we have the ability to access, and presence, certain types of acausal energy. (ONA 1989: 2)

The general 'satanic' outlook of the ONA is also reflected in the orders take on ritual magick, which does not include any kind of 'occult protection' of the type normally employed in ceremonial magick (ONA 1989: 2).

The main ritual book of the ONA is the *Black Book of Satan* (Robury 1988), which includes instructions on how to practice ceremonial magick such as the black mass. The rituals are heavily sexually loaded, with orgies as part of most practices, and both indoor and outdoor versions are included in most cases. Other elements in the *Black Book of Satan* include various Latin chants, rituals for both the births and deaths of members, as well as a sinister creed, various satanic blessings, and instructions on how to run a satanic temple. In addition, the guide *NAOS* contains a general guide to what the order calls internal or hermetic magick, and also includes instructions on how to play the 'Star-Game', which is a magickal game used in the practice of aeonic magick, which will be explained shortly (West 1996).

The ONA distinguishes between three forms of magick: external, internal, and aeonic. This is also reflected in the grade system of the order, with grades such as external and internal adept, focusing on different aspects of magickal practice (ONA 1994). *External magick* is divided into two categories. The first is ceremonial magic, which is, in essence, ritual magick involving more than two persons, the purpose being to use magickal forces to achieve a specific goal. The second form is hermetic magick, usually done *extempore* without a fixed text either in solitary or by two persons. Sex magick and other such forms of 'emotional' magick fall into this category. According to the ONA, *internal magick* is used to provoke an altered state of consciousness, leading to a process of 'individuation' and thus adepthood, which includes the ability of opening so-

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called gates (also referred to as a 'nexus') where one can channel energies 'between the causal and acausal' (ONA 1993: 1). Internal magick is mostly hermetic and includes working with the seven different 'spheres' on the septenary tree of wyrd.

Finally, *aeonic magick* is the most advanced form of magick practiced, according to the ONA, and experience with external and internal magick is a natural requisite, which is why it is normally only conducted by initiates who have obtained the grade of master. The aim of aeonic magick is to influence large numbers of people over a long period of time, that is, to influence 'aeons', by altering or distorting existing forces, or by creating **(p.261)** new ones (followers of the ONA would say 'presencing acausal energies') in order to change the evolution of man (ONA 1993: 1). The use of aeonic magick is explained as follows:

> All aeonic magick can only be used, by its nature, in three ways—(1) aid the already existing or original wyrd of an existing aeonic civilization; (2) create a new aeon and thus a new aeonic civilization; (3) distort or disrupt an existing civilization and thus the aeonic forces of that civilization. That is, aeonic magick involves working (a) with existing aeonic energy (as evident in the associated aeonic civilization); or (b) against existing aeonic energy; or, finally, it involves (c) creating a new type of aeonic energy by opening a new nexion and drawing forth new acausal energies. (Long 1994b)

According to the ONA, world history is divided into aeons, which are periods of roughly two thousand years, where the final one thousand five hundred of that period includes the manifestation of an aeonic civilization. Earlier civilizations include the Sumerian and the Hellenic, each with their own ethos and type of magickal practice. We are currently living in the aeon of the Western civilization, whose ethos is Faustian (albeit distorted by Christianity and Semitic values); the next aeonic civilization will be galactic and will only emerge with the evolution of a new man, which is the goal of the ONA. The idea of aeons and their specific properties, such as length and ethos, is primarily borrowed from Arnold Toynbee and Oswald Spengler, although the concept itself is probably derived from Crowley.[21]

A person working with and controlling the so-called acausal energies is called a *cliologist*, and his work is normally done by using one of the following methods.[22] The first way is to create a physical so-called nexion, which **(p.262)** is done through various rites and magickal chants that will open a gateway to the acausal realm in the attempt to manifest these energies in the causal realm, thus influencing the existing aeon. The second method is to play an advanced form of the Star Game, a magickal game developed by the ONA with pieces symbolizing different aspects of various aeons, which while played causes the

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cliologist to become a living nexion via the symbolism of the game and thus a channel for acausal energy (Long 1994b). Aeonic magick is thus used in the ONA to act against what the ONA claims is a 'distortion' of the current 'Western' aeon, created and maintained primarily by Judeo-Christianity (Long 1994b).[23]

