Satanism: A Social History

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Satanism: A Social History

By

Massimo Introvigne

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Introduction

Encountering Satanism

It was the summer of 1973, when I took my first trip to the United States. I rented a car together with a friend from high school, which we had just finished, and explored legendary California. We had an "alternative" map of San Francisco, which marked, among other places to see, a house at number 6114 of California Street, identified as the home of the "Black Pope", "the world leader of Satanism", Anton Szandor LaVey (1930–1997). I came from Turin, Italy, where newspapers frequently discussed Satanists. I had never met one, and I was not destined to meet the "Black Pope" either. Perhaps, I naively thought that, in the laid-back environment of California, it would be sufficient to knock on the door of 6114 to be welcomed inside immediately. Naturally, it was not so: the door was opened by somebody who told me there was nobody home. By insisting, I managed to obtain some measly Church of Satan brochures. Those were the oldest pieces of a collection which grew progressively, and now includes hundreds of books, pamphlets, brochures, kept in Turin, Italy, in the library of CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions), an institution I founded in 1988.

Starting in 1980, I developed an interest in religious and esoteric minorities, including Satanism. Over the course of many years of research, I collected most of the material that was possible to obtain on Satanism, not only in Italy but also all over the world. A good deal of bizarre stories emerged from old and often forgotten books and from documents, found painstakingly in many different archives and countries. A 17th-century French haberdasher invented the Black Mass. An 18th-century English Cabinet Minister administered the Eucharist to a baboon. High-ranking Catholic authorities in the 19th century believed that Satan appeared in Masonic lodges in the shape of a crocodile and played the piano there. A well-known scientist from the 20th century established a cult of the Antichrist and exploded in a laboratory experiment. Three Italian girls in 2000 sacrificed a nun to the Devil. A Black Metal band honored Satan in Krakow, Poland, in 2004 by exhibiting on stage 120 decapitated sheep heads. Some of these stories, as absurd as they might sound, were real. Others, which might appear to be equally well reported, were false. But even false stories generated real societal reactions.

I began writing about Satanism towards the end of the 1980s, and immediately encountered two kinds of obstacles. The first came from my colleagues in the field of the study of minority religions. Some of them believed that it

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was unwise to waste the limited resources for researching new religious movements on minuscule bands of Satanists, while studies on groups that counted millions of adherents such as the Jehovah's Witnesses or the new religions of Japan were still scarce. It was even claimed that there were more scholars studying Satanism than Satanists.[1] This was explained with the pressures of publishers, who knew that books on Satanists, dressed as devils, or better still naked in their Black Mass ceremonies, especially if pretty girls were involved, sold more than accounts of Jehovah's Witnesses in their jackets and ties.

The second problem is that I am an active Roman Catholic, and I never felt I needed to apologize for it. Curiously, this was rarely a problem for the Satanists who accepted to be interviewed by me, while it was one for some Catholic reviewers, who were surprised that I discussed Satanism in value-free sociological terms rather than expressing my outrage at its unholy practices. Sometimes, those who complained about my methods of research raided my writings, and did not feel the need to quote them in their footnotes.

The first objection, that Satanism is irrelevant, has now largely disappeared. A new generation of scholars has acknowledged that Satanism was not a passing 1960s fashion but something unpredictably capable of resisting the passing of time. These scholars include, to name just a few, James R. Lewis, Jesper Aagaard Petersen, Per Faxneld, Kennet Granholm, Cimminnee Holt, and Asbjørn Dyrendal,[2] who have built upon the foundations provided by scholars of a previous generation, such as J. Gordon Melton and David Bromley.

Admittedly, Satanism is small. The proto-Satanist or early Satanist groups that existed before World War II were all tiny, and probably no one of them reached the figure of 50 members. The largest modern group, the Church of Satan, counted in its heydays between one and two thousand members, and most of them were in contact with the headquarters by mail only. The other two comparatively large organizations, the Temple of Set and the Order of Nine Angles, had a few hundred members each. When it reached a total membership of around 100, the Italian group of the Luciferian Children of Satan was among the largest Satanist groups in the world, and perhaps the largest in a non-English speaking country. However, numbers are only part of

1 Dave Evans, "Speculating on the Point 003 Percent? Some Remarks on the Chaotic Satanic Minorities in the UK", in Jesper Aagaard Petersen (ed.), *Contemporary Religious Satanism: A Critical Anthology*, Farnham (Surrey), Burlington (Vermont): Ashgate, 2009, pp. 211–228 (p. 226).

2 A good summary of recent academic research on Satanism is Asbjørn Dyrendal, James R. Lewis and J.Aa. Petersen, *The Invention of Satanism*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

the story. Books, music, and Internet Web sites produced by Satanist organizations reached an audience of thousands. And the influence of Satanism in a larger occult subculture largely justifies its study by distinguished scholars, who produced collective books and organized conferences on modern Satanist organizations.

As for the questions of anti-Satanism and of whether it is really possible to study Satanism in a value-free perspective, these can only be answered within the framework of a social history of Satanism, a conversation between history and sociology. The lack of a social history of Satanist movements was the reason that led me to publish in 1994 in Italian my *Indagine sul Satanismo*,[3] a book that has been continuously revised through its subsequent French,[4] Italian,[5] and Polish[6] editions. This is now a new book, although it is built around the core of the 1994 and 2010 Italian editions, and maintains the same definition of Satanism.

Satanism: A Definition

One of the problems all the scholars taking Satanism seriously encountered was the definition of Satanism. This is typical of all new fields of research, and Satanism studies are comparatively new.

Definitions are not "true" or "false". They are just methodological tools to delimit a field. I proposed my own definition of Satanism in 1994, and am still happy with that. From the perspective of social history, Satanism is (1) the worship of the character identified with the name of Satan or Lucifer in the Bible, (2) by organized groups with at least a minimal organization and hierarchy, (3) through ritual or liturgical practices.

For the first part of the definition, it does not matter how each Satanist group perceives Satan, as personal or impersonal, real or symbolical. Nor does it matter whether the group tries to go back from a Judeo-Christian image of Satan or Lucifer to one found in different or older religions and cultures. As long as it uses the names Satan and Lucifer, it is still within my definition of Satanism.

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3 Massimo Introvigne, *Indagine sul Satanismo. Satanisti e anti-Satanisti dal Seicento ai nostri giorni*, Milan: Mondadori, 1994.

4 M. Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme. Satanistes et anti-Satanistes du XVIIe siècle à nos jours*, Paris: Dervy, 1997.

5 M. Introvigne, *I satanisti. Storia, riti e miti del Satanismo*, Milan: Sugarco, 2010.

6 M. Introvigne, *Satanizm historia mity*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo św. Stanisława, 2014.

I do not distinguish between Satanism and Luciferianism. Some groups use the names Satan and Lucifer more or less as synonyms. Other insists Luciferianism is their worship of a benevolent entity, while Satanists worship an evil being. However, very few Satanists or Luciferians in fact want to glorify evil. Some examples of a glorification of evil are only found in fringes of Extreme Metal music. Most Satanists worship Satan because for them he is a positive presence in human history. The distinction between Luciferianism and Satanism would, in my opinion, only unnecessarily complicate the issue and compel the scholar to take at face value the emic statements of each different group.

The second part of the definition limits the field of Satanism to movements, i.e. groups with a modicum of organization, although this organization can be minimal. Satanism is about organized groups. The history of the Devil's notions and images is the subject matter of very interesting books, including those by historian Jeffrey Burton Russell,[7] where the reader will find plentiful references to the Devil in Augustine (354–430), Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), Karl Barth (1886–1968), Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), William Shakespeare (1564–1616), and Spanish poetry. All these themes certainly deserve consideration but have little to do with Satanism.

The third part of the definition requires that worship of Satan or Lucifer be expressed through a ritual of liturgy. A school imparting to its members philosophical lessons about Satan only does not qualify as Satanist according to the model I suggest to adopt.

My definition has been criticized by other scholars and certainly is not the only possible one.[8] There are also scholars who propose to eliminate the category of "Satanism" from social sciences altogether. They believe it has been used too often as a defamatory label, and argue that the so-called "Satanist" groups can simply be included in the wider category of the "Left-Hand Path".[9]

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7 See the four volumes by Jeffrey Burton Russell: *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity*, Ithaca (New York): Cornell University Press, 1977; *Satan: The Early Christian Tradition*, Ithaca (New York): Cornell University Press, 1981; *Lucifer: The Devil in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca (New York): Cornell University Press, 1984; *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World*, Ithaca (New York): Cornell University Press, 1986. See also, for an American perspective, W. Scott Poole, *Satan in America: The Devil We Know*, Lanham (Maryland): Rowman and Littlefield, 2009.

8 See J.Aa. Petersen, "Modern Satanism: Dark Doctrines and Black Flames", in J.R. Lewis and J.Aa. Petersen (ed.), *Controversial New Religions*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 423–457 (pp. 441–444); J.Aa. Petersen, "Introduction: Embracing Satan", in J.Aa. Petersen (ed.), *Contemporary Religious Satanism: A Critical Anthology*, cit., pp. 1–24.

9 See Kennet Granholm, "Embracing Others than Satan: The Multiple Princes of Darkness in the Left-Hand Path Milieu", *ibid.*, pp. 85–101.

Granholm argues that Left-Hand Path is a term largely unknown outside the small community of practitioners and scholars of esotericism, and thus does not carry the negative connotation of "Satanism". He proposes to identify the Left-Hand Path on the basis of three discourses: an ideology of individualism, the goal of self-deification, and an antinomian stance of refusal of religious and other taboos.[10] For the time being, it might be enough to say that most Satanists are part of the larger esoteric category of the Left-Hand Path, but not all left-handers are Satanists.

Satanism and Demonic Possession

In 1994, I felt the need to explain why my book did not address demonic possession, since possession and Satanism are two structurally different topics but at that time were often discussed together. This may be less necessary now, since confusing Satanism and possession became rarer. However, when the Polish edition of my book was published in 2014, the Polish publisher, without advising me, included with it a DVD on possession that had nothing to do with the text. The incident made me wonder whether perhaps it may still be useful to explain why demonic possession is not part of Satanism.

It could be said, in general, that Satanists seek the Devil, while the possessed claim they have been "found" by the Devil, whom normally they had not consciously sought. The Satanists *would like* to encounter the Devil, and some of them use specific rituals for calling or evoking him. On the contrary, the victims of spectacular demonic possessions have often been pious and devout Christians, very far away from the ideology and the activities of Satanists.[11] The 2005 film *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*, by the Protestant director Scott Derrickson, was significantly better, at least from the point of view of real-life Catholic exorcists, than the more widely acclaimed *The Exorcist*. It was based on the true story of Anneliese Michel (1952–1976),[12] transported, in the cinematographic version, from Germany to the United States. It took for granted that the controversial case of Michel was one of real possession. If one adopts this perspective, victims of possession such as Anneliese Michel had no desire to meet Satan. However, for reasons that theologians explain in the most varied ways, the Devil attacks them.

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10 K. Granholm, "The Left-Hand Path and Post-Satanism: The Temple of Set and the Evolution of Satanism", in Per Faxneld and J.Aa. Petersen (eds.), *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 209–228 (p. 213).

11 See *Études Carmélitaines*: *Satan*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1948.

12 On this very controversial case, see Felicitas D. Goodman, *The Exorcism of Anneliese Michel*, Garden City (New York): Doubleday, 1981.

In Catholic theological literature, one impressive confirmation is the case of "Madame R.", who was eighty-two in 1993 when her spiritual diary was published. With her anonymity still protected by her biographer, she died in 2000. Stigmatic, she was able to live for years without eating or drinking, baffling doctors, who reportedly supervised her rigorously. "Madame R." was a quiet mother and grandmother of a French family, far from the clatter of the media. Reportedly, she had already reached the highest levels of mysticism when, in 1979, she was "attacked" by the Devil. Technically, it did not seem to be a case of possession, but a "presence" of the Devil, which caused doubts about faith and provided a sensation of "damnation". This disturbing feeling would disappear, although not completely, only through exorcism.[13] "Madame R." was not a Satanist, but a saintly woman.

The comparative study of exorcism in different religious contexts, ranging from the "indigenized" Pentecostalism of Mexico to the new religious movements of Japan, undertaken by anthropologist Felicitas Goodman (1914–2005), led to the same result. The victim of a diabolical possession in most cases was a deeply religious person, who never sought a contact with the evil spirits and was "found" by them quite unexpectedly.[14]

It is true that, according to some Catholic exorcists, the practice of Satanism may "open" to demonic possession. However, Satanism and demonic possession remain two very different phenomena. In the first chapter, we will deal with some early cases where it was argued that Satanists, with their rites, *caused* the demonic possession not of themselves but of others. They belong to the prehistory of Satanism, and what is interesting there is not the possession in itself but the idea that Satanists can cause and organize it.

Satanism vs Romantic Satanism

A neighboring field includes the study of the use of the Devil's image for political, artistic, or literary purposes. It is a parallel field to mine, and one that will be defined for years by the pioneer research of Per Faxneld, whose brilliant dissertation appeared in 2014.[15] We can call the subject of Faxneld's book "cultural

13 See *La Passion de Madame R. Journal d'une mystique assiégée par le démon*, ed. by René Laurentin, Paris: Plon, 1993.

14 See F.D. Goodman, *How About Demons? Possession and Exorcism in the Modern World*, Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988. For the older, rationalist approach to possession, see the classical works by the Tübingen professor Traugott Konstantin Österreich (1880–1949), collected in the English edition *Possession Demoniacal and Other among Primitive Races, in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Modern Times*, New York: Richard R. Smith, 1930.

15 P. Faxneld, *Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as the Liberator of Woman in Nineteenth-Century Culture*, Stockholm: Molin & Sorgenfrei, 2014.

Satanism" or "Romantic Satanism",[16] i.e. the use of the image of Satan or Lucifer by political, cultural, literary, or even religious and esoteric personalities and groups, whose main aim is not, however, the worship of Lucifer or Satan. Faxneld's encyclopedic work lists a number of poets, social activists, artists who showed some sympathy for the Devil and used Satan or Lucifer as a symbol of almost any possible rebellion: against superstition, mainline religion, anti-feminist patriarchy, moralism, conventional academic art, capitalism. Most of these "romantic Satanists" were individuals who never tried to create a group or organization, and would thus be excluded from my definition by the second test. But they rarely pass the first either, as their references to Satan or Lucifer normally did not imply some form of worship.

Faxneld also mentions *groups* using the image of Satan, including socialists and anarchists hailing Satan as the first revolutionary, and feminists celebrating the Devil as liberator of women. More close to our subjects are esoteric groups that also included sympathetic references to Satan or Lucifer. Some branches of Freemasonry, particularly in predominantly Catholic countries, used the image of Satan as an anti-Catholic symbol in the late 19th and early 20th century. We find sympathetic references to Lucifer in the writings both of Madame Helena Blavatsky (1831–1891), the founder of the Theosophical Society, and of Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), who was the leader of the Theosophical Society in Germany until he separated and established his own Anthroposophical Society.

I would add to the list Édouard Schuré (1841–1929), the author in 1889 of the extremely influential esoteric book *The Great Initiates*.[17] Schuré maintained for decades a fascination for the figure of Lucifer, as evidenced by his 1900 play *Les Enfants de Lucifer*, as he moved from Theosophy to Anthroposophy.[18] Schuré's play was ostensibly about Satan as a symbol of freedom and liberation. However, in the same years the French author was actively engaged in Spiritualist séances and experienced visions of various mystical entities.[19] At least three times in his life, Schuré had visions of Lucifer. In the first vision, Lucifer

16 See Peter A. Schock, *Romantic Satanism: Myth and the Historical Moment in Blake, Shelley, and Byron*, New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2003.

17 Édouard Schuré, *Les grands Initiés. Esquisse de l'histoire secrète des religions*, Paris: Perrin, 1889.

18 On the role of Schuré's play in the history of Satanism, see Ruben van Luijk, "Satan Rehabilitated? A Study into Satanism during the Nineteenth Century", Ph.D. diss., Tilburg: Tilburg University, 2013, pp. 170–171. On the play, see also Dorothy Knowles [1906–2010], *La réaction idéaliste au théâtre depuis 1890*, Paris: Droz, 1934, pp. 376–381.

19 See Alain Mercier, *Édouard Schuré et le renouveau idéaliste en Europe*, Lille: Atelier Reproduction des Thèses Université de Lille III, and Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1980, p. 472.

manifested itself in Assisi, the Italian city of Saint Francis (1182–1226). As he later reported, "it was not Francis of Assisi, it was not the Christ who appeared to me. It was the Archangel Lucifer, whom my eyes saw floating in his majesty, with a tragic and splendid countenance. It was not the hideous Satan of the Middle Ages. It was the rebel Archangel of the old Judeo-Christian tradition, sad and beautiful, his inextinguishable torch in his hand, his eyes fixed on the starry sky as if on a kingdom he should conquer".[20]

Schuré believed that "the two principles, Christ and Lucifer, lead the world" and that history is a struggle to achieve the necessary equilibrium between the two principles.[21] Obviously, Schuré was not a Satanist, but his case shows the problematic nature of the boundaries of Romantic Satanism or Luciferianism. Rudolf Steiner's theatrical group represented Schuré's play *Les Enfants de Lucifer* in Munich in 1909, an event that, Schuré wrote in his journal, marked "a capital moment of [his] life".[22] When he died in 1929, Schuré's last words might have been a call to Lucifer, although an alternative version maintained he was seeing his long-deceased father.[23]

Neither Theosophy nor Anthroposophy were born with the purpose of worshipping Satan, and their rhetorical use of the image of Lucifer never amounted to worship. Certainly, in Faxneld's and similar studies there are areas overlapping with my research. However, Romantic Satanism in general can be distinguished from Satanism *stricto sensu*, the main subject matter of this book, mostly because organizing the worship of Satan or Lucifer is not part of its aims.

Folk Satanism

Another distinction I proposed in 1994 is between "religious" Satanism and folk Satanism. I am now more dubious about the label "religious Satanism", although it is widely used, because it includes rationalist Satanism, which is technically not religious and in fact very close to atheism. Perhaps, it is preferable to simply use "Satanism *stricto sensu*".

Folk Satanism, which will also be discussed in this book, is a version of Satanism reduced to some hardly recognizable elements of it, present in specific folkloric subcultures. As folklorist Bill Ellis noted, folk Satanism would hardly exist without popular literature and movies adopting an *anti*-Satanist

20 Irène Diet, *Jules et Alice Sauerwein et l'anthroposophie en France*, Chatou: Steens, 2010, p. 60.

21 *Ibid.*

22 A. Mercier, *Édouard Schuré et le renouveau idéaliste en Europe*, cit., p. 566.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 667.

perspective and accusing Satanism of all possible evils.[24] Folk Satanism, consciously or unconsciously, mirrors this image and becomes part of an oppositional or contrarian subculture.

Varieties of folk Satanism include adolescent Satanism and the folklore of some criminal groups. Adolescent Satanism, which can become dangerous and in fact produced a certain number of murders, is practiced by bands of teenagers, occasionally with slightly older leaders, which adopt the anti-Satanist model of the "evil Satanist", borrow some simplified rituals from Satanism, and create a mirror image of the anti-Satanist fears.

Some criminal groups and individuals, in fact as far back as 18th-century Sweden, also became persuaded that simple satanic rituals might grant to their criminal enterprises the powerful protection of Satan. We will examine in the book some spectacular cases, including the 1989 murders in Matamoros, Mexico, noting how criminal folklore borrowed from popular culture, such as the movie *The Believers*, more elements than it did from "religious" Satanism.

A third form of folk Satanism is the folklore of some bands of rock music, particularly in the genre of Extreme Metal, and of their fans. Their Satanism, in some cases expressed in particularly violent statements, also mirrored the image of the evil Satanists created by Christian anti-Satanists, and was so much simplified that it can be defined as folkloric. However some Extreme Metal groups of a later generation cultivated serious esoteric interests and moved either into the field of Satanism *stricto sensu* or into non-Satanist forms of Neopaganism.[25]

Rationalist vs Occult Satanism

Admittedly, my definition of Satanism includes under the same label quite different groups. The main distinction I proposed in 1994, and believe should be maintained today, is between *rationalist* and *occult* Satanism. Both worship Satan through rituals and maintain an organization. However, rationalist Satanists regard Satan as a metaphor for our deeper human potential. Rationalist Satanism moves towards atheism. There is no god but us, and Satan is just a symbol of the human ego no longer inhibited by traditional morals and religion.

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24 See Bill Ellis, "The Devil Worshippers at the Prom: Rumor-Panic as Therapeutic Magic", *Western Folklore*, vol. 49, no. 1, January 1990, pp. 27–49 [reprinted in J.R. Lewis and J.Aa. Petersen (eds.), *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism*, Amherst (New York): Prometheus Books, 2008, pp. 202–232].

25 See Kennet Granholm, "Ritual Black Metal: Popular Music as Occult Mediation and Practice", *Correspondences*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2013, pp. 5–33.

I prefer "rationalist Satanism" to "LaVeyan Satanism", because some Satanist groups that identified themselves as "rationalist" insist that they are outside of the tradition established by LaVey when he founded the Church of Satan in 1966. One example are the Luciferian Children of Satan in Italy. It remains, however, true that most of contemporary rationalist Satanism is LaVeyan, and most groups borrow from LaVey even when they do not acknowledge it.

In contrast to, occult Satanism believes that the Biblical narrative of Satan, although it cannot be accepted at face value, discloses the existence of a real living and sentient being, Satan or Lucifer. By evoking Satan, not only do we come into contact with our deeper, uninhibited inner self, but with a real personality who exists outside human consciousness. This does not mean that occult Satanism simply accepts the Bible and reverses its meaning. For most occult Satanists, the Bible is just a door, an opportunity to come to a more precise notion of Satan or Lucifer, often borrowed from pre-Christian sources whose worldview is very different from the Biblical one.

Some use for what I call occult Satanism the designations "esoteric"[26] or "theistic" Satanism. Since, however, the definition of esotericism is a matter of contention, I prefer the name "occult Satanism", although I am very much aware that occultism and esotericism are not synonymous. As for "theistic" Satanism, the label is embraced by some of the groups who reject rationalist Satanism and regards Satan as an independent sentient being. The Church of Azazel, which has a very active presence on the Web, is one such group. Others do not like the label, as they do not have a "theistic" representation of God. Here, again, "occult Satanism" seems to be more inclusive.

By the door of occult Satanism, some groups may even exit from Satanism altogether. This is the case of the Temple of Set, which was born as an occult schism of the rationalist Church of Satan, and now no longer uses the designation "Satanist". Perhaps for the Temple of Set and other groups the label "post-Satanism", suggested by Granholm,[27] is in order. However, as far as the Temple of Set is concerned, his early history is so much connected with occult Satanism that leaving it out of this book would be, at least in my opinion, inconceivable.

Scholars and Satanists themselves suggested additional sub-categories. For a particular current, mostly Swedish, Benjamin Hedge Olson uses "anti-cosmic

26 See A. Dyrendal, J.R. Lewis and J.Aa. Petersen *The Invention of Satanism*, cit., p. 6.

27 See Kennet Granholm, "The Left-Hand Path and Post-Satanism: The Temple of Set and the Evolution of Satanism", cit.

Satanism",[28] a designation its main group, the Temple of the Black Light, does accept, although it also uses "chaos-gnostic Satanism". The label does have its reasons, although one could also argue that most occult Satanist groups exhibit traces of Gnosticism, believe that there is something wrong in the physical reality as it is, and could thus be called "anti-cosmic".

The distinction between rationalist and occult Satanism requires two further comments. The first is that it should not be used in order to distinguish "genuine" Satanism from "pseudo-Satanism". As Petersen astutely noted, the academic study of Satanism was born during the "cult wars", when academics crossed swords with anti-cultists and with those actively promoting Satanism scares. As a consequence, academics tried to "de-demonize" and "sanitize" Satanism, by claiming it was just part of the human potential movement, and the Satanists' Satan was just our liberated inner self. This claim necessitated the adoption of the rationalist Church of Satan as the paradigm for all Satanism. Outside of this boundary, there was only folk Satanism, or perhaps pseudo-Satanism.[29] The political rationale of some early scholars is understandable. Yet, occult groups, some of them admittedly not very much palatable, are as legitimate a part of Satanism as their rationalist counterparts.

The second comment is that boundaries between rationalist and occult Satanism are by no means clear-cut. As Cimminnee Holt observed, "some atheistic Satanists are widely knowledgeable of esoteric texts and ideas and use them in their rituals", while some occult Satanists, whom she calls "esoteric", advocate worldviews that "practically mirror rationalistic Satanism".[30] Even the "LaVeyan" reference does not solve all the problems. Several groups, not only the Temple of Set, went from LaVey to occult Satanism without any particular problem.

Satanism, Anti-Satanism, and the Pendulum Theory

Among the scholars of Satanism of the new generation, there are those who object that older books on the topic, including my own, ended up devoting

28 See Benjamin Hedge Olson, "At the Threshold of the Inverted Womb: Anti-Cosmic Satanism and Radical Freedom", *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, vol. 4, no. 2, November 2013, pp. 231–249.

29 See J.Aa. Petersen, "Bracketing Beelzebub: Introducing the Academic Study of Satanism", *ibid.*, pp. 161–176.

30 Cimminnee Holt, "Blood, Sweat, and Urine: The Scent of Feminine Fluids in Anton LaVey's *The Satanic Witch*", *ibid.*, pp. 177–199.

more pages to anti-Satanism than to Satanism. I do agree that in the 1980s and 1990s, while we were busy debunking the most bizarre claims of anti-Satanists, we did not pay enough attention to the rich variety of contemporary Satanism. I tried to correct this in the subsequent incarnations and editions of my textbook of 1994. On the other hand, readers will quickly discover that even this book devotes at least as much attention to anti-Satanism than to Satanism. There is a reason for this. My purpose is to propose a *social* history of Satanism. What society as a whole *believes* about the presence of Satanists in its midst is no less important for me than the *real* activities of Satanist groups. I am not referring to novels or movies,[31] but to accounts of Satanism presented as very much factual. These fantastic accounts, as we will see, were produced by anti-Satanists and were almost uniformly false. Some even derived from practical jokes and deliberate hoaxes.

Yet, false information often generates true consequences. False accounts by anti-Satanists generated scares where innocent persons ended up in jail or lost their jobs. The false belief that Satanists controlled Freemasonry influenced religion and politics in the 19th century in several important ways. In the 20th century, in Utah and beyond, another false belief, originating in the previous century, that networks of Satanists operated within the Mormon Church also had relevant social consequences. Anti-Satanists would often appear to the contemporary reader as part of a lunatic fringe. Yet, they set in motion social movements of some relevance. Last but not least, they influenced both folk Satanism and the way Satanists operated in general.

In 1994, I proposed a pendulum model of the interactions between Satanism and anti-Satanism. The model included three stages:

(a) In the first stage, Satanist movements emerge at the fringes of an already existing occult subculture. Little by little, they gather notoriety, which eventually extends beyond the original subculture.
(b) In the second stage, the dominant religion and culture acknowledge the existence of such Satanist movements, while at the same time strongly refuse to accept them as legitimate, if idiosyncratic, expressions of the spirit of the time. On the contrary, the religious and cultural establishments react by criminalizing Satanism, exaggerating its size, and exorcizing it with multiple instruments, from ridicule to conspiracy theories. In

31 Not that movies were not influential in shaping a certain public image of Satanists. See Carrol L. Fry, *Cinema of the Occult: New Age, Satanism, Wicca, and Spiritualism in Film*, Betlehem (Pennsylvania): Lehigh University Press, 2008.

this phase, it is the anti-Satanists rather than the Satanists who are at the center of the action. They are able to mobilize vast social resources to combat the largely imaginary evils of Satanism, often presenting "ex-Satanists" as witnesses who offer incredible revelations.

(c) In the third phase, the anti-Satanist movement, still at the center of the scene, runs into a variety of complications. The first is the lack of a clearly identifiable adversary. At this point, in fact, Satanists have wisely reduced their visibility, since their weapons are clearly inferior. In order to continue to mobilize significant resources, the confessions of "ex-Satanists" should become progressively more extreme, until they become hard to believe and often cause the "apostate" to be unmasked as an impostor. While the anti-Satanist movement loses credibility, minorities in opposition to the dominant cultural structures may redirect its arguments towards a renewed positive interest in Satanism. Satanism is slowly reorganized within the occult subculture and is thus ready to reemerge, giving rise to a new cycle.

In this social history of Satanism, which thus has, necessarily, anti-Satanists just as much as Satanists as an object, we will apply the three-stage pendulum model to three different historical eras.

Proto-Satanism, 17th and 18th Centuries

Satanism is a modern phenomenon, but it uses pre-existing and pre-modern materials. Traces of elements that will subsequently be used by Satanism appear in a significant number of witch trials, although not in all of them and not in the older ones. In some 17th-century cases of demonic possession, it was claimed that the victims, mostly female, were possessed by the Devil because of a curse cast by sorcerers, mostly male, who were themselves Satanists. In Sweden, highway robbers and other criminals put themselves under the protection of Satan. At the end of the 17th century, at the fringe of a pre-existing subculture of soothsayers and urban folk sorcerers for hire, a small group in Paris was accused of worshipping the Devil in order to gain some material benefits. The police officers who investigated the case were not unimpeachable, but I do believe that some form of proto-Satanism did really exist there. Gazettes magnified it and spread its fame around Europe, fueling both anti-Catholic parodies in England and imitation rituals, one of them possibly practiced by a strange Catholic priest in Italy. It is also possible that groups of people met in Russia based on a certain interpretation of Milton as a romantic Satanist.

Modern Anti-Satanism and Satanism, 1821–1952

Not everybody agrees that Satanist rituals really took place in late 17th-century France. The same problems exist for the first cycle of my pendulum model. It started with two events that had nothing to do with Satanism, but were perceived by Catholics, in France and elsewhere, as being somewhat connected with the Devil: the French Revolution and the fashion of Spiritualist mediums. As these events took Catholics by surprise, they were explained through the actions of the Devil and his mortal associates, the Satanists.

The paradoxical manifesto of this first wave of anti-Satanism was the famous *Les Farfadets* of Alexis-Vincent-Charles Berbiguier (1765–1851), published in 1821. While Berbiguier was both widely read and easily ridiculed, Catholic scholars with solid credentials seriously proposed the theory that Satanism was behind both the French Revolution and Spiritualism.

In the second half of the 19th century, France also hosted a rich occult subculture. It is possible, although by no means certain, that within this subculture some small groups, inspired both by theories sympathetic to Lucifer and by the Catholic anti-Satanist literature, tried to evoke, among many other spirits, also Lucifer or Satan. We have as witnesses for the existence of such groups a journalist, Jules Bois (1868–1943), and a novelist, Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848–1907). Both are controversial and dubious witnesses. However, by following their careers, we will discover elements of possible Luciferian or Satanist worship that *may* have existed both in the occult subculture and in mystically and esoterically oriented group at the extreme fringes of the Catholic Church.

Much more was claimed by anti-Satanists such as the notorious impostor Léo Taxil (pseudonym of Marie-Joseph-Antoine-Gabriel Jogand-Pagès, 1854–1907). He went from a pseudo-conversion, from anticlerical Freemasonry to Catholicism, in 1885 to a self-unmasking in 1897. The Taxil case had relevant political and social consequences. It also discredited anti-Satanism for decades.

If, after the scandalous end of Taxil's career in 1897, anti-Satanism was no longer respectable, some room was left for a renewed literary and artistic interest in the Devil. Rituals with some references to Satan or Lucifer also emerged. We will discuss the magical career of Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) following the revelation of the *Book of the Law* in Cairo in 1904. There are good reasons, which I will try to list, *not* to consider the famous English occultist as a Satanist. It cannot however be denied that Crowley had a decisive influence on most Satanists of the 20th and 21st century. I will also discuss why in my opinion a friend of Crowley, Gerald Brosseau Gardner (1884–1964), who is at the origins of the modern revival of ancient witchcraft called Wicca, was in turn not a Satanist. Some Catholics still believed that dangerous Satanist cults were at work in France, but they followed false tracks.

Very small groups of Satan- or Lucifer-worshipers gathered around Stanisław Przybyszewski (1868–1927) in Poland and nearby countries, Ben Kadosh (1872–1936) in Denmark, and Maria de Naglowska (1883–1936) in Paris. There were also derivations of Crowley's worldview that moved towards Satanism, such as the early Fraternitas Saturni in Germany or the "cult of the Antichrist" led by Jack Parsons (1914–1952) in California. I have selected the date of Parsons' tragic end in 1952 to close this first cycle of Satanism and anti-Satanism.

Did Satanism *stricto sensu*, as opposed to Romantic Satanism, really exist between 1821 and 1952? Certainly, anti-Satanism existed, and persuaded many that Satanism was indeed a dangerous presence. For the post-Taxil groups around Kadosh, Przybyszewski, Naglowska and certain disciples of Crowley, it is a matter of how we decide to call them. They did include some elements of Satanism, although perhaps not all. Faxneld, who deserves credit both for having "discovered" Kadosh and called the attention on Przybyszewski and the Luciferian elements in the Fraternitas Saturni, originally used these cases to argue that Satanism existed before LaVey, although he may partially have changed his mind later.[32] As for the Ophite Cultus Sathanas in Ohio, it probably became a Satanic organization only *after* it heard of LaVey.

The question is both different and more complicate as far as a pre-Taxil Satanism is concerned. There are not enough elements for a clear-cut conclusion. The French-speaking occult subculture was so differentiated that I would not exclude that, having tried all sort of practices and rituals, some decided to get in contact with Satan or Lucifer. Perhaps, we will never know for sure.

Contemporary Satanism and Anti-Satanism, 1952–2000

I distinguish here between "contemporary" and "modern" Satanism in a way similar to what art historians do when they distinguish between contemporary and modern art, irrespective of the chronology. Their respective styles are indeed different. I also agree with Petersen that contemporary Satanism is, in many ways, a new phenomenon, and that there is no "stable relation" between Satanism as emerged in California in the 1960s ("satanic discourse") and the previous satanic "performances".[33]

After Parson's scandalous career, California witnessed the emergence of a "black", antinomian branch of its counterculture, with significant international

32 See P. Faxneld, "Secret Lineages and de Facto Satanists: Anton LaVey's Use of Esoteric Tradition", in Egil Asprem and K. Granholm (eds.), *Contemporary Esotericism*, Sheffield (UK), Bristol (Connecticut): Equinox, 2013, pp. 72–90.

33 J.Aa. Petersen, "Contemporary Satanism", in Christopher Partridge (ed.), *The Occult World*, Abington (UK), New York: Routledge, 2015, pp. 396–405 (p. 398).

repercussions. The attitude of Hollywood figures such as director Kenneth Anger, who, during a period of his career, completed the transition from Crowley to an explicitly Satanist philosophy, influenced several members of the occult subculture. LaVey created his first magical organizations in cooperation with Anger. Initially, the dominant culture tolerated LaVey as an inoffensive Californian eccentric. LaVey's movement had its internal contradictions, however. The repeated schisms of the Church of Satan marked the Satanism of the 1970s. In the meantime, The Process, an idiosyncratic communal group that worshipped together Satan, Lucifer, the Judeo-Christian Jehovah, and Jesus Christ, moved from England to Mexico and then to United States. It collapsed after a famous participant observation by sociologist William Sims Bainbridge.

In the end, the dominant culture was not really prepared to look at itself in the mirror of Satanism, especially after some suggested that the mirror was perhaps not so deforming. What was probably the greatest Satanism scare in history developed, primarily in the United States and Great Britain, between 1980 and 1994. The anti-Satanist reaction manifested in two different subcultures, sometimes forming an unexpected alliance. The first was the secular milieu of the anti-cult movement and a post-Freudian wing of the psychiatric and psychological professions. The second was a religious, primarily Evangelical, context where Satanism and the presence of the Devil became a sort of universal key for explaining and exorcising a post-modernity that many religionists found intolerable and difficult to understand.

Incredibly, even old material from Taxil was recycled. And, just as it happened at the time of Taxil, both fraudulent ex-Satanists and moral entrepreneurs of dubious credentials spread tall tales about thousands of Satanists lurking in the shadow and trying to control the world. In the meantime, again finding inspiration in 19th-century anti-Satanism, it was claimed that Satanists controlled Freemasonry and parts of the Mormon Church. As strange as these claims may seem, they caused serious scares in Utah's Mormon Country, mobilizing therapists, law enforcement, the Utah government, and portions of the Mormon Church itself.

The excesses of anti-Satanism were vigorously denounced by sociologists and other scholars, reporters, professional skeptics, and moderate exponents of the mainline Christian churches. In the second half of the 1990s, these efforts led to the end of the great Satanism scare, although some fragments survived and continued into the 21st century.

The very excesses of anti-Satanism created again the pendulum effect, and helped Satanism to survive. In fact, from around 1995, Satanism began to experience a revival of sorts, with the surprising revitalization of the Church of Satan and the birth of new groups in several countries. Parts of the rock music

scene went from folk Satanism to an interest in real Satanism. Folk Satanism was responsible for some very real crimes, the worst of which were those perpetrated in Italy by the Beasts of Satan in 2004, although Extreme Metal musicians hailing Satan in their songs also burned churches and committed homicides. Other groups maintained Nazi connections and even exalted terrorism and murder as a way of creating a chaos seen as necessary for the passage to a new satanic aeon.

Although anti-Satanism did not disappear in the 21st century, these incidents did not revitalize it as much as it might have been expected. At least a part of the dominant culture, and certainly a part of the academia, was now prepared to recognize Satanism as a shadow, in the sense of Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), of modernity and post-modernity. Surprising some early scholars of the phenomenon, Satanism did not disappear either. In both its rationalist and occult wings, Satanism established a significant presence on the Internet, and a number of new groups were created. 2016 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Church of Satan by LaVey. Although many regarded it as a passing fad, LaVeyan Satanism has been around for half a century and seems to be here to stay. The same is true for occult Satanism, even in its less polite forms.

Of course, if incidents like the one involving the Beasts of Satan in Italy will multiply internationally, it is possible that a strong anti-Satanist reaction will manifest and will persuade some Satanist groups to lower their level of visibility, although the Internet allows for multiple pseudonyms and untraceable addresses. Anti-Satanism, however, can hardly exist without tall tales, hoaxes, and excesses. In all probabilities, even if anti-Satanism will be revitalized by the violent deeds of some fringes of Satanism, it will in turn fall victim to its own excesses. And the pendulum will switch again.

PART 1

Proto-Satanism, 17th and 18th Centuries

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CHAPTER 1

France: Satan in the Courtroom

Satan the Witch: The Witches' Sabbath and Satanism

The prehistory of modern Satanism can be traced back to the beginning of the 17th century in France. Many have claimed that Satanism[1] and even the Black Mass[2] have origins that are more ancient. In some Crowleyan circles and in contemporary Chaos Magic, there is an insistence that a "monstrous cult" of dark and diabolical gods existed since ancient times. By appropriate rituals, contemporary magicians should still be able to encounter these terrible and ancient gods.[3] For some readers of fantasy writer Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890–1937), who was surprisingly popular in several Crowleyan and Satanist groups, the "Great Old Ones" of his Cthulhu mythos are these obscure archaic divinities, with whom the modern magician should be able to interact.[4] All this is certainly not without interest, but is not directly correlated with Satanism, if we define Satanism as the organized ritual worship of the being called Satan in the Bible. It is also important to distinguish with clarity witchcraft from Satanism.

The word "witchcraft" describes a genus, in which different species co-exist. Their common traits are not easy to extract, from medieval episodes to the

1 See Gerhard Zacharias [1923–2000], *Satanskult und Schwarze Messe. Ein Beitrag zur Phänomenologie der Religion*, Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1964; revised British ed.: *The Satanic Cult*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980.

2 See H[enry] T[aylor] F[owkes] Rhodes [1892–1966], *The Satanic Mass: A Criminological Study*, London: Jarrolds, 1968.

3 In the Crowleyan milieu, this theme was developed in particular by Kenneth Grant. See his *Outside the Circles of Time*, London: Frederick Muller, 1980, and *Hecate's Fountain*, London: Skoob, 1992. See also Stephen Sennitt, *Monstrous Cults*: *A Study of the Primordial Gnosis*, Doncaster (Yorkshire): New World Publishing, 1992. On Grant, see Henrik Bogdan, "Kenneth Grant and the Typhonian Tradition", in Christopher Partridge (ed.), *The Occult World*, cit., pp. 323–330; and H. Bogdan, *Kenneth Grant: A Bibliography*, 2nd ed., London: Fulgur Esoterica, 2014.

4 Lovecraft never showed a particular interest in a possible magical use of his books, although his father was a member of various occult orders. See S. Sennitt, John Smith and Ian Blake, *Mythos and Magick: Three Essays on H.P. Lovecraft and the Occult Revival*, Doncaster (Yorkshire): Starry Wisdom Press, 1990; and John L. Steadman, *H.P. Lovecraft & the Black Magickal Tradition: The Master of Horror's Influence on Modern Occultism*, San Francisco: Weiser Books, 2015.

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contemporary neo-witchcraft known as Wicca.[5] In the broadest sense, the word witchcraft describes a series of magical practices that ensure the practitioner an influence on people or things that goes beyond the ordinary causality principle. In contemporary Wicca, this is connected with a psychological self-transformation of the practitioner.[6] In traditional witchcraft, which has not been replaced by Wicca and can still be found in various forms and cultures today, the external effect is regarded more as a mechanical consequence of the ritual than of the psychological attitude of the practitioner.

When witchcraft "worked", its enemies constantly suspected that the result was achieved through a pact with the Devil, and that witches in fact worshipped Satan. This accusation has been directed towards Wicca as well, particularly by Protestant fundamentalist critics. Wiccans refute these accusations with indignation, claiming that their worship is not directed to the Devil but to pre-Christian gods. When a "Horned God" appears among these deities, it is not Satan but the god of fertility, who is part of many ancient traditions.

In traditional witchcraft, things are more complicated. Today, in an era where there is no risk of being burned at stake, a sorcerer for hire might accept to summon the Devil in order to increase the power of the ritual, with an obvious increase on the tariff as well. This explains why satanic symbols are found in the studios of certain folk magicians, or in outdoor places where spells or curses were carried out, sometimes inducing the media or the police to believe that a Satanist cult was at work. The symbols do not mean that the magicians for hire necessarily believe in the powers of the Devil: however, their clients certainly do. There are also folk magicians who consider themselves exclusively as adepts of "white magic" and who refuse to summon the Devil, unmoved even by the prospect of more substantial payments.

In the trials for witchcraft during the late Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the 17th century, many accused claimed they had nothing to do with the Devil, while others provided detailed descriptions of the Sabbath. They described a ritual where the Devil was worshipped and ecstatic dances were practiced, together with abundant drinking and coupling. There were accused ready to confess that the Devil appeared in person during the Sabbath in the form of a cat or a man. He was, however, as cold as ice and was able to freeze the witches

5 For some relevant observations, see Chas S. Clifton, *Her Hidden Children: The Rise of Wicca and Paganism in America*, Lanham (Maryland): AltaMira, 2006.

6 See Margot Adler [1946–2014], *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Pagans and Goddess-Worshippers in America Today*, 2nd ed., Boston: Beacon Press, 1986 (1st ed., Boston: Beacon Press, 1979).

who sexually united with him with an equally gelid sperm. Occasionally, he also appeared in the characteristic iconic form of the Christian Devil.

There are still scholars who believe that not only the apparitions of the Devil, but also the whole details of the witches' rituals were always figments of the accused's imaginations or the inevitable consequences of tortures by the Inquisition. However, these scholars are now in the minority.[7] Italian scholar of witchcraft Carlo Ginzburg observed that for years historians who specialized on the topic had as a main objective "to destroy the thesis of Margaret Murray" (1863–1963).[8] Murray, an English Egyptologist, argued that medieval witchcraft was the prosecution in disguise of the pre-Christian "old religion". Her thesis was enthusiastically adopted by Wiccans but rejected by academic scholars. Ginzburg believes that scholars should be able to vigorously disagree with Murray's thesis, while maintaining the reality of a "folkloric culture" in the narratives of the Sabbath.

In early modern Europe, secular authorities were often stricter than the ecclesiastical Inquisition, and Protestants were often more credulous than Catholics.[9] In general, the very mechanic of the trials might have produced

7 See Marina Romanello (ed.), *La stregoneria in Europa* (*1450–1650*), Bologna: Il Mulino, 1975; Bengt Ankarloo [1935–2008] and Gustav Henningsen (eds.), *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Center and Peripheries*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990; Nicole Jacques-Chaquin and Maxime Préaud (eds.), *Le Sabbat des sorciers* (*XVe–XVIIIe siècles*), Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1992; J.B. Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca (New York), London: Cornell University Press, 1972; Elliot Rose, *A Razor for a Goat: A Discussion of Certain Problems in the History of Witchcraft and Diabolism*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989; Anne Llewellyn Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts*, San Francisco: Pandora, 1994; Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations*, New York, London: Routledge, 1996; Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999; and the six volumes of the series edited by B. Ankarloo and S. Clark, *The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe*, London: The Athlone Press, 1999–2002.

8 C. Ginzburg, "Les Origines du Sabbath", in N. Jacques-Chaquin and M. Préaud (eds.), *Le Sabbat des sorciers* (*XVe–XVIIIe siècles*), cit., pp. 17–31 (p. 17). On Murray's biography, see Kathleen L. Sheppard, *The Life of Margaret Alice Murray: A Woman's Work in Archaeology*, Lanham (Maryland), Boulder (Colorado), New York, Toronto, Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013.

9 "Between 1590 and 1620 witchcraft seems to divide two Europes: the North, where it proliferates, and Southern Europe, where it is rare": Michel de Certeau, *La Possession de Loudun*, 2nd ed., Paris: Gallimard, Julliard, 1990, p. 10. In Spain, the Inquisition rather *prevented* the development of a real witch-hunt, which was initially promoted by secular authorities: see G. Henningsen, *The Witches'Advocate: Basque Witchcraft and the Spanish Inquisition*, Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1980. The Inquisition of Rome executed only one person for witchcraft.

false or exaggerated confessions. An imaginative mechanism multiplied the phantasmagoria of descriptions concerning infernal flights, pacts with the Devil, and carnal congresses with Satan, especially after the publication in 1487 of the famous *Malleus maleficarum*, which incited the inquisitors to investigate exactly these points.

However, the presence of spontaneous confessions and sober testimonies seems to indicate that, although deformed and exaggerated by endless fantastic reports, the Sabbath had some existence, in the form of clandestine reunions where folkloric elements of remote pagan origin, social protest, hallucinatory seizures, spells, and curses mixed. It is not impossible that fertility and sexuality were occasionally celebrated through orgiastic rituals. It is probable that, in some cases, the Devil was effectively invoked, and it was not uncommon to find reports of parodistic or blasphemous liturgical practices, which imitated parts of the Catholic Mass. It is, however important to note the dates of the reports that describe something similar to the Black Mass of the Satanists. They started to emerge mostly in the late 17th century, when Black Masses had already been reported in urban Satanist circles.

It has been claimed that Satanism represented an evolution or a deviation of witchcraft. According to this theory, when witchcraft spread to the urban middle class and even to aristocracy, it became Satanism.[10] But one can ask whether the opposite did not also occur: whether late rural witchcraft was not inspired by the activities of urban magicians, whose fame, heightened by the trials, spread outside their original context. It is not necessary to suppose that peasants were able to read the gazettes. Priests did read them and could indulge in the taste for wonder in homilies quoting documents on the atrocities of Satanists and their appropriate punishment.

French historian Jules Michelet (1798–1874), whose influential book *The Witch* was published in 1862,[11] believed the Sabbath had been a real event. His main source was Pierre de Lancre (1553–1631), who began his investigation in the area of the French Pyrenees in 1609. Lancre, a judge appointed by the French King Henry IV (1553–1610), was not a religious inquisitor but a civil magistrate, who was regarded as the very incarnation of secular justice. The Bishop of Bayonne, in whose diocese he was operating, in fact regarded him as too secular and tried to convince the King to retrieve his mandate.

The upright magistrate, one of the few held in any regard by Michelet, heard, from the French Basque peasants that he interrogated, how "the Devil,

10 See G. Zacharias, *The Satanic Cult*, cit., pp. 99–100.

11 See Jules Michelet, *La Sorcière*, critical ed., Paris: Société des Textes Français Modernes, 1952.

in a parody of the most holy sacrament the Church celebrates, had a sort of Sabbath Mass performed in his honor". "Some of the women who go to the Sabbath, Lancre reported, who often attended Mass in this manner, claimed to have seen walls like those in a church, with an altar, and on the altar a small demon the size of a twelve-year-old boy with a set smile on his face. He did not move until this abominable mystery and fraud came to an end, when the altar and the statue vanished". In these Masses, rosaries and crosses were also present, but fortunately the profanation of real sacred objects did not occur, because "witches' crosses and rosaries are always imperfect". The crosses had a broken arm and the Rosary beads were not identical as they should be, but "different in proportions, different in colors and ill tied one to each other".

In the Sabbath Masses described to Lancre by his defendants, there were "benedictions" involving urine sprinkling, and one witness swore to the judge that it was urine from the Devil himself. The sign of the cross was performed with a peculiar formula, half in Spanish and half in Basque: "In nomina Patrica, Aragueaco Petrica, Agora, Agora Valentia, Youanda goure gaitz goustia", which the magistrate translated as: "In the name of Patrick, nobleman of Aragon, now in Valencia, may all our problems leave us". But sometimes the last words in Basque were more sinister, "Equidac ipordian pot", which should mean: "Kiss me on my bottom", always in the name of the mysterious "Patrick, nobleman of Aragon". There was also a collection, where silver coins were donated for the rather mundane purpose of paying for lawyers, should the Sabbath participants be identified and, as the magistrate let us guess with understandable pride, tried by zealous and skilled judges such as Lancre himself.

In a parody of the Catholic Mass' elevation ritual, a "black, host, rather simple, with no incisions or pictures" was raised. It was not round as its Catholic counterpart, but "in the shape of a triangle". A fifteen-year old boy, from Saint-Jean-de-Luz, testified to having seen a satanic priest, with his head down and legs up in the moment of the satanic elevation, lifted into air, not for a brief moment but for the duration of a liturgical Credo. Another witness added that, in the moment of elevation, the priest pronounced: "Black goat, black goat". That was not all: the Devil continuously introduced "new kinds of Sabbath Masses, so as to better seduce all types of priests and monks" and some of these wretched priests, after having learned their Sabbath Masses, repeated them in their churches.[12]

In fact, Lancre did not believe everything he was told. He gained the admiration of Michelet by attributing the reports on the personal presence

12 Pierre de Lancre, *Tableau de l'Inconstance des mauvais Anges et Démons*, Paris: Jean Berjon, 1612, pp. 457–468.

of the Devil and other miraculous facts, at least "for the most part", to the exalted imagination of the witches or to tricks, as in the case of illusionists, of which magicians and sorcerers were expert. With Lancre, we are in an interesting transitory moment from Sabbath to Black Mass, and from witchcraft to Satanism. The pages of Lancre where a "Mass" is described do announce the Black Masses reported in Paris in the same 17th century. However, most of his volume, so successful that two editions were published in two years, in 1612 and 1613, was dedicated to the classical themes of the Sabbath: apparitions, real or supposed, of the Devil, naked men and women dancing in circles, shameless touching and coupling.

All this constituted the conventional context of the traditional Sabbath, where there were rudimentary parodies of the Catholic liturgy, but not the systematic use of a ritual "Black Mass" and differences with Satanism were more or less clear. The Sabbath was of peasant origin, the Black Masses were bourgeois and aristocrat. The different rituals of the Sabbath did correspond in their way to a common model, but all witnesses reported a fragmented and disorganized ritual, a repetition of both ancient movements, whose logic had been lost, and a "feast of the fool" where everything was allowed.

The main goal of the Sabbath was primarily the Sabbath itself, although in the context of a sort of camp meeting of magic. There were also more practically oriented activities such as spells and curses. The Paris Black Mass was created and celebrated for a single, specific materialistic goal and its liturgy respected a ritual. The Black Mass, in other words, was supported by an ideology typical of an urban magical subculture, while in the Sabbath there was no clear ideology.

Satan the Exorcist: Possession Trials

"Those who talk about *possession*, wrote French historian Michel de Certeau (1925–1986), are not talking about *witchcraft*. The two phenomena are distinct and come one after the other, although ancient treaties associate them and confuse them".[13] Demonic possession is, clearly, ancient: Jesus freed several possessed in the Gospels, and in the book of *Acts* we find wandering Jewish exorcists, more or less successful, who evidently descended from a pre-Christian tradition. One famous episode, from this perspective, was that of the seven sons of Sceva in *Acts* 19,8-20, where for the first time the word *exorkistes*, "exorcist", was used, with connotations not particularly positive for the "exorcists" who operated outside the Christian Church. The word referred

13 M. de Certeau, *La Possession de Loudun*, cit., p. 10.

to wandering practitioners who clumsily attempted to use Jesus' name in a magical way. The text "implies that there were other Jewish exorcists besides the seven operating in the area; this is historically plausible, since Jews of this period were famed for their exorcistic ability".[14]

Possession was old, but in late 16th-century France something new appeared. The great possession trials were celebrated alongside trials for witchcraft and partially substituted them. "The distinction between a witch and a demoniac", according to historian Daniel Pickering Walker (1914–1985), "is clear and usually well maintained. The Devil is not inside a witch's body, as he is in a demoniac's; in consequence a witch does not suffer from convulsions and a demoniac does. A witch has voluntarily entered into association with a devil, whereas possession is involuntary and a demoniac is not therefore responsible for her wicked actions, as is a witch".[15] There was also a social and class aspect: although exceptions did occur, the possessed tended to come from good families. In the possession trials, there was not the social distance between middle class judges and peasant witches that occurred in the trials for witchcraft.

The Sabbath, when it really existed, was a folkloristic and coral event, where the individual was lost and melted in a collective ecstatic form. In the demonic possession, the individual was central and often, as modern scholars will suspect, was morbidly pleased with this position. Although similar cases also occurred in England, the main scenario of possession trials was in France.[16] There, experts in witchcraft started looking upon the possessed with suspicion. They suggested asking the Devil during exorcism whether the possession was not the consequence of some form of magic. At this point, however, questions should stop. These experts did not suggest asking the Devil the name of the witch or of the sorcerer who might be responsible, since the Devil, always a liar, could easily accuse the innocent.[17]

During the 16th century, it also happened that the possessed, in what Walker described as "few aberrant cases in France",[18] which became more common in the 17th century, confessed to having themselves worshipped the Devil. This was the case of a nun from Mons, in the French county of Hainaut, Jeanne

14 Susan R. Garrett, *The Demise of the Devil: Magic and the Demonic in Luke's Writings*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989, p. 91.

15 D.[aniel] P.[ickering] Walker, *Unclean Spirits: Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries*, London: Scholar Press, 1981, pp. 9–10.

16 See *ibid.*

17 See *ibid.*, p. 9, with references to several textbooks on witchcraft, both Catholic and Protestant.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Fery (1559–1620), who was tried in 1584–1585.[19] Jeanne had been quite literally "sent to Hell" as a little girl by her drunken father, and the Devil, thanks to this father's curse, "had the power to assault and continuously fly around the little girl until she reached the age of four, when he acted to obtain her consent, so as to be recognized as her true father".

At the age of four, the unlucky child accepted the Devil as her father. When she was twelve, she started seeing him and signing written pacts with Satan. The Devil, she confessed, "told me to get ink and parchment: he made me write that I renounced my baptism, Christianity, and all the Church ceremonies. This obligation was signed with my own blood, with the promise of never breaking the pact". This piece of parchment containing the pact with the Devil was "minutely folded" and, as Jeanne reported, the Devil "made me swallow it with a sweet orange. I felt it sweet until the last bite, which was so bitter I could not tolerate it". At the time of her first communion, several devils asked her to sign a new pact, where Jeanne renounced "the holy sacrifice of the Mass".[20]

Jeanne subsequently entered the order of the Black Sisters. However, on the eve of her profession, "at nightfall (…) they made me sign, in the presence of more than a thousand devils, yet another written pact, where I declared that the vows I was going to take in public were a simulation". Jeanne's act of religious profession was immediately consigned to a devil called Namon, and was followed by new demonic pacts: as many as eighteen, as would be discovered in the exorcism.[21] The names of many devils, a theme found in the whole cycle of the possession trials, also began to emerge. They referred both to sins as ancient as humans, and to problems of the time: "Traitor", "Heresy", "Turks", "Pagans", "Saracens", "Blasphemers".[22] The most interesting material for possible references to Satanism concerned diabolical parodies of the Catholic sacraments, in which Jeanne surrendered to the devils. Thus, the nun received a Satanist baptism where, she confessed, "they made me take off all my clothes and marked every part of my body with a sweet oil; they made me perform many other ceremonies, changing continuously clothing and singing together with them evil verses with diabolical words".

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19 See *La Possession de Jeanne Fery, religieuse professe des sœurs noires de la ville de Mons (1584)*, Paris: Aux Bureaux du Progrès Médical, A. Delahaye et Lecresonier Éditeurs, 1866; and *Discours admirable et véritable des choses arrivées en la Ville de Mons en Hainaut, à l'endroit d'une Religieuse possédée et depuis délivrée*, Louvain: Jean Bogard, 1586; reprint, Mons: Léopold Varret, 1745.

20 *La Possession de Jeanne Fery, religieuse professe des sœurs noires de la ville de Mons (1584)*, cit., pp. 94–96.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 97–99.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 99–101.

There were also, to complete the cycle of Catholic sacraments, a renunciation to confirmation and a parody of confession, where, as Jeanne confirmed to the exorcists, the devils "made me confess and be examined by the evil Heresy", an arch-demon who, as a penitence, made her eat during days of fasting and fast during days of feast.[23] Jeanne was induced to offer small animals as sacrifices to the little statue of a diabolical idol named Ninus, which she had built herself according to the devils' indications and which was then confiscated and burned by the exorcists. A particularly aggressive devil called "Bloodthirsty" went further. He made the nun lie down on a table and "with great screams and pains he cut a piece of flesh out of my body, and soaking it in my blood, went to sacrifice it to Beleal".[24] There was also a full-blown diabolical Eucharist, in the double form of a communion performed by devils, giving her "a bite that she considered quite sweet", and the profanation of the real Catholic host. The devils forced Jeanne to take the host out of her mouth "and hide it in a secret location". Later, she might retrieve it and turn it into an object for blasphemy and "many offenses".[25]

At this point, however, Heaven decided to act and sent Saint Mary Magdalene to intervene against the powers of Hell. Initially, the devils were enraged by Magdalene calling her, with unflattering references to her past, "a woman of ill repute".[26] Eventually they fled, thanks to the personal intervention of the Archbishop-Duke of Cambrai, Louis de Berlaymont (1542–1596), who conducted the exorcisms assisted by many leading priests of the diocese, including François Buisseret (1549–1615), who would succeed him as Archbishop. The exorcism, which followed a set pattern, was rather dramatic. Jeanne's "noble parts" were severely compromised when she released from her body "with urine, twenty pieces of putrid flesh which emitted a powerful stench". Previously, she had vomited "from her mouth and nostrils incredible quantities of filth and vermin, together with locks of hair and animals in the shape of hairy worms".[27]

In May 1585, she "punched and kicked the Archbishop (…) and other clergymen, with such violence that they feared for their lives". On November 12, 1585, she was fully healed in the final and solemn exorcism. From then on, Jeanne lived as a good nun, with the singular privilege of having the Archbishop-Duke in person as her confessor, until her death in 1620.[28]

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23 *Ibid.*, p. 107.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 114.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 125.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

28 See Sophie Houdard, "Une vie cachée chez les diables. L'irréligion de Jeanne Fery, exposséde et pseudo-religieuse", *L'Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques* (online), no. 4, 2009, available at <http://acrh.revues.org/1227>, last accessed on November 20, 2015.

What should we make of the case of Jeanne Fery? In the *Discours* of 1586, which refers to her case, there are two distinct narratives. On one side, there are the reports of the exorcism sessions, compiled in the presence of numerous clerical and civil witnesses, of whom there is no reason to doubt. The expulsion from the body of all kinds of material, generally disgusting, was reported in many modern and contemporary exorcisms. On the other side, there is the fantastic reconstruction of satanic apparitions and pacts with the Devil, easily explainable through Jeanne's psychological situation. The nun was clearly pleased to be at the center of attention, in direct and constant contact with the powerful Archbishop-Duke. Thanks to the extraordinary stories she told, she was elevated significantly beyond the more senior nuns.

A 20th century Catholic specialist who examined the case was rather skeptical about Jeanne Fery, and concluded that her case was about the mysteries of the female psyche as much as about the mysteries of the Devil. He concluded that Fery's might have been originally an authentic case of possession, on which the nun constructed an improbable narrative of pacts with the Devil and satanic sacramental parodies.[29] For the influence on the successive construction of Satanism, the blasphemous rituals described in the *Discours* on Fery, a real instant book published a few months after the facts, offered at any rate material that others would be able to use in different contexts.

For now, the setting provided two main characters: the Devil, with his minions, and the possessed. The welding between the cycle of possession and that of witchcraft had not yet occurred. This model, as Walker explained, was the only one known in the 16th century, in which "this connection between possession and witchcraft was not present",[30] and it remained prevalent until the beginning of the 17th century and even later. It was illustrated, to quote just one example, by the episode of the young Bavarian painter Christoph Haizmann (1652–1700), exorcized in 1677–1678 in the sanctuary of Mariazell, in the Austrian region of Carinthia. It was another typical case of a pact with the Devil, broken by a double exorcism. The artist also painted portraits of the Devil as he saw him, initially as a respectable gentleman and later as an androgynous being with breasts and a "giant penis ending in a snake", as well as with green hair

29 See Pierre Debongnie C.SS.RR. [1892–1963], "Les Confessions d'une possédée, Jeanne Fery (1584–1585)", in *Études Carmélitaines: Satan*, cit., pp. 386–419.

30 D.P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits: Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries*, cit., p. 75.

and fully feminine traits.[31] The interest of this case is that the possessed was a man instead of a woman, although a particular kind of man traditionally associated with an almost feminine sensitivity, an artist. The text that described the exorcisms, the *Tropheum Mariano-Cellense*, would attract in 1923 the interest of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), who would interpret it from a psychoanalytical perspective in his "A Seventeenth-Century Demonological Neurosis".[32]

Freud considered the Devil of Haizmann as a metaphor of the father, but even within psychoanalysis there have been diverse and conflicting interpretations. For example, Ida Macalpine (1899–1974) and Richard Hunter (1923–1981), in a study of 1956, claimed that Haizmann's Devil was not only a "super-male", thus an image of the father, but was also represented in androgynous or feminine forms, revealing the Bavarian painter's desperate confusion about his sexual identity.[33] The first historian of the Haizmann case, the Catholic priest Johannes Innocentius ("Adalbertus") Eremiasch (1683–1729), published the two pacts signed by the painter with the Devil, which were not too different from the usual forms. It is also true that the 17th century was a decisive era for the formation of the Faust legend,[34] which focuses on a pact with the Devil, not only in Germany but also in Spain, where the matter was given a literary form by Antonio Mira de Amescua (1577?–1636) in his *El esclavo del demonio* (1612),[35] and in France.[36]

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31 See the report of the exorcism: *Tropheum Mariano-Cellense*, in Rudolf Payer-Thurn [Payer von Thurn, 1867–1932], "Faust in Mariazell", *Chronik des Wiener Goethe-Vereins*, XXXIV, 1924, pp. 1–18.

32 See Sigmund Freud, "A Seventeenth-Century Demonological Neurosis", in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1923, vol. XIX, pp. 72–105. See also Luisa de Urtubey, *Freud e il diavolo*, Rome: Astrolabio, 1984; Fulvio Salza, "Il simbolo del diavolo in Freud", in Filippo Barbano and Dario Rei (eds.), *L'autunno del Diavolo, vol. II*, Milan: Bompiani, 1990, pp. 311–322.

33 Ida Macalpine and Richard Hunter, *Schizophrenia 1677: Psychiatric Study of an Illustrated Autobiographical Record of Demoniacal Possession*, London: William Dawson, 1956. According to Paul C. Vitz, *Sigmund Freud's Christian Unconscious*, New York, London: The Guilford Press, 1988, pp. 149–157, by studying Haizmann, Freud in reality, psychoanalyzed himself, divided as he was between fantasies of a "pact with the Devil" and the temptation to convert to Christianity.

34 See E[liza] M[arian] Butler [1885–1959], *The Fortunes of Faust*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952 (2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

35 See Aldo Ruffinatto, "Il patto diabolico in Spagna dal Medioevo a Calderón (e oltre)", in Eugenio Corsini and Eugenio Costa (eds.), *L'autunno del Diavolo, vol. I*, Milan: Bompiani, 1990, pp. 523–542.

36 See Gabriella Bosco, "Da Plutone a Satana: percorsi diabolici dell'epica francese seicentesca", *ibid.*, pp. 557–571.

For this material to be used in accusations of Satanism, it was necessary to introduce the figure of the agent of Satan, the Satanist-magician or Satanist-witch. In the previous cases, the possessed, male or female, who were not technically "innocent", were together the subject and the object of a diabolical operation, as they incautiously signed a pact with the Devil and were then inextricably victimized by Satan until the liberating exorcism. Starting with the case of the Ursuline nuns of Aix-en-Provence in 1611, we are presented with a triangle – she, the possessed, he, the Devil, and the other: the male Satanist-sorcerer, who with his curses causes the possession of a victim who was originally innocent. For the law of *corruptio optimi pessima,* the Satanist was often a man consecrated to God, a priest, who consciously inverted his role into that of agent of the Devil. And the role-playing ended in tragedy, as the first of these "demonic" priests, Louis Gaufridy (1572?–1611), was burned at the stake in 1611 for having caused the possession of the Ursulines of Aix-en-Provence.[37] The presence of a third party, the Satanist, who was not possessed but made the Devil possess the victim, "at the time (…) seemed an innovation", although there had been an intimation in 1599 in the case of a famous possessed, Marthe Brossier (1577?–?), regarded by many as a simulator. In a few decades, "the innovation had caught on in a big way".[38]

The case of the Brigidine Sisters of the convent founded by Anne Dubois (1574–1618) in Lille (1608–1609) followed immediately after the Aix case, which was clearly its model. Aix and Lille were in turn the models for a third episode made famous by cinema and literature: Loudun (1632–1640). Loudun would be in turn the model for Louviers (1642–1647), Auxonne (1658–1663), and many other cases. Before Loudun, an episode that presented some original features was that of Elisabeth de Ranfaing (1592–1649), studied in the 20th century by the Catholic scholar Jean Vernette (1929–2002). In this case, it was not a priest who was accused of causing the possession but a medical doctor, Charles Poirot (?–1622) "who in reality the woman secretly desired" and who "became the scapegoat" of her neurosis. After Poirot was burned as a Satanist, Elisabeth "thanks to her powers of dissimulation and her intense paranoia", "played the part of the saint just as she did that of the possessed". She founded her own

37 See Jean Lorédan [1853–1937], *Un grand Procès de sorcellerie au 17the siècle. L'Abbé Gaufridy et Madeleine de Demandolx (1600–1670), d'après des documents inédits*, 2nd ed., Paris: Perrin, 1912. See also Michelle Marshman, "Exorcism as Empowerment: A New Idiom", *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1999, pp. 265–281; Sarah Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France*, London, New York: Routledge, 2004.

38 D.P. Walker, *Unclean Spirits: Possession and Exorcism in France and England in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries*, cit., p. 75.

group, the Brotherhood of the Medalists, that distributed medals reportedly blessed through Elisabeth by the Holy Trinity in person. The Brotherhood was however condemned by the Holy Office in 1644 and again by Pope Innocent X (1574–1655) in 1649.[39]

Some modern Catholic theologians, who do believe in the reality of demonic possession, have their doubts as to whether a Satanist, through a pact with the Devil, can really cause the possession of a third party.[40] This possibility is however admitted by some Catholic exorcists.[41] The intervention of an "external" Satanist, the priest Urbain Grandier (1590–1634), was crucial in the case of Loudun, made famous by the novel *The Devils of Loudun* by Aldous Huxley (1894–1963), which was not, however, historically accurate. On this novel, Ken Russell (1927–2011) based in 1971 his film *The Devils*, where Vanessa Redgrave interpreted Jeanne des Anges and Oliver Reed (1938–1999) played the part of Grandier.[42] Even in this case, the sisters involved were Ursulines, including the mother superior, Jeanne des Anges (Jeanne Belcier, 1602–1655).[43] The culprit was identified, once again, as the man who had power over the possessed women, the priest. It was, also, a priest strongly suspected of immorality and thus capable of extending his power from souls to bodies, just as the doctor accused in the Ranfaing case.

There is a clear difference with the episode relative to Jeanne Fery. In this case, the pact with the Devil was not signed by one of the possessed but by a third party, Grandier, who then caused the possession by a whole legion of devils. Jeanne des Anges, the mother superior, was possessed by Leviathan (from the order of Seraphims), Aman and Isacaron (from Powers), Balam (from

39 Jean Vernette, *La Sorcellerie: Envoûtéments, désenvoûtements*, Paris: Droguet et Ardant, 1991, pp. 139–144. On the Ranfaing case, see André Cuvelier [1948–2015], "Énergumènes, possédés et mystiques", in *Histoire des faits de sorcellerie*, Angers: Presses de l'Université d'Angers, 1985, pp. 55–70; Étienne Delcambre [1897–1961] and Jean Lhermitte [1877–1959], *Un Cas énigmatique de possession diabolique en Lorraine au 17ème siècle. Elisabeth de Ranfaing, l'énergumène de Nancy, fondatrice de l'Ordre du Refuge. Étude historique et psychomédicale*, Nancy: Société d'Archéologie Lorraine, 1956.

40 See the work by Mgr. Boaventura Kloppenburg O.F.M. (1919–2009), the Catholic Bishop of Novo Hamburgo, Brazil, and a specialist of Spiritualism and afro-Brazilian religions: "La Théorie du pacte avec le diable dans la magie évocatoire", in Jean-Baptiste Martin and M. Introvigne (eds.), *Le Défi magique. II. Satanisme, sorcellerie*, Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1994, pp. 241–257.

41 See Pellegrino Ernetti [1925–1994], *La catechesi di Satana*, Udine: Segno, 1992, p. 188.

42 See Aldous Huxley, *The Devils of Loudun*, London: Chatto and Windus, 1952.

43 Her autobiography was reprinted in 1990: Sœur Jeanne des Anges, *Autobiographie (1644)*, Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1990.

Dominions), Asmodeus and Behemot (from Thrones). Other sisters were possessed, one by Achaph, Asmodeus, Berith and Achaos; another by Penault, Caleph and Daria; a third by Cerberus; a novice by Baruch; and so on. A real cohort of demons must have flown over Loudun to possess no less than nine nuns and six laypersons, to which were added another eight nuns and three laypersons, "cursed" even if not truly possessed.[44] Loudun has been interpreted in different ways, as a mystification of Marie des Anges, who played the saint no less than Ranfaing, or as a political game orchestrated by Cardinal Armand-Jean de Richelieu (1585–1642). Certeau reconnected the episode to the archetype of Baroque theatre.[45] In Loudun, most of the exorcisms were public and in fact became an attractive show.

Among the fake saints there was also a probable authentic one, Father Jean-Joseph Surin S.J. (1600–1665), who arrived in Loudun after Grandier was burned at stake, but with the nuns still possessed, and finally successfully exorcised them taking into himself the Devil. Satan would torment him for thirty years, turning him from a brilliant spiritual writer into a sick person treated as a madman and despised in the religious houses where he lived. Things would improve only in the final part of his life.

This Jesuit priest, who believed in possession but who correctly defined the Loudun of 1634 as a "theatre",[46] left some writings of such elevated spiritual standard that it is hard to simply disregard him as a neurotic. Mgr. Giovanni Colombo (1902–1992), later a Catholic Cardinal, who dedicated a valuable study to him in 1949, suggested that sanctity, just as it can coexist with physical illnesses, could be compatible with the mental illness of a priest who was clearly exhausted by his own zeal, and he saw in Surin both a saint *and* a sick man.[47]

Loudun is interesting for our story also because, during the 17th century, it was discussed in numerous pamphlets and volumes. Certeau counted no less than five-hundred books and pamphlets before 1639, without considering

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44 M. de Certeau, *La Possession de Loudun*, cit., pp. 136–139.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 131.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 290.

47 Giovanni Colombo, *La Spiritualità del P. Surin*, introductive study to Giovanni Giuseppe Surin, *I fondamenti della vita spirituale ricavati dal libro dell'Imitazione di Cristo*, It. transl., Milan: Ancora, 1949, pp. 7–175 (pp. 58–59). Surin's report on the Loudun case was reprinted in 1990: *Triomphe de l'Amour divin sur les puissances de l'Enfer en la possession de la Mère Supérieure des Ursulines de Loudun, exorcisée par le père Jean-Joseph Surin, de la Compagnie de Jésus, et Science expérimentale des choses de l'autre vie* (*1653–1660*), Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1990.

the gazette articles.[48] Such a deluge of literature could not but affect popular imagination. As we mentioned, Loudun was a clear model for Louviers, where we see again the theatre of public exorcisms at work. A nun, Magdelaine Bavent (1607–1652), with an interesting variation on the plot, was considered as both victim and accomplice. In the end, she was sentenced to life imprisonment. Bavent's confessions mentioned sacrilegious Masses where satanic priests "placed the host in a piece of parchment mixed with a form of fat", "rubbed it all on their private parts starting from the belly", and then "indulged in the company of women".[49] In one case, the nun reported that a child had been roasted and eaten.[50] At the trial, two of the accused priests were already dead and of one the judges had to be content with exhuming the body to have it burned. Only the third confessor of the nuns in chronological order, Thomas Boullé (?–1647), was condemned and burned at stake in 1647. Bavent's confessions have been explained in psychological or psychoanalytical terms,[51] and she appears to the modern readers of her texts as a deeply disturbed personality.

Satan the Poisoner: "Black Masses" at the Court of Louis XIV

The La Voisin trial, should we take it at face value, would represent the first historical instance of Satanism as defined in this book. Certainly, the organizational elements and the ideology of Satanism that will emerge in the late 19th and 20th century were still missing. However, this was an episode that happened outside the wild, peasant, and folkloristic circle of witchcraft and the Sabbath: the location was the splendid court of the French King Louis XIV (1638–1715). It was also beyond the cases of possession, because the objective of a congregation of Satanists was not to cause the possession by the Devil of one or more nuns. It was to organize satanic liturgies in order to obtain material benefits. In the case of La Voisin, we first find the expression "Black Mass", and the idea of celebrating the Catholic Mass in an "inverted" form, turning it into a demonic Mass, acquired a certain technicality not found in previous cases.

48 M. de Certeau, *La Possession de Loudun*, cit., pp. 272–273.

49 *Histoire de Magdelaine Bavent, Religieuse du Monastère de Saint-Louis de Louviers*, Paris: Jacques le Gentil, 1652 (reprint, Rouen: Léon Deshays, 1878), p. 29.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

51 See Karl R.[ichard] H.[ermann] Frick [1922–2012], *Die Satanisten*, Graz: Akademische Drück- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1985, p. 119.

The La Voisin case was investigated by secular rather than by religious inquisitors. Secular authorities were of course also involved in the earlier cases of witchcraft and possession, but in a close co-operation with the Bishops that we do not find in the La Voisin incident. In the latter, secular authorities still believed in the existence of Satan and framed their discourse in religious terms. However, the whole process was not governed by the Church.

The La Voisin episode was part of the famous poison cases, and the threat of assassination by poison of the most powerful European monarch justified the full attention of the police. Rather than the ecclesiastic authority, the secular police, led by the formidable prefect Gabriel Nicolas de La Reynie (1625–1709), carried on the whole investigation. Although Louis XIV later had some of the original documents destroyed, La Reynie had copied most of them. A number of these documents were included in the large collection published between 1866 and 1904 at the initiative of the French historian and director of Paris' Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, François Ravaisson-Mollien (1811–1884), under the title *Les Archives de la Bastille. Documents inédits*.[52] This collection, however, was not complete. Several other documents exist in different archives in Paris. American historian Lynn Wood Mollenauer published in 2006 the first study that examined systematically these additional documents.[53]

The affair was born in the climate created by a *cause célèbre*, the trial and execution in 1676 of the Marquise Marie-Madeleine d'Aubray de Brinvilliers (1630–1676), convicted of poisoning her father and two brothers in order to inherit their estates.[54] The Brinvilliers case persuaded both the French public opinion and the police that a variety of poisons was readily available to those who had enough money to purchase them. Brinvilliers herself told her judges that the commerce of poisons was widespread in Paris, and La Reynie launched a vigorous investigation. He quickly discovered that, although Brinvilliers had purchased arsenic from chemists, perhaps including the Royal Apothecary Christophe Glaser (1629–1672),[55] the main suppliers of poisons did not come from the world of science. They belonged to an obscure criminal underworld including abortionists, charlatans selling recipes to produce the philosopher's stone and turn base metals into gold, fortune tellers, and magicians for hire.

52 François Ravaisson-Mollien, *Archives de la Bastille. Documents inédits*, 19 vols., Paris: A. Durand et Pedone-Lauriel, 1866–1904.

53 Lynn Wood Mollenauer, *Strange Revelations: Magic, Poison, and Sacrilege in Louis XIV's France*, University Park (Pennsylvania): Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006.

54 See Jean-Christian Petitfils, *L'Affaire des poisons. Alchimistes et sorciers sous Louis XIV*, Paris: Albin Michel, 1977, pp. 19–25.

55 *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22.

The existence of this subculture was an open secret. In the late 17th century, it was fashionable in Paris for both aristocrats and the common people to consult soothsayers and card readers. Before the La Voisin affair, which induced the King to change the laws, these activities were not illegal. La Reynie, however, discovered that almost all the most famous soothsayers in Paris also performed abortions and sold poisons, two obviously criminal activities.

At the beginning of 1679, La Reynie arrested two well-known Paris soothsayers, Marie Bosse (?–1679) and Marie Vigoureux (?–1679). They claimed that, at most, they had sold some harmless love potions to rich clients, and implied that darker activities were performed by some of their colleagues, including the most famous soothsayer in Paris, Catherine Deshayes (1637?–1680). She was a haberdasher who had changed her name to Montvoisin on her marriage and preferred to be called, with a false touch of nobility, La Voisin. Reportedly, La Voisin's business was so lucrative that "she was said to fling handful of coins from her carriage as she drove around the city".[56] She was arrested on March 12, 1679.

Following a suggestion by La Reynie, Louis XIV decided to entrust the investigation to a special court, half judicial and half administrative, equipped with special powers. It was the Commission de l'Arsenal, popularly known as the "Chambre Ardente" because it held its meetings in a dark room lit by candles. Before the newly established court, Bosse and La Voisin started accusing each other of increasingly serious crimes, and named several accomplices. Between 1679 and 1682, the Commission would investigate more than 400 suspects. They belonged to three categories: the soothsayers, the clients, and the priests. It was widely believed that the most powerful and effective magical rituals could only be performed by ordained Catholic priests. The Commission determined that 47 Parisian priests were part of the magical underground.[57]

The King expected the Commission to produce quick results, and in two months it declared it had enough evidence to sentence the sorceresses Bosse and Vigoureux to death for having sold poison to several women who wanted to kill their husbands. Vigoureux died during torture, and Bosse was burned at stake on May 10, 1679. The investigation went on, and several other soothsayers were arrested, including two colorful characters known as La Trianon (Catherine Trianon, née Boule or Boullain, 1627–1681) and La Dodée (?–1679),

56 L.W. Mollenauer, *Strange Revelations: Magic, Poison, and Sacrilege in Louis XIV's France*, cit., p. 21.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 99.

who, having poisoned La Dodée's husband, "lived together as man and wife".[58] Both women eventually committed suicide in jail.

One of the male sorcerers, Adam Cœuret, known as Adam Dubuisson or Lesage (1629–?), decided to cooperate with La Reynie in order to escape the death penalty. He was well informed about the whole affair, having been the lover of both Bosse and La Voisin. Eventually, La Voisin confessed her involvement in abortions and the sale of poison and was burned at stake on February 22, 1680. She never realized her dream to make enough money to retire peacefully in Italy.

La Reynie and the Commission started being perceived by the King and his court as even too successful. Increasingly, the soothsayers, sorcerers, and renegade priests interrogated by them named among their clients high ranking aristocrats, including the Marquise Françoise Athenaïs de Montespan (1640–1707), who had the title of semi-official lover (*maîtresse en titre*) of Louis XIV. She was also the mother of five children the King had duly recognized as his own. One of the soothsayers, Françoise Filastre (1645–1680), and some of the priests accused Montespan not only of being a regular client of La Voisin, but also to have conspired to poison some of her younger rivals for the affection of the King and even Louis XIV himself. These accusations were confirmed by La Voisin's daughter, Marie-Marguerite Montvoisin (1658–1728), who started talking after her mother had been executed.

While Louis XIV wanted the magical underworld dealing in abortions and poisons wiped out of Paris, he did not want a scandal involving the mother of his children. Several other defendants were convicted and burned at stake, including Filastre, who was perhaps executed before she could talk too much.[59] In 1682, the King dissolved the Commission de l'Arsenal. This meant that the defendants who remained in jail could not be tried by the Commission, nor did the King want them publicly tried by ordinary courts, to which they could tell embarrassing tales about Montespan. He solved the problem by having them incarcerated for life in faraway fortresses, with all contacts with outsiders forbidden. In 1682, Louis XIV also enacted a decree making fortune-telling and the sale of magical potions a crime, although enforcing it was quite problematic.[60]

In fact, La Reynie's investigation had confirmed that interest in magic was widespread in late 17th-century France. In 1679, he even induced playwrights Thomas Corneille (1625–1709), the younger brother of the more famous

58 F. Ravaisson-Mollien, *Archives de la Bastille. Documents inédits*, cit., vol. V, p. 477.

59 See L.W. Mollenauer, *Strange Revelations: Magic, Poison, and Sacrilege in Louis XIV's France*, cit., p. 47.

60 See *ibid.*, pp. 129–133.

Pierre Corneille (1606–1684), and Jean Donneau de Visé (1638–1710) to quickly produce a play ridiculing the soothsayers and their frauds, *La Devineresse, ou les faux enchantements*.[61] The play was extremely successful, but citizens of Paris continued to patronize the soothsayers. They provided a variety of services. Some were ineffective but harmless. La Voisin sold "a cream intended to increase a woman's breast size",[62] cosmetics, and herbs allegedly effective as toothache reliefs. In addition to abortions and poisons, clients could also buy love potions, grimoires and other books with magical rituals for all occasions blessed by the renegade priests, and charms intended to bring good luck in business, love, and gambling.

The role of the priests was very important. Every magical object, when blessed by a priest, was regarded as much more powerful. Priests could also supply consecrated holy wafers, which were regarded as the ultimate magical tools. Some of them would write the name of their client and of the person they wanted to capture with a love spell on a host, consecrate it in the Mass, and give it to the client, who would keep it as a charm or reduce it to particles to be ingested in a love potion.[63] The activity of the priests was very lucrative but it also exposed the soothsayers to serious risks. They risked being accused of sacrilege, an offense punished with the death penalty. The same risk, of course, was incurred by the priests themselves. They sold consecrated hosts for two reasons. Some of them were very poor and badly needed the money. Others were rewarded by the female soothsayers in a different way and became their lovers. Father Étienne Guibourg (1603–1686), a Parisian parish priest who became the main accomplice of La Voisin, had several children by different lovers. According to La Reynie, all of them were killed immediately after they were born, and some might have been sacrificed in magical ceremonies.[64]

Guibourg was also a specialist in producing *pistoles volantes*, something very much in demand among the soothsayers' clients. These were coins "baptized" by priests in ceremonies similar to Catholic baptism. As a result, when it was spent and given to another person, the coin would magically reappear in the pocket of the owner. The *pistoles volantes* would remain a feature of French folk magic for the next two centuries. Guibourg, however, found himself in

61 See a modern edition: Thomas Corneille and Jean Donneau de Visé, *La Devineresse: comédie*, ed. by Philip John Yarrow, Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1971.