The long-term vision and goals of the ONA stretch over several centuries and cannot be linked directly to the achievements of a single individual as is customary within the Left-Hand Path milieu. Other groups have talked about the coming of new aeons, but it has often been in vague terms, such as the 'Age of Satan' mentioned in *The Satanic Bible* by LaVey (1969: 12). The long-term goals and ONA's strategy to achieve them include aiding human evolution by 'increasing the dark, creative, forces whose presence on Earth creates a new Aeon' based on a new and higher 'adept-like' consciousness (ONA 1988: 1). To achieve this goal, 'existing power structures and thus societies need to be disrupted and re-shaped'. The ONA seeks to destabilize society both by magickal and practical means. Magickal means include increasing chaotic and destabilizing energies through 'aeonics'. Practical means include actual disruptive acts such as terrorism to create general chaos; havoc and mayhem; as well as support of political unrest; economic misfortune; and racial, religious, and social tension. All this is done to achieve the simple goal of aiding a coming breakdown of the current system (ONA 1988: 2).

David Myatt—a sinister trickster?

A key figure in arguing for a disruption of society, aiding the fall of the current aeon and the advent of a new one through his work in so-called insight roles, is David Myatt, to whom we will now turn. Before we look at how Myatt relates to the ONA, an in-depth biographical account will demonstrate how interconnected the life of Myatt is to the history of the ONA.

(p.263) National Socialist Beginnings

David Wulstan Myatt was born in 1950.[24] He grew up in Tanzania with his father, who worked as a civil servant for the government. In 1970, he began studying physics at Hull University, primarily fuelled by an interest in space travel and other dimensions (Goodrick-Clarke 2003: 217). Myatt learned martial arts and began studying Taoism. Later, he lived a few years in the Far East, continuing his studies in martial arts. He started his political life as a bodyguard in the British Movement, which he joined in 1968. This movement was led by Colin Jordan, who was behind the international World Union of National Socialists (WUNS) and who later became a leading figure on the international scene of National Socialism. From the 1970s to the 1990s, Myatt was involved in various National Socialist groups. More recently, he was a member of the London-based, radical right-wing group Combat 18 (18 designating the letters AH, Adolf Hitler). After internal strife the group split up, and Myatt founded the National Socialist movement,[25] to continue the work initiated in Combat 18 (Myatt 2003: 8). In this period of political activism, Myatt also founded the group

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Reichsvolk, which had active members in both Britain and in the United States, and which promoted the idea of establishing rural communities based on ‘folk culture’ as it was presented in Myatt’s many writings.

Both Combat 18 and Myatt’s newly formed National Socialist movement traced their linage back to earlier National Socialist leaders such as Colin Jordan. It was after having founded the National Socialist movement that Myatt wrote his most notorious pamphlet, the ‘Practical Guide to Aryan Revolution’ (1997). This work contained both a theoretical and a practical section on how to bring down ‘the System’, including bomb-making recipes and other tricks. The guide is no longer obtainable and is supposedly banned by the English MI5. When the tract was published in 1997, it did not gain much notoriety; it was only after the nail bomber David Copeland, a member of Myatt’s organization, successfully conducted several attacks two years later, killing three and injuring 129, that the pamphlet **(p.264)** became renowned for allegedly influencing Copeland to carry out his attacks (BBC 2000).[26]

In February 1998, David Myatt’s house was raided by the police, and he was charged with publishing hate material, a charge that was later dropped. Two years later, after the Copeland bombings, Myatt and several other members of the National Socialist movement and Combat 18 were arrested in an operation involving MI5, Scotland Yard, and the FBI. Myatt was acquitted of the charges against him—conspiracy to murder and incitement of racial hatred. Several media campaigns focused on Myatt’s activities, including an ‘exposure’ by BBC’s panorama programme that linked Myatt to the nail bombings of Copeland (BBC 2000). Even before the media storm, Myatt had already resigned as a leader of the National Socialist movement, although he continued writing and publishing *The National Socialist* and other publications. His resignation also happened before David Copeland became a member and carried out his bombings, but given that Myatt continued writing for the organization and given the widespread availability of Myatt’s written productions within the organization, it is very likely that Copeland came across the writings of Myatt.

It is difficult to say exactly when Myatt began his studies of the occult. According to Goodrick-Clarke, Myatt learned his ways in the occult through contact with a coven in Fenland in 1968 (Goodrick-Clarke 2003: 216). Myatt recounts how he used his esoteric studies in a more political fight against the system:

> Remembering my Occult studies of years ago, I conceived a plan to use or if necessary create secret Occult-type groups with several aims. These groups would be allied to and aid a real covert organization dedicated to the overthrow of the System. One of the aims of these Occult-style groups was to infiltrate people into various positions in society where they could aid our Cause; another was to subvert people in influential positions by

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> drawing them into these secret groups and then gradually converting them to the Cause. Another was to try and establish international links and spread the idea of a world-wide revolution and world-wide National-Socialist renaissance. The final aim was to attract people to these groups and gain information from them, using one obvious means which various other intelligence groups had used over the centuries to gain useful **(p. 265)** information … In pursuit of these covert aims I infiltrated several already existing Occult-type groups and created a new one. (Myatt 2003: 7)

This quote is probably the closest one can get to an admission of starting the ONA, including its idea of covert action through insight roles. After years of attempting to get National Socialist groups to initiate a full-fledged fight against the system, Myatt realized that a change of tactics was needed.

In Service of Allah

Myatt now drifted towards the study of Islam. He took several courses in Arabic, went to the mosque on Fridays, and met and conversed with Muslims. Myatt admits that he 'existed in-between two worlds' (Myatt 2006a); he was still under investigation by the police for his former activities and still in regular contact with several of his former 'comrades' of his National Socialist period. During this time of being caught between two worlds, Myatt started to ponder the idea of seeking cooperation between right-wing extremists and Muslims 'against what I considered were our common enemies' as Myatt stated (Myatt 2006a: 1–2). According to a professor in political science, George Michael, David Myatt 'has arguably done more than any other theorist to develop a synthesis of the extreme right and Islam' (Michael 2006a: 142). Myatt was inspired by historical examples of cooperation and mutual respect between Islam and National Socialism, as expressed by Waffen SS General Leon Degrelle and Mohammed Amin al-Husseini, the grand mufti of Jerusalem, who lived several years in National Socialist Germany and who helped recruit Muslim SS soldiers (Degrelle 1982).

Apparently, Myatt's conversion to Islam did not mark a 'change of heart' as to who the enemy was and to his basic *weltanschauung*: 'I understood both Islam and National-Socialism as striving to create a better world based upon noble ideas and encouraging individuals to change themselves through a triumph of the will. Both upheld the noble ideals of honour, loyalty and duty' (Myatt 2003: 5).[27] Myatt still resented the influence of the United States and its penchant for Zionism. As such, his fascination with modern-day so-called mujahideens, such as Osama Bin Laden and Mullah **(p.266)** Omar,[28] can be seen as a continuation of his anti-Zionist ideas from his National Socialist period (Myatt 2006: 2).

The attempts at creating cooperation between National Socialists and Muslims did not work as planned. Myatt was accused of being a 'traitor' by his old National Socialist comrades, and Muslims and others doubted the veracity of his

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conversion, seeing him more as an 'undercover nazi' than a genuine Muslim (Myatt 2006b). As a Muslim, he no longer saw it as his duty to promote an alliance with 'unbelievers'. One could not call Myatt's attempt a total failure however. The US-based group, Aryan Nations, originally part of the so-called Christian Identity movement, attempted to reach out for alliances with the Muslim world with their 'Ministry of Islamic Liason', and their website also featured a section dedicated to Myatt's Reichsfolk organization, with several of Myatt's writings (Michael 2006: 140ff). Among Muslims, Myatt was eventually accepted, and his name was featured on a website for the group the Saved Sect, led by Omar Bakri.[29] Similarly, he was defended by Muslims when he wrote for the online forums Islam Online and Islamic Awakening.[30] He has been invited to talk at certain mosques in England and was interviewed by an Arabic TV station (DarkLogos 2008).