62 L.W. Mollenauer, *Strange Revelations: Magic, Poison, and Sacrilege in Louis XIV's France*, cit., p. 87.

63 See F. Ravaisson-Mollien, *Archives de la Bastille. Documents inédits*, cit., vol. VI, p. 408.

64 *Ibid.*, vol. VI, pp. 400 and 432.

trouble with his clients because the coins "baptized" by him failed to produce the expected results.[65]

All this had little to do with the Devil or Satanism. Priests, however, were credited with the power of summoning demons for a variety of purposes. Treasure hunting was a popular occupation for those who dreamed to become rich quickly, and it was believed that a demon called Baicher was the master of hidden treasures. Priests, with the help of a consecrated host, were able to summon him, although only on Wednesday.[66] Other demons were summoned to help kill the clients' enemies. Guibourg and La Voisin, however, went one step further and invented a new ritual.

It seems that these episodes started in 1666. The year's numeral contained 666, the demonic number of the Beast in the *Apocalypse*, but perhaps this was merely a question of chance. La Voisin purchased a house in Rue Beauregard, in the Paris suburb of Villeneuve. In the garden, she kept a pavilion where a chapel was hidden, with walls tapered in black and an altar behind a black curtain decorated with a white cross. The drape on the altar was also black, the candles were of the same color and made with human fat provided by one of the royal executioners, Martin Levasseur (?–1694). Under the black drape, the police of La Reynie found a mattress, the purpose of which became clear when a significant number of witnesses reported how the Black Mass was celebrated on the naked body of a woman client who acted as an altar. The priest, usually Guibourg, put the host on her private parts, and at the end of the ceremony united with the woman.[67] Guibourg claimed he had celebrated these Masses at least three times in 1667, 1676, and 1679 on the naked body of Montespan, although he had skipped the part about the final union with the woman. This was confirmed by Marguerite Montvoisin[68] and other witnesses.

Together with the inversion of the Catholic Mass, sacrifices were performed during the offertory in La Voisin's ceremonies. Marguerite initially confessed to the sacrifice of a dove, perhaps a sacrilegious reference to the Holy Ghost, then to the offering to Satan of aborted fetuses of La Voisin's abortion business, and finally claimed that living infants were sacrificed. She attributed the innovation to Guibourg. While sacrificing aborted fetuses (or children), Guibourg reportedly used the formula: "Astaroth, Asmodeus, princes of friendship, I beg you to

65 *Ibid.*, vol. VI, p. 280.

66 See L.W. Mollenauer, *Strange Revelations: Magic, Poison, and Sacrilege in Louis XIV's France*, cit., p. 84.

67 F. Ravaisson-Mollien, *Archives de la Bastille. Documents inédits*, cit., vol. VI, p. 55.

68 *Ibid.*, vol. VI, p. 298.

accept my sacrifice of this child for the things I ask of you…".[69] Sometimes, the formula was not pronounced by the priest, but by the (generally female) client who had requested the Black Mass. La Reynie did not find much evidence that living children had been sacrificed, He however believed that this had occasionally happened,[70] while in most cases aborted fetuses were used.

Menstrual blood and other bodily fluids, including sperm, were also reportedly used in Guibourg's Black Masses and mixed with the wine in the chalice. Magical techniques involving the ingestion of sperm and other human fluids were not new. They had arrived in the West from India and China, where these practices were known at least some decades before the year 1000 A.D.[71] The use of these "elixirs" and the naked woman who acted as an altar would become regular features of later Satanism, but it is interesting to find them already in La Reynie's investigation. Reportedly, these practices continued in Black Masses celebrated by some priests from the entourage of La Voisin, who escaped trials and carried on almost to the end of the century, until they were discovered in 1695.[72]

Did these Black Masses really happen? The police investigation was serious, lengthy, and well documented.[73] Certainly, La Reynie and his associates firmly believed in the existence of the Devil, as everybody did in the 17th century. Torture was used, as procedure mandated at that time. However, the police officers did some homework as well. They concluded that, since the simple traffic of powders, balms, and potions with pieces of consecrated hosts was not sufficient to obtain the promised results, probably inspired by the literature

69 L.W. Mollenauer, *Strange Revelations: Magic, Poison, and Sacrilege in Louis XIV's France*, cit., p. 107. Guibourg's and Marguerite's statements about this prayer, allegedly used in rituals involving Montespan, were left out of the official proceedings republished by Ravaisson-Mollien but are included in the private copy made by La Reynie: see *ibid.*, p. 174.

70 See e.g. F. Ravaisson-Mollien, *Archives de la Bastille. Documents inédits*, cit., vol. VII, pp. 66–67.

71 On these techniques and their use in modern magical movements, see M. Introvigne, *Il ritorno dello gnosticismo*, Carnago (Varese): SugarCo, 1993, pp. 149–160.

72 F. Ravaisson-Mollien, *Archives de la Bastille. Documents inédits*, cit., vol. VII (1874), p. 172.

73 Historian François Bluche (*Louis XIV*, Paris: Fayard, 1986, pp. 405–407) doubts that Black Masses really took place at the court of Louis XIV, but his narration is so imprecise as to wonder if he really consulted the police documents of the time. For more nuanced skeptical assessments, see Anne Somerset, *The Affair of the Poisons: Murder, Infanticide and Satanism at the Court of Louis XIV*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003; and R. van Luijk, "Satan Rehabilitated? A Study into Satanism during the Nineteenth Century", cit., pp. 58–76. In 2016, van Luijk's thesis was expanded into an important book, covering also more recent developments: see R. van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer: The Origins of Modern Religious Satanism.,* Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

on witchcraft and possession trials, La Voisin and her main accomplices organized Black Masses.

Although there was the spinoff discovered in 1695, survivors who were trying to maintain a lucrative business, the police intervention by La Reynie effectively suppressed the Paris group. In 1702, La Reynie's successor, Marc-René de Voyer de Paulmy d'Argenson (1652–1721), denounced in a memorandum, published by historian Robert Mandrou (1921–1984), that some ten persons in Paris were in the business of selling pacts with the Devil.[74] In 1745, a priest, Louis Debarez (1695–1745), was burned at stake, accused of having organized Black Masses in order to find hidden treasures.[75] Debarez had probably read the reports about the Chambre Ardente and decided to try Black Masses as a last resort in his unsuccessful treasure-seeking enterprise. Although legends are hard to die, it seems certain that nothing remained of the circle of La Voisin and Guibourg.

Were they, in fact, Satanists? The answer depends on whether we take La Reynie's investigation at face value. Criticizing earlier works by the author of this book, the Dutch scholar Ruben van Luijk did not find the police documents believable, suggested the possibility of political intrigue, and found the police officers generally superstitious and gullible. Van Luijk, however, conceded that not everything La Reynie reported was invented: "*some* of the accused during the Affair might actually have done *some* of the things they were accused of".[76] Perhaps Montespan did not participate, nor were children sacrificed. As Mollenauer indicated, as the investigation proceeded, stories became "increasingly fantastic" and their factual truth "highly uncertain".[77]

Two points, however, need to be taken into account. The first is that, as Mollenauer herself notes, La Reynie eliminated from his investigation all "manifestly impossible activities". There is no trace in his documents of defendants who "purports to fly through the air, on broomsticks, attend sabbats, copulate with devils, or worship Satan".[78] The second is that the Commission was formed of magistrates from the Parliament of Paris, which at the end of the 17th century had become extremely reluctant to prosecute cases of witchcraft. In fact, the last execution for witchcraft in Paris took place in 1625. The Parliament of Paris

74 Cf. Robert Mandrou, *Possession et sorcellerie au XVIIe siècle*, Paris: Fayard, 1994, pp. 275–328.

75 G. Zacharias, *The Satanic Cult*, cit., p. 117.

76 R. van Luijk, "Satan Rehabilitated? A Study into Satanism during the Nineteenth Century", cit., p. 74.

77 L.W. Mollenauer, *Strange Revelations: Magic, Poison, and Sacrilege in Louis XIV's France*, cit., p. 5.

78 *Ibidem.*

acting as a court of appeal almost routinely annulled convictions for witchcraft by lower courts.[79] The judges who tried Guibourg and La Voisin were the same who normally did not believe in allegations of witchcraft submitted to them.

If satanic rituals were celebrated, these were very simple "liturgies" organized by a lose organization. The rituals took a series of scattered elements from the literature on witchcraft and possession, fused them in a somewhat coherent ensemble, and consigned them to modern Satanism. The ideological basis was quite tenuous, since it is clear from the documentation that the end of the Paris Satanists was always and only utilitarian. The power that they proposed to acquire was not understood in esoteric terms as self-transmutation or self-realization. For Guibourg and La Voisin, it was simply a way to get rich. For their clients, who were already rich, the objective was to obtain the favor or the love of the King or other members of the court.

In a way, this was even a step backward if compared to the literature on the possessed and the Satanists, real or supposed, accused of demonizing them with a curse. There we find, at least in the reconstructions produced by the judges, a glimmer of Satanism for Satanism, of a passion for the Devil. For all their crimes, and I believe there are good reasons to consider some of them as real, La Voisin, Guibourg, and their noble clients were simply engaged in a minor form of magic for hire. None of the protagonists of the Paris case fought for the defeat of Christianity or the glory of Satan. Their more mundane objective was to overcome, with the help of the Devil, a younger rival in love or earn sufficient money to retire in a nice house in Italy, as La Voisin planned to do. These rather squalid aspects do not allow us to speak of Satanism in the 20th-century meaning of the word. Nevertheless, I am inclined to believe that a ritual and an embryonic organization did exist, and the Paris incident was a first instance of proto-Satanism.

79 See Alfred Soman, *Sorcellerie et justice criminelle. Le Parlement de Paris (16e–18e siècles)*, Brookfield (Vermont): Ashgate, 1992.

CHAPTER 2

Sweden: Satan the Highway Robber

An interesting question is when the word "Satanist" was first used. It appeared in English in the 16th century, designating a non-orthodox Christian or a heretic. Only in the 19th century, it acquired the current meaning of a worshiper of Satan.[1] In 2013, however, a Swedish scholar, Mikael Häll, argued that the second meaning appeared in Swedish earlier than in other languages. Bishop Laurentius Paulinus Gothus (1565–1646), Lutheran Archbishop of Uppsala between 1637 and 1645, used the Swedish word *Sathanister*, always in the plural form, in his monumental and celebrated work *Ethica Christiana* (1615–1630) in order to designate black magicians and sorcerers.[2] Gothus mostly described "Satanists" based on previous European accounts of witchcraft, but his works were well known to the Swedish Lutheran clergy and no doubt inspired sermons. Consequently, in Sweden even those who did not read scholarly works such as *Ethica Christiana*, or did not read at all, might have heard about Satanists.

Häll describes how Swedish court cases from the 17th century identified individuals who worshipped the Devil, believing he was more powerful than God. In 1685, a blasphemer and perhaps sorcerer called Matts Larsson told the judges that "it is better to believe in the Devil, for he will help you".[3] Some court cases involved pacts signed with the Devil in order to obtain "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".[4]

While it is difficult to determine whether the individual cases collected by Häll had some connections with each other, the most interesting incidents concerned highway robbers and other criminals, often living in the deepest Swedish forests. It seems that they had developed one of the earliest instances of what I suggest to call "folkloric Satanism". The folklore of a particular category, Swedish outlaws, came to include quite regularly pacts with the Devil

1 See Gareth J. Medway, *Lure of the Sinister: The Unnatural History of Satanism*, London and New York: New York University Press, 2001, p. 9.

2 See Mikael Häll, "'It is Better to Believe in the Devil': Conceptions of Satanists and Sympathies for the Devil in Early Modern Sweden", in P. Faxneld and J.Aa. Petersen, *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity*, cit., pp. 23–40 (p. 27).

3 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

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and simple "rituals" aimed at favoring the success of criminal enterprises. The earliest cases seem to date back to the 1650s and 1660s, continuing well into the 18th century.

For these criminals, Satan became "a god of the outsiders and the dispossessed, a principle considered more powerful, more reliable, or more real than even God".[5] That criminal subcultures may develop unorthodox and antinomian forms of religion was not unique of Sweden. It has been studied, for example in the context of Chinese organized crime.[6] What was peculiar to Sweden was the frequent reference to Satan and his power, believed to be superior to God's.

"Were there really Satanists in early modern Sweden?", Häll asks in conclusion. Probably, they did not use this term in order to describe themselves. The Swedish scholar believes, however, that "it is possible to speak of a form of early modern Satanism in Sweden", in the sense that "there existed individuals in whose belief systems Satan was conceived as the crucial entity or deity" and was worshipped as such. There was no "doctrinal or organizes system of 'Satanism'" nor an "organized religious cult or sect". What there was were "individual Satanists", with a "satanic discourse".[7] These individuals were not common, but they did exist and to a certain extent knew of each other. Without returning to the controversial matter of definitions, perhaps my category of "folkloric Satanism" may be appropriate to designate the satanic discourses and practices that appeared in 17th- and 18th-century Sweden in the subculture of forest robbers and criminals.

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5 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

6 See Barend J. ter Haar, *Ritual and Mythology of the Chinese Triads: Creating an Identity*, Leiden: Brill, 2000; and M. Introvigne, "L'interprétation des sociétés secrètes chinoises. Entre paradigme ésotérique, politique et criminologie", in Jean-Pierre Brach and Jérôme Rousse-Lacordaire (eds.), *Études d'histoire de l'ésotérisme. Mélanges offerts à Jean-Pierre Laurant pour son soixante-dixième anniversaire*, Paris: Cerf, 2007, pp. 303–317.

7 M. Häll, "'It is Better to Believe in the Devil': Conceptions of Satanists and Sympathies for the Devil in Early Modern Sweden", cit., pp. 38–39.

CHAPTER 3

Italy: Satan the Friar

"Delirious mysticism", "doctrine which, under the veil of spirituality, gives freedom to disorder", "revolting turpitude", "disgusting forms", "horrifying libertinage". With these scarcely diplomatic expressions, Henri Grégoire (1750–1831), in the second volume of his *Histoire des sectes religieuses*, described a "cult" that he considered particularly hateful.[1] Grégoire emerged during the Revolution as one of the main figures of the "Constitutional Church", loyal to the French government and declared as schismatic by the Vatican. After the Revolution, he went into the safer business of attacking "cults", and his monumental work in five volumes, later increased to six, may be considered the first example of anti-cult literature. The object of Grégoire's wrath was not a satanic "cult", but a form of spirituality that originated in the 17th century in the Catholic Church, known as quietism. Based on certain spiritual practices spread in 1670–1680 and the theology of the Spaniard Miguel de Molinos (1628–1696), condemned by Pope Innocent XI (1611–1689) in 1687, French quietism was associated with the name of the mystic Madame Jeanne-Marie Guyon (1648–1717).

An analysis of quietism would have little to do with our topic, but one aspect deserves our attention. The quietists considered mental oration, which seeks to reach a state of contemplation, as the only path to salvation, despising exterior devotion and good works. The safest way to salvation was found in "silent contemplation", where one should empty the spirit of all content and await the manifestation of God. Grégoire was keen to draw parallels between this quietist practice and Hinduism and Islamic Sufism.[2]

Although Madame Guyon personally led a highly moral and pious lifestyle, someone might easily interpret quietism as antinomianism, in the sense that, for those who had reached the quiet of pure love, everything was legitimate. Molinos had in fact claimed, although as a paradox, that carnal acts that were materially illicit, when performed in states of complete abandonment to God, were not sins. Quietism remains the object of conflicting interpretations.[3] For some, it was a mystical teaching where the pendulum, as frequently occurred

1 (Henri) Grégoire, *Histoire des sectes religieuses*, 2nd ed. expanded, 6 vols., Paris: Baudouin Frères, 1828, vol. II, pp. 96–107.

2 *Ibid*., vol. II, p. 94.

3 See Massimo Petrocchi [1918–1991], *Il quietismo italiano del Seicento*, Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1948.

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in the history of spirituality, switched radically in the direction of experience, as a reaction to excessively rationalistic and doctrinaire tendencies that were prevalent in 17th century Catholicism. For others, quietism was connected to the antinomianism of medieval heresies, where the "pure" believer was regarded as impeccable, and for some became a justification for libertine sexual activities carried out under the pretext of mysticism.

In the anti-quietist repression that began in the 17th century and continued throughout the 18th, the Devil and Satanism also showed up. In extreme cases, certainly not typical of the movement as a whole, some quietists were accused of pushing their antinomianism to the point of doing business with the Devil. At the beginning, according to the accusations, these quietists debated whether, since everything was permitted to those who reached the perfection of divine quietude, even pacts with the Devil, sought for material advantages, should be regarded as allowed. But at the end of the itinerary, or so the accusations claimed, they entered into a Satanist and Black Mass climate that was not so much different from La Voisin's.

For a series of reasons, the "satanic" episodes of quietism were concentrated in Italy in the 18th century, first in a Tuscan cycle, greatly exaggerated by Grégoire and a number of subsequent authors, then in an Emilian cycle, less known but brought to light in 1988 by Italian historian Giuseppe Orlandi (1935–2013). In the Central Italian city of Reggio Emilia, there were some singular cases, which had as protagonists two priests and their libertine adventures with their female penitents: aristocrats, nuns, but also peasant women. The priests persuaded them, as one of them would report, to keep "quiet, since there were things that could be done without sin, as it pleases God to show sinners that they can follow him even within sin".[4] What emerged was an unhealthy climate where confessors and penitents alternated Hail Marys with coupling, caresses, and "acts of love of God". If we believe the witnesses who testified in the ecclesiastical trials, a certain quietism did in fact lead to antinomianism. In two or three cases, magical arts and the Devil also made their appearances.

The most interesting case is that of Father Domenico Costantini (1728–1791?), a member of the Congregation of the Oratory of Reggio whose dubious morality caused an apostolic visit to his convent. Costantini was born in Reggiolo in 1728. In 1771, when he was 43, he was accused of something worse than simple flirting by Agata Gorisi (1751–?), a twenty-year old girl from Fabbrico who was living in Reggio Emilia with the Franciscans in order to confirm her potential vocation as a nun. Gorisi declared to the general vicar of Reggio Emilia that

4 Giuseppe Orlandi, *La fede al vaglio. Quietismo, Satanismo e massoneria nel Ducato di Modena tra Sette e Ottocento*, Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1988, p. 34.

Costantini had told her that it was not a sacrilege to "receive the holy Eucharist in a state of sin" and that confession was only superstition. Orlandi connected these accusations with the quietist environment of the Oratory of Reggio, and antinomian practices emerged from the testimony of another penitent of Costantini, the nun Emilia Marianna Rossi (1751–?). She testified that the confessor told her that "one could sin as much as one liked and still become a saint". Costantini also "tempted with acts of an impure character" both Gorisi and a number of other penitents, who were ready to testify that the priest also denied core teachings of the Catholic faith.

Despite Costantini's threats against her, in 1772, Gorisi would again show up to testify against him, raising before the ecclesiastical authorities accusations more serious than simple immorality. "Father Costantini, reported Gorisi, taught me how to have illicit transactions with the Devil in the figure of the aforesaid Father, and to trample, for this reason, blessed Sacramental wafers, and to donate my soul eleven times to the Devil, when I wanted to sin with the Devil in his presence". The same Costantini brought the consecrated wafers to Gorisi, so that "she trampled the Eucharist almost every day". The priest promised the young girl a concrete result: "satisfaction", intended both as an act of mystical consolation and orgasm. The demonic practices did not allow Gorisi to reach "satisfaction", however, and Costantini proposed another expedient, which we already found in cases of witchcraft and possession: "writing down a pact with the Devil, so as to obtain the desired result".

Gorisi thus signed her pact with the Devil, who appeared "in the shape of Giuseppe Medici", a friend of the priest. The young girl trampled again a consecrated wafer and, together with Father Costantini, she worshipped the "Devil" by kneeling before Medici and reciting a series of blasphemous prayers. After that, Gorisi "sinned" with both Costantini and the "Devil", i.e. Medici. However, she still did not reach the elusive "satisfaction". Tirelessly, always according to Gorisi, Costantini suggested a Black Mass, in the house of Agata's sister, Carlotta, with the presence of Carlotta's daughter, Marianna, who was only three years old. Costantini extracted "three small balls approximately the size of a hazelnut" from a leather bag, kissed them "seven times each", placed one in front of the door of the chamber, "the other he gave to me" (Agata) and held the third. He traced seventeen crosses on the balls "eight with the right hand, the others with the left". After that, the Devil came "in the figure of Father Costantini" and Agata and Carlotta worshipped him. Costantini brought with him the usual consecrated wafer, which was trampled again.

In her testimony, Gorisi astutely noticed the inconsistency of the priest, because "first he said that it was not true that Jesus was in the Eucharist; then the same Father Domenico Costantini said that Jesus was indeed in the Eucharist and he had the nerve to insult him". At the peak of the ceremony, Agata and

Carlotta "sinned with the Devil", who this time was played by Costantini. The priest then traced cabalistic symbols and read orations from a book "written in very small writing". It had "at the beginning (…) the figure of the Devil, in the middle five white pages, and in the third of these there was the picture of a naked woman who was embracing a naked man, and there was the figure of a naked man and woman in acts that were dishonest".

Agata did not know how to read but knew "that the book was small, and by assertion of Father Costantini it taught how to do the things that the Father operated". The ceremony was not over: Costantini extracted a black box, from which he took a new wafer, around which he lighted two candles. He then consecrated the wafer. He asked for water, which he blessed with "nineteen or twenty-one signs of the cross", and large grains of salt, which he mixed with the wafer's fragments. He then asked Agata to strip naked and to put herself on top of the bed in the room "upside down (…) holding the shoulders towards the wall, the legs raised towards the wall and spread, and Father Costantini was supporting my knees with one hand. With the other, he took the glass from the hands of Carlotta, and, making nine times the sign of the cross and reciting some words, emptied three times the glass of the water on the nature" (the vagina), informing the young girl that she had been baptized in the name of the Devil. He then took a fragment of the wafer "and put it in my nature, pronouncing the same words that the ministers of God say when they commune in churches".

The ceremony was repeated with her sister Carlotta. Costantini gave thanks to the Devil and divided what remained of the consecrated wafer into four parts, placed on Agata and Carlotta's breasts, and on the chest of the priest and of little Marianna. After the Black Mass, the "satisfaction" was not exceptional, but "gifts of the Devil" started appearing in the chambers of Agata and Carlotta: white silk socks, scarves, "two superb caps", "a watch", and even some gold coins. The satanic ceremony was repeated many times in the presence of people that Agata named to the judges, and the regional Central Italian traditions wanted their part when in one of the Black Masses a "sweet tortello" was offered together with the sacramental bread. The tortello was consecrated, assured Costantini, by Satan himself. In the end, Agata placed an image of the Devil round her neck, began using a demonic version of the holy water, and tried to recruit for the satanic ceremonies nuns from the monastery where she lived, together with well-known citizens of Reggio Emilia, whom the ecclesiastic authorities started to interrogate.[5]

5 See the complete text of the deposition of Agata Gorisi *ibid.*, pp. 131–148.

Several witnesses confirmed the substance of Agata's accusations. During the course of 1772, she repeatedly complained about the pressure and death threats by Costantini to recant the accusations. It is interesting to see how the local ecclesiastical authorities, and the Vatican itself, from which they sought instructions, behaved with great caution. Rome explicitly prohibited the arrest of Father Costantini. In Central Italy, the Inquisition, whose regional headquarters were in Modena, was known in the 18th century to inflict, in trials of magic and witchcraft, punishments that were "little more than symbolic".[6] Finally, with what Orlandi called a "twist", in August 1772, Gorisi retracted all her accusations and other witnesses did the same. But not all of them: some of the penitents, the most protected from Costantini's threats thanks to their social position, confirmed the original version. The ecclesiastical authorities had no real desire to prosecute the case, at least in the absence of overwhelming evidence, nor to raise a scandal around the convent. They closed the case, probably with a light sentence for Costantini. Some documents are missing and the exact conclusion of the affair is unknown.

The priest, however, repeatedly got into trouble again in following years for libertine adventures, from which however Black Masses and the Devil were absent. Costantini never risked again, after the case of Gorisi, passing himself off as a Satanist or the Devil. Saved, in what was now a more tolerant climate, from the Inquisition, he was however punished for his erotic exploits by the "French disease" (syphilis) and by a solemn beating by a rival in love.[7]

These events, certainly unpleasant for Father Costantini, but not exempt from a certain poetic justice, were no longer part of our story. The question is whether, in a convent known for its quietist leanings, one or more priests really celebrated Black Masses and justified their libertine attitudes with references to Satan. Orlandi, after a detailed discussion of the documents, wrote that "the reports of the depositions of the young woman [Agata Gorisi] are so rich with events, occurrences, with names of people who could have been called to testify, and partly were, to consider it almost impossible that she could have invented everything". The recantation is explainable with the pressures and the threats from Costantini. Agata, not very well supported by authorities that preferred not to raise a scandal, was objectively weak.

Even Orlandi, however, considered that many details were not credible, including the sexual exploits of Father Costantini, who reportedly was able to "sin" with seven women in the same night. As for apparitions of the Devil, they can be read, according to Orlandi, "from a hallucinatory and symbolic

6 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 64–65.

perspective".[8] A study of the documents also shows that the Devil was always present in the form of some person, often Costantini himself. It is true that in one description, there was a reference to Costantini-the-Devil and Costantini-the-priest as if they were two different persons simultaneously present. But it is safer to conclude that Costantini and his associates persuaded the women that they were the Devil for their own libertine purposes.

Naturally, in the whole episode it is hard to "discern with absolute certainty the true from the false".[9] However, the sheer number of witnesses lets us imagine that something must have occurred. A priest's libertine activities would not be particularly interesting. If, on the other hand, in 1770 in Reggio Emilia, pacts with the Devil were written and Black Masses celebrated, although mostly to impress naïve young women, the story would confirm that books and pamphlets about the La Voisin case exerted an influence well beyond Paris.

The relation between quietism and Satanism in the episode of Reggio Emilia, although hypothetical, is also interesting. It shows how certain radical and deviant forms of Catholic mysticism may have a complicate relation with Satanism. The 19th century, with Joseph-Antoine Boullan (1824–1893), would confirm that this may indeed be the case. Although Boullan was not connected with quietism, other incidents in the 19th century involving Catholic convents, bizarre forms of mysticism, and the Devil were. In 1999, German historian Hubert Wolf discovered in the archives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in Rome the file of the investigation and trial of a group of cloistered nuns of the Third Order of Saint Francis, from the Roman convent of Sant'Ambrogio della Massima. The incident took place between 1859 and 1862, but also revisited earlier events connected with the founder of the branch of the Third Order of Saint Francis involved, Mother Maria Agnese Firrao (1774–1854). Although regarded by many as a saint, Firrao had been involved in several scandals. At one stage, she was hospitalized and found pregnant with twins. The pregnancy was attributed to "lasciviousness and carnality with demons",[10] although the ecclesiastical judges believed that one of her confessors was the father. Finally, Firrao, who was also accused of following the doctrines of quietism, was banned from Rome, but the convent continued until a new leadership.

Worse things, however, happened at Sant'Ambrogio after Firrao left. That a clandestine cult of Firrao as a saint before and after her death in 1854 continued in the convent was not the more serious accusation against the nuns.

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 52–53.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

10 Hubert Wolf, *The Nuns of Sant'Ambrogio: The True Story of a Convent Scandal*, English transl., Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 94.

The ecclesiastical investigation of 1859–1862 was kept strictly secret and its details became available to scholars only after the Vatican archives were opened to them by Pope John Paul II (1920–2005) in 1998. It uncovered a ring of nuns who, under pretenses of sainthood and allegedly following instructions mystically received from Jesus Christ, engaged in a wide range of sexual activities, mostly between themselves and occasionally with men. Worse still, nuns who complained were murdered with poison. Although there was no worship of the Devil, the first defense of the accused was reminiscent of Father Costantini. They claimed that the Devil appeared in the form of a senior nun and had sex with young novices, who mistakenly accused their superior, not realizing their lover was in fact the Evil One.

In the end, the ringleaders made the mistake of admitting to the convent as a novice a German princess, Katharina von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen (1817–1893), who later in life became well known as the founder of the German Benedictine abbey of Beuron, home of a celebrated school of artists. When she realized that something was wrong, the leading nuns tried to poison her too. Katharina understood that her life was in danger and was a high ranking aristocrat with important contacts in Rome. She was able to escape the convent and denounce the nuns to the authorities, starting in motion the events that would lead to their ultimate exposure and ruin. The community in Sant'Ambrogio was closed, and nothing further was heard about the Devil appearing both as a man and a woman and engaging in multiple sexual relationships with nuns in Rome.

CHAPTER 4

England: Satan the Member of Parliament

In 1762, King George III of England (1738–1820) appointed the conservative John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute (1713–1792), as his prime minister. His inclinations were pacific and conciliatory. Bute retained most of the ministers from the government of his predecessor and political rival, Thomas Pelham-Holles, 1st Duke of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1693–1768), and nominated only three new ministers. As his Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Minister of Finances of His Majesty, Bute selected Sir Francis Dashwood (1708–1781).[1] He was the son of a businessman who had been made a baronet by Queen Anne (1665–1714) in 1707, and had married the daughter of Thomas Fane, 6th Earl of Westmorland (1681–1736). Thanks to this wedding, Sir Francis – the Chancellor of the Exchequer – became in due course the 111th Baron le Despencer. Among the opponents of the new government, the most aggressive was John Wilkes (1725–1797), a journalist and Member of Parliament. When Dashwood was nominated as a minister, Wilkes was both offended and happy. Offended, because he believed he would have been better qualified for the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer. Happy, because he knew some details of the life of Dashwood that were little known. He thought that, in due course, he would be able to use them against the government.

Wilkes was an agitator who, for his offenses to the King and the government, went into exile and to prison, which made him popular in certain circles. He was not alien to selling his poisoned pen as a popular journalist for an appointment, or just for a good sum of money. He was among Dashwood's best friends for years, and participated in many of his activities. They included a literary club, which still exists today, the Society of Dilettanti, created by those who had taken at least one trip to Italy. Even more exclusive was the Divan Club, reserved for those, like Dashwood, who had also been to Turkey or had

1 For the biography of Dashwood see Betty Kemp [1916–2007], *Sir Francis Dashwood: An Eighteenth Century Independent*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967; Eric Towers, *Dashwood: The Man and the Myth*, Wellingborough (Northamptonshire): Crucible, 1986; Daniel Willens, "The Hell-Fire Club: Sex, Politics and Religion in Eighteenth-Century England", *Gnosis: A Journal of the Western Inner Traditions*, no. 24, Summer 1992, pp. 16–22; Geoffrey Ashe, *The Hell-Fire Clubs: A History of Anti-Morality*, Stroud: Sutton, 2000; Evelyn Lord, *The Hell-Fire Clubs: Sex, Satanism, and Secret Societies*, New Haven (Connecticut), London: Yale University Press, 2008.

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at least something to do with that country. Finally, there was an institution of more dubious fame, although the first two had something to do with wine and women of ill reputation as well: the "abbey" of Medmenham. Wilkes began hinting that Medmenham was the gathering place of a group of Satanists. He dosed the revelations as an able journalist, while also offering his silence to the government in return for a prestigious position as Governor of Canada or ambassador in Constantinople.

In 1763, the moderate and peaceful Bute, who perhaps had also frequented Medmenham, was so disturbed by the polemics and insults of Wilkes that he resigned, on the pretext that the excessive pressures of his job were making him ill. The King appointed as his successor George Grenville (1712–1770), who personally took on the position of Chancellor of the Exchequer. This was customary for Prime Ministers who, as opposed to Bute, were members of the House of Commons and not of that of Lords.

Dashwood received the royal appointment, prestigious but merely honorary, of Keeper of the Great Wardrobe. The role required, as its sole responsibility, the disposition of clothing for the members of the royal family for coronations, wedding, funerals, and other ceremonies. Grenville also gave Dashwood a more delicate political appointment: to negotiate with the corruptible Wilkes and convince him to end his press campaign. Wilkes, however, refused the position that the new government, through Dashwood, offered him, probably a diplomatic role in India, considering it not at the level of the great image he had of himself.

The government then decided to use harsher measures and discredit Wilkes, ending, although only temporarily, his political career in England, by reading to a scandalized Parliament some of the compositions of openly pornographic nature found by Grenville's agents in the house of the journalist. Wilkes, however, did not stop telling in public and private what he knew about Medmenham. Wilkes' magazines included *The North Briton*, whose title was an allusion to the main object of his abuses, Bute, who was a "northern Briton", a Scotsman. The magazine began to make references, although initially veiled, to the extraordinary story of the "friars" of Medmenham.

The abbey of Medmenham had been founded by the Cistercians and was transformed into a private house during the reign of Henry VIII (1491–1547). The former abbey was located in Buckinghamshire, seven miles from West Wycombe, where Dashwood had his country house. Dashwood had already been noticed in the village for his unorthodox religious ideas. He decorated the local Anglican church with pagan symbols and built in his residence a temple to Bacchus and one to Apollo. He also readapted his garden in a bizarre shape, which seemed to represent a female body.

The owners of Medmenham at that time, the Duffield family, rented the abbey to Dashwood as a location "for a club". The contract for the rent was concluded in 1751, and Dashwood began working on transforming what had become a house back into an abbey, in gothic style. He included artificial ruins in accordance with the taste of the era. The garden was decorated with statues of Venus and Priapus. The statue of the latter god, traditionally linked to male genitals, also exhibited, according to Wilkes, the motto *Peni tento, non penitenti* ("with a tense penis, not as a penitent"). On the entrance of the abbey there were, in the French of François Rabelais (1494–1553), the words "Fay ce que vouldras" ("do what thou wilt").

According to reports that derived more or less directly from Wilkes, and almost certainly contained exaggerations and imprecisions, the members of the exclusive club that met in Medmenham called themselves "friars" or even "Franciscans". Reportedly, they adopted the name of the Society of Saint Francis, with reference both to the Christian name of Francis Dashwood and to a parody of Franciscan friars, whom the members of the Society had met during their favorite journeys to Italy. The abbey included a great dining room, a library, a lounge and a mysterious "chapter house", in addition to a good number of bedrooms. The dining room was decorated with a statue of Harpocrates, the Egyptian god of silence, a reference to the secrecy of the Society. References to both Harpocrates and the motto "do what thou wilt" would be found in Aleister Crowley's writings, although there is no evidence that Crowley was particularly interested in Dashwood.

Wilkes had been a member of the group of "friars" of Medmenham, together with Charles Churchill (1731–1764), a minister of the Church of England and a collaborator of Wilkes in his anti-governmental journalistic campaigns. In 1764, Churchill launched a furious attack against John Montague, fourth Earl of Sandwich (1718–1792), a political ally of Dashwood and Grenville who had read to the House of Commons the pornographic prose found in Wilkes' house. Sandwich, to whom is attributed, although not unanimously, the invention of the homonymous filled bread, was enrolled among the "friars" by Dashwood on the same level as Wilkes and Churchill. The latter described him as particularly active in the nocturnal hunts for the "nuns", i.e. women dressed as such who accompanied the "friars" to Medmenham. Until now, we are in the atmosphere of a libertine club: and there were other similar institutions in the 18th century. Anticlericalism and the ridicule of Catholic religious orders were also quite common in that era.

There are interesting anecdotes about Dashwood's youthful trips to Italy. One of the most famous episodes, referred, or perhaps invented, by novelist Horace Walpole (1717–1797), took place in Rome on a Good Friday. The Roman

Catholic penitents visited the Sistine Chapel, collecting at the entrance a small whip to symbolically whip themselves as a sign of penance. "Sir Francis Dashwood, thinking this mere stage effect, entered with others, dressed in a large watchman's coat, demurely took his scourge from the priest and advanced to the end of the chapel, where, on the darkness ensuing, he drew from beneath his coat an English horsewhip and flogged right and left quite down the chapel and made his escape, the congregation exclaiming 'Il Diavolo! Il Diavolo!' and thinking the evil one was upon them with a vengeance. The consequences of this frolic might have been serious to him, had he not immediately left the Papal dominions".[2]

Dashwood then proceeded to Assisi, where he also made heavy jokes about the "superstition" of the pilgrims. In 1742, a portrait for the Society of Dilettanti depicted him in a friar's cloak while staring devoutly not at a cross, but at a naked statue of Venus. Neopaganism, deism, and atheism were quite common among the Dilettanti and other figures of the enlightened and libertine world of 18th-century London, where in the same era an "Atheist Club" also existed. The government, and the Anglican Church, did not complain that much, especially when, as Dashwood did, the nobles took care of restoring the chapels in their gentrified lands and generously provided maintenance for the clergy. The fact that, during these restorations, pagan symbols were sometimes included, and that among the clergy there were atheists and libertines was often overlooked. Dashwood, besides, was sufficiently interested in the Church of England to devote his time in his old age, together with Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790), to a revision of the *Book of Common Prayer,* "an odd activity for a supposed Satanist". But as it was observed, both Dashwood and Franklin were Freemasons and "were trying to bring the Anglican Church in line with Masonic Deism".[3]

What was less common, even in the world of 18th-century libertines, was the mysterious chapter house in the abbey at Medmenham. Nothing is known for certain about it. In 1763, the curious Walpole bribed a cook to gain entrance to the abbey during the absence of the owner, but found the chapter house well locked. In 1766, the chapter house was "cleaned" and nothing remained, although meetings of the "friars" continued for another twelve years until 1778, three years before the death of Dashwood. The latter abandoned the parties in

2 Horace Walpole, *Memoirs and Portraits*, ed. by Matthew Hodgart, New York: Macmillan, 1963, p. 130.

3 D. Willens, "The Hell-Fire Club: Sex, Politics and Religion in Eighteenth-Century England", cit., p. 21. It is not probable, an often repeated legend arguing the opposite notwithstanding, that Franklin was ever part of the "friars" of Medmenham.

the abbey only when he had reached 70 years of age. Wilkes wrote in one of his newspapers that, although he had been a "friar" of Medmenham, he never became part of the internal circle that was permitted to enter the chapter house. Or perhaps he did, but he preferred to state that he had nothing to do with the dubious celebrations that were held there.

The fact that the chapter house was stripped of all its ornaments in 1766 can probably be connected to the further scandal caused by the publication, in 1765, of the third volume of the second edition, extended with revelations from Wilkes, of the novel by Charles Johnstone (1719–1800), *Chrysal; Or, the Adventures of a Guinea*. The writer adopted the method of having a coin tell the story of different owners whose hands it had passed through. Johnstone was a lawyer coming from a Scottish family, but he was born and educated in Ireland.

In Johnstone's novel, where he certainly invented a lot, the voices on the celebration of satanic rituals in the abbey were exposed in detail. *Chrysal* tells a story of an initiation ceremony, which supposedly occurred in 1762, where two "friars" were elevated from the "low order" to the "high order" of Dashwood's society. The two candidates recited an "inverted" Anglican credo, a sort of demonic parody of the profession of faith of the Church of England. The superior of the abbey then invoked Satan. The latter inspired the "friars" to choose for initiation in the "high order" only one of the candidates, who was immediately unbaptized "in the name of the Devil" and "in a way that will not be appropriate to describe". The ceremony ended with a banquet where blasphemy and libertinage summoned, according to Johnstone, "the damned themselves".

The ritual also included an evocation of the Devil, which had, however, a farcical element. An invocation to Satan was recited. However, a skeptic had brought a baboon with him, "dressed in the fantastic garb in which childish imagination clothes devils". When the Devil was evoked, he walked the baboon into the room, terrorizing the candidate who knelt and declared: "Spare me, gracious Devil, I am as yet but half a Sinner; I have never been as wicked as I intended!". Johnstone named no names but from the descriptions the London readers could recognize Wilkes as the author of the prank and Lord Sandwich as the terrorized sinner.[4] Perhaps the episode had been invented by Johnstone, but was based on tales according to which there really was a baboon in Medmenham, and Dashwood regularly gave him communion, it is not clear whether with a Catholic consecrated host or not.[5]

4 Charles Johnstone, *Chrysal; Or, the Adventures of a Guinea*, 2nd ed., London: T. Becket, 1765 (reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1976), vol. III, p. 165.

5 E. Lord, *The Hell-Fire Clubs: Sex, Satanism, and Secret Societies*, cit., p. 106.

Johnstone was an outsider and was never one of the "friars". In 1795, a poem was published, *The Confessions of Sir Francis of Medmenham and the Lady Mary His Wife*, a posthumous work by John Hall-Stevenson (1718–1785). Hall-Stevenson, a member of a club called The Demoniacks, was a rich eccentric and a political ally of Wilkes. Probably, he was not a member of the "friars", but he had occasionally visited them in Medmenham. In the poem, written in a coarse and excessive style, he confirmed the previous accusations, and added that Dashwood had sexual relations with his mother and three of his sisters, although one of them was also a lesbian. These authors were the sources of around twenty subsequent writings, which from the first decades of the 19th century until present times have narrated in satanic terms the story of the "friars" of Medmenham.

In most of these writings, the society of Dashwood was also given the name of Hell-Fire or Hellfire Club. Wilkes and Churchill had already referred ironically to the activities of the "friars" with that name, but back then it was quite clear to what it was supposed to allude. A well-known young libertine and member of the House of Lords, Philip Wharton, 1st Duke of Wharton (1698–1731), had been accused of having founded a Hell-Fire Club in 1719. It met on Sundays, at the Greyhound Tavern near St. James' Square in London. The club, closed by a royal edict in 1721, had created a significant scandal, but had never been accused of practicing satanic rituals. It was limited to mocking religion and morals, and conducting debates against the doctrine of the Trinity. If we believe the critics, some young women of dubious repute could be persuaded there to remove their clothes, with consequences that can easily be imagined.

The Duke of Wharton, who was a member of the Hell-Fire Club but probably had not founded it, had been stopped by the King from being further associated with the group. He had then unleashed his passion for secret societies, becoming between 1722 and 1723 the fifth Grand Master of the London Grand Lodge, founded in 1717 and at the origins of modern Freemasonry, before converting to Catholicism and dying as an exile in Spain. It is interesting to note how, in the following campaigns that would try to connect Freemasonry and Satanism, the anti-Masonic camp would completely miss the fact that a member of the infamous Hell-Fire Club was one of the first Grand Masters of the Grand Lodge of London. But in fact the Hell-Fire Club of the Duke of Wharton did not practice Satanism.

More or less in the same period, perhaps inspired by the London club, an artist, Peter Paul Lens (1682–1740), congregated a dozen friends in another club in Dublin, The Blasters, known both to Johnstone and to philosopher Bishop George Berkeley (1685–1753), who denounced it violently as Satanist. It was

connected to a Hell-Fire Club operating in Dublin.[6] Both were mostly groups of revelers and religious dissidents. Among the various Hell-Fire Clubs, however, the Irish ones were the most suspected of having conducted rituals in honor of the Devil or to have at least toasted to him.[7]

In fact, the Hell-Fire Clubs, with this or similar names, constituted a species inside a genus, which originated in the 17th century and developed in the 18th in England, Scotland, Ireland, and then in the American colonies. Young non-conformists assembled in clubs around three kinds of interests: anticlericalism, sexual libertinage, and the desire to protest against the puritan spirit of the epoch through actions that were intended as provocations, such as beating randomly chosen people walking in the streets. In 1712, the beatings of passers-by by a group called the Mohocks, a corruption of the name of the Native American tribe Mohawk, intended as a symbol of free and wild behavior, triggered the repressive intervention of the London authorities.[8] The most recent scholarly interpretations debunked the legends connecting these clubs to Satanism and saw in them a form of male bonding, where young bored rich people took on libertine and provocative behaviors inspired by Enlightenment radicalism. The name of the Devil was often willfully used, but no one believed he really existed.

Apart from adversaries, the name of Hell-Fire Club or Hellfire Club was never used for Medmenham. The subsequent literature became rather creative when it came to naming members. Besides Dashwood, Wilkes, Churchill, Sandwich, and perhaps Bute, other names mentioned as members were: the brother of the founder, John Dashwood-King (1716–1793); William Stanhope, 2nd Earl of Harrington (1702–1772); Thomas Potter (1718–1759), son of an Archbishop of Canterbury and member of the Parliament; the brothers Arthur (1727–1804, another member of the Parliament), Robert (1728–1789, a law professor in Oxford) and Henry Vansittart (1732–1770), the Governor of Bengal, from whom the infamous baboon was brought to Medmenham. Further names included Benjamin Bates (1736–1828), Dashwood's medical doctor; John Clarke (1740–1810), Dashwood's lawyer; three members of the Parliament: Richard Hopkins (1728–1799), John Aubrey (1739–1826) and John Tucker (1705–1779); and two close political allies of Dashwood, to whom he would dedicate artistic mausoleums in West Wycombe: George Bubb Dodington, 1st Baron Melcombe (1691–1762) and Paul Whitehead (1710–1774). Dodington came to Medmenham

6 See George Berkeley, *A Discourse Addressed to Magistrates and Men in Authority. Occasioned by the Enormous Licence and Irreligion of the Times*, Dublin: George Faulkner, 1738.

7 E. Lord, *The Hell-Fire Clubs: Sex, Satanism, and Secret Societies*, cit., pp. 61–63.

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 27–35.

accompanied by his doctor, Thomas Thompson (1700–1778), who had been pro-rector at the University of Padua and, it seems, an agent of the British secret service. Assuming that all or most of them really went to the gatherings in Medmenham, this was a company of people who were able to exercise a significant political influence.

There are no doubts that the "friars" of Medmenham were a fine group of pleasure seeking libertines, despisers of conventional morality who reveled in mocking the Catholic Church and even religion in general. But were they Satanists? Some satanic references appeared to be *de rigueur* among the most enraged libertines of the era. Traces could be found even in the most notorious of all libertines, the French Marquis Donatien Alphonse François de Sade (1740–1814). An author who obtained the cooperation of the present descendants of Dashwood published in 1986 an apology for the English aristocrat, praising the progressive aspects of his political activity and attempting to definitively disprove the accusations of Satanism.[9] Perhaps, however, we will never know what really happened in the chapter house and other rooms of Medmenham.

On Satanism, the clearest testimonies are indirect and imaginative, including that of Johnstone, while direct witnesses just limited themselves to allusions and hints, which were also an expression of the intense political struggles of the time. Those who were once united as "friars" in later years were bitterly divided by politics during the era of George III. There are still authors willing to believe that some satanic rituals were celebrated in Medmenham:[10] but they are a minority. The possibility has also been suggested that Dashwood and his friends were in fact crypto-Catholics and partisans of the Stuarts. In this case, they hid behind fashionable anti-Catholicism and rumors of Satanism a Catholic sympathy which, had it been discovered, would have been significantly more dangerous.[11]

Ultimately, the problem rotates around the reliability of witnesses who had a political interest in presenting Dashwood as a Satanist. If I were to hazard a conclusion, based on a dossier destined to remain forcibly incomplete, I would not exclude symbols and references to the Devil in Medmenham. However, from this I would not conclude that the "friars" intended to pay homage to Satan, nor that, in contrast with their fame as unbelievers, they believed in the existence of the Devil. Rather, I would argue that Dashwood's friends, like the members of other libertine circles and Hell-Fire Clubs in the same century,

9 E. Towers, *Dashwood: The Man and the Myth*, cit.

10 See for example J.B. Russell, *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World*, cit., p. 146.

11 D. Willens, "The Hell-Fire Club: Sex, Politics and Religion in Eighteenth-Century England", cit., p. 22.

began a tradition of "playful Satanism", where Satan was invoked to *épater le bourgeois*, to show a daring contempt for conventional morality, or to protest against the established order.

Forms of playful Satanism were found in a good number of student organizations and fraternities of the 19th and 20th centuries. Their references to the Devil, as interesting as they may be, remain peripheral in the history of Satanism. The same cannot be said about Medmenham, which, perhaps less in the historical reality than in the picture offered by literature, served to connect the radical libertinism of the Enlightenment with the figure of Satan. The literature about Medmenham served the function of connecting accusations of Satanism in the 17th century and parallel accusations in the 18th and 19th centuries. For this function to be carried out, what really happened in Medmenham was not decisive. In the history of Satanism and anti-Satanism, how facts are mirrored in literature is just as important as reality. And the literature about the Medmenham "friars" as Satanists, was, in any case, singularly persistent.

CHAPTER 5

Russia: Satan the Translator

In Russia, the fear of the Devil and his followers, the Satanists, appeared in a peculiar way in the 17th century. Previously, in the Russian folkloric tradition, the Devil was represented as a comic figure, who clumsily attempted to fool others but often was fooled: a "poor Devil" who, overall, was not particularly scary. The situation changed with the spread in the 17th century of a numerological prophetic literature, which concentrated on apocalyptic previsions about the year 1666, feared as it contained 666, the number of the Beast in the Book of Revelation. By chance, or misfortune, in 1666 something really happened: it was the culminating year of the liturgical reform process in the Russian Orthodox Church by Patriarch Nikon (1605–1681), unpopular with a significant portion of the Russian population. The Raskol, the schism of the "old believers" (*raskolniki*), was a consequence of this. They refused the new liturgy and continued their existence, divided into a myriad of sub-sects, until the present.

The theme of the Devil and the fear of Satanists played a prominent role for the first *raskolniki*. The main text of the Raskol, the *Life of Archpriest Avvakum,* accused Nikon of having made a pact with the Devil and of having regular exchanges with the Evil One, as a real Satanist.[1] Nikon, and his followers' dealings with the Devil were seen as having caused a particularly fearful consequence: the imminent advent of the Antichrist, who was not a simple human agent of the Devil but the "most powerful incarnation of Satan, against which simple humans could do nothing".[2] About who the incarnation of the Devil, the Antichrist, exactly was, the "old believers" had divided opinions. For some it was Nikon, for others Tsar Alexis I (1629–1676), or his successor Peter the Great (1672–1725), for others still a metaphysical entity that could have different contemporary incarnations, among which the worst was yet to come.

1 See the annotated edition of *Vita dell'Arciprete Avvakum scritta da lui stesso*, by the Italian scholar Pia Pera (1956–2016), Milan: Adelphi, 1986, p. 73. See also Georg Bernard Michels, *At War with the Church: Religious Dissent in Seventeenth-Century Russia*, Stanford (California): Stanford University Press, 1999.

2 Pia Pera, "Dal Demonio all'Anticristo fra i vecchi credenti", in E. Corsini and E. Costa (eds.), *L'autunno del Diavolo, vol. I*, cit., pp. 593–594. More extensively, by the same author, see *I vecchi credenti e l'Anticristo*, Genoa: Marietti, 1992.

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The fear of the Devil and the Antichrist pushed the *raskolniki* to suicide, and often to mass suicide. Their actions had an obvious protest content, but it was more a metaphysical than a political protest. At the start the "old believers" killed themselves by dying of hunger; subsequently they "tried (…) other methods: some drowned themselves, others stabbed themselves or buried themselves alive, or set fire to themselves". Between 1675 and 1691, "around twenty-thousand Old Believers immolated themselves".[3] These horrors may appear disproportionate compared to the origins of the schism connected to questions of liturgy. It is not surprising that some followers of the mainline Russian Orthodox Church saw in turn in the leaders of the Raskol a group of worshippers of the Devil in disguise, or agents sent by the Prince of Darkness to cause the moral and physical destruction of the faithful.

These episodes must be taken into consideration to understand how, at the end of the 17th century, "devils dominated the Russian imagination".[4] In Imperial Russia, there were cases of possession reportedly induced by sorcerers, lesser known but not too different from those we examined in France.[5] An interesting research conducted by Valentin Boss, published in 1991, shows how among Russian intellectuals, from the 18th century on, a diabolical element was present in a particular incarnation: the fascination for the character of Satan in the poem by John Milton (1608–1674), *Paradise Lost.* Milton's Satan, as had happened in other European countries, was appreciated for his "noble" and "heroic" qualities. The Satan of Milton became a positive figure, a cult character. This appreciation typically belongs to Romantic Satanism and manifested itself in England before Russia, particularly in the circle of radical bookseller and publisher Joseph Johnson (1738–1809) and, moving in a less political and more esoteric direction, in the writings of William Blake (1757–1827).[6] However, in Russia things perhaps went further, to the extent of inspiring esoteric circles and the creation of a peculiar form of Satanism.

The Russian Devil was hidden between the folds of an originally Christian book, if not always orthodox, like that of Milton, and in the subtle game of translations. In the 18th century, not many Russian literati spoke English, but almost all knew French and read Milton in the translation *Le Paradis perdu*

3 P. Pera, "Dal Demonio all'Anticristo fra i vecchi credenti", cit., p. 587.

4 Valentin Boss, *Milton and the Rise of Russian Satanism*, Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1991, p. 3.

5 See Christine D. Worobec, *Possessed: Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia*, DeKalb (Illinois): Northern Illinois University Press, 2001.

6 See P.A. Schock, *Romantic Satanism: Myth and the Historical Moment in Blake, Shelley, and Byron*, cit.

of 1729, attributed to Nicolas-François Dupré de Saint-Maur (1695–1774). On its basis, Baron Aleksandr Stroganov (1698–1754), to whose family cooks is attributed the invention of the "Beef Stroganoff", in 1745 prepared the first Russian translation of *Paradise Lost*. It had the title *Paradise Destroyed* and was destined to remain unpublished and to circulate only as a manuscript in literary circles. Stroganov, more than the English original or the French translation, is the possible source of a series of other Russian manuscripts on Milton's Devil. Even after the partial translations published by court poet Vasily Petrov (1736–1799) and others, the manuscripts continued to circulate, and it is in these manuscripts that we may look for the traces of a satanic movement of sort in Russia.

One of the most interesting "satanic" manuscripts dates back to some years after 1784 and is signed by an "E. Barsov", of whom nothing is known. In this version, "the Devil rather than God moves to the centre" and the text is not faithful to Milton, in the sense that God and Jesus Christ become secondary. Satan is not the villain but the hero of the manuscript, which tells the story from the perspective of the Devil. "Barsov" could simply be the name of a copier, and the text is of little literary value, but it is important because it documents the presence of a "satanic" tendency in Russian circles at the end of the 18th century. Some rather quick homages to Christianity sound false, and appear to have been inserted out of caution in the case of an always-possible police intervention. Russian police occasionally did take action against the followers of Milton. Authorities were not so much worried about theology, but by a possible political identification between the Tsar and the Devil, which already circulated among some of the "old believers" groups.[7]

We know nothing about possible connections between the manuscript signed by Barsov and organized groups of occultists. There is however literature on Russian Freemasonry in the 18th century mentioning the presence, next to the mainline lodges, of a "fringe masonry",[8] which came from Western Europe and particularly from Germany. The term "fringe masonry" was coined by Ellic Howe (1910–1991) in 1972, to designate masonic organizations and rituals that were not technically "irregular", since they did not confer the first three degrees of Freemasonry, reserved by masonic jurisprudence to "regular" obediences, limiting their activities to the higher degrees, yet were regarded

7 V. Boss, *Milton and the Rise of Russian Satanism*, cit., pp. 14–29.

8 On Russian Freemasonry in the 18th century, see Douglas Smith, *Working the Rough Stone: Freemasonry and Society in Eighteenth-Century Russia*, DeKalb (Illinois): Northern Illinois University Press, 1999.

with some suspicion by "regular" bodies.[9] The boundaries between "regular", "irregular", and "fringe" Freemasonry were never clear-cut, and Howe's term has been criticized.[10] At any rate, Boss claims that, in the milieu of what he calls Russian "fringe masonry", there was a particular fascination for the works of Milton, and some drew inspiration from the English poet for rituals.[11] There is no doubt that in Russian "fringe" Masonic circles there was a particular attention towards magic and occultism.[12] However, one should not be too quick to see a satanic connection in these activities. On the contrary, Masonic works influenced by Milton such as the epic poem by Nikolay Novikov (1744–1818), *True Light* (1780), were substantially Christian, notwithstanding their fascinated look at the Miltonian Satan.[13] This literature, however, transmitted the idea of Satan as a noble rebel to the following era, when Russian "free thinkers", excited by the French Revolution, would hail Satan without hesitation.

The transformation became evident in the incomplete *Angel of Darkness* by Aleksandr Radischev (1749–1802), a Russian follower of the Enlightenment, where Satan "has already acquired some of the positive characteristics associated with Milton's Satan in the verse of the Romantic [Russian] poets". For the latter, "literary Satan is indistinguishable at times from Prometheus".[14] But the literary Russian Devil, of Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837), Vasily Zhukovsky (1783–1852), Mikhail Lermontov (1814–1841), does not amount to more than Romantic Satanism. Their Satan was a heroic and sad figure, a metaphor of the impatience of humans towards theirs limits, which had little to do with satanic groups. Boss offers another track that appears more interesting. In the wake of the translations of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* published in 1859 by Elizaveta Zhadovskaja (1824–1883), Satan became the first freethinker and first atheist for a whole political world. This new significance of Satan did not go unnoticed by the Tsarist police, which ended up censoring all works by Milton.

9 See Ellic Howe, "Fringe Masonry in England, 1870–85", *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, vol. 85, 1972, pp. 242–295.

10 See H. Bogdan, "The Sociology of the Construct of Tradition and Import of Legitimacy in Freemasonry", in Andreas B. Kilcher (ed.), *Constructing Tradition: Means and Myths of Transmission in Western Esotericism*, Leiden: Brill, 2010, pp. 217–238.

11 V. Boss, *Milton and the Rise of Russian Satanism*, cit., pp. 48–49.

12 Russian Freemasonry maintained some peculiarities even in the 20th century, on which see the interesting contribution by novelist Nina Berberova (1901–1993), *Les Francs-Maçons russes du XXe siècle*, Paris: Les Éditions Noir sur Blanc, and Lausanne: Actes Sud, 1990.

13 See V. Boss, *Milton and the Rise of Russian Satanism*, cit., pp. 48–67.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

Satan thus gained some merit as a political target of the old regime, and the new regime celebrated him.

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 represented a triumph of sort for Milton's Satan, who was celebrated as an anti-imperialist and a precursor of scientific atheism by a number of intellectuals of the regime, whose works were not always contemptible from the literary standpoint.[15] The paradoxical images of Satan as an *angelus sovieticus*, archetype of the *homo sovieticus*, reached extremes that Boss considers as "absurd" and "ridiculous" under Iosif Džugašvili, Stalin (1878–1953), and would reemerge during the era of Leonid Brezhnev (1906–1982), which "has been compared to Stalin's, but in parodic form". In this era, pupils in Soviet schools were taught, with quotes from Milton, that Satan represented the call to freedom and equality.[16]

All of this was certainly not new, nor does it really belong to our history. Satanic references in socialist and Marxist literature were gathered by a Romanian Protestant pastor, Richard Wurmbrand (1909–2001), himself a victim of Communist persecution in his country, in a polemical book translated into many languages.[17] In fact, most modern revolutionary rhetoric presented a fusion of Satan and Prometheus, the trace of which can be followed to Russia "from the Decembrists to the partial revival of their Romantic interpretation after the Bolshevik Revolution by [Anatoly] Lunacharsky [1875–1933] and D.[mitry] S.[vyatopolk] Mirsky [1890–1939]", until its corruption in the "fraudulent revolutionary rhetoric of Brezhnevian Satan".[18] Per Faxneld has persuasively demonstrated how socialists and Marxists did not invent anything but were part of a larger tradition, where Satan was the symbol of rebellion and revolution, from anticlericalism to feminism.[19]

But is this Satan, fused or confused with Prometheus, still Satan? Perhaps so, from the perspective of a modern iconography of the Devil, or a history of literary or political Satanism. If we remain within our definition of Satanism, as Devil worship in ritual forms by groups with a socially stable existence formed for this purpose, then references to Satan in the Soviet propaganda, just as the

15 *Ibid.*, p. 134.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 151. See also William B. Husband, *Godless Communists: Atheism and Society in Soviet Russia 1917–1932*, DeKalb (Illinois): Northern Illinois University Press, 2000.

17 See Richard Wurmbrand, *Was Karl Marx a Satanist?*, New York: Diane Books Publishing, 1976.

18 V. Boss, *Milton and the Rise of Russian Satanism*, cit., pp. 157, 163.

19 P. Faxneld, *Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as the Liberator of Woman in Nineteenth-Century Culture*, cit., pp. 113–160.

parades with statues of Satan during the course of the Spanish civil war or the Mexican Revolution, are perhaps "satanic" episodes, but they are not Satanism.

However, as an old saying goes, if we keep speaking of the Devil, perhaps in the end he will appear. Studies like that of Boss do not allow us to say with certainty whether in these literary, occultist, "fringe" Masonic or radical political circles of 18th century Russia Satanist rituals were in fact celebrated. The Russian magazine *Rebus* declared in 1913 that St. Petersburg was "full of Satanists, Luciferians, fire worshippers, black magicians and occultists". Black Masses were mentioned, similar to those described by Huysmans in France. Just like Huysmans, Russian writer Aleksandr Dobroljubov (1876–1945) stated that he experimented with "black magic", perhaps even with Black Masses, before going back to Orthodox Christianity.[20] Similar stories circulated about writer Valery Briusov (1873–1924) and painter Mikhail Vrubel (1856–1910). But this was much later, and at any rate for these years, as historians Kristi Groberg summarized, "there is a dearth of concrete evidence of the actual practice of Satan Worship, the black magic, and the black mass; what does exist is second-hand: rumor, gossip, epithet, or literary artifact".[21] An important contribution from this excursion in Russia for our story, however, is to underline the connection between Satanism, or at least suspicions of Satanism, and radical politics, something we will find again in other environments.

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20 See Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, "The Occult in Modern Russian and Soviet Culture: An Historical Perspective", *Theosophical History*, vol. IV, no. 8, October 1993, pp. 252–259 (quoting *Rebus* no. 8, 1913). See also B. Glatzer Rosenthal (ed.), *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, Ithaca (New York), London: Cornell University Press, 1997.

21 Kristi A. Groberg, "'The Shade of Lucifer's Dark Wing': Satanism in Silver Age Russia", in B. Glatzer Rosenthal (ed.), *The Occult in Russian and Soviet Culture*, cit., pp. 99–133 (p. 99).

PART 2

Classical Satanism, 1821–1952

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CHAPTER 6

An Epidemic of Anti-Satanism, 1821–1870

A Disoriented: Fiard

The French Revolution represented the end of an era. A new society was born, where the Catholic Church was no longer the only producer of culture, and Catholicism no longer shaped the institutions. Confronted with these upheavals, many Catholics no longer considered political or historical interpretations to be sufficient, turned to theology or metaphysics, and interpreted the end of an era as the end of the world. Satan resurfaced, as a protagonist and occult cause of the French Revolution. It is necessary, however to distinguish between Catholic authors, including Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821), who spoke of the satanic character of the French Revolution within the frame of a theological discourse that did not ignore the distinction between primary and secondary causes, and some radical *illuminés*. According to the latter, a secret cabal of Satanists and magicians had directed the main events of the Revolution in a subterranean fashion. Between those who proposed grand theological-historical frescos, which sometimes included the Devil, and those who imagined they were able to reconstruct in detail a conspiracy of Satanists, the relationships were not very good.

Among the first to speak of the French Revolution not only as the work of the Devil in the theological and metaphysical sense, but as a conspiracy of Satanists, was a Catholic priest from Dijon, Jean-Baptiste Fiard (1736–1818). Although he was mentioned in the 20th century as a "crank",[1] Fiard was in fact an esteemed collaborator of the semi-official *Journal Ecclésiastique*. His articles on Satanism and the Enlightenment were reprinted, in an anonymous book form, in 1791, with the title *Lettres magiques ou Lettres sur le Diable*.[2]

1 André Blavier [1922–2001], *Les Fous littéraires*, Paris: Veyrier, 1981, pp. 317–318. On Fiard, see Jacques Marx, "L'abbé Fiard et ses sorciers", *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, vol. 124, 1974, pp. 253–269; David Armando, "Des sorciers au mesmérisme: l'abbè Jean-Baptiste Fiard (1736–1818) et la théorie du complot", *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome – Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporains* (online), vol. 126, no. 1, 2014, available at <http://mefrim.revues.org/1751>, last accessed on October 28, 2015.

2 *Lettres magiques ou Lettre sur le Diable, par M***, Suivies d'une pièce curieuse*, "En France": n.p., 1791.

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In an article, published originally in 1775, Fiard started from the existence, mentioned in the Bible, of whole legions of demons, to conclude that there were also legions of sorcerers in contact with the Devil. "Man, he wrote, is not alone on this globe that is called Earth. God, to increase his merit, to try his fidelity, wanted him to be attacked by countless legions of evil spirits (…). These seduce some of those who march with God, who become apostates (…). In this manner, those whom all nations call Sorcerers and Magicians were born".[3] The *Lettres* were, in the middle of the revolutionary storm, reprinted twice[4] and were accompanied by an *Instruction sur les sorciers*.[5] In 1803, Fiard published his principal work, *La France trompée par les magiciens et démonolâtres du 18e siècle, fait démontré par les faits*.[6]

The priest of Dijon affirmed that the wonders of the *illuminés* and of magnetists such as Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815) were not just simple frauds, as the rationalists claimed, nor could they be explained by purely natural causes. They were in fact preternatural phenomena, just as their followers believed: only, they were not caused by God or angels but by the Devil. Giuseppe Balsamo, known as Cagliostro (1743–1795), had become notorious in Paris as the protagonist of the famous trial about the Queen's necklace. He was really able to predict the future and to heal, Fiard claimed, but only with "the aid of infernal forces".[7]

Even ventriloquists, a fashionable marvel at the beginning of the 19th century, were in reality Satanists. "Every man or woman able to produce articulate sounds from the stomach, or any other part of the body that was not destined to speak by the Author of nature, certainly works thanks to the intervention of the Devil".[8] It was even more evident for Fiard that tarot readers, fortune-tellers, occultists, and sorcerers were Satanists. But it was not only these more obvious personalities who were part of a great satanic conspiracy. Satanists must be sought higher up, even in the royal court, where "the incomprehensible weakness of Louis XVI" (1754–1793) could only be explained as being caused by a spell.[9] This was, finally, how the Revolution should be understood.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

4 In Paris, Year 9 and Year 11.

5 Jean-Baptiste Fiard, *Instruction sur les sorciers*, n.l. (but Paris): The Author, 1796.

6 J.-B. Fiard, *La France trompée par les magiciens et démonolâtres du XVIIIe siècle, fait démontré par les faits*, Paris: Grégoire, 1803.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 127.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 7.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

"The real factious, Fiard writes, the real conspirators against every sacred or profane society are not to be sought exclusively among those who are called *enlightened philosophers, Jacobins, Freemasons of the retro-lodges*. Once it is proven that there are *demon-worshippers* or Satanists in the State, even if among a million beings with a human face there is but one, there you will find the necessary capital enemies. If the *Jacobins, Freemasons, illuminés* do not really communicate with the Devil, if they are not initiated into his damned mysteries, as numerous as we believe they are, their anger will be impotent against the totality of the human kind. But if they are part of this exchange, if they really have made a *pact* with Hell, a *pact* that they will transmit to their children, and this is effectively their greatest secret, then who our conspirators and our executioners really are is explained".[10]

Fiard, like many Catholics overwhelmed by the storm of the Revolution, admitted being disoriented, but declared that from this state of disorientation it was not possible to escape through philosophy or politics only, and not even through theology. Everything became explainable only if one considered the Revolution a conspiracy of Satanists, in which tarot readers and Jacobins participated on the same level.

The final pages of Fiard's work are apocalyptical. The ancient prophecies claim that after six thousand years from the creation of the world the Antichrist will come. Now he was coming, according to calculations that other apocalyptic writers, up until the Jehovah's Witnesses, would also use but interpret differently. "The present generation, Fiard wrote, is confronting the seventh millennium; the century that has just finished must have been that of the announced *creators of wonders* or the *Precursors of the Antichrist*, who will be, as Saint Paul taught us, the greatest of all magicians".[11] Fiard's prophecy of the Antichrist was one of the reasons for the success of his work. From an initial audience of Catholics, it spread among the followers of the Swedish scientist and visionary Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), who were quite numerous in France in the first decades of the 19th century and very much interested in apocalyptic prophecies.[12]

In 1816, a continuer of Fiard, a German priest who had moved to France, Jean Wendel Wurtz (1766?-1826),[13] took up the theme of the precursors of the

10 *Ibid.*, p. 189.

11 *Ibid.*

12 On the influence of Fiard in Swedenborgian circles, see Auguste Viatte [1901–1993], *Les Sources occultes du Romantisme. Illuminisme – Théosophie 1770–1820*, 2 vols., vol. II, *La Génération de l'Empire*, 2nd ed., Paris: Honoré Champion, 1979, pp. 247–248.

13 See the entry "Wurtz (Jean-Wendel)" in *Annales biographiques*, Paris: Ponthieu et Compagnie, 1827, vol. I, Part 1, pp. 257–259.

Antichrist. He gave humanity, however, a little more breathing space by predicting the coming of the Antichrist in 1912, the beginning of the "great persecution" in 1953 and the fall of the Antichrist in 1957.[14] Wurtz also repeated the theories of Fiard on the satanic conspiracy involving both Cagliostro and Mesmer, as well as the ventriloquists. He also included the Freemasons, of which Satan was the real "unknown superior".[15] Wurtz also accused "modern philosophers of having operated wonders, thanks to the intervention of reprobate angels".[16]

A Lunatic? Berbiguier

If Fiard certainly had his admirers, Alexis-Vincent-Charles Berbiguier published a book in 1821 that few approved of but many read. In the elegant Paris of the Restoration, reading Berbiguier became almost an obligation. References to him by several contemporary authors show the popularity of Berbiguier, later usually listed among the "cranks" or simply consigned to psychiatry,[17] which justifies the space dedicated to him in this chapter. *Les Farfadets, ou tous les démons ne sont pas de l'autre monde*[18] is, effectively, a paradoxical and wonderful work, which deserves its fame. The portrait decorating the first of Berbiguier's three volumes, a marvelous lithography that became a rarity sought

14 Jean Wendel Wurtz, *Apocalypse, où les Précurseurs de l'Antéchrist*, Lyon: Rusand, 1816; J.W. Wurtz, *L'Apollyon de l'Apocalypse, ou la Révolution française prédite par Saint Jean l'Evangéliste*, Lyon: Rusand, 1816.

15 J.W. Wurtz, *Superstitions et prestiges des philosophes où les Démonolâtres du siècle des lumières*, Lyon: Rusand, 1817, p. 185.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

17 On Berbiguier as a psychiatric case, see A. Blavier, *Les Fous littéraires*, cit., pp. 467–468; Jacques Lechner, "A.V.C. Berbiguier de Terre-Neuve du Thym, 'L'homme aux farfadets'", M.A. Thesis, Strasbourg: School of Medicine, Université de Strasbourg Louis Pasteur, 1983.

18 Al.-Vinc.-Ch. Berbiguier de Terre-Neuve du Thym, *Les Farfadets, ou tous les démons ne sont pas de l'autre monde*, 3 vols., Paris: The Author and Gueffier, 1821. The addition of "de Terre-Neuve du Thym" to the surname, Berbiguier explained, did not derive from an improbable claim to nobility but more simply from the idea that Terra Nova fishermen catch many fishes, as he wanted to catch many *farfadets*, and from his desire to retire and cultivate thyme, a plant that was effective in driving out demons (*ibid.*, pp. XIII–XIV; see also Jean-Luc Steinmetz, "Un Schreber romantique: Berbiguier de Terre-Neuve du Thym", *Romantisme*, vol. IX, no. 24, 1979, pp. 61–73). Our Berbiguier also wanted, by re-elaborating his surname, not to be confused with other relatives, with whom he had altercations due to a question of inheritance. Berbiguier had to wait until 1990 for a second edition (in one volume) of his work (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon).

by bibliographers, portrays him as the "scourge of the *farfadets*". *Farfadet* in French, means "leprechaun", but the author defined *farfadets* as "the élite secret services of Beelzebub".[19] Although the demons themselves are occasionally defined by Berbiguier as *farfadets* too, there is no doubt, through his three volumes, comprising almost one thousand five-hundred pages, that most *farfadets* are human beings, who became "agents" of the Devil and Satanists.

The work of Berbiguier opens with an erudite introduction, a *Preliminary Discourse* that was probably written by François-Vincent Raspail (1794–1878) who, together with lawyer J.-B.-Pascal Brunel (1789–1859), edited Berbiguier's manuscript giving it a literary form.[20] The *Discourse* states that the world would be "inexplicable if we would not admit the existence of two genes, that of good and that of evil".[21] The evils of humans do not come from God nor from nature; universal consensus attributes them to evil spirits but also to "some men who serve the genius of evil and his infernal work".[22] This is followed by a collection of ancient and modern demonological texts and some conclusions.

Theology and experience, Berbiguier argued, prove not only that the Devil does exist, but also that there are men and (more often) women who bond with him through a demonic pact. More often, these are old women, who however seduce younger ones, leading them into Satanism. The powers of Satanists are limited by God, but are great. Animated by the Devil, *farfadets* can manipulate nature, causing rain or snow, and invisibly sneak into the houses of their victims. They can also modify the behavior of animals and even "animate" inanimate things. The pious man can however defeat Satanists through

19 [A.V.C.] Berbiguier de Terre-Neuve du Thym, *Les Farfadets, ou tous des démons ne sont pas de l'autre monde*, cit., p. x.

20 See Robert Reboul [1842–1905], *Anonymes, pseudonymes et supercheries littéraires de la Provence*, Marseilles: M. Lebon, 1879, p. 57; and [Pierre-]Gustave Brunet [1805–1896], *Les Fous littéraires. Essais bibliographiques sur la littérature excentrique, les illuminés, visionnaires, etc.*, reprint, Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970, p. 18. On the other hand, Claude Louis-Combet maintained in his "Berbiguier ou l'ordinaire de la folie", preface to [A.V.C.] Berbiguier de Terre-Neuve du Thym, *Les Farfadets ou tous des démons ne sont pas de l'autre monde*, 2nd ed. (1990), cit., pp. 7–20, that Raspail and Brunel limited themselves to small corrections at the printing press. On the composition of the text, see also Ariane Gélinas, "Le 'Fléau des *farfadets*'", *Postures*, no 11, 2009, special issue on *Écrire* (*sur*) *la marge: folie et littérature*, pp. 17–32; A. Gélinas, "Intertextualité et pacte diabolique dans les *Farfadets* de Berbiguier de Terre-Neuve du Thym, suivi de *L'héritière écarlate*", Diss., Trois-Rivières: Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières, 2012.

21 A.-V.-C. Berbiguier de Terre-Neuve du Thym, *Les Farfadets ou tous les démons ne sont pas de l'autre monde*, 1st ed. (1821), cit., vol. I, p. XXII.

22 *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. XXX–XXXI.

prayer and the use of herbs such as laurel and thyme, which are feared by the devils themselves.

The first volume portrays the poor Berbiguier, who at the age of thirty-two moved from his birthplace in Carpentras, where he was born in 1764, to Avignon. He worked there as an employee for the Lottery, and then as the bursar in the Hospice of Saint Martha. One of the housemaids convinced him to consult tarot cards with a soothsayer known as "La Mansotte". This initial excursion into occultism was the event that "put him in the hands of the *farfadets*" and was the source of all evils for Berbiguier.[23] The poor man never slept again from this moment on: the Satanists, invisible, crept into his house and into his bed and tormented him with every sort of offense.

All of this, he claims, did not occur by chance to a pious man such as Berbiguier. Jesus Christ himself appeared to him, showing him Paradise and the final judgment, hinting that he would suffer greatly but had been called for the important mission of revealing to his contemporaries the satanic conspiracy. For the time being, however, Berbiguier was not happy that he could not sleep during the night. He approached for help both an exorcist and several doctors in Avignon: among whom two named Bouge and Nicolas who, unfortunately for him, were disciples of Mesmer, and tried to "magnetize" him. Berbiguier saw in magnetism and mesmerism, just like in tarot reading, an artifice of the Devil, so he did not regard his declining condition as a surprise. These were the same ideas of Fiard, and we will find them again in other authors.

He then went to Paris to visit a sick uncle. The latter liked him and nominated him as his heir. The disappointment of the other relatives generated a trial, which was destined to worsen Berbiguier's nervous condition. The pilgrimage to different doctors continued, among others to the famous Philippe Pinel (1745–1826) of the Salpêtrière Hospital. Pinel sent him to an exorcist priest, who however did not believe in the diabolical nature of his ills. Pinel and his collaborators for a while indulged Berbiguier, suggesting placebos and ceremonies both bizarre and harmless to free him from spirits they regarded as imaginary, but eventually sent him away and treated him as a lunatic. Berbiguier ended up believing that almost all doctors were *farfadets* and that Pinel was actually the "representative of Satan" on Earth.[24] While his nights continued to be tormented, Berbiguier by now believed Satanists had thrown a "planet" against him. He befriended a young dissolute, failed priest, Étienne Prieur, who promised to free him from all his ills.

23 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 9.

24 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 4.

The relationships between Berbiguier, Prieur, and the latter's family take up hundreds of pages and are rather complex to follow. The relatives of the young Étienne first believed that the pious Berbiguier might be a positive influence on the young priest, but they were worn down by his endless speeches and letters on Satanists and *farfadets*, and one after another they closed the door on him. On the other hand, it seems that Étienne really enjoyed making fun of his friend. He assured him that, to free him from the curses of the Satanists, he had to put himself totally under the priest's power, "authorizing" a cousin of his with the improbable name of Papon Lomini to take care of him. From then, in fact, both the tarot reader from Avignon and Pinel came less frequently to persecute Berbiguier invisibly during the night, but as to compensate for this the "doubles" of Prieur and Lomini entered his apartment and tormented him. If at the start it was an amusing joke, the roles were eventually reversed, as Prieur with all his family ended up being chased out and persecuted by endless letters and claims by Berbiguier. The young priest eventually changed his address and tried to wipe out his tracks.

Berbiguier, however, did not halt his crusade against *farfadets*, "excrements of the earth and execrable emissaries of infernal powers". Their number was incalculable,[25] and all the evils in the world that afflict humanity were their doing. Many "occasional" deaths were in reality the precise effect of the witchcraft of Satanists. Even immorality was part of the *farfadet* conspiracy. A damsel advised Berbiguier to solve the problem of his night visions by finding female company, and had the nerve, as the author reported, to "place her hand on my thigh". There was no doubt: she was a *farfadette*, a female Satanist, and in fact, in the place of the immodest touch, Berbiguier felt a strong pain, which "kept increasing".[26]

Berbiguier repeated several times over that *farfadets* were capable of accessing the beds of the most virtuous women while invisible, even without being summoned and without the women knowing about it. It can thus happen that more than one *farfadet* "can access the chamber of an attractive woman whose husband travels afar from his chaste half. Upon returning, two years later, this man is surprised to discover he has become the father of twins, while he believed for his honor and happiness there had only been one fruit from his union". The good man refused to believe that it was the consequence of "the *farfadets*, who, after having taken advantage of the effects of a sleeping drug, dangerous for the virtue of his chaste spouse, had become the masters of

25 *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 280–281.

26 *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 290.

her sensations. They made her involuntarily betray the promise that she had made at the foot of the altar". As a consequence, the family was ruined.[27]

Good priests, Berbiguier believed, "are almost always victims of the persecutions and evil deeds of the *farfadets*", who harass them in many ways. Satanists are in league with the Devil, and are able to move planets, which makes them even more fearsome. For example, through Venus they can lead to immorality. They are also capable of taking on the most varied forms, however preferring cats. Lomini, the supposed cousin of Prieur, often appeared to Berbiguier in the shape of a big white cat. The author believed that "many of these gentlemen, used to turning into cats, must, running around roofs every night, often fall and make faux pas (…) because, as opposed to real cats, they do not normally run on slates". When a cat falls off a roof and dies, there can be no doubt that it is a Satanist, so virtuous people should run to the window and scream with joy, "insulting the fate of the criminal cat: What Joy! That was a *farfadet*, which received the just punishment for his own misdeeds".[28] With this consolatory vision, except for cats, the first volume ends: however, Berbiguier threatens to write at least another two.

The second and third volume are partially a repetition of the first, even if the prose of Berbiguier is often twisted and the chronology of the narration is not respected. A magician, Adélio Moreau (1789–1861), and other personalities are added to the Prieur family and the doctors in the list of Satanists. The most famous pages of the book are those dedicated to the epic of the squirrel Coco, Berbiguier's only inseparable friend, destined to a cruel fate. The author speculates whether, as it is said par excellence in Catholic literature, "Saint Roch and his dog", in the future it would be said "Berbiguier and his Coco".[29] The *farfadets*, in their nocturnal visits to Berbiguier in invisible form, lashed out at Coco, and finally killed him by inducing him to hide between the mattress and the bed of his unhappy owner, who at the same time was violently thrown on that bed by a *farfadet*, causing the immediate death of the little creature.[30]

There are also interesting details about the organization and activities of the Satanists. The head of the *farfadets* is clearly the Devil, but he has a complex hierarchical organization under his command. In France, the satanic orders are transmitted through the "infernal diplomacy" of the fearsome "prince Belphegor".[31] There is also a hierarchy among humans who have become

27 *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 292–293.
28 *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 351–352.
29 *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 9.
30 *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 78–79.
31 *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 353.

farfadet. There is a Great Mistress for women, and it is significant that Berbiguier names Marie-Anne Lenormand (1772–1843), the most famous tarot card reader of the era of the Revolution and the Restoration, whose divination card system is still employed today. As for the Grand Master of the male organization, Berbiguier is more uncertain. He refers to a certain Rothomago, from whom he has received threatening letters, but also to his old enemies Prieur, Pinel, Moreau and others, all of whom appear to be reasonable candidates.[32]

The activities of this army of Satanists are diverse and make use of the strangest instruments. Among their fearsome magical tools, there is a normal five franks "farfadetized" coin. This coin is magical and always returns to the pocket of the Satanist. This was not an invention of Berbiguier: as mentioned earlier, the production of these miraculous coins called *pistoles volantes* was already attributed to magicians and Satanists at the time of the La Voisin trial. The *farfadets* do not steal: they pay, but with the magical coin, which will mysteriously vanish from his supplier or creditor's pocket and find its way back to the Satanist. Thus, Berbiguier noticed, it was easy for the Satanists to get rich. All they had to do is to buy goods that cost less than five franks, pay with the magical coin, which will always come back to them, and accumulate the change.[33]

In the third volume, Berbiguier reports a peculiar anecdote on magical coins: "A *farfadet*, tired of the pleasures that he could obtain thanks to his invisibility, wanted to change his enjoyments. He visited a brothel, where he found a superb woman. He behaved gallantly, which was well received. He suggested a sum for payment, it was not accepted. On the contrary he was offered a five francs coin and was told that he should accept it if he wanted to win the woman. He accepted, on the condition that it should be exchanged for a coin of equal value (…). The moment both the man and the woman gave each other their respective five francs, they heard, both of them, a sound in their pockets. Their coins crossed and returned to their respective original owners. The two *farfadets* recognized each other as such and shared their successes, skills, and projects". This is how "*farfadets* recognize each other, just as freemasons have their handshakes".[34]

Naturally, *farfadets* could also derive other advantages from their magic and invisibility. The poor Berbiguier was often robbed of his snuffbox, jewels, and even the buckle of his suspenders.[35] At least, Berbiguier was not married, but

32 *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 114.

33 *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 101–102.

34 *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 108.