While a Muslim, Myatt wrote the text 'Are Martyrdom Operations Lawful (According to Quran and Sunnah)?' which 'is considered by some to be one of the most eloquent and detailed defences, in the English language, of "suicide attacks"' (Wright 2007), and for a period it featured on the website of the Islamist organization Hamas. In this period of being a Muslim, there seems to be no question of Myatt's loyalty towards Islam, at least publicly. According to an article in *The Times* published on April 24, 2006, Myatt stated:

> The pure authentic Islam of the revival, which recognizes practical jihad as a duty, is the only force that is capable of fighting and destroying the dishonour, the arrogance, the materialism of the West … For the West, nothing is sacred, except perhaps Zionists, Zionism, the hoax of the so-called Holocaust, and the idols which the West and its lackeys worship, or pretend to worship, such as democracy … Jihad is our duty. If nationalists, or some of them, desire to aid us, to help us, they can do the right thing, the honourable thing, and convert, revert, to Islam—accepting the superiority of Islam over and above each and every way of the West. (Kennedy 2006)

(p.267) Despite such statements, it appears that after around eight years of dedicating his life and writings to Islam, Myatt's affiliation with Islam came to an end. This can be gathered from the most recent versions of his autobiographical notes, as well as the substantial updates on the website of Julie Wright, an associate of Myatt, where all links to Islamic sites were removed and were replaced by a link to the non-Islamic site cosmicbeing.info (Wright 2007). Likewise, one can note a substantial increase in new texts released by Anton Long of the ONA on www.o9a.org/ and onanxs.wordpress.com/ combined with a sudden dwindling of new Islamic texts on www.davidmyatt.info, which featured the following quote: 'When the Prophet (salla Allahu 'alayhi wa sallam) intended to go on an expedition, he always pretended to be going somewhere else, and he

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would say: War is deception'. This could be a sign of the possible deception going on.[31]

When looking back at Myatt's period as a Muslim, it is interesting to observe how his 'conversion' was received by the mainstream media and his political enemies. His conversion did not escape the mainstream media; most English newspapers and media outlets wrote about the incident, including the BBC, and in general no one questioned his new faith. His conversion was not accepted by all however; his political enemies, especially, did not let down their guard when the news of Myatt's conversion hit the press, as can be seen in this quote from Gerry Gable, from the left-wing *Searchlight* in the *Sunday Mercury*:

> Myatt is an ethereal character. He is a dangerous man who has twice been jailed for his violent right-wing activities and who openly asked for blood to be spilled in the quest for white Aryan domination. We believe that despite his claims to be a devout Muslim he remains a deeply subversive intellectual and is still one of the most hard-line Nazi intellectuals in Britain today. (*Sunday Mercury* 2000)

David Myatt and the Order of Nine Angles

It is my claim that Myatt's move to Islam is part of a 'sinister strategy' that has its roots in the 'insight roles' and idea of 'sinister dialectics' within the ONA. We should note, however, that Myatt has always denied any connection to the ONA (Myatt 1998). At one point, Myatt even challenged the two journalists Nick Ryan and Nick Lowles to a duel with deadly weapons, **(p.268)** to dispute the assumptions and accusations that they put forth in their writings (Lowles 2000; Searchlight 1998). It is important that scholars once and for all document that David Myatt *is* Anton Long, and it is a pivotal point for the whole thesis of Myatt's apparent involvement with Islam that his connections with the ONA become clearly established.

If we first look at the textual evidence, there are several texts linking Myatt and the ONA. The ONA manuscript 'Aeonic Insight Roles' (ONA 2004) refers to the text 'The Strategy and Tactics of Revolution'. This text, written by Myatt, was formerly called the 'Practical Guide to Aryan Revolution' and supposedly influenced David Copeland, as explained earlier. Thus, we have a direct link which has not been covered up. Another example is a printed version of the manuscript 'Copula cum Daemone' which is dated 1978, written by D. W. Myatt, and which appears in a collection of ONA manuscripts (Myatt 1978). Later (digital) editions of the text have ONA and R. Venn as the author, and we thus have a clear example of a text originally issued by Myatt and later 'disguised' with a pseudonym (Venn 1978).[32] Other texts have also been used to link Myatt and the ONA, such as *Diablerie—The Secret Life of a Satanist*, which is the autobiography of Anton Long, and which reveals details of Long's life that appear remarkably similar to Myatt's life, to the extent that Goodrick-Clarke

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uses the text unquestionably to cover certain biographical events of Myatt's life (Goodrick-Clarke 2003: 217). The Long autobiography has been removed from the Internet.[33] Finally, we have a convergence of publishers used by the ONA and Myatt respectively. Both writings by Myatt and the ONA have been published by Thormynd Press, which is Myatt's own press; so again we have a direct connection.[34]

Another link between ONA and Myatt concerns the use of alternate dating systems. During the period in which he wrote his National Socialist writings, Myatt dated his texts 'Yf', which stands for 'Year of the Führer'. The same dating system is used by the ONA, although in recent years the **(p.269)** ONA began calling it 'Year of Fayen', but the connection remains nonetheless. Further, there are numerous ideological and linguistic points of convergence which can be made between the ONA and Myatt, such as the idea of a galactic empire. It is, however, unnecessary to dwell on this any further because the previous documentation should suffice as evidence. I will now look at the use of so-called insight roles within the ONA, in order to finally show how Myatt's lifelong devotion to various extreme ideologies has been part of a sinister game that is at the heart of the ONA.

Insight Roles

Within the initiatory system of the ONA, insight roles play an important part. From the second stage, *Initiate*, undertaking an insight role is part of the curriculum (ONA 1994: 2). Undertaking an insight role means gaining real-life experience by working 'undercover' for a period of six to eighteen months, challenging the initiate to experience something completely different from their normal life both to 'aid the Sinister dialectic' and to 'enhance the experience of the Initiate' (ONA 2004).

According to the text 'Aeonic Insight Rôles', 'any group or individual which [*sic*] is engaged in *practical* action against The System with the purpose of destroying it and challenging its ideas, is interesting from the point of view of the Sinister Dialectic and those undertaking an Aeonic Insight Rôle' (ONA 2004). The following is a list of suggested insight roles from a recent text published on the subject:

> (1) Join or form a covert insurrectionary organization, dedicated to National Socialism, whose aim is to undermine by practical means the status quo … (2) Undertake the role of assassin, selecting as your opfers [victims] those who publicly support or aid, ZOG, the NWO, The System. (3) Convert to Islam and aid, through words, or deeds, or both, those undertaking Jihad against Zionism and the NWO. (4) Join or form an active anarchist organization or group dedicated to fighting the capitalist System. (5) Join or form a National Socialist group or organization, and aid that

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organization and especially aid and propagate 'historical revisionism'. (ONA, 2004)

It is interesting to note that out of the above five different examples of insight roles, Myatt has undertaken at least numbers 1, 3, and 5. It is also interesting to note that this text was written in 2004 and updated in 2006, while Myatt was still officially a Muslim. In addition, none of the earlier texts on insight roles, some of them dating back to the mid-1980s, **(p.270)** mentions being a Muslim as a possible insight role. This is a new addition that was added after Myatt's conversion and realization that this was a viable way forward in the fight against the system.

Conclusion: Islamism of David Myatt as sinister dialectics

After looking at the idea of insight roles within the ONA, we are now able to see Myatt's shifts in ideology from National Socialism to Islam for what they really are: All part of a 'satanic' game of 'sinister dialectics'. The insight roles of the ONA fit well with Myatt's life, and they were even adjusted to fit his latest ideological shift to Islam; as such, they appear to be central in order to understand what seem to be very abrupt and radical shifts of worldviews.

The only way to reconcile the opposition in the ONA to conventional religions and their submission to a deity and certain dogma with Myatt's submission to Islam, is to understand Myatt's view of Islam as something adopted for sinister motives (Long 1994: 2). Myatt as a Muslim successfully established connections to leading radical Muslims in Britain such as Omar Bakri and his Al-Muhajiroun, a group which promotes jihad and is banned for its pro-Al Qaeda views. It appears as if Myatt is a perfect example of an initiate of the ONA, living out insight roles, both with his initial attempt in National Socialist groups and later with his realization that more could be achieved within Islam. Thus, the instructions of the ONA appear to lay out a blueprint of what later became the life of Myatt.