35 *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 124–125.

couples should fear even worse misdeeds from Satanists. Invisible as they are, they can slip between man and wife during their moments of greatest intimacy and cause sterility in women with abominable means. "*Farfadets* slide under the marriage bed sheets to strike men and women with absolute sterility" and "are thus to be feared as enemies of the propagation of the human species". Doctors were consulted in vain for these cases, the more so because "almost all doctors are *farfadets*".[36]

Nor, able as they are to turn themselves into animals, are *farfadets* limited to cats. The second volume places fleas on the scene, alongside cats. Satanists "transform into these small animals" to torment us with their little bites, showing their desire for human blood. One should not be afraid of or have remorse about killing a flea, quite the opposite. "People living on Earth, shouts Berbiguier, men, women, daughters, widows who, day and night, are tormented by fleas or other *stinging* animals, have no fear of taking them between the nails of your two thumbs and crushing them, shouting: *one* farfadet *less*!".[37]

Berbiguier is not limited to small domestic mishaps or fleas. In the third volume, he rewrites Biblical history, showing how all the enemies of humanity, from Cain to those responsible for the death of Jesus Christ, were *farfadets* and Satanists. In the second volume, he easily identifies his mission with that of Joan of Arc (1412–1431). She was also a victim of *farfadets*, who, Berbiguier writes, are still opposed to her cult today and attempt to ridicule her.[38] Finally, and naturally, the French Revolution was the clearest fruit of the Satanist conspiracy. "If, he writes, when I took the pen to report my misadventures I had not decided not to enter into details about the French Revolution, I could have, following the events that marked it, provided irrefutable proof of the *farfadettisme* of the men who played a role during these disastrous times. But, as I already said, politics is not really part of my field".[39] This is a pity, because the work of Berbiguier is a real sample, although in an extreme and paradoxical form, of a series of anti-Satanist themes that would be taken very seriously by the next generation of Catholic writers.

A good part of the third volume is devoted to the incredible letters that Berbiguier claimed to have received from Satanists and the Evil One himself. Perhaps he did not invent these letters, and they were really sent by pranksters such as Prieur. These letters were numerous and signed by the *farfadet* chiefs,

36 *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 376–378.

37 *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 384–386.

38 *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 403.

39 *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 221.

but also by Lucifer in person and even by the Antichrist.[40] Moreau and the Paris soothsayer Romina Vandeval (1790–1872), who were perhaps really enjoying making fun of Berbiguier and his obsessions, wrote to him on behalf of "the infernal and invisible farfaderic-parafarapinic committee". They accused him of having "revealed to the first person who turned up the holy mysteries of opoteosoniconi-gamenaco" and reproached him for a lascivious adventure with the *farfadette* Feliciadoïsca, who had accessed his room while invisible to seduce him.

"If you want to enter in our society, they wrote, all you have to do is to say yes out loud on February 16 at 3.13 p.m. In that case, you will be well received and taken on a sapphire gondola to a place of delights, which you will be able to enjoy *ad libitum*".[41] The sinister Rothomago, "ambassador of all evil spirits", wrote to him: "Berbiguier, will you stop tormenting me and my colleagues? You wretch! You just killed one-thousand-four-hundreds of my subjects (…). Were you more indulgent with us, we will nominate you as our sovereign. Consider the eminent position you will have. You will be the head of all the spirits. You will enjoy not only this incredible advantage, but also that of possessing all the most attractive women in your palace. In fact, you should know that here we have all the queens, the princesses, in one word all the most attractive women who, in the past 4,800 years, have been the pleasure of all the greatest heroes in the world".

Berbiguier must now decide. "The great Lucifer has summoned and appealed to all the infernal generals and soldiers to submit you to us with kindness, and if not with force; thus consent, the time has come".[42] Another head of the infernal cliques, with the more elaborate name "Thésaurochrysonicochrysides", wrote, through his secretary "Pinchichi Pinchi", in more threatening terms: "Abomination in desolation, earthquake, deluge, storm, snow, comet, planet, ocean, flux, reflux, genie, syphilis, faun, satyr, sylvan, dryad, and hamadryad! The agent of the great genie of good and evil, the ally of Beelzebub and of Hell, the brother in arms of Astaroth, winner and seducer of Eve, author of the original sin, and minister of the Zodiac, has the right to possess, torment, sting, purge, excite, roast, poison, stab, and scare the very humble and patient vassal Berbiguier, for having (…) cursed the most honorable and indissoluble magical society".[43]

40 See *ibid.*, vol. III, p. 147.

41 *Ibid.*, vol. III, pp. 309–310.

42 *Ibid.*, vol. III, pp. 416–417.

43 *Ibid.*, vol. III, pp. 415–416.

One can imagine what happens when Lucifer writes personally. "Tremble, writes the Prince of Darkness, there are a hundred and ten of us who have sworn to your loss (…). I beg you to decide to choose to come over to our side with your colleagues, otherwise, without warning, for you and them it will be the end". "Tomorrow, Lucifer threatens, thirty of us will come in delegation to you to receive a definite answer; if it is not enough, we will pester you in five hundred and we will inflict on you the final blow".[44]

Berbiguier does not limit himself to talking about his misfortunes. He replies and attacks. The second volume, and especially the third, amply illustrate the remedies with which Berbiguier attacks the *farfadets*. These remedies, he explains, have not been very effective for the unfortunate author, but they could be effective for others. Even if he cannot harm the Satanists in their visible existence, Berbiguier deprives them of their invisible "double" by capturing it and putting it in a condition of not doing any harm. Berbiguier's remedies consist of needles and thorns, with which he stabs the *farfadets* during their invisible metamorphosis;[45] of aromatic fumigations of laurel and thyme; and even of recipes that are more complicated. Berbiguier boils the heart of a bull in a pot with two pints of water. When the heat has made it tender, he stabs it with needles, nails and wood splinters exclaiming in a loud voice: "May all I do serve you as payment! I destroy the emissary of Beelzebub!". He then nails the heart to a table with three knife strikes, repeating the imprecations and throwing salt and sulfur on the fire that served to boil the pot. This remedy is sometimes so powerful that it can even kill real Demons and not only the "doubles" of the human *farfadets*.[46]

Tobacco, he explains, "plays a primary role" in the fight against the spirits. Thrown onto people and on their beds, "it blinds all *farfadets*" and protects their enemies.[47] Tobacco is a powerful ally of thorns and needles, with which Berbiguier continues to prick and stab nocturnal spirits. In the third volume, he reveals how "when I perceive the presence of my enemies in the lining of my clothes, I puncture thorns in my clothes and thus I attach them to my shirt. In this way, I prevent *farfadets* from escaping. I keep them imprisoned on me, as I fear letting them free, and I go to sleep dressed". In a similar fashion, when he finds the spirits on his bed, "I jab a needle or a thorn on the covers so as to trap my persecutors and thus they cannot cause harm anywhere else. While I stab them, I have the satisfaction of advising them, if they are not happy

44 *Ibid.*, vol. III, pp. 310–311.

45 *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 32.

46 *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 34–37.

47 *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 154.

with my welcome, to go to and visit Doctor Pinel at the Salpêtrière and to ask for a remedy, if he has one in his pharmacy, against the attacks that I direct towards them".

Then there is the "scrying tub", an anti-magical version of the magical tub that Cagliostro used as a mirror, scried into by a young boy. It is a wooden tub, "which I fill up with water and place on my window. I use it to reveal the *farfadets* when they are in the clouds". Thanks to the tub, Berbiguier can see evil spirits in the air, "meeting, fighting, jumping, dancing, and twirling". He can see them "when they organize the weather, modeling the clouds, when they turn on lightning and unleash thunder". The water in the tub "follows all the movements of these wretches" and allows them to be watched. The final solution to the problem of the spirits, in their disembodied form, as when they are incarnate there can be no solution other than trusting human tribunals, consists of the "bottle-prisons". All other remedies "are nothing if compared to the wonders I perform with these bottles". With big needles, the best that one can hope for is to trap the *farfadets* "for eight to fifteen days". With the bottle-prisons, "they are forever deprived of freedom, unless the bottles that enclose them break".

To trap them in bottles "is very simple. When I hear them walking and jumping on my covers during the night, I disorientate them by throwing tobacco in their eyes. At this point, they cannot understand where they are, and they fall like flies on my covers, where I cover them in tobacco. The following morning, I pick up this tobacco very carefully with a piece of paper, and empty it in my bottles, where I also place vinegar and pepper". Then, "I seal the bottle with Spanish wax and by this means I subtract all their chances of escaping from the prison, to which I have condemned them". Berbiguier is not as cruel as he may seem, because "tobacco is meant to feed them and vinegar replenishes them when they are thirsty". On the other hand, they have to "live in a state of fear" and be "testimonies to my everyday triumphs: I place the bottles in such a way so they can see everything I do to their companions".[48]

Berbiguier offers to donate the bottles to the Natural History Museum, the new marvel in Paris, where the *farfadets* could perhaps be exhibited among poisonous snakes and frogs, to confuse the skeptics who do not believe in spirits. Sometimes, however, cruelty is necessary, and Berbiguier becomes more evil. He uses a "giant iron concave spoon, where I place sulfur and packets that contain the *farfadets* I captured in tobacco. I cover the spoon and place it on the fire; and I rejoice in listening to them burst with anger and pain".

48 *Ibid.*, vol. III, pp. 222–228.

Finally, "another method of waging war on *farfadets* consists in killing all frogs which can be captured in the countryside. Frogs are the acolytes of infernal spirits".[49] After having suggested all these healthy remedies, Berbiguier can close his work "on the first days of 1822", although he would date it 1821, and with it pay homage to the governors of the world so that they might unite in the war against the *farfadets*.[50]

Berbiguier ruined himself by sending copies of his luxuriously bound text to sovereigns, newspapers and libraries. He later had all of his remaining copies burned, an action which makes his work today a bibliographic rarity, we don't know if out of fear of being considered a madman or of further persecution by the *farfadets*.[51] Although other sources considered him as "healed" and dead in Paris in 1835, it appears that in 1841 he was still chasing after *farfadets*, in spite of his miserable condition, in the Carpentras' home for the aged. Poet Jules de la Madeleine (1799–1885) described Berbiguier in the Carpentras hospice as "a very dirty little man, all broken, with an arched back, a limp head, inclined to one side, with his chin rubbing against his chest in such a way that it was impossible to look into his eyes".[52] Despite this unflattering portrait, the poet became friend with old Berbiguier, who continued to tell him about the *farfadets*. Berbiguier died in the hospice after 1840, probably in 1851. Today, it is even questioned whether the *Farfadets* were the fruit of a mystification, operated by the editors of the volumes in order to artfully create a literary case.[53]

Berbiguier's Occult Legacy

It is almost irrelevant for the purpose of our story to know whether Berbiguier was or not the author of the material in the three volumes, as I believe he was, or whether he was technically a lunatic. Contemporaries widely regarded him

49 *Ibid*., vol. III, p. 229.

50 *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 436.

51 Marie Mauron [pseud. of Marie-Antoinette Roumanille, 1896–1986], *Berbiguier de Carpentras*, Paris: "Toute la ville en parle", 1959, pp. 293–294.

52 J. Lechner, "A.V.C. Berbiguier de Terre-Neuve du Thym, 'L'homme aux farfadets'", cit., p. 120.

53 See Bernardo Schiavetta, "Conspirationnisme et délire. Le thème du complot chez les 'fous littéraires' en France au XIXe siècle", *Politica Hermetica*, no. 6, 1992, pp. 57–66. Others believe that, although later edited, the book was in fact written by Berbiguier and conveys his ideas: see G. Brunet, *Les Fous littéraires. Essais bibliographiques sur la littérature excentrique, les illuminés, visionnaires, etc.*, cit., pp. 18–19; C. Louis-Combet, "Berbiguier ou l'ordinaire de la folie", cit., p. 10.

as a madman, but a madman who told certain truths. The number of authors who referred to Berbiguier was significantly conspicuous. Many were inspired by his ideas, filtered of all that was clearly paradoxical or ridiculous. In the competing subcultures of occultists and anti-Satanists, he was not judged as unreliable. In fact, many took him quite seriously.

Let us consider for example, a leading occultist such as Stanislas de Guaïta (1861–1897), the founder of the Cabalistic Order of the Rosy-Cross and other important Parisian occult organizations. His volume *The Temple of Satan* evokes Berbiguier extensively and anticipates the objections of his readers. "Simple madness, Guaïta writes, someone may remark. Why make the chapter (already too long) longer with the consideration of this poor man? The famous Father [Nicolas Montfaucon] de Villars [1635–1673] might reply: *God blessed me by allowing me to understand that the insane exist for no reason but to impart lessons of wisdom*". Moreover, "our Berbiguier is not mad like the others. His madness has this peculiarity, that it is based on perception, certainly indirect and altered, I agree, of a real world, whose existence people with normal senses do not even suspect. My book [*The Temple of Satan*] will not reveal this world if not to those who are willing to become mad themselves: I mean, creatures capable of notions and perceptions from which most are excluded".

From the perspective of occult sciences, Guaïta added, Berbiguier could be considered "quite certainly the victim of a bunch of larvae". A study of "his engravings", the ones that accompany the three volumes of the *Farfadets*, "is one of the most interesting from this perspective. Those whose eyes are not made for the astral world can at least understand the changing nature of the larvae. They are able to take on, with incredible agility, the most diverse forms. It is sufficient for the poor possessed, exasperated by their presence, to be afraid or obsessed by some horrible image, and the larvae will immediately model themselves in the corresponding shape. It is a hallucination that takes shape, a thought that becomes an object and assumes a form in the plastic substance of the environment". The larvae, according to Guaïta, are not, or are only occasionally, "doubles" of human beings, Satanists or not, in flesh and bones. They are more often the fruit of our nightmares and our "objectivized" bad thoughts. They are nocturnal and inferior entities, which can be generated by the dispersion of human semen in nocturnal pollutions and in masturbation but also, by analogy, by impure thoughts.

According to an authority such as Guaïta, "the variety and forms in which larvae can multiply are perfectly described" by Berbiguier. It is even "more astounding" that a character such as Berbiguier "foreign, clearly, to the scientific theories of the Kabbalah, had the precise intuition of the true weapons used to dissolve these fictitious and ephemeral beings: the steel tips, the

sharp blades, and also (…) the special fumigations!".[54] Here, we can witness the strange solidarity between anti-occultists and occultists. From the perspective of the occultists, stolid as he was, Berbiguier described the very real phenomena of the "larvae" and was even able to guess the right weapons to fight them. At the other extreme, anti-Satanists such as Fiard and satanic conspiracy theorists could hardly disagree with Berbiguier when the latter exclaimed: "Why should I define what is meant as Robespierrism, Jacobinism, extremism, liberalism? It is sufficient to say in this case that those who did evil during the Revolution were emissaries of the Devil and consequently *farfadets*".[55] When anti-Satanists of the next decades would try to describe the extraordinary arts of the Satanists, they would often use Berbiguier.

Equally significant is the treatment reserved to Berbiguier by Jules Bois, a journalist with a passion for the occult whom we will discuss in our next chapter. Guaïta and Bois were not friends, and in fact even challenged each other to a duel, but their interpretation of Berbiguier was the same. The unlucky author of the *Farfadets*, both argued, was not persecuted by invisible "doubles" of human Satanists but rather by "larvae". Bois admitted, however, that Satanists could direct larvae against men. Larvae, the journalist explained, must not be confused with elementals (fairies, elves, sylphs, undines). They were actually "embryos of beings", "volitions or human dreams, which have fallen out of their astral sheaths, crumbs of thought, debris of anger and hate, waste of imperfect and cursed souls, damned in the true sense of the word, which means eternal dissolution". The larvae can be born, according to the occult tradition, which Bois resumes, "from the blood scattered by the criminal" on the gallows, "from the monthly wound of virgins and spouses", from the "libidinous ecstasy of the loner" (by which he meant masturbation), and even from bad thoughts and "frenetic desires". The bad "the weak, the maniac, the senseless" and even the lazy "attract them like a magnet".

From a certain perspective, according to Bois, larvae are parts of the Devil, if we call Devil "the vast and incoherent desire, which ferments in the sin of the world". Berbiguier, scourge of the country frogs, was correct even in the sense that "these repugnant beasts were created in a likeness to the Devil". Frogs, Bois assured his readers, will vanish after the Day of Judgment, when the Earth will

54 Stanislas de Guaïta, *Essais de Sciences Maudites. II. Le Serpent de la Genèse. Première Septaine* (*Livre I*). *Le Temple de Satan*, Paris: Librairie du Merveilleux (Chamuel), 1891, pp. 354–358. For a more skeptical perspective, see Charles Lancelin [1852–1941], *Histoire mythique de Shatan*, 2 vols., Paris: H. Daragon, 1903–1905.

55 A.-V.-C. Berbiguier de Terre-Neuve du Thym, *Les Farfadets ou tous les démons ne sont pas de l'autre monde*, cit., vol. III, p. 222.

be transformed in the "Kingdom of the Spirit and of Love". Larvae, however, are dangerous and can kill. Bois explained the episode of possession of Louviers, against the rationalist narrative of Michelet, as an attack of larvae. They appeared to Bavent and the other nuns, Bois argued, in the shape of cats, just as they did to Berbiguier. Even in this case the larvae, the journalist stated, perhaps "allied" with deviant and satanic confessors, placing themselves at their service.[56] Luckily, "the larvae are idiots; they jump out of the double horned cornucopia in front of the bull of stupidity". To describe them adequately, there was the need of "an honest man in the inferior sense of the term, one infected by the mediocre virtues with which the middle classes honor themselves". Berbiguier was this man.

Bois, an anti-bourgeois populist and a friend (for a time) of Charles Maurras (1868–1952), the leader of the right-wing party Action Française, was happy to mock the bourgeois spirit in Berbiguier. However, he read it with all seriousness. Berbiguier, this "bourgeois Don Quixote", was for Bois a necessary figure and was even "chosen by Providence" for an important mission. "Just like Saint Anthony [251–356], and the parish priest of Ars [Jean-Marie Vianney, 1786–1859], Berbiguier, Bois writes, was really molested" by satanic presences. His story demonstrated the dangers that the weak and the bourgeois encounter "when they lean out over to the Other Side". From the moment Berbiguier started to frequent tarot readers, "he was trapped into the pits of the invisible".

However, the very obtuseness of the author of the *Farfadets* was for Bois a guarantee of reliability. "No one could, I believe, wrote Bois, in this prophetic and bourgeois style, which signals one of the most limpidly obtuse minds of our century, narrate in a better way the malice of invisible magicians". Even considering a certain "tendency to hallucinate" of Berbiguier, it is impossible not to conclude, according to Bois, that "this loss of money, the thefts of the *farfadets*, these nocturnal battles and these itches (which are not always and only caused by fleas), the vision and the constant audition of his enemies, and even the moving and unexpected death of the squirrel, everything reveals the mysterious presence of an evil, of a perfidy which surrounded him". When, as the subtitle to his work reports, Berbiguier claims that "not all demons are of the other world", he, according to Bois, "is fully and absolutely right. He knows, and he knows experimentally, that the corrupt will of the living is also a *farfadet*, and on sensitive nerves it can also act at a distance with insistence and with cruelty".

The episode of Coco the squirrel was not a literary invention, Bois claimed, but revealed "another (real) secret", that of "our solidarity with the poor

56 Jules Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, Paris: Léon Chailley, n.d. (1895), pp. 210–216.

animals, which accompany us", often shields or victims of witchcraft. Certainly, sometimes Berbiguier "cannot resist for too long the temptation of being stupid", and Bois denied any validity to the story of the magical coins, doubtlessly told to the writer of the *Farfadets* by some charlatan magician. However again, in the midst of eccentricity, Bois believed that "strange lights" appeared when Berbiguier spoke about remedies. Through "the thorns, the fumigations, the sound of bells, the magical tub, this incomparable idiot reconstructed ancient magic. A defensive instinct allowed him to rediscover the ancient formulas for astral fighting".

Bois concluded that "this poorly spirited man gave these prodigies the testimony of his trivial common sense and of his scrupulously ridiculous morality. He is, as his portrait shows, with a hand on his heart, with his eyes stupidly wide open and so honest, the incarnation of what happens when the enemies of occultism fall themselves into the holes of occultism. He is from that class of the half wise, of freethinkers, of people with 'common sense' and closed mind, which little by little are drawn by the ape-like hoard of the larvae into the fog and the traps of magic".[57]

For the whole of the 19th century, the occult milieu continued to take Berbiguier, in its own way, seriously. It did not rehabilitate him, and certainly did not consider him smart or intelligent. Occultists, however, saw in Berbiguier's own bourgeois stupidity the pledge of an unimpeachable testimony on the all too real world of the larvae, and on the disturbing commerce with these entities of Satanists.

Scholars against Satan: From Görres to Mirville

To follow the ideas of Berbiguier implied, for Catholics who were seriously interested in denouncing a satanic conspiracy, the risk of ridicule. The only road to confront the theme seriously appeared to be that of surpassing in erudition both occultists and skeptics. If the subject, the Devil and Satanists, was suspicious, the method must rival the most obstinate rationalists both in the rigor of the investigation and the abundance of documentation.

The first example of a believer willing to take up the challenge came from Germany, between 1836 and 1842, when Johann Joseph von Görres (1776–1848) published *Divine, Natural, and Diabolical Mysticism*.[58] Görres was a professor

57 *Ibid.*, pp. 218–230.

58 J. Joseph von Görres, *Die Christliche Mystik*, 5 vols., Munich, Regensburg: G.J. Manz, 1836–1842. See also the French edition: *La Mystique divine, naturelle et diabolique*, Paris:

at the University of Munich, who, after his enthusiasm for the French Revolution and a passage in the ranks of German nationalism against Napoleon I (1769–1821), converted to Catholicism in Strasbourg in 1819. Some modern authors consider Görres as too credulous, and the feminist theologian Uta Ranke-Heinemann turned him into the prototype of the reactionary misogynist, "demonic" and "pseudo-Christian".[59] His radical German nationalism explains why some consider him a precursor of Nazism. We should however consider that in the 1840s and 1850s many Catholics criticized the recently converted Görres for being not too credulous but too skeptical.

Certainly, Görres accepted at face value the existence of many wonderful and dubious facts. However, the explanation of these singular facts was almost always very cautious in attributing this or that phenomenon to the Devil. His sense of caution pushed Görres to look for "natural" explanations in the scientific and philosophical theories of his era rather than in demonology. Catholic demonologists criticized this as the position of a skeptic.

Humans, according to the German author, live in a tight bond with nature. If they carefully cultivate this bond, they can perform prodigies, which, although extraordinary, are not demonic but part of a "natural mysticism". The phenomena of dowsers, of astrologers, even of the famous seer of Prevorst, Friederike Hauffe (née Wanner, 1801–1829), a young Protestant visionary well known through the books of the German medical doctor and poet Justinus Kerner (1786–1862), are all explained by Görres as cases of "natural" mysticism. The human spirit is, according to the German scholar, in a "magnetic" relationship with the natural elements. This relationship can be cultivated with significant results, as in the case of those who specialize in the discovery of hidden treasures. Many prodigies of pagan priests were, again, instances of natural mysticism. Even vampirism, discussed in Chapter XIV of his third volume by Görres, who accepts it as a fact, does not necessarily belong to the sphere of Satan. If metal, hidden in the earth, can act on humans at a distance and reveal to the clairvoyant where the treasure is, the same must be assumed for a corpse. Certainly, corpses do not leave their tombs and do not drink the blood of their

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Poussielgue-Rusand, 1854–1855 (2nd ed., Paris: Poussielgue-Rusand, 1861–1862; reprint, Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1992). On Görres, see Reinhardt Habel [1928–2014], *Joseph Görres: Studien uber den Zusammenhang von Natur, Geschichte und Mythos in seinen Schriften*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1960; Uwe Daher, *Die Staats- und Gesellschaftsauffassung von Joseph Görres im Kontext von Revolution und Restauration*, Munich: Grin Verlag, 2007; Monika Fink-Lang, *Joseph Görres. Die Biografie*, Paderborn, Munich, Vienna, Zurich: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 2013.

59 Uta Ranke-Heinemann, "Introduction" to the new edition, with spelling revision, of J.J. von Görres, *Die Christliche Mystik*, 5 vols., Stuttgart: Eichborn, 1989, pp. 1–17 (p. 5).

victims: they may however "fatten", Görres argued, by absorbing the blood of living beings at a distance. Their victims experienced terrible nightmares, from which the myth of the vampire was born.[60]

Most of the stories of larvae and ghosts are explained through nervous agitation, which can however be produced by magnetic influxes by evil magnetists. Görres' efforts to provide natural explanations had their limits: in the third volume, the Chapters from XIX to XXIV describe the actions of the spirits of the deceased, which can manifest to men, at least in particular circumstances. In Chapter XXIV, there is also an appearance of the Devil. When spirits cause harm to someone by burning houses, setting the crops ablaze, or hurting people, we are confronted with a "certain and positive" action of the spirit of Evil, who can sometimes respond to the evocations of evil magicians. However, as Görres insisted in his fourth volume, a distinction between natural and diabolical mysticism should be made even in these cases. Certain evil phenomena are produced by the sorcerer's malice rather than by Satan. Humans can make a pact with the Devil, but the latter is not required to follow it and, even if he wanted to, it is not certain that God would allow it, much less in a systematic manner.

After a discussion of no less than thirty-three chapters on demonic possession, in the fifth volume, Görres confronts the subject of "diabolical magic". To become an adept of the Devil, it is necessary to have natural and astrological predispositions. One can become a Satanist by slowly descending the ladder of sin and malice, or by opening the door to the Devil by using certain forms of magic. The magician may call them "white magic", but the name is not important, as these forms eventually attract the Devil. Görres believes that sorcerers and witches, animated by Satan, can fly: but more often than not, they simply "believe" they are flying and are victims of an illusion. Moreover, nobody turns into a cat, but "under the influence of the Devil, some can end up *believing* they have turned into cats".[61]

Even when Satanists perform miracles that are apparently beneficial, for instance by healing, one must make a distinction. There is a gift of healing that is simply explained with natural mysticism and magnetism. Occultism and Satanism can excite this natural gift, although, eventually, with very negative consequences for whoever practices it, and make it more powerful. The Devil, on the other hand, can heal, but he does not pursue good, ultimately wishing for evil. When Satan "heals a sick person, he takes the health from a

60 J.J. von Görres, *La Mystique divine, naturelle et diabolique*, cit., vol. III, pp. 280–300.

61 *Ibid.*, vol. V, p. 305.

healthy one, but ultimately will strike the healed person with an even more severe illness".[62]

Görres' fortune in the European Catholic milieu of the 19th century was ambiguous. On the one hand, his extraordinary erudition was acknowledged and respected. On the other, he was suspected for his reticence in attributing certain phenomena to the Devil, and even for his use of magnetism as a universal explanation. Magnetism was strongly suspected of belonging to the sphere of the diabolical as well, and Mesmer had left a rather sulphureous reputation. Magnetism was also connected with Spiritualism. According to prevailing Catholic wisdom, it could not be doubted that the Devil manifested himself in Spiritualism. Hence, magnetism should also come from the Devil. In his *Satan et la magie de nos jours. Réflexions pratiques sur le magnétisme, le spiritisme et la magie* (1864), Albert Duroy de Bruignac (1831–1907) concluded that "the intervention of the Devil in magnetism and in Spiritualism is clear in most cases; and it is quite probable even in the rare circumstances in which it cannot be proved directly and fully". Duroy de Bruignac presumed to having "rigorously demonstrated in *all cases*, particularly in those where there is a lack of direct proof, that the Devil is *always* the agent of magnetism and of Spiritualism" and "that magnetism and Spiritualism are nothing more than forms of magic".[63]

As late as 1899, at a time when medical and scientific hypnosis was already separating itself from traditional magnetism, a French Catholic medical doctor from Bolbec, Charles Hélot (1830–1905), with *imprimatur* of the Archbishop of Rouen, published a volume called *Le Diable dans l'hypnotisme*. There, he claimed that in a hypnotized person "the origin and the principle of the state are supernatural". The hypnotic state, characterized by "the abolition of the conscience", cannot be willed by God or produced by angels "who would not be able to act against the order established by the creation of the divine government". It was impossible not to conclude that "hypnosis is thus necessarily the work of an EVIL SPIRIT, to whom God leaves temporary freedom to punish or to test us. This evil spirit is called by tradition, by revelation and by the Church, the DEVIL". Thus to practice hypnotism means "*to willfully cause this state*, which only the Devil can create", "TO CALL the Devil *at least implicitly*, and this calling and this evocation are always considered by theologians as a REVOLT a CRIME against GOD HIMSELF".[64]

62 *Ibid.*, vol. v, p. 420.

63 Albert Duroy de Bruignac, *Satan et la magie de nos jours. Réflexions pratiques sur le magnétisme, le spiritisme et la magie*, Paris: Ch. Blériot, 1864, pp. 215–216.

64 Ch.[arles] Hélot, *Le Diable dans l'hypnotisme*, Paris: Bloud et Barral, 1899, pp. 61–62 (capitals in original).

Dr. Hélot, with his abuse of capital letters, wrote late, in an era when his medical colleagues tried to take control of cases of possession, explaining them away as hallucinations and hysteria, and representing their conflict with the Catholic Church as a true "crusade for civilization". The possession cases of Morzine (1857–1873), in the French Alps, were, in a certain sense, the manifest of this clash. Modern ethnologists are however not so certain that positivist doctors, who came from the city to disturb the ancient cultural fabric of a mountain village, helped the local peasants more than the priests did.[65]

A great French Catholic offensive, aimed at demonstrating that there was some truth in the satanic conspiracy theory, and in Görres' ideas, dates to a couple of decades earlier. It was started in France by the Marquis Jules Eudes de Mirville (1802–1873), who began publishing his monumental *Pneumatologie*[66] in 1853, with a first volume on the spirits and their manifestations. Naturally, something had happened in the time between Görres and Mirville. The fashion of Spiritualism had exploded in France, preceded by events such as the fantastic one of the rectory of Cideville infested by spirits. French "Spiritists", as they preferred to call themselves, unlike most British and American Spiritualists, were almost invariably anticlerical, and sometimes anti-Christian. The Catholic apologists had found their adversary, Spiritism.

Mirville was a recognized specialist in the *affaire* of Cideville. He retraced the history of apparitions of spirits across the arc of twenty-five centuries. After startling his readers with a prodigious documentation, he tried to show them how, although many Spiritualist phenomena might be explained with mere fraud and natural causes, among which, attentive to the times, the Marquis included electricity, others remained inexplicable. It must be concluded that they were the work of the Devil. Since most Spiritualist mediums consciously interacted with the Devil, Mirville concluded that they were part of Satanism.

A Polemist: Gougenot des Mousseaux

The complete *Pneumatologie* in ten volumes is today a rare book, and perhaps even when it was published, its dimensions frightened the readers. The ideas of Mirville were however taken up by one of his disciples, who wrote

65 See Catherine-Laurence Maire, *Les Possédées de Morzine* (*1857–1873*), Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1981.

66 [Jules] Eudes de Mirville, *Pneumatologie*, 10 vols., Paris: Vrayet de Surcy, Delaroque et Wattelier, 1853–1868.

in a more popular style, Henri-Roger Gougenot des Mousseaux (1805–1876). Some believe that his erudition was inferior to that of the master.[67] But he probably had more readers than Mirville. Courtier and diplomat for the French King Charles X (1757–1836), to whom he remained always loyal, Gougenot de Mousseaux is notorious today for his work from 1869 on Judaism, a famous monument of 19th-century anti-Semitism.[68] The anti-Judaism of Gougenot is not racial: it is entirely religious. From the perspective of attitude, of intelligence, and capacities, Jews are, according to Gougenot, "the most noble and august of all people", and Christians should recognize them with loyalty as "elder brothers".[69] Unfortunately, however, the Jews were victims of a deviated religiosity, which blended "sublime" and marvelous elements with others "absurd and unclean",[70] as evidenced by the Kabbalah.

Gougenot distinguished between two types of Kabbalah, one capable of being interpreted in a "sincerely Christian" sense, the other "false and full of superstition", which he exposed as being at least potentially "daemonic". By practicing the latter kind of Kabbalah, which he believed was unfortunately prevailing among religious Jews, there was the risk of coming into contact with "the genies of the fallen sidereal army",[71] i.e. with the demons. Gougenot was aware that, in an era of rationalism, the "superstitious" Kabbalah was rejected by many Jews, who as a reaction slipped into positivism and atheism. Here again, we see the differences between the Catholic anti-Judaism of Gougenot and the social or racial anti-Semitism. Gougenot only dealt with theology and ideas. By following his considerations on the Jews, we would however leave the theme of Satanism, to which Gougenot was in fact completely dedicated before writing his notorious volume on Judaism.

Already in his first published work, *Mémoire sur les Pierres Sacrées*, Gougenot strived to prove the ancient origins of Satanism through the direct and continuous intervention of the Devil in pagan rituals. He insisted on the same thesis in the *Monde avant le Christ* (1845), which, republished and expanded in

67 See Albert L.[ouis] Caillet [1869–1922], *Manuel bibliographique des sciences psychiques ou occultes*, 3 vols., Paris: Dorbon, 1912, vol. III, p. 114. For biographical information on Gougenot des Mousseaux, see Marie-France James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme au XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1981, pp. 136–138.

68 (Henri-)Roger Gougenot des Mousseaux, *Le Juif, le Judaïsme et la Judaïsation des peuples chrétiens*, Paris: Plon, 1869.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 509.

70 *Ibid.*, p. 499.

71 *Ibid.*, pp. 541–545.

1854, became a famous work under the new title *Dieu et les Dieux*.[72] In these writings, Gougenot was particularly concerned with the ancient "holy stones". Originally, he believed, these stones were genuine pledges of alliance between God and humanity. Subsequently, however, they degenerated into objects of satanic worship and locations for wicked rituals and sometimes human sacrifices.

Catholic France, in the meantime, was witnessing, appalled, the first large wave of Spiritualism or "Spiritism". Gougenot reacted in 1860 with *La Magie au dix-neuvième siècle*, where he denied that natural causes, including electricity, caused the Spiritualist phenomena. When they were not a simple fraud, they might derive from the power of magicians who manipulated for their own questionable ends the "wandering souls" or the "magnetic fluid". But, more often than not, Spiritualism came from the actions of the Devil.[73]

In 1863, Gougenot returned to this subject with *Les Médiateurs et les moyens de la magie*. With a method inspired by Mirville, he attempted to prove that the Devil had constantly been in contact with humanity, originally through wicked pagan priests and magicians, then through magnetists and Spiritualist mediums.[74] In 1864, the year that perhaps marked the highest point in France of the Catholic campaign against Satanism "disguised as Spiritualism", Gougenot published *Les hauts Phénomènes de la magie*. There, he claimed that in antiquity and in the Middle Ages, but also in his contemporary France, Satanism, vampirism, lycanthropy, and satanic evocations were very real threats. The pages where he described how the respected scientist Charles Girard de Caudemberg (1793–1858) managed to have sexual relationships with many astral entities were, not without reason, the most famous of his work.[75]

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72 (H.-R.) Gougenot des Mousseaux, *Mémoire sur les Pierres Sacrées*, Paris: Lagny Frères, 1843. He followed up with *Le Monde avant le Christ. Influences de la religion dans les États*, Paris: Paul Mellier, and Lyon: Guyot Père et Fils, 1845; and *Dieu et les Dieux, ou un voyageur chrétien devant les objets primitifs des cultes anciens, les traditions et la fable*, Paris: Lagny Frères, 1854.

73 (H.-R.) Gougenot des Mousseaux, *La Magie au dix-neuvième siècle, ses agents, ses vérités, ses mensonges*, Paris: H. Plon, E. Dentu, 1860 (2nd ed., Paris: H. Plon, E. Dentu, 1864). See, for similar considerations, Auguste-François Lecanu, *Histoire de Satan. Sa chute, son culte, ses manifestations, ses oeuvres, la guerre qu'il fait à Dieu et aux hommes*, Paris: Parent-Desbarres, 1861.

74 H.-R. Gougenot des Mousseaux, *Les Médiateurs et les moyens de la magie, les hallucinations et les savants; le fantôme humain et le principe vital*, Paris: Plon, 1863.

75 H.-R. Gougenot des Mousseaux, *Les hauts Phénomènes de la magie, précédés du spiritisme antique*, Paris: Plon, 1864.

In the meantime, the indefatigable Gougenot was working on the second edition, after the first had been published in 1863, of his *Mœurs et pratiques des Démons*, which was released in 1865.[76] This was the final work of the anti-Spiritualist and anti-Satanist campaign of Gougenot, who subsequently addressed the more controversial topics of Kabbalah, Judaism, and Freemasonry. On the latter, he was preparing what he believed would be a definitive work, but it was left incomplete when he died in 1876.

Mœurs et pratiques des Démons constitutes, from a certain perspective, the synthesis of Gougenot's ideas on Satanism. The style, compared to other works by the author, is less polemical and more similar to a manual or a treatise. Gougenot starts from the necessity and the evidence of the supernatural world's existence in order to conclude that many spirits inhabit the Earth and the atmosphere. Among these are the devils. Gougenot has no sympathy for pre-Christian religions, but invites not to consider immediately as devils all the gods and "demons" of classical antiquity. Even back then, however, "demons were, and are again today, thanks to the resurrection of Spiritualism, *the teaching body*, which means the heads, of the demonic Church, the masters and corruptors of every man who listen to their messages".[77]

The souls who are in Heaven and Purgatory, more rarely those of the damned who live in Hell, can appear to humans, although rarely. It is also possible that, when a deceased person seems to appear, it is in reality "his good or evil angel" who manifests himself.[78] "More often" they are, however, "devils who lead humans into error by presenting themselves as *the souls of the dead*, and our Spiritualist circles are proof of it".[79] It is also possible that the Devil will appear presenting himself with his real name, either summoned or not. However, those who summon the Devil "open a terrible account" that Satan, "who does not serve if not to become a master", will make them pay eventually.[80]

Gougenot goes on to retrace the history of magic and evocations of spirits, showing how at the origins of all magical arts and Spiritualism there is always the Devil. He presents the traditional doctrine of the Church in the matters of spirits, possession, and exorcism. Gougenot then examines Spiritualist mediums, moving tables, and magnetism, all phenomena he attributes, at least in part, to the action of the Devil. Not without some good reasons, he claims that

76 (H.-R.) Gougenot des Mousseaux, *Mœurs et pratiques des Démons ou des esprits visiteurs du spiritisme ancien et moderne*, Paris: Plon, 1865.

77 *Ibid.*, p. 49 (italics in original).

78 *Ibid.*, p. 56.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

80 *Ibid.*, pp. 83–84.

Spiritualism was not born recently, and traces its antecedents as far back as the 16th century. What is new in modern Spiritualism, Gougenot claims, is the organization of a new religion, a "Spiritualist church", which is nothing else if not a "satanic church".[81]

Spiritualists, including Allan Kardec (pseud. of Hyppolite Léon Denizard Rivail, 1804–1869), the founder of 19th-century French Spiritism, are not mistaken when they claim they receive messages from the other world, on which they base their new vision of the world and new religion. Simply, they are not from the spirits of the dead but from the devils, who are preparing the world for the advent of the Antichrist, which "it is reasonable to believe will occur soon, as his precursors are appearing with increasingly clearer traits".[82]

In his book, Gougenot also mentions the "sacraments of the Devil": figures, words, numbers, and signs, which over the course of centuries have acquired a demonic meaning. Magicians can use them in order to accomplish prodigies and quickly contact the Devil. Naturally, "the strength is not really in the sign but in the Spirit of malice who attaches itself to it, taking advantage of our weakness". This does not mean that the signs, the formulas, the numbers have not their intrinsic effectiveness, although they do not always work.

Gougenot quotes the example of an old witch, who was able to cure an apparently mortal wound, which an assassin had inflicted on a girl, by simply pronouncing a diabolical formula of invocation. The story, however, did not have a happy end, because, after some time, "the body of the poor wounded girl swelled, the wound became putrid while she was still alive, and a few days were sufficient for death to triumph, while for a short time it appeared to have been defeated. Other false cures, obtained with similar processes, concluded with the same disastrous results".[83]

It is interesting to notice how, for Gougenot, the Devil operates through occult sciences, magnetism, Spiritualism, but normally magicians and Spiritualists do not realize this. One of his main arguments is that one can be part of the "Demonic Church" without knowing it. Gougenot presents himself as the quintessential anti-Satanist scholar, but his attention is not focused on Devil worshipers and Black Masses. He claims that contemporary society, thanks to the success of Spiritualism, is full of Satanists, but these are largely Satanists who are unaware of what they were.

A final note on Gougenot is that he was read with interest by occultists, who obviously did not share his Catholic criticism of magic but found in his

81 *Ibid.*, p. 163.

82 *Ibid.*, p. 389.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 187 and p. 190.

writings useful information not easily available elsewhere. William Emmette Coleman (1843–1909), a Spiritualist critic of Madame Blavatsky, found in the writings of the founder of Theosophy a number of unacknowledged borrowings from Gougenot. According to Coleman, Blavatsky's occult masterpiece *Isis Unveiled*[84] included no less than 124 passages "plagiarized" from three of Gougenot's books, *La Magie au dix-neuvième siècle*, *Les hauts Phénomènes de la magie* and *Mœurs et pratiques des Démons*,[85] well beyond her explicit quotes of both Gougenot and Mirville in the fourth chapter.[86] Coleman had his own anti-Theosophical agenda, and not all his accusations of plagiarism are well-founded. He did, however, his homework and checking his list of Blavatsky's real or assumed borrowings may be a good starting point for a further investigation of Gougenot's influence on 19th-century occultism.[87]

A Lawyer: Bizouard

The year 1864 saw the publication in France of another massive work about the Devil and Satanism, by Catholic lawyer Joseph Bizouard (1797–1870). It included six volumes, for a total of four-thousand pages.[88] To fill so many pages, Bizouard had to provide an extensive definition of Satanism. He criticized Görres by claiming that many of the phenomena classified as "natural mysticism" by the German author were in reality of a diabolical nature. According to Bizouard, Görres had been himself influenced by the magnetists. By using naturalistic explanations, the German scholar became "the adversary of the Christian doctrine, which explains these same marvelous phenomena in an infinitely more rational manner, attributing to black magic what Görres tries to explain through nature". According to the French lawyer, Görres "offered a

84 Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*, 2 vols., New York: J.W. Bouton, and London: Bernard Quaritch, 1877.

85 William Emmette Coleman, "The Sources of Madame Blavatsky's Writings", as Appendix C to Vsevolod Sergeyevich Solovyoff [1849–1903], *A Modern Priestess of Isis*, London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1895, pp. 353–366.

86 See H.P. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology*, cit., vol. 1, pp. 101–103.

87 See Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "The Theosophical Imagination", keynote address at the conference *Theosophy and the Arts: Texts and Contexts of Modern Enchantment*, Columbia University, New York, October 9, 2015.

88 Joseph Bizouard, *Des Rapports de l'homme avec le Démon. Essai historique et philosophique*, 6 vols., Paris: Gaume Frères and J. Duprey, 1864.

food that is both healthy and poisonous: if one considers the poison, his offer, which might have been useful, is revealed as deadly; or to be more precise his book, which contains many errors, may become dangerous".[89]

Bizouard has no scruples in ascribing to the Devil most of the phenomena that for Görres are part of "natural mysticism". With Gougenot, Bizouard attributes the prodigies and the oracles of the ancients, which he discusses in his first volume, to the action of Satan. The second elaborates, more widely than Mirville and Gougenot did, on the trials for witchcraft and "induced" possessions, concentrating on the end of the 16th century and on the 17th. With the skill of a successful lawyer, Bizouard discusses in the second and in most of the third volume the famous cases of Aix, of Loudun, of Louviers, and a number of lesser-known episodes. He concludes that the judges, secular more often than ecclesiastical, so that one would wrongly speak of pressures from the Church, were not mistaken when they thought they could see the shadow of the Devil behind these events.

Bizouard defends the "old demonological doctrine" and knows, as a lawyer, that in order to save the conclusions of the courts on the presence of real Satanists he must rehabilitate the witnesses. He examines in detail the accusations against the nuns of Loudun and Louviers, and insists on the sanctity of Surin. He even considers doubtful the censures of deception and exhibitionism against Brossier, the daughter of the weaver from Romorantin exorcised in 1600, whom even contemporary Catholic authors regarded as unreliable. Bizouard argues that the Brossier case, where not everything was false, shows how the Church and the judges of the 17th century were not too credulous but, if anything, too cautious.[90]

The fourth volume examines the 18th century and confirms the rather broad idea that Bizouard had of Satanism. All those who perform prodigies and at the same time do not profess the true Catholic doctrine are dealing with the Devil. Sometimes they do not realize it but, more often than Gougenot believed, they do know that the Devil is at work. The wonders of the Jansenists and of the *illuminés*, together with the survival of popular and traditional witchcraft, are also attributed to the Devil. Swedenborg, Mesmer and magnetism, the first Freemasons and Cagliostro fare no better. Bizouard's scheme, to limit ourselves to Cagliostro, is always the same. The prodigies of the Italian magus were real, and naturalistic explanations are misleading. Cagliostro was really in contact

89 *Ibid.*, vol. VI, p. 54 and pp. 65–66.

90 *Ibid.*, vol. III, pp. 567–570.

with a preternatural agent, but this agent was the Devil, and Cagliostro probably knew it.[91]

Bizouard relies on previous authors such as Orestes Brownson (1803–1876), Father Auguste-François Lecanu (1803–1884), and Fiard, and announces all successive anti-Satanist literature. He denounces a joint conspiracy by the *illuminés* and Freemasonry, whose "retro-lodges" promoted and organized the French Revolution. The ideology of Freemasonry, he claims, is "pure Satanism", and it often happened that 18th-century Freemasons "consulted the Devil".[92]

The last part of the fourth and the last two volumes deal with the 19th century, and Bizouard continues to apply his method in the same way. All of those who make prodigies and who do not teach the true doctrine are part of Satanism. Even the seer of Prevorst, Friederike Hauffe, whose phenomena happened in a Christian context, taught "pagan and heretic doctrines" and was therefore a Satanist. Bizouard's evaluation of the Prevorst phenomena is that "the agent that produced them wanted to favor the new discovery of magnetism".[93]

Berbiguier, without being mentioned directly, is given some justice by Bizouard, because one of his persecutors, Moreau, is mentioned among the soothsayers most suspect of Satanism. Through tarot reading, Moreau could have become rich, but "he died poor; he practiced the divinatory science for himself, and was not very concerned with making money", a sign that he was probably not a simple crook but a devotee of the Devil.[94] The natural explanations of the phenomena of magnetism and of Spiritualism are discussed in more than a thousand pages, and systematically refuted. Spiritualist mediums are Satanists in league with the Devil. Bizouard also mentions Eugène Pierre-Michel Vintras (1807–1875), whom we will discuss later, who tried to fight against Satanists. Although he was in "great good faith", Bizouard believes that Vintras, who was not an orthodox Catholic, was deluded and misled by the Devil.[95]

A long chapter in the sixth volume is dedicated to the Mormons, who attracted French curiosity in that era for their practice of polygamy. Since the Mormon question often appears in anti-Satanist literature, it deserves a closer examination. Anti-Mormonism followed, in the United States, a parallel scheme to criticism of Freemasonry and anti-Catholicism. Freemasons,

91 *Ibid.*, vol. IV, pp. 377–383.

92 *Ibid.*, vol. IV, p. 441.

93 *Ibid.*, vol. IV, pp. 598–601.

94 *Ibid.*, vol. IV, pp. 507–508.

95 *Ibid.*, vol. VI, pp. 103–110.

Catholics and Mormons were seen as foreigners to American "civil religion", which always had an aspect of "uncivil religion", needing to designate adversaries in order to exist.[96]

It was not only polygamy that roused the worst suspicions about the Mormons. Just as happened with Freemasonry and Catholicism, Mormonism was considered anti-American because of its rigid hierarchy, which appeared as quintessentially non-democratic. The secret of the Mormon temple, which only the faithful can access, was a parallel in the imagination of the opponents to the secrets of the Masonic lodge and that of the Catholic confessional. In fact, in the secret ceremonies in the Mormon temple, well known thanks to dozens of publications by defectors and apostates, there was nothing satanic. The tone was typical of prophetic Protestantism and 19th-century millenarianism, with some Masonic influences. If Satan was mentioned in the ritual, it was in his fully traditional robes as the adversary of truth and the Gospels.[97]

Prodigies and miracles were less frequent in early Mormonism than in other American new religious movements. The most famous French traveler who reached Salt Lake City in the first years of the independent Mormon state, Jules Rémy (1826–1893), left a balanced report with favorable appreciations.[98] Bizouard often quotes Rémy, but reverses his interpretations trying to shed a sinister light on the Mormons of Utah. Bizouard is also familiar with American anti-Spiritualist literature, which, starting from a work published in 1853 by Charles Beecher (1815–1900), had its own demonological wing. Beecher and others interpreted the phenomena of the sisters Leah (1814–1890), Margaret (1833–1893) and Kate Fox (1837–1892) in 1848 and other similar Spiritualist manifestations attributing their origins to the Devil.[99]

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96 See Robert N. Bellah [1927–2013], Frederick E. Greenspahn (eds.), *Uncivil Religion: Interreligious Hostility in America*, New York: Crossroad, 1987; David Brion Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature", *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, vol. 47, no. 2, September 1960, pp. 205–224.

97 See on Freemasonry and Mormon rituals, Michael W. Homer, *Joseph's Temples: The Dynamic Relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014.

98 Jules Rémy, *Voyage au pays des Mormons*, 2 vols., Paris: E. Dentu, 1860.

99 Some relevant works are: Charles Beecher, *A Review of the Spiritual Manifestations*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1853; John C. Bywater [1817–?], *The Mystery Solved; or, a Bible Exposé of the Spirit Rapping, Showing that They Are not Caused by the Spirits of the Dead, but by Evil Demons or Devils*, Rochester (New York): Advent Harbinger Office, 1852; William Ramsey [1803–1858], *Spiritualism, a Satanic Delusion, and a Sign of the Times*, Rochester (New York): H.F.L. Hastings, 1857; (The Reverend) William Henry Corning [1820–1862], *The Infidelity of the Times as Connected with the Rappings and Mesmerists*,

A main source for Bizouard was Brownson's novel *The Spirit-Rapper: An Autobiography*, where the author described in a sensational form his itinerary as a social reformer interested in Spiritualism until his conversion to Catholicism in 1844, coincidentally the same year of the assassination of the founder of the Mormons, Joseph Smith (1805–1844). In 1862, while Bizouard was completing his work, Brownson's book was published in a French translation.[100]

Brownson was also interested in Mormonism, and believed that Smith, whom he claimed he personally met, was "utterly incapable of conceiving, far less of executing the project of founding a new church". But now and again, according to Brownson, Smith entered in a state of "sleep-waking". "In that state, he seemed another man. Ordinarily his look was dull and heavy, almost stupid". When he entered in his trance state, however, Smith's face "brightened up, his eye shone and sparkled as living fire, and he seemed instinct with a life and energy not his own. He was in these times, as one of his apostles assured me, 'awful to behold'". "In his normal state, Smith could never have written the most striking passages of the *Book of Mormon*; and any man capable of doing it, could never have written anything so weak, silly, utterly unmeaning as the rest".

There was no doubt: for Brownson, Smith was under the influence of a "superhuman power", thanks to which he and the Mormon elders produced "miracles" and "certain marvelous cures". This mysterious power was the Devil. Brownson concluded that Mormonism, inexplicable with purely natural arguments, came directly from Satan. "That there was a superhuman power employed in founding the Mormon church, cannot easily be doubted by any scientific and philosophic mind that has investigated the subject; and just as little can a sober man doubt that the power employed was not Divine, and

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Boston: J.P. Jewett, 1854; William R. Gordon [1811–1897], *A Three-Fold Test of Modern Spiritualism*, New York: Scribner, 1856; Joseph F. Berg [1812–1871], *Abaddon, and Mahanaim; or, Daemons and Guardian Spirits*, Philadelphia: Higgins and Perkinpine, 1856; James Porter [1808–1888], *The Spirit Rappings, Mesmerism, Clairvoyance, Visions, Revelations, Startling Phenomena and Infidelity of the Rapping Fraternity Calmly Considered and Exposed*, Boston: George C. Rand, 1853; William M. Thayer [1820–1898], *Trial of the Spirits*, Boston: J.B. Chisholm, 1855; Joseph Augustus Seiss [1823–1904], *The Empire of Evil, Satanic Agency, and Demonism*, Baltimore: James Young's Steam Printing Establishment, 1856.

100 Orestes Augustus Brownson, *The Spirit-Rapper: An Autobiography*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, and London: Charles Dolman, 1854 (French translation, *L'Esprit frappeur, Scènes du Monde Invisible*, Paris - Tournai: H. Casterman, 1862). For the context of the novel, see R. Laurence Moore, *In Search of White Crows: Spiritualism, Parapsychology, and American Culture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 35.

that Mormonism is literally the Synagogue of Satan".[101] Brownson considered "ridiculous" the theory advanced by anti-Mormon literature according to which the *Book of Mormon* was plagiarized from a manuscript by Solomon Spalding (1761–1816). For him, the author of the *Book of Mormon* cannot be a simple human, but only Satan himself.[102]

Brownson, from whom Bizouard took his inspiration, in turn widely used Mirville's *Pneumatologie*. In later works, Brownson was more nuanced about the demonological interpretation of Mormonism, without abandoning it altogether.[103] Brownson was not the only American author of the 19th century who connected Mormons and the Devil. In a work in verses of 1867, which once again criticized both Mormonism and Spiritualism, as well as abolitionism and feminism, an author writing under the pseudonym of "Lacon" exposed the "Devil of Mormonism" as the authentic creator of the religion founded by Joseph Smith.[104]

Bizouard, guided by Brownson, found further confirmations of the demonological interpretation of Mormonism in Rémy. Kind as he was to the Mormons, the French traveler could not fail to include in his account their arch-heretical doctrines. Bizouard also criticized the opinion presented by Father Jacques-Paul Migne (1800–1875) in his celebrated *Dictionary of the Religions of the World*, which explained Mormonism merely with "avarice and fanaticism". These causes, Bizouard insisted, were not sufficient and in the success of the Mormons we must see "the actions of a supernatural power", the Devil.[105]

In the sixth volume, Bizouard developed with many details the idea that Satan also directed secret societies. He particularly singled out Freemasonry, "the enemy of Christian society just as Satan is of humanity",[106] and saw "the precursors of the Antichrist"[107] already at work in the Europe of his time.

Gougenot and Bizouard's campaigns against Satanism, announced by Mirville, brought the activities of French anti-Satanists to their apogee in the

101 O.A. Brownson, *The Spirit-Rapper: An Autobiography*, cit., pp. 164–167.

102 *Ibid.*, pp. 165–166.

103 See M.W. Homer, "Spiritualism and Mormonism: Some Thoughts on the Similarities and Differences", in J.-B. Martin, François Laplantine (eds.), *Le Défi magique. I. Ésoterisme, occultisme, spiritisme*, Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1994, pp. 143–162.

104 "Lacon", *The Devil in America: A Dramatic Satire*, Mobile: J.K. Randall, 1867, pp. 80–95. Michael W. Homer directed my attention to this work, which had remained unknown to historians of anti-Mormonism.

105 J. Bizouard, *Des Rapports de l'homme avec le Démon. Essai historique et philosophique*, cit., vol. VI, pp. 111–127.

106 *Ibid.*, vol. VI, p. 783.

107 *Ibid.*, vol. VI, p. 806.

first half of the 19th century, and allow some conclusions to be drawn. The authentic epidemic of anti-Satanism in France from the beginning of the 19th century to the 1860s is mostly explained by two events that greatly affected the imagination of French Catholics: the French Revolution and the success of Spiritualism. These events, each in its own way, appeared so incredible to French Catholics to push them to suppose that they derived from the direct action of the Devil and of a century-old Satanist conspiracy. The Satanist conspiracy theory, exposed in a disjointed and paradoxical way by authors whose mental sanity has been doubted, such as Fiard and Berbiguier, acquired historic and theological dignity in the works of Mirville, Gougenot, and Bizouard.

These theories did not appear in France only. The idea of a diabolical origin of both Spiritualism and Mormonism was developed for the first time in the United States by both Catholic and Protestant authors. It then passed into France when Brownson's book was translated. The identification of who the main Satanists were changed over time. Fiard privileged revolutionaries and Jacobins, with the *illuminés* of the 18th century seen as precursors of occultism and Spiritualism, in an important but secondary position. Gougenot and Bizouard regarded as the main agents, and sometimes victims, of the Devil the magnetist disciples of Mesmer and the Spiritualists. Bizouard, following Brownson, added the Mormons. Almost all authors included Freemasons.

Were these campaigns internationally influential? In Italy, they were supported by a series of articles in the semi-official Vatican journal *La Civiltà Cattolica*, published by the Jesuits, where Mirville and Gougenot were praised. French anti-Satanists were also supported by respected Italian Catholic authors, including Agostino Peruzzi (1764–1850), Antonio Monticelli (1777–1862), Giovanni Maria Caroli O.F.M. (1801–1873), and Gaetano Alimonda (1818–1891), a learned priest who became Bishop of Albenga and later Archbishop of Turin.[108] The polemic was further accentuated after an event as bewildering for Italian Catholics, as a century before the Revolution was for their French counterpart: the capture of Rome, the capital of the Papal States, by the Italian Army in 1870. The year 1870 was also that of the death of the last great

108 See Agostino Peruzzi, *Sul mesmerismo o come altri vogliono Magnetismo animale. Dialoghi*, Ferrara: Pomarelli, 1841; Antonio Monticelli, *Sulla causa dei fenomeni mesmerici*, 2 vols., Bergamo: Mazzoleni, 1856; Giovanni Caroli, *Del magnetismo animale, ossia mesmerismo, in ordine alla ragione e alla Rivelazione*, Naples: Biblioteca Cattolica, 1859; G. Caroli, *Filosofia dello spirito – ovvero del Magnetismo animale*, Naples: Biblioteca Cattolica, 1860 (2nd ed., Naples: Biblioteca Cattolica, 1869); Gaetano Alimonda, *Del magnetismo animale. Ricerca e conclusioni*, Genoa: G. Caorsi, 1862. On this literature, see Clara Gallini, *La sonnambula meravigliosa. Magnetismo e ipnotismo nell'Ottocento italiano*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1983.

anti-Satanist of the first half of the 19th century, Bizouard, and symbolically marked the end of this period.

In France, as opposed to what one might suppose, the mainline Catholic milieu of the 19th century was more cautious than in Italy in adopting the demonological interpretation of Spiritualism. A French scholar of Spiritualism, Régis Ladous, studied the Catholic catechisms that appeared in France in the 19th century. He concluded that the early French catechisms manifested a singular resistance to accepting demonological hypotheses in matters of Spiritualism. On the contrary, naturalistic explanations along the lines of Görres were privileged, to the point of accepting dubious theories on "magnetic fluid" and electricity. The recourse to the Devil was surprisingly moderate. Between 1870 and 1880, according to Ladous, catechisms began to distinguish. If in the messages of the so-called spirits there was information that the medium could not have known, the Devil could be really at work. Otherwise, everything could be explained by frauds, trickery, or hallucinations.

It was only in the 1890s that French catechisms, but mostly the popular and diocesan versions rather than the theological and national ones, started mentioning the Devil as mainly responsible for the phenomena of Spiritualism. However, they took care to clarify that Spiritualist mediums were not Satanists in the technical sense of the term because, even if they were deceived by the Devil, they did not consciously intend to worship him. This trend vanished quickly after 1910. Spiritualism was still condemned in the catechisms as a superstition contrary to faith, as an enemy of public order, of mental hygiene, and of morality, but slowly the Devil "went back into exile". Overall, Ladous concluded, it is surprising how French Catholic catechisms followed rationalist doctors more than demonologists in their explanations of Spiritualism.[109]

The French anti-Satanist polemists of the 1860s, perhaps scarcely influential on catechisms, left to the following decades an immense quantity of material, which serious Catholic scholars, adventurers, and hoaxers would all use. The relations of the Devil with Freemasonry, Kabbalah, and even Mormonism would be duly rediscovered by anti-Satanist campaigns and mystifications in the 1880s and 1890s, which would remain incomprehensible without this vast preceding literature.

The texts from this first anti-Satanist era are interesting even for what they do not say. Satanism was sought everywhere, and the actions of the Devil were suspected behind the seer of Prevorst, Mesmer, Cagliostro, Jansenists,

109 Régis Ladous, "Le Spiritisme et les démons dans les catéchismes français du XIXe siècle", in J.-B. Martin, M. Introvigne (eds.), *Le Défi magique. II. Satanisme, sorcellerie*, cit., pp. 203–228.

and Mormons. Very little attention was given to Black Masses, and the case of La Voisin usually was reported in a few lines. "Unconscious" Satanists were regarded as more important than those who explicitly and voluntarily worshipped the Devil. To understand their obscure activities, it was not sufficient to have access to extraordinary libraries. It was necessary to frequent the slums of occultism with an ambiguous attention and sometimes a touch of complicity. Those who looked for the rebirth of an organized Satanism were not the professional anti-Satanists, learned as they might be, such as Bizouard, but the marginal Catholics like Boullan and Vintras, the journalists willing to associate with magicians and sorcerers such as Bois, the decadent literates such as Huysmans.

The learned Catholic anti-Satanists of 1860 continued, however, to be a point of reference for the scholars of the treacherous frontiers between the three fields that Görres called respectively divine, natural, and diabolical mysticism. As late as 1992, in a polemic work where she attacked the phenomena of a controversial Christian mystic, Vassula Ryden, as potentially satanic, Canadian Catholic conservative scholar Marie-France James pointed out how "already more than a century and a half ago some vigilant searchers and anticipators, great unrecognized Catholics and simple laymen at that, placed us on the track of the contemporary wiles of Evil. We can no longer afford to ignore the criteria, the schemes, the scope and the stakes" they described. The authors, to whom James was referring as "the workers of the first hour", to whom her volume was dedicated, were "Henri-Roger Gougenot des Mousseaux, the marquis Jules Eudes de Mirville, and the lawyer Joseph Bizouard".[110]

Éliphas Lévi and the Baphomet

Éliphas Lévi was the pen name of the former Catholic seminarian and deacon, and distinguished occult author, Alphonse-Louis Constant (1810–1875). He was not a Satanist, but deserves a short mention here because he offered to the Satanists their most popular symbol ever, the Baphomet, as he portrayed it in his book *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (Dogma and Ritual of High Magic), published in two volumes between 1854 and 1856.[111]

110 M.-F. James, *Le Phénomène Vassula. Étude critique*, Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1992, p. 7 and p. 29.

111 See an English translation: Éliphas Lévi, *Transcendental Magic*, transl. by Arthur Edward Waite, York Beach (Maine): Samuel Weiser, 1999.

Constant was born in Paris on February 8, 1810, the son of a modest shoemaker.[112] Catholic priests recognized in him a gifted student, and he entered seminary with the idea of becoming a priest. In 1835, he was ordained as a deacon, the last step before priesthood in Catholic orders. In the meantime, however, he had fallen in love with a young girl and decided to leave the seminary. He had also developed Socialist and libertarian ideas, and his first interests in the occult. He befriended the Socialist leader Flora Tristán (1803–1844), with whom he shared some ideas about Satan and Lucifer, but in the same time was still dreaming about a religious vocation. Tristán was the grandmother of painter Paul Gauguin (1848–1903), and would eventually become influential on the anti-Catholic texts the artist wrote in Polynesia.[113] Constant spent a year in the Benedictine abbey of Solesmes, and then was supported by Catholic Bishops and priests who appreciated his gifts as both a writer and a painter.

In 1841, he created great scandal with his revolutionary book *La Bible de la Liberté* (The Bible of Freedom), which eventually landed him in jail for eleven months. He tried to live two parallel lives, one as a Catholic, occasionally under the assumed name of Father Beaucourt, and one as a Socialist and revolutionary, spending in the latter capacity another six months in jail in 1847. In the meantime, he engaged in a serious study of occult literature and in 1850 met his esoteric mentor, the Polish scientist Josef Hoëné-Wroński (1776–1853). Wroński's esoteric messianism was a decisive influence on Constant, and he started writing *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* under the name Éliphas Lévi, which he had reportedly adopted already in 1843 when he had joined a Rosicrucian society. Lévi also visited the Rosicrucian novelist Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803–1873) in London, where he got in touch with occult circles and, as he would later report, evoked the spirit of the 1st-century magus Apollonius of Tyana (ca. 15–100 C.E.).

Upon his return to France, Lévi achieved a certain success with his magical trilogy, including the *Dogme et Rituel* (1854–1856), the *Histoire de la Magie* (1859), and the *Clef des grands mystères* (1861). In the same year 1861, he was initiated into Freemasonry in the Paris lodge La Rose du parfait silence.

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112 For Lévi's biography, see Christopher McIntosh, *Éliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival*, London: Rider and Company, 1972 (2nd ed., Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2011); Thomas A. Williams, *Éliphas Lévi: Master of Occultism*, Tuscaloosa (Alabama): University of Alabama Press, 1975.

113 See Elizabeth C. Childs, "*L'Esprit moderne et le catholicisme*. Le peintre écrivain dans les dernières années", in *Gauguin Tahiti, l'atelier des Tropiques*, Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2004, pp. 274–289. Gauguin's ideas on religion were also influenced by Theosophy, which he knew both through other French artists and his Polynesian neighbor, Jean Souvy (1817–1913).

He found disciples in Italy, Germany, and England in addition to France but never established an occult society of his own. Although his books were successful, he lost most of his money in the war crisis of 1870, and decided to move to Germany. There, he was a guest of his wealthy disciple Mary Gebhard (1831–1891) in the same villa in Elberfeld, a suburb of Wuppertal, where Madame Blavatsky would be also received in 1884. He returned to France in 1871, but his health was declining and he died in Paris on May 31, 1875.

Lévi was already a Romantic Satanist when he wrote *La Bible de la Liberté* under his name Constant, although in this book he distinguished between Lucifer, the spirit of freedom and intelligence, and Satan, the spirit of evil. However, in subsequent writings, the distinction became less clear. Constant both reported old legends and invented some new ones about Satan being able to repent, shed a tear, and recover his original luminous self as Lucifer.

Writing occult books under the name Éliphas Lévi, the former seminarian proposed a new understanding of Lucifer and Satan. Drawing on the esoteric writings of Antoine Fabre d'Olivet (1767–1825), Lévi introduced the notion of "Astral Light" or "Great Magical Agent", a universal fluid that constantly changes and transforms the world in order to preserve "order". The old Lévi was disenchanted with socialism and revolution, and now regarded order, both cosmic and social, as something positive. He also believed that evil Satanists as agents of disorder were indeed at work, and repeated the vituperations of the Catholic writers against them.[114]

The Astral Light manifested itself in the Baphomet. In the *Dogme et Rituel*, Lévi connected the Baphomet with the Devil or Satan.[115] However, the Devil is "the Great Magical Agent employed for evil purposes by a perverse will".[116] In other words, the Astral Light or Great Magical Agent is a blind medium. It can be used for evil purposes by black magicians, and for good purposes by authentic initiates. The evil use of the Astral Light creates Satan, who is not a person but just a by-product of perverse will. "For the edification of M. le Comte de Mirville",[117] Lévi admitted that some, including the Knights Templar, adored the Baphomet. However, their purposes were different from Satanists, because

114 On Lévi and Satan/Lucifer, see R. van Luijk, "Satan Rehabilitated? A Study into Satanism during the Nineteenth Century", cit., pp. 148–167.

115 É. Lévi, *Transcendental Magic*, cit., p. 307. On Lévi's Baphomet, see Carl Karlson-Weimann, "The Baphomet: A Discourse Analysis of the Symbol in Three Contexts", term paper, History of Religions and Social Sciences of Religion, Uppsala: Department of Theology, University of Uppsala, 2013.

116 É. Lévi, *Transcendental Magic*, cit., p. 135. I am following here Karlson-Weimann's scheme, which I find persuasive.

117 *Ibid.*, p. 307.

by using the symbol of the Baphomet they wanted to mobilize the Astral Light in its positive polarity, which is equivalent to the Holy Spirit and even to Christ.

Lévi then proceeded to explain in detail his famous depiction of the Baphomet, reproduced in the frontispiece of *Dogme et Rituel*. "The goat which is represented in our frontispiece bears upon its forehead the Sign of the Pentagram with one point in the ascendant, which is sufficient to distinguish it as a symbol of the light". Interestingly, for Lévi, a Pentagram with two points in the ascendant, rather than one, would be the symbol of malevolent black magic and Satanism. "Moreover, he continued, the sign of occultism [i.e. the sign of the horns] is made with both hands, pointing upward to the white moon of Chesed, and downward to the black moon of Geburah. This sign expresses the perfect concord between mercy and justice".

"The torch of intelligence burning between the horns is the magical light of universal equilibrium; it is also the type of the soul, exalted above matter, even while cleaving to matter, as the flame cleaves to the torch. The monstrous head of the animal expresses horror of sin, for which the material agent, alone responsible, must alone and for ever bear the penalty, because the soul is impassible in its nature and can suffer only by materializing". The caduceus, "which replaces the generative organ, represents eternal life; the scale-covered belly typifies water; the circle above it is the atmosphere, the feathers still higher up signify the volatile; lastly, humanity is depicted by the two breasts and the androgyne arms of this sphinx of the occult sciences". "Behold the shadows of the infernal sanctuary dissipated! Lévi concluded. Behold the sphinx of mediaeval terrors unveiled and cast from his throne! *Quomodo cedidisti, Lucifer*!".[118] As for the name, Baphomet should be interpreted by spelling it backwards as Tem-Ohp-Ab, and means "Templi omnium pacis abbas", the ruler of the Temple of Peace for all humans.[119]

Lévi was not a Satanist, and clearly differentiated between white and black magic. Both can use the same symbol of the Baphomet or invoke the name of Lucifer, although with some subtle differences in how the Pentagram and the sign of the horns would appear. The aim would be in both cases to mobilize the Great Magical Agent, the Astral Light. However, black magicians would mobilize it for evil purposes, creating the Devil, while white magicians would summon it for preserving the cosmic equilibrium and the necessary order.

The Baphomet, the sign of the horns, and the Pentagram were born with Lévi as inherently ambiguous. It would not be difficult for Satanists to turn this ambiguity to their advantage, and the symbols created by the non-Satanist

118 *Ibid.*, pp. 308–309.

119 *Ibid.*, pp. 315–316.

Lévi would become the most popular emblems of Satanism in the 20th century. They would also be used by contemporary Wicca, in non-Satanist but somewhat ambiguous rituals. One example is the Euphoria festival, organized every year north of Melbourne, Australia, and studied by sociologist Douglas Ezzy in a 2014 book, where Euphoria is disguised under the pseudonym of Faunalia. Modeled after Christian accounts of the witches' Sabbath, the wild ritual of the Baphomet in the Euphoria festival does not, however, worship Satan.[120]

120 See Douglas Ezzy, *Sex, Death, and Witchcraft: A Contemporary Pagan Festival*, London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2014.

CHAPTER 7

Around Huysmans, 1870–1891

Satan the Archivist: Vintras

The second part of the 19th century was a period, we are told, when "pure, confessed and militant Satanism, a thankfully rare form of Satanism, is revealed in an active and unexpected manner". Between 1851, the year when Pope Pius IX (1792–1878) condemned Vintras, to 1891, with the first publication in *feuilleton* on the *Écho de Paris* of Huysmans' novel *Là-bas*, Satanism, in the strict sense of the term, "appears to have flourished".[1] Many writers of the era were interested in Satanism, and many of them posed as Satanists. However, "the true Satanists will not have been found among such flamboyant personages": the authentic Satanist lived rather secretly, did not leave written documents, and did not advertise the satanic activities.[2] In order to meet the real Satanists, one had to get one's hands dirty by investigating in the field and meeting questionable people. This is what Huysmans tried to do when he decided to write a novel on Satanism. He could however manage to use some pre-existing material: the "archives" of two priests condemned as heretics, Vintras and Boullan, and the journalistic enquiries of his friend Bois.

Vintras and Boullan, whose respective doctrines should not be confused, had an ambiguous relationship with Satanism. To their followers, they presented themselves both as victims of Satanism and as the sole holders of the secrets to effectively fight it. Their adversaries and the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, on the other hand, accused them of being in league with the Devil. Pope Pius IX wrote a letter to the Bishop of Nancy dated February 19, 1851, which was the definitive condemnation of Vintras and followed a previous letter from Pope Gregory XVI (1765–1846) to the Bishop of Bayeux of November 8, 1843. Pius IX defined the movement of Vintras "a criminal association" and a "disgusting sect", dedicated to spreading "monstrous opinions and absurd illusions", with maneuvers that could only be considered as "truly infernal".[3]

1 Richard Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature 1870–1914*, London: Constable, 1966, pp. 124–125.

2 *Ibid*., p. 137.

3 See the full text of the Papal Brief in Maurice Garçon, *Vintras hérésiarque et prophète*, Paris: Émile Nourry, 1928, pp. 145–146.

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As British historian Richard Griffiths noted, "in neither Vintras nor Boullan, however, does there seem to have been conscious Satanism involved. In fact, both were convinced that one of their greatest powers and duties was the exorcism of the devil and the prevention of satanic rites by mystical powers. Boullan's erotic 'secret doctrine' was in fact based upon a logical application of his theory of 'Unions de Vie' and the ascending ladder of perfection. It was mad and vicious, but in no way does Boullan seem to have believed he was serving the devil by these practices". Notwithstanding, "the eccentricity and obscenity of Boullan's beliefs were no doubt 'satanic' in the sense that, to a Catholic, the abbé may have been misled through the positive influence of the devil; but there seems little doubt that he himself saw his role as that of a bulwark against satanic influences".[4]

The movements of Vintras and Boullan were born in the context of an era still perturbed by the Catholic disorientation that followed the French Revolution and the end of the old world. Apocalyptic themes on the end of the world, the beginning of the "third kingdom" of the Holy Spirit, after those of the Father and the Son, the advent of both the Antichrist and of a "Great Monarch" savior of France and of the Church, continued to be popular until the middle of 19th century, just as they were in the times of Fiard. The apparition of the Virgin Mary at La Salette (1846), officially recognized by the Catholic Church, was seen by many as part of this apocalyptic picture. After the apparition, the visionary girl of La Salette, Mélanie Calvat (1831–1904), began a long and tormented career of tensions with the Church, during which she revealed new secrets and came into contact with the subculture of those interested in apocalyptic prophecies.[5]

Politics entered the mix, because in these same milieus were found those who claimed that Louis XVII (1785–1795), the son of Louis XVI and of Queen Marie Antoinette (1755–1793), did not die, as many believed, in the prison of the Temple but survived. They recognized in the adventurer Karl Naundorff (1785?–1845) both Louis XVII and the "Great Monarch" of the prophecies.

4 R. Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature 1870–1914*, cit., p. 129 and p. 137.

5 On "Melanism", of which no complete history has been written, see Louis Bassette, *Le Fait de La Salette, 1841–1856*, Paris: Cerf, 1965. A collection of documents, published by followers of Mélanie, is *Témoignages historiques sur Mélanie Calvat bergère de La Salette*, Paris: F.X. de Guibert, 1993. For a general overview, see also Michel de Corteville, R. Laurentin, *Découverte du secret de La Salette: au-delà des polémiques, la vérité sur l'apparition et ses voyants*, Paris: Fayard, 2002; M. de Corteville, *La Grande Nouvelle de Mélanie et Maximin, bergers de La Salette. II. Mélanie, "bergère de La Salette" et l'appel des "Apôtres des derniers temps"*, Paris: Tequi, 2008.

A visionary who came to rival Mélanie in popularity was Thomas-Ignace Martin (1783–1834), a peasant from Gallardon near Chartres, who would end up undergoing psychiatric treatment by the same Dr. Pinel who had clashed with Berbiguier. Martin supported Naundorff with the authority of his revelations.[6]

A Catholic novelist very much involved in these controversies was Léon Bloy (1846–1917). He was inspired for many years by the prophecies of a former prostitute, Anne-Marie Roulé (1846–1907), who became the novelist's lover until she ended up in a psychiatric asylum in 1882. The ideas of the Great Monarch, of the end of the world, of the Antichrist and of messianic prophecies, are all found in Bloy's writings.

There were also those who accused Bloy, if not of Satanism, at least of "Luciferianism", believing that the real secret message of Roulé was the identification between the Holy Ghost and Lucifer, a character not to be confused with Satan. These speculations about Bloy[7] are still mentioned by contemporary scholars. They were, however, refuted by Griffiths, as incompatible with the character and the works of the French author, where there is no more than an occasional Miltonian compassion for Lucifer as the archetype of the defeated and the exiled, the same compassion which vibrates in the pages of Bloy towards the Wandering Jew and Cain.[8] Perhaps the question of Bloy's alleged Satanism will be put to rest after Pope Francis, a Bloy enthusiast, in 2013 quoted the French writer as an authority on Satan in the introductory homily of his pontificate.[9] Unlike that of Bloy, other roads led more decisively outside of the Catholic Church, generating suspicions that recall those we witnessed concerning quietism.

Eugène Vintras was born in Bayeux in 1807, the son of an illiterate unmarried mother. During his early years, spent between one job and the next, with occasional accusations of swindling, he was not known for either his culture or his piety. In 1839, in Tilly, a village in Normandy near Caen, his life changed. Archangel Michael appeared to him, announcing the advent of the Third

6 See S*** [Louis Silvy, 1760–1847], *Relation concernant les événements qui sont arrivés à Thomas Martin, laboureur à Gallardon, en Beauce, dans les premiers mois de 1816*, 2nd ed., Paris: L.-F. Hivert, 1839; G.[eorges] Lenôtre [pseud. of Louis Léon Théodore Gosselin, 1855–1935], *Martin le Visionnaire (1816–1834)*, Paris: Perrin, 1924; Philippe Boutry, Jacques Nassif, *Martin l'Archange*, Paris: Gallimard, 1985.

7 See Raymond Barbeau [1930–1992], *Un Prophète luciférien, Léon Bloy*, Paris: Aubier, 1957.

8 R. Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature 1870–1914*, cit., pp. 142–143.

9 Pope Francis, *Holy Mass with the Cardinals – Homily*, March 14, 2013, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130314_omelia-cardinali.html>, last accessed on September 21, 2015.

Kingdom and ordering him to change his name to Pierre-Michel. He would later further change his name to Elias, the name of the prophet whose mission he claimed to renew, and would use also Strathanaël, his "angelic" name. The revelations that Vintras received in the subsequent years followed a usual apocalyptic-prophetic scheme, but with significant innovations.[10]

The intricate doctrines of Vintras lie outside our topic, but we must at least mention his cosmic vision and the fight between angels and demons in the last days. The members of the "Carmel" or the "Work of Mercy" founded by Vintras were, according to the prophet from Tilly, more than simple human beings. They were angels, who had incarnated on Earth for the final battle. So for each one of his followers, Vintras revealed an "angelic" name. If Earth was now populated by angels, it was just normal that demons also went on a rampage, and their minions, the Satanists, were hidden everywhere. There were Satanists even in the hierarchies of the Catholic Church, and this is how Vintras' Vatican condemnations were explained. Satanists should be fought, Vintras insisted, with all possible means, and some of these means were quite peculiar. From the political perspective, the greatest hopes were placed in Naundorff, who for some years supported Vintras' Work of Mercy. The battle against demons and Satanists was also fought on a metaphysical plain, through miraculous holy wafers consecrated by Vintras, on which appeared droplets of blood, crosses, hearts, images of angels, and cabalistic symbols.[11]

The purpose of these holy wafers was to offer protection against remote attacks by Satanists, who tried to direct their rituals against the members of the Vintras movement from afar. The prophet of Tilly made hundreds of "holy wafers" miraculously appear during the course of his life. French lawyer Maurice Garçon (1889–1967), who researched Vintras in 1928, considered them as the products of pure mystification, and the reproduction of the "miracle", until the last days of the life of Vintras, was for him proof that the prophet was an incorrigible cheater who never changed his ways.[12] At least one of the holy wafers, passed over to Boullan and known to Huysmans, was still in a private collection in Paris in 1963.[13]

Some of Vintras' followers pushed themselves to even more dubious practices. A priest, Father Pierre Maréchal, taking advantage of the temporary prison

10 For a synthesis, see M. Garçon, *Vintras hérésiarque et prophète*, cit.

11 A reproduction of one of these hosts, which was in Boullan's possession, can be found in J. Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, cit., p. 335.

12 M. Garçon, *Vintras hérésiarque et prophète*, cit., p. 175.

13 See Pierre Lambert, "Un Culte hérétique à Paris, 11, rue de Sèvres", *Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jacques*, vol. VIII, 1963, pp. 190–205 (p. 202).

detention of Vintras, who had been accused of fraud over the holy wafers,[14] introduced in Tilly in 1845 a practice called "The Holy Freedom of the Sons of God". Maréchal, also known as Ruthmaël, his "angelic" name, taught that for the angels who came to Earth and for the apostles of the Third Kingdom, even materially sinful acts, if they were accomplished with pure intentions, must be considered as acceptable. He thus preached "senseless sexual depravations". He suggested that men who were incarnate angels can create new angels in Heaven with their semen, masturbating during the course of ceremonies specifically created by him. He preached to women how they could become the mothers of celestial spirits through embracing their confessors and their "kindred spirits" in the Vintras group, who were normally not their husbands.[15]

Opponents of Vintras used the Maréchal case to write sensational and exaggerated accounts of the movement in general. Garçon stresses how Vintras was personally foreign to these practices, but admits that Tilly became "the theater of the most scandalous abandons".[16] When Vintras left prison, Maréchal was promptly expelled from the movement. He would later repent, would be readmitted, would fall again and be expelled again. The episode confirmed how Vintras did not promote nor condone sexual perversions.

Garçon also shows us a Vintras who frequented with caution, while seeking information on Satanism, the occult milieus of his time. In his "archives", he meticulously gathered everything from correspondents spread throughout Europe, newspapers, books discussing Satanists and their activities. He believed that, from around 1855, Black Masses in the style of La Voisin in the 17th century and the theft of holy wafers in Catholic churches began spreading around France. The documents gathered by Vintras were classified as being of "first", "second", and "third" class depending on their importance. They often mentioned Black Masses, observed by correspondents and witnesses whose reliability is hard to evaluate.

We thus learn about the existence of numerous localities in France, Belgium, England, and Italy where there were diabolical chapels with satanic and obscene wall paintings. These chapels were decorated, Vintras believed, with statues of pagan divinities such as Venus and Apollo but also of the Devil,

14 See M. La Paraz, *Les Prisons d'un Prophète actuel poursuivi par tous les pouvoirs*, Caen: Ch. Woinez, 1846. "M. La Paraz" was a pseudonym of Father Alexandre Charvoz (1797–1855), a priest who supported Vintras, as results from an unpublished letter to an unknown correspondent by Charvoz himself dated February 14, 1849 (currently in my own collection).

15 M. Garçon, *Vintras hérésiarque et prophète*, cit., pp. 110–111.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

and with blasphemous images and parodies of Jesus Christ, represented for example with donkey ears. Satanists there replaced incense with strong and intoxicating perfumes. A "first class" document described how a naked Catholic priest turned Satanist celebrated a satanic ritual. He went up to the altar and opened a box closed with a chain, where holy wafers were kept. The priest then put on a cloak decorated with blasphemous images of Jesus Christ and offered the holy wafers to an image of the Devil, a goat with a human face, set on the table that served as altar. He then consigned the holy wafers to the participants who, instead of eating them, trampled them under their feet or introduced them into the women's genitalia. The ritual ended with an orgy, where the participants united in a confusion of bodies, which, in its collective obscenity, was the symbol itself of the confusion induced by the Evil One.[17]

Vintras apparently believed that, just as his rituals were effective, the ones practiced by Satanists unfortunately also had the effect of increasing the power of the evildoers. It was thus important to intervene at a distance by using magical means against the Black Masses, attempting to disturb them through occult storms. This was one of the objectives of the "Provictimal Sacrifice of Mary",[18] a purification ritual, and of the "Great and Glorious Sacrifice of Melchizedek", along which there were the "Glorious Sacrifice of Elijah on the Holy Mountain of Carmel" and the "Provictimal and Glorious Sacrifice of the Marisiac of the Carmel of Elijah". The adjective "provictimal" in these rituals indicated that good Christians, or better still incarnate angels, should perform a sacrifice and direct its fruits to the redemption of the sinners and the salvation of the world.

This idea of "vicarious suffering",[19] which may have a perfectly orthodox sense within the Catholic doctrine of the communion of saints, would have perverse consequences with Boullan, but already had a suspicious automatism in Vintras. His "archives" described a mystical experience of Vintras, who in 1855, from his exile in London where he was trying to escape French justice, managed to disturb a Black Mass held in Paris in a house whose walls confined with a cemetery. Vintras saw in this house three people in a state of trance: a young girl around twenty, an old priest, and a mature man. Around the bodies of each, a metal wire favored "the action of fluids and the possession by evil

17 See J. Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, cit., pp. 196–200.

18 See Joseph-Antoine Boullan, *Sacrifice Provictimal de Marie*, Lyon: J. Gallet, 1877; reprinted in Robert Amadou [1924–2006], "Sacrifice Provictimal de Marie", *Les Cahiers de La Tour Saint-Jacques*, VIII, cit., pp. 316–338.