That an occult group based in the tradition of the Left-Hand Path and Satanism has connections to radical Muslims is both sensational and unique, creating new constellations not seen before in either politics or esotericism. It appears as if Myatt's life is inherently connected to the Order of Nine Angles, despite his denial of this being the case. Most of his life, he has been living and experiencing ideas based on deliberations of the ONA, which he began formulating in the late 1970s. Thus, there appears to be no other way to understand Myatt's life than as an attempt at living out the 'sinister dialectics' in a struggle to revolutionize the world through practical as well as 'magickal' means. Only the future will tell to what degree Myatt has been successful in instigating Islamic Jihad towards the 'West', and if Myatt will discover yet another method in his struggle to take down 'The System'. His ideas, however disturbing they might be, appear to contain a blueprint for fusing disparate

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ideologies such as National Socialism, Satanism, and radical Islam, resonating with similar ideas in the larger context of religion and politics, such as the critique of modernity and the West **(p.271)** as presented both by the European radical Right and by fundamentalist Muslims.

As we are dealing with a quite recent phenomenon, it is too early to tell what lasting influence this new current of Left-Hand Path Satanism might have on esotericism and the world in general. Will new forms, groups, and currents develop out of the ideas initially presented by the ONA, or will the ONA and the 'Sinister Tradition' be merely a phase connected to the occult and political movement of the 1990s? According to a recent text by the ONA, Satanism is only the beginning of something else yet to come: 'there will come a time when the ONA—and the individuals who are part of it or who are influenced by it—will outwardly shed the rhetoric, the images, the forms of "Satanism", for such things are causal emanations tied to a particular Aeon' (Long 2005: 3). What this form of the 'new Aeon' will be, only the future can tell, but looking at the various extreme ideologies that Myatt has promoted over the years, it could be potentially dangerous to ignore these fanatics, however limited their numbers might be.

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Notes:

(1) . When talking of 'satanic' Left-Hand Path groups, I refer to groups that identify themselves as Satanists, or who use Satan (or a mythological equivalent such as Set) as a primary symbol in their *Weltanschauung* (cf. Faxneld 2006: xiii–xvi; Petersen 2009: 1–8). Although most, if not all, groups belonging to the Left-Hand Path might be said to follow such an ideology, not all groups belonging to the Left-Hand Path would subscribe to being called 'satanic' (cf. Granholm 2009).

(2) . The term 'magick' will be defined later in the chapter. This peculiar way of spelling has been retained, because it is the form commonly used by the ONA and among many practitioners of the Left-Hand Path, primarily the ones inspired by Aleister Crowley.

(3) . The concept of an Imperium was developed by postwar fascist Francis Parker Yockey in his book *Imperium* (Yockey 2000) and is probably the key inspiration of the idea of a 'Galactic Imperium', which is present throughout the writings of the ONA and David Myatt. The concept of the Imperium and its historical roots will be dealt with in the final part of this chapter.

(4) . For examples of such groups see G. Sieg's paper 'Angular Momentum: From Traditional to Progressive Satanism in the Order of Nine Angles' (delivered at the first international conference on Satanism, 2009).

(5) . The term National Socialism is used throughout this chapter instead of the more common 'neo-Nazism'. This is based on a deliberate choice to use the terminology chosen by the practitioners themselves instead of using the term 'Nazism', which adherents find to be a derogatory term, a practice also adopted by some scholars. See *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*, s.v. 'National Socialism,' http://www.britannica.com/, accessed August 15, 2008; and McGowan 2002: 9. It should be stressed when referring to National Socialism, I refer to the post–World War II movements, in particular National Socialism as understood by David Myatt.

(6) . See the ONA's 'A Gift for the Prince' (ONA 1984); 'Culling' (ONA 1989); and 'The Ceremony of Recalling' in *Black Book of Satan*, vol. 3 (Beest 1992). Printed material can be found in earlier editions of the *Black Book of Satan* that contains 'The Ceremony of Recalling' and the symbolic 'Death Ritual', believed to result

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in the actual death of the victim (Robury 1988: 21, 40). The most comprehensive collection of texts on symbolic and actual sacrifices is given in the 'Opfer' (victim) edition of *Fenrir* (vol. 2, no. 2), which contains texts describing methods of actual human sacrifice, supposedly conducted every seventeenth year. It is stressed that these rituals are given 'for historical interest only' (ONA 1990c).