19 See R. Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature 1870–1914*, cit., and Maurice M. Belval, *Des Tènèbres à la lumière. Étapes de la pensée mystique de J.K. Huysmans*, Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1968.

spirits". These wires reached into a nearby room, where three tables, like those used by Spiritualists, surrounded another table, placed on a higher step, which acted as an altar, on which a cross without Christ and a statue of Venus were placed. At the foot of the cross, to its right, there was a piece of bread with a goblet filled with blood, perhaps human, and to the left a snake in a glass vase. Two vases contained human fat, extracted from corpses. Fourteen Satanists were engaged in what seemed to be a séance, and the tables started moving.

In the other room, one of the Satanists implored: "Omnipotent intelligence who are about to dress with our fluids, manifest yourself". Vintras was miraculously following the ritual from faraway London. He reported that a spirit appeared and declared: "I am Ammon-Ra, Ammon-Ra of Aminti; I lead the souls of the dead on a merciless boat. I need the great God of the Christians to be sacrificed to me, if you want me to crush his last prophet [i.e. Vintras himself]. All of you must write and burn your cursed Christian names, and I will start the battle".

The bystanders wrote their first names on pieces of paper, which were then burned. The infernal spirit continued: "You have to give me the virginal flesh of the sleeping woman as compensation". "You shall have it, replied the head of the Satanists, but make sure we receive your active power, just as we abandon to you the immaculate nature of this girl. Do not refuse us any of your gifts, just as we pay homage to you with this soft virgin. Take her. We will celebrate your voluptuousness with the immolation of sacrifice. Lift up and excite the priest that we consecrated for you".

The girl entered the second room, naked but still covered with the wire. Although she was in a trance, she was able to sing. The girl lied down on the altar, onto which the old priest ascended, then dropped his robes and stripped naked. The Satanists, as Vintras' notes reported, appeared "certain of their triumph" while the unworthy priest came closer to the girl. "Consecrate! Consecrate!" the Satanists shouted. But the priest "seemed petrified" and stopped. The head of the Satanists understood that something was wrong and asked him: "What is your problem, coward?" And the priest was obliged to reply: "There is an invisible foreign presence here". It was of course Vintras who, from London, watched everything. "His commandment, the perverted priest claimed, is stronger than yours and has covered me with an imperative anointment. I am now bonded to his will".

"Consecrate all the same", the leader ordered. However, the priest could not do anything: "You can see for yourself how my body falters, and my tongue twists. I cannot understand anything if not the masterly anointment of his word". "Consecrate! Consecrate!" Three Satanists tried to jump onto the altar, but an invisible force threw them to the ground. The same occult storm made

the altar tremble, the cross, the statue and the bread fall down. The leader refused to surrender. Vintras knew he was now winning, the more so because he had managed to introduce a "magical letter" into the chapel. Around the head of the chief Satanist a "magnetic prison" formed, from which he could not escape. He tried to throw himself against the bars of his invisible prison but "blood oozed from his eyes, forehead and ears". The Satanist however did not die but, defeated by the power of Vintras, converted and shouted to the faraway, invisible prophet: "You truly are he who precedes the Great Justice".

He then improvised a sermon for his ex-Satanist companions: "Vile, assassins, fierce animals, godless monsters, you shall hear the truth notwithstanding your stupor. I am the new Balaam, who prophesizes for he who had to curse him. Your operations have failed, you violators of life, of the purity of the bodies, of the virtue of souls, of the honor of spirits. Listen, princes and custodians of the Roman Church, and you evil maleficents in league with them. Hypocrites who, from when you rise to when you fall asleep, preach piety, prayer and faith, hiding under your honorific vests the essential oils of prostitution and of corpses. Shame on you, and glory to your enemy the Great Prophet!" Here we can see how for Vintras there was no difference between the Satanists and the Roman Church, who had condemned his movement as a "disgusting cult". Unfortunately, the episode did not conclude with this happy ending, because the demon Ammon-Ra took advantage of the confusion to possess the virgin, who died from this embrace.[20]

One could easily place the adventure in the category of rants, and conclude that it is more interesting for understanding the mentality of Vintras, which some in fact studied from a psychiatric perspective,[21] than for discovering the true activities of Satanists. This is certainly a possibility, although perhaps the whole story also deserves a second look. The slightly pornographic story of Vintras intervening from London in a Black Mass celebrated in France, where the demon Ammon-Ra appeared in order to rape a virgin, obviously belong to the imagination of either Vintras or Bois who reported it. Vintras, however, built his imaginary adventures from materials he found in the contemporary occult subculture. In fact, Vintras and the occultists shared the same subculture. It is not impossible that the Work of Mercy, or some of its numerous local chapters, encountered occultists performing quite unconventional rituals.

20 J. Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, cit., pp. 201–206.

21 See Marie-Reine Agnel-Billoud [1889- ?], *Eugène Vintras* (*Pierre-Michel-Élie*). *Un cas de délire mystique et politique au XIXe siècle*, Paris: Librairie Littéraire et Médicale, 1919; André Pasquier Desvignes [1901–1985], *Délire d'un paranoïaque mystique. Vintras et l'Oeuvre de la Miséricorde*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1927.

Satan the Pervert: Boullan

Vintras was almost forgotten after his death, but his fame had a revival of sort in 1896, when in Tilly the Virgin Mary appeared just as he had predicted. This apparition was also not recognized by the Catholic Church, but attracted the interest of Spiritualists such as Lucie Grange (1839–1909), who took the opportunity to rehabilitate Vintras.[22] Grange, editor of the Spiritualist magazine *La Lumière*, was in touch with both Huysmans and Bois. She had gathered together prophecies of all kinds including the *Letters of the Salem-Hermès Spirit*,[23] but by 1897, she was trying to represent Vintras as a good Catholic. The operation was difficult, even if Vintras' "official" successors tried to keep away from his more radical practices.[24] These were maintained by a splinter group lead by a strange character, Joseph-Antoine Boullan, who managed to get three of the nineteen Vintrasian Bishops to follow him in a schism after the death of the prophet from Tilly.[25]

Boullan was a very different character from Vintras. The latter was a self-taught peasant, while Boullan was a learned priest, who was part of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, a religious order founded in Italy by Gaspare del Bufalo (1786–1837). Reportedly, Boullan even became a doctor in theology in Rome. He became a fanatic collector of prophecies and apparitions, but he had started his career as a mystical theologian of some repute. The Jesuit Augustin

22 See Hab. L.[ucie] Grange, *Le Prophète de Tilly, Pierre-Michel-Élie, Eugène Vintras. À l'occasion des apparitions de Tilly*, Paris: Société Libre d'Éditions des Gens de Lettres, 1897. On Grange, see Nicole Edelman, "Lucie Grange: prophète ou messie?" *Politica Hermetica*, no. 20, 2006, pp. 60–72. Others, including the Marquis Louis de l'Espinasse-Langeac, *Historique des Apparitions de Tilly sur Seulles. Facta non Verba. Récits d'un témoin*, Paris: E. Dentu, 1901, realized that, if they wanted to make the apparitions of Tilly palatable for orthodox Catholics, they should claim that they had nothing to do with "the ridiculous saga of the prophet Élie Vintras" (*ibid.*, p. 14).

23 See H.L. Grange, *Lettres de l'Esprit Salem-Hermès. Mission du Nouveau-Spiritualisme*, Paris: Communications Prophétiques Lumière, 1896.

24 Vintras' legitimate successor, Edouard Soulaillon (1825–1918), merged in 1907 the Work of Mercy into the Universal Gnostic Church of Jean (Joanny) Bricaud at the so called Council of Lyon, on which see M. Introvigne, *Il ritorno dello gnosticismo*, cit., pp. 128–129 and 131–133. Soulaillon always denied that Vintras ever practiced sexual magic: see (Léonce) Fabre des Essarts [1848–1917], *Les Hiérophantes. Études sur les fondateurs de religions depuis la Révolution jusqu'à nos jours*, Paris: Chacornac, 1905, pp. 267–268.

25 On Boullan's career, see Christian Giudice, "Saint or Satanist? Joseph-Antoine Boullan and Satanism in Nineteenth-Century France", *Abraxas: International Journal of Esoteric Studies*, no. 6, 2014, pp. 114–121.

Poulain (1836–1919), a respected Catholic scholar of mysticism who in 1901 would become famous with his book *Les Grâces d'oraison*, addressed Boullan "from disciple to master" in 1873. Other ecclesiastical writers, who would later be ashamed of their connections with the former Missionary of the Precious Blood,[26] did the same. Boullan was inclined to the more sensational aspects of "Melanism" after the apparitions of La Salette, and for all his life he was obsessed with the ideas of "vicarious suffering" and "provictimal sacrifices". In the years immediately following his ordination as a Catholic priest in 1848, these devotions were however presented in the orthodox form of the adoration of the Eucharist in reparation of the sins of the world.

After the break with the Missionaries of the Precious Blood in 1854, Boullan's passion for the marvelous, for apparitions, and apocalyptic prophecies, began to reach extreme heights. In 1856, he met at La Salette a Belgian nun, Adèle Chevalier (1834–1907), who had problems with her mother superior because she claimed to receive messages from God and the Virgin. The mother superior considered it a fortune that the nun had met a theologian expert in mysticism such as Boullan, and gladly entrusted him with her spiritual education. It was a disastrous and imprudent decision: Boullan and Adèle were young and, as it would soon be discovered, not uninterested in the temptations of the flesh. They traveled back and forth between Rome and France, trying to found both a male and a female religious orders dedicated to reparation. Pope Pius IX received Boullan in 1858, but limited himself to some generic encouragement. In the meantime, the priest and the nun united in a love that was not exclusively platonic.

In 1859, with a small group of followers, they made a first attempt at establishing a "Work of the Reparation" in Sèvres, with the authorization of the Bishop of Versailles. In a house in Avenue Bellevue in Sèvres, Boullan also began to take an interest in the Devil, concluding he was responsible for most incurable illnesses, which could be cured only thanks to the intervention of those consecrated in the Work of the Reparation. Because the latter were all saints, body and soul, medicines made with their urine and even their fecal matter would have miraculous effects and heal demonic illnesses. It seems that in these peculiar concoctions Boullan included also relics, and even pieces of consecrated holy wafers. From these practices, we begin to see Boullan's obsession with excrement and perversions. They also manifested Boullan's belief in

26 Letter from Poulain to Boullan, March 18, 1873, Pierre Lambert collection, and letters of other authors quoted in R. Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature 1870–1914*, cit., p. 132.

the omnipotence of the Reparation, and of the men and women consecrated exclusively for this work.[27]

In 1860, Chevalier found herself pregnant, and there was little doubt that Boullan was the father of the male child who was going to be born. Boullan, however, declared that Adèle, by the workings of Satanists, had been raped during the night by an incubus, an invisible demon. The son of the Devil could not be left to live. When he was born, on December 8, 1860, the very day when Catholics celebrate the Immaculate Conception of Virgin Mary, Boullan killed him. He would later defend the version of the satanic rape even in front of the Holy Office in Rome. But it was also true that there were sexual activities inside the Work of Reparation, based on doctrines that circulated inside the group in a notebook called "Doctrinal Foundation of Reparation".

Sin, according to this theory, was "*aliquid essentiale* just like illness". Many saints took the illnesses of others onto themselves and healed them. Now the "true workers" of the Reparation could take the sins of others onto themselves, thus saving the sinners. This meant, concretely, to repeat these sins, transforming them into holy sacrifices. "The transfer of sin from one person to the other, Boullan wrote, is a fact that can be verified, witnessed in the clearest way". "The repairing soul tries and feels sin in its body, it acknowledges the phases, the progress of the vice, of the defect, of passion, in one word it suffers all the crisis of the laws of sin"; but finally, sinning in a spirit of perfect purity and sacrifice, "it destroys the sin by virtue of Jesus Christ".[28]

Scholars have sometimes detected a quietist influence,[29] even if few quietists would have dared to push themselves towards the consequences of Boullan. The ecclesiastical authorities realized that something was not right.

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27 See Marcel Thomas [1908–1994], "Un Aventurier de la mystique: l'abbé Boullan", in *Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jacques*, vol. VIII, 1963, pp. 116–161; R. Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature 1870–1914*, cit., p. 131; M.M. Belval *Des Ténèbres à la lumière. Étapes de la pensée mystique de J.K. Huysmans*, cit., pp. 125–180.

28 Boullan's notes, in M. Thomas, "Un Aventurier de la mystique: l'abbé Boullan", cit., pp. 131–132. The Catholic doctrine of reparation accepts the idea that a soul can atone for the sins of another, and even, in rarer cases, take demonic attacks and temptations destined to others onto itself. "Madame R". voluntarily took on herself, according to R. Laurentin, the attacks of the Devil destined to her diocese: see *La Passion de Madame R. Journal d'une mystique assiégée par le démon*, cit., pp. 348–349. But in no case does the Catholic doctrine admit that one could sin in the place of a sinner. M.M. Belval (*Des Ténèbres à la lumière. Étapes de la pensée mystique de J.K. Huysmans*, cit., pp. 125–175) shows the evolution of Boullan from the orthodox doctrine of reparation to the heterodox one of the "substitution of sin".

29 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

Boullan was suspended by the Bishop of Versailles, who later, believing he had repented, reintegrated him but had to suspend him again in 1861. In the meantime, Boullan was also in trouble with the secular French courts, to which he was denounced by clients his miraculous remedies did not manage to heal, and by relatives of benefactors the "voices" of Chevalier had pushed to make considerable donations to the Work of Reparation. Condemned with a first-degree decision and on appeal, from 1861 Boullan and Adèle spent three years in prison. In the Rouen prison, Boullan seemed very saddened by the interdiction of the sacraments maintained against him by the Bishop, which demonstrated that he still considered himself a Catholic. He appeared repentant and submissive, and was readmitted to the sacraments upon leaving the prison in 1868. After going to Rome and making a full confession of his faults to the Holy Office, he was even reintegrated in his priestly functions.

The confessions made by Boullan in Rome are contained in the fourteen pages of the so called "Pink Notebook", which was studied by Father Bruno de Jésus-Marie O.C.D. (1892–1962).[30] The first four pages are a "confession concerning his faults" signed on May 26, 1889, which includes a description of his bizarre "remedies of the Reparation" and of his sexual perversions. The other pages constitute a defense, including an attempt to justify his deeds and what he calls a "solemn judgment" against "the idiots of the priesthood", who considered him more culpable than he was. The "Pink Notebook" reached Huysmans through a collaborator of Boullan, Julie Thibault (1839–1907). Huysmans used these documents for his novel *Là-bas* and consigned them, just before his death, to his friend Léon Leclaire (1851–1932). Leclaire in turn gave them to Louis Massignon (1883–1962), a famous Islamologist, who in 1930 transmitted them to Mgr. Giovanni Mercati (later Cardinal, 1866–1957) in Rome, together with 108 letters from Boullan to Huysmans. Mercati in turn deposited the documents in the Vatican Library. Writing in 1963, Massignon stated he had made sure that the dossier would not vanish, since "in his zeal for the 'honor of the French clergy' a certain compatriot of mine warned me he wanted to have it destroyed".[31]

It is probable, however, that Boullan's worst perversions came after he wrote the "Pink Notebook" of 1869. Back in France from Rome, he took over a newspaper, *Les Annales de la Sainteté* founded by Father Jules Bonhomme (1829–1906), an "apparitionist" newspaper of a kind that still exists today in certain fringe Catholic milieus, which ran from one apparition and one

30 (Father) Bruno de Jésus-Marie, "La Confession de Boullan", in *Satan*, cit., pp. 420–428.

31 Louis Massignon, "Le Témoignage de Huysmans et l'affaire Van Haecke", *Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jacques*, vol. VIII, 1963, pp. 166–179 (p. 167).

exorcism to the next. In those years, Boullan "left his imprint in more than one ambiguous affair, on the ill-defined frontiers between false mysticism, Spiritualism and magic".[32] In 1875, he began a correspondence with Vintras and declared himself his follower. This was the right occasion for Rome to terminate his activities once and for all. The Vatican ordered the Archbishop of Paris to suspend him again from his priestly functions and to excommunicate him.

Separated from the Church of Rome, Boullan's main purpose in life was now to be recognized as the successor of Vintras, who died in the same year 1875. In 1876, he moved to Lyon, the capital of the Vintras movement, but managed to convince only a part of the followers of the prophet of Tilly. In these years Boullan, who signed himself as "John the Baptist" and also "Dr. Johannès", the name Huysmans would give him in *Là-bas*, began teaching his followers the doctrine of *unions de vie,* which he had in fact elaborated before leaving the Catholic Church. The former priest also frequented occult circles in Paris and Lyon, and the few months he spent in the group of Vintras initiated him sufficiently in the doctrines of the prophet of Tilly. He managed to take possession of part of the archives of Vintras, and started considering himself the head of an epic battle against Satanists.

What Boullan really knew, or presumed to know, about Satanism came from both the literature and the documents gathered by Vintras, and from his adventures in the most dubious occult milieus of Paris. Among the occultists, he had made enemies as well as friends. His attempt to recruit disciples among the adepts of magical movements that were proliferating in the *fin de siècle* Paris roused the suspicion of the best-known masters of Parisian occultism. Guaïta, who was not yet thirty but already well known as an occultist, asked his secretary, Oswald Wirth (1860–1943), to learn more about Boullan and infiltrate his organization.

Guaïta and other occultists who examined Boullan's activities, including Gérard Encausse, who called himself Papus (1865–1916), and Joséphin Péladan (1858–1918), were not easily scandalized, and were familiar with the traditions of sexual magic. However, what Wirth learned from Boullan and his followers went beyond their imagination. The doctrine of Reparation was further refined: it was now a question of fighting not only Satanists but also the Devil in person, and more radical methods were necessary. Boullan explained to Wirth "the right of pro-creation", distinguished from "the laws of matrimony", and which required a special initiation. Sexual unions were literally "the tree of science of Good and Evil. Those that are made according to the laws

32 M. Thomas, "Un Aventurier de la mystique: l'abbé Boullan", cit., p. 136.

of decadence lead to the abyss; those that are made according to divine rules open the route to destiny".

The narrative of Boullan was substantially gnostic: human beings are imprisoned in matter, and to fight the final battle against the Devil and his agents they must set themselves free and "ascend" to a higher plane. In fact, in the last days that precede the Apocalypse, not only human beings but also all creation, from angels to the inferior spirits known as elementals and even animals, is engaged in an "ascension". The "life unions" are the means of ascension: each creature can, and must, ascend by uniting with one that is placed above in the ascension scale, and must at the same time become the instrument of the ascension for one that is below, by uniting with an inferior creature. The letters Boullan wrote to Wirth and to another follower, of whom Wirth managed to assure the collaboration, clarified the sexual implications of the practice. "It is the Ferment of Life, Boullan wrote, which, when included in the principle of life of the three kingdoms, makes them rise, step by step, the ascending scale of life (…). One being alone has but one fluid. The Ferment of Life is the combination of two fluids", male and female.

The letters to Wirth from three young female initiates, who hoped to perform a "life union" with him, countersigned by their mother and Boullan himself, claimed that "Carmel means *flesh elevated unto God*" and that in the Carmel of Boullan "one finds celestification here-below through the act that was and still is the cause of all moral decadence". Boullan's doctrine was not only about "life unions" among humans. To ascend, there must also be unions with "spirits of light", but one must also lend oneself so that the spirits of earth, air, water, the strange "humanimals", and animals themselves may ascend. A member of the group wrote to Wirth that one follower of Boullan was "obliged to receive the caresses and the embraces not only of spirits of light but also of those that she calls *humanimals*, malodorous monsters that plagued her room and her bed and united with her in order to be elevated to humanization. She assured me that these monsters had impregnated her on more than one occasion, and that, during the nine months of this gestation, she had all the symptoms, even external ones, of pregnancy. When the time came, she gave birth without pain and she was freed from the flatulence of the organ where children are born at the moment of birth".[33] The phenomenon ultimately described was perhaps not incredible: it could be what modern medicine defines as hysterical pregnancy.

The "life unions" were infallible, according to Boullan, for fighting Satanists. They often took on a perverse character. In one family, it was said that "Father

33 S. de Guaïta, *Essais de Sciences Maudites. II. Le Serpent de la Genèse. Première Septaine (Livre I). Le Temple de Satan*, cit., pp. 286–299.

[Boullan] would sleep with both the daughters at once". According to the testimony of a disciple, the priest had to "be affected with satyriasis, because the unions he had with one or another woman were so frequent that it would rouse the envy of many younger men". Reportedly, he also experimented with a wide variety of sexual positions.

Not all of this, once again, must be interpreted as mere libertinism or sexual perversion. Boullan believed that, through the Life Unions, "we can form an Edenic body on this Earth, which will be called the Glorious Spiritual Body, our immortal body, which is the wedding dress the Evangelist speaks about". We will also be able to provide "Glorious Spiritual Bodies (…) to those who died without possessing this wedding dress". This was an old esoteric doctrine, but Boullan presented it in heavily sexualized terms, and in the frame of the battle he believed he was fighting against Satanists.

For these battles, Boullan "took small statues of male and female saints" and "baptized them with the name of the people to whom he wanted something to happen". "There were also hearts of animals riddled with needles. The person [i.e. the Satanist] felt she was being struck in the heart, and sometimes the operation led to death". The old remedies used by Boullan in Sèvres did not go out of fashion. There was still mention of "an elixir made with his [Boullan's] blessed urine, mixed in certain proportions to that of Sister C. [another of his disciples]", of "cataplasms made with fecal matter", and of vials with "a balsam in which sperm could be recognized". Boullan and his disciples could act against the Satanists at a distance, forcing their guiding spirits to obey. They used the "*supreme commandments* written on a parchment blessed with ink and blood", "read out loud, with a certain ceremony, then sealed, again with a secret method and burned. In this way the Spirit to whom they were addressed will read them and will be forced to do what the order required".[34]

At the end of 1886, Boullan began to realize that Wirth was not what he claimed to be, and to exclude him from the inner workings of his group. In the end, Wirth confirmed to Boullan that he had effectively deceived him, adding that, if he had not detected him as a mole, he should not be such a great prophet. Wirth also told Boullan that all the documents gathered about him would be examined by an "esoteric court". This "court" was part of the Cabalistic Order of the Rosy+Cross, one of the occult societies connected with the Rosicrucian legend founded between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century.[35] In May 1887, Wirth transmitted to Boullan, in the name of

34 *Ibid.*, pp. 298–305.

35 On the splits between different Rosicrucian orders, see M. Introvigne, *Il cappello del mago. I nuovi movimenti magici dallo spiritismo al satanismo*, Milan: SugarCo, 1990, pp. 187–190.

Guaïta, a sentence of condemnation as a "sorcerer and supporter of an ungodly cult".[36] Occultists such as Papus and Péladan, who were also part of this court, used when they referred to Boullan expressions curiously similar to those Pope Pius IX had used to condemn Vintras.

What punishment did correspond to this condemnation? Boullan had no doubts: it was a sentence of death that Guaïta and his friends, whom he considered erroneously as Satanists, intended to execute against him with magical means. His nights became sleepless from that moment on. He felt attacked and suffocated, he believed his enemies were celebrating a Black Mass, and he ran to perform counter-rituals assisted by his most faithful follower, Madame Thibault. He could however count on a precious help: some of the miraculous holy wafers that Vintras had used against Satanists. Huysmans would describe some of those episodes. Boullan, attacked during the night, "jumped like a tiger with his holy wafers. He called for Saint Michael, the eternal executioner of divine Justice, climbed on the altar and shouted three times: "Knock down Péladan, knock down Péladan, knock down Péladan!" – "It is done" said Mother Thibault, who held her hands on her womb".[37] As for Guaïta and his friends, they insisted the punishment they had in mind was more mundane: it consisted in the publication of the letters and documents gathered by Wirth in a volume that Guaïta published in 1891, *The Temple of Satan*.[38] The controversies concerning the "verdict" of 1887 would continue within the polemics that would follow the death of Boullan in 1893, in which Huysmans would also be involved.

On the question of French Satanism in the second half of the 19th century, Boullan did not add any particularly interesting element. Substantially, his vision of the battle between Satanists and anti-Satanists came from Vintras. He only added the accusations of Satanism against Guaïta, Papus and Péladan, which were clearly unfounded. Péladan, in particular, belonged to a Catholic variety of Romantic Satanism. For the French author, Lucifer was "a great sinner" but he had been ultimately well-intentioned. Recognizing this original benevolent intention, God offered to Lucifer a possibility of redemption through repentance, and Péladan extended to the Fallen Angel his "fervent

36 See the work written, with the intent of defending his old master, by a pupil of Guaïta, André Billy [1882–1971], *Stanislas de Guaïta*, Paris: Mercure de France, 1971, p. 77.

37 R. Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature 1870–1914*, cit., p. 136.

38 Stanislas de Guaïta, *Essais de Sciences Maudites. II. Le Serpent de la Genèse. Première Septaine* (*Livre I*). *Le Temple de Satan*, cit.

Catholic" compassion.[39] Péladan recognized that this was not orthodox Catholic "demonology as it is taught in the seminaries".[40] But it was not Satanism in Boullan's sense of the word either.

However, Boullan is important for our story, for two different reasons. On one side, he was the intermediary through whom the "archives" and ideas of Vintras reached Huysmans, who would popularize them for a larger audience. On the other, entering into a paradoxical logic that was not isolated in the history of Satanism, Boullan, obsessed as he was with the idea of fighting Satanists, eventually adopted some "satanic" practices. In "the 'union' with 'higher beings' from the spiritual world the unconvinced observer could merely see onanism".[41] The use of sperm, urine, and fecal matter and at the same time of consecrated Catholic holy wafers, in bizarre concoctions, curiously anticipated subsequent Satanism, although Boullan claimed they were tools of an anti-Satanist crusade. Boullan was not a Satanist, and he believed he was actively engaged in fighting Satanists. However, the practices he utilized to fight the Devil and the Satanists became materially identical to some practices later used by the Satanists themselves. Catholic critics had their good reasons, when they concluded that sometimes Satanists and so-called anti-Satanists gave the Devil the same satisfaction.

Boullan in Poland? Mariavites and the Occult

Before leaving Boullan, it is perhaps useful to mention his legacy. A small group of followers survived in Lyon until the Second World War. More interesting is the hypothesis of Boullan's influence on the Polish Mariavite movement. The Mariavite Union dates back to the private revelations of Maria Franciska Kozłowska (1862–1921), condemned by the Vatican in 1906. In 1909, the Mariavites managed to have one of their own, Jan-Maria Michal Kowalski (1871–1942), consecrated as a Bishop by the Dutch Old Catholic Church, a Catholic splinter group of Jansenist origin, which also welcomed in late 19th century those Catholics who refused the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope proclaimed by the First Vatican Council.

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39 J. Péladan, *Comment on devient artiste, esthétique* (*Amphithéâtre des sciences mortes – III*), Paris: Chamuel, 1894, pp. xi–xiii.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

41 R. Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature 1870–1914*, cit., p. 135.

Kowalski was an avid reader of Huysmans novels and occult literature, and there is some evidence that Mariavites practiced "Life Unions" inside their Plock monastery between priests and nuns. In 1935, while the scandal spread and the Polish government threatened to intervene against the movement, Mariavite Bishop Philip Feldman (1885–1971), although himself a participant in Life Unions, launched a movement that lead to the deposition of Kowalski and his removal from the headquarters in Plock. Kowalski retreated to the Mariavite estate of Felicjanów, where he eventually organized a schismatic movement, before being deported by the Nazis and dying in the concentration camp of Dachau.

To what extent the name "Life Unions" was really used and the sexual unions between priests and nuns related to sex magic is unclear, and many documents have been destroyed.[42] Bishop Maria Beatrycze Szulgowicz, leader of the Mariavite branch more loyal to Kowalski, assured Polish scholar Zbigniew Łagosz in 2013 that Kowalski had no contacts with occult groups and derived his doctrines from Polish Messianism and Kozłowska.[43] The unions between priests and nuns, at any rate, existed and they were so much non-Platonic that a significant number of children were born.

Mariavites remained divided into two branches: the "Plock group", which chose a moderate Protestant theology and even became part of the World Council of Churches, and the "Felicjanów group", which maintained Kowalski's more radical ideas, but not the practice of Life Unions. There were also a series of smaller schismatic groups, which often interacted with the occult subculture.

Vintras influenced important authors connected with Polish Messianism, such as Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) and especially Andrzej Towianski (1799–1878), often quoted by the Mariavites. There are some elements common to both Boullan and the Mariavites, but the two movements seem to be two different branches of the same gnostic tree. It is not certain whether Kowalski ever heard about Boullan: the allusions and the pseudonyms of Huysmans and other sources were sufficiently cryptic for those who did not know the background. The successor of Kowalski, interviewed by the Polish novelist and academic Jerzy Peterkiewicz (1916–2007), guaranteed never having heard of Boullan before 1970.[44]

42 See Zbigniew Łagosz, "Mariavites and the Occult: A Search for the Truth", *Anthropos: International Review of Anthropology and Linguistics*, vol. 108, no. 1, 2013, pp. 256–265.

43 *Ibidem.*

44 Jerzy Peterkiewicz, *The Third Adam*, London: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 71.

Satan the Journalist: Jules Bois

Another source of information and more or less accurate claims on Satanism allegedly existing in 19th-century France is the controversial journalist Jules Bois, whom we already had the opportunity to mention.[45] Twenty years younger than Huysmans, Bois was born in 1868 in Marseilles to a family of traders. By the age of eighteen, he had already developed an interest in politics and connections with nationalist and monarchist movements. When he turned twenty-two, after an experience as secretary of poet Catulle Mendès (1841–1909), himself close to the occult milieu in Paris, Bois published an esoteric drama on the symbolism of Satan.[46] A well-received lecturer for hire on esoteric themes, he turned to journalism and, just like many contemporary esotericists, was fascinated by the topic of women, both in the obscure dimension of the witch and in the bright one of the "female messiah" of the future. On the mystery of the woman, he would publish during the course of his career, *L'Éternelle Poupée*[47] and *L'Ève Nouvelle*, where he would insist on the idea, which would become quite popular in the 20th century, of the witches' Sabbath as a proto-Feminist enterprise.[48]

In the years 1891–1892, he became the editorial secretary for *L'Étoile*, a journal of Christian esotericism owned and edited by Albert Jounet (1863–1923). During this period, Bois lived immersed in the milieu of Parisian occultism, of which he tried to uncover all the secrets. The people he felt closest to seemed to be poised between Catholicism and magic. On one side, they publicly declared their Catholic faith. On the other, they were fascinated by heterodox theses such as those of Vintras and cultivated magical evocations and gnostic themes. Jounet announced in 1895 that he had abandoned esotericism after a Catholic confession, but soon returned to his old habits.[49] In 1893, Bois had already left Jounet and *L'Étoile* to found a new magazine, *Le Cœur*, which would survive for only two years, and was especially interested in the prophecies concerning a future "female messiah".

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45 See the biography by Dominique Dubois, *Jules Bois (1868–1943). Le reporter de l'occultisme, le poète et le féministe de la Belle Époque*, Marseilles: Arqa, 2004.

46 J. Bois, *Les Noces de Shaïtan, drame ésotérique*, Paris: Chamuel, 1890. For further biographical information on Bois, see also M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme au XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., pp. 42–44, who perhaps overestimates the activities of the journalist in French extreme right politics.

47 J. Bois, *L'Éternelle Poupée*, Paris: P. Ollendorff, 1894.

48 J. Bois, *L'Ève Nouvelle*, Paris: Léon Chailley, 1896.

49 For a detailed reconstruction of this milieu, see Jean-Pierre Laurant, *L'Ésotérisme chrétien en France au XIXe siècle*, Lausanne: L'Âge d'Homme, 1992.

Bois also emerged as a respected art critic. In 1897, he defended the controversial style of the French group of artists known as the Nabis ("Prophets") and other esoterically minded painters and sculptors, claiming that theirs was an "art inconscient", where a transcendental impulse and otherworldly spirits guided the artists. The influence of Bois' "esthétiques des esprit" on French esoteric culture and art criticism has been discussed in the dissertation defended in 2002 by Canadian scholar Serena Keshavjee.[50] Bois' interpretation was in turn controversial, but the Nabis were more than a group of artists: they operated as a secret society based on Schuré's ideas. While some of their rituals were playful and humorous, others had a serious esoteric content.[51]

These were, in fact, also the years of Bois' friendship with Schuré and Huysmans, and of journalistic investigations into Parisian occult groups, great and small. Bois collected them in two volumes, *Les Petites Religions de Paris*[52] and *Le Satanisme et la Magie*.[53] The first was typical of a new literary genre, a reporter's travelogue among new and bizarre "cults", which would be illustrated after Bois by authors such as Pierre Geyraud (pseudonym of the former Trappist monk Raoul Guyader, 1890–1961) and Georges Vitoux (1860–1933) and still exists today. Bois' first book already hinted at Satanism, on which the broadest treatment was that of *Le Satanisme et la Magie*. While he was writing these works, Bois was also involved, to the point of taking part in two duels, in the magical war between Boullan and Guaïta, where we will find Huysmans once again.

In the milieu of "Catholic" esotericists, the most prominent figure was Péladan. Bois and Péladan were not friends. Bois attempted to discredit Péladan and attract to his own magazine *Le Cœur* the wealthiest supporters

50 Serena Keshavjee, "'L'art inconscient' and 'L'esthétique des esprits': Science, Spiritualism, and the Imaging of the Unconscious in French Symbolist Art", Ph.D. Diss., Toronto: Department of the History of Art, University of Toronto, 2002. See also Janis Bergman-Carton, "The Medium is the Medium: Jules Bois, Spiritualism, and the Esoteric Interests of the Nabis", *Arts Magazine*, vol. 61, no. 4, December 1986, pp. 24–29.

51 See Caroline Ross Boyle, "Paul Sérusier", Ph.D. Diss., New York: Faculty of Philosophy, Columbia University, 1979: Caroline Boyle-Turner (the same author of the dissertation, writing under her married name), *Paul Sérusier, la technique, l'œuvre peint*, Lausanne: Edita, 1988. Paul Sérusier (1864–1927) was a leading exponent of the Nabis.

52 J. Bois, *Les Petites Religions de Paris*, Paris: Léon Chailley, 1894. In this book, next to sensational information on Vintras and Boullan (pp. 120–152) a chapter on "Luciferians" (pp. 155–164) acted as a counterpoint. There, Bois published certain documents and declared "having received them from Dr. Bataille" (p. 156), whom we will return to in the next chapter. Bois did express some doubts on Bataille (*ibid.*, p. 168), but apparently did not realize his "documents" were part of an elaborate fraud.

53 J. Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, cit.

of his publications, including Count Antoine de La Rochefoucauld (1862–1959). Neither did Bois consider the occult milieu of Paris only: he knew and met occultists from all over Europe, including the English circle around the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. In the salon of Maria de Mariategui, Lady Caithness and Duchess of Pomar's (1830–1895), a key figure of the Paris occult milieu[54] with her own interests on sexual magic,[55] or perhaps at the Librairie de l'Art indépendant of the editor and occultist Edmond Bailly (pseudonym of Henri-Edmond Lime, 1850–1916), Bois met the famous actress and singer Emma Calvé (pseudonym of Rosa-Emma Calvet, 1858–1942), who would eventually become his lover.

Lady Caithness, patroness of Christian esotericists, was at the same time a friend of Madame Blavatsky and the founder of the Theosophical Society in France, and considered her salon a bridge between East and West. Bois eventually met there and befriended the most famous of all the Indian gurus who came to the West: Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902). This "Saint Paul of Hinduism" discovered the missionary potential of the Hindu religion among Westerners by participating in the World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in 1893. Bois attentively followed the information that arrived in Europe about the Parliament in Chicago and was especially enthusiastic about Vivekananda, "the Young Hindu prophet promulgating a 'universal religion'".[56] In 1900, Vivekananda finally traveled to Paris and Bois met him at the house of two American friends, Francis (1840–1909) and Elizabeth McLeod Leggett (1854–1931). The residence of the Leggetts where Vivekananda was a guest was quite luxurious, but the Swami surprised Bois by suggesting on their first meeting that he moved into the journalist's modest house.[57]

On September 1, 1900, Vivekananda wrote to his disciple Turiyananda (1863–1922): "Yesterday I went to see the house of the gentleman with whom I shall stay. He is a poor scholar, has his room filled with books and lives in a flat on the fifth floor. And as there are no lifts in this country as in America, one has to climb up and down. The gentleman cannot speak English: that is a further reason for my going. I shall have to speak French perforce".[58] Vivekananda was

54 See M. Introvigne, *Il ritorno dello gnosticismo*, cit., pp. 88–92.

55 See Marco Pasi, "Exégèse et sexualité: l'occultisme oublié de Lady Caithness", *Politica Hermetica*, no. 20, 2006, pp. 73–89.

56 Marie Louise Burke [1912–2004], *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*, 3rd ed., 6 vols., Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1987, vol. VI, p. 337.

57 J. Bois, "The New Religions of America – Hindu Cults", *Forum*, no. 77, March 1927, pp. 414–415.

58 *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 8 vols., Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989, vol. VIII, p. 534.

enthusiastic about his hosts. In his *Memoirs of European Travel,* he described Emma Calvé as "a unique genius. Extraordinary beauty, youth, genius, and a celestial voice – all these have conspired to raise Calvé to the forefront of all singers…". He saw Bois as a "famous writer; he is particularly an adept in the discovery of historical truths in the different religions and superstitions". Vivekananda also read *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, describing it as "a famous book putting into historical form the devil-worship, sorcery, necromancy, incantation, and such other rites that were in vogue in Mediaeval Europe, and the traces of those that obtain to this day".[59] Bois, in the meanwhile, reported to having found in the Indian master "something of Marc Aurelius [121–180 B.C.E.], of Epictetus [ca. 55–135] and perhaps even of Buddha [563–483 B.C.E.?] in a single man".[60]

In the meantime, Vivekananda, thanks to Bois, met a number of Parisian occultists, academics, and journalists. In 1900, Bois and Calvé took Vivekananda on a long journey from France to the Middle East. The famous ex-Carmelite priest and Catholic modernist author Hyacinthe Loyson (1827–1912) and his American wife were also part of the group. Only Bois, but not Loyson nor Calvé, traveled further to India, where he stayed for several months with Vivekananda. Rather than strengthening his enthusiasm for Hinduism, however, this permanence convinced him of the superiority of Christianity. He visited the Franciscan missionaries in India and converted to Catholicism. On the journey back, he was received in a private audience in Rome by Pope Leo XIII (1810–1903).

The conversion was one of the elements that brought, although not immediately, the love story between Bois and Calvé to a close. The gradual return to the Catholic Church, however, did not prevent the journalist from pursuing his interests in alternative opinions about the afterlife. In 1902, he published *Le Monde Invisible*,[61] where, writing as a Catholic, he criticized Spiritualism and Theosophy. However, in the same year, he conducted an enquiry into occult phenomena among literary and scientific celebrities of his era, recording their answers.[62] His successive activity, while he continued to write for various newspapers, was rather directed towards literature, art, and cinema, and he attempted several times to write novels.

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59 Swami Vivekananda, *Memoirs of European Travel*, *ibid.*, vol. VII, p. 375.

60 J. Bois, "The New Religions of America – Hindu Cults", cit., p. 422.

61 J. Bois, *Le Monde Invisible*, Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1902. In this book, Bois tried to come clear about his relations with Dr. Bataille, who by now had confessed his fraud. He claimed, however, that some "Luciferians", quite outside the "mystification" of Bataille, really existed in 1902 in Paris (*ibid.*, pp. 161–181).

62 J. Bois, *L'Au-Delà et les forces inconnues* (*Opinion de l'Élite sur les Mystères*), Paris: Société d'Éditions Littéraires et Artistiques, Librairie Paul Ollendorff, 1902.

The director of the *Journal*, Charles Humbert (1866–1927), commissioned him to visit the United States and report about that country for curious Parisian readers. Reportedly, he also worked for the French secret services, and had some problems with his government when the *Journal* was involved in an obscure story of espionage in favor of Germany.[63] He decided to settle in the United States, where he remained, with the exception of a trip to France in 1927–1928, until his death in New York on 2 July 1943. In his final years, ill, the journalist limited his production. He seemed to be particularly worried, after such a spiritually adventurous life, about Catholicism and "the salvation of his soul".[64]

Although all of his life is interesting, for our purposes the most significant years are those when he was writing about Satanism, which go from 1890 to 1902. As a journalist, Bois contributed to the promotion of Huysmans, but it is certain that much of the information Huysmans thought he could rely on about Satanism came from Bois himself. In one of his last works on the world of occultism, *L'Au-delà et les forces inconnues*, the journalist interviewed Huysmans, defining him as "one of the most knowledgeable about these frightful rituals" such as "Black Masses and curses, which caused scandals in past times and have not yet disappeared". This was a subtle game, because the interviewer had been in fact the informer of the interviewed in the first place. Bois claimed that Huysmans "owns incredible documents on the rituals of this 'inverted religion', which still has its ungodly priests and its repulsive rituals", documents in the face of which "the most skeptical smile leaves space to a movement of stupor and horror, thinking that such abominations are possible in our present world. Nothing, however, is more certain". But Huysmans' certainties came largely from Bois, although he also used texts from the "archives" of Vintras and Boullan.

In the Bois interview, Huysmans stated he believed, just like anti-Satanist Catholics of the 1860s, that Spiritualism had been invented by the Devil. Spiritualism "simply gave imbeciles access to the afterlife. It was invented for the lowest souls. The Devil heard that materialism was weakening; thus, he changed his game. He played new cards but did not lose in this new game. His

63 D. Dubois, *Jules Bois (1868–1943). Le reporter de l'occultisme, le poète et le féministe de la Belle Époque*, cit., pp. 257–259. It is possible that the accusations of collaborationism with the Nazis during the Second World War, which M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme au XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., p. 44 echoes, derived in fact from a confusion with events relative to the *Journal* in the period of the First World War.

64 D. Dubois, *Jules Bois (1868–1943). Le reporter de l'occultisme, le poète et le féministe de la Belle Époque*, cit., p. 262.

supreme malice reached the point of telling his followers to say he does not exist. The sole fact of denying the Devil is proof of being possessed. Spiritualists are in this position". After having attributed to his old enemy Guaïta the magical killing of the poet Édouard Dubus (1864–1895), which resulted from a "diabolical and crazy" death curse, Huysmans went on to state that the only "real Satanism is religious Satanism", and in his literary work he provided just some modest examples of it. Wanting to show there was much more, the writer opened a small drawer and showed to Bois "the confession of an evil priest to the Holy Office". Although he did not name names, there is little doubt that it was the "Pink Notebook" of Boullan, for whom by now Huysmans had lost his early sympathy.

If Boullan, Huysmans continued, moved in an ambiguous way between God and the Devil, "another satanic priest enjoyed himself by multiplying in peaceful nunneries the love ghosts that in the Middle Ages were called 'incubi', because it was believed the Devil could fall in love with women and take possession of them". Not only: this priest, "who is nothing more than an operator of Satanism", used "special fumigations and sacrilegious practices", teaching the poor nuns "some special positions so as his astral body or those of the entities from the afterlife could visit and rape them better". The writer showed the journalist the correspondences between "the poor girls", meaning the nuns, and the satanic priest, who "was not a vulgar erotomaniac at all, and genuinely believed he was able to influence invisible beings, which he could unleash or withhold".

Concerning the Black Masses, they "are held quite often, Huysmans assured, in the neighborhood where I used to live, rue de Sèvres". "Did you really see them?" Bois asked. Huysmans' reply was cautious: "As you know, Durtal [the main character of his novels] confesses to this in my *En Route*". A main problem, Huysmans complained, was that otherwise good Catholic priests unfortunately did not believe in the existence of Satanists, although it was proven by the theft of holy wafers and confirmed by what the writer accepted as reliable information. There were however also believing priests, and one reported to Huysmans that some ladies "told me in confession that they had received the proposal, in exchange for a sum of money, of rinsing their mouths with an astringent concoction which will be supplied to them before the communion, because it will maintain the holy wafer intact". The ladies could then spit the wafers and sell them. Why, Huysmans asks, "will one try to buy consecrated holy wafers if they were considered simple bread, and for what purpose if not for satanic rituals?"[65]

65 J. Bois, *L'Au-Delà et les forces inconnues* (*Opinion de l'Élite sur les Mystères*), cit., pp. 32–46. The possibility for Catholics to receive communion on the palm of the hand instead of

Bois' most ambitious work on Satanists was *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, published in 1895, but collecting articles largely published between 1890–1891. There, "he revealed everything he knew".[66] Huysmans' preface generously praised the competence and the science of his friend and returned to the theft of the holy wafers. "On last year's [1894] Easter Tuesday at Notre Dame in Paris, Huysmans wrote, an old lady (…) took advantage of a moment when the cathedral was almost empty to launch herself on the tabernacle and steal two ciboria, each containing fifty consecrated holy wafers". "This woman certainly had some accomplices, since she had to keep one ciborium in each hand, hidden under her cloak! And unless she placed one on the floor, thus risking giving herself away, she would not have been able to open one of the exit doors to leave the church. Besides, it is clear this woman committed the theft to get the holy wafers, because ciboria no longer have, at least in big cities, a sufficient value to constitute a temptation". I examined, Huysmans continues, a great number of accounts and concluded that "this one of Notre-Dame was not an isolated case". Quite the opposite: the thefts of holy wafers "have in the past years reached an incredible number. Last year, not to go too far away, they multiplied even in the most secluded corners of the country".

There followed a detailed enumeration of the locations, in France with excursions in Italy, where these thefts had occurred: Varese Ligure (in the Italian province of La Spezia), Salerno, Rome itself. The thefts of holy wafers were, the novelist claimed, a proof of the existence of Satanism for skeptics. Huysmans and Bois did not need such proof, however, since they knew by now, by what they claimed was direct experience, that Satanists existed. Better still, they were able to distinguish between two different types of cultists. The first were the "Luciferians", who believed Lucifer to be good and about whom Huysmans admitted he knew very little. He mentioned Taxil in such a reserved tone that he might have suspected he was an impostor. The second group included the

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in the mouth, introduced in many countries after the instruction of the Vatican Congregation for the Divine Worship *Memoriale Domini*, of May 29, 1969, finally made the "astringent concoctions" unnecessary and the theft of wafers easier. At least, this was what some authoritative Catholic authors believed. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bologna, in Italy, noted in a letter of Mgr. Gabriele Cavina, Vicar General, which accompanied the note of the Archbishop, Cardinal Carlo Caffarra, *Disposizioni sulla distribuzione della Comunione Eucaristica*, dated 27 April 2009, that after "the possibility of receiving Communion on the hand was conceded", serious abuse was occurring in the Holy Eucharist. "There are those who sell them" and "who take them away to desecrate them in satanic rituals": "although they may be sporadic events, they have however occurred!".

66 M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme au XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., p. 43.

"Satanists", about whom Huysmans believed he knew a lot. They, he wrote, "believe the same things we believe in. They know perfectly well that Lucifer, that Satan is the proscribed Archangel, the great Creator of Evil; and consciously make a pact with him and adore him".

The study of Bois, according to Huysmans, "is certainly the most conscious, complete, the most informed that has ever been written on afterlife and Evil". Certainly, Bois "does not profess orthodox Catholic ideas", but by revealing the secrets of Satanists "he acted in a very Christian manner" because in magic "every publicized secret is a loss". "Advertising, open air are one of the most powerful antidotes against Satanism". The "complete itinerary of Satanism" described by Bois cannot but have, according to Huysmans, the best effects on Catholic readers.[67]

Huysmans in his preface promised much, and Bois at least partially delivered. Compared with *Les Petites Religions de Paris*, the style is more refined and literary, and we must be patient with several pages containing historic, theological and poetic references, before the journalist from Marseilles finally tells us what he knows about magicians and Satanists. The first part of his enquiry concerns "Satanism in the countryside". Unlike modern sociologists, Bois does not arrive at a clear distinction between folkloric magic in the countryside and the bourgeois magical movements in the cities. He moves however with an inquisitive spirit from the old witch trials to the chronicles of provincial newspapers and the streets of his beloved Brittany, in order to be sufficiently well informed on the everyday spells of magicians for hire.

He concludes that both the witch, a figure that fascinated him as the magical incarnation of the eternal woman, and the folk magician in the countryside sometimes resorted to invoking Satan and to pact with the Devil in order to obtain some modest concrete results, without really being Satanists. But sometimes the Devil appeared, "complete, voracious, malicious and criminal", and made them pay dearly for their imprudence. There is also an interesting description of how some folk magicians came to satanic evocations through the popular cult of the apostle Jude or Judas (Thaddeus), confused in their imagination with Judas (Iscariot), the traitor, considered as an intermediary of the Devil. Cycles of prayers to Saint Jude with ambiguous occult traits are still part of fringe Catholic folklore in several countries.

In the second part of the volume, dedicated to the "Church of the Devil", Bois firstly explored the libraries and examined the origins of the Black Mass in the last Sabbaths of the witches. Coming to modern times, the journalist began with the case of La Voisin and then described the "archives" of Vintras and

67 J.-K. Huysmans, "Préface", in J. Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, cit., pp. VII–XVI.

Boullan, which he had examined at length with his friend Huysmans. A first conclusion was that the dangerous Satanist is usually an unworthy Catholic priest. "The priest of Satan is effectively the priest of God; the Damned fights religion with the same weapons of religion".[68] A real Catholic priest, often beyond suspicion, Bois insisted, normally celebrated the real Black Mass. The descriptions in Vintras' archives, Bois maintained, were fundamentally true, even if sometimes exaggerated. The plan of the Black Mass was always the same: the virgin who was used as an altar, the inversion of the Catholic Mass, the consecration by an unworthy priest, the profanation of the holy wafer, the final sexual act.

Who took part in Black Masses? Very few people, according to Bois: normally less than thirty, rarely more than fifty. The social level was high, sometimes extremely high. An interesting document, the authenticity of which the author left up to the reader to decide, even mentioned Empress Eugénie (1826–1920), whose enthusiasm for Spiritualism and the apparitions of Mary were well known, and even her husband, Napoleon III (1808–1873). The document was the alleged record of a strange ritual, where Napoleon III anointed his forehead with a mysterious "theurgist cream" and summoned three different spirits: "the Spirit of the causes, the Writer of the effects, and the Affirmer of the dominant laws". Three spirits appeared, but it was unclear if they were the summoned ones, since they gave as their names Adoina, Pinfenor, and Benhaenhac, which, Bois argued, were certainly names of demons.

The incident happened in 1870, and the devils, liars as it was their custom, advised the unfortunate Emperor to attack Prussia, assuring him victory. Napoleon III did not trust them, and the following evening, by using another unguent, he summoned the spirit Luhampani, which he considered the protector of his family. The summoning did not work very well, as Luhampani remained silent, but the Emperor took this as a good omen. Other signs were less positive, but by now Napoleon III had decided to declare war on Prussia. Boullan, the journalist reported, confirmed to Bois that the document relative to Napoleon III was reliable. The priest also claimed to know from eyewitnesses that in Prussia the highest political leaders also summoned demons. They were evidently more powerful, or more truthful, as they correctly predicted the victory of the German army. As for Napoleon III, Bois was sufficiently prudent

68 *Ibid.*, p. 181. It is instructive to confront these points in Bois' book, which claimed to be a serious investigation, with the previous work signed by Bibliophile Jacob [pseud. of Paul Lacroix], *Curiosités infernales*, Paris: Garnier Frères, 1886, where the objective was exclusively that of entertaining the reader.

to talk about of the "*hypothetical* magic of the sad Emperor", relating it to "that spirit of dizziness and error, which, according to the poet Racine, accelerates the fall of Monarchs".[69]

Bois was also interested in less spectacular cases. He examined at length Berbiguier, as we already mentioned. He then dwelt on episodes that are not strictly part of Satanism and Black Masses, but still have something to do with the Devil. He studied the cases of incubi and succubi, and the sexual relations between human women and the Devil, and saw them repeated in the extraordinary phenomena of the Chevalier de Caudemberg. The Chevalier was the author of a book about the deep and sensual kisses which, in ecstasy, he claimed receiving from the Holy Virgin. These kisses, Bois claimed, came from the Devil. Bois also mentioned one "visionary Marie-Ange", about whose identity he remained reticent. In the presence of her confessor, the Lord himself kissed Marie-Ange, leaving colored bonbons and a sweet liquor on her tongue. Bois concluded that, in a modern version of the stories told by the Sabbath witches, both the pious Caudemberg and the devout Marie-Ange had been in reality kissed by the Devil.[70]

Other phenomena more directly related to Satanism were those, which Bois tried to gather wherever he could find them, of spells and death curses. Certainly, Bois knew these phenomena where not found only in a Judeo-Christian context. He referred to death spells travelers found in the Marquesas Islands, among Native Americans, in Borneo, in China: "the ritual of the death curse is universal". But "the Church of the Devil is the real factory of the tools of evil. The death curse is affiliated to the Black Mass like a sacrament, which could not exist without a priest or without an altar". Thus, Bois returned to Satanists, and repeated the anecdote, known to Huysmans' readers, about the Satanist priest portrayed in *Là-bas* under the name of Canon Docre, who "had white mice in cages fed with holy wafers and poisons dosed with accuracy. Precious instruments, from which he could not separate himself, not even when he left on a journey. These small creatures, saturated with evil spells, were disemboweled the appropriate day with a skilled knife and their blood collected in a goblet", creating a very powerful potion for death spells.

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69 J. Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, cit., pp. 206–209 (Italics added). In reality, the quote is not from the poet Louis Racine (1692–1763) nor from his father, the playwright Jean Racine (1639–1699), but from Count Louis-Philippe de Ségur (1753–1830), *Histoire Universelle Ancienne et Moderne*, vol. IV, Paris: Alexis Eymery, 1822, p. 67.

70 J. Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, cit., pp. 236–240. As mentioned earlier, Caudemberg had also been studied by Gougenot des Mousseaux.

French and Belgian Satanists also used "chickens and guinea pigs, fattened with the same sacrilegious and poisonous foods" and kept their fat for deadly spells. Among Parisian Satanists, Bois claimed he found various recipes, which were reproduced fully in Huysmans' *Là-bas*. Huysmans admitted in the preface to Bois' book that this kind of information for the novel came straight from the journalist. The first recipe suggested crushing together "flour, meat, consecrated holy wafers, mercury, animal sperm, human blood, morphine acetate, and lavender oil". Another recipe prescribed using a fish, a classic figure of Jesus, which had swallowed poison together with fragments of holy wafers; then to take the fish out of the water, leave the body to rot and take from this an oil to be distilled, which would turn the enemies of the Satanist "insane".

Fantasies? Figments of Boullan or the journalist's own imagination? Not according to Bois: even the French police, he claimed, had evidence that "in 1879 in Châlons-sur-Marne the blood of mice was used in the practice of evil by a demonic group, and in 1883 in Savoy a circle of Satanist priests prepared the terrible oil". Certainly, "these substances are perfidious to handle", and Satanists prefer to perform magical rituals where they command invisible spirits, and the larvae that obsessed Berbiguier, to attack their enemies with reduced risks for themselves.[71] Bois invited the reader not to be afraid of the terrible death curses, nor of the gentler but not less effective love spells. There was no potion, spell, nor curse sufficiently powerful that it could not be dispelled by an opposite practice, which Bois called "exorcism" by using the term in a wider sense than Catholic orthodoxy would allow. The journalist was careful to especially recommend a moral and devout life, always the best defense against all satanic curses, and to appeal to priests who were in fame of being cautious and prudent. He however believed that even Boullan's theatrical "exorcisms", which he knew well, were not devoid of a certain effectiveness.

It has been argued that Bois invented all the details of his so-called investigations, or relied on Vintras and Boullan only.[72] Certainly, he took Vintras, and particularly Boullan, at face value. The main interest of Bois' work is to document what a certain literary milieu in fin-de-siècle Paris believed about Satanism. I would not however discard his whole massive work as all and always imaginary. The practices he described were, admittedly, odd. But some oddities may have existed in certain fringes of the occult milieu in Paris, rather than simply in Bois' imagination, although knowing for certain is admittedly difficult.

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71 *Ibid.*, pp. 283–286. These passages have almost literal parallels in *Là-bas*.

72 R. Van Luijk, "Satan Rehabilitated? A Study into Satanism during the Nineteenth Century", cit., pp. 223–225.

Satan the Author: Huysmans, Boullan, and the Satanists

We have to resort once more to Bois' testimony to summon a strange enemy of Satanists, the already mentioned Madame Thibault, who had the useful gift of discerning in the screaming and movements of birds a satanic attack arriving from far away like a thunderstorm. Thibault one day woke her master Boullan and began to inform him about the workings of Satanists, which she "saw" from a distance just as Vintras was able to do. "Mother Thibault, what are these operators of iniquity doing?" Boullan asked. "Father, they are placing your portrait in a casket". "The laws of *contresigne* and of *choc en retour* [i.e. the laws according to which, when a curse meets a powerful adversary, it backfires on whoever sent it] are going to punish them", Boullan replied, and placed a writing of his enemies in another casket, which was quickly buried in the night. "Mother Thibault, what are these evil people doing now?" "Father, they are saying a Black Mass against you". To resist, Boullan, with his head and feet naked and wearing one of Vintras' magnificent red and blue vestments he managed to obtain, began to celebrate the Sacrifice of Glory of Melchizedek to which, if it was not sufficient, he would also add the Provictimal Sacrifice of Mary, extracting from a bag Vintras' miraculous holy wafers.

"These rituals, independently of what one will think, Bois wrote, were not vain pantomimes. One of these battles, that Boullan did not win, became for this Napoleon of magic a kind of Waterloo in the metaphysical space. He had defended himself too late. Noises were heard, like punches with a fist on the operator's forehead", a detail, specified Bois, which was told to him by painter Auguste Lauzet (1863–1898), who assisted Boullan during a ceremony in 1892. "Real tumefactions appeared on Boullan's forehead. Then Boullan let out a great scream; he opened his cloak and the bystanders could see a great bleeding wound". "On another occasion, Bois reported, the altar almost toppled; it had become a point of contact, the location of the explosion of two antagonist fluids, that of Boullan and that of the Satanists".[73]

Whether these episodes really happened or not, Bois moved them from journalism to the history of mainline literature. Mother Thibault, at a certain point in her tumultuous career, lived in Paris working as a cook, resident magician, and domestic protecting spirit against Satanists, for one of the greatest novelists of the era, Joris-Karl Huysmans. Starting in 1895, a cult inspired by Vintras and Boullan was celebrated in Paris in an apartment in 11, rue de Sèvres. Thibault celebrated it in the house of Huysmans, a writer who in those years was

73 J. Bois, *Le Satanisme et la Magie*, cit., pp. 288–290.

progressively more interested in the occult. There, Thibault decorated a room with portraits of saints, of Boullan, of people who were famous for holiness in her era such as the Italian founder of the Salesian order, Giovanni Bosco (1815–1888), and the holy parish priest of Ars, Jean-Marie Vianney. She began to celebrate behind closed doors the Provictimal Sacrifice of Mary, for which she had received a special priesthood reserved to women from Boullan.

The ceremonies of Thibault, who proved to be an excellent cook for the writer, continued until 1898, when Huysmans, who by now was frequenting orthodox Catholics, began to see her as an "old witch", "diabolical", "satanized", "an old drugged liar". In 1899, Huysmans moved for a few years to the abbey of Ligugé, and Thibault took advantage of this to return to her hometown in Champagne, where she continued to celebrate Boullan's rituals until her death, which occurred a few months after the passing of Huysmans, in 1907. Thibault took her famous tabernacle to Champagne, where she kept Boullan's treasures, which her heirs would sell in 1960 to a private French collector. She also continued a correspondence with Huysmans, who no longer believed in her magical powers. For several years, however, the writer had allowed himself to be protected every day from the pitfalls of Satanists by Thibault, using rituals derived from both Vintras and Boullan.[74]

To understand why such a well-known French intellectual as Huysmans needed a domestic exorcist to protect him from Satanists, we must reconstruct his career in the decade before Thibault's arrival in rue de Sèvres, i.e. from 1885 to 1895. Huysmans was born in Paris to a Dutch father and a French mother. He was hired as a clerk at the Ministry of Internal Affairs at the age of eighteen, but he was also interested in literature from a very young age. He took to intensively frequenting actresses and prostitutes, quickly abandoning the Catholicism he was raised in. Between 1876 and 1884, the patriarch of French naturalism, Émile Zola (1840–1902), considered him as one of his most promising literary disciples. His first works all had a naturalist imprint. In 1884, however, Huysmans broke away from Zola and published one of the manifestos of the new literary current called Decadentism (*À Rebours*), while he also befriended a conservative Catholic like Bloy. For a few years, in fact, Huysmans assisted Bloy, who was continuously tormented by extreme poverty, with sums of money. Bloy, whose Catholicism was bizarre but sincere, in turn attempted to guide Huysmans back to the Church.

A zealous frequenter of both brothels and monasteries, Huysmans was still spiritually tormented and restless. He looked everywhere, and began to take an

74 See P. Lambert, "Un Culte hérétique à Paris, 11, rue de Sèvres", cit.

interest in Naundorff, to whom he intended to dedicate a novel.[75] He astutely detected Naundorff's connection with marginal Catholicism, occultism, and Spiritualism. He frequented the circle of Papus; he met Jounet, Guaïta, Péladan and the "journalists of the occult" Bois and Vitoux. He befriended the poet Dubus, the same whose suspicious death was later attributed by Huysmans and Bois to sorcery. Around 1885 – although, according to others, this episode should be moved to 1892[76] –, Dubus introduced him to "an extraordinary medium, M.A. François, who directed an office at the Ministry of War and who was the president of a branch of the Independent Group of Esoteric Studies" (founded by Papus).[77] Huysmans was himself an officer in a branch of the government. Together with other functionaries, he participated in an evocation of the spirit of the famous General Georges Boulanger (1837–1891). With Dubus, who was quite passionate about Spiritualism, Huysmans frequented the séances of the era, but he quickly became convinced that Spiritualist mediums, "whether they want it or not, and in fact often without knowing, are in the field of diabolism".[78]

Huysmans' passage from Spiritualism to occultism was typical of the times, and dates back to 1889. A literate and agnostic friend, Remy de Gourmont (1858–1915), introduced Huysmans to his lover, a Catholic lady who dabbled in esotericism called Berthe Courrière (Caroline-Louise-Victorine Courrière, 1852–1916). Berthe, in turn, introduced to Huysmans the priest Arthur Mugnier (1853–1944).[79] Later, Mugnier would play a decisive role in the novelist's conversion to Catholicism. Courrière, although she was at the same time a pious frequenter of the Parisian parish of Saint Thomas Aquinas, began to guide Huysmans in a series of explorations into the darkest aspects of occultism, and to tell him about Black Masses and Satanists. There was, in fact, a milieu where someone like Courrière could introduce Huysmans, and where neither Bois nor the esotericists of the circle of Papus could easily be received. These were

75 See Fernande Zayed, *Huysmans peintre de son époque*, Paris: A.G. Nizet, 1973, p. 433. Naundorffism was so tightly connected to prophecies and the occult that the project of the novel on Naundorff transformed, little by little, into *Là-bas*.

76 See D. Dubois, *Jules Bois (1868–1943). Le reporter de l'occultisme, le poète et le féministe de la Belle Époque*, cit., p. 51.

77 See Joanny Bricaud, *Huysmans occultiste et magicien*, Paris: Chacornac, 1913, p. 10.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 13. See Gustave Boucher [1863–1932], *Une Séance de Spiritisme chez J.-K. Huysmans*, Niort: The Author, 1908.

79 Mugnier was an admirer and a correspondent of Édouard Schuré. See A. Mercier, *Édouard Schuré et le renouveau idéaliste en Europe*, cit., p. 470. Schuré was for several years a close friend of Bois, although he also corresponded with Papus, Guaïta and Péladan: see *ibid.*, pp. 464–468.

the extreme fringes of a certain Catholic world, where it was never completely clear who was fighting against the Devil and who was seduced by him.

About Courrière, "there were many stories". It is certain that "she guided Huysmans in his investigations". It is not clear whether she was a Satanist herself. The medical doctor Jean Vinchon (1884–1964) reported the testimony of another celebrity of the literature who became a good friend of the disturbing parishioner of Saint Thomas, Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918). He reported that from Paris Courrière often traveled to Bruges to visit the rector of the chapel of the Holy Blood, which still exists today: the Belgian priest, Canon Louis (Lodewijk) Van Haecke (1829–1912). The priest would remain for decades at the center of the polemics between Huysmans and his critics.[80] Bookdealer Pierre Lambert (1899–1969) published in 1963 a series of letters to Huysmans from Gourmont and the baron Firmin Vanden Bosch (1864–1949), a Catholic Belgian magistrate, who provided a series of pieces of information on the relationship between Courrière and Van Haecke. Gourmont initially considered the Belgian canon as a good influence on his lover, but subsequently changed his mind and came to consider him as an "ungodly priest". In his letters, he referred to a series of ambiguous relationships between the Parisian damsel and the Belgian priest, whom he described as being at the center of a clandestine network of Black Masses.

In 1890, Courrière interrupted her relationship with Van Haecke in dramatic circumstances.[81] "Berthe Courrière ran away in the middle of the night, almost naked, from the house of the canon": found in the middle of the street by police officers, she was housed in a mental hospital in Bruges,[82] where Van Haecke tried to visit her. After she was discharged from the hospital, the priest chased after her. "She escaped from him and reached the train station, where she stood in line with the travelers who were waiting for their turn in front of the ticket booth. She only had one person in front of her, when she felt a

80 Jean Vinchon, "Guillaume Apollinaire et Berthe Courrière inspiratrice de 'Là-bas'", *Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jacques*, vol. VIII, 1963, pp. 162–165. See also Peter Read, "Apollinaire et le Dr. Vinchon: poésie, psychanalyse et les débuts du surréalisme", *Revue des Sciences humaines*, no. 307, 2012, pp. 35–59.

81 P. Lambert, "Annexes au dossier Van Haecke, Berthe Courrière. Lettres inédites de Gourmont et de Firmin Vanden Bosch à Joris-Karl Huysmans", *Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jacques*, vol. VIII, 1963, pp. 180–189. The archives of Bruges' Saint-Julien Psychiatric Hospital confirms that Courrière was there, from September 8 until October 6, 1890 (*ibid.*).

82 M. Thomas, "De l'abbé Boullan au 'Docteur Johannès'", *ibid.*, pp. 138–161 (p. 146).

powerful force that prevented her from stepping forward. She halted the line, notwithstanding the complaints of the ticket vendor and the other travelers".

Excusing herself as sick, Berthe Courrière asked a man to help her. "This man, though quite strong, had a hard time holding her up due to the rigidity of her body, which prevented her from moving forwards. The power of this immobilizing force increased. Mad with terror, she realized that the priest was holding her from far away with a curse. People started to gather around the ticket booth. Berthe Courrière could only resolve the situation by asking the man who was supporting her to take the money out of her bag and to put her on board the wagon. Luckily, the train left. During the first hour of the journey, until the French frontier, she could still feel a force pulling her back. The friends who came and collected her in Paris at the Gare du Nord welcomed her in their arms, exhausted by tiredness and emotion".[83] According to Baron Vanden Bosch, Courrière finally left Satanism by going to confession to a well-known Belgian priest, poet Guido Gezelle (1830–1899), who would later have an ambiguous role in the case of Van Haecke. For others, the priest who confessed Courrière could not have been Gezelle. He was already in trouble with an English damsel who was infatuated with him after having read his poetry, and would have refused to be further involved with such scandalous characters as Gourmont and his lover.

Huysmans discovered Courrière's misadventure in Bruges in October 1890. At the beginning of the year, the writer, who had already been thinking for months about writing a novel on Satanism, had decided to try a contact with Boullan, although his occultist friends in Paris spoke about him in the worst possible terms. Initially, he approached Father Paul Roca (1830–1893), an occultist priest who was having a hard time with the Catholic hierarchy and was a friend of Bois. Roca, however, peremptorily refused to help Huysmans to contact Boullan.[84] It was Boullan's worst enemy, Guaïta, who consented to giving Huysmans the private address of the priest in Lyon, which was very hard to procure. On February 5, the novelist wrote his first letter to Boullan.[85]

83 J. Vinchon, "Guillaume Apollinaire et Berthe Courrière inspiratrice de 'Là-bas'", cit., pp. 164–165. The author is quoting a report by his friend Apollinaire, who was told by Courrière herself.

84 This correspondence can be found in the Pierre Lambert collection and was quoted by M. Thomas, "Un Aventurier de la mystique: l'abbé Boullan", cit., p. 141.

85 All of the correspondence between Huysmans and Boullan is now, as a gift from Louis Massignon, in the Vatican Library.

Wirth went to Huysmans' home on February 7, to put him on guard against Boullan,[86] but to no avail.

At this point, the writer did not know whether Boullan was an accomplice or an enemy of the Satanists: but, the more he was advised against meeting him, the more his intuition told him that he would extract from the priest precious material for his book. He would not be disappointed: a prolific correspondence between Huysmans and Boullan[87] accompanied the whole redaction of *Là-bas* and continued until September 1890, when finally the writer took the road to Lyon to visit his peculiar correspondent and attend his liturgies. In the meantime, Boullan had managed to provide Huysmans with many documents from his and Vintras' "archives". They were indeed "the most incredible archives on Satanism", as Huysmans defined them in 1890.[88] Boullan also sent to the novelist information on exorcisms and on his peculiar interpretations of the apparition of La Salette, as well as on his magical battles with Guaïta and his friends. Huysmans was very much impressed by Boullan's "documentation", and accepted his version of the fight with the circle of Guaïta. Therefore, he broke his connections with the Parisian occultists, started considering them as Satanists, and sided decisively with the priest of Lyon.

The study of his correspondence with Boullan also shows in a definite way that Huysmans had not been informed by him about the activities of Canon Van Haecke in Bruges. Boullan did not even know the name of the Belgian priest. It was Huysmans who mentioned to him for the first time the Black Masses in Bruges, asking for his opinion on the misadventures of Courrière. Boullan examined the case, concluded that it was effectively about "black magic", and carried out a series of his usual rituals against Van Haecke. Courrière, incited by Huysmans, wrote in turn a couple of letters to Boullan. She remained, however, suspicious of him and the priest from Lyon eventually complained about the woman's "lack of gratitude". She did not even realize, he wrote, the decisive role played by Boullan's rituals in "freeing her" from the influence of Van Haecke.[89]

86 M. Thomas, "Un Aventurier de la mystique: l'abbé Boullan", cit., p. 141.

87 Only three of the many letters from Huysmans to Boullan remain, while almost all of those from Boullan to Huysmans survived. See M.M. Belval, *Des Ténèbres à la lumière. Étapes de la pensée mystique de J.K. Huysmans*, cit., which offers a detailed chronicle of the relations between the two men.

88 Letter from Huysmans to Ary Prins (1860–1922) of November 3, 1890, in Joris-Karl Huysmans, *Là-Haut. Le Journal d'"En Route"*, ed. by Pierre Cogny [1916–1988] and P. Lambert, Paris: Casterman, 1965, p. 223.

89 Most of this correspondence is reproduced in M. Thomas, "Un Aventurier de la mystique: l'abbé Boullan", cit., pp. 146–151.

Huysmans' *Là-bas*

In February 1891, *Là-bas* began to appear in *feuilleton* in the newspaper *L'Écho de Paris*. It was published in a volume in the month of April.[90] The novel was the story of a writer, Durtal, who was busy reconstructing the adventures of Gilles de Rais (1405–1440), the bloodthirsty 15th-century criminal known as Bluebeard, and at the same time was carrying on an affair with a married woman, Hyacinthe Chantelouve. She attracted his attention by sending him, before they met in person, a series of unsigned letters. A small group of people educated the skeptical Durtal on Catholic mysticism, the marvelous, and apparitions. Little by little, Madame Chantelouve revealed her shady side. She was part of the circle of a certain Canon Docre, who celebrated Black Masses and other satanic rituals. Durtal was thus pushed into an investigation of contemporary Satanism, where Huysmans was able to use the "archives" of Vintras and Boullan and Bois' journalistic inquiries. Durtal also met a mysterious priest, Dr. Johannès, who with his exorcisms was engaged in a deadly fight against the Satanists.

Finally, Madame Chantelouve persuaded Durtal to participate himself in a Black Mass. He obliged the woman, but came out of the Black Mass so disgusted that he abandoned his lover forever. In the last pages, where many saw the pre-announcement of Huysmans' conversion, Durtal continued to follow Doctor Johannès' "white magic", but his Catholic friends almost managed to convince him that all magic must be equally refused. They urged him to abandon also Spiritualism, which "was still filth", and the "riffraffs of the Rosy Cross", whose activities, either directed by Papus or Péladan, concealed "the disgusting experiments of Black Magic". "White magic…, his Catholic friend des Hermies told Durtal: but, notwithstanding the nice words that hypocrites and naïve people flavor it with, what can it be all about? What can it lead to? The Church, besides, which is not fooled by such rackets, condemns both forms of magic, white and black, indifferently".[91]

A lot could be said about the literary structure of *Là-bas*, and its role in the itinerary of Huysmans towards his conversion to Catholicism. What we are interested in is not, however, its value as a novel, but as a document of Huysmans' opinions on Satanism. As often happens in novels, the main characters were based on real people. Durtal was certainly Huysmans; Canon Docre was

90 J.-K. Huysmans, *Là-bas*, Paris: Tresse et Stock, 1891. My quotes are from the 15th edition, Tresse et Stock, Paris 1896, which includes some corrections. There are several English translations, but I prefer to translate myself from the original French.

91 *Ibid.*, pp. 427–428. Hermies also condemns the Theosophical Society (*ibid.*, p. 426).

clearly Canon Van Haecke, whose last name would literally translate from Flemish to French as "D'Ocre". The identification of "Doctor Johannès" with Boullan was also clear. Catholic writer Charles Buet (1846–1897) is a convincing homologue of Madame Chantelouve's husband, a conventional and dull character. Concerning Madame Chantelouve herself, the novel presented various letters to Durtal that were identified with certainty as directed to Huysmans by Henriette Maillat (1849–1915),[92] who had offered her graces both to the author of *Là-bas* and to Péladan. Another woman who was famous in Parisian artistic circles, Jeanne Jacquemin (1863–1938), a Symbolist painter and the lover of Boullanist artist Auguste Lauzet, also had some characteristics of Chantelouve, as did the wife of Buet. But there may be no doubt that stories about Hyacinthe Chantelouve and the Satanists and her relations with Canon Docre, i.e. Canon Van Haecke, corresponded to the adventures of Berthe Courrière. The allusions were not immediately transparent to Huysmans' readers, and were reconstructed by critics only after many decades.

The sources of Huysmans on Satanism were fundamentally of four types. Firstly, as an official of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the writer had access to the national archives of the police, and meticulously gathered everything that concerned rumors of Satanism and Black Masses.[93] Secondly, before the final redaction of the novel, Huysmans went to Lyon and inspected Boullan's "archives", using them extensively. A third source was constituted by the journalistic investigations of Bois: this was where the recipes for satanic poisons came from, and perhaps the episode of the white mice fed with consecrated holy wafers in *Là-bas*.[94] The final source, and the most controversial, of Huysmans was certainly Berthe Courrière. But she was never the only one: for example, Dubus, a literary associate of Huysmans, also claimed to have visited Van Haecke in Bruges and to know about his dubious activities.

It is sometimes argued that Huysmans was a victim of the mystifications of Taxil, to whom we will dedicate the next chapter. The dates, however, do not support this theory. In 1890, when Huysmans wrote *Là-bas*, Taxil had already been publishing against Freemasonry for four years. However, the anti-Masonic theme was only vaguely mentioned in Huysmans' novel, where the influence

92 Huysmans was criticized for having included personal letters from one of his lovers in a novel. Henriette did not protest, perhaps because she badly needed Huysmans' help in her extreme poverty. See on this point Christophe Beaufils, *Joséphin Péladan (1858–1918). Essai sur une maladie du lyrisme*, Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1993, pp. 100–101.

93 J. Vinchon, "Guillaume Apollinaire et Berthe Courrière inspiratrice de 'Là-bas'", cit., p. 163.

94 *Là-bas* included a virtually identical passage to what Jules Bois reported in *Le Satanisme et la Magie*. Whether Huysmans told the story to Bois or vice versa remains unclear.

of Taxil can be recognized in a couple of paragraphs at the most, of secondary importance. The main "revelations" of Taxil and his circle on Satanism are found in *Le Diable au XIXe siècle*, which appeared between 1892 and 1895 when *Là-bas* was already well known, so that the most likely conclusion is that the author of the *Diable* was inspired by Huysmans rather than vice versa.

Huysmans was also influenced by the publication in 1875, by the scholar Isidore Liseux (1835–1894), of a manuscript by Father Luigi Maria Sinistrari d'Ameno O.F.M. (1622–1701) on incubi, succubi, and sexual intercourse between Devils and witches.[95] The book is very interesting, and many scholars, including myself, believed for years it was the fruit of a fraud orchestrated by "Bibliophile Jacob", a pseudonym for Paul Lacroix (1806–1884), the author of many works on medieval witchcraft and a friend of Liseux.[96] The Italian scholar Carlo Carena, however, traced in 1986 two manuscripts in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan and in the Biblioteca Casanatense in Rome respectively, with the title *Daemonialitas*, which appears to constitute the original version of the work by Sinistrari d'Ameno.[97] The version of Liseux presents many discrepancies, and Carena believes that he worked on a third manuscript, now lost, although it is also possible that the French author simply embellished the text himself.

The Black Mass attended by Madame Chantelouve and Durtal in the novel occurred in an old chapel of an aristocratic palace, among damsels of high society and homosexuals. On the altar, above the tabernacle, there was "a derisive and villainous Christ. They had raised his head, stretched his neck and painted wrinkles on his cheeks, transforming his suffering face in that of a mug with a base laugh that disfigured his face. He was naked, and instead of the cloth that covered his loins, the erected unclean manly parts were exposed though a bundle of horse hair". Paraphernalia worthy of La Voisin such as goblets with cabalistic symbols, black candles, and an incense burner with poisonous perfumes, decorated the altar.

Canon Docre entered "with his head decorated with a crimson hat on which two bison horns of red cloth sprouted". Under the liturgical vestments, "he was naked" and between the vestments there was a chasuble "of dark red, similar

95 Luigi Maria Sinistrari d'Ameno, *De la démonialité et des animaux incubes et succubes*, Latin text and French translation, Paris: Liseux, 1875.

96 See A. Mercier, *Les Sources Ésotériques et Occultes de la Poésie Symboliste* (*1870–1914*), 2 vols., Paris: A.-G. Nizet, 1969, vol. I, pp. 240–241.

97 L.M. Sinistrari d'Ameno, *Demonialità. Ossia possibilità, modo e varietà dell'unione carnale dell'uomo col demonio*, ed. by Carlo Carena, Palermo: Sellerio, 1986. Marco Pasi and Alexandra Nagel convinced me to reconsider my previous opinion on the apocryphal nature of the Liseux edition.

to dry blood" where "in the middle, inside a triangle where thrived a vegetation of colchicum, red savina, barberry and euphorbia, there was a black goat, standing showing its horns". Just like in any proper Black Mass, the Catholic ceremony was "inverted", but Docre transformed the conventional formulas in authentic satanic sermons. "Lord of scandals, Dispenser of the benefits of crime, Overseer of sumptuous sins and great sins, Satan, we worship you, logical God, honest God!", exclaimed the priest. He extolled crimes, agonies, abortions, torture, rape, and also included a social polemic, when he called the Devil "King of the disinherited" and the rich "sons of God", which meant that God Satanists hated.

In the satanic consecration, Docre addressed Jesus Christ as someone "who by force of my priesthood I compel, whether you want to or not, to descend into this holy wafer, incarnate in this bread, Jesus, Maker of all oppression, Thief of respect, Predator of affection". Among the various forms of insult such as "Profaner of generous vices, Theorist of stupid purities, cursed Nazarene, King of the idlers, cowardly God" with which Docre reproached Jesus Christ, there was one quite peculiar: "Vassal of banks, with which you are passionately in love with", a gross anticlerical allusion to the Church's relationships with big business.

Docre, there is no doubt, hated Jesus Christ with a vengeance, to the point that he placed his image under his feet because he wished to trample it with every step. "We will want, he declared, to hammer your nails in even deeper, to drive in your thorns, make your dry sores bleed painfully again!" However, he did not limit himself to spewing "terrifying imprecations" and to spilling out "insults as a drunken coachman". He urinated on the consecrated holy bread, he threw it on the ground and some women, after it was thus tarnished, fed on it. It was the signal for an orgy where men, women, children, and old people participated among scratches, swearing, spitting, "a monstrous cauldron of prostitutes and madmen". One little girl began "howling at death, like a dog". Durtal, disgusted, left and dragged away Chantelouve, who took advantage of the excitement and induced him to sleep with her one last time.[98]

This literary Black Mass described by Huysmans certainly *became* true, because in the 20th century, a significant number of Satanist groups used it as a model to be reenacted. But *was* it true when Huysmans described it? There are some doubts. A journalist friend of Huysmans and Bois, but also of Guaïta, Vitoux, considered the author sincere but deceived by Boullan. "The sacrifice celebrated by Canon Docre, Vitoux wrote in 1901, had nothing to do with a real Black Mass. Everything was written from a novelist's perspective, and the

98 J.-K.Huysmans, *Là-bas*, cit., pp. 369–383.

ignorance of the art of witchcraft was clear".[99] That Huysmans invented the whole story was also the opinion of Gourmont[100] and Bloy.[101] Father Mugnier told a student in 1930 that Huysmans "never attended a 'Black Mass'".[102] On the other hand, two old friends of Huysmans, Léon Hennique (1850–1935) and Vanden Bosch related that the writer told them that he did witness a Black Mass.[103] Durtal, in a passage that seems autobiographical, confessed as much in the following novel presenting the conversion of the author, *En Route*.[104]

Huysmans never claimed that the Black Mass of *Là-bas* came exclusively from his direct experience. Gourmont confirmed that the writer used the documents about the trial of La Voisin,[105] and in the years before *Là-bas* Huysmans read descriptions of scenes of Satanism in the novels by Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly (1808–1889),[106] whom he mentioned in *À Rebours*. Ultimately, it is impossible to know whether, in the company of Courrière or others, the novelist personally witnessed the Black Mass he described; in his writings and correspondence, he remained himself ambiguous. We cannot even know for sure whether these Black Masses were really celebrated, in Paris or elsewhere. Courrière was a psychiatric case, and certainly not the most reliable witness. Boullan's most sensational information on Satanism came from visionary experiences. The conclusion that there were no Black Masses at all, except in Huysmans' imagination, is not absurd.[107] Even if this conclusion were true, however, *Là-bas* would remain a key passage in the history of Satanism, not only because Satanists would take it seriously in the 20th century. In fact, it shaped the image of Satanism for a whole generation, and images are productive of social consequences, whether or not they mirror the reality.

On the other hand, the question of whether there really were Satanists in the time of Huysmans should be addressed by taking into account the larger

99 Georges Vitoux, *Les Coulisses de l'Au-delà*, Paris: Chamuel, 1901, p. 296.

100 For Gourmont, Huysmans' Black Mass was "purely imaginary": Remy de Gourmont, *Promenades littéraires*, 2nd series, Paris: Mercure de France, 1909, p. 15.

101 See F. Zayed, *Huysmans peintre de son époque*, cit., pp. 441–442.

102 *Ibid.*, p. 442.

103 *Ibidem*.