(7) . Not all 'insight roles' are specifically right wing, such as joining left-wing oriented anarchistic, environmentalist, or anticapitalist disruptive groups, but these groups are joined for strategic reasons that ultimately serve a more sinister purpose.

(8) . It should be noted that while some of these terms, such as 'sinister' and 'aeons', are also used by other groups, these terms have a much more prominent and central role within the Sinister Tradition. For example, unlike any other Left-Hand Path group, aeonics is a core teaching and practice of the ONA.

(9) . In a glossary recently published by the ONA, the 'tree of wyrd' is defined as a system of correspondences, associations, and symbols. It can be likened to a non-Semitic version of the Kabbalistic Sephirot (Tree of Life); see an illustration in West 1996: 92.

(10) . One can rightfully question the consistency of the idea of being against Semitic traditions while labelling oneself 'satanic', thus using the most common antagonist of the Semitic tradition, Satan. This, however, is not a question dealt with in the writings of ONA, and apart from using the term 'Satanism', the explicit gravitation towards non-Semitic traditions appears quite consistent.

(11) . Some members of the ONA use this apparent mistake by Kaplan in their own 'disinformation' campaign, using Kaplan's text as a 'proof' that Myatt and Long are different persons (PointyHat 2009).

(12) . It should be noted that the claim made by the ONA of having Wiccan origins is not possible to verify from external sources. It is part of the explanation provided in 'Anton Long's' autobiography, reiterated in an interview of Christos Beest (OSV, *The Heretic #8*, 1994), and it is stated as fact by Goodrick-Clarke, who uses the same sources used in this chapter. Given that Myatt probably received at least some training in ritual magick and similar practices before initiating the ONA, the claims of Wiccan origins is not unlikely but is not proven. A more detailed biography of David Myatt/Anton Long has recently been made available (DarkLogos 2009).

(13) . Camlad (referring to Arthurian legends) and Temple of the Sun continued as lodges within the ONA (OSV 1994; ONA, 1990b). Another text mentions the Orthodox Temple of the Prince and the Black Order as groups that have been affiliated with the order. The Orthodox Temple of the Prince was led by a Ray

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Bogart in Manchester, England (cf. Faxneld 2006: 211–215). Myatt was only a member for a short period but obtained contact with his ‘Mistress’ here (DarkLogos 2008). For more on the Black Order, see Goodrick-Clarke 2003: 227.

(14) . It should be emphasized that this account relies entirely on claims made by the ONA, which are not verifiable by external independent sources. As such, it likewise serves as an example of a self-promoted narrative of how the order came to be.

(15) . This pseudonym was used by a composer and artist from Shropshire, Richard Moult, who acted as outer representative of the order for a few years. Beest produced ‘The Sinister Tarot’ as well as a few musical compositions to be used in order rituals. In 1999, he withdrew from the order and from politics, and since then, most of his written works for the order, such as *The Black Book of Satan*, vol.2, *Black Pilgrimage* and *Nexion—A Guide to Sinister Strategy*, no longer have status as official order documents, but merely as personal workings from his period as internal adept (RS 2010).

(16) . I define transnationality as interactions across national borders, on a level that does not implicate nation-states and higher levels of government (termed international and supranational respectively) and translocality as relations between different localities, such as the cooperation between local units of ONA practitioners in England, the United States, and New Zealand.

(17) . The seven grades are I: Neophyte; II: Initiate; III: External Adept; IV: Internal Adept; V: Master of Temple/Mistress of Earth; VI: Grand Master/Grand Mistress; VII: Immortal (ONA 1994).

(18) . Exceptions to this ‘rule’ do exist, a prominent one being the text ‘One Star in Sight’ published by Aleister Crowley for his organization A.’.A.’, which reveals a complete overview of the grade system and curriculum of the individual grades (Crowley, 1921). Given that Myatt received some of his initial training in occultism from groups using material by Crowley, it is likely that Myatt encountered such ideas and drew inspiration from these.

(19) . *Männerbünde* is a form of Indo-European warrior bands that supposedly existed in prehistoric times. See Wikander 1938; Kershaw 2000; Brunotte 2004; and Davidsson 1988: 80. Kershaw also contains information on Germanic initiation, including the idea of ‘utesita’.