104 J.-K. Huysmans, *En Route*, Paris: Tresse et Stock, 1895, p. 115.

105 R. de Gourmont, *Promenades littéraires*, cit., 3rd series, volume II, p. 16.

106 F. Zayed, *Huysmans peintre de son époque*, cit., pp. 429–430.

107 The strongest case for the totally fictional nature of all Huysmans accounts has been built by R. van Luijk, "Satan Rehabilitated? A Study into Satanism during the Nineteenth Century", cit., pp. 188–232. Robert Ziegler, *Satanism, Magic and Mysticism in Fin-de-Siècle France*, Houndmills (Basingstoke, Hampshire), New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, leaves the question open.

context of the European occult subculture at the end of 19th century. If we focus only on the reliability of Huysmans' witnesses, considering the Satanism he described as largely imaginary makes sense. If, however, we look at the context, we find a flourishing of occult practices ranging from the evocation of the spirits of the dead to attempted contacts with nature spirits, elementals, angels, with a wide range of techniques, including sexual magic. In this wider context, it is not unbelievable that some occultists, having tried their luck at contacting all sorts of metaphysical entities, included also Satan among the spirits they tried to deal with. After all, the works of previous Catholic anti-Satanists were readily available, and offered what occultists could read as suggestions on how to do it.

Satan the Catholic Priest: The Mystery of Canon Van Haecke

Another question that created controversies for decades concerns the personality of Van Haecke. The future canon was born in Bruges on January 18, 1829, in a family of wealthy merchants. In 1846, he entered the Seminary of Bruges, and in 1853, he was ordained a Catholic priest. Attracted by the Jesuits, he frequented their novitiate after ordination, but left it in 1855. After several pastoral and teaching assignments, he became the rector of the basilica of the Holy Blood in Bruges in 1864. This was, and still is, a small sanctuary, very popular in the Belgian city, which hosts a reliquary said to contain some drops of the blood of Jesus Christ, brought to Belgium from Jerusalem after the Second Crusade. Van Haecke maintained his position as rector for more than forty years, until he resigned in 1908 for health reasons. He died on October 24, 1912.

Van Haecke was not simply a priest like all the others. Besides being a collector of historic and curious facts about Bruges and his devotions, a subject to which he consecrated not less than twenty volumes and booklets,[108] he became very famous in his city as a lover of fun stories and jokes, and a tireless organizer of pranks. Because of his playful side, it was pleasant to go to visit him, and one was certain to hear some amusing anecdote. Sometimes cautioned by his Bishop for some excesses, he was however considered a harmless eccentric, and the local press treated him kindly.

108 Among which, see Louis Van Haecke, *Le Précieux Sang à Bruges, ou manuel de pèlerins et guide des touristes à la chapelle de Saint Basile, dite du Précieux Sang*, 2nd ed., revised, Bruges: M. Delplace, 1875. The third edition was published with the title *Le Précieux Sang à Bruges en Flandre*, Bruges: Aimé De Zuttere, 1879.

When *Là-bas* was published, and it became obvious that it was about Van Haecke, the newspapers of Bruges were scandalized for the attacks on a priest they regarded as worthy and friendly, and speculated that Huysmans misunderstood some of the canon's pranks or was misled by Boullan or Courrière. This literature, favorable to Van Haecke,[109] often attributed to Boullan the information that Huysmans had on the canon, and Boullan was clearly a suspicious witness and a discredited character. As we saw, however, Huysmans told Boullan about Van Haecke and not vice versa. For Huysmans, the decisive witness was Courrière, her mental instability notwithstanding, but there were also a few others.

The writer, after his conversion to Catholicism, considered it his duty to put an end to the activities of the canon, and gathered the information he had on Van Haecke in a dossier, which through the baron Vanden Bosch, he transmitted to the Belgian Catholic Bishops. When this occurred, Van Haecke was old, although he would die after Huysmans, in 1912. Massignon, who became the legatee of the documents collected by Huysmans and was a friend of Vanden Bosch, reported that the dossier was destroyed "to save the honor of the Belgian clergy", probably by Father Gezelle, the same priest who reportedly confessed Courrière. Massignon regretted that such precious documents and pieces of information were lost.[110]

On the other hand, even among Huysmans' friends, some, among which Father Mugnier, who played such a relevant part in his conversion, remained skeptical about Van Haecke's guilt. Massignon, on the other hand, believed that there were sufficient documents to conclude that the canon of Bruges was guilty, and was an authentic Satanist. And the opinion of Massignon carries some weight. The fact that it was one of the leading Islamologists of the 20th century is not decisive. Massignon, however, also had a career in the French intelligence, was an expert of intrigues of all sorts, and more than an amateur when it came to studying the occult subculture of the 19th century.[111] It is also interesting to note that, when Huysmans discovered the truth about the practices of Boullan and radically modified his judgment on the priest of Lyon, he continued to maintain his thesis on Van Haecke and to operate, without success, to have him condemned by the Belgian Catholic authorities.

Belgian investigative journalist Herman Bossier (1897–1970) dedicated several writings to Van Haecke over the course of thirty years, including a book

109 On which see L. Massignon, "Le Témoignage de Huysmans et l'affaire Van Haecke", cit., pp. 166–179.

110 *Ibid.*, p. 167.

111 See Christian Destremau, Jean Moncelon, *Louis Massignon*, Paris: Plon, 1994.

written in 1943.[112] Bossier met an already old Van Haecke when, as a child, he participated in processions organized by the canon. He also interrogated many witnesses, concluding that the priest of Bruges could not have been the chief of a group of Satanists in Belgium. At the same time, Bossier maintained that Huysmans was not a mere slanderer, nor was he led astray by Boullan or Courrière only. On Courrière, Bossier confirmed that she was psychically unstable, to the point that after her recovery in 1890, she ended up again in an asylum in Uccle, near Brussels, in 1906. Clearly, Belgium did not bring her good luck.[113]

Bossier did not even believe the thesis that one of Van Haecke's jokes was misunderstood. Quite the opposite, at the end of his enquiry he concluded that Van Haecke led a double life. If in Bruges he had no contact with occultism or Satanism, in Paris, where he often went, pushed by his insatiable curiosity, he frequented the most ambiguous milieus of the occult subculture. For Bossier, it is very likely that Huysmans witnessed a Black Mass in Paris and that he met Van Haecke, who was not there however in the role of celebrator but observer. After which, Huysmans visited Van Haecke in Bruges and the canon, or so Bossier believed, told him that he was at the Black Mass as an observer: "Have I not the right to be curious? And who says that I was not there as a spy?"[114] But this did not convince the novelist.

Huysmans' Last Years

Before leaving Huysmans, we must make a final reference to his relationships with Boullan after the publication of *Là-bas*, which effectively concluded the period when the writer focused on Satanism. Boullan hoped Huysmans would write a sequel to *Là-bas*, with the title of *Là-haut*, where he would be the hero, and in 1891 he accompanied Huysmans on a pilgrimage to La Salette. In the meantime, however, Huysmans, through Courrière, met Father Mugnier, who preached Catholic orthodoxy to him. The writer was not yet converted. The journey to La Salette and the first meeting with Mugnier happened in a period in which he maintained a regular relationship with a Parisian prostitute. Huysmans seemed to oscillate between mysticism and decadence.

He declared himself converted in July 1892, yet he continued to frequent Boullan, in spite of warnings from Catholic priests whom the magician from

112 Herman Bossier, *Un Personnage de roman: le chanoine d'Ocre de "Là-bas" de J.-K.Huysmans*, Bruxelles, Paris: Les Écrits, 1943.

113 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

114 Ibid., p. 144.

Lyon continued to despise as members of "the old Church". He considered he still needed the protection of Boullan's white magic against the attacks of the Satanists, who were annoyed by the publication of *Là-bas*. As a "shield", Boullan offered him four remedies: "blessed perfumes", sacred objects among which a talisman and a "tephillin", i.e. a cord with the name of Mary and the cross, the prayers of the "Carmel" in Lyon, and especially the "substitution" ritual. In the latter, Mother Thibault could divert and take herself "ninety percent" of the magical attacks directed against Huysmans.[115]

Boullan had also in mind something else. He wrote to the novelist between the end of 1890 and the beginning of 1891, that "our dear Mother Thibault (…), unable to bring dishes to your table [because the excellent cook was in Lyon, while Huysmans was in Paris], would like to supply you with Ferments of Life. Yes, my dear friend, these Ferments are not something to despise, because they rejuvenate and revive energies". "It is through these celestial means that dear Mother Thibault wants to work for your transformation".[116] It is not certain whether Huysmans, whose reply to Boullan has been lost, realized that the "Ferments of Life" were in fact a mixture of sperm and female sexual secretions. Maurice Belval (1909–1989),[117] a Jesuit and a distinguished scholar of Huysmans, noted that the writer never approved Boullan's sexual magic. According to Belval, in the end Boullan performed one of his few good actions towards Huysmans. When he realized he could not convert the novelist to "his" religion, he sincerely tried to help his return to the Catholic Church, which he considered a safer destination for Huysmans than Decadentism or agnosticism.

The last magical adventure of Huysmans is relative to the death of Boullan, which occurred in Lyon on January 4, 1893. The previous day, January 3, Boullan wrote his last letter to the novelist, where he reported of a terrible crisis in which he felt as if he was suffocating, while Mother Thibault dreamed about Guaïta and the cry of "a bird of death" was heard. The following day, Boullan died, and Thibault described his death in a letter to Huysmans. At lunchtime, she reported, Boullan felt considerable pain, "then shouted and asked: 'What is this?' Then, he collapsed. We only had the time, [Pascal] Misme [?-1895: an architect, disciple of Boullan, himself a visionary] and I, to support him and take him to his armchair, where he began reciting a prayer, which I shortened to put him to bed as fast as possible". "His chest became more oppressed, his

115 M.M. Belval, *Des Ténèbres à la lumière. Étapes de la pensée mystique de J.K. Huysmans*, cit., pp. 89–90.

116 Letters from Boullan to Huysmans of November 14, 1890; December 12, 1890; and January 19, 1891: *ibid.*, pp. 88–89.

117 *Ibid.*

breathing harder; in the midst of this entire struggle he had contracted heart and liver illnesses. He told me: 'I am going to die. Farewell'". His followers encouraged him, but Boullan died "as a saint and as a martyr", victim of the Satanists.[118]

The news of Boullan's death quickly reached Paris, and the press of the capital reported it. Both Bois, in an article in the *Gil Blas* on January 9, and Huysmans, in an interview for the *Figaro* the following day, attributed the death of the miracle-worker of Lyon to a "magical murder" perpetuated by Guaïta, Péladan, and Wirth. On January 11, Guaïta published a note in the *Figaro* protesting against the accusations, but the same day and on January 13, Bois made matters worse in the *Gil Blas*, declaring that in these very days Huysmans was ill and the victim of a magical attack by Guaïta. The owners of the *Gil Blas* became worried, and published a replica by Guaïta on January 15, to which Bois further replied. In the meantime, Guaïta, true to his public persona of a typical old Italian-French nobleman, had not placed his faith exclusively in his pen but had also sent his witnesses to Bois and Huysmans, challenging them to duels.

Huysmans, who disliked duels, placed on record "that he never intended to question the perfectly gentlemanly character of Mr. de Guaïta". Bois accepted the duel with Guaïta and, on the lawn of the Tour de Villebon, the journalist and the occultist exchanged two shots, missing each other. Bois then reported how the first horse of the carriage that should have taken him to the field of the duel had died. Substituted twice, the other horses had died as well, the second one toppling the carriage over and leaving the journalist torn and bruised: a peculiar coincidence, the incorrigible journalist noted, even for those who declared themselves skeptical towards the magical capabilities of Guaïta.[119] These comments led the journalist to a second duel, with Papus, this time using swords rather than pistols. He got away with a couple of scratches only.

With these incidents, the Guaïta-Boullan-Bois-Huysmans saga, which would fuel persistent legends, like the one according to which Guaïta had a demon as a servant, cannot be considered as completely closed, because, as mentioned earlier, after Boullan's death Huysmans took Thibault to live with him. However, in the summer of 1894, during a visit to Lyon, Huysmans examined all of Boullan's surviving papers, "and what he saw shocked him". He had the confirmation that Boullan took part in sexual rituals, and that the accusations of Wirth were true. From then on, he considered Boullan a "Satanist", although he

118 J. Bricaud, *Huysmans et Satan*, new ed., Paris: Michel Reinhard, 1980, pp. 47–50, where the two letters of January 3 and 4, 1893 are reproduced.

119 Part of the articles that appeared in the press of the time are reproduced *ibid.*, pp. 58–59.

maintained he was different from Van Haecke. Boullan was a victim of Satan without knowing it, while Van Haecke was a conscious Satanist, or so Huysmans believed.[120]

The subsequent biography of Huysmans had progressively less to do with Boullan and Satanism. It was the story of a soul, the story of his progressively more complete conversion to Catholicism conquered day after day, with comprehensible effort if we consider the strange mysticism he had been in contact with for long. Maurice Belval, Robert Baldick (1927–1972),[121] and the Dominican Father Pie Duployé (1906–1990)[122] recounted in detail the adventure of the conversion of the writer. Bloy remained suspicious until the end about the genuine character of this conversion, though he had prayed and acted to favor the return of Huysmans to the Church for a long time, and some of his ideas on a coming millennial Kingdom of the Holy Spirit were found in *Là-bas*.[123] When it came to La Salette, Bloy was no less "Melanist" than Boullan, but he was always a fierce adversary of the priest of Lyon, although the latter had for some time influenced Bloy's mentor, Father René Tardif de Moidrey (1828–1879). Father Duployé's arguments about Huysmans' conversion as genuine appear convincing, and are supported by the novelist's Christian endurance towards his last extremely painful illness before his death in 1907. The Brazilian Catholic scholar Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira (1908–1995) also considered the return of Huysmans to the Catholic Church not only genuine, but also exemplary.[124]

Reading Huysmans, and *Là-bas* in particular, would even cause conversions. It was by reading Huysmans that an Anglican clergyman, Robert Hugh Benson (1871–1914), the author of the celebrated novel *Lord of the World*, converted to Catholicism in 1903 and started exploring the occult milieu by using *Là-bas* as a guide.[125] Benson's theories on the Devil and the Antichrist experienced

120 R. Griffiths, *The Reactionary Revolution: The Catholic Revival in French Literature 1870–1914*, cit., pp. 136–137.

121 Robert Baldick, *La Vie de J.K. Huysmans*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955; 2nd edition, revised, with an introduction by Brendan King, Sawtry (UK): Dedalus Books, 2006.

122 Pie Duployé, *Huysmans*, Paris-Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1968. See also J.K. Huysmans, *"Là-Haut". Le Journal d'"En Route"*, cit.

123 For the doubts on Huysmans' conversion, see Léon Bloy, *Les dernières Colonnes de l'Église*, in *Oeuvres*, vol. IV, Paris: Mercure de France, 1965, pp. 229–313; and *Sur la tombe de Huysmans*, *ibid.*, vol. IV, pp. 329–360.

124 Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, "Huysmans – I", *O Legionário*, no. 93, January 31, 1932; and "Huysmans – II", *O Legionário*, no. 94, February 21, 1932.

125 See C.[yril] C.[harlie] Martindale [S.J., 1879–1963], *The Life of Mgr. Robert Hugh Benson*, London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1916. From his explorations in the occult environment of London, Benson derived in 1909 *The Necromancers*, London: Hutchinson

a revival of sort between 2013 and 2015, when Pope Francis repeatedly quoted *Lord of the World* in his homilies and interviews. In an interview granted in 2015 while returning from the Philippines to Rome, the Pope connected Benson with his own theories about "ideological colonizations", i.e. anti-Christian theories subtly imposed by obscure but powerful groups. "There is a book, he said, perhaps the style is a bit heavy at the beginning, because it was written in 1907 in London… At that time, the writer had seen this drama of ideological colonization and described it in that book. It is called *Lord of the World*. The author is Benson, written in 1907. I suggest you read it. Reading it, you'll understand well what I mean by ideological colonization".[126]

Even Benson, however, at least in his youth, dabbled in a world where the boundaries between fringe Catholicism, occultism, and an ambiguous interest in Satan were not clearly established. A forgotten but important figure in this milieu was Cantianille Bourdois (1824-?).[127] She claimed to be possessed by the Devil, but at the same time to be able to visit Voltaire (1694–1778), Jean-Paul Marat (1743–1793) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) in Purgatory, thus scandalizing these Catholics who believed that these enemies of the Church should rather be in Hell. She told her confessor, Father Jean Marie Charles Thorey (1836-?), that she was raped by a priest very much similar to Huysmans' Canon Docre, and consecrated to Satan.[128]

Even after her supposed conversion from Satanism to Catholicism, Cantianille kept acting as a "femme à prêtres", entertaining sexual relationships with various priests. She ended up outside of the Roman Catholic fold, first joining

& Co., 1909 (reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1976). A completely different itinerary, from Huysmans to a skeptical view of religion in general, was followed by René Schwaeblé (1873–1961). He was an alchemist who was involved in the so called *affaire* Fulcanelli, where books allegedly written by a mysterious master of alchemy were published in France and abroad. On Satanism, he published *Le Sataniste flagellé. Satanistes contemporains, incubat, succubat, sadisme et Satanisme*, Paris: R. Dutaire, n.d. (ca. 1913) and the novel *Chez Satan. Roman de mœurs de Satanistes contemporains*, Paris: Bodin, n.d. (1902).

126 Pope Francis, *In-Flight Press Conference from the Philippines to Rome*, January 19, 2015, available at <http://m.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/january/documents/papa-francesco_20150119_srilanka-filippine-conferenza-stampa.html>, last accessed on September 21, 2015.

127 For a biography, see Abel Moreau [1893–1977], *Le Diable à Auxerre… à Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne et Delémont*, supplement to *L'Écho d'Auxerre* (no. 47 bis), Auxerre: L'Écho d'Auxerre, 1963. The careful investigation by Moreau did not manage to identify where Cantianille and Thorey spent their last years and died.

128 (Abbé) J.[ean] M.[arie] C.[harles] Thorey, *Rapports merveilleux de Me. Cantianille B avec le monde surnaturel*, 2 vols., Paris: Louis Hervé, 1866.

the Old Catholic Church, a splinter group who mostly included those hostile to the doctrine of Papal infallibility, and then trying with limited success to establish her own church.[129] Controversies about Cantianille determined the resignation of the Bishop of Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne, Mgr. François-Marie Vibert (1800–1876), who had originally supported her, as did Boullan and Huysmans. Vibert was also criticized because of his support of another visionary, Théotiste Covarel (1836–1908), who ended up in a psychiatric hospital. Later, yet another visionary, Marie-Julie Jahenny (1850–1941), received an apparition from the spirit of Mgr. Vibert and tried to rehabilitate the unfortunate Bishop and his entourage.[130] Bishop Vibert was close to a Naundorffist lawyer, Benjamin Daymonaz (1837–1899), and his removal was also part of an attempt by the Catholic Church to keep its distance from Naundorffism, a movement attracting both Catholics and occultists.[131]

Although Naundorffist circles and those who followed Cantianille had their role in controversies about Satanism, I selected Huysmans as the central character because he was a well-known novelist and brought the question of Satanism to the fore. His vicissitudes, interrelated with those of Vintras, of Boullan, of Bois, shed some light on the French discourse on Satanism in the 19th century. The very ambiguity and uncertainties of Huysmans attest, at least, that he was proposing his theories about Satanism in good faith. After the publication of *Là-bas*, others would come forward to describe in a complete, clear and linear manner the hierarchies of Satanists, providing names, circumstances, and addresses so precisely that one might suspect from the beginning the fraudulent nature of their enterprises.

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129 See Michel Pierssens, "La Langue de l'au-delà", in Anne Tomiche (ed.), *Altérations, créations dans la langue: les langages dépravés*, Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, Centre de recherche sur les littératures modernes et contemporaines, 2001, pp. 27–50.

130 See Hilaire Multon, "Catholicisme intransigeant et culture prophétique: l'apport des archives du Saint-Office et de l'Index", *Revue Historique*, no. 621, 2002, pp. 109–137.

131 See Benjamin Daymonaz, *La Séquestration de Théotiste Covarel et le vol d'un évêché de France en plein XIXe siècle*, Paris: Bertin, 1876.

CHAPTER 8

Satan the Freemason: The Mystification of Léo Taxil, 1891–1897

Le Diable au 19e siècle

Both the *Temple of Satan* by Guaïta, where the rituals of Boullan were exposed, and *Là-bas* by Huysmans were published in 1891. The Parisian public was, however, still not saturated with revelations on Satanism, because at the end of the following year, in December 1892, an extraordinary piece of work, which would grow to little less than two-thousand pages, started been published in monthly issues. The title, a program in itself, was *The Devil in the 19th Century; or the mysteries of Spiritualism, the Luciferian Freemasonry, complete revelations on Palladism, Theurgy, Goetia, and all modern Satanism, occult magnetism, pseudo-Spiritists, evocations, Luciferian mediums, fin-de-siècle Kabbalah, the magic of the Rosy-Cross, latent states of possession, the precursors of the Anti-Christ: Tales of a witness*.[1] The author presented himself as "Doctor Bataille", a physician on board the ships of the Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes.

According to "Doctor Bataille", his adventure began in 1880 on a ship that took him from Marseilles to Japan. While on the ship, the doctor received the confidences of an Italian businessman, one Gaetano Carbuccia, a native of Maddaloni, in the Southern province of Caserta. Carbuccia, in the hopes of improving the state of his business, became initiated into Freemasonry in the Memphis-Misraïm Rite organized in Naples by Giambattista Pessina (?-1900). The latter was a real person, although his last name was often misspelled in the *Diable* as "Peisina",[2] and the Memphis-Misraïm was one of the so-called "fringe" Masonic organizations where occult elements prevailed.

1 Dr. Bataille, *Le Diable au 19e siècle, ou les mystères du spiritisme, la franc-maçonnerie luciférienne, révélations complètes sur le Palladisme, la théurgie, la goétie, et tout le Satanisme moderne, magnétisme occulte, pseudo-spirites et vocates procédants, les médiums luciférians, la Cabale fin-de-siècle, magie de la Rose-Croix, les possessions à l'état latent, les précurseurs de l'Ante-Christ. Récit d'un témoin*, 2 vols., Paris-Lyon: Delhomme et Briguet, 1892–1894.

2 On Pessina and his role in the story of the Masonic Rites of Memphis and Misraïm, born as separate organizations and later unified under the name of Memphis-Misraïm, see M. Introvigne, *Il cappello del mago. I nuovi movimenti magici dallo spiritismo al satanismo*, cit., p. 166.

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Pessina's group was only the gateway into a darker world for Carbuccia. He passed over to the society of "New Reformed Palladium", also known as the group of "Optimate Re-Theurgists", a name already used by Huysmans in *Là-bas*. He was also invited to Spiritualist séances, where Voltaire and Martin Luther (1483–1546) were summoned. Finally, when the ship stopped in Calcutta, the Optimate Re-Theurgists had him assist at an even more frightening evocation, for which "three craniums of Catholic missionaries to Kuang-Si, whom our Chinese brothers had tortured" were necessary.

With the help of these macabre instruments, the Optimate Re-Theurgists were finally able to evoke Lucifer. He appeared in the shape of "a man between thirty and thirty-eight, of tall stature, with no beard or mustache, thinner rather than fatter but not bony, of slender build, somewhat aristocratic, with an unfathomable melancholy in his eyes". Lucifer was "naked, but with white and slightly pinkish skin, as handsome as a statue of Apollo". Lucifer then gave a speech in a rather conventional Miltonesque style. Then, he mightily shocked Carbuccia, who almost turned insane, by personally celebrating the human sacrifice of the same "Brother Shekleton" who had brought the craniums of the deceased missionaries from China to India.

Bataille claimed he had already detected the presence of a "Chinese cabalistic Freemasonry" and of even more sinister societies during his tours around the world. He decided, after having attended to Carbuccia in his medical capacity, to become "the explorer, not the accomplice, of modern Satanism" by infiltrating Satanist societies.[3] He visited in Naples "Peisina", who sold him for good money a diploma of "Sovereign Gran Master of the Memphis-Misraïm Rite for Life", a customary activity for real-life Pessina, and jumped, vainly dissuaded by his confessors, into his exploration of international Satanism.

His first experiences were in Ceylon, where he was recognized as a Freemason of the Memphis-Misraïm Rite and, in this capacity, was introduced with full honors by indigenous people, described in orientalist but repugnant terms, in the "underground sanctuaries of the Luciferian fakirs".[4] There, he had some extraordinary encounters with talking bats, a priestess of Lucifer who will die only at the age of 152, and the voice of Satan coming from flames. He also made the important discovery that Sinhalese fakirs were part of the

3 Dr. Bataille, *Le Diable au 19e siècle, ou les mystères du spiritisme, la franc-maçonnerie luciférienne, révélations complètes sur le Palladisme, la théurgie, la goétie, et tout le Satanisme moderne, magnétisme occulte, pseudo-spirites et vocates procédants, les médiums luciférien, la Cabale fin-de-siècle, magie de la Rose-Croix, les possessions à l'état latent, les précurseurs de l'Ante-Christ. Récit d'un témoin*, cit., vol. I, pp. 11–20.

4 *Ibid*., vol. I, p. 66.

same international satanic conspiracy to which European Freemasons belonged. These fakirs, Bataille assured, were using garments that were entirely similar to those of the lodges in London and Paris and even the same Latin expressions.

Thanks to a *lingam* he received from the fakirs of Ceylon, the doors of the most secret Luciferian temples of continental India were now open to Bataille. He met Brahmins who spoke a wonderful French, were enthusiastic about the doctor's diploma of Memphis-Misraïm, and revealed that "the real Brahma is Lucifer".[5] Bataille did not merely have European prejudices towards the indigenous people, "men who have the appearance of monkeys".[6] As a good Frenchman, he also had more than one suspicion about the British Empire. It was in fact an Englishman, Brother Campbell, who in Pondichéry, in the French Indies, evoked Beelzebub in person. Under the authority of Albert Pike (1809–1891), another very real character and well-known Freemason, Campbell proceeded to nominate the doctor "Hierarch of the New Reformed Palladium".[7] Bataille would by now be able to participate in the satanic evocations directly and personally, and would not be forced to rely on Carbuccia. In Pondichéry, however, Satan refused to appear: but in other occasions the doctor would be more fortunate.

The journey in the Orient continued, and the French doctor, without too much surprise, discovered that initiates of "High Freemasonry" and Luciferian Palladism guided all oriental secret societies, including those openly criminal such as the Chinese Triads. One of the great leaders of the Palladists made here his appearance, allowing Bataille to return to the old theme of Mormon Satanism. He was "the former Pastor Walder, impenitent Anabaptist, now Mormon, who resides in the United States, in Utah, where he is the shadow of John Taylor [1808–1887], who is the successor of Brigham Young [1801–1877] as head of the Mormons". This Phileas Walder "is one of the worst examples of the human species" but he redeemed himself with his daughter Sophie, "who is, in my belief, as beautiful as her father is repugnant".

Educated from a very young age to become a Luciferian priestess, Sophie Walder, known as "Sophia-Sapho" in the lodges with a not too subtle allusion to her sexual preferences, had just landed in Paris where she was giving proof of her powers. When she went into a trance, her father used a metal rod, which, fortunately for her, "did not have a penetrating tip", to write "an unexpected question on Sophie's breast, extracted by chance among the ones

5 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 78.

6 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 55.

7 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 83–85.

that the present had the right to write and place in a crystal urn located in the center of the room". In the meantime, Sophie was still in a trance, with a living serpent wrapped round her neck. When the question was formulated, the serpent "moved his tail whose 'tip', like a pencil, ran on the skin of the girl's back and appeared to write letters". Eventually "the reply appeared, in visible letters, with incredible clarity". The questions were not always uninteresting. For example, with the same method, the daughter of the Mormon leader was asked "how many popes will reign after Leo XIII". The reply, clearly coming from the Devil, "appeared in red letters on her white skin": "Nine, and I shall rule after them".[8] To this very day, there are still archconservative Catholics who believe in the factual truth of the *Diable*, and normally they are very much against Pope Francis's reformist agenda. To my knowledge, however, none of them has noticed this prophecy. It implies that after Leo XIII there will be nine Popes, and then the Devil will rule. The tenth Pope after Leo XIII is, in fact, Pope Francis.

The authority of Walder and his daughter was recognized, Bataille reported, through direct or indirect affiliation, by secret satanic societies all over the world, who were simply "branches of High Masonry". The French doctor learned that even the (thirteenth) Dalai Lama (1876–1933) was a Satanist, who by virtue of the Devil was able to perform prodigies. Chinese secret societies were also directed by Satanists, and were responsible for the anti-European riots. Bataille insisted especially on the San-Ho-Hoeï secret society, which enjoyed capturing and torturing Catholic missionaries. He claimed that Italian and English Masonic emissaries, all duly affiliated to Palladism and Satanism, governed it in secret. Bataille had not invented the name of San-Ho-Hoeï, a Chinese secret society engaged in a number of illegal activities. British sinologist John Francis Davis (1795–1890), the second governor of Hong Kong, had claimed in his successful book *The Chinese* that "except in their dangerous or dishonest principles, the *San-ho-hoey* [sic] bears a considerable resemblance to the society of freemasons".[9]

Bataille reported that he went to a meeting in China, where the skeleton of a Chinese Catholic assassinated by San-Ho-Hoeï members was interrogated with the help of a "relic of Beelzebub", "a clump of hair that Beelzebub had removed during an apparition which occurred in the past century". Animated by the formidable relic, the skeleton replied to a series of questions on the activities of the missionaries, but also took the liberty to severely bite one of the mediums

8 *Ibid*., vol. I, pp. 41–42.

9 John Francis Davis, *The Chinese*: *A General Description of the Empire of China and Its Inhabitants*, 2 vols., New York: Harper & Brothers, 1840, vol. II, p. 25.

who was interrogating him. Luckily, Doctor Bataille was present, ready to provide the Chinese Satanist with the best remedies of French medicine.[10]

The good doctor was put in a more difficult situation on the occasion of a successive human sacrifice. He was asked to act as the executioner, but luckily Walder appeared and carried out the sacrifice himself, hoping to obtain from Satan the healing of his sick daughter. He also freed Bataille from the dilemma, well known to modern sociologists, of the limits of "participant observation".

In the middle of 1892, the reader of Bataille's publications could at this point have some doubts. That "indigenous people" of India and China abandoned themselves to the most repugnant devilry was confirmed by all illustrated magazines in Paris. What was less easy to accept was the association between these facts and French Freemasonry to which, after all, many good bourgeois belonged. The lodges were anticlerical, but nobody had ever accused them of performing human sacrifices.

A further issue of the *Diable* provided all the answers. Doctor Bataille distinguished between Satanists and Luciferians. They both worship the Devil and manifest an implacable hatred towards God, Jesus and the Catholic Church. Luciferians, however, as opposed to Satanists, are convinced that the Devil is "the good God". He simply found a bad press in the Bible, which was written by his adversary, Adonai, the "other" God. Luciferians, whose secret society is hidden behind all the Freemasonries of the world, have a strange idea of what is morally acceptable. They take many licenses with morality, performing rituals of a sexual nature and occasionally assassinating their enemies.

International Satanism, or more exactly Luciferianism, was coordinated according to Bataille by headquarters located in Charleston, South Carolina, "the American Venice", a beautiful city that unfortunately became "the center for universal Satanism".[11] Its inhabitants were "naturally cruel", as was demonstrated by their attachment to slavery and their cruelty towards black people.[12] Only a very restricted number of initiates were aware of it, but Charleston was in fact "the Vatican of universal Freemasonry", the "Luciferian Rome", where the Supreme Dogmatic Directory was located. It operated from a truly infernal

10 Dr. Bataille, *Le Diable au 19e siècle, ou les mystères du spiritisme, la franc-maçonnerie luciférienne, révélations complètes sur le Palladisme, la théurgie, la goétie, et tout le Satanisme moderne, magnétisme occulte, pseudo-spirites et vocates procédants, les médiums luciférien, la Cabale fin-de-siècle, magie de la Rose-Croix, les possessions à l'état latent, les précurseurs de l'Ante-Christ. Récit d'un témoin*, cit., vol. I, pp. 275–280.

11 *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 315.

12 *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 316.

building, in the center of which there was the Sanctum Regnum, a room where "Satan in person appeared once a week, at the same hour, every Friday".[13]

The French physician claimed he had first-hand information on this building. He had visited Charleston, where he met Pike, the Luciferian "anti-pope", and his main collaborator, Albert Gallatin Mackey (1807–1881), a fellow medical doctor. A refined observer of female psychology, Bataille also noticed a rivalry between Sophie Walder and the daughter of Pike, Lilian (Pike Roome, 1843–1919). The French doctor was informed of the most abominable secrets for a sense of gratitude, since once again French medicine performed miracles and Sophie Walder was saved from a dangerous peritonitis. Thankful, the girl told Bataille some curious episodes of her youth. She met many demons from Hell and was taught how to read Tarot cards. Thus, she predicted with the cards the fate of the unfortunate sovereigns of Mexico, Maximilian (1832–1867) and Charlotte of Habsburg (1840–1927).

She also informed Bataille that the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865), John Wilkes Booth (1838–1865), was another agent of the "Satanic Vatican", and his remains "were resting secretly in Charleston, in the seat of the Supreme Dogmatic Directory, in an underground mausoleum".[14] This circumstance, Bataille commented, was not surprising. Pike was in fact a fanatical Confederate, and in the Civil War led a battalion of Indians who fiercely tortured their victims.

As for Palladism, Bataille specified that its origins were not old. It was founded on September 20, 1870, the day of the Italian invasion of Rome that put an end to the temporal power of the Popes. Thus, the same day, there were "in Rome, the suppression of the temporal power of the Catholic Popes; in Charleston, the creation of a Masonic Papacy and the nomination of a Luciferian Pope". One cannot doubt that "Palladism was founded and put into work to prepare for the kingdom of the Antichrist". However, "one must not confuse Palladism", which is "the cult of Satan", with "High Masonry", the organizational structure hidden behind the common Masonic lodges. Certainly, the "secret chiefs" of Palladism and of "High Masonry" are often the same. However, while all Palladists are part of "High Masonry", not all the leaders of "High Masonry" are Palladists. Some are atheists or skeptics while Palladism, as satanic as it

13 *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 318–319, 324.

14 *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 333. Since the name of Booth became the symbol of treason in American minds, anti-Masonic literature turned him into a Freemason and anti-Catholic literature, to our present day, made him into a Catholic hired by the Vatican and the Jesuits. See the work by the ex-Franciscan priest Emmett McLoughlin (1907–1970), *An Enquiry into the Assassination of Lincoln*, Secaucus (New Jersey): Citadel Press, 1977.

can be, is "a cult, a religion". To make matters more complicated, the Palladists sometimes, "but only exceptionally", admit within their ranks Luciferians who have never been part of "ordinary Freemasonry" but come from Spiritualism.[15]

However, Bataille continued, there was no doubt that Palladism was directed by Satan, who personally approved its foundation by appearing in July 1870 in Milan. Bataille claimed that Pike's successor, as chief of the Palladium, was the Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Italy, Adriano Lemmi (1822–1906). While above Pike and Lemmi there was only Satan, next to Pike, who was the "Supreme Dogmatic Chief", there was a "Chief of Political Action" who resided in Rome, and whom Bataille identified with the Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–1872). There was also a Sovereign Administrative Directory in Berlin, whose chiefs however rotated and were not on the same level of Pike and Mazzini. Under this supreme command, there were five Great Central Directors, who divided the world in geographical areas and had their respective seats in Washington D.C., Montevideo, Naples, Calcutta, and Port-Louis in the Mauritius Islands. Lower still, there were the chiefs of the various secret, occult, and Spiritualist societies, who were all, knowingly or not, under the direction of the Supreme Dogmatic Directory. The latter was "not a human enterprise, but an instrument that acted under the direct inspiration of the Devil".[16]

It was not surprising, Bataille insisted, that Pike was able to accomplish incredible facts of magic, since he was in direct contact with Lucifer. Bataille also referred to a "pastoral visit" of the Luciferian Pope through the United States. He met the third president of the Mormon Church, John Taylor, whom Pike considered "a perfect and illustrious brother". Taylor worked as the "connecting ring between Mormonism and Freemasonry" and had even founded a new Masonic rite called Moabite.[17] One of the most interesting episodes of this journey took place in a beautiful villa in Saint Louis, where Pike and his collaborators "penetrated with the spirit Ariel" a certain Sister Ingersoll, "who was a first class medium", without even putting her to sleep. The junior devil Ariel, however, felt a bit lonely, and summoned in the body of Sister Ingersoll another "329 genies of fire".

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15 Dr. Bataille, *Le Diable au 19e siècle, ou les mystères du spiritisme, la franc-maçonnerie luciférienne, révélations complètes sur le Palladisme, la théurgie, la goétie, et tout le Satanisme moderne, magnétisme occulte, pseudo-spirites et vocates procédants, les médiums luciférien, la Cabale fin-de-siècle, magie de la Rose-Croix, les possessions à l'état latent, les précurseurs de l'Ante-Christ. Récit d'un témoin*, cit., vol. I, pp. 346–347.

16 *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 355.

17 *Ibid.*, vol. I, p. 360.

The experience implied a serious inconvenience, because all the clothes of Sister Ingersoll burned in an instant. By a prodigy of the demons, the medium "suffered no burns" but, to her understandable embarrassment, "appeared completely naked for more than ten minutes". "Whirling, as Pike later told Bataille, above our heads, as if lifted by an invisible cloud or supported by good spirits, she answered all the questions which we asked her. We could thus receive through her all the freshest news of our illustrious and beloved brother Adriano Lemmi. Then Astaroth in person appeared, flying next to Sister Ingersoll and holding her hand. He blew on her and her clothes were rebuilt out of thin air, covering her again". Proper decorum, although belatedly, was saved.[18]

From Charleston, Bataille reported, Pike reigned over a worldwide structure, of which the French physician was able to provide a complete organizational chart. There were names known in the international Masonic Gotha, among which the Italians Ettore Ferrari (1845–1929) and Giovanni Bovio (1837–1903), Mormon president John Taylor in Salt Lake City, and John Yarker (1833–1913), the founder of several "fringe" masonic organizations in London.[19] Bataille also mentioned the Italian poet from Bologna, Giosuè Carducci (1835–1907), well known for his juvenile poem *Hymn to Satan*, and even one Alice Booth, "daughter of the founder of the Salvation Army" William Booth (1829–1912). The real life Booth had five daughters, but none was called Alice. Bataille probably alluded to Catherine Booth (1858–1955), the elder daughter of William Booth, who in the 1890s was trying to promote in France the Salvation Army founded in England by her father. Catherine was attacked as a heretic and a "witch"[20] and the Salvation Army in general was regarded as a cult by the Catholic press.[21]

Bataille pointed out that he managed to conquer so well the trust of the chiefs, including Pessina, whose name he was by now even able to write correctly, that he was included himself in the organizational chart of the Luciferian Freemasonry. He was thus admitted to visit the Charleston headquarters and in particular the "inaccessible Sanctum Regnum", where he discovered truly incredible marvels. There was for example, "what the cultists called the

18 *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 360–361.

19 On Yarker see John M. Hamill, "John Yarker: Masonic Charlatan?" *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, vol. 109, 1996, pp. 191–214.

20 See Carolyn Scott, *The Heavenly Witch*: *The Story of The Maréchale*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1981.

21 See Jean-François Mayer, *Une honteuse exploitation des esprits et des porte-monnaie? Les polémiques contre l'Armée du Salut en Suisse en 1883 et leurs étranges similitudes avec les arguments utilisés aujourd'hui contre les "nouvelles sectes"*, Fribourg (Switzerland): Les Trois Nornes, 1985.

Relic of Saint Jacob", which meant the cranium of the last Grand Master of the Templars, Jacques de Molay (1244–1314), who "once a year, on the established day, spoke and vomited flames". There was also the Baphomet, the true Palladium of the Palladists, the diabolical idol of the Knight Templars that found its way to Charleston, although nobody knew how.

If keeping the original Baphomet in South Carolina was an American sin, Britons did not fare any better in Bataille's book. "The British, Bataille wrote, really curse everything they touch; it seems an infirmity with which God struck this heretic population like a visible mark of his malediction". It was not surprising for Bataille to find in Gibraltar, which was under British control, another international satanic center. He saw a maze of caves and labyrinths under the Rock of Gibraltar, a true "kingdom of the seven Luciferian metals", where horrible idols and poisons were made.

A man known as Joe Crocksonn, "chief accountant of the secret establishment" and Bataille's guide, had the right to access the most hidden areas as a Luciferian initiate. He allowed the physician to visit the hidden factory, manufacturing poisons able to kill entire cities and potions based on microbes that would be the envy of bacteriological war in the following centuries. The "chosen workers" were also busy fusing satanic idols: "Cherubs" with "the body of a lion and the head of a bull", Molochs, Astaroths, Mammons. Their "obscenity showed, without need of further description, the bestiality they wanted to represent": in one word, all that was needed for the "one horned and bi-horned cult". "Clearly, the doctor exclaimed, Lucifer was there, if not in person at least in spirit".

Confronted with these indefatigable workers, Bataille, as his guide suggested to him, asked (in English) if anyone "wanted an increase in his salary". An infernal scene followed. Each one of the workers, dwarves, giants, monsters with all kinds of deformities, bragged about his satanic merits. "– I killed my father… – I set fire to three Catholic churches… – I cut the throat of a monk, who was on his way back to the convent from collecting alms… – I massacred two Christian children on a lawn…". "All of this was shouted in English". Since not all of the workers, independently of their merits for Lucifer, could receive the raise, they turned on Doctor Bataille, whom they took for an emissary of Charleston, seriously frightening him. In the end, a team of more violent satanic followers reestablished order by striking the others with incandescent metal bars.[22]

22 Dr. Bataille, *Le Diable au 19e siècle, ou les mystères du spiritisme, la franc-maçonnerie luciférienne, révélations complètes sur le Palladisme, la théurgie, la goétie, et tout le Satanisme moderne, magnétisme occulte, pseudo-spirites et vocates procédants, les médiums*

Over the course of his visit in Gibraltar, Bataille claimed to have met an interesting Palladist, Brother Sandeman. Perhaps the physician alluded to well-known businessman George Sandeman (1765–1841), founder of a famous winery, which had its *bodegas* not too far from Gibraltar, in Jerez de la Frontera, who had died fifty years earlier, or to his family. Sandeman, Bataille claimed, had created chaos in London between 1889 and 1890 by evoking Moloch during the course of a séance in the home of a lady of the British court. Sandeman, who was significantly more powerful than the average Spiritualist medium, made the table turn as usual, until it "changed into a disgusting winged crocodile".

One can easily imagine what followed: "there was a general panic or, to be more precise, everyone, except Sandeman, was paralyzed, incapable of moving. But the shock reached its summit when the crocodile was seen going towards the piano, opening it and playing a melody, the notes of which were the strangest ever heard. While it was playing, the winged crocodile would glance at the lady of the house with expressive looks, which obviously, as one can imagine, made her uncomfortable. Fortunately, it was not one of Moloch's cruel days. Thus, the crocodile vanished abruptly. The table remained, as it was before, laden with bottles of gin, whisky, rum and beer, together with other drinks offered to the guests. The only difference was that the bottles had been emptied, as by magic, without being opened. The guests did not protest, convinced they had made a lucky escape".[23]

Enter Diana Vaughan

Bataille's material was not always as new as it was when he described Brother Sandeman's crocodile or the undergrounds of Gibraltar. To fill in thousands of pages, he had to make extensive use of ancient and modern demonological literature. He returned to the old writings about Loudun, Louviers, and other episodes, which had been collected by demonologists such as Mirville and Bizouard. He used the same authors for a prolonged attack on magnetism, hypnotism, and Spiritualism, where he denounced their demonic origins. It would be, however, wrong to forget the part of the *Diable* relative to possessions and obsessions, because this is where the central character came into play. It was a

luciférien, la Cabale fin-de-siècle, magie de la Rose-Croix, les possessions à l'état latent, les précurseurs de l'Ante-Christ. Récit d'un témoin, cit., vol. I, pp. 481–500.

23 *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 618–619.

lady whose stories would continue intriguing French Catholics and anticlericals for the following five years. Her name was Diana Vaughan.

"Half French and half American", Diana was born in Paris. Her father was from Louisville, Kentucky, and her Protestant mother from the Cévennes. Her father, shortly after the foundation of Palladism, joined the new cult, in which he initiated his daughter in 1883. In 1884, when she turned twenty, Diana was already a "master" in a Palladist "triangle" (i.e. a lodge), but what followed was even more extraordinary. On February 28, 1884, while her Palladist "triangle" met "in a theurgic cabalistic session", suddenly "the vault of the temple opened and released a genie of fire, who was none other than the devil Asmodeus". The famous demon brought a trophy as a gift to his devotees in Louisville, "the tail of the lion of Saint Mark", which he cut off with a sword in a battle between angelic and demonic spirits. Bataille was not gullible, and observed judiciously that "there is no lion of Saint Mark, as this is a purely symbolic lion, an iconographic attribute of the Evangelist". Thus, "Asmodeus fooled the triangle, bringing a tail of a random lion to those who believe in the lies, in most cases stupid, of the infernal spirits". The Luciferians "demonstrated a proud dose of superstitious credulity":[24] not so Bataille, who knew better.

The French doctor credited his readers with being less credulous than the Palladists, and busy with "more serious things". They knew that "the tail of the lion kept in Louisville had nothing supernatural in itself. However, a Devil could easily have elected it as its home, and thus it could produce infernal manifestations, and these effectively occurred frequently, at the command of Sister Diana Vaughan, the protégé of Asmodeus".

Notwithstanding her diabolical relations, Diana Vaughan was introduced from the start as a pleasant character, just as Sophie Walder was hateful. The two prima donnas of Palladism were thus destined to clash. This occurred in Paris in 1885, in a triangle presided by a man called Bordone, to whom Diana was sent to "receive the perfect Palladian light, which meant the degree of Master Knight Templar". On the order of Pike in person, in recognition of the Palladist merits of her father, Diana was dispensed of a preliminary trial of an obscene nature, the "Rite of Pastos". Sophie Walder was also present in Paris, and she had with her a consecrated holy wafer. She asked that Diana at least submit to the second trial, which was necessary to become a "Master Knight Templar": "to spit on the divine Eucharist". Diana, however, although she claimed to be "happy to dedicate herself to Lucifer", refused the profanation. The session was suspended and a committee gathered the following day to judge the rebel.

24 *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 711–712.

Diana, Bataille reported, seriously risked being expelled from Palladism, but luckily, the famous "supposed tail of the lion of Saint Mark" was also brought to Paris. While the committee was about to vote the measures against Sister Vaughan, the tail "leaped from the chest that contained it and, although light as a feather, vigorously stroked all those who had spoken against Diana". After such a manifestation, Diana not only was not expelled but was immediately proclaimed a "Master Knight Templar", without any further need for the sacrilege.

More extraordinary prodigies followed. The tip of the lion tail "transformed in a small Devil's head", which opened its mouth and declared: "I, Asmodeus, commander of fourteen legions of fire spirits, declare that I protect and always will guard my beloved Diana against everyone and everything (…). Diana, I will obey you in everything, but on one explicit condition: you must never marry. Besides, should you decide not to conform to this wish of mine, the only law that I impose on you, I will strangle whomever will dare to become your spouse".

This was not all: some time later, the adversaries of Diana, while she was going back to America, gathered under the presidency of Bordone and with the participation of the perfidious Sophie, in order to plot against her again. But at a certain point Bordone "let out a horrifying scream and his head suddenly turned around, with his face now on the side of his back". Sophie Walder summoned her "familiar spirit" to understand the cause of the mishap, and the spirit replied that it was the doing of Asmodeus, who came as an avenger of his fiancé Diana. Only the latter would be able to put the head of Bordone back in its place. "Since she was a good girl, who did not hold grudges", when she was informed of the event, Diana set out and twenty days later arrived in Paris, where she turned the head of the misfortunate Palladist back to normal. Bordone was so "disgusted" by the episode that he abandoned the cult forever. Finally, notwithstanding the further protests of Sophie, Diana was formally consecrated as a "Master Knight Templar" on September 15, 1885, again on Pike's personal orders. She returned to Louisville, where she reigned "on local Palladists until 1891, when she moved to New York, always accompanied by the famous 'tail of the lion of Saint Mark'".[25]

The successive career of Diana Vaughan happened outside of the *Diable*, which we now want to follow in its systematic extensive exposition of all kinds of Satanism. The second volume dedicated many hundreds of pages to palmistry, tarot reading, astrology, interpretation of dreams, apparitions of spirits,

25 *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 714–721.

magical mirrors, spells, filters, talismans, amulets: all clearly exposed as works of the Devil. Then politics and culture were discussed: the French Revolution, anarchy, socialism, communism; the rehabilitation of the Devil in French literature; Martinism, the esoteric Christianity of priests such as Roca, the foundation of a Gnostic Church. Bataille, again, denounced all as direct activities of the Satanists, sometimes personally organized by Pike. From Charleston, the American Freemason maneuvered hundreds of different organizations in order to substitute the cult of Lucifer to that of the Christian God, Adonai, whom he considered, in a gnostic manner, an evil god, and the Luciferian *Liber Apadno*, from which Bataille offered precious quotes, to the Bible. The physician however admitted that there were also "non-organized Satanists", among which he mentioned Bois, and "dissident Luciferians" such as Lady Caithness. He insisted, however, that as long as Pike was alive, the great majority of the world Satanists could not subtract themselves from his direction.

It is impossible to analyze all the hundreds of episodes and characters in the *Diable*. In the second volume, Bataille quoted liberally from Léo Taxil and Domenico Margiotta, whom I will discuss shortly. Here, I will limit myself to referring to some curious objects, rituals and episodes, which concern the main plot, the one relative to Pike, Diana Vaughan, and Sophie Walder. Pike was described as a collector of peculiar objects, among which the "Arcula Mystica" was not the least prodigious. This was a "diabolical telephone", constituted by a double horn similar to that of normal telephones of the 19th century, situated in a small chest. Inside the chest, there were also a silver toad and seven small statues, which corresponded to Charleston, Rome, Berlin, Washington, Montevideo, Naples and Calcutta.

When Pike wanted, for example, to call Lemmi in Italy, he placed two fingers on the statues that represented Charleston and Rome respectively. As an effect of this act, "in the same instant in Rome, where Lemmi had his own *Arcula Mystica*, he heard a strong hiss. Lemmi opened his small chest and saw the statue of Ignis [i.e. the statue that represented Charleston] raised, while small inoffensive flames escaped from the throat of the toad. He thus knew that the Sovereign Pontiff of Charleston wanted to talk to him. He lifted the statue of Ratio [which represented Rome] from the chest" and began to talk. Everything, naturally, worked thanks to the arts of Lucifer, who clearly in the era of telephones did not intend to be overcome by mere human technology. But what if, "when there was a call, Lemmi was not in his office"? Lucifer did not yet invent the cell phone, but found a solution nonetheless. Lemmi "would feel the sensation of seven warm breaths blown on his face; he would know exactly what it means. If, for example, he would need an hour to be available, he should say in a low voice, 'I will only be ready in an hour'. And the toad in

the chest in Charleston [from which the call came] would speak in a loud and understandable voice to Pike: 'In an hour! In an hour! In an hour!'".[26]

Among Pike's marvels, there was also "the famous talisman-bracelet" that, according to Bataille, was still kept in Charleston after the death of the Luciferian Pontiff. At one stage Pike, who often had to travel away from Charleston, was sorry not to be able to see the weekly apparition of Lucifer there. The Prince of Darkness, complacent, provided him with a bracelet, which allowed him to "make Lucifer appear in any location where Pike was". It was sufficient for him to kneel, kiss the earth, and call Lucifer three times. The first time he used the bracelet, Pike, in reality, had nothing to ask Lucifer in particular: he only wanted to test the jewel. Lucifer, however, told him: "I can't have come here for nothing. Ask me something". Pike then asked him to be transported "to the most beautiful and bright among the stars, Sirius". "In Satan's arms" the American Freemason flew "1,373,000 times the distance between the Earth and the Sun", to Sirius and back.[27]

Armed with this protection, Pike could fear no opposition. The schism within Palladism would explode only after his death, and would give Bataille the opportunity to produce a different kind of literature. The *Diable* was, rather, the story of the kingdom of Pike, whose only problems came from the rivalry between Sophie Walder and Diana Vaughan. Sophie, while the issues of the *Diable* continued to be published, got into all kinds of mischief. She created a talisman with a consecrated holy wafer surrounded by sharp points, as she wanted to hold it in her hands and desecrate the holy bread every time she wished.[28] She planned to assassinate Pope Leo XIII, as she was "furiously enraged" by the anti-Masonic encyclical *Humanum genus*.[29] She imposed her authority on the Freemasons of all of Europe, crossing walls and making bouquets of snakes appear thanks to the protection of the Devil Bitru, no less powerful than his colleague Asmodeus who protected Diana Vaughan.[30]

The same Bitru was the fiancé of Sophie, just as Asmodeus was of Diana. On October 18, 1883, Bataille reported, a Palladist session was held in Rome. Among the participants was the mysterious Lydia Nemo, an Italian initiate who had received from the Devil the gift of being able to appear in the lodges with the splendid appearance she had when she was thirteen. In Rome, Bitru promised to marry Sophie on December 25, 1895, and that their daughter

26 *Ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 391–395.
27 *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 330–340.
28 *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 349–350.
29 *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 816.
30 *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 830–850.

would be born on September 29, 1896. When the time would come, Sophie's daughter would in turn marry another demon, Décarabia, giving birth to a girl who would be the mother of the Antichrist. The reader thus had from Bataille a chronology that permitted the prediction of the advent of the Antichrist in the second half of the 20th century, and indicated in Sophie no less that the great-grandmother of the Antichrist. The coming of the Antichrist, Bataille added, was solemnly announced in a séance attended by the Italian Prime Minister Francesco Crispi (1819–1901) together with well-known Italian Freemasons, including Lemmi and Ettore Ferrari.[31]

In the same year, 1893, the Mormon father of Sophie, Phileas Walder, had died. The great-grandmother of the Antichrist did not appear to be too worried, since the corpse of her father had risen eleven times from the grave and even took part in a Palladist banquet, where he ate and drank with great satisfaction.[32] The only problems came to Sophie, as usual, from her arch-rival Diana Vaughan, now in a state of "permanent possession", while previously she was only in "obsession", by her demon lover Asmodeus. In the final issues of the *Diable,* it became clear to the readers that the matter went beyond a contest of Luciferian prodigies. When Pike died in 1891, Lemmi was elected as the new Sovereign Pontiff of Palladism, and began to make it slip from a cult of Lucifer, the Devil as the "good God", to a cult of Satan, the Devil as prince of Evil. Diana, who wanted to keep worshipping the Devil as Lucifer and not as Satan, was about to create a revolt and a schism, in the course of which she would come into conflict again with Sophie. The *Diable* ended promising a follow up, and referring to a new complementary magazine, signed by the same Doctor Bataille, which would follow month after month the events of Palladism and reveal further sensational episodes.

The Sources of the *Diable*

The Devil in the XIX century was published from 1892 to 1894. Beginning with a "specimen" issue in 1893, Bataille followed up in 1894, 1895 and 1896, with the *Revue Mensuelle Religieuse, Politique, Scientifique complément de la publication Le Diable au XIXe siècle*, introduced as a "fighting organ against High Masonry and contemporary Satanism", preceded some months earlier by a more modest *Bulletin Mensuel*. The *Revue Mensuelle* published information on Lemmi, Diana Vaughan, Sophie Walder, lists of Freemasons from all over the world, further

31 *Ibid*., vol. I, pp. 390–395.

32 *Ibid*., vol. II, pp. 871–874.

details on Satanism and Palladism, prayers and devotional articles, and lives of Catholic saints. Between the "complementary magazines" and the installments of the *Diable*, Bataille had now produced almost four thousand pages.

Where did all this material come from? An investigation into the sources of the *Diable* has rarely been attempted, but it is crucial for the whole story. It is not enough to declare that the *Diable* was a mystification, as it clearly was. Even hoaxers need sources, especially when they have to fill thousands of pages. There is little information on the biographical data and personality of Doctor Charles Hacks. The historian, politician and Freemason Jean Baylot (1897–1976) gathered a large dossier, composed mostly of pieces bought in an antique shop, which is now in the National Library in Paris. The dossier has been studied by French historian Jean-Pierre Laurant, and contains a series of documents gathered by an anti-Masonic writer, Colonel Emmanuel Bon (1856–1939), regarding the enigmatic Doctor Bataille. The Messageries Maritimes had confirmed the existence and the career, as a physician aboard their ships, of a certain Doctor Charles Hacks, who was known as a competent and dignified professional. Father Pellousier, a priest from Digne, met him as a medical student and freethinker. He suggested him to read "the eight volumes of Mirville", i.e the *Pneumatologie*: a precious information, which already puts us on the track of the literature destined to influence the *Diable*.

The manuscript of the *Diable* was all written by Léo Taxil, a character whom we will meet shortly. Bataille claimed that he was indeed the author, but he had adopted the strategy of having his texts copied by Taxil, so that the Satanists, who might have exacted a terrible revenge, would not recognize his handwriting. A certain number of Franciscans, among whom a Father Célestin-Marie, from the convent of Pau, were consulted by Hacks during the redaction of the *Diable*. This Franciscan later declared having interrupted his relations with the doctor after he had noticed that "a woman went every day to his clinic, and stayed in a closed room well after the time for medical visits".[33]

Doctor Hacks had good reasons for preferring not to be recognized behind the signature of Bataille. The same year 1892, while presenting himself as a devout Catholic to the readers of the *Diable*, he published a work under his real name, *Le Geste*, where he revealed himself as a freethinker and announced the death of God. "God the immortal, he wrote, has died once again, killed by the same exaggerations and by the abuse that has been done of his gestures. The figure of the old man who presents himself from the balcony of the palace

33 See J.-P. Laurant, "Le Dossier Léo Taxil du fonds Jean Baylot de la Bibliothèque Nationale", *Politica Hermetica*, no. 4, 1990, pp. 55–63.

of the Eternal City [the Pope] now blesses in emptiness a world that has lived by this gesture and that will die no longer needing it".[34]

In 1896, when the Jesuits of the learned journal *Études* attacked the *Diable* as a mystification, Father Eugène Portalié S.J. (1852–1909) used the Doctor Hacks of the *Geste*, a "freethinker and atheist", in order to demonstrate that "the extravagant tales" he signed as Doctor Bataille were the work of an impostor.[35] In fact, the *Diable* did not bring good fortune to the medical career of Doctor Hacks. From being the chief physician of the Clinique St. Sulpice (83, rue de Rhin), he went down to become the manager of a modest "fixed price restaurant" (2, boulevard Montmartre).[36]

The little information we have on Doctor Hacks-Bataille still tells us little on the genesis of the *Diable*, which must be collocated in a wider context. We have seen how the school of the Mirvilles, the Gougenots, and the Bizouards began in the 1850s and 1860s to focus on Satanism. It also occasionally mentioned its possible connection with secret societies, which was already present in the first anti-Satanist speculations on the French Revolution. We know that the young Hacks-Bataille read Mirville. In the works by Mirville and his followers, there was no particular insistence on the relations between Freemasonry and the Devil. While a group of anti-Masonic authors had seen the hand of Freemasonry behind the French Revolution and had discussed the connections between the Masonic lodges and Judaism, a *direct* connection with the Devil had rarely been mentioned.

One of the first works mentioning Satanism and Freemasonry as strictly connected was a small book by the well-known French Catholic apologist, Mgr. Louis-Gaston de Ségur (1820–1881). Although its second edition (1875) was more successful, it was published for the first time in 1867.[37] This might well have been the starting point of the whole Catholic narrative about a "High Masonry" or "secret Freemasonry", where – "what horrible thing!", commented Ségur – "each adept, to be admitted, must bring with him the day of his initiation the Holy Sacrament of the altar and trample it under his feet in front of

34 Charles Hacks, *Le Geste*, Paris: Flammarion, 1892, p. 349.

35 Eugène Portalié S.J., "Le Congrès Antimaçonnique de Trente et la fin d'une mystification", *Études*, no. 69, November 1896, pp. 381–393.

36 See A.L. Caillet, *Manuel bibliographique des sciences psychiques ou occultes*, cit., vol. II, p. 227.

37 (Mgr. Louis-Gaston de) Ségur, *Les Francs-Maçons. Ce qu'ils sont, ce qu'ils font, ce qu'ils veulent*, Paris: Librairie St.-Joseph, 1867. See the reprint of the text by Mgr. de Ségur in Émile Poulat [1920–2014], J.-P. Laurant, *L'Anti-maçonnisme catholique*. Les Francs-Maçons *par Mgr de Ségur*, Paris: Berg International, 1994, pp. 16–102.

the Brothers". All this happened in France, where "they assured me that this infernal sect exists already in all major cities", while in nearby Italy, in order to be initiated into the "High Masonry", it was necessary to have accomplished, naturally without having been discovered, at least one murder on behalf of the cult.[38]

Ségur's pamphlet, due to the authority of its author, played a decisive role in the passage from philosophical and political anti-Freemasonry to an anti-Masonic enterprise of a different kind, which "made the Devil intervene, Satan himself".[39] Ségur went well beyond previous anti-Masonic polemists. Even the most virulent among them, the lawyer from Dresden Eduard Emil Eckert (1825–1866), mentioned the Knight Templars and their presumed Baphomet, but stayed safely away from the idea of a Satanist "High Masonry".[40] Some see an echo of Ségur's theories in the *Juif* by Gougenot des Mousseaux, which dates back to 1869 and is a text of much greater ambitions compared to the simple pamphlet of the French prelate.[41]

The work that developed, in the most complete form, the thesis of the existence of a Satanist "High Masonry" operating behind the regular Masonic lodges was published in 1880 and signed by "C.C. de Saint-André". It was *Francs-Maçons et Juifs*, a huge 820-page tome, consecrated to an anti-Masonic interpretation of the biblical Book of Revelation. After having revealed that Jews were the "real chiefs and real directors of Freemasonry and all secret societies", "Saint-André" concluded that "Freemasonry is inspired and guided by Satan; it practices magical Kabbalism or the cult of the fallen spirits. Jewish Masonry is the tool Satan strives to use to reconstruct his ancient dominion on humanity, preparing the people for the Empire of the Antichrist".[42] The identity of "Saint-André" is now certain. It was the pen name of Father Emmanuel A. Chabauty (1827–1914), the parish priest of Saint-André in Mirabeau-au-Poitou, who was also an honorary Canon of Angoulême and Poitiers. One of the numerous anti-Jewish sources of Chabauty was Gougenot des Mousseaux, but Chabauty also slipped into millenarianism and apocalyptic prophecies. In the end, while

38 Mgr. L.-G. de Ségur *Les Francs-Maçons. Ce qu'ils sont, ce qu'ils font, ce qu'ils veulent*, cit., p. 57.

39 See Pierre Barrucand, "Quelques aspects de l'antimaçonnisme, le cas de Paul Rosen", *Politica Hermetica*, no. 4, 1990, pp. 91–108.

40 See the French edition: Eduard Emil Eckert, *La Franc-Maçonnerie dans sa véritable signification, son organisation, son but et son histoire*, Liège: J.G. Lardinois, 1854.

41 P. Barrucand, "Quelques aspects de l'antimaçonnisme, le cas de Paul Rosen", cit., p. 96.

42 C.C. de Saint-André, *Francs-Maçons et Juifs. Sixième Age de l'Église d'après l'Apocalypse*, Paris: Palmé, 1880, p. 280.

the Vatican had praised Gougenot, it condemned the parish priest from Poitou and placed his works in the Index of forbidden books on January 8, 1884.[43]

The year 1884 marked the highest point of Catholic anti-Masonism all over Europe. On April 20, Pope Leo XIII published the encyclical *Humanum genus*, considered the *magna carta* of Catholic criticism of Freemasonry. The encyclical of Leo XIII has been accused of "sanctioning diabolical interpretations", arguing that, after all, the Pontiff's analysis of Freemasonry "was not so different from that of Chabauty/Saint-André".[44] There is no doubt that *Humanum genus* came in the most acute moment of the clash between the Catholic Church and the Latin branches of Freemasonry – in Italy, France, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, and Latin America –, which had in the previous twenty years, one by one, left the communion with the Grand Lodge of London. They had broken with London, the traditional center of "regular" worldwide Freemasonry, precisely for their anticlerical attitude, the admission of atheists into their ranks, excluded by the Anglo-Saxon lodges, and the involvement in politics.

The anticlerical virulence of Masonic initiatives such as the so-called "Anti-Council", held in Naples in 1869 in opposition to the First Vatican Council, reached heights that are hardly imaginable today.[45] Sometimes, without this implying an effective belief in the Devil, images of Satan were exhibited with the intent of anticlerical provocation, or as a symbol of rationalist rebellion against the Catholic "superstitions". This was also the meaning of the *Hymn to Satan* that the Freemason Carducci, soon to become the national poet of Italy, wrote as a young man. Another famous incident was the "discovery" of a drape with the image of Lucifer in a room in Palazzo Borghese in Rome, which between 1893 and 1895 hosted a Masonic lodge. It is understandable that, in the years of the *Diable*, the international press paid some attention to the incident.[46]

Even from the Catholic side, there was no lack of anti-Masonic insults. They were not a Catholic monopoly, and a vitriolic anti-Masonic literature had already appeared in the 1820s and 1830s among American Protestants. These were the times of the "Anti-Masonic Party" and of the harshest polemic between

43 For the Chabauty incident, see J.-P. Laurant, *L'Ésotérisme chrétien en France au XIXe siècle*, cit., pp. 125–129; and P. Barrucand, "Le Chanoine Emmanuel Chabauty (1827–1914)", *Politica Hermetica*, no. 7, 1993, pp. 147–153.

44 P. Barrucand, "Quelques aspects de l'anti-maçonnisme, le cas de Paul Rosen", cit., p. 97.

45 See the official proceedings of the Anti-Council: Giuseppe Ricciardi [1808–1882] (ed.), *L'Anticoncilio di Napoli del 1869, promosso e descritto da Giuseppe Ricciardi*, Naples: Stabilimento Tipografico, 1870; reprint, Foggia: Bastogi, 1982.

46 For this and other similar incidents, see Jacques Marx (ed.), *Aspects de l'anticléricalisme du Moyen Age à nos jours*, Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1988.

some American Protestant denominations and Freemasonry.[47] In this context, in his encyclical *Humanum genus* Leo XIII recognized Masonic anticlericalism as an egregious example of "that implacable hatred, that thirst for revenge in which Satan burns against Jesus Christ". In "ungodly cults", according to Leo XIII, "one can clearly see the spirit of arrogant obstinacy, of uncontrollable perfidy and simulation of the Devil".[48] On the other hand, *Humanum genus* never used the expressions "city of Satan" or "Synagogue of Satan" to define Freemasonry.

If one reads *Humanum genus* in the context of all the encyclicals of Leo XIII, which often mentioned Masonic heresies, it appears that the primary reproach he made to Freemasonry was that of professing "naturalism", which he defined as the pretense of organizing society, the State, family, culture, regardless of God and the Church. Leo XIII knew that there were divergences inside the Masonic world between an Anglo-Saxon "orthodoxy" and a Latin "dissidence", and that they also concerned the Masonic attitude towards Christianity and atheism. In all forms of Freemasonry, however, he found a spirit of relativism, which he deemed incompatible with the Catholic faith. The first paragraph of the encyclical stemmed from Augustine's vision of the two cities, and described a clash between a "kingdom of God" and a "kingdom of Satan". But this was a theological and metaphysical vision: the *civitas Diaboli* of Augustine and Leo XIII did not coincide with Satanism, nor was it reduced to those who explicitly worshipped the Devil.

The virulence of the anti-Masonic polemic of Leo XIII, who in the encyclical defined Freemasonry as a "baleful pestilence", is not at issue. What is questionable is the attempt to enlist the Pope in the current that was searching in the Masonic lodges for the explicit practice of Satanism, if not for direct apparitions of the Devil. In fact, Leo XIII did not criticize Freemasons for believing too much in the supernatural, summoning Satan in their lodges, but for believing in it too little, professing "naturalism" and slipping into skepticism and atheism. There were, in essence, two religious models of opposition to Freemasonry. We can call this religious opposition, including both its models, a counter-Masonic movement, to distinguish it from a "secular" anti-Masonic movement, which criticized Freemasonry, independently of its attitude towards religion, exclusively for social and political reasons. There was, for instance,

47 See William Preston Vaughn [1933–2014], *The Antimasonic Party in the United States 1826–1843*, Lexington (Kentucky): University Press of Kentucky, 1983; Paul Goodman [1934–1995], *Towards a Christian Republic: Antimasonry and the Great Transition in New England, 1826–1836*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

48 Leo XIII, *Humanum genus*, Vatican City: Tipografia Vaticana, 1884, no. 17 and no. 26.

a socialist anti-Masonic critique, which saw in Freemasonry a tool of the rich and capitalism.

The first model of religious counter-Masonic critique, of which the *Humanum genus* constitutes an example, represents substantially what the Catholic Church still believes today about Freemasonry.[49] It is mostly a philosophical critique, and accuses Freemasonry of relativism, secularism, "naturalism". It also claims that Freemasons, at least in their Latin lodges – as those in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany are normally less anticlerical –, effectively conspire against the Church and use secrecy to obtain unfair advantages in civil society. The latter critique is of course shared by "secular" anti-Masonic theories. The second counter-Masonic model, on the other hand, almost ignores the philosophical aspects and accuses Freemasonry of being personally guided by the Devil, looking for evidence of adoration of the Devil and of Satanist cults in the lodges. The use of expressions such as "kingdom of Satan" and similar is not decisive in determining which of the two counter-Masonic models is at work. In the Augustinian tradition, one can speak of the "city of Satan" in the theological sense of a universe of evil, in which all humans participate when they distance themselves from God through sin. This is different from descriptions of a "city of Satan" in a concrete and material sense, intended as a clandestine network, with headquarters in Charleston or elsewhere, of organizations that adore Satan or Lucifer and celebrate rituals in his honor. Notwithstanding occasional similarities in the language, the two models are different and should not be confused.

Another controversy divided the anti-Masonic camp in the final decades of the 19th century. Both secular anti-Masonic and religious counter-Masonic activists were divided internally concerning the role of Jews in Freemasonry. For "Saint-André", there were no doubts: Jews directed the diabolical High Masonry. In a less virulent and more scholarly manner, a Catholic Jesuit Bishop, Mgr. Léon Meurin (1825–1895), son of an officer of Napoleon I, later proposed the same thesis. Meurin had a good knowledge of the Hebrew language as well as of English, Persian and Sanskrit, an international career, and a familiarity with the writings of Gougenot des Mousseaux. Educated in Berlin, Meurin entered the Catholic seminary in Cologne, where he became a priest in 1848 and a Jesuit in 1853. A missionary in India from 1858, in 1867 he was consecrated as

49 See Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, *Declaration on Masonic Associations*, November 26, 1983, available at <http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19831126_declaration-masonic_en.html>, last accessed on October 28, 2015.

a Bishop and became the Apostolic Vicar of Bombay. A diplomat for the Holy See, he served delicate missions in favor of Indian Catholics. In 1887, he was appointed as Bishop of Port-Louis, in the Mauritius Islands.

In Port Louis, a particularly anticlerical Masonic lodge, the Triple Espérance, was the center of local social life. Meurin felt the urge to take up the project of a counter-Masonic campaign that he had already started in India. After having gathered more information in France, which, as we shall see, was not always reliable, he published in 1893 *La Franc-Maçonnerie, Synagogue de Satan*.[50] It became the most famous work of the Catholic counter-Masonic crusade, at least in the version critical towards the Jews. It was translated in numerous languages, and its Italian edition of 1895 was widely read in the Vatican.[51]

In the meantime, another kind of counter-Masonic literature had appeared, which systematically distanced itself from anti-Semitism and the attacks against the Jews. This literature did believe Freemasonry had a satanic aspect, but also claimed that the Jews, a profoundly religious people, were no less victims of Satanist "High Masonry" than Christians were. If anything, Freemasonry abused their sacred symbols. The most representative author of this current was Samuel Paul Rosen (1840–1907), a Polish Jew born in Warsaw, who had been a rabbi and a Freemason before his conversion to Catholicism. René Guénon (1886–1951) reported how Rosen, a famous bibliophile, wore a large cloak, inside which he could, if necessary, hide the books he stole from libraries.[52]

Rosen debuted as an anti-Masonic author shortly after moving to France from Poland, preceded by a stay in Constantinople.[53] In 1883, he published a chaotic history of secret societies, from Druids to Carbonari and Freemasons.[54] In 1885, Rosen achieved a "master strike":[55] he began the publication of two big volumes entitled *Practical Masonry*, in which he provided the most complete information available at that time on each of the 33 degrees of the Masonic

50 (Mgr.) Léon Meurin S.J., *La Franc-Maçonnerie, Synagogue de Satan*, Paris: Retaux, 1893.

51 (Mgr.) Leone Meurin S.J., *La Frammassoneria, Sinagoga di Satana*, Siena: Ufficio della Biblioteca del Clero, 1895.

52 P. Barrucand, "Quelques aspects de l'antimaçonnisme, le cas de Paul Rosen", cit., p. 99.

53 See [Samuel Paul Rosen], *La Franc-Maçonnerie. Révélations d'un Rose-Croix à propos des événement actuels*, Bar-le-Duc: Bertrand, and Paris: Bloud et Barral, n.d. (probably 1877); S.P. Rosen, *Aujourd'hui et demain. Les Événements dévoilés par un ancien Rose-Croix: suite de ses Révélations*, Paris: Bloud et Barral, n.d. (but 1882).

54 [S.] P. Rosen, *La Franc-Maçonnerie, Histoire authentique des sociétés secrètes depuis le temps le plus reculé jusqu'à nos jours, leur rôle, politique, religieux et social, par un ancien Rose-Croix*, Paris: Bloud, 1883.

55 P. Barrucand, "Quelques aspects de l'antimaçonnisme, le cas de Paul Rosen", cit., p. 99.

Scottish Rite.[56] While he was writing this work, Rosen had already moved closer to the Catholic Church, to the extent of publishing in the appendix the encyclical *Humanum genus*.

His book, defined by a pro-Masonic author as "one of the most serious ever written on Freemasonry",[57] maintained a safe distance from diabolist interpretations. The same cannot be said about the subsequent work by Rosen, which also enjoyed a "prodigious success",[58] *Satan et Cie*.[59] In this work, Rosen attempted to build, with the help of tables offering complicated charts, a unified vision of Freemasonry and its rites, distinguished into symbolic, Scottish-Cabalistic, the rites of York and of Swedenborg, and finally "Hermetic and Templar". To put rites and obediences, "regular" and "fringe" Masonries, all together in a single grand scheme was a questionable operation, as within Freemasonry different and separate organizations coexist. Rosen, however, had now launched himself into the search for satanic secrets. The "supreme secrets" of the so called "symbolic" rites of Freemasonry were still of a "naturalistic" nature: "the only God is man". For Scottish Freemasonry, the secret was something else: "the only God is Satan". For the rites of York and Swedenborg, the secret presented a variation: "the only God, who is in Jesus, is Satan". For "Hermetic and Templar" Freemasonry the secret was political: "man has the absolute right to kill all priests and all kings".

The final explanation of the chart, the secret of secrets, left no doubts: "the omnipotence of Satan is the final objective and the supreme secret of Freemasonry". The chart already showed enough, but the volume revisited the previous work of Rosen on the Scottish rite, now attributing a perverse meaning to each degree. Thus, the first three degrees were interpreted as dedicated to the "glorification of vice" by exalting curiosity (apprentice), ambition (companion), and pride (master). Rosen further divided the other degrees into seven categories, without necessarily respecting their Masonic order. The first category included the first three initial degrees. The second category taught atheism and anarchy, the third promoted "German Enlightenment", by which Rosen meant the revenge of Knight Templars. The fourth, abusing Jewish symbols, taught the war on morality and virtue and the exaltation of corruption, deism, collectivism,

56 [S.] P. Rosen, *Maçonnerie pratique – Cours d'enseignement supérieur de la Franc-Maçonnerie, Rite Écossais ancien et accepté*, 2 vols., Paris: Baltenweck, n.d. (but 1885–1886).

57 A.L. Caillet, *Manuel bibliographique des sciences psychiques ou occultes*, cit., vol. III, p. 429.

58 *Ibid*., vol. III, p. 430.

59 [S.] P. Rosen, *Satan et Cie. Association Universelle pour la destruction de l'Ordre Social: révélation complète et définitive de tous les secrets de la Franc-Maçonnerie*, Paris: Casterman, 1888.

and communism. The fifth category taught a form of political perversion both of the masses and of the élite; the sixth, naturalism; the seventh, absolute obedience to Freemasonry above all human laws. Finally, the eight category, which corresponded to one degree only, the 33rd of the Scottish Rite, "united all the ritual secrets of Freemasonry". It taught, although not in a way which was immediately recognizable, the worship of Satan as an active force, a teacher, and a leader, finally leading the adept into recognizing Satan as God.[60]

Among the tools used by Freemasonry, according to Rosen, sexual magic, the cult of the male and female sexual organs, and tantric practices, were the most effective in pushing the adepts towards Satanism. With what a critic described as a "remarkable" creativity, Rosen blended the magical-sexual practices of Pascal Beverly Randolph (1825–1875), of "certain Jewish cabalists", of ancient "licentious Gnostics", and united them in a "work of synthesis". Rather than describing an existing Masonic system, he was in fact fabricating a "new religion (…) mixing an old basis of sexual esotericism and a particular interpretation of Gnosticism, Kabbalah, and Christianity". After having "'diabolized' this system to make it pass as a cult of the Devil", finally he presented this "peculiar mixture as the 'supreme secret of Freemasonry', in order to make it palatable to a certain Catholic milieu".[61] Rosen did not invent anything. He simply put together rituals and practices of dozens of different magical movements, old and new, fictional and real, lumped them in a unified system, and attributed it to Freemasonry. He also mixed with his fiction real information on Freemasonry, so that an authoritative bibliography on esoteric works could later conclude that, "although conceived for an objective which was sharply hostile to Freemasonry, his work was also one of the most documented that existed on this order".[62]

The career of Rosen did not end with *Satan et Cie*. Two years later, the former rabbi published another large volume, *L'Ennemie sociale*, cautioned by an apostolic blessing he received from Leo XIII.[63] In this volume, he repeated how Freemasonry was "founded by Satan" and that the well-known French Masonic acronym AGDGADU did not mean, as it was usually believed, "To the Glory of the Great Architect of the Universe", but "To the Glory of the Great Association

60 *Ibid.*, pp. 204–213.

61 P. Barrucand, "Quelques aspects de l'antimaçonnisme, le cas de Paul Rosen", cit., p. 105.

62 *Bibliotheca Esoterica. Catalogue annoté et illustré de 6.707 ouvrages anciens et modernes qui traitent des sciences occultes comme aussi des sociétés secrètes*, Paris: Dorbon, n.d. (ca. 1940), p. 441.

63 [S.]P. Rosen, *L'Ennemie Sociale. Histoire documentée des faits et gestes de la Franc-Maçonnerie de 1717 à 1890 en France, en Belgique et en Italie*, Paris: Bloud et Barral, and Bruxelles: Société Belge de Librairies, 1890.

for the Destruction of the Universe". Rosen also revealed that the headquarters of High Masonry were in Berlin, from which four centers depended situated in Naples, Calcutta, Washington D.C., and Montevideo, an idea that was not confirmed by any scholar of Freemasonry but that Bataille, with slight modifications, would treasure. Overall, however, compared to Rosen's previous works, the satanic theme had a minor role in *L'Ennemie sociale*.

Summing up, around 1890, there were at least four different anti-Masonic schools, and each would take a different position on the *Diable*, which, in turn, would freely draw from authors of all schools.

(a) First, there was an *anti*-Masonic school, which, although composed also by Catholics, used secular and political arguments. It believed that, in order to react to the improper influences of Freemasonry on the State, a broader front needed to be created. This front should not include Catholics only. Anti-Jewish and sometimes frankly anti-Semitic, this current was represented especially by Édouard Drumont (1844–1917) and his disciple Gaston Méry (1866–1909). When, in 1894, two ideas of France sharply confronted themselves in the case of Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935), a Jewish officer accused of espionage, this school became popular by lumping together Freemasonry and Judaism as enemies of the country.[64]

(b) In the part of the Catholic world most closely connected with the hierarchy, criticism of Freemasonry was more of a doctrinal nature, and tried to show the political positions taken by Freemasonry in France as an inevitable consequence of its doctrinal premises. Thus, we can speak of *counter*-Masonic rather than *anti*-Masonic criticism. The bibliography of this Catholic philosophical counter-Masonic movement is immense, not to mention its Protestant counterpart that was widespread in the United

64 French Catholic writer Georges Bernanos (1888–1948) described in 1931, in his *La grande Peur des bien-pensants*, Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1931, the political and spiritual itinerary of Drumont. Bernanos insisted on Drumont's tormented but, he believed, sincere relationship with the Catholic faith. The most detailed account of the career of Drumont and his relationship with the Catholic Church, which went through many stages, is Grégoire Kauffmann, *Edouard Drumont*, Paris: Perrin, 2008. Kauffmann considers the admiration of a respectable writer such as Bernanos for an anti-Semitic writer "unsustainable" (*ibid*., p. 463). For a typology and an overview of the *fin de siècle* anti-Semitic movements, around the project of a monument for one of the protagonists of the Dreyfus case, see Georges Bensoussan, *L'Idéologie du rejet. Enquête sur "Le Monument Henry" ou archéologie du fantasme antisémite dans la France de la fin du XIXe siècle*, Levallois-Perret: Manya, 1993.

States and elsewhere. The main exponents of this trend during the publication of the *Diable* were Mgr. Henri Delassus (1836–1921), editor of the Catholic weekly *Semaine religieuse de Cambrai*, and the Parisian lawyer Georges Bois (1852–1910), a friend of Huysmans like Jules Bois but not a relative of the latter. Authors such as Delassus and Georges Bois, following the trail of Leo XIII's *Humanum genus*, remained anchored to a doctrinal criticism of Freemasonry and looked at diabolist interpretations with great suspicion.

(c) In contrast with the philosophical wing, another current of Catholic counter-Masonic criticism was definitely diabolist. We followed its developments up until Meurin. The current culminating in Meurin's works elaborated what were simple hints in anti-Satanist authors of the 1860s concerning Freemasonry and, by using but somewhat re-interpreting Gougenot des Mousseaux, closely connected Freemasonry to Judaism, assuming an anti-Jewish attitude.

(d) Within the group of Catholic counter-Masonic authors who adopted a diabolist interpretation of Freemasonry, some tried to distance themselves from anti-Judaism. Rosen was the main representative of this orientation.

The sensational revelations of an anticlerical Freemason would crash upon these conflicting currents with the strength of a storm beginning in 1885, when his conversion to Catholicism would be announced. His name, soon to become famous, was Léo Taxil.

The Early Career of Léo Taxil

Léo Taxil[65] was the pseudonym of Marie-Joseph-Antoine-Gabriel Jogand-Pagès, born in Marseilles on March 21, 1854 into a family of Catholic merchants.

65 For biographical information on Taxil, see M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme au XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., pp. 247–252; Eugen Weber [1925–2007], *Satan franc-maçon. La mystification de Léo Taxil*, Paris: Julliard, 1964; J.-P. Laurant, "Le Dossier Léo Taxil du fonds Jean Baylot de la Bibliothèque Nationale", cit.; Christopher McIntosh, *Eliphas Levi and the French Occult Revival*, London: Rider and Company, 1972, pp. 207–218. The book by Leslie Fry [pseud. of Paquita Shishmarev], *Léo Taxil et la Franc-Maçonnerie. Lettres inédites publiées par les amis de Monseigneur Jouin*, Chatou: British-American Press, 1934, a controversial work, to which I will return, includes an important documentation. Léo Taxil, *Confessions d'un ex-libre penseur*, Paris: Letouzey et Ané, n.d., is his autobiographical text written in the "conversion" period, which of course should be approached with great caution.

His father was, according to a police report, of "monarchist and clerical" opinions.[66] His grandfather, on the other hand, was a Freemason, as was one of his paternal uncles. Another aunt was a nun, which demonstrates how controversies between anticlerical Freemasons and monarchist Catholics were a family matter for Taxil.[67] The father sent young Gabriel to the best private Catholic schools in Marseilles, but they were not frequented by children of Catholics only. At age fourteen, as a student in the Collège Saint Louis, he made friends with a schoolmate whose father was a Freemason, and it was by frequenting his family that he developed an interest in Freemasonry. In his own family library, he only found the book by Ségur, which interpreted Freemasonry as Satanism. The book's effect on him was the opposite of what the author had intended.

Freemasonry, Satanist or not, aroused the enthusiasm of Jogand, who began to read, secretly from his parents and teachers, freethinking, anticlerical, and socialist newspapers. He was also received, at the age of fourteen, by radical and revolutionary politicians such as Henri Rochefort (1831–1913). When the latter was exiled to Belgium in October 1868, he decided to run away from home, together with his older brother, whom he convinced to come with him, travel through Italy and from there reach the radical politician in his Belgian exile. The escape attempt was however unsuccessful: the police captured the youngsters near the Italian frontier. Gabriel, identified as a potential revolutionary, was sent by the juvenile court to Mettray, near Tours, where Frédéric Demetz (who signed as "de Metz", 1796–1873) directed a sort of private reformatory.

This choice would turn out to be crucial for the future of the young revolutionary. Demetz, a magistrate, also dabbled in esotericism and proclaimed himself a follower of Fabre d'Olivet. Several years before Gabriel, in 1855, another restless youngster, Alexandre Saint-Yves d'Alveydre (1842–1909), spent time in the reformatory of Mettray, where under the guidance of Demetz he took the first steps towards becoming a famous esotericist. After some months, Gabriel's father was moved by his son's condition and managed to bring him home. He enrolled him in a public high school in Marseilles, from which he was expelled in December 1869, for both his revolutionary political ideas and an absolute lack of discipline.

His father wrote even to Pope Pius IX, entrusting his son to the prayers of the Pontiff, but Gabriel was by now a freethinker interested in esotericism, politically radical and above all fiercely anticlerical. At Mettray, he had written an

66 E. Weber, *Satan franc-maçon. La mystification de Léo Taxil*, cit., p. 193.

67 J.-P. Laurant, "Le Dossier Léo Taxil du fonds Jean Baylot de la Bibliothèque Nationale", cit., pp. 57–58.

eighty-page notebook, presently in the National Library in Paris, dedicated to Demetz, where he defined Catholicism as "a fabric of lies" and recommended Judaism to those weak souls who needed organized religion, as at least it was "closer to the truth".[68] He was by then only sixteen, but he looked older: in fact, he declared his age as eighteen in order to be enrolled in the Third Battalion of Zouaves, with which he left for Algiers in August 1870. His mother, however, discovered his adventure and warned about his real age the military authorities, who sent him back to Marseilles in September 1870. As a good radical, he followed the ideas of Italian revolutionary Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807–1882) and his triumphant visit to Marseilles. In his honor, Gabriel founded a "Young Urban Legion".

At the end of 1870, the precocious young man created a strongly anticlerical satirical magazine, *La Marotte*, which was prohibited by the authorities in 1872 when, at the age of eighteen, Gabriel stood the first of many criminal trials. When he founded the magazine, he took a pen name "so as not to harm, he will later explain, his family":[69] "Léo Taxil". He declared having derived the name from the Spartan King Leonidas I (ca. 540–480 B.C.) and an Indian King who lived during the time of Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.), Taxiles (ca. 370–315 B.C.). However, it was also true that his parents' family notary was called Ernest-Martin Taxil-Fortoul (1832-?), which may indicate a less cultivated origin of the pseudonym.[70] In subsequent years the anticlerical magazines founded by Taxil, prohibited by the authorities from time to time, and started again under different names, succeeded one another: *La Jeune République* in 1873, *La Fronde* in 1876, *Le Frondeur* in 1878, *L'Anti-Clérical* in 1879 and, in the same year, *L'Avant-Garde Républicaine*.

Not all his trials were harmless: he was condemned to eight years in 1876, and had to escape to Switzerland, where he attempted to launch initiatives in favor of Garibaldi in Geneva. In the meantime, precocious in this as well, he married and had two children. The family followed him to Geneva, from where he could quickly re-enter France thanks to the amnesty granted following the Republican victory in the elections. He moved to Paris with his wife in September 1878, where he vowed to "dedicate himself in particular to attacking the Catholic Church" and to "spread, among the common people, inexpensive

68 *Ibid.*, p. 58.

69 M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme au XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., p. 249.

70 J.-P. Laurant, "Le Dossier Léo Taxil du fonds Jean Baylot de la Bibliothèque Nationale", cit., p. 58.

pamphlets that will divulge anticlerical ideals".[71] The Parisian police monitored Taxil, but did not consider him as a particularly dangerous revolutionary. A report described him as rather busy "assiduously frequenting ill reputed places and ill reputed women" and added that, if well paid, he was not alien to collaborating with the police, providing information on the activities of other young subversives.

The Geneva police in the meantime had cautioned its colleagues in Paris on other questionable tendencies of Taxil. He had organized many swindles in Switzerland, among which the sale of "aphrodisiac pills" called "menagerie bonbons" and accompanied by "immoral advertising", even if, as the Swiss gendarmerie confirmed, they were absolutely harmless.[72] With his wife in Paris, in 1879 and 1880, he launched two of his most famous initiatives: the "Anticlerical Library", where the promised inexpensive pamphlets against the Catholic Church and the clergy finally materialized, and an "Anticlerical Bookstore" in rue des Écoles. A list of the anticlerical publications signed by Léo Taxil would fill many pages.[73] Taxil had a passion for using different pseudonyms, making it impossible to prepare a complete list. Among the most revelatory titles, some would translate as: *Down with the Priests!*, *The Lovers of the Pope*, *The Secret Loves of Pius IX*, *The Crimes of the Clergy*, *The Secret Books of the Confessors*, *The Son of a Jesuit*.

From 1879, some of these books were enriched with prefaces by his friend Garibaldi, who from his exile in the island of Caprera incited him to be pitiless against "that race of black crocodiles", the priests.[74] The formula that guaranteed Taxil's success was "the fusion of anticlericalism with pornography". His political adversaries, among whom Drumont, would later gain the upper hand in observing that nobody before him dared invent pornographic stories about the Sisters of San Vincent, very popular in France for their charitable work with the sick, and even about the Virgin Mary.[75] Garibaldi, however, was not the only one to rejoice. In 1878, Taxil was the guest of honor at a party organized by the Masonic lodge La Réunion des Amis Choisis in Béziers; in 1879, many lodges congratulated him for the success of his novel *The Son of a Jesuit*.

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71 M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme au XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., p. 249.

72 E. Weber, *Satan franc-maçon. La mystification de Léo Taxil*, cit., pp. 193–194.

73 A partial list can be found in M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme au XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., p. 250.

74 E. Weber, *Satan franc-maçon. La mystification de Léo Taxil*, cit., p. 195.

75 See G. Bernanos, *La grande Peur des bien-pensants*, cit., pp. 221–243, where, on the basis of what Drumont wrote about him, Bernanos offers an exhilarating if severe portrait of Taxil.

In 1880, he was received as a Freemason in the Paris lodge Le Temple des Amis de l'Honneur Français.

The formal initiation of Taxil, on February 17, 1881, became a worldly event: the lodge invited Freemasons from all over the city and journalists affiliated to Freemasonry to celebrate such a prestigious candidate.[76] However, during that same ceremony the playful side of Taxil was not well received by all the Freemasons present. The anticlerical journalist pointed out a spelling mistake on one of the temple's panels, and without thinking twice, pulled out a pen and wrote on the skull used in the ceremony: "The Great Architect of the Universe is requested to correct the spelling mistake in the inscription on the thirty-second panel to the left".[77]

The good relationship of Taxil with French Freemasonry lasted, in fact, only a few months. On April 28, 1881, the General Secretary of the French Grand Orient wrote to him, prohibiting Taxil from giving lectures in the lodges, while he had just been invited to inaugurate the lodge La Libre Pensée in Narbonne. Before allowing these lectures, the Grand Orient wanted to clarify a judicial misadventure, where fellow writers, some of which were Freemasons, such as Louis Blanc (1811–1882), or sons of Freemasons, such as Victor Hugo (1802–1885), accused Taxil of plagiarism. In fact, Taxil had been condemned on April 23, 1881 for having plagiarized a text by Auguste Roussel (1841–1901).[78]

In August 1881, there was a new clash, following the presentation of Taxil's candidature to the Parliament for the seat of Narbonne. There, Freemason Joseph Malric (1852–1909) was already a candidate, and he was supported by the Grand Orient. In October 1881, Taxil was forced to leave Freemasonry, which in 1882 declared him expelled for unworthiness.[79] From that moment on, Taxil's business became less successful. His file kept by the police in Paris reported his newspaper *L'Anti-Clérical* dropping from 67,000 copies to 10,000. The substitution of this publication with yet a new one, *La République Anti-Cléricale*, did not solve his problems. The police, gossiping, also reported that from April 1882, Taxil had a lover and a series of problems with his wife. He continued printing anticlerical pamphlets, but the success was no longer what it used to

76 J.-P. Laurant, "Le Dossier Léo Taxil du fonds Jean Baylot de la Bibliothèque Nationale", cit., p. 59.

77 M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme au XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., p. 250.

78 J.-P. Laurant, "Le Dossier Léo Taxil du fonds Jean Baylot de la Bibliothèque Nationale", cit., p. 59 and p. 64.

79 *Le Réveil*, August 7, 1882.

be. In May 1884, the police noted the "extreme poverty" of Taxil,[80] and on July 30, 1884, the Anticlerical Bookstore declared its bankruptcy.[81] The year was the same of the encyclical *Humanum genus* by Leo XIII.

A few months later, thanks to an aunt, who was a nun in the convent of Notre-Dame de la Réparation in Lyon,[82] Taxil, while continuing to publish *La République Anti-Cléricale*, began to secretly meet exponents of the Catholic clergy, including some Jesuits. On April 23, 1885, he declared his conversion to Catholicism. On July 23, he publicly condemned *La République Anti-Cléricale* and left for a spiritual retreat, at the end of which he took confession, on September 4. On November 15, he publicly reconciled with his wife.[83] He organized the liquidation of the Anticlerical Bookstore in December, declaring that in this way he would prevent others from buying it and continuing its deplorable activities. The police, which used to keep watch on Taxil as a left wing extremist, continued to monitor him but this time as a possible monarchist and clerical conspirer.

The police reports reveal the generosity of the Catholic world, where Taxil found new friends who paid his debts and gave him a job at the Saint-Paul Bookstore. The police, however, also noted that most Jesuits considered him "a snake that the Catholics were nestling in their breast", and this as early as 1886.[84] However, the Vatican's Apostolic Nuncio, perhaps overestimating the role Taxil had in Freemasonry, incited him to continue with his journalistic career, revealing what he knew about the Masonic conspiracy.[85] Taxil followed this advice enthusiastically and presented a three-volume plan of revelations, all completed in record time between the end of 1885 and 1886: *Les Frères Trois-Points*, *Le Culte du Grand Architecte*, and *Les Sœurs Maçonnes*.[86] Tireless, in the same year, 1886, he consolidated his fame with the Catholics by publishing a

80 E. Weber, *Satan franc-maçon. La mystification de Léo Taxil*, cit., pp. 196–198.

81 *Le Figaro*, August 2, 1884.

82 J.-P. Laurant, "Le Dossier Léo Taxil du fonds Jean Baylot de la Bibliothèque Nationale", cit., p. 58.

83 M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme au XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., pp. 250–251.

84 E. Weber, *Satan franc-maçon. La mystification de Léo Taxil*, cit., p. 199.

85 M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme au XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., p. 250.

86 L. Taxil, *Révélations complètes sur la Franc-Maçonnerie – I. Les Frères Trois Points*, Paris: Letouzey et Ané, n.d. (but 1885); *II. Le Culte du Grand Architecte*, Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1886; *III. Les Sœurs Maçonnes. La Franc-Maçonnerie des dames et ses mystères*, Paris: Letouzey et Ané, n.d. (but 1886).

compilation of anti-Masonic documents issued by the Holy See.[87] He also collected his three volumes in one, *La Franc-Maçonnerie dévoilée et expliquée*.[88] While this volume was introduced as a "digest version of the bigger edition", "especially destined as propaganda for the people", the content of the three volumes was also reworked in a luxury edition with detailed pictures under the title *Les Mystères de la Franc-Maçonnerie*.[89]

In a few months, Taxil provided French Catholics with a complete anti-Masonic arsenal. His works were immediately translated into Italian and Spanish. More books followed. Among the various anti-Masonic currents we referred to, where did Taxil stand exactly? He introduced himself as a fierce adversary of the "political" and anti-Semitic current of the anti-Masonic campaign represented by Drumont, standing against him as a candidate for the Parliament in the Paris neighborhood of Gros-Caillou. Taxil withdrew his candidature at the very last moment but, with this act of disturbance, certainly damaged the author of *La France Juive*, who in the end lost the elections. Taxil also wrote a vitriolic work against Drumont in 1890.[90] Drumont responded in the same tone.

Among the different schools of religious counter-Masonic criticism, Taxil moved with caution, praising authors of different persuasions. In *Le Culte du Grand Architecte*, he claimed that "one cannot insist too much on the satanic character of Freemasonry",[91] but his original cycle of revelations did not mention lodges where Lucifer was explicitly worshipped. Luciferians, who distinguish Lucifer and Satan, were mentioned among the "precursors of Freemasonry",[92] but Taxil provided no particular clue about a Luciferian cult practiced in his own era. He insisted, mostly, on the philosophical, moral and political danger of Freemasonry, which, according to him, resorted quite liberally to poisoning and assassination. When he began to reveal the existence of a "Palladian Order" in the *Sœurs Maçonnes* and in the *Mystères*, it was still only an order where, under the veil of supposed moral high standards, women were taught immorality, but without references to Satan or Lucifer.

87 L. Taxil, *Le Vatican et les Francs-Maçons*, Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1886.

88 L. Taxil, *La Franc-Maçonnerie dévoilée et expliquée*, Paris: Letouzey et Ané, n.d. (but 1886).

89 L. Taxil, *Les Mystères de la Franc-Maçonnerie*, Paris: Letouzey et Ané, n.d. (but 1887).

90 L. Taxil, *Monsieur Drumont. Étude psychologique*, Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1890. On the conflict between Taxil and Drumont, see G. Kauffmann, *Edouard Drumont*, cit., pp. 188–192.

91 L. Taxil, *Le Culte du Grand Architecte*, cit., p. 111.

92 L. Taxil, *Les Mystères de la Franc-Maçonnerie*, cit., pp. 770–771.

It emerges from Taxil's correspondence that the topic of women within Freemasonry was the one that roused the greatest interest among his readers.[93] "Adoption lodges" for the wives and daughters of Freemasons, where women were "adopted" into the order, but were not given a real Masonic initiation, which was reserved for men, existed since ancient times. It was only at the time of Taxil, however, that women requested a full Masonic initiation. In 1882, the feminist Marie Deraismes (1828–1894) managed to be initiated into the lodge Les Libres Penseurs in Le Pecq, generating a scandal of significant proportions in French Freemasonry. The member of the Les Libres Penseurs lodge eventually submitted to the Grand Orient and excluded the woman, but in 1893, Deraismes, together with the French senator Georges Martin (1844–1916), established a mixed order of Freemasonry, where women had full rights to be initiated, called Le Droit Humain. It was immediately declared "irregular" and schismatic by the majority of the Masonic obediences and rites, but it is still in existence today and is also at the origin of Anglo-Saxon Co-Masonry.[94]

Thanks to his revelations, Taxil was favorably welcomed in many Catholic milieus, where he tried not to make enemies with either the philosophical or the diabolist faction of counter-Freemasonry. The two factions were, besides, invited to stop their interminable quarrels and to collaborate by the Catholic hierarchies, and actually did so in magazines such as *La Franc-Maçonnerie démasquée*, founded in 1884 by the Bishop of Grenoble, Mgr. Armand-Joseph Fava (1826–1899), a tireless anti-Masonic polemist. Fava, however, was not popular among conservative Catholics because of his skeptical attitude towards the new revelations proposed by Mélanie Calvat, the seer from La Salette, a locality that was in his diocese.[95]

Religious anti-Judaism remained hostile to Taxil no less than Drumont's political anti-Semitism, since the newly converted journalist, at least in his first anti-Masonic campaigns, railed against the enemies of the Jews. This did not prevent the anti-Jewish Mgr. Meurin from consulting Taxil in Paris before publishing his book, which would, as a consequence, be accused of resting "mostly on the pseudo-revelations of Léo Taxil".[96] Taxil's position should have elicited

93 J.-P. Laurant, "Le Dossier Léo Taxil du fonds Jean Baylot de la Bibliothèque Nationale", cit., p. 59.

94 Only as late as 2010, women were admitted as Freemasons by the Grand Orient of France. They are still excluded from the Masonic obediences in communion with the Grand Lodge of London.

95 See L. Bassette, *Le Fait de La Salette, 1841–1856*, cit., which offers a detailed account of these controversies.

96 M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme au XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., p. 196.

the sympathy of the pro-Jewish Rosen. The latter, however, suspected from the beginning that Taxil was an impostor, and denounced him immediately to the Catholic authorities. Taxil was informed, and replied in similar tones. Rosen, he explained, was a Palladist, an agent of the Grand Master of the Italian Freemasonry Adriano Lemmi, and was still known in the lodges with the name of Moïses Lid-Nazareth. This defamatory accusation managed to create a void around Rosen, who did not make a comeback even after Taxil's fall, and was almost forgotten when he died in 1907.

Taxil and Diana Vaughan

When he launched his accusations against Rosen, Taxil was already concentrated on Palladism, which was slowly becoming something other than the gallant order for ladies his first works referred to in 1886. Most probably, the change in his style was directly related to the publication of *Là-bas* by Huysmans in 1891. Although Huysmans and Bois were suspicious of Taxil, the latter immediately thought of connecting the new interest for Satanism they had generated with his own revelations on Palladism. In 1891, Taxil decided what he wanted to do. From now on, he focused almost exclusively on the satanic character of Freemasonry, and started to explain to French Catholics that there was a High Masonry connected to Palladism, where Lucifer was evoked and worshipped.[97] According to the Catholic priest, republican but anti-Masonic, Paul Fesch (1858–1910), another more serious change occurred in the life of his friend and correspondent Taxil in 1890. His conversion, which Fesch considered genuine in 1885, had failed. Disappointed by his lack of success in electoral politics, Taxil had secretly returned to his old anticlerical ideas.[98]

In 1891, on the wave of the success of Huysmans, Taxil quickly produced a new volume, *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?* which portrayed on the cover the allusive image of a Freemason examining the garter of a damsel. In a less frivolous manner, the book revealed that Palladism, directed in France by a mysterious "Sister Sophie-Sapho", the daughter of a Swiss Lutheran pastor who became an Anabaptist and then a Mormon, was hidden behind ordinary Freemasonry. Palladism practiced the evocation of Lucifer, considered a "good God" and thus distinct from Satan, and the profanation of holy

97 E. Weber, *Satan franc-maçon. La mystification de Léo Taxil*, cit., p. 208.

98 Paul Fesch, *Souvenirs d'un abbé journaliste*, Paris: Flammarion, 1898, p. 221.

wafers, and answered to the world direction of the American Freemason Albert Pike.[99]

He did not provide the surname of Sophie-Sapho, but he published her portrait:[100] a meritorious work, if one considers that this twenty-eight year old "incarnated Satanism as if Luciferian blood dripped from her veins", presided "coldly" to "nameless orgies", and was a "fiery lesbian", as revealed by her Masonic pseudonym. When with "wild fury she gave the signal and the example of profanations", she required the new initiates to "undergo copulation after having inserted a holy wafer in their vaginas". Reigning "over French Palladism", she was "the true secret chief of French Freemasonry".[101]

With some extra pornographic details, added in accordance to Taxil's particular tastes, the careful reader would have certainly recognized Sister Sophie-Sapho: she was Sophie Walder, one of the main characters in the *Diable* of Doctor Bataille. This was not a coincidence. A series of documents prove that, between 1891 and 1892, Taxil made contact with his old friend Charles Hacks, a freethinker who was familiar with both the Grand Orient and the Far East. Taxil suggested that Hacks write a feuilleton where he would mix the adventurous story of his voyages between China and India, duly embellished, and the secrets of Palladism. It is by accepting this proposal by Taxil that Doctor Charles Hacks became Doctor Bataille.[102]

It was necessary for Taxil to move in two different directions. He must convince Hacks to agree, and in the meantime began to hint at the news of another fine conversion to Catholicism of a well-known freethinker such as Hacks. There was only a problem: in the same years, Hacks, as mentioned earlier, was completing his main skeptical and materialistic work, *Le Geste*, and absolutely wanted to publish it. In fact, it came out in 1892. But *Le Geste* would be signed with the name of Hacks and the *Diable* with the name of Bataille. Later, when the identity of Hacks and Bataille was discovered, Taxil explained that the publishing house simply published, enforcing rights acquired several years before, a manuscript prepared by Hacks before his conversion.

Taxil was a specialist in this kind of explanation, because, while he entered in the presidential committees of several Catholic associations, somebody

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99 L. Taxil, *Y a-t-il des Femmes dans la Franc-Maçonnerie?*, Paris: H. Noirot, 1891, pp. 208–279 (on Palladism) and pp. 390–393 (on Sophie-Sapho).

100 *Ibid*., p. 193.

101 *Ibid*., pp. 390–393.

102 We do not have, on this point, only the suspicious testimony of Léo Taxil published in the *Frondeur* on April 25, 1897 ("Discours prononcé le 19 avril 1897 à la Salle de la Société de Géographie"; reprinted in E. Weber, *Satan franc-maçon. La mystification de Léo Taxil*, cit., pp. 155–183), but also Hacks' own interviews to the press, to which I will return.

continued to reprint his old pornographic anticlerical works and even added particulars that were more lurid. In a book with the ironic title of *The Splendors of Christian Charity in the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul*,[103] the popular nuns were now accused of regularly practicing anal sex with their confessors. It is possible[104] that Taxil wrote and published this work in 1889, four years after his public conversion. Critics claimed that Taxil was making money with his new anti-Masonic and Catholic works, while his wife continued getting rich with his anticlerical books.

There was no doubt that the whole business was lucrative and successful. In the same year 1889, when the offenses against the Sisters of Saint Vincent were published in Paris, Taxil bought the castle of Sévignacq, in the Basque region, for his wife and children, thus distancing them from Paris. Madame Jogand wrote from the castle letters to her husband where she clarified she had no illusions concerning his conjugal fidelity.[105] It was never fully explained whether, in the years 1885–1897, the anticlerical publications continued by the direct action, albeit obviously secret, of Taxil, or his wife was publishing old material without the help of her husband. After 1897, first the couple, then, after the separation from his wife, Taxil by himself, would start to openly publish the anticlerical obscenities again.

In his revelations on Palladism of 1891, Taxil also called Palladists "Re-Theurgist Optimates", a term created by Huysmans to describe Satanists in his novel, and which would be used again by Bataille. By acting as midwife of the *Diable* in 1892, Taxil made a militant choice, in favor of Catholic diabolist counter-Freemasonry and against the philosophical wing. Precisely Taxil and Bataille made the clash between the two wings inevitable. The revelations in the *Diable* on Moloch appearing as a crocodile, on Sophie Walder as the promised great-grandmother of the Antichrist, and on Pike as the weekly interlocutor of the Devil, determined those Catholic authors who, although anti-Masonic, were skeptical about the Satanist character of Freemasonry to publicly distance themselves.

Taxil's correspondence during the years 1891–1897[106] shows how the publication of the *Diable* finally made it impossible to maintain the unity of the counter-Masonic Catholic field, notwithstanding the serious attempts by the

103 [L. Taxil], *Les Splendeurs de la Charité chrétienne des sœurs de Saint-Vincent-de Paul*, n.p.: n.d. (but Paris, 1889).

104 E. Weber, *Satan franc-maçon. La mystification de Léo Taxil*, cit., pp. 207–208.

105 J.-P. Laurant, "Le Dossier Léo Taxil du fonds Jean Baylot de la Bibliothèque Nationale", cit., p. 58.

106 Mostly published by L. Fry, *Léo Taxil et la Franc-Maçonnerie. Lettres inédites publiées par les amis de Monseigneur Jouin*, cit.

hierarchy, and even by the Holy See. There were not only Taxil's clashes with Drumont and Rosen, two authors who did not enjoy a significant support among Catholic Bishops. The philosophical wing of the anti-Masonic campaign had already criticized previous works exposing the satanic character of Freemasonry that, compared to Taxil and Bataille, were much more moderate. Now it took to the field in full strength, declaring that the revelations in the *Diable* and those of Taxil, clearly connected, could not be but colossal mystifications, or worse still, Masonic tricks intended to fool Catholics. The most respected exponents of the philosophical wing, Mgr. Henri Delassus through his *Semaine religieuse de Cambrai*, and the lawyer Georges Bois, began in 1893 a sustained campaign against Taxil. The latter responded, predictably, in the only way he knew: he started to write letters to influential ecclesiastics, accusing Delassus and Bois of being Freemasons who had infiltrated the Catholic Church.[107]

In England and Germany, the Masonic lodges had a much less anticlerical attitude compared to their Latin counterparts. There, the Catholic press, with some minor exceptions, did not believe either the *Diable* or Taxil. In 1896, Arthur Edward Waite (1857–1942), a British Christian esotericist who was at the same time a Freemason and an apologist of Freemasonry,[108] published in London one of the most brilliant indictments against the *Diable*.[109] The Catholic weekly *The Tablet* recommended the volume of the "honorable opposer" as "moderate and conscientious" and stated that English Catholics "did not mind at all" that Taxil and Bataille were denounced.[110]

In the United States, the Catholic Bishop of Charleston, Mgr. Henry Pinckney Northrop (1842–1916), explained that in his beautiful and highly moral city there was no "Satanic Vatican". Pike, the prelate added, was certainly the leader of the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite in the United States, an important position in American Freemasonry, but he was by no means a Satanist. The reply by Taxil to the Bishop of Charleston was his usual one: clearly, even

107 Many examples *ibid.*

108 On Waite, see Robert A. Gilbert, *A.E. Waite: Magician of Many Parts*, Wellingborough (Northamptonshire): Crucible, 1987.

109 Arthur Edward Waite, *Devil-Worship in France or the Question of Lucifer*, London: George Redway, 1896.

110 Text from *The Tablet* in the appendix of A.E. Waite, *Diana Vaughan and the Question of Modern Palladism: A Sequel to "Devil-Worship in France"*, unedited typescript, pp. 123–124. Robert A. Gilbert provided me, in 1993, with a photocopy of this typescript, which I thus quote from the original. Gilbert successively published this text as part of the work he edited of A.E. Waite, *Devil-Worship in France, with Diana Vaughan and the Question of Modern Palladism*, Boston, York Beach (Maine): Weiser, 2003.

among the Catholic Bishops of the United States there were some infiltrated Freemasons.[111] But the Bishop was not wrong. Pike's most famous work, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*,[112] included a mixture of Egyptian religion, magic, and Freemasonry, together with some ideas largely derived from Éliphas Lévi. Although the book remains controversial in modern Freemasonry,[113] it was certainly not the Bible of Luciferianism.

The *Diable* also accused of Satanism another American Masonic dignitary, Albert Gallatin Mackey. These accusations were no less absurd, although Mackey was accused by fellow Freemasons of having "succumbed to the Ancient Mysteries, Magism, Paganism, Egyptology, and Hermeticism, so that his *Symbolism of Freemasonry* and *Masonic Ritualist* are in places revolting in their surrender to doctrines of sun-worship and sex-worship".[114]

There were also those who took a position in favor of Taxil. Among these, until the end, was the Bishop of Grenoble, Mgr. Fava. Faced with the diabolic revelations of Bataille, he did not give proof of the same skepticism he manifested, much to the annoyance of his flock, against the celestial revelations of the visionary girl of La Salette. The Catholic milieus in Paris were divided, within both the magazine *La Franc-Maçonnerie démasquée*, created by the Bishop of Grenoble, and the Anti-Masonic Committee founded in Paris on December 21, 1892, from which in 1895 the larger French Anti-Masonic Union was born.

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111 "Évêques des États-Unis", *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste Parfaite Initiée, Indépendante*, no. 6, December 1895, pp. 189–192.

112 Albert Pike, *Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, Washington D.C.: The Scottish Rite, 1871. For a bibliography, see Ray Baker Harris [1907–1963] (ed.), *Bibliography of the Writings of Albert Pike*, Washington D.C.: Supreme Council 33° Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, 1957. See also Pike's rebuttal to Leo XIII: *A Reply for the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry to the Letter "Humanum Genus" of Pope Leo XIII*, Washington D.C.: Grand Orient of Charleston, 1884.

113 See the entry *Pike, Albert* in the authoritative compilation by Henry Wilson Coil [1885–1974], *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia*, New York: Macoy, 1961, pp. 472–475. On the real career of Albert Pike – interesting, although rather far from the inventions of the *Diable* –, see Frederick Allsopp [1867–1946], *Albert Pike*, Little Rock (Arkansas): Parke-Harper Company, 1898; Walter Lee Brown [1924–2014], *Albert Pike*, Ph.D. Diss., Austin: University of Texas 1955; Robert L.[ipscomb] Duncan [1927–1999], *Reluctant General: The Life and Times of Albert Pike*, New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1961; W.L. Brown, *A Life of Albert Pike*, Fayetteville (Arkansas): University of Arkansas Press, 1997. For the contemporary Masonic context, see Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America*, New Haven (Connecticut), London: Yale University Press, 1989, pp. 133–139.

114 H.W. Coil, *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia*, cit., entry *Mackey, Dr. Albert Gallatin*, pp. 389–391.

The leader of all these initiatives, the priest Marie-Joseph-Louis-Gabriel de Bessonies (1859–1913), who sometimes signed himself as "Gabriel Soulacroix", was on Bataille's and Taxil's side, supported in the provinces by Canon Ludovic-Martial Mustel (1835–1911), editor of the *Revue Catholique de Coutances*. Rather in favor of Taxil, although with occasional doubts, as it emerges from his correspondence, was the journalist Albert Clarin de la Rive (1855–1914). In 1894, he published a volume on the moral corruption of Freemasonry, corroborated by independent sources that did not come from the forge of Taxil and Bataille.[115] Other Parisian Catholics engaged in the anti-Masonic campaign had great suspicions about Taxil.[116]

While he was busy defending himself from attacks, Taxil's star witness, whom no one would ever cross-examine as no one would ever see her, entered the field: Diana Vaughan. In the *Diable*, as mentioned earlier, Diana Vaughan was the pleasant counterpart to the evil Sophie Walder. The *Diable* ended by making reference to a revolt by Diana against the election, after the death of Pike, of the new Luciferian Pope of Palladism, the Italian Grand Master Adriano Lemmi. In coincidence with the final issues of the *Diable*, in March 1894, the first edition of a new magazine called *Le Palladium Regénéré et Libre, lien des groupes luciférians indépendants*, came out under the editorship of Diana Vaughan. It was introduced as the organ of the "real" Luciferians, in revolt against the pseudo-Luciferian Satanists directed by Lemmi. Three issues of the magazine were published in Paris by the publishing house Pierret, the last one on May 20, 1895.

The real life Lemmi, who was at that time the Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Italy, did not bother to react to what he regarded as mere fiction. He was perhaps wrong, since in the end he would suffer some damage. In fact, a Calabrian Freemason hostile to Lemmi, Domenico Margiotta (1858-?), was plotting in the shadows. Margiotta was born in Palmi on February 12, 1858. He graduated at the University of Naples and became both a successful journalist and a local historian, who wrote several books about his native city and region.[117] His Masonic career remains more obscure: he was perhaps a real

115 Albert Clarin de la Rive, *La Femme et l'Enfant dans la Franc-Maçonnerie universelle. D'après les documents officiels de la secte (1730–1893)*, Paris: Delhomme et Briguet, 1894.

116 See Michel Jarrige, "*La Franc-Maçonnerie démasquée*, d'après des fonds inédits de la Bibliothèque Nationale", *Politica Hermetica*, no. 4, 1990, pp. 38–51; M. Jarrige, *L'Antimaçonnerie en France à la Belle Époque: personnalités, mentalités, structures et modes d'action des organisations antimaçonniques, 1899–1914*, Milan: Arché, 2006.

117 I obtained this information from a local historian of Palmi, Francesco Lovecchio. Margiotta published inter alia a *Studio-critico-letterario sul calabrese Antonio Jerocades*, Naples: Tip. Francesco Mormile, 1882. His native Palmi has a street named after him.

Freemason, but certainly boasted of a number of high Masonic offices that he never really held.[118] His involvement in the Taxil case, at any rate, seem to have put an end to his career as a respected provincial erudite. What he did after the fall of Taxil remains unknown.

In 1894, Margiotta went to Grenoble and contacted Bishop Fava, introducing himself as a friend of Diana Vaughan. He told the Bishop that, after a long career within Palladism, he had decided to side with Diana and join her revolt against Lemmi.[119] Margiotta told his story in a book in French, which was quickly translated into Italian. Two editions in the latter language were published in France in 1895.[120] Clearly inspired by the *Diable*, Margiotta accused Lemmi of being in weekly contact with Lucifer, at three in the afternoon every Friday, of routinely desecrating holy wafers, and of dealing regularly with Sophie Walder and the devil Bitru. The book also included suspicious details concerning Italian politics. Lemmi, Margiotta argued, had a really satanic hatred towards France, and was in total control of both the Italian Parliament and the Crispi government, on which the Palladists had imposed the anti-French alliance with Germany and Austria. Margiotta also attacked the poet Carducci. Writing to Lemmi from Bologna on December 15, 1894, the poet defined the book "between crazy and naughty", "things that make human reason cry".[121]

The book mixed stories taken from Bataille with very real names of Italian Freemasons, news taken from the Italian Masonic press, and allusions to Lemmi's judicial misadventures. Margiotta seemed to have a political objective: "dismantle the Triple Alliance [the alliance between Italy, Germany and Austria] by overthrowing the government of Crispi".[122] The operation included rather grotesque elements, but was not completely ineffective. A leading historian of Italian Freemasonry, Aldo Mola, suspects that Margiotta, and perhaps

118 See A.A. Mola, *Adriano Lemmi Gran Maestro della nuova Italia* (*1885–1896*), Rome: Erasmo, 1985; A.A. Mola, *Storia della Massoneria italiana dalle origini ai nostri giorni*, Milan: Bompiani, 1992, p. 216.

119 Domenico Margiotta, *Souvenir d'un trente-troisième, Adriano Lemmi chef suprème des Francs-Maçons*, Paris-Lyon: Delhomme & Briguet, 1894.

120 D. Margiotta, *Ricordi di un trentatré. Il Capo della Massoneria Universale*, Paris-Lyon: Delhomme & Briguet, 1895 (2nd ed., expanded, Paris-Lyon: Delhomme & Briguet, 1895).

121 *Un'amicizia massonica. Carteggio Lemmi-Carducci con documenti inediti*, ed. by Cristina Pipino, Livorno: Bastogi, 1991, p. 123. See also A.A. Mola, *Giosué Carducci. Scrittore – politico – massone*, Milan: RCS Libri, 2006.

122 See A.A. Mola, "Il Diavolo in loggia", in Filippo Barbano (ed.), *Diavolo, Diavoli. Torino e altrove*, Milan: Bompiani, 1988, pp. 257–270; A.A. Mola, "La Ligue Antimaçonnique et son influence politique et culturelle", in Alain Dierkens (ed.), *Les Courants anti-maçonniques hier et aujourd'hui*, Bruxelles: Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1993, pp. 39–55.

Taxil as well, were maneuvered by the French intelligence, which was operating against Crispi and his German alliances. Or perhaps Margiotta, tired of publishing books on the city of Palmi that sold a limited number of copies, simply wanted to capitalize on the "incredible success"[123] of the *Diable* and Taxil.

Margiotta followed his first book with a new volume of Palladism, intended for Taxil's usual public, complete with shocking satanic rituals and new revelations, and enriched with warm letters from various French Bishops, among which the inevitable Mgr. Fava. The author also included a Papal blessing from Leo XIII, although it was directed to Margiotta without cautioning the book and consisted of three lines only.[124] In this new book, it was predicted that Diana Vaughan would win and "defeat" Lemmi. The Calabrian also published a correspondence between Diana and himself.

The year 1895 saw what the Catholic newspaper *La Croix des Ardennes* called "an incredible event in the order of grace, which many would call a miracle":[125] the conversion of Diana Vaughan to Catholicism, and her definitive renounce of Palladism. This announcement was prepared by Taxil with a series of letters to the *abbé* de Bessonies, some of which were signed by Diana herself.[126] News of Diana's spectacular conversion first appeared in the most authoritative French Catholic newspaper, *La Croix* of Paris, on June 12, 1895.[127] In this story, there was a never ceasing consignment of new magazines to printers, be they anticlerical, clerical, "reformed Palladists", anti-Masonic. As soon as she had converted, Diana immediately started a new monthly: *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste Parfaite Initiée, Indépendante*. It started in July 1895, was published in Paris by Pierret, and was personally edited by Miss Diana Vaughan, who now signed herself as "Jeanne-Marie-Raphaëlle" in honor of Joan of Arc, who had a miraculous part in her conversion, the Virgin Mary, and the archangel Raphael.

In the third issue, dated September 1895, the magazine also offered a photograph of Diana, before her conversion, "with the uniform of the General Inspector of the Palladium". The year, it appears, was especially favorable to conversions. In April, Jules Doinel (1842–1902), the founder of a Gnostic

123 A.A. Mola, "Il Diavolo in loggia", cit., p. 262.

124 D. Margiotta, *Le Palladisme: culte de Satan-Lucifer dans les Triangles Maçonniques*, Grenoble: H. Falque, 1895. Margiotta also published a further sequel, *Le Culte de la Nature dans la Franc-Maçonnerie Universelle*, Bruxelles: Société Belge de Librairies, 1895.

125 *La Croix des Ardennes*, June 23, 1895.

126 L. Fry, *Léo Taxil et la Franc-Maçonnerie. Lettres inédites publiées par les amis de Monseigneur Jouin*, cit., pp. 57–62.

127 *La Croix*, June 12, 1895.

Church, also converted to Catholicism. Diana Vaughan warmly recommended his anti-gnostic and anti-Masonic works in her magazine. Using the pseudonym of Jean Kostka, Doinel founded with Taxil in November 1895 a Catholic anti-Freemasonry of sort, the ephemeral League of the Anti-Masonic Labarum.[128]

Diana Vaughan's magazine surpassed with its fantastic revelations even the *Diable*. Diana revealed everything about her Luciferian education, and even claimed having a she-demon among her ancestors. Diana explained that she descended from 17th-century philosopher Thomas Vaughan (1621–1666), "the Philaletes", a particularly anti-Catholic member of the Church of England. Diana reported that Thomas Vaughan obtained from Lucifer, paying for it with the blood of Catholic martyrs, the promise that a she-demon called Venus-Astartes, "first princess of the kingdom of Lucifer", would be given to him as a wife. He thus went to America where, among the Native American "Lenni-Lennpas", he consumed his marriage with the she-demon, from whom he had a daughter, Diana, raised by the tribe. This Diana was the source of a whole genealogy of Vaughans, where the editor of *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste* was "the tenth to bear this name".[129] In Diana's veins thus ran the blood of the Devil himself.

If the devils in Diana's family were in the high part of the family tree, to Sophie Walder they were promised, as we know, for the future. Diana followed her movements with acrimony. Sophie, she reported, was pregnant, and at the end of 1896 went to Jerusalem to give birth to the announced grandmother of the Antichrist. The Diana-Sophie rivalry amply occupied the *Mémoires*, and there was no room left for Italian political events. They were reserved for a separate book, also signed by Diana and dedicated to expose the Satanist affiliations of Crispi.[130] The Crispi government had, however, by now fallen, and there was no time to publish an Italian translation.[131] In the *Mémoires*, readers met a converted and pious Diana, who was interested in the lives of the saints and composed a novena for which she received a personal blessing from Leo

128 I reconstructed the career (and the bibliography) of Doinel in M. Introvigne, *Il ritorno dello gnosticismo*, cit., pp. 87–125, discussing in particular the opinions in favor and against the genuine character of his short-lived conversion to Catholicism.

129 D. Vaughan, "Mon éducation luciférienne – Chapitre 3", *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste Parfaite Initiée, Indépendante*, no. 6, December 1895, pp. 176–181, and no. 7, January 1896, p. 193.

130 D. Vaughan, *Le 33e Crispi. Un Palladiste homme d'État démasqué. Biographie documentée du héros depuis sa naissance jusqu'à sa deuxième mort*, Paris: Pierret, 1897.

131 A.A. Mola, "Il Diavolo in loggia", cit., p. 270. A volume in Italian was however extracted from the French magazine: Diana Vaughan, *Memorie di una ex-palladista perfetta iniziata*, Rome: Filziani, 1895.

XIII. The encouragement from the Pope was transmitted in a letter to Diana by Cardinal Lucido Maria Parocchi (1833–1903), Vicar of His Holiness, dated November 29, 1895.

Taxil under Siege

Diana was at that time engaged in a mortal battle against enemies who were much more dangerous than Sophie Walder was. Some were Freemasons like Waite, others were Catholics. They joined forces in accusing her of actually not existing. Critics maintained that Diana Vaughan was just a literary pseudonym of Taxil. The campaign was guided by Drumont's *La Libre Parole*, under the pen of Gaston Méry, and by the *Semaine religieuse de Cambrai*, edited by Mgr. Delassus. It was the natural consequence of the internecine struggles within the anti-Masonic camp.

The Jesuits appeared divided among themselves. In Italy, *La Civiltà Cattolica*[132] praised the "most notable Miss Diana Vaughan", "called from the depths of darkness to the light of God, prepared by divine providence, and armed with science and personal experience". It was the Freemasonry itself, continued *La Civiltà Cattolica*, which "started, in order to compensate for the great strikes of the fierce warrior, to spread the word that she does not exist, and it is a simple myth. It is a childish defense: but obviously Freemasons do not have a better one". At the same time, in the French Jesuit magazine, *Études*, Father Portalié, who had already emerged as a leading critic of the *Diable*, firmly claimed that Diana was just a figment of Taxil's imagination.

In Germany, it was again a Jesuit, Father Hermann Grüber (1851–1930), who guided the campaign against the existence of Diana Vaughan. Years later, Grüber would promote a controversial dialogue between the Catholic Church and Freemasonry, but at that time he was still in the anti-Masonic camp. In a devout magazine, the *Rosier de Marie*, Pierre Lautier,[133] general president of the Order of Lawyers of Saint Peter and a man very close to the Archbishop of Paris, stated in October 1896 that he had personally met Diana Vaughan. However, some months later, at the beginning of 1897, he specified that he only saw

132 "Le Mopse. Origini, Riti, Gradi, Educazione, Rituale", *La Civiltà Cattolica*, series XVI, volume VII, no. 110, September 19, 1896, pp. 666–685.

133 A Pierre Lautier Law Firm still exists today in Paris. Unfortunately, many family documents had been destroyed and when I contacted the present namesake of our Pierre Lautier, he confirmed that the 19th-century lawyer was his ancestor but was not able to supply further biographical data.

a young lady "who *was introduced to him*" as the former Luciferian, presumably by Taxil. Cardinal Parocchi wrote, through the French Jesuits, that he simply signed a routine letter on behalf of the Holy Father, and that the Holy See sent to everyone who made an offer, as Diana did, a pious booklet and some kind words as homage.

In Catholic newspapers of all over the world, United States included, the debate on the question became heated. Diana Vaughan revealed that Taxil had been received by the Pope, who approved of his work, already in 1894. She also claimed, in the April 1897 issue of the *Mémoires*, that the campaign against Taxil was the "supreme maneuver" of Sophie Walder, who had given birth to the great-grandmother of the Antichrist on November 29, 1896 in Jerusalem. Diana also took some steps back, and admitted for the first time that some of the revelations of Bataille in the *Diable* were exaggerated.[134]

Three episodes, in the meantime, caused a crisis in the Taxil camp. From September 26 to 30, 1896, the first International anti-Masonic Conference was held in Trento, now in Italy but then part of Austria. Taxil, as results from his correspondence,[135] hoped that, thanks to the dimension of his anti-Masonic propaganda machine, he would manage to control the conference, celebrated with the blessing of the Pope. In fact, several opponents of Taxil spoke at the conference. The fact that Doctor Hacks, the freethinker, and Doctor Bataille, the Catholic author, who wrote their respective books in the same year, were one and the same was revealed in the presence of the most qualified representatives of the international Catholic counter-Masonic crusade. Portalié concluded that Trento represented "the end of a mystification", and that it was by now demonstrated that the Bataille-Taxil-Diana Vaughan affair was a "colossal deception".[136]

In France, many newspapers and magazines who had sided with Taxil, among which *La Croix*, chose to distance themselves. Taxil was personally present in Trento and defended himself with skill. He was supported by Father de Bessonies, who was one of the vice-presidents of the congress, and by Canon Mustel, who presided the first session. From Grenoble, Mgr. Fava judged Taxil and his allies as rather victorious in Trento, and considered the "death sentence to Miss Diana Vaughan", to be executed via her declaration of

134 For the main texts of this controversy, see E. Weber, *Satan franc-maçon. La mystification de Léo Taxil*, cit., pp. 106–153.

135 L. Fry, *Léo Taxil et la Franc-Maçonnerie. Lettres inédites publiées par les amis de Monseigneur Jouin*, cit., pp. 53–78.

136 E. Portalié, "Le Congrès Antimaçonnique de Trente et la fin d'une mystification", cit., p. 381.

non-existence, "a conspiracy planned by the heads of Italian, French and German Freemasonry".[137] The congress, in reality, had nominated a commission to make a decision on Diana Vaughan, presided by an Italian prelate, Mgr. Luigi Lazzareschi (1835–1918), Bishop emeritus of Gubbio. At the end of January 1897, the Lazzareschi commission declared "having being unable to gather to date any significant element in favor or against the existence, the conversion, or the authenticity of the writings of the supposed Diana Vaughan".[138]

In the meantime, poor Diana received another two attacks. Charles Hacks, or Bataille, who had been mentioned so often in Trento, agreed to be interviewed after the conference by *L'Univers* and wrote letters to *La Vérité* and *La Libre Parole*. He presented himself as a "literary jester", who always remained a freethinker and considered his Catholic readers as "idiots". He confirmed having cooperated with others in the redaction of the first volume of the *Diable*, but stated he did very little for the second volume, which was the work of Taxil only. Diana Vaughan, he concluded, was for him "only a vague name", about whom he had no definite opinions. These letters were from November 1896, a few days after Hacks-Bataille had been interviewed by *La Libre Parole*, the newspaper of Drumont and Méry, who had always been very much hostile to the *Diable* and Taxil.

Hacks received the journalist, a certain Villarmich (perhaps a pseudonym), in an apartment above the restaurant of which he had become the owner, decorated with a stained glass with the image of Lucifer. In the interview, Hacks confirmed that he participated in the publication of the *Diable* because there was some money to be made at the expense of the "idiocy of the Catholics". He stated, however, that now, and for many years, he had been uninterested in Satanism. He explained that he worked with various pseudonyms for the magazine *L'Illustration* and also became a photographer. He had abandoned his medical practice altogether, and was now reasonably successful with his restaurant. Concerning Taxil, Hacks preferred not to comment and defined the character of his friend as "very complex and hard to describe". Asked about Diana Vaughan, the doctor invited the journalist to call on Taxil, who "always claimed to be the honorary agent of Diana".[139] Hacks told the same things to an

137 *Semaine religieuse de Grenoble*, January 14, 1897. There was no lack of supporters for the diabolical thesis in Trento: see *Atti del primo Congresso antimassonico internazionale* (*Trento 1896*), Trento: G.B. Monauni, 1896, and the more complete French version, *Actes du Ier Congrès antimaçonnique international*, 2 vols., Tournai: Desclée, 1897–1899.

138 E. Weber, *Satan franc-maçon. La mystification de Léo Taxil*, cit., pp. 143–144.

139 The interview was published in A.E. Waite, *Diana Vaughan and the Question of Modern Palladism. A Sequel to "Devil Worship in France"*, cit., pp. 32–35.

English journalist some weeks earlier, before the conference of Trento.[140] He added that his atheism was so absolute that he even retired from the French Society for Psychical Research because "this group admits the existence of the supernatural".

The English newspapers had little echo south of the English Channel, but it was not so for *L'Univers* or *La Libre Parole*. While Taxil and the *Mémories* of Diana were busy replying that Doctor Hacks had been very simply bought at a good price by Freemasonry, they were struck by a third and very severe blow. It was a "great maneuver", denounced as such for the first time in the *Mémoires* of Diana in April 1896,[141] which eluded any attempt of control. From Italy, Margiotta claimed that "the Diana Vaughan whom I met in 1889 in Naples, and for whom, incidentally, no exception was made to the rule of the Pastos [i.e. the obligation to pass through an obscene ritual in order to access the high degrees of Palladism], was always a Palladist. The story of her conversion is only a hoax to fool the Catholics. The Diana Vaughan who writes the *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste*, the Novena and so on, and who announces the book on Crispi, is a false Diana Vaughan. I challenge her to come out; because the person who is using her name is a mere adventurer, and I will immediately unmask her as an impostor. As for the real Diana Vaughan, she is indifferent to this comedy; she is the first to laugh at it. She demonizes in the triangles more than ever, and has made her peace with Lemmi".[142]

In the following months, during and after the conference of Trento, Margiotta went even further. He described the poor Diana as a sexual maniac, "an insatiable hysterical", and sent the following telegram to the *Libre Parole* on November 2, 1896: "Reliable information: Madame Taxil [the wife of Taxil] is Vaughan. Taxil is an accomplice in the Bataille imposture. Publication 'Devil' speculation with the complicity of Taxil-Bataille. Autographed Taxil copy will follow. I take responsibility. Margiotta".[143]

Finally, at the end of 1896, Margiotta made his confession to *La France Libre* of Lyon, declaring that he never met a Diana Vaughan and that he invented all her adventures after he signed an agreement with Taxil. The latter made him sign a "barbarous contract", guaranteeing his literary success and a part of the economic profit from the fraud, but asking Margiotta to obey him in

140 *Ibid.*, pp. 26–27.

141 D.V., "La Grande Manœuvre", *Mémoires d'une ex-Palladiste Parfaite Initiée, Indépendante*, no. 10, April 1896, pp. 314–320.

142 *Ibid.*, p. 316.

143 A.E. Waite, *Diana Vaughan and the Question of Modern Palladism. A Sequel to "Devil Worship in France"*, cit., p. 43.

everything and to publish only texts authorized by Taxil himself.[144] Taxil and his friends, who could still count on the support of the Bishop of Grenoble and of Canon Mustel, answered by circulating rebuttals signed by Diana, who claimed to be offended in her feminine virtue. They also published the pamphlets of "E. Viator"[145] and "Adolphe Ricoux", who fought with understandable zeal since "Viator" and "Ricoux" were new pseudonyms of Taxil. Diana, now on the defensive, insisted that she had indeed refused to perform the requested obscene and blasphemous rituals, and as a consequence had not been proclaimed by the lodge of Louisville an "effective" Master Templar but just an "honorary" one.

In March 1897, in issue number 24 of her *Mémoires*, Diana announced that decisive documents would surface in the following month. Finally, Taxil recognized that the question must be resolved: he announced a lecture in the Parisian hall of the Geographical Society for April 19, 1897. There, he promised, he would give all the necessary clarifications and would present Diana, kept rigorously invisible until that moment, to the public of Paris.

The Fall of Taxil

Taxil gave his lecture on the evening of April 19, 1897. The text was published in the anticlerical newspaper *Le Frondeur*[146] and translated into various languages.[147] Taxil opened immediately, after a rather short preamble, with the revelation: "It was not a Catholic who decided to investigate, under a false mask, High Masonry and Palladism; but on the contrary, it was a freethinker who, for his own personal curiosity, *not out of hostility*, came to spy in your field not for eleven but for twelve years; and it was… your humble servant".

Taxil further identified himself as the stereotypical eccentric from Marseilles, who made pranks the essence of his life. As a boy, he reported, he threw the city into a panic making everyone believe that the harbor in Marseilles was infested by a school of terrible sharks. Later, while in Switzerland, he claimed he managed to convince local scientists that under Lake Geneva there was "an

144 Interviews quoted *ibid.*, pp. 49–50.

145 E. Viator, *La Vérité sur la conversion de miss Diana Vaughan*, 2 vols., Paris: Pierret, 1895–1896; E. Viator, *Les Suites de la conversion de miss Diana Vaughan*, Paris: Pierret, 1896.

146 L. Taxil, "Discours prononcé le 19 avril 1897 à la Salle de la Société de Géographie", cit.

147 In Italy, it appeared as a supplement to the *Rivista Massonica*, an official Masonic publication, in 1897; it was republished as L. Taxil, *La più grande mistificazione antimassonica*, Rome: Edinac, 1949, and as *La grande mistificazione antimassonica*, Genoa: ECIG, 1993.

underwater city". Although he was "moved" when he had to abandon his anti-clerical friends at the time of his simulated "conversion", he also enjoyed leaving traces, cyphered messages, enigmas, from which the most perceptive of his old friends could understand that he was still working in their interest.[148]

To convert, Taxil claimed, or rather to convince of a conversion was no easy task. It was necessary to stage a false conversion, fool a Jesuit confessor, and manage to convince him that Taxil's obvious uncertainty came from the fear of confessing his greatest sin, a murder. Once "converted", he insisted, he published real Masonic rituals, but by doing this, in fact "he helped French Freemasonry", since his "publication of old-fashioned rituals was not foreign to the reforms that suppressed antiquated practices, which were by then embarrassing for every Freemason who was friendly towards true progress".[149] After these first anti-Masonic exercises, i.e. *before* the beginning of the saga of Diana Vaughan, he went to Rome and was received by Cardinals Mariano Rampolla del Tindaro (1843–1913) and Parocchi. Eventually, he met Pope Leo XIII, who, or so Taxil said, asked him "My son, what do you desire?" to which he replied: "Holy Father, to die at your feet, in this moment, will be the greatest happiness!". The Pope allegedly praised his work and insisted "on the satanic direction of Freemasonry".[150]

By now, Taxil was convinced of having succeeded. Mgr. Meurin came to contact him from faraway Mauritius Islands, and "just imagine if he received good information!".[151] Emboldened by these successes, he decided to launch his greatest mystification: the invention of Palladism, created with the help of only two collaborators, Hacks and a typist. The latter, Taxil told his astonished audience, was from an American Protestant family but had become a free-thinker. She worked in Paris as "agent of a typewriter manufacturer from the United States", and her name was really Diana Vaughan. Hacks, Taxil reported, was hard to persuade, and initially he told him that there was something real in Palladism, but finally confessed it was a prank. Diana Vaughan saw there an opportunity to find clients for her typewriters' business, "but never accepted any sum of money as a gift. In reality, she was extremely amused by this brilliant hoax. She enjoyed it: corresponding with Bishops and Cardinals, receiving letters from the private secretary of the Pope and answering with bedtime stories

148 L. Taxil, "Discours prononcé le 19 avril 1897 à la Salle de la Société de Géographie", cit., pp. 33–50.

149 *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 55.

150 *Ibid.*, pp. 60–61.

151 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

more appropriate for children, informing the Vatican of dark Luciferian conspiracies, all of this put a smile on her face, making her incredibly festive".[152]

Thus, according to Taxil, a Diana Vaughan really existed: but she did not show up at the lecture. Concerning Margiotta, Taxil explained that he was both tricked and trickster. He operated by himself at the beginning, not in agreement with Taxil, and used the story of Diana Vaughan to his advantage, happy that Diana did not contradict him. He believed that, since she should have met many Freemasons, she could very well have met him too and not remember his name. In the last few months, however, Margiotta finally understood that the whole story was a hoax and invented the contract with Taxil, preferring "to show himself as an accomplice rather than a fool".[153]

The controversy with Margiotta, Taxil said, was genuine, while the one with Hacks-Bataille was false. His attacks on Taxil before and after the conference of Trento had been agreed upon with Taxil himself. Finally, the journalist boasted about his erudition and cleverness for having "solidly constructed" Palladism, fooling people such as "Mr. de La Rive, who is the personification of the investigation, who sections the facts and investigates every part of them with a microscope, and who could give advice to our best prosecutors".

In the final part, the most dangerous for the Catholics, Taxil read the letters sent to Diana Vaughan by various prelates close to the Holy Father, thanking her for the *Novena* and for her offers and blessing her work. The letters had already been published, but Taxil noted how the Holy See had sent its blessings to Diana although Mgr. Northrop, the Catholic Bishop of Charleston, "went to Rome specifically to assure the Pope that these stories were absolutely imaginary". "The Apostolic Vicar of Gibraltar", Mgr. Gonzalo Canilla (1846–1898), had also written to the Pope that the story of the demonic laboratories in the Rock of Gibraltar, told in the *Diable,* "was a daring invention, based absolutely on nothing, and that he was indignant towards the creation of such legends".[154]

There was also an attempt at analysis: Taxil divided his victims in two "categories of fooled". On one side, "the good parish priests, friars, and nuns, who admired in Miss Diana Vaughan a converted Luciferian Masonic sister", and thus erred only because of ignorance and ingenuity. On the other side, Rome, where things were different. "In Rome, all pieces of information are centralized. In Rome, it cannot be unknown that there are no other female masons than the spouses, the daughters, the sisters of Freemasons", who take part in the so-called rites of adoption, and that Palladism does not exist. The Vatican,

152 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

153 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

154 *Ibid.*, pp. 80–81.

Taxil hinted, had to know that the story was a hoax, but thought it could pilot and control it in order to fire up its anti-Masonic campaign. Now, in any case, the party was over: "I announced that Palladism will be destroyed today: more than that happened: it has been annihilated: it no longer exists! I accused myself of an imaginary assassination in my confession to the Jesuit father in Clamart. Well, I accuse myself before you of another crime. I committed an infanticide: Palladism is now dead, and well dead; his father killed it".

With this, the lecture concluded but not the report on *Le Frondeur*, which continued as such: "An indescribable turmoil followed this conclusion. Some were laughing uproariously and soundly applauded the lecturer. The Catholics shouted and booed. Father [Théodore] Garnier [1850–1920] jumped onto a chair and tried to lecture those present. His voice, however, was covered by the shouts and by those who started singing a funny [anticlerical] song by [Victor] Meusy [1856–1922]: 'Oh Holy Heart of Jesus'".[155] With the lecture of April 1897, "the month of pranks", as Taxil did not fail to point out, the whole anti-Masonic climate changed suddenly. In one night Palladism, Diana Vaughan, and Sophie Walder suddenly disappeared, together with the Luciferian Vatican of Charleston and other ingenious creations that poured rivers of ink and filled thousands of pages between 1892 and 1897.

Aftermath

In fact, after the famous lecture in the hall of the Society of Geography, the Taxil case continued, although not with the same amplitude as before. We can follow its aftermath along three different pathways. The first, just like the end titles of certain movies, concerns the fate of the main characters. Taxil divorced his wife and married one of his Parisian lovers. He continued with his satisfactory career as an author of anticlerical booklets, and further increased his income through two new pseudonyms. The first was Prosper Manin, who published pornographic literature without the usual anticlerical background. Under the second, Jeanne Savarin, he wrote for women, publishing cooking manuals and guides against food frauds. The police, which continued to keep a watch over him, followed Taxil to Sceaux, where he lived as a quiet landowner. While the readers of "Madame Savarin" were unaware that the real author of her books for housewives was the main character of the famous case of ten years earlier, Taxil died in Sceaux, more or less forgotten, on March 31, 1907.

155 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

Hacks and Margiotta vanished even more completely from the scene: historians have found no trace of them after the lecture by Taxil. As for the sales representative for American typewriters, Diana Vaughan, nobody had seen her before 1897, and no one would afterwards. Among the deceived, Mgr. Fava offered the Holy See his resignation from his episcopal seat of Grenoble, which was refused;[156] strained, he died on October 17, 1899.

Clarin de la Rive, to whom Taxil had paid homage as the only Catholic who "gave him a hard time", spent the remainder of 1897 investigating Diana Vaughan, not convinced by Taxil's version.[157] Finally, "he distanced himself further from the adepts of the satanic interpretation of Freemasonry", and continued to fight it "on more rational" and political bases.[158] He recruited for his magazine *La France chrétienne antimaçonnique* the esotericist and one-time Freemason René Guénon, who was interested in cooperating with Catholic anti-Masonic crusades in order to denounce what he considered "deviant" forms of Freemasonry and occultism. World War I and the death of Clarin in 1914 interrupted the cooperation.

The *abbé* de Bessonies realized that Taxil's self-unmasking had almost destroyed his French anti-Masonic committees and his magazine *La Franc-Maçonnerie démasquée*. However, in the same year 1897, he found a new excellent associate, the priest Henry-Stanislas-Athanase Joseph (1850–1931), who signed with the pseudonym of "abbé J. Tourmentin". Thanks especially to Tourmentin, *La Franc-Maçonnerie démasquée* recuperated from the blow of 1897 and in fact met its greatest period of success between the confession of Taxil and 1914.[159]

Among the enemies of Taxil, Méry, the very day after the lecture at the Geographical Society, launched a new magazine, *L'Écho du merveilleux*, which promised to offer serious investigations of Spiritualism and occultism, after the false revelations by Taxil and Bataille. Méry continued as editor of this successful publication until 1908, the year before his death. Mgr. Delassus received due praise for having put Catholics on guard against Taxil. He was made by the Vatican a Prelate of the Papal Household in 1904 and an Apostolic Proto-Notary in 1911, titles that did not give him a real power in the Church but signaled

156 M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme au XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., p. 116.

157 J.-P. Laurant, "Le Dossier Léo Taxil du fonds Jean Baylot de la Bibliothèque Nationale", cit., p. 62.

158 M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme au XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., p. 74.

159 M. Jarrige, "*La Franc-Maçonnerie démasquée*, d'après des fonds inédits de la Bibliothèque Nationale", cit., pp. 39–40 and 51.

an appreciation from Rome. He remained active in the campaign against the modernist movement in the Catholic Church and was even denounced to the Vatican, which eventually sided with him, for his anti-modernist excesses. He would continue to write about history, Catholic social teaching, Judaism, and Freemasonry until his death in 1921.

The German opponent of Taxil, Father Grüber, passed, as we mentioned earlier, from anti-Masonic campaigns to discreet encounters aimed at promoting a dialogue between the Catholic Church and some Masonic lodges,[160] which made him controversial within the small world of Catholic scholars of Freemasonry. Another Jesuit critic, Father Portalié, received his shares of praises and recognition for having unmasked Taxil's conspiracy. He became a professor in the Catholic Institute of Toulouse and died in 1909. Among the Masonic adversaries of Taxil, Waite, after the lecture at the Geographical Society, started writing a second book on the incident, which contained a very subtle analysis of the whole case but remained unpublished until 2003.[161] Waite had a long life, was involved in all the controversies of the esoteric subculture in the first decades of the 20th century, and died during World War II, in 1942.

A second series of aftereffects from the Taxil case concerns the conflict between the Catholic Church and Freemasonry in France. Many of those who studied the Taxil case did not examine the context with sufficient care. The clash between the Church and Freemasonry was certainly very bitter. This bitterness explains the success of Taxil and Bataille. We must, however, not forget that Leo XIII, the Pope of *Humanum genus*, was also the Pope of the *ralliement* of the Catholics to the French Republic. It was a bold political move, which led the Vatican to suggest that a good French Catholic did not need to be a monarchist and could support the Republican government, notwithstanding the secular and anticlerical origins of the French Republic. The Holy See of Leo XIII was engaged in a political, cultural and diplomatic game with France that was more complex than it appears to those who explain the Taxil case as the simple exasperation of a head-on clash. When the publication of the *Diable* began, Jules Ferry (1832–1893) was still alive. He had been for many years the leading figure of French politics. Ferry was himself a Freemason, with whom Leo XIII played out a complex political bargain, offering the Vatican's recognition of the Republic against the State's support for Catholic schools.[162]

160 See Luc Nefontaine, *Église et Franc-Maçonnerie*, Paris: Éditions du Chalet, 1990, p. 73.

161 A.E. Waite, *Diana Vaughan and the Question of Modern Palladism: A Sequel to "Devil Worship in France"*, cit.

162 Pierre Chevallier, *La Séparation de l'Église et de l'école. Jules Ferry et Léon XIII*, Paris: Fayard, 1981, p. 420.

After Ferry, Dreyfus' conviction in 1894 marked again a moment of bitter conflict between the Catholic Church and Freemasonry in France. However, even in this case, things were more complex than they might first seem. The nunciature, the Paris curia, the clergy closer to the Bishops and who directed the Catholic associations, including Bessonies, tried to prevent any form of identification between the Catholic Church and the anti-Semitic activities of Drumont.[163] The politics of the *ralliement* implied in fact that the Vatican diplomacy discreetly maintained open lines of contact with leading Freemasons.

The same Freemasonry at the time was more divided internally than one would imagine. There was no shortage, for example, of Masonic lodges reluctant to side with Dreyfus and exhibiting anti-Semitic leanings. In 1897, the year of Taxil's confession, the lodge of Nancy "was called to order by Paris for having refused to initiate a profane with the sole reason that he was a Jew". Worse still, in French Algeria, where anti-Semitism was rampant, lodges during the Dreyfus affair proceeded with the expulsion of Jews who had been already initiated.[164]

As we can see, the relations in France between intransigent monarchist Catholics, right-wing opponents of the Republic who were not necessarily Catholic, Catholics faithful to the Vatican line of *ralliement*, and Freemasons of different political orientations were complicated. The diplomatic channels remained open at least until the death of Leo XIII and the advent of the new and more conservative Pope, Pius X (1835–1914), in 1903, which coincided with the mandate as Prime Minister in France of a radical anticlerical, Émile Combes (1835–1921). It was Combes who tried to expel the religious congregations from France and broke diplomatic relations with the Holy See. The Prime Minister had been initiated into Freemasonry in 1896.[165] In that era, the affair of the *fiches* was already in gestation. This was the real Catholic answer to the Taxil case, and allowed those fooled by Taxil such as Bessonies to conclude that, after all, in the whole imbroglio it was the Catholic Church that had the last laugh.

The same year when the publication of the *Diable* began, Jean-Baptiste Bidegain (1870–1926), whose career would deserve a parallel with that of Taxil

163 See P. Chevallier, *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie française. 3. La Maçonnerie: Église de la République (1877–1944)*, Paris: Fayard, 1975, pp. 71–95.

164 Lucien Sabah, "Les Fiches Bidegain, conséquences d'un secret", *Politica Hermetica*, no. 4, 1990, pp. 68–90 (p. 70 and p. 75).

165 See the entry *Combes*, in Daniel Ligou [1921–2013] (ed.), *Dictionnaire de la Franc-Maçonnerie*, 2nd ed., Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1987, p. 274.

that has not yet been attempted by historians, was initiated into French Freemasonry. A militant of the Catholic social circles of Albert de Mun (1841–1914) and René de La Tour du Pin (1834–1924), in his early twenties Bidegain announced his conversion from Catholicism to Masonic freethinking. Just as with Taxil, in the beginning the sincerity of his conversion was questioned. And, just like the newly converted Taxil, the newly converted Bidegain took some peculiar initiatives. The Masonic authorities of the Grand Orient allowed him to found a lodge, the Action Socialiste, which was "composed exclusively by socialists" as part of its statute. The lodge devoted itself to "intensive propaganda" in favor of socialism, and did not welcome Jews, suspected of being anti-socialist and agents of capitalism, although some exceptions were made.[166] The extreme socialist and anticlerical tirades of Brother Bidegain should have made the Masonic authorities suspicious. On the contrary, they suggested he worked full time in the Grand Orient, of which he became deputy secretary in 1900.

This was an interesting position, the more so since Bidegain found himself working in a special department. Convinced of the necessity of purging the army, which in the case of Dreyfus had manifested nationalist and anti-republican feelings, the Grand Orient began to keep careful records on the attitude of all French officers. It then transmitted the files, the famous *fiches*, to the Minister of War, the general Louis-Joseph-Nicholas André (1838–1913), who was not a Freemason but was a rabid anticlerical and an intimate friend of Combes. The majority of the *fiches* have now been destroyed, but those that remain show what kind of information they contained. The officers the Freemasonry recommended not to consider for promotion were decorated with titles such as "militant clerical", "puppet of the clergy", and "Jesuit in spirit". Sometimes, the information was more precise: "goes to Mass", "carries candles in religious ceremonies", "went to receive ashes on Ash Wednesday", or "took part in his daughter's first communion".[167] The system of the *fiches* was clearly detestable[168] and, if discovered, would certainly have caused a reaction in the public opinion.

166 The foundation document is in the file of the lodge Action Socialiste in the archives of the Grand Orient in Paris. It was published by L. Sabah, "Les Fiches Bidegain, conséquences d'un secret", cit., pp. 75–77.

167 See François Vindé, *L'Affaire des fiches 1900–1904. Chronique d'un scandale*, Paris: Éditions Universitaires, 1989, pp. 61–62.

168 According to D. Ligou, entry *Fiches* in D. Ligou, *Dictionnaire de la Franc-Maçonnerie*, cit., p. 453, "most Freemasons of the [French] Grand Orient believed that Combes and André did well to purge the army, but that it was outside the duties of the Grand Orient to play an active role in this policy".

In 1902, the Grand Orient received news that an agent in contact with the Archbishop of Paris and the nationalist right, referred to with the code name "GT 104", had penetrated into Freemasonry to investigate the *fiches*. The Grand Orient asked Bidegain to look into the information, which came from an anonymous letter. He concluded that the letter was unreliable and there was no reason to worry. The accuracy of his investigation could be imagined, when we consider that "GT 104" was Bidegain himself. The saga of the *fiches* would take us away from our topic. It is sufficient to say that, in due course, Bidegain came out as the infiltrate he was and consigned a good number of *fiches*, in return for a good sum of money, to two right-wing members of the French Parliament, Gabriel Syveton (1864–1904) and Jean Guyot de Villeneuve (1864–1909). The latter, on October 28, 1904, read extracts of the *fiches* in the French House of Representatives, and Syveton slapped General André in the face. Even many members of the opposition did not appreciate the slap, and the Combes government was saved for some months, but finally fell in January 1905.

It is interesting to note that Bidegain followed the instructions of a small group of anti-Masonic conspirators, among which the main figure was Bessonies. In fact, Guyot de Villeneuve was initially suspicious of Bidegain exactly because he had been presented to him by Bessonies, a priest who had been fooled for years by Taxil.[169] As historian Pierre Chevallier (1913–1998) noted, the role of Bessonies was somewhat exaggerated in the Catholic accounts of the *affaire des fiches*, in order to leave the real leader of the operation in the background. This was Henri-Louis Odelin (1849–1935), the powerful vicar general of the Archbishop of Paris, and a man who was in direct contact with the Vatican. Odelin wanted the *fiches* to be discovered, but did not want it to be said that the infiltration of Bidegain derived from a clerical conspiracy. He achieved both his goals admirably.[170]

The conclusion of the story was, however, tragic for the main characters on the Catholic side. Shortly after his famous slap in the House, Syveton died choking on gas. The police archived his case as an accident or suicide, although the thesis of murder remains plausible for a number of historians.[171] Bidegain had to flee from France, pursued by his fame as a hired gun and a traitor, and ended up killing himself in 1926, after another scandal not directly connected to the *fiches* affair. Guyot de Villeneuve, after a car accident, died in the hospital. His

169 F. Vindé, *L'Affaire des fiches 1900–1904. Chronique d'un scandale*, cit., p. 90.

170 P. Chevallier, *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie française. 3. La Maçonnerie: Église de la République (1877–1944)*, cit., pp. 100–108.

171 See *ibid.* and F. Vindé, *L'Affaire des fiches 1900–1904. Chronique d'un scandale*, cit.

friends, in a climate saturated by conspiracy theories, attributed his death to "the 'special' care of a Masonic nurse".[172]

Odelin, Bessonies, and their referents in the Vatican did not claim, with comprehensible discretion, victory: but in fact they won. No politician was more hostile towards the Catholic Church than Combes, and Combes fell because of the *fiches*. After the scandal, anticlericalism and the influence of Freemasonry on French politics began a slow but sustained decline. The two cases of Taxil and Bidegain, however they are interpreted, were closely connected. Taxil taught Catholics that they should not search in the archives of French Freemasonry for proof of Devil worship and relics of Lucifer, but for documents proving a progressively more invasive Masonic influence on society and politics. They learned to look for these documents, and found the *fiches*.

A final consequence of the Taxil case was the search for the truth behind the lecture of 1897 at the Geographical Society, which included a quest for the elusive Diana Vaughan. As mentioned earlier, Clarin de La Rive investigated for several months after the revelations of Taxil in April. He went as far as interviewing a clairvoyant, although this "disgusted him". He was not convinced that a Diana Vaughan did not exist and believed that the story of the American sales representative was just another prank by Taxil. He reported in a letter to his friend Emmanuel Bon that "Mgr. [Paul-Félix-Arsène] Billard [1829–1901], Bishop of Carcassonne,[173] declared in the course of a retreat, before nine hundred priests, having seen and spoken in a convent to Diana Vaughan". In another letter to the same correspondent, dated 31 October 1897, he signaled "the presence of D. Vaughan in England".[174]

Later, as we mentioned earlier, Clarin became more cautious and kept away from the Taxil affair entirely. In 1897, however, he was still suggesting that Taxil had lied once again in the Geographical Society's lecture and "betrayed" Diana Vaughan, who was not his accomplice but his victim. She was, Clarin claimed in 1897, a real converted ex-Freemason, and Taxil in the end had consigned her to the Satanists. Before leaving the affair, however, Clarin in his correspondence with Bon changed his mind and concluded that Diana had "gone back to Palladism".

172 *Ibid.*, p. 198.

173 He was the Bishop in whose diocese was situated Rennes-le-Château, and who had to deal with Rennes' bizarre parish priest, Berenger Saunière (1852–1917), whose adventures inspired *The Da Vinci Code.* Billard was very tolerant towards Saunière, who was disciplined only by his successor, Mgr. Paul-Félix Beuvain de Beausejour (1839–1930).

174 J.-P. Laurant, "Le Dossier Léo Taxil du fonds Jean Baylot de la Bibliothèque Nationale", cit., pp. 61–62.

The idea that Diana was a real convert from Palladism was presented to the public at the end of the summer of 1897, but not by Clarin. The theory was suggested by a pamphlet called *La vérité sur Miss Diana Vaughan la Sainte et Taxil le Tartufe* and published in Toulouse. Taxil was defined as a wretched criminal, asking him: "What did you do to Diana Vaughan whom your fake friendship, which she believed sincere, lost? It is certain that she must have been at least kidnapped". "Did her ferocious enemies, the pamphlet asked, kill her and send her to Heaven to reach her beloved patron [Joan of Arc]? They are certainly capable of this". We might believe that behind the improbable name of the author of the pamphlet, a certain *abbé* de la Tour de Noé,[175] hid, as usual, Taxil. In fact, a Father Gabriel-Marie-Eugène de La Tour de Noé (1818–1905) really existed in France, and that was his real name rather than a pseudonym.[176]

The thesis on the existence of Diana Vaughan will never be abandoned in "diabolist" anti-Masonic circles. It would emerge again in the 1930s in the pamphlets of "Spectator"[177] and of the "Bibliophile Hiram" (Emmanuel Bon),[178] and above all in the writings of Leslie (or Lesley) Fry,[179] a pseudonym of the Russian-American anti-Masonic author Paquita Shishmarev (1882–1970), who was also one of the supporters of the authenticity of the infamous *Protocols of*

175 Abbé [Gabriel-Marie-Eugène] de la Tour de Noé, *La vérité sur Miss Diana Vaughan la Sainte et Taxil le Tartufe*, Toulouse: The Author, 1897.

176 An anonymous author, or, as it emerged from the Web site of the publishing company, a collective of Naundorffist political inclinations hidden behind a single pseudonym, still persuaded of the existence of Diana Vaughan, Sophie Walder, and Palladism, published in 2002 a book signed with the name "Athirsata", *L'Affaire Diana Vaughan, Léo Taxil au scanner*, Paris: Sources Retrouvées, 2002. The book consisted of more than five-hundred pages, and its main aim was to criticize a previous version of this chapter on Taxil, part of M. Introvigne, *Enquête sur le Satanisme. Satanistes et anti-Satanistes du XVIIe siècle à nos jours*, cit. The only effective inaccuracy "Athirsata" managed to find in my text was, in fact, the existence of the *abbé* de La Tour de Noé, a name so picturesque I believed it was a result of Taxil's imagination. I apologized for the mistake in my reply to the anonymous critic: "Diana Redux: Retour sur l'affaire Taxil-Diana Vaughan", *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2004, pp. 91–97. I also pointed out that this was an interesting but marginal detail, and that in general the lengthy arguments of "Athirsata" in favor of the existence of real life Diana Vaughan and Sophie Walder as High Priestesses of Lucifer were not convincing.

177 Spectator, *Le Mystère de Léo Taxil et la Vraie Diana Vaughan*, Paris: Éditions "RISS", 1930.

178 Bibliophile Hiram, *Diana Vaughan a-t-elle existé?* "Jerusalem" (but in fact Paris): Éditions "RISS", 1931. The book gathered a series of articles that had previously appeared in the *Revue internationale des sociétés secrètes* between August 1929 and December 1930.

179 L. Fry, *Léo Taxil et la Franc-Maçonnerie. Lettres inédites publiées par les amis de Monseigneur Jouin*, cit., pp. 396–443.

the Elders of Zion.[180] The method of "Hiram" consisted in bringing into the light information found in literature signed by Diana Vaughan, which appeared to be both new and confirmed by independent sources. If it was an anticlerical conspiracy, the author argued, why provide information not available elsewhere? One must conclude that for Catholics "it is *not* a good idea to attack the *Mémories* of Diana Vaughan!"[181]

Fry republished "Spectator", and revealed that the author hidden under this pseudonym was Mgr. Ernest Jouin (1844–1932), the leading anti-Masonic writer of the generation subsequent to Taxil. Decorated with the title of Apostolic Protonotary by Pope Pius XI (1857–1939), Jouin reported that his anti-Masonic vocation was born from a meeting with Bidegain. Founder in January 1912 and editor of the *Revue internationale des sociétés secrètes*, Mgr. Jouin was a controversial character, but his good faith was never questioned in Catholic circles, to the point of considering his beatification.[182]

One possibility, based on its content and style, is that the manuscript that fell into the hands of Mgr. Jouin, on which he based his pamphlet, had been written by Clarin de la Rive, or rather reported information transmitted by him at the time of his correspondence with Bon about Diana Vaughan. The main arguments of this text for supporting the existence of Diana Vaughan were three. In the first place, the text claimed, it was impossible to trace in any way a

180 The *Protocols,* presented as a dark Jewish program for world domination, were published in Russian in 1903, in a shorter version that appeared in the *Znamia* newspaper, in installments, from August 26 to September 7. In 1905, a longer version followed, published as a pamphlet without indication of a publishing company in St Petersburg. The pamphlet came to the attention of the Western public in 1920, with a Russian language edition in Paris, a publication in English in the London *Times*, and translations in German, French, Polish, and Italian. A complete bibliography of the editions until 1991 was offered by Pierre-André Taguieff, *Les Protocoles des Sages de Sion*, 2 vols., Paris: Berg International, 1992, vol. I, pp. 365–403. The *Protocols* certainly presented a "diabolical" conspiracy, but made no direct reference to Satanism and thus are not part of our story. Certainly, the history of anti-Semitism can be interpreted as a "demonization" of Jews, but in a metaphorical sense. Jews were rarely accused of organizing Satanist cults, although they were often accused of sexual and murderous rituals similar to those of the Satanists. See Joel Carmichael [1915–2006], *The Satanizing of the Jews: Origin and Development of Mystical Anti-Semitism*, New York: Fromm, 1992; and M. Introvigne, *Cattolici, antisemitismo e sangue. Il mito dell'omicidio rituale. In appendice il voto del cardinale Lorenzo Ganganelli, O.F.M. (poi Papa Clemente XIV) approvato il 24 dicembre 1759*, Milan: SugarCo, 2004.

181 B. Hiram, *Diana Vaughan a-t-elle existé?* cit., p. 165.

182 See M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme au XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., pp. 156–158.

sales representative for an American typewriter company who lived in Paris in 1895–1897 and was called Diana Vaughan. At least on this point, Taxil lied once again. Additionally, Clarin de La Rive in 1897 publicly challenged Taxil twice, through Paris newspapers, to show to the public the supposed sales representative, and Taxil did not bother to reply. Second, a Diana Vaughan was presented to different people, so it must be excluded that she existed solely in the mind of Taxil. Naturally, the explanation of the latter at the Geographical Society was that she was the famous sales representative. But the people who saw Diana Vaughan, the pamphlet objected, unanimously declared she was a very distinguished lady. This excluded a mere saleswoman, as no lady would have worked as a sales representative in the 19th century, and also Margiotta's suggestion that she was the wife of Taxil, a notoriously vulgar woman of working class origins.

The third proof offered by the pamphlet for the existence of Diana Vaughan had to do with the obscure incident of a convent of nuns in Loigny. The nuns were in revolt against Rome, and in 1890 suggested that the character who went under the name Leo XIII was not the real Pope, as the latter had been kidnapped and kept as a prisoner. Loigny's Ordre des Épouses du Sacré-Cœur de Jésus Pénitent had been founded based on the visionary experiences of Mathilde Marchat (1839–1899), and condemned by the Holy Office in 1891.[183] The community of Loigny continued as a new religions movement, separated from the Catholic Church, until 1910. Its story, which included several missions to rescue the kidnapped Leo XIII, is no less incredible than Taxil's but is certainly less well known.[184]

On March 13, 1897, a lady who introduced herself as Diana Vaughan went to Loigny, spoke with both the local parish priest and his colleague of a nearby village, Patay, and was finally dissuaded from visiting the rebellious nuns. Interviewed by Clarin de La Rive, both the parish priests of Loigny and that of Patay recognized in their visitor the "Diana Vaughan" whose photograph appeared in the *Mémoires*. Shortly after the visit of this lady to Loigny, Diana Vaughan wrote in the *Mémoires*: "Thanks God for having escaped temptation". She did not elaborate further, but time and location seem to coincide with a temptation to side with the rebellious nuns of Loigny. The pamphlet concluded

183 See "La prétendue visionnaire de Loigny", *La Semaine Religieuse du Diocèse de Nancy & de Toul*, May 9, 1891.

184 Some information is found in Giacomo E. Carretto, "Avventurieri ottocenteschi: Nicola Prato e Giovanni Bustelli", *Kervan – Rivista Internazionale di studi afroasiatici*, no. 13–14, July 2011, pp. 57–80.

that "everything on Diana Vaughan must now be reconsidered from the start, independently of what Taxil said, based on the crucial Loigny event".[185]

The controversy was thus not terminated with Taxil's lecture at the Geographical Society. Seen from the perspective of a number of Freemasons, some of them academic historians, these attempts of the 1930s simply demonstrated that Catholics were incorrigible. They did not want to admit having being fooled by Taxil and were still chasing after Diana Vaughan. However, the Freemason who studied the question more in depth, Waite, reached less drastic conclusions. Waite was certain, based on a meticulous enquiry he carried out in America, that no woman called Diana Vaughan who lived in the 19th century in the United States had any family relations with the philosopher Thomas Vaughan, from whom "Diana" claimed to be the descendant in the *Mémoires*. In Louisville, Kentucky, where the family of Diana was supposed to be prominent, nobody had ever heard neither of a rich Vaughan family nor specifically of a Diana Vaughan.