(20) . That Manson was an ordained priest in the Church of Satan by LaVey himself is well-known from tabloids and the general media, and Moynihan wrote the following when I asked about his membership: ‘I am a member of the Church of Satan; this was bestowed to me personally by Anton LaVey out of (mutual)

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respect. He later appointed me a priest, which I likewise consider an honor' (interview with author via e-mail, January 19, 2008).

(21) . See Toynbee's gigantic *A Study of History* (1933–61) on the cycles of civilizations; and *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (*Decline of the West*) by Spengler (1918–22) who also wrote on the organic elements of the rise and decline of civilizations. In the ONA, the concepts have been explained in Long 1994b; Myatt 1984; and Myatt 2009a. One might think that Crowley is a closer inspiration to the idea of aeons, but looking at the material in, e.g., Myatt 1984 and 2009a, leaves no doubt that at least the exoteric aspects of 'aeonics' is based on Toynbee and Spengler. Crowley might have been a source to the concept of aeons itself, but to which degree his idea of aeons has influenced the ONA is still difficult to assess. There also appears to be similarities with the Theosophy of H. P. Blavatsky, where Blavatsky presents an idea of ages and corresponding 'root-races', and similarly in her book *The Secret Doctrine* where she refers to the 'septenary hierarchies' (Blavatsky 1888: 86–88). There is, however, no mentioning of Blavatsky in neither the writings of the ONA nor David Myatt, nor any detailed overlap of ideas that documents any influence with certainty.

(22) . See 'Cliology—A Basic Introduction' (ONA 1990a: 119).

(23) . A more down to earth description of the 'distortive' forces and how they have influenced the West is given in Myatt's *Vindex—Destiny of the West* (Myatt 1984) and more recently in Myatt 2009a, 2009b, and 2009c.

(24) . The scholarly literature disagrees on Myatt's age. Goodrick-Clarke states the year of birth to be 1952, while Michael states 1950. The date provided by Michael (2006) is the most recent and appears the most trustworthy in this case. The date is likewise confirmed by my informant DarkLogos who states that Michael corresponded with Myatt contrary to the research conducted by Goodrick-Clarke (DarkLogos 2008).

(25) . That is, the British Movement, which is not to be confused with the contemporary group in the United States bearing the same name.

(26) . For more information on the nail bombings by David Copeland and his relationship to the National Socialist movement and David Myatt, see Lowles 2000 (in particular 62–75), which is the only book dealing specifically with the nail bombings. Caution is advised because the book is sensationalist and subjective, written by a journalist who, albeit working for the BBC, is also a co-editor of *Searchlight*, a magazine by the extreme Left which monitors the Right.

(27) . This quote appears to be part of the 'game' that Myatt is playing with the media, in his attempt to convince everyone of the genuineness of his conversion and of the supposed consistency in his worldview. As will be exposed in this

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chapter, his conversion to Islam was probably nothing more than a game of make-believe.

(28) . As of this writing, Mullah Mohammed Omar is the current leader of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

(29) . Omar Bakri was behind the Al-Muhajiroun that was banned under the British Terrorism Act in 2006 and was later behind the Saved Sect and various other Islamist groups promoting militant action against the West.

(30) . See IslamicAwakening.com and IslamOnline.net.

(31) . By November 2009, the website www.davidmyatt.info no longer featured Islamist texts but had reverted to present a selection of recent texts on 'The Numinous Way', presumably thus marking the transition back to the Numinous Way from Islam.

(32) . My claim that David Myatt is Anton Long has recently been disputed, and my lack of 'forensic evidence' has been called into question (Sistermoon 2010). Other scholars have claimed Myatt to be Anton Long (Goodrick-Clarke 2003: 217), and I here present what I believe is sufficient textual evidence to document that Myatt is, in fact, Long. I acknowledge, however, that most of this evidence, although compelling, is circumstantial.

(33) . The article is available in the British Library collection, and the most recent speculations about Myatt as Anton Long, as well as a tentative chronology, are available at davidmyatt.wordpress.com.

(34) . See Amazon.co.uk, search for Thormynd Press and writings by both Myatt and Anton Long will appear.

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The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity
Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen

Print publication date: 2012
Print ISBN-13: 9780199779239
Published to Oxford Scholarship Online: January 2013
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199779239.001.0001

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