Here, however, Waite's certainties stopped. He judged the story of the sales representative told by Taxil as "improbable". He however mentioned a curious document, according to which there was some reason to believe that a person called Diana Vaughan was not unknown in America. It was an unpublished manuscript dating back to when the *Diable* and Taxil started being known among American Freemasons, the authenticity of which was confirmed to Waite by what he believed were reliable sources, including an interview with "Mr. William Oscar Roone", introduced as a cashier of the National Bank of Ohio and an old friend of Albert Pike. I tried myself to trace this character, and found that American archives have no trace of a William Oscar Roone. However, I believe that Waite simply made a spelling error and meant William Oscar *Roome* (1841–1920). He was a dignitary of the Scottish Rite and had been in fact a cashier of the National Bank of Ohio, before becoming president of the American Savings Bank of Washington, and as such being involved in a scandal in 1901.[186] Roome was more than a friend of Pike: he was his son in law, having married his daughter Lilian.

According to Waite, Roone (or, more precisely, Roome) "stated that Diana Vaughan had been long known to him in a mental state which necessitated medical supervision. Her family, composed of honourable Protestants of Kentucky, was obliged to incarcerate her in an asylum, some six or seven years ago.

185 L. Fry, *Léo Taxil et la Franc-Maçonnerie. Lettres inédites publiées par les amis de Monseigneur Jouin*, cit., p. 410.

186 See "William Oscar and His Little Savings Bank in Trouble: A Stunning Petition", *The Sunday Morning Globe* (Washington D.C.), November 17, 1901, p. 5.

At the end of several months, she left as she was supposed to have been cured. Her whereabouts at the present time are quite unknown to Mr. Roone, but it is probable enough that she repaired at some period to Paris, and fell into the hands of persons who have been exploiting her delusions. As she is an orphan and of age, her surviving relations in the Union have no power over her, her uncle is the only person who might exercise some authority, but he is very old, she has outwearied him, he asks only to die in peace, and has declined to intervene in any way". "Assuming, Waite cautiously concluded, that this report, the original of which I have not seen, has not been garbled by the conspiracy, the question seems settled so far".[187]

Many Questions and Some Answers

The Bataille-Taxil-Vaughan affair was at the center of the greatest Satanism scare of the 19th century. It is also a source from which a particular anti-Satanism, even today, is reluctant to completely part company. It was, thus, necessary to examine the case in detail, even if the details did not lead to clear answers. It is thus worth reformulating the most important questions on the Taxil case.

Are the Texts of Taxil, "Diana Vaughan", and "Bataille" Reliable?

In general terms, there is no doubt that they are hoaxes. The fundamental plot of the whole episode is false, most details are false, and the books and magazines were published with malicious intent. This does not mean that every single word that appeared in this literature is false. It is impossible to put together ten thousand pages without utilizing multiple sources, and thus without stumbling, even unwillingly, in some genuine documents and episodes. It is also possible that some real episodes were deliberately interwoven with fictional ones with the purpose of misleading the critics. Taxil, "Diana" and "Bataille" should be treated as false witnesses in a court case. Their testimony cannot be utilized. However, if some of the facts reported by the false witnesses are also reported by reliable ones, or are confirmed by documents whose authenticity can be established, then the fact that the false witnesses also reported them does not prove their falsehood. Naturally, following this method is demanding. It implies, on one side, that Taxil's books cannot be used as a source, contrary to what some anti-Masonic literature still claims today. On the other, one should abstain from the quick and easy elimination as false

187 A.E. Waite, *Diana Vaughan and the Question of Modern Palladism. A Sequel to "Devil Worship in France"*, pp. 92–99.

of any element that is reported *also* by Taxil, before verifying whether it is confirmed by independent and more reliable sources.

Who Wrote the Books and Articles Signed by "Bataille" and "Diana Vaughan"?

In its entirety, this literature is, as we have seen, overwhelming: more than ten thousand pages, if we include the books and pamphlets signed by Taxil under his name and various pseudonyms. Taxil could not have written everything by himself. Doctor Hacks, as the work signed with his real name, *Le Geste*, demonstrated, was anything but illiterate. There is no reason to doubt his assertion that he wrote a good part of the first volume of the *Diable*, while Taxil wrote the second. Hacks also claimed that there was a whole staff helping Taxil, while in the conference of the Geographical Society the latter insisted on having only two auxiliaries: Hacks and the "sales representative" Diana Vaughan. Taxil directed the whole enterprise and personally wrote a good part of the material, but it is not believable that he wrote everything without collaborators: among whom, Hacks probably had a greater part than what is normally attributed to him.

What Are the Sources of the Literature Produced by Taxil and His Auxiliaries?

Ten thousand pages could not have been produced in a few years without resorting extensively to previous sources. From this perspective, sufficient attention has not been given to the anti-Satanist campaign of the 1860s, during which Bizouard alone had filled four thousand pages. Although they used an enormous plurality of sources, including authors as Rosen they criticized as suspicious, Taxil and his collaborators literally raided the anti-Satanist literature of the 1860s, as well as older authors, including Berbiguier with his larvae, though they made sure not to refer to him. Taxil's production did not come out of nowhere. In France, thousands of pages of anti-Satanist controversies were available. Almost thirty years had passed since their popularity, but this also meant they could be recovered without risking being discovered too easily.

Did Palladism Exist?

We must distinguish between the existence of an order called Palladium or Palladism *before, during* and *after* the Taxil case. Before Taxil, as Waite noted,[188]

188 See Waite's *A New Encyclopedia of Freemasonry*, 2 vols., Rider, London 1921, where the entry on "Palladian Freemasonry" (vol. II, pp. 251–264) also offers a summary of the Taxil case.

there was an enormous underworld of secret and para-Masonic European societies. Among them, it existed in the 18th century an Order of the Palladium, established in 1737, which seems to have always had only a few members. "Now, the original Order of the Palladium, constituted in 1737, made no mark whatsoever, and bears no more traces of Satanism than do the knights and dames of the Primrose League".[189] It is certain that this order no longer existed in 1890. One can believe Waite as a Masonic encyclopedist, when he gives his "honourable assurance that it is extremely unlikely the existence of such an Order would have escaped me, had it possessed a thousandth part of the diffusion which is attributed to it".[190]

Historians know the career of Pike sufficiently well to exclude that he ever had anything to do with a Luciferian Palladist Order, and certainly everything that concerns Palladism as High Freemasonry is purely a product of the fraud. Curiously, however, *after* the case of Taxil, and inspired by his literature, some "Palladist" groups were really created. They tried to reproduce the rituals described in the *Diable* and in the publications signed by Diana Vaughan as much as possible, since it was not easy to make Moloch appear in the form of a crocodile. The tireless Geyraud, whom perhaps we can consider reliable in his own way, met these strange characters in 1930. He called two Paris groups "neo-Palladist". It is clear that, if they really existed, the rituals and the terminology of these small groups, one of which according to Geyraud even nominated a "Black Pope", derived entirely from Taxil's literature, and did not constitute the prosecution of supposed groups that existed at the end of the 19th century.[191] Once again, in the history of Satanism, reality imitated fiction rather than vice versa.

Did Diana Vaughan Exist?

This is one of the questions that cannot have a certain answer. Both the Freemason Waite and the anti-Masonic crusader Clarin de la Rive concluded that the story of the "sales representative" was probably false. The episode of Loigny, on which the supporters of the existence of Diana Vaughan connected to the *Revue internationale des sociétés secrètes* insisted so much in the 1930s, is not incompatible with Waite's hypothesis that Taxil and some of his friends took advantage of a mentally unstable woman. As psychiatrists know, assuming the attitudes of a grand dame may be a form of mythomania and is not

189 A.E. Waite, *Diana Vaughan and the Question of Modern Palladism. A Sequel to "Devil-Worship in France"*, cit., p. 112.

190 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

191 Pierre Geyraud, *Les Religions nouvelles de Paris*, Paris: Émile-Paul Frères, 1937, pp. 159–171.

incompatible with mental illness. What is certain is that Taxil showed to a certain number of persons a woman who could not have been his wife, both because she was not sufficiently elegant and was well-known in Paris. This woman may or may not have had Diana Vaughan as her real name.

Finally, Taxil's Diana Vaughan was constantly busy with Sophie Walder and her father Phileas, one of the apostles of the Mormon Church: but I found no trace of a general authority, nor of a simple member of the Mormon Church, by the name of Phileas Walder between 1860 and 1900, either in Salt Lake City or in the European missions.[192]

What Exactly was the Role of Margiotta?

Here, also, we do not have a final answer. It is very likely that Margiotta began operating autonomously, jumping on what he saw as a lucrative bandwagon, and later contacted Taxil and concluded some sort of agreement with him. Mola's theory that he was connected with intelligence services is perhaps typically Italian, but is not unbelievable.

Was Taxil Successful?

Undoubtedly. Many Catholics fully believed in the adventures of Diana Vaughan. Even a soul of great spiritual sensibility such as the Catholic mystic Thérèse of Lisieux (1873–1897) asked her superior for permission to write to Diana Vaughan. She obtained it, wrote, and received a reply.[193] On June 21, 1896, for the birthday of her Carmelite convent's mother superior, Marie de Gonzague (née Marie-Adèle-Rosalie Davy de Virville, 1834–1904), Thérèse wrote, and the nuns represented, a theatrical piece called *Le Triomphe de l'Humilité*. There, the devils Beelzebub, Lucifer and Asmodeus, who spoke in the language attributed to infernal spirits by the *Diable*, grieved over the conversion of Diana Vaughan and were finally chased back to Hell by the archangel Michael. After Taxil's lecture at the Geographical Society, Thérèse, according to the editors of her works, felt struck "as if from a whip". She burned the letter received from "Diana Vaughan", tried to suppress the references to

192 This is the result of an investigation I carried out in the archives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah. A research in the ancestry.com site also confirmed the non-existence of Taxil's Sophie Walder. There were four Sophie or Sophia *Walders* born in the United States in 1838, 1876, 1892 and 1893, respectively, and the one born in 1892 died in the same year, but none of them corresponded to the right age for Taxil's character. Nor was there any Phileas or Phineas Walder in the vast ancestry.com archives.

193 See Jean-François Six, *Thérèse de Lisieux au Carmel*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1973, p. 243.

Diana in her works, and felt she was sinking ever more into the prostration and "dark night" that preceded her death, which happened on November 30, 1897.[194] The title of her piece on Diana, "The Triumph of Humility", became painfully real for the young nun.

As Taxil remembered with pleasure in his lecture at the Geographical Society, "the most curious thing was that also some Freemasons jumped on my boat (…). Yes, I saw Masonic magazines, such as *La Rénaissance Symbolique*, believe in every 'dogmatic bulletin' of Luciferian occultism emanating from Charleston, including the famous one of June 14, 1889 and signed by Pike, in fact all written by me in Paris".[195] The circular Taxil wrote, dated June 14 and, occasionally, July 14, perhaps as an homage to the French Revolution, and signed with the name of Albert Pike, is the one where "Pike" calls Lucifer "God of Light and God of Goodness" and Adonai (the God of the Christians) "God of Darkness or Evil". According to this document, "the absolute can only exist in the shape of two gods": thus, "Lucifer is God and unfortunately Adonai is also god".[196] Leslie Fry showed how much, about these doctrines ascribed to Pike, Clarin de la Rive's *La Femme* was dependent on Taxil and "Diana Vaughan".[197]

The fame of the apocryphal "circular" signed with the name of Albert Pike was particularly persistent. In 1933, Edith Starr Miller, "Lady Queenborough" (1887–1933), reproduced it in her *Occult Theocrasy*.[198] Miller, a popular anti-Masonic author, apparently believed in everything contained in the *Diable*, including the flights of Sister Ingersoll and the diabolical telephones of Pike and Lemmi.[199] Pike's false circular letter is still occasionally found in anti-Masonic literature today.[200]

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194 See Sœur Cécile O.C.D., Jacques Lonchampt [1925–2014], *Le Triomphe de l'Humilité. Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus mystifiée (1896–1897), l'affaire Léo Taxil et le Manuscrit B*, Paris: Cerf, Desclée de Brouwer, 1975. The critical edition of the *Triomphe* is in [Sainte] Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus, *Théâtre au Carmel – Récréations pieuses*, ed. by Sœur Cécile O.C.D. and Guy Gaucher O.C.D. [1930–2014], Paris: Cerf, Desclée de Brouwer, 1985, pp. 239–260.

195 L. Taxil, "Discours prononcé le 19 avril 1897 à la Salle de la Société de Géographie", cit., p. 73.

196 A. Clarin De La Rive, *La Femme et l'Enfant dans la Franc-Maçonnerie universelle. D'après les documents officiels de la secte (1730–1893)*, cit., p. 588.

197 See L. Fry, *Léo Taxil et la Franc-Maçonnerie. Lettres inédites publiées par les amis de Monseigneur Jouin*, cit.

198 Lady Queenborough, *Occult Theocrasy*, 2 vols., Paris: The Author, 1933, vol. I, pp. 220–221.

199 See *ibid*., vol. I, pp. 223–226.

200 See John J. Robinson [1918–1996], *A Pilgrim's Path: Freemasonry and the Religious Right*, New York: M. Evans and Company, 1993, pp. 56–59.

"When I nominated Adriano Lemmi as the successor of Albert Pike as the supreme Luciferian pontiff", Taxil added, "when, as I said, this imaginary election was known, some Italian Freemasons, among which a member of the Parliament, took it seriously. They were annoyed that they had to know from the indiscretions of the non-Masonic press why Lemmi was behaving mysteriously towards them, keeping them in the dark concerning this famous Palladism, of which the whole world was talking about. They reunited a conference in Palermo, and constituted in Sicily, Naples, and Florence three independent Supreme Councils, and nominated Miss Diana Vaughan as a member of honor and protector of their federation".[201] Here, Taxil was exaggerating as usual, but he did not invent the paradoxical episode of a group of particularly anticlerical Italian Freemasons who, on September 20, 1894, sent a "Luciferian tiara" as a gift to the supposed "Luciferian Pope", Lemmi, much to the surprise of the latter.[202]

From a purely economic perspective, Taxil's profit was more than reasonable. He was ruined at the moment of his supposed conversion to Catholicism and quite rich when he confessed his hoax in 1897. We do not need to believe Taxil when he insisted in his lecture at the Geographical Society that he had programmed from the start his self-unmasking. On the contrary, as Waite pointed out, "there is no reason to suppose that Leo Taxil would have unmasked his own imposture, unless it had ceased to be profitable or until his position became untenable, so there is no call to accredit him with more ingenuity than is sufficient for the equipment of an accomplished trickster".[203]

Waite believed, and he was probably right, that Taxil had been *forced* to confess his mystification due to three factors. The first was the systematic demolition of his lies by some Masonic authors who took the trouble to study them, including Waite himself and the German historian Joseph Gottfried Findel (1828–1905). The second was the attack by authoritative exponents of the Catholic world, such as the Jesuits of *Études*, the English and German Catholic press, and Mgr. Delassus. They could not be easily disqualified as Freemasons in disguise, a technique that had worked with Rosen. Finally, Taxil did not program the defection of Hacks and Margiotta. At this point, the fraud could no longer continue, and Taxil found a way to get out.

201 L. Taxil, "Discours prononcé le 19 avril 1897 à la Salle de la Société de Géographie", cit., pp. 73–74.

202 See P. Geyraud, *Les Religions nouvelles de Paris*, cit., p. 161.

203 A.E. Waite, *Diana Vaughan and the Question of Modern Palladism: A Sequel to "Devil-Worship in France"*, cit., p. 24.

Overall, Did the Catholic Church Believe in Taxil?

Certainly a good number of rank and file Catholics, perhaps the majority, believed in the hoax of Taxil. One must not exaggerate, however, the involvement of the hierarchies. Around ten Bishops, among hundreds that existed in Europe, openly sided with Taxil, some, such as Mgr. Fava of Grenoble, until the very end. Taxil and "Diana Vaughan" received letters of blessing from the Vatican, but these letters were routinely sent to whomever requested a blessing and accompanied the request with a monetary offer. Taxil stated that the Pope received him two years after his "conversion", thus in 1887 or 1888. Since the Vatican and the Catholic press did not protest immediately, we can believe Taxil about the fact of the meeting, but there is no reason to accept the picturesque details of his lecture about what the false convert and Leo XIII said to each other. The dates are also important: in 1887 or 1888, Taxil was a well-known anti-Masonic author but had not yet started discussing the cult of Satan in the lodges, nor begun his mystification on Palladism and Diana Vaughan. As we have seen, Taxil's turning point was in 1891, inspired by the publication of *Là-bas* by Huysmans. In 1887–1888, Leo XIII received an anti-Masonic writer who was not particularly controversial in Catholic circles.

The Catholic Church showed during the Taxil affair a considerable level of gullibility. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that Catholic theologians and ecclesiastical magazines gave a decisive contribution to the unmasking of Taxil. Some scholars have also suggested that the Vatican and the French Catholic Church were not particularly gullible. They knew or suspected that Taxil was a fraud, but used him for their own anti-Masonic purposes.[204] There is no evidence that the Taxil affair was started by Catholic agencies, in the same sense in which they later organized the *affaire des fiches*. Many Catholic personalities and groups, however, jumped on his bandwagon, with different purposes. If some believed they would be able to control or manipulate Taxil, their strategy backfired quite spectacularly.

Did Taxil Ever Really "convert"?

Personally, Taxil, denied the reality of his conversion until his death, and he died as a convinced and impenitent freethinker. It is hard to reconstruct the secrets of the hearts, but personally I am inclined to believe that he never converted, in spite of the more charitable opinions of Father Fesch and other

204 See R. Van Luijk, "Satan Rehabilitated? A Study into Satanism during the Nineteenth Century", cit., pp. 294–302.

priests. During his supposed Catholic period, directly or through his wife, he continued to make money with his pornographic anticlerical books.

Cui Prodest? Who Gained from the Taxil Case?

Was Taxil the agent of a Masonic conspiracy to discredit the Catholic Church? Or of a Catholic conspiracy to embarrass the Freemasons? These are complex questions, but I would be inclined to answer both in the negative. Conspiracy theorists in both the Catholic and the Masonic camp tend to lend to their adversary a quality they know they lack in their own ranks: the unity of action and the capacity to move as one group. The idea of a Masonic "grand conspiracy" behind Taxil ignores the divisions inside the Freemasonry of his time. Not to mention the vast quarrel about atheism, which divided the Latin Freemasonry from the Anglo-Saxon one, concerning anti-Semitism, international politics, Crispi, Ferry, and a great number of minor controversies, Freemasons were very far from agreeing with each other. Similarly, the thesis of a "grand conspiracy" of the Catholic Church ignores the division of the Catholics: favorable and hostile to Leo XIII's *ralliement* to the French Republic, friends and foes of Drumont, anti-Semites and critics of anti-Semitism, and so on. These were no minor quarrels, and made it impossible for Freemasons or for Catholics of different persuasions to cooperate.

Further proof of these divisions was offered precisely by the fact that Catholics and Freemasons divided among themselves before 1897 concerning the existence of Diana Vaughan and the reliability of Taxil. While Waite and Findel demolished Taxil's construction, there was no shortage of Freemasons who went around looking for Palladists. That the Catholic camp was divided between supporters and enemies of Taxil should by now be clear to our patient reader.

However, if the theory of either a Masonic or Catholic "grand conspiracy" is unsustainable, some "small conspiracies" likely took place. There were Catholics such as Bessonies and Clarin de la Rive who, even after they started suspecting that Taxil was a fraud, continued to use his literature. They played with the fire, were burned, learned, and behaved more wisely in the future, as their wiser handling of the case of the *fiches* confirmed. It is also possible that certain groups of Freemasons, rather than Freemasonry as a whole, at a certain stage of the saga realized its fraudulent nature and started thinking about using Taxil to deliver a lethal blow to Catholic anti-Masonic campaigns. This strategy, if it was seriously pursued, also backfired, because it is unclear whether the Taxil case really benefited Freemasonry. Catholic strategies against Freemasonry after 1897 did not vanish, but changed, although in areas far away from France

such as Latin America some continued to use the *Diable* ignoring that it had been exposed as a fraud.[205]

The Taxil case, in reality, tells us very little about Satanists. But it fully belongs to this book because it tells us everything on anti-Satanists. And anti-Satanists are no less important for our story than Satanists are.

205 An edition of Diana's *Mémoires* was collected in a volume, published in Spanish and translated into English by Reverend Eugene Rickard (1840–1922) of Meath (Ireland). It was printed in Mexico in 1904, without mentioning the confession of Taxil in 1897, still quoting Margiotta as a reliable source, and declaring that Diana was "now a nun". See *Miss Diana Vaughan Priestess of Lucifer, by Herself, Now a Nun*, Guadalajara: La Verdad, 1904. I am indebted to Michael W. Homer for a photocopy of this rare text, which could have been one of the vehicles for the diffusion of the saga of Diana Vaughan in Latin America.

CHAPTER 9

A Satanic Underground, 1897–1952

Satan the Unknown: Ben Kadosh

In the years from the publication of *Là-bas* by Huysmans (1891) to the fall of Taxil (1897), Satanism and anti-Satanism occupied the first pages of European newspapers and magazines, and not only the Catholic ones. After the famous lecture by Taxil at the Geographical Society, interest declined. The occult subculture tried to stay away from Satanism, fearful to be involved in the ridicule caused by Taxil. There were still Catholic anti-Satanists who continued, if not to chase after Diana Vaughan, at least to look for similar revelations. But they were no longer at the center of the scene.

This period, which embraces the very last years of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th, is however not irrelevant for our story. If Satanism first, and anti-Satanism later, were able to reemerge with great visibility after World War II, it was because an underground river had continued to flow in the previous decades. It must not be forgotten that the first half of the 20th century was a golden era for occultism, in its different forms. The key figures of occultism in these decades were not Satanists, at least if we define Satanism as we do in this book, even if their Christian adversaries often attacked them as Satan-worshipers. However, they prepared for successive generations a *corpus* of occult material of extraordinary richness, which would be also used in the future in a satanic perspective.

Ben Kadosh, the pseudonym used by Danish fringe Freemason Carl William Hansen (1872–1936), was not among the most well-known occultists of this period. In fact, he remained largely unknown outside Denmark, until he was rescued from oblivion by the studies of Per Faxneld.[1] It was probably mostly because of these studies that he was also rediscovered by 21st-century Satanists, as we will see in the last chapter of this book. There are reasons to consider

1 See P. Faxneld, *Mörkrets apostlar: satanism i äldre tid*, Sundbyberg: Ouroboros, 2006; P. Faxneld, "The Strange Case of Ben Kadosh: A Luciferian Pamphlet from 1906 and its Current Renaissance", *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2011, pp. 1–22; Per Faxneld, "'In Communication with the Powers of Darkness': Satanism in Turn-of-the-Century Denmark, and its Use as a Legitimating Device in Present-Day Esotericism", in H. Bogdan and Gordan Djurdjevic (eds.), *Occultism in a Global Perspective*, Durham, Bristol (Connecticut): Acumen, 2013, pp. 57–77.

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Kadosh a Satanist, although he gathered only a handful of followers and would have preferred the label "Luciferian".

Hansen was born in Copenhagen in 1872, in a poor family. He managed to get some education and as a young man worked as a bookkeeper, although he later mostly co-operated with his wife, who ran a dairy store in the house where they lived. Before he turned thirty, Hansen had already joined several occult orders. He also worked as an alchemist, and tried to persuade several wealthy persons to lend him money for his gold-making experiments, including Swedish playwright, poet, and painter August Strindberg (1849–1912). Strindberg had himself an interest in esotericism and alchemy, and while living in Paris was involved with the Isis Lodge of the Independent Theosophical Society of French alchemist François Jollivet-Castelot (1874–1937).[2] He was also part of Romantic Satanism, with references in his writings to both Satan and Lucifer.

In 1902, Danish author Carl von Kohl (1869–1958) published in Copenhagen the book *Satan og hans kultus i vor tid*, a popular account of Satanist cults, which used information from Bois and also gave an account of the Taxil saga.[3] It is probable that Kadosh read Kohl, but he read it in a strange way. According to Faxneld, it might have taken some of Taxil's tales at face value, although Kohl clearly explained that the whole story was a hoax.[4]

In 1906, Kadosh published *Den ny morgens gry: verdensbygmesterens genkomst* (The Dawn of a New Morning: The Return of the World's Master Builder).[5] It was a strange booklet, written, perhaps deliberately, in an obscure and convoluted style. Kadosh announced that Lucifer was the creator of the entire material world, or its "demiurge", a word he used, unlike the ancient Gnostics, without any negative connotations. Perhaps influenced by Taxil, he identified Lucifer, or Satan, with the Great Architect of the Universe and with Hiram, the builder of the Temple of Solomon, both mentioned in Masonic rituals. He also identified Lucifer/Satan with the Greek god Pan, claimed that this entity can be evoked through appropriate rituals, and invited those interested to join him in forming a new occult group. Lucifer/Satan for Kadosh was not the ultimate God, nor was he the source of life. The supreme God was unknowable, and could not be accessed but through his son, Lucifer/Satan.

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2 See A. Mercier, "August Strindberg et les alchimistes français: Hemel, Vial, Tiffereau, Jollivet-Castelot", *Revue de littérature comparée*, vol. 43, 1969, pp. 23–46.

3 Carl von Kohl, *Satan og hans kultus i vor tid*, Copenhagen: Det Nordiske Forlag, 1901. See P. Faxneld, "The Strange Case of Ben Kadosh: A Luciferian Pamphlet from 1906 and its Current Renaissance", cit., pp. 3–4.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

5 Ben Kadosh, *Den ny morgens gry: verdensbygmesterens genkomst*, Hafnia: The Author, 1906.

With Kadosh, we have one of the first systems of Satanism, including a doctrine, the statement that there were appropriate rituals for evoking Satan, and the stated aim of creating an organization. Whether the organization was really created is, however, unclear. Kadosh operated, as many of his contemporaries in the occult subculture did, an impressive number of different occult orders. He had at least a couple of trusted associates who might have followed him in the adventure announced in *Den ny morgens gry*, perhaps in the form of a Luciferian fringe masonry, more or less corresponding to what Taxil had invented in his fraudulent accounts.[6] But we would never know for sure.

What is certain is that Kadosh did found a number of fringe Masonic orders. With meager resources, he was still active in 1928, when he published a second (non-satanic) pamphlet, on Rosicrucians.[7] Although quoted, or lampooned, in several Danish novels,[8] Kadosh, as Faxneld concluded, "was a local eccentric, whose ideas did not, it seems, during his lifetime spread much further than his hometown".[9] If he really managed to organize a small Luciferian group, it might well have been the first Satanist group in history with a coherent doctrine. This would become important in the 21st century, when Satanists would start looking for historic credentials as old as possible, and would discover that Kadosh might offer credentials older than any other available. We will return to this point in our last chapter.

Satan the Philosopher: Stanisław Przybyszewski and Josef Váchal

Faxneld has credited Polish author Stanisław Przybyszewski as having "formulated what is likely the first attempt ever to construct a more or less systematic Satanism". He was, in this sense, "the first Satanist".[10] Was he? Faxneld is of course aware that Romantic Satanism had a long tradition before Przybyszewski. What was new with the Polish author was the effort to build a systematic and coherent system. On the other hand, there is no evidence that

6 See P. Faxneld, "The Strange Case of Ben Kadosh: A Luciferian Pamphlet from 1906 and its Current Renaissance", cit., pp. 11–12.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13.

9 *Ibid.*, 20.

10 P. Faxneld, "Witches, Anarchism, and Evolution: Stanislaw Przybyszewski's Fin-de-Siècle Satanism and the Demonic Feminine", in P. Faxneld and J.Aa. Petersen (eds.), *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity*, cit., pp. 53–77 (p. 74). See the biography by George Klim [1926–2014], *Stanislaw Przybyszewski: Leben, Werk und Weltanschauung im Rahmen der deutschen Literatur der Jahrundertwende*, Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1992.

Przybyszewski ever gathered a real Satanist group around him, and he should thus in principle be excluded from our definition of Satanism. However, there were followers of Przybyszewski both in Poland and elsewhere, and perhaps the question deserves a second look.

Przybyszewski was born in Łojewo, in North-Central Poland, on May 7, 1868. After high school, he went to Berlin, where he studied architecture and medicine. He lived with Marta Foerder (1872–1896), by whom he had three children. He left her and married Norwegian writer Dagny Juel (1867–1901), famous as the model for several important paintings by Edvard Munch (1863–1944). Przybyszewski had another two children by Juel, but theirs was a very open marriage. Both had several affairs, and Juel was assassinated in 1901 by a man some claimed was her lover. In 1896, Foerder had also died of carbon monoxide poisoning in Berlin. Przybyszewski was arrested and accused of her murder, although he was ultimately exonerated. By then, he had already published both fiction and philosophical texts, including the successful trilogy of novels *Homo Sapiens*, and started being recognized as a relevant voice within the new generation of revolutionary and modernist Polish writers.

In the mid-1890s in Berlin, Przybyszewski had been a member of the international group of artists gathering at the tavern Zum Schwarzen Ferkel (The Black Piglet), which included Strindberg, Munch, the Finnish painter Akseli Gallen-Kallela (1865–1931), and the Norwegian sculptor Gustav Vigeland (1869–1943). Przybyszewski discussed esotericism and art with the group. According to Faxneld, when he later wrote about Munch and Vigeland, Przybyszewski proposed an "esoterisation" of their artistic production, seeing in their works an esoteric content that perhaps was not there. This was particularly true, Faxneld argued, for Vigeland, while in the case of Munch, Strindberg, and Gallen-Kallela[11] some esoteric elements were really at work. It was Przybyszewski that gave to Munch's painting originally called *Love and Pain* the title *The Vampire*, under which it became internationally famous, thus radically changing "an image that, according to the artist, originally had nothing to do with the supernatural and demonic".[12]

11 On Gallen-Kallela, Theosophy, and esotericism, see Nina Kokkinen, "The Artist as Initiated Master: Themes of Fin de-Siècle Occulture in the Art of Akseli Gallen-Kallela", in *Fill Your Soul! Paths of Research into the Art of Akseli Gallen-Kallela*, Espoo: The Gallen-Kallela Museum, 2011, pp. 51–52 and 57–58. For the Finnish context and esoteric interpretations of the Kalevala, see *The Kalevala in Images: 160 Years of Finnish Art Inspired by the Kalevala*, Helsinki: Ateneum Art Museum, Finnish National Gallery, 2009.

12 P. Faxneld, "Esotericism in Modernity, and the Lure of the Occult Elite: The Seekers of the Zum Schwarzen Ferkel circle", in Trine Otte Bak Nielsen (ed.), *Vigeland + Munch: Behind the Myths*, New Haven (Connecticut): Yale University Press, 2015, pp. 92–105.

In 1898, Przybyszewski moved to Krakow, where he became one of the leaders of the modernist movement Young Poland and a main contributor to its illustrated weekly *Życie*. Another leading representative of Young Poland was poet and playwright Jan Kasprowicz (1860–1926). Eventually, Przybyszewski fell in love with Kasprowicz's wife, Jadwiga Gąsowska (1869–1927). In 1899, he left Juel and moved to Warsaw with Gąsowska, whom he married in 1905 after her divorce from Kasprowicz. This did not prevent Przybyszewski, who had also developed a serious problem of alcoholism, to carry on an affair with painter Aniela Pająkówna (who signed her works "Aniela Pająk", 1864–1912), who gave him his most famous child, playwright Stanisława Przybyszewska (1901–1935).[13] Przybyszewski lived for the rest of his life in different cities in Germany, Bohemia, and Poland, without solving his alcoholism problem. He died in Jaronty, in the same Polish region where he was born, on November 23, 1927.

Przybyszewski was a decadent Bohemian writer, who posed as a Byronesque anti-hero and became quite famous for his bizarre antics. In 1897, he wrote in German the non-fiction book *Die Synagoge des Satan* (The Synagogue of Satan) and the novel *Satans Kinder* (Satan's Children).[14] The Polish edition of the *Synagoge* followed in 1899. Faxneld showed, however, how, in order to be understood, these books should be read in the context of Przybyszewski's whole production, including his literary criticism.[15] The Polish author's sources of inspiration were Huysmans, Michelet, and Strindberg.

Przybyszewski believed that Huysmans' Satanists were very much real, but he was more interested in celebrating Satan as a revolutionary. Based on Michelet, he contrasted the Christian God, who wants to keep humans in a state of ignorance and slavery, to Satan, who brings curiosity, rebellion, creativity, and sexual liberation. In *Satans Kinder*, Satan was depicted as an anarchist. This was not new, as leading anarchist thinkers, including Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876) and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), had hailed Satan as the first anarchist.[16]

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13 See Jadwiga Kosicka and Daniel Gerould [1928–2012], *A Life of Solitude: Stanisława Przybyszewska. A Biographical Study with Selected Letters*, Evanston (Illinois): Northwestern University Press, 1989.

14 Przybyszewski's works have been collected in Stanisław Przybyszewski, *Werke, Aufzeichnungen und ausgewählte Briefe*, ed. by Michael M. Schardt, 9 vols., Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1990–2003.

15 P. Faxneld, "Witches, Anarchism, and Evolution: Stanislaw Przybyszewski's Fin-de-Siècle Satanism and the Demonic Feminine", cit. See also P. Faxneld, *Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as the Liberator of Woman in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, cit., pp. 426–436.

16 See P. Faxneld, *Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as the Liberator of Woman in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, cit., pp. 140–143.

What was new in Przybyszewski, compared with both Michelet and the anarchists, were his faith in evolution and elitist worldview. While Michelet and Bakunin celebrated Satan as the god of the poor and the proletarians, Przybyszewski believed in a social Darwinist theory of survival of the fittest, and regarded Satan as the god of an aristocratic, liberated elite whose avant-garde were the artists.[17] Przybyszewski was one of the first characters in modern history to openly embrace for himself the label of Satanist. He also claimed to be an atheist, but the two labels for him were not incompatible, and he also believed in the reality of Spiritualist and other paranormal phenomena.[18]

A liberated sexuality was also an important part of both Przybyszewski's private life and writings. Inspired, again, by Michelet, he saw women as naturally in league with the Devil. Although he stated that some witches did commit real crimes, and adopted views popular at his time on female hysteria, the Polish author also viewed the women's connection with Satan as something both necessary and positive.[19] He also believed that Belgian artist Félicien Rops (1833–1898) had offered an adequate and even prophetic depiction of the satanic woman in his paintings.[20]

Did Przybyszewski even gather a group of followers around his quite well developed system of Satanism? The most likely answer is no. No Satanist rituals were ever performed by Przybyszewski and his friends. On the other hand, he had several artist friends and young disciples, and some of them formed a group called Satans Kinder after the title of his novel. One artist, Polish painter Wojciech Weiss (1875–1950), portrayed Przybyszewski in 1899 as Satan presiding over a witches' Sabbath,[21] and spoke in a letter of the need to "propagate Satanism among the crowd".[22] In Germany, horror writer Hanns Heinz Ewers (1871–1943) held public lectures based on Przybyszewski's ideas, and the Polish author was read in the Fraternitas Saturni,[23] which I will discuss later in this chapter.

To these references gathered by Faxneld, I would add Przybyszewski's influence on Czech symbolist artists interested in esotericism. The Polish

17 See P. Faxneld, "Witches, Anarchism, and Evolution: Stanislaw Przybyszewski's Fin-de-Siècle Satanism and the Demonic Feminine", cit., pp. 58–61.

18 See *ibid.*, p. 61.

19 See *ibid.*, pp. 65–73, for a detailed analysis of Przybyszewski's ideas on womanhood.

20 On Rops and the Satanic woman, see P. Faxneld, *Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as the Liberator of Woman in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, cit., pp. 393–407.

21 See *ibid.*, p. 428.

22 P. Faxneld, "Witches, Anarchism, and Evolution: Stanislaw Przybyszewski's Fin-de-Siècle Satanism and the Demonic Feminine", cit., p. 63.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

author's 1893 *Totenmesse* was translated in 1919 as *Černá mše* (The Black Mass) in a richly illustrated edition, which circulated in the circles of Polish symbolists.[24] Prominent among these was Josef Váchal (1884–1969).[25] He was also a printer and bookbinder and, in 1926, self-published only 17 copies of a richly illustrated edition of Carducci's *Hymn to Satan.*[26] Carducci's poem was a hymn to rationalism, but Váchal was a Theosophist, and interpreted Carducci's Satan through the lenses of Blavatsky's comments on Lucifer. He also portrayed scenes he might have derived from Przybyszewski's *Die Synagoge des Satan* in his series of print devoted to the Black Mass.

All this would make Váchal a typical Romantic Satanist, but there was more. The Czech artist participated in the gatherings in Prague in the studio of Theosophist and sculptor Ladislav Jan Šaloun (1870–1946), well known for his monument to the religious reformer Jan Hus (1369–1415) in Prague's Old Town Square. Because of his participation in these meetings, where occult experiments took place, Váchal started experiencing "nocturnal sightings and hearings of beings with misty bodies" and feelings of horrible fear. As he later reported, only "when I began to occupy myself with Spiritualism and even with the devil, my fear ceased".[27]

Not unlike Przybyszewski, Váchal deliberately cultivated the image of a satanic anti-hero and an isolated eccentric, although he had a small circle of friends and disciples. Some of his statements about the Devil had a playful side and should not be taken at face value. On the other hand, he claimed he had real hallucinatory experiences, which justify the demons painted between 1920 and 1924 in the extraordinary murals in the home of collector Josef Portman (1893–1968), in the Czech city of Litomyšl. The home, the Portmoneum, is reminiscent of Crowley's Abbey of Thelema in Cefalù, Sicily, although, unlike

24 S. Przybyszewski, *Černá mše* (*Totenmesse*), translated and illustrated by Otakar Hanačík, Prague: Otakar Hanačík, 1919. On Przybyszewski's influence on Czech symbolism, see Luboš Merhaut, "Paths of Symbolism in Czech Literature Around 1900", in Otto M. Urban (ed.), *Mysterious Distances: Symbolism and Art in the Bohemian Lands*, Prague: Arbor Vitae and National Gallery of Prague, and Olomouc: Olomouc Museum of Art, 2014, pp. 369–377.

25 On Váchal in general, see Xavier Galmiche (ed.), *Facétie et illumination. L'œuvre de Josef Váchal, un graveur écrivain de Bohème* (*1884–1969*), Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, and Prague: Paseka, 1999. On Váchal and the esoteric subculture, see Marie Rakušanová, *Josef Váchal. Magie hledání*, Prague and Litomyšl: Paseka, 2014.

26 Giosuè Carducci, *Satanu. Basen*, Prague: Josef Váchal, 1926.

27 O.M. Urban, "Gossamer Nerves: Symbolism and the Pre-War Avant-Garde", in O.M. Urban (ed.), *Mysterious Distances: Symbolism and Art in the Bohemian Lands*, cit., pp. 249–257 (p. 255).

the latter, it also includes Christian references. Luckily, unlike the Sicilian residence of the British magus, the Portmoneum has been saved from the disrepair into which it felt in Communist times and reopened as a museum in 1993.[28]

Neither Przybyszewski nor Váchal created organizations. They were also different, as the primary reference to Satanism in Przybyszewski became one among several different esoteric interests in Váchal. They had friends and followers that can better be described as "circles". Although neither of them established Satanist organizations, they imagined, and showed to their circles, that organized Satanism had at least the potentiality to exist.

Satan the Suicidal: The Ordo Albi Orientis and the Polish Satanism Scare

Przybyszewski's and other books on Satanism also created, not unexpectedly, a Polish anti-Satanism, which suspected satanic activities behind the flourishing Polish occult subculture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These suspects concentrated on Czesław Czyński (1858–1932),[29] who founded the main Polish branch of the Martinist Order in 1918. Czyński was born on July 16, 1858 in Turzenko, Southern Poland, in a wealthy family. He started, but did not complete, academic studies of medicine in Paris, where he became interested in the local occult subculture. He worked as a high school teacher in Poland, but around 1875 started touring Europe as a traveling magnetist and hypnotist under the name of "Doctor Punar Bhava".

He managed to persuade a wealthy German countess to marry him. He was accused of having won her by hypnotism, and also of bigamy, as he was already married in Poland. Reportedly, as other sources say he was acquitted, he was sentenced to three years in jail in Berlin in 1894. He then went to Paris, where he became a friend of Papus and was initiated into his Martinist Order. Eventually, Papus appointed Czyński as delegate of both the Martinist Order and the Universal Gnostic Church for the whole Russian Empire. Czyński returned to Poland and resumed his career as a traveling hypnotist and lecturer, which was reasonably successful, although it also landed him shortly in a psychiatric hospital.

28 On the Portmoneum, see Jirí Kaše *et al.*, *Portmoneum: Josef Váchal Museum in Litomyšl*, Prague, Litomyšl: Paseka, 2003.

29 On Czyński's biography, see Rafał T. Prinke, "Polish Satanism & Sexmagic", *The Lamp of Toth*, vol. 1, no. 5, 1981, pp. 12–18.

Czyński also operated a parallel Society for Esoteric Studies and was initiated in the German branch of the O.T.O., where he cultivated his interests in sexual magic. In 1920, he initiated in the Martinist Order Bolesław Wójcicki, who had been connected with a group called the Mysteries of Venus. They "were active in Poland until the early 1920's and their members practiced sexual intercourse with spirit beings and ectoplasmic materializations. They used a seal showing a naked woman with an incubus sitting on her".[30] These interests in sexual magic were one of the reasons for Czyński's eventual exclusion from the Martinist Order, and in 1926 he founded his own organization, the Ordo Albi Orientis. This organization became notorious in Poland after six persons connected with it or with parallel esoteric groups, including Wójcicki, committed suicide. The first suicide happened in 1924, but was connected with the others only later.[31]

The police investigation started in 1929, following thefts of holy wafers in Catholic churches by a tramp just released from Warsaw's St. John of God psychiatric hospital. The media had connected these thefts with Satanism. It turned out that the tramp had nothing to do with occult organizations, but they were investigated and their relationship with the suicides was discovered. On August 30, 1930, Czyński's apartment in Warsaw was raided, and a large-scale police operation against supposed Satanists began, which involved all branches of the Martinist Order and other esoteric societies, including fringe Masonic groups. Self-styled ex-members of the Satanist cult offered their stories of Black Masses to the press, complete of images of Baphomet, nude women serving as altars, and apparitions of the Devil, all most likely taken from Przybyszewski's and other accounts of Huysmans' Paris Satanists. The most famous of such accounts accused Wójcicki of organizing Black Masses in Warsaw.

"Wójcicki told me, the anonymous eyewitness reported, to prepare for taking part in the black mass for a week, encouraging me to take narcotics and have weakening baths. The aim of these practices was to evoke the state of ecstasy in me and to weaken my will. When on the appointed day Wójcicki showed me into a secret apartment at Pulawska Street, I met there four men in robes and masks". A detailed description followed: "The floor was covered with a carpet. Inverted triangles hung on the walls, and on one of the walls was an image of

30 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

31 On these incidents, see Zbigniew Łagosz, "Mit polskiego satanizmu. Czesław Czyński – proces, którego nie było", *Hermaion*, no. 1, 2012, pp. 186–206. On Czyński's esoteric philosophy, see Z. Łagosz, "Na obrzeżach religii I filozofii Czesław Czyński", *Nomos*, no. 53–54, 2006, pp. 85–95.

Baphomet, i.e. a he-goat sitting on the globe. In front of Baphomet there were two triangles with copper bowls full of narcotic incense". Suddenly, Wójcicki appeared "dressed in a black chasuble with an image of a he-goat embroidered in red. He had a red cap on his head. Three women followed him, completely naked except for the faces covered with masks. They lay down on the carpets in front of the image of Baphomet, forming a triangle. Wójcicki stepped inside it, ignited the incense, and started to tell blasphemous prayers, desecrating the Catholic religion". After this first part of the ceremony, he "walked to each person present, giving narcotic pills. Then he returned to the triangle of women and, bowing before the image of Baphomet, recited a hymn to the glory of Satan, asking him to appear among his devotees".

Some results were apparently obtained. "The rest of those gathered repeated his conjuration in whisper. Suddenly a hazy figure of a man with burning eyes and mouth drawn awry in a grimace appeared on the wall. A loud, groan of awesome joy and affection was heard among those present. Wójcicki celebrating the devilish ritual shouted in an inhuman voice: 'In his name I bless you! Offer your sacrifices!'. The silence of intense concentration was now broken by hysterical shouting and squealing of women. The narcotics started to show their effects. The three naked women, forming the triangle in front of Baphomet, rushed to Wójcicki and a general orgy began".[32]

The press managed to create a large-scale, if short-lived, Satanism scare. Polish scholar Zbigniew Łagosz reports that no less than 322 different Polish newspapers and magazines published reports on "Satan's worshippers".[33] Members, both laypersons and priests, of both the Mariavites and the Polish National Catholic Church, a splinter Catholic group, were also accused of Satanism, including Karol Chobot (1886–1937) and Andrzej Huszno (1892–1939). Perhaps the single most vilified person in the Satanism scare, after Czyński himself, was Mikołaj Mikołajewicz Czaplin, a Russian officer who had succeeded Czyński in 1926 as leader of the Polish Martinist Order. A newspaper called him a "black magician with a gorilla face", and mentioned that he had been involved with notoriously fraudulent Spiritualist mediums.[34]

The police investigation did not find any evidence of illegal activities. Masks, swords, cloaks, and texts on sexual magic were not regarded as sufficient to commit any member of the Polish occult milieu to trial. "The satanic scandal

32 Z. Łagosz, "Mit polskiego satanizmu. Czesław Czyński – proces, którego nie było", cit., pp. 187–188.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 189.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 192.

vanished from the press just as quickly as it had appeared",[35] and by the end of 1930 the Polish Satanism scare was substantially over, although several books and novels were later devoted to Czyński, who died in 1932, the Martinists, and their presumed satanic rituals. We can conclude that there were no Satanists in Poland in Czyński's circle, although his organizations did practice sexual magic.

The most puzzling feature of the case were, however, the suicides. Although the media reported that in all six cases messages with a letter S, for Satan, and the words "Under Satan's command" were found, Łagosz' investigation traced a photograph of one of the messages as reproduced in a daily newspaper. It included the Hebrew letter shin, which has a plurality of Kabbalistic meanings, and the words "A return to the Absolute", but no references to Satanism. Łagosz believes that the suicides were of ritual character, and connected with a magical operation, whose nature has not been fully clarified. Satanism, however, was not necessarily involved, and most probably not involved at all.[36]

Satan the Great Beast: Aleister Crowley and Satanism

At the end of the 19th century, the European capitals of occultism were Paris and Lyon, with such prominent characters as Papus, Guaïta, Péladan, Boullan, and Jules Bois. In the last decades of the 19th century, London was little by little acquiring a central role, even if France remained important. We should first direct our attention precisely on one of those responsible for Taxil's ruin, Waite. This encyclopedic Freemason and collector of multiple initiations was, at the same time, always looking for Christian forms of esotericism.[37] He ripped Taxil to pieces in such a convincing manner that he gained the appreciation of English Catholics. His demolition of Taxil had the effect of making for decades anybody who spoke of satanic rituals and Black Masses not very respectable, both in England and elsewhere.

This was the most evident result of Waite's campaigns: but it was not the only one. In the same milieu frequented by Waite, several secret societies were created. The most important and secretive was The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, founded in 1888 by two Freemasons who worked as medical doctors, William Robert Woodman (1828–1891) and William Wynn Westcott (1848–1925), and by an author of celebrated manuals on occultism, Samuel

35 *Ibid.*, p. 196.

36 See *ibid.*, pp. 198–204.

37 See R.A. Gilbert, *A.E. Waite. Magician of Many Parts*, cit.

Liddell MacGregor Mathers (1854–1918). Waite was a member of the Order with the *nomen* of Sacramentum Regis.[38] The Taxil saga caused in this milieu three types of reactions.

In the first instance, beyond the vulgarizations of Taxil and Bataille, many returned to reading Éliphas Lévi, who had been popular for years among English occultists. They found in some texts of Lévi the distinction between Lucifer and Satan. Lucifer was regarded as a benign entity that may be safely summoned in the magical work. Those who wondered what exactly French anti-Satanists found that was so sinister in Pike, ended up by discovering that some texts of the American Masonic leader were simple paraphrases of Lévi.

In the second instance, all the noise made around versions, adaptations, and parodies of the Catholic Mass pushed different occultists, who rejected the idea of the Black Mass with disgust, to study the possibility of "magical" liturgies that in some way resembled Catholic or Anglican rites. Waite himself conducted some experiment in this sense within his Fellowship of the Rosy Cross, founded in 1915.[39]

There was also a third after-effect of the *Diable* saga. The malicious allusions by Taxil and Hacks concerning sexual rituals did not find the British occultists unprepared. They had heard from many years that there were techniques based on the magical use of sex, and that some involved the ritual ingestion of male semen. They knew that these techniques had not been invented by Taxil but had a very ancient magical tradition.[40]

For some, the interest aroused by Waite's chronicles of the Taxil case took the form of inverted mimesis, of nature imitating art. Small groups began to summon Lucifer, and their Luciferian Masses and sexual rituals used Taxil and Bataille as a source. While knowing that it was a spurious literature, they insisted a lot of it was true. We know of their existence because Waite spoke with contempt about this unexpected post-Taxilian developments in his autobiography, published in 1938.[41] Taxil, Waite wrote, performed a real miracle: he gave birth to a Satanism like the one described in his books, which never existed before, but was later organized by his enthusiastic readers. Waite realized that

38 There is a rich literature on the Golden Dawn. A good overview is R.A. Gilbert, *The Golden Dawn Scrapbook: The Rise and Fall of a Magical Order*, York Beach (Maine): Samuel Weiser, 1997. See also Ellic Howe, *The Magicians of the Golden Dawn: A Documentary History of a Magical Order, 1887–1923*, 2nd edition, Wellingborough (Northamptonshire): The Aquarian Press, 1985.

39 On Waite's liturgical experiments see R.A. Gilbert, *A.E. Waite. Magician of Many Parts*, cit.

40 For the texts through which ancient "spermatophagy" reached contemporary magical movements, see M. Introvigne, *Il ritorno dello gnosticismo*, cit., pp. 149–160.

41 A.E. Waite, *Shadows of Life and Thought*, London: Selwyn and Blount, 1938, p. 144.

this concerned very few people, in England and perhaps in France, and they were located in very peripheral positions with respect to the main occult milieu. But he was in general a balanced and moderate author, and there is no reason to doubt that such small groups existed for a while.

The three post-Taxil centers of interest that we considered, Lucifer, "alternative" Masses, and sexual magic, were all present inside the Golden Dawn. In an order where medical doctors were very much involved, another physician, Edmund William Berridge (1843–1923), collected documents on sexual magic that came from the United States and Germany. These explorations on the margins of respectable occultism in the end destroyed the unity of the Golden Dawn. One of the founders, Mathers, moved to Paris, where he became a close associate of Jules Bois. Mathers allowed in the Golden Dawn a young man from England with a keen interest in the evocation of spirits and sexual magic. His name was Edward Alexander Crowley. He had inherited a significant amount of money from his Protestant fundamentalist father, a member of the Exclusive branch of the Plymouth Brethren, and had "celtized" his name into Aleister while he was studying in the University of Cambridge.[42]

The inevitable clash between Crowley's flamboyant personality and the other leaders of the Golden Dawn, including the poet William Butler Yeats (1865–1939), even led to a brawl in a London apartment, with the intervention of the police. Finally, Crowley left the Golden Dawn, founded a rival organization, the Argenteum Astrum or Astrum Argentinum, and caused the end of the golden age of the order, although ramifications of the old Golden Dawn still exist today. Crowley also published the rituals of the Golden Dawn, which had been kept secret up until then, in his magazine *The Equinox* in 1909.

In 1917, when he was in the United States, Crowley told the story of the Golden Dawn in his own way. He wrote a novel, *Moonchild*, where, under easily recognizable pseudonyms, he depicted in an unflattering manner the leading figures of the occult order. He accused them of the worst sexual depravity and black magic, attacking in particular both Berridge and Waite.[43] *Moonchild* was certainly a testimony to the literary *verve* of Crowley, but all the forms of black

42 On Crowley's biography, see John Symonds, *The Beast 666: The Life of Aleister Crowley*, 2nd ed., London: Pindar Press, 1997; J. Symonds, *The King of the Shadow Realm. Aleister Crowley: His Life and Magic*, London: Duckworth, 1989; Richard Kaczynski, *Perdurabo: The Life of Aleister Crowley*, Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2010.

43 Aleister Crowley, *Moonchild: A Prologue*, London: The Mandrake Press, 1929. A note that Crowley published in this edition confirmed that this text, published in 1929, had in fact been written in 1917 and circulated privately among his friends.

magic he attributed to his enemies were well known to the author as he himself was practicing them.

Around 1910, Crowley met the German occultist Theodor Reuss (1855–1923). Reuss had created, together with industrialist Carl Kellner (1851–1905), Theosophist and occult writer Franz Hartmann (1838–1912), and composer and musical entrepreneur Henry Klein (1842–1913), a web of Masonic organizations of dubious regularity, some of them chartered by John Yarker and by Papus. Despite Reuss' later claims, it is doubtful that he operated an active Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.) before 1912, when he appointed Crowley as National Grand Master General of the organization for Britain, and granted Czyński the same role for Poland, although he had used occasionally "Order of Oriental Templars" on his letterhead as early as 1907.[44] Reuss was involved in politics, as a socialist and at the same time as a spy for the German police. He was also interested in the theme of Lucifer and in the Gnostic Masses of which Jules Doinel had been the originator in France. Reuss' main interest was, however, sexual magic.[45] Scholars of the O.T.O. still discuss today whether Crowley was legitimately elected or consecrated as the successor of Reuss at the head of the order. It is at any rate certain that, at the death of Reuss in 1923, the English occultist was controlling the larger part of the organization. Today, among the various rival orders that use the name O.T.O., some identify themselves as "pre-Crowleyan" but the most important, for both international diffusion and number of members, refer to the ideas of Crowley.[46]

A reconstruction of the history of the O.T.O and the doctrine of Crowley lies outside the objective of our research. This statement may not appear to be obvious to the readers of some works on Satanism, which reserve for Crowley

44 See R. Kaczynski, *Forgotten Templars: The Untold Origins of Ordo Templi Orientis*, n.p.: The Author, 2012, pp. 261–270. On the whole, highly contentious matter of the existence of an O.T.O. before Crowley, see M. Pasi, "Ordo Templi Orientis", in W.J. Hanegraaff, with Antoine Faivre, Roelof van den Broek and J.-P. Brach, *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 2 vol., Leiden: Brill, 2006, vol. II, pp. 898–906.

45 On Reuss see Helmut Möller and E. Howe, *Merlin Peregrinus. Vom Untergrund des Abendlandes*, Würzburg: Königshausen + Neumann, 1986; Peter-R. König (ed.), *Der kleine Theodor-Reuss-Reader*, Munich: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Religions- und Weltanschauungsfragen, 1993; P.-R- König (ed.), *Der grosse Theodor-Reuss-Reader*, Munich: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Religions- und Weltanschauungsfragen, 1997.

46 For a map of the different organizations using the name O.T.O., see PierLuigi Zoccatelli, "Notes on the Ordo Templi Orientis in Italy", *Theosophical History*, vol. VII, no. 8, October 1999, pp. 279–294. On developments and schisms in the U.S., see also James Wasserman, *In the Center of the Fire: A Memoir of the Occult. 1966–1989*, Lake Worth (Florida): Ibis Press, 2012.

and the O.T.O. a central role. It is, thus, necessary to discuss in some detail the relation between Crowley and Satanism: a relation that, in my opinion, is important but indirect. If we accept the definition of Satanism proposed at the beginning of this study, Crowley was not a Satanist. On the other hand, there is no author who influenced as deeply as Crowley the Satanism that manifested itself in the second half of the 20th century.[47]

Definitions are just operative tools. Philosophers and theologians may rightfully insist that their broader definitions of Satanism are more adequate for their own purposes. The historian and the sociologist, who must circumscribe the *species* of "Satanism" within a larger *genus* of magical movements, need definitions that are more limited. From this perspective, I proposed to consider as Satanist only those movements that promote the worship or the adoration of the character known as Satan or Devil in the Bible, and create a cult through different forms of rituals and practices. This definition implies that references to Satan or to Lucifer in the rituals and the symbols of a movement are not sufficient to identify it as "Satanist". Satan and Lucifer are evoked by a vast literature, starting from Carducci and Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867),[48] as symbols of transgression, refusal of morality, reason, irreligion, feminism, and socialism. This literature belongs to Romantic Satanism, rather than to Satanism *stricto sensu*.

A similar purely symbolic use of the names of Satan and Lucifer is found in many occult orders, and it is not sufficient to conclude that they practice Satanism. We must examine whether these orders or organizations do practice a cult where they worship the Fallen Angel of the Bible. If a group of Freemasons in the 19th century gathered to be merry, sing Carducci's *Hymn to Satan*, and banquet with meat on Good Friday in order to challenge the prohibition by the Catholic Church, we can perhaps question the elegance of their anticlericalism, but we cannot conclude that they really congregated to worship the Prince of Evil. In fact, this was not their intention. In the *Hymn* written by Carducci, so much typical of a certain continental Freemasonry of the 19th century, Satan was simply a name. It was provocatively exalted because

47 See A. Dyrendal, "Satan and the Beast: The Influence of Aleister Crowley on Modern Satanism", in H. Bogdan and Martin P. Starr (eds.), *Aleister Crowley and Western Esotericism: An Anthology of Critical Studies*, Albany (New York): State University of New York Press, 2012, pp. 369–394.

48 See, for more examples, Claudius Grillet [1878–1938], *Le Diable dans la littérature au XIXe siècle*, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1935; P.A. Schock, *Romantic Satanism: Myth and the Historical Moment in Blake, Shelley, and Byron*, cit.; P. Faxneld, *Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as the Liberator of Woman in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, cit.

it annoyed Catholics, and epitomized rationalism, skepticism, and anticlericalism. Carducci's *Hymn* would be occasionally interpreted differently in the 20th century, but 19th-century Freemasons read it as a hymn to rationalism and free thought.

In the *Hymn to Lucifer* by Crowley, that some insist to regard as evidence of his Satanism, we read that "with noble passion, sun-souled Lucifer swept through the dawn colossal, swift aslant on Eden's imbecile perimeter". Lucifer "blessed nonentity with every curse and spiced with sorrow the dull soul of sense, breathed life into the sterile universe, with Love and Knowledge drove out innocence". Crowley concluded that "the Key of Joy is disobedience".[49] It is appropriate to confront this text with another one that Crowley considered as fundamental to understand his worldview, a passage from *Liber OZ* where the British magus states that "there is no God but man" and "man" has a right to absolute freedom, including "to live by his own law", "to think what he will", "to love as he will" and "to kill those who would thwart these rights".[50]

Two shorter texts are also relevant. The first is taken from the anti-Christian poem of Crowley *The World's Tragedy*: "You are not a Crowleian [sic] till you can say fervently 'Yes, thank God, I am an atheist'".[51] The second is from Crowley's main theoretical work, *Magick*: "The Devil does not exist. It is a false name invented by the Black Brothers to imply a Unity in their ignorant muddle of dispersions".[52] Crowley, thus, is substantially an atheist: "There is no other god but Man". The human being, however, is inserted in the cosmos and can call "god" both the center of the cosmos, the Sun, and the "viceregent of the Sun" in the "Microcosm, which is Man", i.e. "the Phallus". These secret teachings were revealed in the short text *De natura deorum*, prepared by Crowley for the seventh degree of the O.T.O.[53]

The magician, according to Crowley, is a special kind of human being, who is perfectly inserted in the cosmos and is in contact with the Phallus through sexual magic. He or she can also encounter a series of "spirits". They

49 A. Crowley, *Hymn to Lucifer*, republished in *The Equinox*, vol. III, no. 10, March 1986, p. 252. Crowley also wrote a *Hymne à Satan* in French (see *Thelema*, no. 2, Spring 1983, p. 10), which was a clear derivation from Baudelaire's poem.

50 *The Equinox*, vol. III, no. 10, cit., p. 144.

51 A. Crowley, *The World's Tragedy*, new ed., Phoenix (Arizona): Falcon Press, 1985, p. XXV (1st ed., Paris: privately printed, 1910).

52 A. Crowley, *Magick*, critical edition ed. by J. Symonds and K. Grant, York Beach (Maine): Weiser, 1974, p. 296.

53 *The Secret Rituals of the O.T.O.*, ed. by Francis X.[avier] King [1934–1994], New York: Weiser, 1973, p. 172; and Anthony R. Naylor (ed.), *O.T.O. Rituals and Sex Magick*, Thame: I-H-O Books, 1999, pp. 269–274.

are, however, in reality forms of the magician's "Higher self", defined by Crowley, who had some knowledge of psychoanalysis, as being "like the Freudian subconscious".[54] After Freud, Crowley also read Jung and came to believe that "spirits", as forms of collective rather than individual unconscious, can be experimented in the same way by multiple people. This was the nature of the spirit Aiwass, the angel of the revelation in 1904 in Cairo, who transmitted to Crowley the holy scripture of his new religion, the *Book of the Law*. Aiwass announced the arrival of a new era, the Aeon of Horus, and attacked Christianity and other religions. Another "spirit", quite dangerous, who appeared to Crowley was Choronzon, the "Demon of Dispersion", who manifested himself in the "wandering thoughts" and in "the lack of concentration" of humans.[55]

There were five different ways in which Crowley spoke of "Satan", "Devil" or "Lucifer":

(a) The character called Satan in the Bible "does not exist" and is simply a name invented by religions for their less than respectable ends.
(b) "Devil" and "Satan" were also code names used by Crowley in order to indicate two realities: the Sun in the macrocosm and the phallus in the microcosm. Who is afraid of the Devil, suggested Crowley in a very Freudian manner, is in reality afraid of the phallus.[56]
(c) From the astrological perspective, the Devil was identified with the sign of Capricorn. However, the Capricorn for Crowley is "sexually male", thus representing again the phallus.[57]
(d) Since the magical atheism of Crowley was particularly directed against Christianity,[58] Satan and Lucifer, among which Crowley was rather undecided whether to really make a distinction,[59] also represented the rationality of the human beings. Humans "are gods" precisely when they deny God, taste of the forbidden fruit of good and evil, and go beyond "Eden's imbecile perimeter".

54 A. Crowley, *The Law is for All: An Extended Commentary on "The Book of the Law"*, 2nd ed., Phoenix (Arizona): Falcon Press, 1986, p. 80.
55 A. Crowley, *Magick*, cit., p. 56.
56 *Ibid.*, p. 172.
57 *Ibid.*, p. 170.
58 See M. Pasi, "L'anticristianesimo in Aleister Crowley (1875–1947)", in P.L. Zoccatelli (ed.), *Aleister Crowley. Un mago a Cefalù*, Rome: Mediterranee, 1998, pp. 41–67. Crowley's hatred of Christianity had among its root causes the strict fundamentalist education he received from his parents.
59 A. Crowley, *Magick*, cit., p. 296.

(e) Finally, the magician can invoke with the names of "Set, Satan, Shaitan" certain "spirits" who come from the collective unconscious. Aiwass and spirits of the same level could be called "Satan" in order to indicate their "solar-phallic-hermetic" nature and their relation to the rational side of human nature. Crowley also used the name "Satan" to designate "spirits" that revealed the dark and dangerous side of humanity, such as Choronzon.[60]

Crowley could define himself a "servant of Satan",[61] specifying however immediately that this did not mean that he believed in the existence of the Devil. It simply meant that he considered as his mission, in the new aeon, to spread the message of Aiwass. For several reasons, some of them astrological and some connected to the Tarot cards,[62] Crowley regarded as appropriate and even useful to call Aiwass "Satan". Aiwass, however, was for him an aspect of the collective unconscious of humanity, and was definitely not the Satan of the Bible.

There is another text of Crowley that misled generations of anti-Satanists and deserves a comment. Speaking of the "blood sacrifice", Crowley observed that "a male child of perfect innocence and high intelligence is the most satisfactory and suitable victim".[63] Ostensibly, the *Book of the Law* incited to sacrifice children. Those who see here a real encouragement towards human sacrifice, however, miss Crowley's footnote, where he claimed to have "made this particular sacrifice on an average about 150 times every year between 1912 e.v. and 1928 e.v.".[64] Reading this text in the context of the instructions of the eighth and ninth degree of the O.T.O., the conclusion is obvious. The "sacrifice of a male child" is really masturbation, followed by drinking the semen in a mixture called Amrita, on which Crowley wrote an entire book extolling its nutritional and even cosmetic properties.[65] Clearly, a hundred and fifty masturbations every year along the arc of sixteen years are more easily understandable than a hundred and fifty bloody sacrifices of children, which would have eluded the radars of the police in the different countries where Crowley resided. Since the authorities always kept a watch on him, this is utterly impossible. Even the

60 *Ibid.*, pp. 170–173 and 296–297.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 375.

62 *Ibid.*

63 *Ibid.*, p. 219.

64 *Ibid.*, pp. 219–220.

65 A. Crowley, *Amrita: Essays in Magical Rejuvenation*, ed. by M.P. Starr, Kings Beach (California): Thelema Publications, 1990.

former adepts of Crowley who became his enemies and accused the English magician of every kind of vileness never mentioned human sacrifices.

The following part of the footnote concerning the sacrifices performed "150 times every year" is even more interesting. "Contrast, Crowley writes, J.K. Huysmans' *Là-bas,* where a perverted form of Magic of an analogous order is described".[66] Here, we see how Crowley situated himself in relation to the Satanists discussed by Huysmans. Irrespectively from whether they really existed outside of Huysmans' imagination, their magic had certain similitudes with Crowley's. It included the use of the name of Satan and a magical version of the Catholic Mass. Crowley created himself a new "Gnostic Mass" based on sexual magic,[67] and he shared with Huysmans' Satanists the use of sexuality for magical objectives. The differences lied in the respective frames of reference. Unlike Crowley, Huysmans' real or imaginary Satanists considered Satan as a person and adored him as such, adopting the Christian narrative of the role of the Devil and reversing it.

Crowley spent important periods of his life in Paris. If not Huysmans, he could easily have met Jules Bois, who was initiated into the Golden Dawn in the same Mathers faction as Crowley. Some satanic rituals, real or fictional, certainly passed through Crowley's hands, and his criticism of them in his autobiography is revealing. "For all their pretended devotion to Lucifer or Belial, they [the French Satanists] were sincere Christians in spirit, and inferior Christians at that, for their methods were puerile".[68] "Christians", precisely, because they believed in the reality of Satan as a person and not simply as a figment of the human collective unconscious. As a consequence, they ended up believing in the Christian vision of the world and in the Bible, in the very moment in which they criticized and blasphemed it. Towards the end of the 1960s, modern Satanism would become very much aware of this criticism, and would attempt to build a Satanism that would not be "Christian" in the sense deprecated by Crowley.

That Crowley is sometimes mistaken for a Satanist is easy to understand. His taste for *épater le bourgeois* was unparalleled, and he loved being called the "servant of Satan" and the "Great Beast". But he was an atheistic magician, who waved the flag of Satan to teach how we should free ourselves from religious

66 A. Crowley, *Magick*, cit., p. 220.

67 See M. Introvigne, *Il ritorno dello gnosticismo*, cit., pp. 160–166. One edition of the Crowleyan ritual of the "Gnostic Mass" is A. Crowley, *Liber XV. Ecclesiae Gnosticae Catholicae Canon Missae*, San Francisco: Stellar Visions, 1986.

68 *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley: An Autohagiography*, ed. by J. Symonds and K. Grant, London, Boston, Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979, p. 126.

"superstitions" and come into contact with our own "phallic-solar" subconscious. He rejected the essential of Huysmans' Satanism: the belief in the Biblical narrative about Satan and the attempt to reverse its meaning.

My conclusion that Crowley, according to my definition,[69] was not a Satanist does not deny his enormous influence on later Satanism. Without Crowley, a good part of the Satanism of the 20th and 21st centuries would not exist, at least in the form in which we know it. From the mud into which the discourse on Satanism and "black" occultism had been precipitated by Taxil, Crowley was able to extract a serious narrative about Lucifer, Satan, magical Masses, and sexual magic, offering a convincing synthesis that would fascinate generations of occultists. Through his criticism of the Satanists described in *Là-bas*, Crowley warned *not* to consider Satan as a person who may be adored and worshipped as such. It would be, however, sufficient to ignore these warnings and insert the ritual of Crowley inside a different frame of reference in order to create new forms of Satanism.

Satan the Counter-Initiate: René Guénon vs. Satanism

Among those who regarded the sexual magic taught by Reuss and Crowley as a form of Satanism was the leading French esotericist of their time, René Guénon.[70] The French author, however, knew the history of ancient occultism too well not to realize that some distinctions must be made. In Guénon's cyclical vision of history, contemporary humanity is in the dark era, the Kali-Yuga, but this does not mean that human freedom does not have a role to play. Notwithstanding the heaviness of the times, human beings can still obtain salvation, along the exoteric path of "orthodox" religions, and "liberation", along the esoteric path of "regular" initiatory organizations. At the same time, in all eras, but even more in the Kali-Yuga, humans can also collaborate with the dark forces and consciously contribute to evil. This is the typically

69 By adopting a different definition of Satanism, one can legitimately come to a different conclusion. For a discussion, see M. Pasi, *Aleister Crowley and the Temptation of Politics*, Durham (UK), Bristol (Connecticut): Acumen, 2014; and A. Dyrendal, "The Influence of Aleister Crowley on Modern Satanism", cit.

70 On Guénon in general, see Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004; Xavier Accart, *Guénon ou le renversement des clartés. Influence d'un métaphysicien sur la vie littéraire et intellectuelle française (1920–1970)*, Paris: Edidit and Milan: Archè, 2005; and J.-P. Laurant, *René Guénon. Les enjeux d'une lecture*, Paris: Dervy, 2006.

guénonian notion of "counter-initiation", where history becomes the theater of an all-out fight between "initiates" and "counter-initiates".[71]

Guénon believed he had managed to identify some of the most dangerous counter-initiates. He mentioned Reuss, Crowley, his rival in the Gnostic church Jean (Joanny) Bricaud (1881–1934), the Martinist leader Teder (pseudonym of Charles Détré, 1855–1918), and the esoteric masters Georges Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1866–1949) and René Adolphe Schwaller de Lubicz (1887–1961). In the last years of his life, as results from the correspondence he exchanged with Italian friends, he wondered whether the Neapolitan occultist Giuliano Kremmerz (pseudonym of Ciro Formisano, 1861–1930) should not be added to the list.[72] But was what Guénon called "counter-initiation" equivalent to the Satanism denounced by Catholic authors?

The answer to this question is both affirmative and negative. Affirmative, because the counter-initiation of Guénon "could not be reduced to purely human phenomena": "necessarily", he wrote, "a non-human element" had to be included. The counter-initiation proceeds "by degradation until the most extreme degree, which 'overturns' the sacred and constitutes true Satanism". It is a process of "degeneration", going on for centuries, in the course of which the counter-initiation "can use the residues" of traditions that were once respectable but are today "completely dead and entirely abandoned by the spirit". Guénon alludes to vanished continents such as Atlantis, a classic theme in all esoteric literature, of which only degenerate relics remain, utilized by the counter-initiates for their evil purposes.[73]

He expressed a similar opinion about ancient Egypt and of the attempts in certain occult groups to resurrect Egyptian rituals. "As a matter of fact, he wrote, the only thing that survives from ancient Egypt is a very dangerous magic and of very inferior order. This is a precise reference to the mysteries of

71 See René Guénon, *Le Règne de la Quantité et les signes des temps*, Paris: Gallimard, 1945; for a comment, see J.-P. Laurant, "Contre-initiation, complot et histoire chez René Guénon", *Politica Hermetica*, no. 6, 1992, pp. 93–101.

72 Guénon's doubts about Kremmerz are mentioned in a letter he wrote in November 19, 1950 to the Italian lawyer Goffredo Pistoni (1906–1982), one of his Italian correspondents. I am indebted to PierLuigi Zoccatelli for a copy of this letter. Paolo Virio (pseudonym of Paolo Marchetti, 1910–1969), an Italian Christian esotericist, had the intention of discussing Kremmerz with Guénon, but the letter he sent to him on December 22, 1950 was probably never read by Guénon, who died on January 7, 1951. See Paolo M. Virio, *Corrispondenza iniziatica*, Rome: Sophia, n.d., p. 88.

73 See letters from René Guénon to various correspondents, in J.-P. Laurant, "Contre-initiation, complot et histoire chez René Guénon", cit.

the famous god with the donkey head, who is no other than Set or Typhoon".[74] The use of Egyptian magic by the counter-initiation can be really dangerous. According to Guénon, in the tombs of the Egyptian pharaohs there remain influences "effectively scary and which seem to be able to maintain themselves in these locations for undefined periods of time".[75] The theme, of course, was and remains popular in many novels and horror movies, based on mummies and pharaohs' curses that strike and kill unfortunate archeologists. Guénon also presented himself as the victim of powerful magical aggressions by counter-initiates. He claimed he was able to resist only thanks to his own psychic gifts and the protection against occult attacks supplied by his friend Georges Tamos (Georges-Auguste Thomas, 1884–1966).[76]

That the degeneration process can lead "up to Satanism" seems compatible with Guénon's view of history in general, but still leaves somewhat fluid the limits of Satanism as a category. Guénon, who would later formally convert to Islam, cooperated for a while with Catholic magazines, although he never fully identified with them.[77] There, he denounced movements such as Spiritualism and Theosophy, which were at the same time heterodox for Catholics and part of the "counter-initiation" for Guénon. He was aware of the old discussion among Catholic theologians concerning Spiritualism. Should or should not Spiritualists be considered Satanists? Decades ago, Guénon observed, Catholics labelled as Satanists the followers of Spiritualism without too much caution or restraint. Now many refused to do so, and "the memory of all too famous mystifications, such as that of Léo Taxil, is not foreign to a similar negation; but the consequence is that from one excess we went to another" and some even deny that Satanism exists at all. "If one of the wiles of the Devil is

74 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

76 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

77 See M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme et Christianisme autour de René Guénon*, Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1981; Noëlle Maurice-Denis Boulet [1897–1969], "L'Ésotériste René Guénon. Souvenirs et jugements", *La Pensée Catholique*, no. 77, 1961, pp. 17–42; no. 78–79, 1962, pp. 139–162; no. 80, 1962, pp. 63–81; R. Guénon, *Écrits pour* Regnabit. *Recueil posthume établi, présenté et annoté par PierLuigi Zoccatelli*, Milan: Arché, and Turin: Nino Aragno, 1999; P.L. Zoccatelli, *Le Lièvre qui rumine. Autour de Réné Guénon, Louis Charbonneau-Lassay et la Fraternité du Paraclet*, Milan: Arché, 1999; Jean-Pierre Brach, "Christianisme et 'Tradition primordiale' dans les articles rédigés par René Guénon pour la revue catholique *Regnabit*, août-septembre 1925–mai 1927", in Philippe Faure (ed.), *René Guénon. L'appel de la sagesse primordiale*, Paris: Cerf, 2015, pp. 299–336.

to persuade humans that he does not exist, it has to be said that he manages it quite well".[78]

According to Guénon, Satanists do exist. He did not believe, however, that "conscious Satanists, the real worshippers of the Devil, have ever been particularly numerous". Nor were they numerous in his time: "in fact, we should not believe that all magicians indistinctly, nor even those we may more or less call 'black magicians', correspond in equal measure to this definition. It could very well be that they do not even believe in the existence of the Devil".[79] Guénon, who was aware of Crowley, may well have had him in mind. "The followers of Lucifer", according to Guénon, also exists, "even without taking into account the fancy tales of Léo Taxil and his co-conspirator Dr. Hacks". Perhaps they still exist, in America or elsewhere: but they do not worship Lucifer "as a Devil, because in their eyes he is really 'the bringer of light'". "Without doubt, Guénon concluded about Luciferians, they are de facto Satanists, but, as strange as it may seem to those who do not examine things in depth, they are unconscious Satanists, since they make a mistake concerning the nature of the entity to which they direct their cult".[80]

Thus, through the example of the Luciferians, Guénon introduced a new category: "unconscious Satanism", which he claimed "is not particularly rare". It is a Satanism that "can be exclusively mental and theoretical, without there being implications of coming into contact with entities of any description, of which, in the majority of cases, these people do not even take the existence into consideration". Guénon, for example, considered "satanic, to some measure, every theory that disfigures in a noticeable manner the idea of divinity. I would include here, above all, the notions of a God who evolves and those of a limited God". Thus, as they believed in a "God who evolves", Guénon classified in his category of "unconscious Satanism" a number of modern philosophers, from Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677) to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831). As partisans of the "limited God" theory, Guénon listed among the "unconscious Satanists" both the founder of modern psychology of religion, William James (1842–1910), and the Mormons, which thus appeared once again in the rounds of Satanism.[81]

Guénon returned to Mormonism in several texts. He claimed that behind Smith, the founder of the Mormons, who was a simple peasant in good faith, the crucial character was Sidney Rigdon (1793–1876), the better-educated

78 R. Guénon, *L'Erreur spirite*, new ed., Paris: Éditions Traditionnelles, 1991, pp. 301–302.

79 *Ibid.*, p. 302.

80 *Ibid.*, pp. 302–305.

81 *Ibid.*, pp. 306–307.

pastor of the Disciples of Christ who converted to Mormonism. In Rigdon, Guénon argued, one can identify the usual sinister agent of "counter-initiation", who usually lurks in the shadow of the founders of non-orthodox religions.[82] The case of the Mormons was, in the eyes of Guénon, less dangerous than that of James and the modern psychologists of religion. The latter taught that the experience of the divine comes from the subconscious. This Guénon exclaimed, "really means placing God in the inferior layers of being, *in inferis* in the literal sense of the expression. It is thus a really 'infernal' doctrine, a reversal of the universal order, and it is precisely what we call 'Satanism'". Again, it was a Satanism that was not aware of its nature. "Since it is clear that Satanism is not the aim, and that those who propose and accept ideas of this kind are not aware of their implications, it is only unconscious Satanism".[83]

However, unconscious and conscious Satanism share a common element: the "overthrow of the natural order", which is manifest in "religious practices imitated backwards" and "reversals of symbols". The difference is that this reversal can be "intentional or not" and, as a consequence, "Satanism can be conscious or not conscious". For example, the inverted cross of Vintras was an "eminently suspicious symbol". But it is possible that the same Vintras did not fully understand the danger, and thus "was only a perfectly unconscious Satanist, in spite of all the phenomena that occurred around him and that clearly proceeded from a form of 'diabolical mysticism'". "Perhaps, Guénon added, the same could not be said about some of his disciples and his more or less legitimate successors". The allusion was not only to Boullan. Guénon wanted to target Bricaud, who presumed to be the legitimate successor of Vintras and whom Guénon considered as a particularly sinister enemy. In the world of "cults" and of movements of "low spirituality", Guénon distinguished between lesser cases, the "pseudo-religions", and more serious cases, the "counter-religions". It was in the latter that the real conscious Satanism must be sought. However, between the two categories "there can be many degrees, through which the passage occurs almost insensitively and unexpectedly".[84]

Guénon typically insisted on the distinction between a metaphysical and a theological plane. "Everything that is said theologically of angels and demons can be said metaphysically of the superior and inferior states of being".[85] The plane studied by theologians, Guénon insisted, did not interest him: he was

82 See R. Guénon, "Les Origines du mormonisme", in R. Guénon, *Mélanges*, Paris: Gallimard, 1976, pp. 161–175.

83 R. Guénon, *L'Erreur spirite*, cit., pp. 308–309.

84 *Ibid.*, pp. 308–309.

85 *Ibid.*, p. 309.

only concerned with human Satanists. For Guénon, the area of unconscious Satanism was extremely vast. Certain groups, he said, ostensibly "assign to morality a place superior to everything", and they include Spiritualists and certain Protestants. They, however, cooperate to "overthrow the natural order of things and are as a consequence involved in a 'diabolical' enterprise, which however does not mean that all those who think in this way are for this reason in effective communication with the Devil".[86] As we can see, to identify conscious and unconscious Satanists became a vast and quite difficult exercise.

In his book against the Spiritualists, Guénon discussed the Belgian Spiritualist leader Georges Le Clément de Saint-Marcq (1865–1956), who may have had an influence on the elaboration of the theories of Reuss and Crowley on sex magic. Saint-Marcq was a leading expert on "spermatophagy", i.e. the ritual ingestion of male semen, a practice that he attributed even to Jesus Christ.[87] Writing for a Catholic audience of many decades ago, Guénon hid Saint-Marcq's "spermatophagy" behind a prudish "practices whose nature we would not discuss here". However, he asked rhetorically: "Would we still deny that the epithet 'satanic', at least taken in a figurative sense, is too strong to characterize things so poisonous?".[88]

The question was rhetorical, but only up to a point. Guénon used the adjective "satanic" rather than the noun "Satanism", and even the adjective should "perhaps (be) taken in the figurative sense". Saint-Marcq, in fact, was certainly not "conscious" of serving the Devil. On the contrary, he believed he had understood the "true" mission of Jesus Christ and proclaimed he just wanted to defend it against those who misunderstood, hid, or deformed it.[89] It is unclear whether Saint-Marcq practiced "spermatophagy" or just described it. Rituals of "spermatophagy" would be practiced by Satanists after World War II, and were practiced in the O.T.O. and other occult societies before the Satanists

86 *Ibid.*, p. 316.

87 See, on Saint-Marcq, M. Introvigne, *Il ritorno dello gnosticismo*, cit., pp. 155–160; and the definitive treatment by M. Pasi, "The Knight of Spermatophagy: Penetrating the Mysteries of Georges Le Clément de Sain-Marcq", in W.J. Hanegraaff and Jeffrey J. Kripal (eds.), *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2008, pp. 369–400. On the controversies between Saint-Marcq and Belgian Theosophists, led by the painter Jean Delville (1867–1953), see M. Introvigne, "Zöllner's Knot: Theosophy, Jean Delville (1867–1953), and the Fourth Dimension", *Theosophical History*, vol. XVII, no. 3, July 2014, pp. 84–118.

88 R. Guénon, *L'Erreur spirite,* cit., pp. 321–322.

89 See Georges Le Clément de Saint-Marcq, *L'Eucharistie*, Anvers: The Author, n.d. (but 1906); G. Le Clément de Saint-Marcq, *Les Raisons de l'Eucharistie*, 3rd ed., Waltwilden: Le Sincériste, 1930.

borrowed them. "Spermatophagy", however, is not per se evidence that a group worships the Devil.

Guénon cultivated over a long period, alternating between enthusiasm and pessimism, the idea of a possible tactical alliance with the Catholic Church in order to fight certain common "counter-initiatory" enemies.[90] He was also involved, between 1929 and 1933, in the revival of the polemics on the presence of satanic lodges in the so-called "High Freemasonry" and on the Taxil case. At the center of these controversies was the anti-Masonic journal *Revue internationale des sociétés secrètes*, edited by Mgr. Jouin. The belligerent *Revue* had published articles against Crowley, denouncing him as a dangerous Satanist.[91] Jouin had been involved in anti-Masonic campaigns late in life, founding his journal in 1912, at the age of sixty-eight. Previously, he was mostly interested in pastoral theology and patristics, even if he had already crossed swords with a number of Freemasons while defending the religious congregations and their educational and charitable organizations against anticlerical attacks. In 1913, he founded as a companion organization to his journal a Ligue Franc-Catholique, introduced as "an anti-Masonic élite body". Jouin was initially not very inclined to sympathize with Diana Vaughan, whoever she was, and Taxil. He was persuaded of the decisive role of the Jews behind Freemasonry, a role Taxil always denied. Later, he changed his mind and came to believe that probably Diana Vaughan existed.

We already referred to the literature on Diana Vaughan produced by the group of the *Revue internationale des sociétés secrètes* in the years 1929–1934, but here we are interested in noting the reactions of Guénon. After having read the book by Fry, and the documents gathered by Jouin on Taxil, Guénon recognized that "the question is more complex than it may appear at first sight and is not easy to resolve. It seems that there was also something else, and that Taxil lied one more time when he declared to having invented everything on his own initiative. In Taxil, one finds a skillful blend of truth and falsehood, and it is true that, as it is said in the preface of the work [by Fry], 'imposture does not succeed except when it is mixed with certain aspects of the truth'".[92] Guénon

90 On this point, see P.L. Zoccatelli, *Le Lièvre qui rumine. Autour de Réné Guénon, Louis Charbonneau-Lassay et la Fraternité du Paraclet*, cit.

91 On the *Revue internationale des sociétés secrètes* and its campaign against Crowley, see M. Pasi, *Aleister Crowley and the Temptation of Politics*, cit., pp. 118–123.

92 R. Guénon, review of L. Fry, *Léo Taxil et la Franc-Maçonnerie*, in "Revue des Livres", *Études traditionnelles*, no. 181, January 1935, pp. 43–45 (reprinted in R. Guénon, *Études sur la Franc-Maçonnerie et le Compagnonnage*, 2 vols., Paris: Éditions Traditionnelles, 1964–1965, vol. 1, pp. 102–104).

did not believe that the documents collected by Jouin allowed any firm conclusion on Diana Vaughan. "That one or more persons could present themselves with the name of Diana Vaughan, he wrote, and in different circumstances, seems more than likely; but how can we identify them today?".[93]

Guénon did not accept, however, the general scheme of Mgr. Jouin. He even suspected him of being, in good faith and misled by others who were acting in the shadow, an unknowing agent of the ubiquitous "counter-initiation".[94] Guénon's disagreement with Jouin concerned Freemasonry. Satanism, Guénon claimed, had "nothing to do with Freemasonry". About Taxil and his anti-Masonic campaigns, Guénon asked: "Who could have inspired Taxil and his notorious collaborators if not more or less direct agents of that 'counter-initiation' from which all dark things come from?".[95] Guénon believed that Satanists, perhaps even "conscious", did exist at the time of Taxil: but they were not Freemasons.[96] Not that Guénon had a good opinion of the Grand Orient of France, which he regarded as a rationalist degeneration of genuine Freemasonry. Even the Grand Orient, by promoting rationalism and atheism, was playing the game of "counter-initiation": but this had nothing to do with Satanism.

Satan and His Priestess: *L'Élue du Dragon*

On the relationship between Satanism, "conscious" or "unconscious", and Freemasonry, Guénon found himself involved in a curious remake of the case of Diana Vaughan. Both the Catholic and the esoteric Parisian milieus were agitated in 1929 by a book reportedly written by one Clotilde Bersone, a woman who should have been a great initiate of Satan twenty years before Taxil's Diana, but whose writings appeared only thirty years after the *Diable*.

Before placing Clotilde on the scene, we must meet two associates of Mgr. Jouin: the learned Jesuit Harald Richard (1867–1928) and a provincial French priest, Father Paul Boulin (1875–1933).[97] A professor of physics and natural

93 *Ibid.*

94 J.-P. Laurant, "Contre-initiation, complot et histoire chez René Guénon", cit., p. 95.

95 *Ibid.*

96 In fact, Guénon believed that those looking for Satanists should rather have searched for them in the ranks of the O.T.O., even before Crowley: see M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme et Christianisme autour de René Guénon*, cit., p. 332.

97 For biographical information on both Richard and Boulin, see M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme aux XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., pp. 227–228 and 50–52.

sciences in several Jesuit institutions, Richard served from 1911 to 1918 as a missionary to Armenia, Syria, and Egypt. Coming back quite exhausted from his missions, he retreated to a Jesuit house in Lyon, where he built a reputation as an expert in parapsychology, and even gave proof of his skills as a dowser. In the last years of his life, the Jesuit frequented Paray-le-Monial, known for its apparitions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the 17th century. Paray also hosted a curious Catholic-esoteric institution, the Hiéron du Val d'Or, founded by the Jesuit Victor Drevon (1820–1880) and Baron Alexis de Sarachaga-Bilbao y Lobanoff de Rostoff (1840–1918), where the theme of the fight between Catholics and Satanists was occasionally discussed within the framework of a complex esoteric history of the world.[98]

Some considered Richard "really a good man, although original and nonconformist", while others found him "unstable, unbalanced, and unbearable" and observed that in his old age "he did not like to be contradicted and saw the Devil everywhere, both in his fellow Jesuits and in many others".[99] His sojourn in Paray-le-Monial involved Richard in a strange adventure that also included Boulin. The latter was a priest from the French region of Aube, who had been ordained in 1901 and had published a series of nationalist and monarchist novels. In December 1912, Boulin founded a newspaper called *La Vigie*. Reportedly, it was connected to Sodalitium Pianum, known in France as "La Sapinière", a secret Catholic organization created with the approval of Pope Pius X in order to report to Rome priests and Bishops who supported the ideas of Modernism.[100]

Some French Bishops strongly disapproved of the activities of the Sodalitium Pianum, considering it an organization spying on them on behalf of the Vatican. Because of these controversies, the *abbé* Boulin, whose *Vigie* was defined as "the organ in France" of the Sodalitium Pianum,[101] had to abandon Paris in 1913 and transfer as a simple parish priest to the remote village of Saint-Pouange, in the Diocese of Troyes. This did not prevent him from continuing to publish his magazine. He even received in his humble provincial presbytery

98 See Patrick Lequet, "Le Hiéron du Val d'Or et l'ésotérisme chrétien autour de Paray-le-Monial", *Politica Hermetica*, no. 12, 1998, pp. 79–98.

99 M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme aux XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., p. 228.

100 See É. Poulat, *Intégrisme et catholicisme intégral. Un réseau anti-moderniste: la "Sapinière" (1909–1921)*, Paris: Casterman, 1969.

101 M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme, occultisme, franc-maçonnerie et Christianisme aux XIXe et XXe siècles. Explorations bio-bibliographiques*, cit., p. 51.

Mgr. Umberto Benigni (1862–1934), the international leader of Sodalitium Pianum.

Boulin was allowed to return to Paris after the First World War, where he continued his activities as a journalist using the pseudonym of Roger Duguet. Again, he found himself in trouble, because he translated Spanish books attacking the Jesuits, denouncing them as part of a subversive and proto-Masonic organization. Two of his translations from Spanish were placed by the Vatican on the Index of the forbidden books on May 2, 1923.[102] Boulin submitted and from then on, using various pseudonyms, left the Jesuits alone and confined his attacks to Freemasons and Jews. He started cooperating with Mgr. Jouin and his magazine and was involved in the launching of the ephemeral *Cahiers anti-judéo-maçonniques* (1932–1933). He should have changed in the meantime his opinions about the Jesuits, since he became the best friend of the Jesuit Father Richard.

At the beginning of 1928, or perhaps at the end of 1927, a person, whose identity Richard never revealed, gave to the Jesuit a manuscript reportedly found in 1885 in the monastery of Paray-le-Monial. The manuscript contained the memories of a "grand initiate" of "High Freemasonry", who had been at the center of all the intrigues of Satanist Freemasonry in Paris in the years 1877–1880. At the beginning of 1928, Richard started to copy and edit the manuscript, supplementing it with notes. He was however in poor health, and died on June 7, 1928. Before dying, he had entrusted the manuscript to Boulin, whose skills as a novelist he knew and appreciated. Boulin put the text in a literary form, and took it to Jouin, asking him whether it would be appropriate to publish the text. The anti-Masonic virulence of the book was not greater than others Jouin had published before, but the personal apparitions of the Devil in the lodge were too much of a reminder of Taxil, and Jouin remained doubtful.

The year following the death of Jouin, Boulin, writing under his pen name of Roger Duguet, remembered that "Mgr. Jouin and I did not take the step [of publishing the work] if not after having consulted theologians". They assured them of the perfect possibility of these diabolical manifestations, leaving only open the question of whether they were real apparitions of the Devil or hallucinations of satanic mediums in trance.[103] The book was thus published in 1929 with the title *L'Élue du Dragon.*[104] It was reasonably, if not phenomenally, successful, and a second edition came out in 1932.

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102 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

103 Roger Duguet, "La R.I.S.S. et la reprise de l'Affaire Léo Taxil-Diana Vaughan", *Cahiers anti-judéo-maçonniques*, February 1933, pp. 59–61.

104 ***, *L'Élue du Dragon*, Paris: "Les Étincelles", 1929.

A "warning to the readers" announced the main thesis of the volume: "Satan is the real political master of France, on behalf of Lucifer and through International Freemasonry. The latter is the real 'Élue du Dragon': this is the sense, the objective, the range of this work. No, we are not in a time of democracy, but in a time of demonocracy".[105] The reader was immediately introduced to the protagonist, an Italian by the name of Clotilde Bersone, who defined herself as "beautiful, of that beauty that is considered fatal".[106] At the age of eighteen, she was in exotic Constantinople, visiting her father, who was a freethinker and a libertine who lived separate from her mother. Clotilde had been educated "in a great international college of the [Italian] peninsula: a sort of ultra-secular monastery".[107] She was a smart girl, and perceived that her father led a double life. Without telling her, he frequented a very mysterious "lodge" or "society".

The enterprising girl convinced her father to sneak her into the lodge, where she was struck by "a strange beast of white marble", "with seven heads and an almost human face; some appeared as that of a lion but without really resembling it; others were with horns". Clotilde learned that this was the "Dragon (…), the Hydra of the Kabbalah and of the Illuminati". The Dragon, she was told, had already been served by two "nymphs" who died: but the third "will not die and (…) will speak in the name of the Dragon".[108]

Over the course of a few pages, after Clotilde had been introduced to a libidinous eighty-year-old Turk initiate called Ahmed Pasha, we discover that the young Italian girl would become the third Nymph, the Elected of the Dragon. In fact, although she was not yet initiated, she was allowed to participate in a strange lodge session, where the adepts wore masks in the shape of horse heads, which became animated thanks to a "magical process", giving the impression of talking horses. Initially, the chaste Clotilde was afraid of her role of Elected of the Dragon and of the "brothel-like" activities that occurred in the lodge, to the extent that she even attempted suicide in the Bosphorus. She returned to Italy, where her anti-Catholic mother pushed her into the arms of a "Count Daniele F.", a low level Freemason of whom she became the lover. In Italy, a letter from Ahmed Pasha reached Clotilde and invited her to go to France for "serious business". She felt she should accept, and she left with Daniele, proclaiming: "Yes, I will be a Freemason, because fate pushes me there

105 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
106 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
107 *Ibid.*, p. 19.
108 *Ibid.*, pp. 31–34.

with relentless ferocity; but a Freemason ready to grasp the power and the secrets and turn them all against the authors of my disgrace".[109]

Clotilde arrived in Paris on June 29, 1875. She did not find Ahmed Pasha, detained in Turkey, but met another interesting character: James Abram Garfield (1831–1881), the future President of the United States. He harbored the degree of "Grand Orient", which in the book was not an organization but a person, of a "French Grand Lodge of the Illuminati", and controlled all the secret organizations of the country. Garfield fell in love with Clotilde, although initially he treated her "brutally, like a lost girl". The American easily overcame the rivalry of the cowardly Daniele, whom Clotilde hated and would eventually ruin, causing his suicide. Garfield made the young Italian his mistress and led her, one after the other, into the highest initiations in the Grand Lodge of the Illuminati.

The girl thus discovered some interesting secrets: for example, that to be initiated it was necessary to stab with a dagger what appeared to be a mannequin but was in reality an enemy of the lodge, adequately drugged for the ceremony. Every initiate, and Clotilde as well, thus had on their conscience, "like an infernal baptism", at least one murder. She also discovered that the "Supreme Being" whom the initiates worshipped in the lodge was Satan, the Dragon.[110] Naturally, it was part of Clotilde's duties to break crucifixes and steal consecrated holy wafers, which were then desecrated, defiled, and given to prostitutes, who would use them for "ignoble touching" and "refinements of impiety and impurity, unconceivable and impossible to describe".[111]

She was also entrusted with more important missions, such as that of cooperating, using the false name of "Madame Cerati", with Prince Humbert of Italy (subsequently King Humbert I, 1844–1900), to poison his father, King Victor Emmanuel II (1820–1878), no longer sufficiently docile to the wishes of the lodges. She was also asked to take secret messages to the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck (1815–1898), a mission that put her in new trouble. The chancellor was not insensitive to the extraordinary beauty of Clotilde and became a rival of Garfield, whose ruin he started to plan. Although the young protagonist was not exactly a paragon of chastity, her only true love was neither Garfield nor Bismarck: it was Satan, the Dragon himself, whom Clotilde learned to summon regularly. The Dragon also provided some small services to her: for instance, he killed a singer, a certain Mina, who had tried to steal Garfield away from Clotilde. Satan also ensured the success of her

109 *Ibid.*, p. 55.
110 *Ibid.*, p. 79.
111 *Ibid.*, p. 112.

spying ventures all over Europe, where she traveled under the assumed name of "Emilia de Fièvе, Countess of Coutanceau".

Garfield was depicted as a bad character in the book, but not without some limits to his evilness. He began to stand in the way of the career of Clotilde, which he saw as too dangerous for the woman he now loved. The Dragon and Clotilde did not appreciate this, and plotted the ruin of Garfield, helped by a group of French politicians who formed the tip of the satanic lodge, including Ferry, Jules Grévy (1807–1891), and Pierre Emmanuel Tirard (1827–1893). This group of Satanist politicians convinced Garfield to create an autonomous American branch of the Grand Lodge of the Illuminati. The organization, in turn, would get him elected as President of the United States. Garfield, thus, should leave the real center of satanic power, Paris, where Grévy became his successor, but the revenge of Clotilde and the Dragon was not finished. After having been elected as President, Garfield was killed in an attack in Baltimore, whose organizers of course took their orders from the Grand Lodge of the Illuminati.

Clotilde believed she had won her battle, but in reality she had lost, and would later regret bitterly her time with Garfield. Grévy tried to summon the Dragon by himself, dispensing from her services. Other initiates started refusing taking orders from a woman. A painter, Chéret, openly rebelled, forcing Clotilde to a duel with a foil in Bern, which was mortal for the artist since the Elected was still under the protection of the Dragon. The allusion, here, seems to be to popular Parisian painter Jules Chéret (1836–1932), who, however, did not die in a duel in the 19th century but peacefully in his villa in Nice many years later, in 1932.

The worst problems for Clotilde began when a priest, a certain Father Mazati, was admitted into the lodge. Mazati consecrated the holy wafers to be later desecrated, thus eliminating the problem of stealing them from churches. The priest began to evoke himself the Dragon, summoning him "in the name of the Holy Trinity". This surprised Clotilde, who wondered how "the Spirit [Satan] was compelled to surrender to an evocation made in the name of an inferior Catholic divinity".[112] Serious doubts started to torment Clotilde, although she was still busy with political intrigues, which included manipulating the French elections of 1881 and organizing the assassination of Tsar Alexander II (1818–1881) in Russia.

Under the impulse of the Dragon, which appeared to her in a visible form, and sometimes animated his statue in the lodge, Clotilde also gave inflammatory anticlerical speeches. She reported that these speeches were plagiarized

112 *Ibid.*, p. 257.

for his books, including *The Lovers of Pius IX*, by a certain Taxil, who did no more than copy the "more perfidious and shameless" discourses pronounced by the young Italian woman in the lodge.[113]

Finally, however, Clotilde decided to ask the Dragon why he had to obey a wretch such as Father Mazati. The Dragon, as the Catholic reader to which the book was directed had already understood, at this point should have confessed that the power of the priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church, even in its worst priest, was stronger than his own power was. He did not want to admit this, however, and more simply organized the ruin of Clotilde. A conspiracy was thus prepared against the Italian inside the Satanist organization. Slogans were spread such as "No more skirts at the Masonic Table" or "Down with Clotilde Bersone!". The poor Italian girl was sent to Grenoble to work as an upscale prostitute in a brothel secretly managed by Freemasonry, where she should try to steal the secrets of the local powerful.[114] Clotilde was still rather obedient and did what she was told. She found some form of comfort in the fact that the "filthy establishment" at least had "some exterior décor, for the use of upper bourgeoisie and high-ranking military": "it was not exactly the vulgar public brothel".[115]

She performed her job as a prostitute, and did it well, obtaining important revelations from her clients, which she passed to the Satanists in Paris. They eventually informed her that her exile was finished and they were waiting for her in Macon. But Clotilde was afraid that in Macon she would simply be assassinated. Besides, reflecting on the episode of Father Mazati, she had by now understood that Roman Catholicism was the true religion, and in her heart she had already converted. She was also pregnant, and gave birth to a child, who died soon thereafter. She thus knocked on the door of a convent, went to confession, was hidden by the nuns, and began to write her memories. In the convent worked, however, a strange gardener, who was probably an agent of the Satanists. This was where the first French edition of the novel ended, while in the second edition a sinister piece of information was included: "Bersone was kidnapped from the convent, where she was working as a receptionist, by the false gardener. He took her to a Satanist lodge, where she was crucified".[116] It is not clear when this macabre detail was included and whether it was found at the end of the "manuscript" signed by Clotilde Bersone.

113 *Ibid.*, p. 249.

114 *Ibid.*, pp. 268–269.

115 *Ibid.*, p. 269.

116 ***, *L'Élue du Dragon*, 2nd ed., Paris: "Les Étincelles", 1932, p. 283.

But did a "manuscript" really exist? The journal of the French Jesuits, *Études*, which had already constantly attacked Taxil, when confronted with Clotilde Bersone in 1929 labeled her revelations as "sick fairy tales". In the second edition of 1932, signing with his pen name Duguet, Boulin explained to the skeptical Jesuits of *Études* that the existence of the manuscript had been confirmed precisely by a Jesuit, Richard, although his name had not been disclosed in the first edition.[117] In this same text, Duguet/Boulin mentioned "a text on which we worked", written by Richard himself. Two years later, in 1933, Duguet/Boulin explained that there were in fact two manuscripts: one copied by Richard, the other not handwritten by "Clotilde Bersone" but "dictated" by her. The latter had been at the Hiéron of Paray-le-Monial, before being passed to Mgr. Jouin and to the archives of his anti-Masonic magazine.[118] The personal archive of Jouin is not at present accessible to scholars[119] and thus it is not possible to ascertain whether the famous manuscript is still there.

But would the existence or non-existence of the manuscript really solve the riddle of Clotilde Bersone? After all, what could the manuscript add or take away from the discussion? Its main interest would be to allow a comparison with the published version, which would show how much was added by Duguet/Boulin when he "novelized" the text he received from Richard. However, even if it were found, the manuscript would tell us nothing about the real life existence of Clotilde Bersone. Independently from any manuscript, there are two crucial elements, which allow us to conclude that the adventures of the *Élue du Dragon* were entirely fictional. A "Countess of Coutanceau", if we take the book at face value, should have been with this name, rather than with her real one of Clotilde Bersone, at the center of the social and diplomatic life of Paris from 1877 to 1881. We read that she animated social events, presided a scientific-cultural society as a cover for the satanic lodge, and participated in public ceremonies with the most prominent personalities of the Republic. I carefully researched the main Parisian newspapers of these years, which devoted several daily pages to gossip and parties, without finding a single mention of a Countess of Coutanceau. Almost fifty years later, Duguet/Boulin stated that the existence of a Countess of Coutanceau was confirmed to him by the writer Juliette Adam (1836–1936), a famous gossip. Even is true, this vague reminiscence by a lady who was almost one hundred years old cannot

117 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

118 R. Duguet, "La R.I.S.S. et la reprise de l'Affaire Léo Taxil-Diana Vaughan", cit., p. 59.

119 The late French historian Émile Poulat informed me that the personal papers of Mgr. Jouin and his archive were indeed still in existence, but could not be consulted by scholars.

substitute the total absence of the supposedly well-known Countess from the press of the era.[120]

The second circumstance that excludes the historicity of the text published in 1929 concerns the American President Garfield. Surprisingly, no one, neither at the time of the most heated controversy on *L'Élue du Dragon* nor afterwards, bothered to consult American scholars of Garfield. Based on their works, it is comparatively easy to reconstruct the movements of Garfield between 1877 and his murder in 1881. He remained constantly in the United States, and we can confidently exclude that he went to France, Italy, or Europe in general, where he could not have directed satanic lodges nor become the lover of Clotilde Bersone. Unfortunately for those who still believe in the factual truth of Bersone's adventures, "no American public man left more ample biographical material than Garfield (…); for every step of his career, from the beginning of his diary at the age of sixteen, there is the abundant testimony of his letters, journals and official papers, such as military reports and Congressional speeches. In addition, he left numerous addresses, articles or memoranda of an autobiographical character, which, taken together, supply a commentary on nearly every aspect of his life".[121]

Thus, we know with certainty where Garfield was on June 29, 1875, that fatal evening of his meeting with Clotilde Bersone in Paris. He was in his cottage in Little Mountain, Ohio, where he remained from June 15 to August 15, not with Clotilde Bersone but with his wife. He was not even able to move, as he was recovering from a surgery, which had become necessary for digestive problems that had occurred during a previous trip to California.[122] He spoke in public for the first time after the surgery in Warren, Ohio, on August 31, 1875, to support the re-election as governor of Ohio of his political mentor, Rutherford B. Hayes (1822–1893), who would be elected president of the United States in 1877. From August 1875 to his assassination in 1881, we can follow both the political career, closely connected to that of Hayes, and the movements of Garfield literally day by day. In the absence of flights, it is impossible that he ever went to Paris in these years. Garfield had been to Europe with his wife in the summer of

120 R. Duguet, "*L'Élue du Dragon*. Une interview de Madame Adam", *Revue internationale des sociétés secrètes* (*judéo-maçonnique*), vol. 18, no. 12, March 24, 1929, pp. 289–294.

121 Theodore Clarke Smith [1870–1960], *The Life and Letters of James Abram Garfield*, 2 vols., New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925, vol. II, p. 845. The *Garfield Papers – Presidents' Papers Series*, Library of Congress, Washington D.C. 1973, include 177 volumes in the microfilm edition.

122 T.C. Smith, *The Life and Letters of James Abram Garfield*, cit., vol. I, pp. 585–586.

1867 and had stopped in Paris for "almost two weeks", before visiting Rome.[123] However, that was before Bersone allegedly became a satanic initiate.

Are there any "satanic" signs in Garfield's career? He was a Freemason, personally initiated into all the degrees from the fourth to the fourteenth of the Scottish Rite during the same day by Pike in Washington, on January 2, 1872. Receiving several degrees in the same day was not an infrequent practice in the Scottish Rite. In 1876, however, he was suspended from Freemasonry, for the trivial reason that he had consistently failed to pay his yearly dues.[124] This was evidence that he was not a particularly active or enthusiastic Freemason. Unlike many of his colleagues in the Republican Party, he was not anti-Mormon, and when visiting Utah had a friendly meeting with the Mormon president Brigham Young.[125] He was anti-Catholic, although to a lesser degree than his mentor and predecessor Hayes, who involved him in an unsuccessful campaign to drive the Little Sisters of the Poor out of Washington D.C..[126] While visiting the West, Garfield recommended keeping the Native Americans at a safe distance from Catholic missions.[127] When he was in Rome, he deplored "the infinite impertinence with which every symbol of its greatness [of the Roman Empire] (...) has been converted into papal symbols [sic]", expressing his "contempt for Catholicism".[128] In 1873, which he called his *Annus Diaboli*, he ran the risk of abandoning his political career due to the rumors, then disproved, concerning bribes paid to him by the Crédit Mobilier of America for a railway business.

His murderer, Charles Julius Guiteau (1841–1882), although not a Satanist, was a member of the Oneida Community of John Humphrey Noyes (1811–1886), where a form of sexual perfectionism was practiced. Guiteau wrote lengthy texts of a prophetic-religious nature, among which a book of prophecies with the title *Truth.* He also got syphilis from a prostitute, and killed Garfield because he refused to receive him and to give him an official position. Guiteau believed he was entitled to the gratitude of the President, as he had "helped" Garfield to be elected with his prophecies.[129] Nothing in all this suggests, however, a connection with Satanism. In fact, having killed Garfield, Guiteau,

123 Allan Peskin, *Garfield*, Kent (Ohio): Kent State University Press, 1978, pp. 280–281.

124 Entry *James A. Garfield* in William R. Denslow "10,000 Famous Freemasons – Volume II", *Transactions of the Missouri Lodge of Research*, vol. XV, 1958, pp. 95–96.

125 A. Peskin, *Garfield*, cit., p. 352.

126 *Ibid.*, p. 401.

127 *Ibid.*, p. 353.

128 *Ibid.*, p. 281.

129 See *ibid.*, pp. 584–592.

declared that "the President was a Christian and that he will be happier in Paradise than here".[130] What is certain is that Garfield was never in Paris between 1875 and 1881, where he could not have lived with Clotilde Bersone nor directed satanic lodges.

In the *Élue du Dragon*, there are several other details that can be criticized, but these are decisive. Writing four years after the first edition, in 1933, Duguet stated that "it is certainly possible that on some points Bersone was wrong, covered the truth or lied", but maintained that the essential of the text was true.[131] However, both the public life in Paris of Clotilde Bersone as the "Countess of Coutanceau" and the activities of Garfield do belong to the central plot. If of a Countess of Coutanceau there is no trace in Paris between 1877 and 1881, and it can be positively excluded that Garfield was in Europe at that time, then the whole plot cannot but collapse.

Where did the *Élue du Dragon* come from? It was not likely to be exclusively an invention of Duguet/Boulin and Richard. For this conclusion, I do not rely on the personality or sincerity of the two priests. Rather, it is the structure of the text that does not seem to belong to the late 1920s. Too many pages were devoted to attacking politicians who, after the First World War, were long forgotten. Some, such as Ferry and Garfield, had at least their place in history, and for Garfield it is possible that some echo of the American scandal of Crédit Mobilier, a French bank, was still alive in France. But why should a forger of 1927–1928 be concerned with attacking Tirard, who was twice Prime Minister for a short time between 1887 and 1890, but after forty years was widely forgotten? The criticism directed against Taxil in his anticlerical incarnation and the absence of any reference to his conversion may indicate that the text was written before 1887. It is also significant that the book did not mention Pike at all, despite his real life association with Garfield. After the *Diable*, Pike became a household name for those who read French anti-Masonic literature. Associating Garfield with Pike would have reinforced the text's credibility, but only if it had been written after 1891.

Alternatively, we can explain the absence of Pike with the desire by the author not to be in any way confused with the discredited Taxil, and conclude that the work was written after 1897. References to minor politicians of the 1880s, however, remain a good argument to suggest that it was an older text. For borrowing details such as the statue of the animated Dragon in the lodge, authors of the 1860s such as Bizouard would have been sufficient, with no need for waiting for Bataille. We cannot know for sure, but my guess is that a

130 *Ibid.*, p. 592.

131 R. Duguet, "La R.I.S.S. et la reprise de l'Affaire Léo Taxil-Diana Vaughan", cit., p. 60.

manuscript was produced between 1880 and 1890 in the Catholic circles favorable to General Boulanger. All the politicians placed by the text in the satanic lodge were opponents of Boulanger. Perhaps the publication became less interesting after both Boulanger's suicide in 1891 and the competition first and the discredit later of Taxil and Bataille between 1892 and 1897. It is not surprising that the unpublished manuscript ended up in that deposit of strange documents that was Paray-le-Monial in the era of the Hiéron, where in the 1920s it was rediscovered by Richard. Those who believe the text was entirely written by Boulin and Richard should explain why they took the trouble to attack Grévy and Tirard, without mentioning figures who were more disliked by French Catholics and that it would have been more interesting to connect to Satanism such as Combes, to whom they could easily have attributed some satanic adventures in his youth.

We can, before abandoning Clotilde Bersone, return to Guénon, who in a first moment considered the *Élue du Dragon* as a sort of tasteless remake of Taxil.[132] Marie-France James has however demonstrated how Guénon later changed his mind on Clotilde Bersone, through the correspondence of the French esotericist with his friend Olivier de Fremond (1854–1940)[133] and others. From Cairo, where he had by then moved, on October 18, 1930 Guénon wrote to a correspondent, a certain Hillel, probably a Freemason from Calais, France: "Here, behind Al-Azhar, there is an old man, who looks surprisingly like the portraits of the ancient Greek philosophers, and who paints strange pictures. The other day he showed us a sort of dragon with the head of a bearded man, and with a hat that was fashionable in the 16th century, with six small heads of different animals that emerge from the beard. The really strange thing is that this picture resembles, in a way that confounds, that of R.I.S.S. [i.e. the *Revue internationale des sociétés secrètes*] published some time ago, of the dragon of the famous *Élue du Dragon*. That volume claimed to have found the image in some old book it did not name, which made its authenticity rather dubious. But the strangest thing is that the old man claims he has seen this incredible beast and he has drawn what he saw!".[134]

On October 6, 1932, replying to an allusion of Guénon, Fremond wrote: "No, you never told me about your extraordinary adventure in Cairo connected with the *Élue du Dragon*".[135] Later, Fremond must have found out, because on

132 See R. Guénon, "Revue des revues", *Le Voile d'Isis*, no. 115, July 1929, pp. 498–500; now in R. Guénon, *Études sur la Franc-Maçonnerie et le Compagnonnage*, cit., vol. I, pp. 91–93.

133 Although his last name is often written Frémond, a personal communication from Pier-Luigi Zoccatelli informed me that the spelling preferred in the family was Fremond.

134 M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme et Christianisme autour de René Guénon*, cit., pp. 329–330.

135 *Ibid.*, p. 333.

February 7, 1933, he wrote to Guénon that in the works and the letters of the latter there is, "it appears to me, a demonstration of the 'marvelous' in Freemasonry and in its 'dependences', for example in the story of the Dragon, which is really extraordinary…". On June 8, 1933, Fremond wrote to Guénon again: "But in reality what is there in this story of the *Élue du Dragon?* Without a doubt, a lot of imagination, but also a great truth, because after all we agree on this 'diabolical marvels' and on the relations of Freemasonry with Hell. And Hell enjoys confusing the questions and changing the cards on the table". On August 21, 1933, after Guénon had read a new novel by Duguet (*alias* Boulin), *La Cravate blanche*,[136] Fremond wrote: "Thus, the *Élue du Dragon* is reality, just slightly novelized, and our most acclaimed politicians are only, as you [Guénon] rightfully qualify them, 'simple puppets', and Satan, Satan in person, holds the strings…".[137]

A skeptic naturally could object that the old man in Cairo could simply have embellished the story for Guénon and have had in his hands one of the illustrated French versions of the *Élue du Dragon*. It is also possible that Richard and Boulin had effectively taken the picture from a more ancient text, which the old Egyptian could have seen. The episode in Cairo is not technically "evidence" of anything. It is however interesting to understand Guénon's obsession with "counter-initiation", which could have induced him to take seriously, after the initial skepticism, even Clotilde Bersone. The latter, with every probability, never existed. Nor did she create a case of international proportions like Taxil's Diana Vaughan: but she brought Taxil back. All the publications that returned to Palladism in the years 1930–1934 can hardly be explained without the precedent constituted by the *Élue du Dragon* in 1929. In this case, there was no clamorous unmasking of the fraud as happened with Taxil. The book by "Clotilde Bersone" continues to be kept in print to this very day by archconservative Catholics promoting anti-Masonic campaigns.[138]

A Real "Élue du Dragon": Maria de Naglowska

The years 1930–1933, in which the discussion on the *Élue du Dragon* took place, were those in which a strange character began her activities in Paris, Maria de Naglowska. She introduced herself as somebody who could offer a

136 See R. Duguet, *La Cravate Blanche: Roman*, Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1933.

137 M.-F. James, *Ésotérisme et Christianisme autour de René Guénon,* cit., p. 330.

138 See e.g. Clotilde Bersone, *L'Élue du Dragon*. Paris: Nouvelles Éditions Latines, 1998; C. Bersone, *L'Eletta del Dragone. Da sacerdotessa di Satana a crocefissa in loggia*, It. transl. (based on C. Bersone, *L'Eletta del Dragone*, Pescara: Artigianelli, 1956), Udine: Segno, 1993.

true initiation to Lucifer after so many frauds. Born on August 15, 1883 in Saint Petersburg, Naglowska was the daughter of the governor of the province of Kazan, General Dimitri de Naglowski.[139] At the age of twelve, in 1895, she was already an orphan. Her father had been poisoned by a nihilist, her mother died of an illness.

Educated in the aristocratic and exclusive Smolna Institute in Saint Petersburg, after a brief and inconclusive experience at university, Maria came into conflict with her family, to which she announced her intention to marry a musician. Not only was he not a noble, but he was a Jew. His name was Moïse Hopenko (1880–1958) and he was a good violinist. The simple idea was a scandal in a noble and anti-Semitic family such as Maria's. The girl had to leave Russia, settling with her fiancé first in Berlin and later in Geneva, where she married and had three children: Alexandre, Marie and André. Reportedly, she also completed her academic studies in Geneva.[140] She later claimed that in Russia she had contacts with both the cult of the Khlisty, who, at least according to some sensational accounts, practiced scandalous sexual rituals, and with the notorious monk Grigorij Efimovič Rasputin (1869–1916).

In Geneva, Naglowska experienced the hostility of the Russian émigré community, which was not immune from anti-Semitic prejudice. At the same time,

139 For a long time, the only information available on the life of Maria de Naglowska was supplied by the Surrealist poet [Sarane] Alexandrian (1927–2009, on whom see Christophe Dauphin, *Sarane Alexandrian ou le grand défi de l'imaginaire,* Lausanne: Bibliothèque Mélusine, L'Âge d'Homme, 2006) in his *Les Libérateurs de l'amour*, Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1978, pp. 185–206. Successively, one of the direct disciples broke the silence: Marc Pluquet, *La Sophiale, Maria de Naglowska: sa vie – son oeuvre*, a work that circulated for years as a simple private typescript before being reprinted by a branch of the Ordo Templi Orientis, Paris: O.T.O., 1993. See also Fr. Marcion, "Introduction à l'oeuvre de Maria de Naglowska", *Thelema*, vol VII, no. 27, April 1992, pp. 18–20; and Hans Thomas Hakl, "Maria de Naglowska and the Confrèrie de la Flèche d'Or", *Politica Hermetica*, no. 20, 2006, pp. 113–123, reprinted in H.T. Hakl, "The Theory and Practice of Sexual Magic, Exemplified in Four Magical Groups in the Early Twentieth Century", in W.J. Hanegraaff and J. Kripal (eds.), *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism*, cit., pp. 445–478 (pp. 465–474). The book by Robert North, "Grand Imperial Hierophant" of the New Flesh Palladium, an organization that includes Naglowska among its main references, *The Occult Mentors of Maria de Naglowska*, Miami Beach (Florida): The Author, 2010, mixes some useful information with unsubstantiated claims. Contemporary accounts of Naglowska include René Thimmy, *La Magie à Paris*, Paris: Les Éditions de France, 1934, pp. 71–91; and P. Geyraud, *Les petites Églises de Paris*, Paris: Émile-Paul Frères, 1937, pp. 142–153. "René Thimmy" was a pseudonym of esoteric poet, novelist and playwright Maurice Magre (1877–1941).

140 H.T. Hakl, "Maria de Naglowska and the Confrèrie de la Flèche d'Or", cit., p. 113.

she never fully integrated into the Jewish community of which her husband was part. Her first two children, Alexandre and Marie (originally called Esther) were raised in Judaism, but not André. Shortly before the birth of the third child, Hopenko, an ardent Zionist, decided to move to Palestine to direct a local music conservatory. He would die in Israel, a well-respected musician, in 1958. Maria refused to follow him and broke with the Jewish community, baptizing all three of her children in the Russian Orthodox Church.

The young Russian woman survived by teaching various subjects in private schools in Geneva. She also tried literature[141] and journalism, where her radical political ideas quickly led her to jail. Freed thanks to the intercession of influential friends, she moved first to Bern and then to Basel, but ended up being expelled from Switzerland.

While the eldest son Alexandre decided to join his father in Palestine, Maria managed to obtain a Polish passport, with which she entered Italy in 1920 with her children Marie and André. She found employment from 1921 to 1926 with the newspaper *L'Italie* in Rome. The conditions of the life of Maria and her family in Rome were not easy. Her daughter Marie, at the age of sixteen, became seriously ill with typhus. Recovered, she went through a religious crisis and manifested the desire to become a Catholic nun. After two years of novitiate, she abandoned the convent, and began working with a Roman dentist as a nurse.

Doubts on his ethnic and religious identity began to torment André as well, who pursued an opposite direction reaching his father in Palestine. In Rome, Naglowska pursued an interest in esotericism she had already begun to manifest in Switzerland. She became the friend, and perhaps the lover,[142] of Italian esotericist Julius Evola (1898–1974).[143] In Rome, she attended the lectures on art and occultism by Rosicrucian painter Raoul Dal Molin Ferenzona (1879–1946),[144] and was involved by Evola in the Italian branch of the

141 See M. de Naglowska, *Le Chant du harem*, Geneva: The Author, 1912, a collection of poems. She also wrote a *Nouvelle Grammaire de la langue française*, Geneva: Eggimann, 1912.

142 See H.T. Hakl, "Maria de Naglowska and the Confrèrie de la Flèche d'Or", cit., p. 113.

143 Naglowska collaborated with Evola in the French translation of *La parole obscure du paysage intérieur: poeme à 4 voix. Traduit de l'italien par l'auteur et Maria de Naglowska*, published without a date or reference to a publisher, probably in Rome by Evola himself around 1920. She also published in Italy another book of poems: M. de Naglowska, *Malgré les tempêtes. Chants d'amour*, Rome: Successori Loescher, 1921.

144 See M. de Naglowska, "L'Occultisme apporte la joie, mais souvent aussi le malheur", *L'Italie – Journal politique quotidien*, May 15, 1921.

literary-artistic movement Dada.[145] Occultism, however, could not solve the economic problems of Maria. She eventually accepted the invitation to join her son Alexandre, who in the meantime had become a successful businessman in Alexandria, Egypt.

Maria was thus reunited with her three children, since Marie agreed to accompany her to Egypt and even young André, who did not like the second wife his father had married in Palestine, came to live with his brother in Alexandria. In Egypt, Maria began to write for *La Bourse Egyptienne* and even attempted to establish her own newspaper, *Alexandrie nouvelle* (1928–1929). She also became a member of the Theosophical Society, which had a long tradition in Egypt, for which she started a regular activity as a lecturer. Her daughter Marie married a Swiss engineer in Egypt and followed him when he returned to his homeland. Of her two sons, André, the most restless, eventually decided to return to his father in Palestine, while Alexandre married in Egypt and started devoting more time to his family than to his mother's political and religious ideas.

Maria then decided to return to Rome, where she was contacted by a French publishing house, which offered her a job in Paris. She arrived in France in September 1929, with a visa that allowed her to live in Paris but not to work there. The limited visa, she believed, was due to the negative information provided by the French embassies in Switzerland and Egypt. In misery, she had to accept all kinds of illegal works to survive. She settled in Montparnasse, where she began to reunite her friends in various brasseries, including the still existing La Coupole, which was known as the "café of the occultists".

Thanks to the small jobs of her son André, who once again had abandoned his father and returned to Paris, Maria could dedicate her time to her esoteric activities, without living in luxury but without worrying about daily survival. From October 15, 1930 to December 15, 1933, she published eighteen issues of a new magazine, *La Flèche*, which included an article Evola sent from Rome. Her few but loyal disciples sold the magazine at the doors of lectures and conferences on esoteric and occult topics, which were frequent in Paris in the 1930s. Her small circle included the alchemist Jean Carteret (1906–1980), the painter and poet Camille Bryen (1907–1977), the sculptor Germaine Richier (1902–1959), and the writer Claude Lablatinière, who signed his name as Claude d'Igée or d'Ygé (1912–1964). The latter presented Maria to Marc Pluquet (1912–?), who would write her first biography. Born in 1912, Pluquet would become a well-known architect and an associate of Le Corbusier (pseud. of Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris, 1887–1965). His most famous project, which he never

145 See Michele Olzi, "Dada 1921: un'ottima annata. Maria de Naglowska e il *milieu* dadaista in Italia", *La Biblioteca di Via Senato Milano*, vol. VIII, no. 1, January 2016, pp. 22–25.

completed, was the "Atélopole", a tall building (250 to 400 meters) of indefinite length, an "habitable Chinese Wall" intended for the modern megalopolis.[146]

Pluquet reported, in particular, how Maria lived in Paris around 1935. The owners of La Coupole did not make her pay for her dinner and drinks, because there were always a number of listeners gathered around her that assured sufficient profit to the establishment. These informal sessions at La Coupole were reminiscent of those of Gurdjieff in other Parisian cafés. She also devoted two hours every day to receive her disciples at the American Hotel (15, rue Bréa). She lived in the much cheaper Hotel de la Paix (225, boulevard Raspail) and every Wednesday gave a public lecture at Studio Raspail (36, rue Vavin). The fauna of La Coupole was cosmopolitan and often there were more foreigners than French. After all, according to Pluquet, Naglowska spoke good English, Russian, German, French, Italian, Yiddish, she understood "Czech, Polish, Spanish", and "was quite good" with Arabic.[147] Although few Catholics would have recognized her ideas as orthodox, she spent all her afternoons meditating in the Catholic church of Notre-Dame des Champs.

Around forty people attended the Wednesday lectures, and a small group passed in another room for more discreet rituals. Maria was not an average occultist, because she often spoke of the role of Satan and Lucifer and certainly defined as "satanic" the initiations she offered. She often touched the theme of sexual magic, arousing the interest of journalists, among whom Stéphane Pizzella (1900–1972), who would become a popular voice on the French radio in subsequent decades. Pizzella published a reportage on *Voilà*, illustrated with some curious photograph, which ensured the Parisian fame of Naglowska.[148] Because of this publicity, interest grew, to the extent that at Studio Raspail there was no more room to contain all those who came to listen to the famous "Priestess of Satan". Maria agreed to speak at the Club du Faubourg, where literates and eccentrics met, but immediately found the environment uncongenial. It was too far from her elitist ideas on esotericism, and too full of simply curious people.

At the end of 1935, Maria began to explain to her disciples that very sad days were coming for Europe and that her mission in Paris had ended. Her doctrine would not be understood by the present generation, but would be rediscovered "after two or three generations"; in the meantime, Europe would

146 See Michel Ragon, "Architecture et mégastructures", *Communications*, vol. 42, 1985, pp. 69–77 (p. 73). The project was described in Marc Pluquet, *Atélopole la cité linéaire: une cité libérée des multiples contraintes de la ville*, n.p.: The Author, 1982.

147 M. Pluquet, *La Sophiale, Maria de Naglowska: sa vie – son oeuvre*, cit., pp. 15–16.

148 References *ibid.*, pp. 25–26.

be devastated.[149] After having discouraged her disciples from joining other occult societies, of which she had little consideration, on a Saturday of 1936, not on Wednesday as usual, she gave her final lecture at the Studio Raspail. She also privately bid farewell to the most faithful disciples: Carteret, Ygé, Bryen, Pluquet, and a few others. Reportedly, the death of a follower in one of her hanging rituals hastened her departure from Paris.[150] Maria also refused to designate a successor, considering Ygé as too intellectual and Bryen, on the contrary, too practical. Naglowska thus left for Zurich, where she lived for some months with the daughter Marie and her husband. According to Pluquet, who seems the most reliable witness, she died in Zurich, in her bed, on April 17, 1936. The rumors according to which she disappeared from Paris during the Second World War, probably deported by the Germans due to her marriage to a Jew, are probably inaccurate.

The disciples continued to meet for another few years and continued after the war, but by now the group was very small. Pluquet claimed that, through him, the ideas of Naglowska on modern cities eventually influenced Le Corbusier.[151] Pluquet led an adventurous life, living in Madagascar between 1948 and 1973. Between 1964 and 1978, he met several times Naglowska's daughter, Marie Grob, in Zurich. He found letters and photographs of Naglowska, but not the unpublished works and rituals he was looking for. Apparently, a suitcase that contained these papers had mysteriously disappeared. It is also true that vanished bags, suitcases, and archives are a recurring topic in the history of occultism.

In 1974, Pluquet managed to obtain from Grob the authorization to reprint her mother's works with the Éditions de l'Index of Brussels, but this did not prevent a series of "pirate" editions to be published in France by groups inspired by Crowley, that were interested in possible relations between the British magus and Naglowska. Writing in 1984, Pluquet concluded that the rediscovery of her doctrines as announced by Naglowska had not yet occurred: but perhaps the two or three generations she referred to had not really passed.

The main works of Naglowska were published in Paris between 1932 and 1934. At that time, Crowley was traveling between Germany and England. He was in a downward phase, tormented by poverty and controversies, but he continued to maintain contacts with followers in Paris.[152] Apparently, Naglowska has not

149 *Ibid*., p. 29.

150 H.T. Hakl, "Maria de Naglowska and the Confrèrie de la Flèche d'Or", cit., p. 115.

151 M. Pluquet, *La Sophiale, Maria de Naglowska: sa vie – son œuvre*, cit., p. 36.

152 See J. Symonds, *The King of the Shadow Realm. Aleister Crowley: His Life and Magic*, cit., pp. 474–505.

left traces in Crowley's writings or even in the polemics on Clotilde Bersone. This is a pity, since she would have deserved, much more than the fictional Italian young girl, the title of "Élue du Dragon". The temple where she gathered her followers was in fact the only "Satanist Temple",[153] publicly introduced as such, opened in Paris at that time.

The satanic worldview of Naglowska rests on a series of complex premises, about which misunderstandings are easy. In her text *The Light of Sex: Ritual of Satanic Initiation*, she moves from two philosophical postulates: the supremacy of "becoming" over "being" and the absence in the universe of elements that are "absolute, perfect and immovable".[154] God is Life, and Life is God. Life is self-generated, and generates the world through a dialectical process where the "yes" is constantly confronted with a "no", i.e. with the negation of Life. This is the esoteric sense of the biblical tale of the Garden of Eden in *Genesis*. Life (God) created both Truth and Lie, Origin and Appearance. Life progresses in the story of the universe through Appearance or Façade, as Truth by itself would destroy Life.

This cosmic drama took place among the first human beings. If they had eaten immediately the fruit of the Tree of Life, "God (that is, Life) would no longer have existed".[155] This does not mean that human beings today should live exclusively in the kingdom of Appearance. Just as Truth alone would destroy the eternal becoming of Life, thus Appearance by itself would block it. In the human being, thus, two components are present: the body, which is God (Life), and the rational mind, which continuously protests against God; "but if the rational mind would not protest, the body would not be".[156] In other words, "if the rational mind would cease to protest, Life (God) would also cease to exist".[157]

Thus, we can say that our "rational mind is at the service of Satan", or better still that "the rational mind is Satan". Its role includes a protest and a struggle against God, which are both "a duty" and "an ordeal". The "secret doctrine of the Royal Art" is thus the doctrine of the "ordeal of Satan".[158] In some particular

153 Maria de Naglowska, *La Lumière du Sexe. Rituel d'Initiation Satanique Selon la Doctrine du Troisième Terme de la Trinité*, Paris: Éditions de La Flèche, 1932, p. 139. An English translation is: *The Light of Sex: Initiation, Magic, and Sacrament*, ed. by Donald Traxler and H.T. Hakl, Rochester (Vermont): Inner Traditions/Bear & Co., 2011. I quote and translate from the French first edition of 1932.

154 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

155 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

156 *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.

157 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

158 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

eras of history, true initiates appear and propose new rituals, or "Masses", and new forms of art and social organization, with the aim of perpetuating the dialectic between Satan (Rational mind) and God (Life). While most human beings participate in this dialectical process without realizing it, a higher class or order of initiates consciously serves Satan. They realize, "tragically", that "the negative action of Satan is absolutely necessary to God" and that "there is no initiate that does not serve Satan before serving God".

It is within the dialectic between Satan and God that the Son was born. The eternal Son was manifested in Jesus Christ, who "himself served Satan before serving God".[159] Satan, after having fought the Father, continues to fight the Son in the same way. From the fight between Satan and the Son, the Holy Ghost was born. Only the initiates, who receive the revelations of Satan, know the great secret: that the Holy Ghost is "female by essence".[160] As this information spreads, a new era of the "Third Term of the Trinity" is being prepared. We discussed earlier how the connection between the Holy Ghost and the woman, and between the new era of the Spirit and the advent of a female messiah, was already present in French occultism in the previous century.

The initiates, consciously, and all the other creatures, unconsciously, participate in the great movement of history: the ascension of a symbolic mountain, which is led by Satan. On this mountain, the initiate will have to be hanged and his or her body will have to fall from the summit. But Satan will guarantee that the initiate will remain alive. It is in fact this ascension that will allow the initiate, after having served Satan, to give service to God, and to understand that the two types of service are part of the same necessary dialectical process. The initiatory tools of the ascent are based on a triangular distinction of man in three centers, the head, the heart, and the genitals. The idea is so similar to certain theses of Gurdjieff, who in the same years lived in Paris, to make it probable that there was some contact.

Although for Naglowska, as for Gurdjieff, the initiate should activate all three centers, the third center, sexuality, is the crucial one for ascending the cosmic mountain. In the course of the ascension, while sharing Satan's own ordeal, the initiate encounters temptations, which in reality "comes from God rather than from Satan".[161] One problem is "the female sex, which tries through all women to win against Satan". In fact, the objective of the initiate is to "ride the white horse", which means that "Satan is victorious and God is defeated".[162]

159 *Ibid.*, p. 39.
160 *Ibid.*, p. 52.
161 *Ibid.*, p. 68.
162 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

However, the Satanism of Naglowska should always be understood in its philosophical context. The victory of Satan is dialectically necessary to Life, i.e. to God himself.

Naglowska' ideas are exposed in *The Light of Sex*, in its sequel, *The Mystery of the Hanging*,[163] and in a novelized version as *The Sacred Ritual of Magical Love.*[164] She also illustrates the techniques and rituals that help the initiates of her order, the Knights of the Golden Arrow, to climb the satanic mountain. In the degree of *Balayeur* (literally "Dustman", but the reference is to interior cleansing), the initiate is offered a teaching on the foundations of Satanism. In the degree of *Chasseur Affranchi* (Free Hunter), there is a first initiatory trial. The male initiate is placed in front of a woman, his sacred lover or spiritual guide in the order, and the two would make love without reaching orgasms, according to the technique of *coitus reservatus.*

This was not new inside the occult tradition, and was propagated by Berridge inside the Golden Dawn. What was, however, new in Naglowska was her idea that initiate women should remain "virgin", i.e. avoid the orgasm or experience it only vicariously, sharing spiritually the orgasm or the man. In fact, Naglowska believed, the orgasm is "solar", and belongs to the Sun (the penis), while the Moon (the woman's vagina and clitoris) should remain "cold and mute". When women try to experience "local pleasure", they "rapidly grow old" and humanity experiences a general decline.[165] Naglowska's ceremonies were described in an impressive manner, adding that the adept could even expect "that Satan will tell him something".[166] A journalist who was himself part of the occult milieu as a member of Papus' Martinist Order, Pierre Mariel (1900–1980), suggested that the not particularly young age of the women involved made the initiations less exciting than they might have seemed at first sight.[167] At least

163 M. de Naglowska, *Le Mystère de la Pendaison. Initiation Satanique Selon la Doctrine du Troisième Terme de la Trinité*, Paris: Éditions de La Flèche, 1933 (Engl. tr., *Advanced Sex Magic: The Hanging Mystery Initiation*, ed. by D. Traxler, Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions/Bear & Co., 2011).

164 M. de Naglowska, *Le Rite Sacré de l'Amour Magique. Aveu*, Paris: Éditions de La Flèche, 1932 (Engl. tr., *The Sacred Rite of Magical Love: A Ceremony of Word and Flesh*, ed. by D. Traxler, Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions/Bear & Co., 2011).

165 M. de Naglowska, *Le Mystère de la Pendaison. Initiation Satanique Selon la Doctrine du Troisième Terme de la Trinité*, p. 84.

166 M. de Naglowska, *La Lumière du Sexe. Rituel d'Initiation Satanique Selon la Doctrine du Troisième Terme de la Trinité*, cit., p. 114.

167 Mariel told this to Jean-Paul Bourre, *Les Sectes luciférienes aujourd'hui*, Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1978, p. 87. This book repeated the mistake according to which Maria de Naglowska was deported by the Germans during World War II.

one of the adepts, the brunette Hanoum, was however not old, and famous for her beauty.[168]

The third degree, Invisible Knight, could be achieved only after a "journey in the profane world" of three, seven, or twelve years after the sexual ceremony of the previous degree, also called the Virile Candle.[169] This level taught that there are three legitimate religions: Judaism, the religion of the Father; Christianity, the religion of the Son; and Naglowska's new religion, the religion of the Mother and of Satan.[170] The degree also taught the complementary role of Jesus Christ and Judas. The Catholic Church "deceived humanity for more than ten centuries", hiding the authentic doctrine on Judas. This mystification, however, was necessary. Naglowska's *Mystery of the Hanging* was paradoxically "dedicated to the Sovereign Pontiff Pius XI, the Pope of the Critical Hour".[171] Naglowska claimed that, exactly during the coronation of Pius XI in Rome, a mysterious monk, her master, had contacted her beginning to reveal the doctrines of the Third Religion.[172] The story was similar to the one circulating in Paris' Fraternité des Polaires, whose arithmetic "Oracle of Astral Force" had reportedly been revealed to the founders by a mysterious hermit in Italy in 1908,[173] and whose meetings Naglowska herself attended.[174]

According to Naglowska, both Christ and Judas, both the Cross and the Tree where Judas hung himself, are equally necessary to the dialectic between God and Satan. If there had been no Judas, if Jesus Christ had not been crucified, or if he had only been crucified by his adversaries, without the betrayal of his disciple, then the absolute White would have triumphed, destroying its equilibrium with the Black. Satan himself would have converted and history would have ended. This apparent triumph of God, however, "would have been the final catastrophe, as God himself would have died in the final embrace with

168 Alexandrian, *Les Libérateurs de l'amour*, cit., p. 202. For a description of a ritual by one of the adepts, see "Une séance magique", *La Flèche*, no. 12, May 15, 1932. See also the interview with Maria de Naglowska in P. Geyraud, *Les Petites Églises de Paris*, cit., pp. 144–153.

169 M. de Naglowska, *Le Mystère de la Pendaison. Initiation Satanique Selon la Doctrine du Troisième Terme de la Trinité*, cit., p. 102.

170 M. de Naglowska, *Le Rite Sacré de l'Amour Magique. Aveu*, cit., pp. 201–202.

171 M. de Naglowska, *Le Mystère de la Pendaison. Initiation Satanique Selon la Doctrine du Troisième Terme de la Trinité*, cit., pp. 4, 7.

172 See M. de Naglowska, "Mon Chef spirituel", *La Flèche*, no. 10, February 15, 1932, pp. 2–3.

173 See Zam Bhotiva [pseud. of Cesare Accomani], *Asia Mysteriosa. L'Oracle de force astrale comme moyen de communication avec "les petites lumières d'Orient"*, Paris: Dorbon, 1929.

174 See M. de Naglowska, "Les Polaires", La *Flèche*, no. 13, June 15, 1932, p. 3.

the converted Satan".[175] In fact, the times were not ready. The time had not yet come for the union between Satan and God. Satan should not have converted, so that Life would not sink into nothingness. Hence the absolute necessity of Judas. "One cannot become an adept of the Religion of the Third Term of the Trinity, wrote Naglowska, if one does not accept the dogma that places the Work of Judas next to the Work of Jesus".[176] At the time of Jesus, in fact, Satan could not yet, without running the risk of a cosmic disaster, disappear from history and return to God. Jesus Christ, with his Passion, ran the risk of tearing Satan away from the bodies of the humans, but fortunately, with his betrayal, "Judas turned him back to the human flesh" and Satan kept residing in human sexuality.[177]

Naglowska's highest degree, the Invisible Knight, was "the full realization of the Work of Satan"[178] and was placed under the patronage of Judas. To become an Invisible Knight, it was firstly necessary to take an "oral exam" on the complex doctrine of the Third Term of the Trinity. It was also necessary to have established a deep relation with a "priestess of love" that had to be necessarily a "virgin", in the sense explained above, as "virginity is the great satanic virtue".[179]

The final ritual was composed of two moments. In the first, the male initiate, who symbolically revived Judas, was hanged and detached from the rope an instant before the hanging became fatal. In the second, he was brought back to his strength, the same night of the initiation, thanks to the cures of a priestess. The male initiate and the priestess then united in a ritual act of lovemaking, and the male was allowed his orgasm. The act was described in a symbolic way, but it seems it consisted in a coitus followed by "assimilation" of the male semen, i.e. spermatophagy. A complete system of sexual magic was thus proposed to the initiates. In the novel *The Sacred Ritual of Magical Love*, it became clear that for each of the lovers, Micha and Xénia, the human partner was simply the substitute of a more jealous and mysterious lover, Satan. Each human partner worked as a vicar of Satan for the other.[180]

Apparently, these rituals were really practiced, although it is unclear whether in one ritual hanging an initiate really died or was saved at the last minute by a

175 M. de Naglowska, *Le Mystère de la Pendaison. Initiation Satanique Selon la Doctrine du Troisième Terme de la Trinité*, cit., pp. 31–32.

176 *Ibid.*, p. 41.

177 *Ibid.*, p. 50.

178 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

179 *Ibid.*, p. 83.

180 M. de Naglowska, *Le Rite Sacré de l'Amour Magique. Aveu*, cit., p. 101.

doctor.[181] Rumors in Montparnasse reduced all this to gossip about Naglowska as "an organizer of *partouzes*". On the other hand, the books also mention a ritual, which should have happened after the holy hanging and its amorous aftermath, but was probably never celebrated. It was called the Golden Mass, a sexual ritual that would have included in the magical sexual act seven members: four women and three men. Naglowska concluded that the Golden Mass was reserved for the future Era of the Third Term of the Trinity. On February 5, 1935, however, she staged at the Studio Raspail a "Preliminary Golden Mass", where the sexual element was purely symbolical.

The fame of Naglowska remains connected to a text that describes a great part of the sexual techniques of her order, which was translated into many languages. She published *Magia Sexualis* in 1931, and claimed it was a translation from an unpublished original by P.B. Randolph, the American mulatto doctor who had founded the Fraternitas Rosae Crucis and acquired a considerable fame as an expert in sexual magic. Randolph' story would take us far away from our theme.[182] It is not clear how Naglowska could have come into possession of his unedited manuscript.[183] Randolph visited Paris in 1855 and in 1857. He befriended the magnetists, both the aristocrats such as Baron Denis-Jules Dupotet de Sennevoy (1796–1881), and the commoners, such as Louis-Alphonse Cahagnet (1809–1885).[184] However, it is not certain that he established a real circle of Parisian disciples, whose presence could have persisted into the following century.

There is no doubt that *Magia Sexualis*[185] contains a certain number of ideas by Randolph, taken from other works of his. The style, however, is not of

181 J.-P. Bourre, *Les Sectes luciférienne aujourd'hui*, cit., p. 87.

182 For a very fictionalized version by one of the members of the Fraternity founded by Randolph, see R.[euben] Swinburne Clymer [1878–1966], *Dr. Paschal Beverly Randolph and the Supreme Grand Dome of the Rosicrucians in France*, Quakertown (Pennsylvania): The Philosophical Publishing Company, 1929. For a sober scholarly version, see John Patrick Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth-Century Black American Spiritualist, Rosicrucian, and Sex Magician*, Albany (New York): State University of New York Press, 1997.

183 According to Naglowska, during one of her difficult moments the text was given to her by "the hand of a stranger", who walked away immediately, in a busy Paris street (*La Flèche*, no. 7, December 15, 1931).

184 P. Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth-Century Black American Spiritualist, Rosicrucian, and Sex Magician*, cit., pp. 51–59, 64.

185 P.B. Randolph, *Magia Sexualis*, Paris: Éditions Robert Télin, 1931 (Engl. tr. *Magia Sexualis: Sexual Practices for Magical Power*, ed. by D. Traxler, Rochester, Vermont: Inner Traditions/ Bear & Co., 2012).

Randolph. Italian historian Mario Praz (1896–1982) pointed out that one of the main rituals of *Magia Sexualis* corresponds exactly, to the minor details, to one of the scenes in a novel by Péladan *À Cœur perdu*, published in 1888. He asked "to what extent Naglowska's text reflected the ideas of Randolph" and where, instead, it "absorbed the teachings of Péladan".[186] Hans Thomas Hakl traced some of Naglowska's ideas back to the Cenacle of Astarté, a French group founded around 1920, and a Société Egyptienne Secrète connected with Czech esotericist Petr Kohout (1900–1944), a member of the occult order Universalia, who lived in Paris in the 1930s and wrote there under the pseudonym of Pierre de Lasenic.[187] John Patrick Deveney, the author of the most complete biography of Randolph, concluded that *Magia Sexualis* was a mixture of texts by the American doctor, oral instructions likely his, particularly on the magical use of drugs, and original texts written by Naglowska.[188]

Magia Sexualis provides us with a description of the sexual magical techniques taught by Naglowska, but only with great caution can it be used in order to study Randolph. It is quite surprising that Evola, who knew Naglowska, considered *Magia Sexualis* as a representative text of the ideas of Randolph, apparently without realizing the doubts that existed on its authenticity.[189] Naglowska insisted that *Magia Sexualis* was not her work and had been written by a man, not by a woman. As a consequence, its male ideas were different from those of Naglowska's "Third Religion", which were specifically female.[190]

Naglowska does not really belong to the history of Rosicrucian organizations and the disciples of Randolph. But she belongs to the history of Satanism, which suddenly emerged in Paris through Naglowska's Order of the Knights of the Golden Arrow. It was a quite complicated Satanism, built on a complex philosophical vision of the world, of which little would survive its initiator. Naglowska, however, represents an important passage connecting Satanism with occult techniques of sexual magic. These techniques found their origins in Randolph, passed through Crowley, and would be found in the Satanist milieus that would emerge after World War II.

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186 Mario Praz, *La carne, la morte e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica*, 5th ed., expanded, Florence: Sansoni, 1976, pp. 251–252 (translated as *The Romantic Agony*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933).

187 H.T. Hakl, "Maria de Naglowska and the Confrèrie de la Flèche d'Or", cit., p. 118.

188 P. Deveney, *Paschal Beverly Randolph: A Nineteenth-Century Black American Spiritualist, Rosicrucian, and Sex Magician*, cit., p. 226.

189 See Evola's introduction to P.B. Randolph, *Magia Sexualis: Sexual Practices for Magical Power*, cit.

190 See M. de Naglowska, "Satanisme masculin, Satanisme féminin", *La Flèche* no. 16, March 15, 1933, pp. 2–4.

Satan the Barber: Herbert Sloane's Ophite Cultus Sathanas

It is occasionally claimed that Herbert Arthur Sloane (1905–1975), a barber born in Rowsburg, Ohio on September 3, 1905, operated the first modern organization of religious Satanism, pre-dating the foundation of the Church of Satan in 1966. It was called the Our Lady of Endor Coven of the Ophite Cultus Sathanas, and it was reportedly founded in 1948.[191] Sloane, however, only started mentioning the date 1948 in interviews he gave after 1969, three years after LaVey founded the Church of Satan.

The Web site satanservice.org has posted a large collection of documents on Sloane.[192] He completed only one year of high school, and in 1928 married a widow called Lilian Mae Harris (1902-?). He worked primarily as a barber in Mansfield, Ohio, but supplemented his income by offering his services as a Spiritualist medium, and styling himself "Reverend Sloane". Local media reported that in 1932, a sign on Sloane's home was stolen, reading "Rev. H.A. Sloane, Spiritualist reading and consultation". He conducted services in various Spiritualist churches and also claimed he was a "numerologist". In 1938, Sloane's wife Lilian got in trouble with the law as the co-organizer of a prostitution ring. She was acquitted at the trial, and separated from Sloane shortly thereafter.

Sloane moved to rural Holmes County, in North-Western Ohio, and in 1941 enlisted in the Army, where he served as a barber until 1945. Released from the Army, he married again and moved first to Cleveland, Ohio, then to South Bend, Indiana. There is no doubt that he was a successful barber, and in 1953 he published a book on *The Sloane System of Hair Culture*.[193] He also advertised himself in *Ebony* as a "licensed trichologist" specializing in hair care for African Americans.

Now with a third wife, Sloane continued a parallel career in the world of alternative spirituality. In 1946, as he later reported, he acquired a life-size doll, April Belle, that he used in his Spiritualist séances, something other mediums did both for "telepathic" and fraudulent purposes. In 1967, *The Blade*, a daily

191 Sloane and his group are discussed by J.R. Lewis, *Satanism Today: An Encyclopedia of Religion, Folklore, and Popular Culture*, Santa Barbara (California): ABC-Clio, 2001, pp. 96, 200–201; and P. Faxneld, *Mörkrets apostlar: satanism i äldre tid*, cit., pp. 202–215.

192 "Herbert Arthur Sloane", available at <http://www.satanservice.org/wiki/Herbert_Arthur_Sloane>, last accessed on August 26, 2015.

193 Herbert Arthur Sloane, *The Sloane System of Hair Culture*, South Bend (Indiana): The Author, 1953.

newspaper in Toledo, Ohio, published a reportage on local psychics. It included Sloane, mentioning him under his name of "Kala the Cardopractor".

The reporter noted that he received clients in "a musty little shop in West Toledo", where presumably he also worked as a barber, and divined "the future by reading tea leaves and a deck of playing cards. On the face of each card is a plethora of hieroglyphic symbols. Kala prepared for the reading, which costs $5 and takes 30 minutes, by washing his hands, mixing the tea leaves with a soupçon of water, and lighting a large oil lamp and a stick of incense". He then turned the teacup upside down, gave to the reporter a "magic wand" to hold in his left hand, and told him to shuffle the cards and turn the teacup for three times. Sloane made some very generic predictions for the reporter, and instructed him how to give "telepathic treatments" to calm his friends and give them peace of mind. He should, Sloane said, "take a photograph of the person, or the queen of spades, and rub it between [his] hands".

Curiously, the article also revealed that Sloane was the president of a club of fans of Rita Atlanta, a popular night club dancer, known as "the champagne girl" because in her shows she appeared and danced in a huge champagne glass.[194] The connection makes more sense when we consider that Atlanta, an Austrian burlesque stripper whose real name was Rita Alexander, was also known for her mediumistic abilities and was capable of seeing ghosts. She told her story to Hans Holzer (1920–2009), the same paranormal researcher who later interviewed Sloane.[195] Later in life, she worked as a professional psychic.[196]

In 1968, it came out that Sloane was the leader of an even more interesting organization than the Rita Atlanta Fan Club. On December 2, 1968, Toledo's *The Blade* revealed to its readers that British occult writer Richard Cavendish was corresponding with the leader of a Satanist cult in their own quiet Ohio city.[197] On December 4, the cat came out of the bag, and a two-part article in *The Blade* revealed that the Satanist leader was none other than the man known as "Kala the Cardopractor" to the citizens of Toledo, i.e. Sloane.

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194 Tom Gearhart, "Toledo's Crystal Ball Business", *The Blade Sunday Magazine*, August 6, 1967, pp. 9–12.

195 Hans Holzer, *Ghosts: True Encounters with the World Beyond*, New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 1997, pp. 509–511. This piece of information on Rita Atlanta eluded the otherwise persistent researchers at satanservice.org.

196 See the Web site of New Orleans' Bustout Burlesque, for which Rita Atlanta still occasionally exhibited in the 2010s in shows about the history of burlesque, while describing her main profession as a psychic: <http://neworleansburlesque.wix.com/lasvegas#!the-legends>, last accessed on October 29, 2015.

197 Fernand Auberjonois [1910–2004], "Witches Reported Active in Toledo", *The Blade*, December 2, 1968.

It was Sloane who had sent a three-page "Satanic manifesto" to Cavendish, explaining that the "ophitic Gnostics" of Toledo "do not regard the devil, or Satan, as an element of evil but as a power of good", who delivered salvation in the Garden of Eden. December 4 was a night of full moon. "When the moon is not full, *The Blade* reported, Mr. Sloane is a barber. He also reads the future in cards and tea leaves". With the full moon, however, Sloane "will preside over a satanic memorial service, called 'sabbat', in a Toledo home". Part of the service would be "a midnight ceremony by flickering candlelight at which the participants circle an altarpiece – usually a nude woman". However, Sloane said his group "was more concerned with the metaphysical than the physical" and that his services were not that far from the Christian ones, "opening with an invocation, including communion, and ending with a social hour over coffee and doughnuts".[198]

The Blade referred to the group as "Our Lady of Indore", but in fact Sloane called it the "Our Lady of Endor" coven of an "Ophite Cultus Sathanas". Rather than to the Indian city of Indore, Sloane, a Spiritualist medium, was referring to the Witch of Endor mentioned in the Bible in the *First Book of Samuel* 28:3–25, a medium who summoned the spirit of the prophet Samuel for King Saul. Sloane might also have been aware of the prevailing Evangelical anti-Spiritualist interpretations, regarding the Witch of Endor as a Satanist and the presumed evocation of Samuel as a demonic apparition. The Ophites were members of a Gnostic sect of the late second and early third centuries, accused by their opponents of worshipping a snake.

As for "Sathanas", the researchers at satanservice.org speculated that Sloane took the name from "The Return of Sathanas", a story by Richard Sharpe Shaver (1907–1975) published in 1946 in the pulp magazine *Amazing Stories*.[199] In Shaver's story, Sathanas is a depraved archangel and the evil ruler of the planet Satana. He kidnaps women from various planets, uses them for his pleasure, and then sells them to owners of intergalactic brothels. Shaver, a Communist, ended up being kicked out of *Amazing Stories*, and later became part of the UFO and early New Age subculture. He always maintained that his stories were based on "voices" he heard and were, for a good part, "true".[200]

In the 1968 *Blade* interview and in his correspondence with Cavendish, Sloane insisted that his group had nothing to do with LaVey's Church of

198 "Local 'Witch' Deadly Serious", *The Blade*, December 4, 1968. The same article was reprinted the following day.

199 Richard Shaver, "The Return of Sathanas", *Amazing Stories*, vol. 20, no. 8, October–November 1946, pp. 8–62.

200 See "'I remember Lemuria' and 'The Return of Sathanas' by Richard Shaver", available at <http://sacred-texts.com/ufo/irl/>, last accessed on August 26, 2015.

Satan. Between 1969 and 1972, Sloane was interviewed by Brad Steiger,[201] Hans Holzer,[202] and Leo Martello (1931–2000),[203] all authors of popular books on witchcraft and Satanism. He actually invited Holzer to a service of the coven, which was attended by five people. The small audience repeated after Sloane: "I believe in an infinite intelligence incomprehensible to all finite beings. I believe in Sathanas as my Savior by virtue of the Ophitic gnosis booned by him to Our Blessed Mother Eve in the Garden of Eden. I believe in Eve as our mundane mother, the blessed Lilith as our spiritual mother. I believe in Asmodius and all the power and principalities of the celestial realms of Sathanas". "I believe in the communion of the succubus and the incubus, Sloane and his five followers went on to chant. I believe in the gnosis of the Ophitic coven of Sathanas, in magic, and in the final release of the souls of all faithful witches from the powers of disdained demiurge unto a life everlasting in Orkus. All this through the power, the goodness, the guidance and wisdom of our Lord Sathanas". The service attended by Holzer also included readings, and they proved that the Toledo barber was quite well read on Gnosticism, as he proposed excerpts from the scholarly works of Hans Jonas (1903–1993).[204]

Sloane claimed that he had started his Satanist coven in 1948, eighteen years before the Church of Satan was founded, and that he had met Satan in the woods as a young boy in 1908. No independent evidence exists that the Toledo coven was founded in 1948. Although some scholars accepted the date of 1948 as believable, it seems safer to conclude that Sloane in the 1940s and 1950s was a Spiritualist medium with different occult interests and a very small number of followers. After LaVey founded the Church of Satan, he included in his offer of occult services also Satanist rituals with coffee, doughnuts, and a nude woman as an altar. He tried to claim that his satanic activities pre-dated LaVey, but we have only his word for it. He died on June 16, 1975 in Toledo, without having ever been really successful as a Satanist, but quite successful as a barber.

From Crowley to Lucifer: The Early Fraternitas Saturni

Crowley was not a Satanist according to the definition adopted in this book, but things are less clear for some of his disciples. A case in point is Eugen Grosche

201 Brad Steiger, *Sex and Satanism*, New York: Ace, 1969, pp. 16–21.

202 H. Holzer, *The New Pagans: An Inside Report on the Mystery Cults of Today*, Garden City (New York): Doubleday & Co., 1972, pp. 69–81.

203 Leo L. Martello, *Black Magic, Satanism, and Vodoo*, New York: Harper Collins, 1972, pp. 31–34.

204 H. Holzer, *The New Pagans: An Inside Report on the Mystery Cults of Today*, cit., pp. 74–76.

("Gregor A. Gregorius", 1888–1964), who served as the first Grand Master of the Fraternitas Saturni.[205] The antecedent of this organization was the Berlin lodge of the Collegium Pansophicum, an organization founded in the 1920s by Heinrich Tränker ("Recnartus", 1880–1956), a member both of the Theosophical Society and the O.T.O..[206] Grosche, a dealer and publisher of occult books, had organized the Berlin Pansophical lodge in 1924 as an evolution of the Astrological-Esoteric Workgroup (Astrologisch-esoterische Arbeitsgemeinschaft) he had founded earlier that year. The full name of the lodge was "Pansophic Lodge of the Light-Seeking Brothers, Orient of Berlin" (Pansophische Loge der lichtsuchenden Brüder Orient Berlin). Another notable member of the Berlin lodge was Albin Grau (1884–1971), an artist and the production designer for the celebrated 1922 vampire movie *Nosferatu*, directed by Friederich Wilhelm Murnau (1888–1931).

In 1925, Crowley visited Tränker in his home near the Thuringian city of Weida[207] and asked that the Collegium Pansophicum submit to him. Tränker refused, but the Berlin lodge looked at the events in Weida as a failure of his leadership. This led in 1926 to the schism of the Fraternitas Saturni. It was formally organized with this name in Berlin in 1926, with Grosche as Grand Master. Grosche also established the Society for Esoteric Studies (Esoterische Studiengesellschaft) as an external circle where potential new members for the Fraternitas Saturni could be gathered and trained. The Society was the successor of the Esoteric Lodge School (Esoterische Logenschule), which had served as an outer circle for the Pansophic lodge of Berlin between 1924 and 1926.[208]

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205 On the Fraternitas Saturni, see Stephen Eldred Flowers, *Fire and Ice: Magical Teachings of Germany's Greatest Secret Occult Order*, St. Paul (Minnesota): Llewellyn Publications, 1990; H.T. Hakl, "The Theory and Practice of Sexual Magic, Exemplified in Four Magical Groups in the Early Twentieth Century", cit., pp. 445–450; H.T. Hakl, "The Magical Order of the Fraternitas Saturni", in H. Bogdan and G. Djurdjevic (eds.), *Occultism in a Global Perspective*, cit., pp. 37–55; Peter-Robert König (ed.), *In Nomine Demiurgi Saturni 1925–1969*, Munich: ARW, 1998; P.-R. König (ed.), *In Nomine Demiurgi Nosferati 1970–1998*, Munich: ARW, 1999; P.-R. König (ed.), *In Nomine Demiurgi Homunculi*, Munich: ARW, 2010.

206 The definive treatment of Tränker's esoteric career is Volker Lechler, with Wolfgang Kistemann, *Heinrich Tränker als Theosoph, Rosenkreuzer und Pansoph*, Stuttgart: The Author, 2013. See also P.-R. König (ed.), *Das Beste von Heinrich Tränker*, Munich: ARW, 1998.

207 On the so called Weida conference, see V. Lechler, with W. Kistemann, *Heinrich Tränker als Theosoph, Rosenkreuzer und Pansoph*, cit., pp. 266–366. On Crowley's interactions with the German occult and artistic milieu, see Tobias Churton, *Aleister Crowley: The Beast in Berlin*, Rochester (Vermont), Toronto: Inner Traditions, 2014.

208 On the origins of the Fraternitas Saturni, see V. Lechler, *Die ersten Jahre der Fraternitas Saturni*, Stuttgart: Verlag Volker Lechler, 2015.

In 1927, another German occult group, the Order of Mental Architects, decided to disband, and its founder, Wilhelm Quintscher ("Rah Omir", 1893–1945), who also operated a number of fringe Masonic organizations, encouraged its members to join the Fraternitas Saturni.[209] Grosche informed Crowley that the Fraternitas Saturni would recognize no spiritual master, but would adopt the Law of Thelema as its basic charter.

The Fraternitas Saturni published a particularly rich corpus of esoteric volumes and journals, including "one of the most elegant occult journals even printed",[210] *Saturn Gnosis*, whose art director was Grau. In 1937, it was hit by the Nazi repression of occult groups, and Grosche went into exile in Switzerland and Italy. After the war, he became a member of the Communist Party and tried to make his ideas acceptable in East Germany. The party, however, had little patience with the occult and Grosche had to move to West Berlin in 1950. There, he patiently reorganized the Fraternitas Saturni and launched a monthly journal, the *Blätter für angewandte okkulte Lebenskunst*. He was reasonably successful, and soon the reorganized Fraternitas had some 100 members. In 1960, he published in 333 hand-signed copies a mysterious novel, *Exorial*, reportedly telling the real life story of a demonic entity who had been present in the Berlin lodge of the Fraternitas and possessed several members.[211]

Grosche died in 1964, followed in 1965 by his designated successor Margarete Berndt ("Roxane", 1920–1965). Internecine struggles for the succession, which had started in the last years of Grosche's life, followed. The publication of confidential material of the Fraternitas about sexual magic and the worship of Lucifer caused further problems. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Fraternitas had to suffer the schisms of the Ordo Saturni and the Communitas Saturni, although the latter was later reabsorbed into the parent organization. While reduced in numbers, the Fraternitas is still active at the time of this writing.

Crowley and the cosmology of Hanns Hörbiger (1860–1931) were clear influences on Grosche, but he added much of his own. He gave a Luciferian touch to the Fraternitas, going beyond Crowley's vision of Satan or Lucifer as a symbol of our deepest self. Grosche believed that Lucifer was much older than his Judeo-Christian misrepresentation. The world exists as a tension of opposites, Light and Darkness. Darkness is older than Light, and originally contained Light. The original god is Baphomet, also spelled backwards Temohpab, who includes both Light and Darkness. In our planetary system, the Logos of the

209 On Quintscher, see *ibid.*, pp. 179–270.

210 H.T. Hakl, "The Magical Order of the Fraternitas Saturni", cit., p. 40.

211 Gregor A. Gregorius, *Exorial – Der Roman eines demonisches Wesens*, Berlin: Privately printed, 1960.

Sun, Chrestos, manifested and brought light and life. But the rebellious angel Lucifer grabbed the torch of life and took it to the farthest extreme of the Solar System, taking the planetary form of Saturn. However, there is a part of darkness in the Sun and a deep light, with a presence of Chrestos himself, within Saturn. When Yahweh, a lesser deity, tried to keep humans in ignorance, Lucifer reappeared and offered them freedom, rebellion, and salvation. The serpent of Eden is thus the friend and brother of humans, not their enemy.

The sphere of Saturn includes an outer and an inner sphere, and a higher and lower octave. Lucifer is more properly identified with the higher octave of Saturn, also connected with the planet Uranus, and the male–female couple Satanas-Satana with the lower octave. The main sacrament of the Fraternitas Saturni is the Sacrament of Light, or Luciferian Mass, which is in the tradition of Crowley's Gnostic Mass and is based on a complicate system of sexual magic. Through the Luciferian Mass, the initiates transcend themselves through transformation in the Luciferian Light, although they may not understand fully what this is all about until they reach the highest stages in the Fraternitas Saturni's initiatory system, which is loosely based on the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry and includes thirty-three degrees.

"Contrary to current prejudice, according to Austrian scholar Hans Thomas Hakl, the FS [Fraternitas Saturni] is not primarily a sex magical order like the O.T.O. and sex magical rituals and writings in fact play only a minor role in its practices and doctrinal corpus as a whole".[212] Intercourse is allowed only rarely, following long periods of chastity. Sexuality, however, is regarded as important for entering the astral world and creating astral beings. In order to achieve the latter goal, a combination of semen and female secretions is collected from the vagina after a ritual intercourse, performed in a magical circle as protection against "astral vampires", "said to be always present at such occasions". The astral beings created in this way are bound to a symbol or magical name, written "on a parchment saturated with a mixture of the female and male fluids".

The operation may also require the use of drugs (cannabis, opium) "in order to enhance the power of visualization and for fumigation purposes" and "the necessarily careful use of so-called witch-ointments containing henbane, belladonna, thorn apple etc. to be rubbed into the area of sexual organs and under the armpits".[213] This creation of new astral beings should not be confused with the evocation of already existing demons. The documents of the Fraternitas

212 H.T. Hakl, "The Theory and Practice of Sexual Magic, Exemplified in Four Magical Groups in the Early Twentieth Century", cit., p. 447.

213 *Ibid.*, p. 488.

Saturni mention several other sexual rituals, some with references to Lucifer, although it is possible that certain rituals were never put to practice.[214]

There is little doubt that, at least in Grosche's times, since these elements may have been tuned down after his death, the Fraternitas Saturni was a Luciferian organization, had its place for Satan, and had "theistic" teachings going well beyond Crowley's magical atheism. Was Grosche a Satanist? "Generally speaking, wrote Stephen Eldred Flowers, a scholar who is also an active participant in the occult subculture, the ideas of Gregorius [Grosche] were more consistent [than Crowley's], mainly because he did not shrink from the 'dark aspects' and clear Luciferian connotations". However, "the Lucifer of the FS system is understood as first and foremost as a part of the Saturnian planetary sphere and is clearly identified with pre- or non-Christian Gnostic concepts. Therefore any attempt to characterize the FS as 'satanic' in the Christian sense of the term must fail".[215] In his most recent writings, Faxneld doubts that the label "Satanism" adequately describes the Fraternitas Saturni, even in its earlier incarnations, as the worship of Satan or Lucifer did not define its entire system.[216] Perhaps, Grosche should better be seen as one of the connecting rings between Crowley and Satanism.

Crowley and Gardner: Why Early Wicca was Not Satanist

Crowley was also in contact with Gerald Gardner, who is at the origins of modern Wicca. Gardner claimed he had been initiated into an ancient form of witchcraft by family circles in the English countryside. Most scholars, however, consider this initiation as purely fictional. Although most probably the first rituals of Wicca were conceived and written by Gardner,[217] some accused him of having hired Crowley, who had written the rituals for a fee. Today, we know that Gardner went to visit Crowley only three times, for a few hours, in 1947, the same year of the death of the O.T.O. leader. Crowley was by now old

214 See *ibid.*, p. 450, and P.-R. König (ed.), *In Nomine Demiurgi Saturni 1925–1969*, cit.

215 S.E. Flowers, *Fire and Ice: Magical Teachings of Germany's Greatest Secret Occult Order*, cit., p. 63.

216 P. Faxneld, "Secret Lineages and de Facto Satanists: Anton LaVey's Use of Esoteric Tradition", cit., p. 75.

217 For different accounts of the origins of the Wicca, see Doreen Valiente, *The Rebirth of Witchcraft*, London: Robert Hale, 1989; Aidan A. Kelly, *Crafting the Art of Magic, Book I: A History of Modern Witchcraft, 1939–1964*, St. Paul (Minnesota): Llewellyn Publications, 1991; Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

and tired, and not in the condition to write an entire ritual for Gardner. The founder of Wicca had already elaborated his rituals autonomously before 1947. At most, Crowley might have supplied Gardner with a few useful books.[218]

Doreen Valiente (1922–1999) was Gardner's favorite pupil until she broke with him in 1957, and is considered by many the mother of contemporary Wicca.[219] She reported that Gardner admitted having copied parts of the rituals from Crowley. She added that she had revised herself the rituals between 1953 and 1957, precisely in order to eliminate the Crowleyan and Masonic references. Valiente believed that Gardner had really come into contact in England with a coven of witches in the New Forest, of very ancient origins, and that Crowley himself had something to do with a hereditary sorcerer tradition through George Pickingill (1816–1909). The latter was a peasant from Canewdon, in Essex, who operated as a "cunning man", or village folk magician, and was made famous in the 1960s by studies by folklorist Eric Maple (1916–1994).[220] Ronald Hutton later dismantled this thesis.[221] Crowley was never particularly interested in modern or ancient witchcraft and believed it was an "inferior" kind of magic. There is no documental evidence of contacts between Crowley and Pickingill, nor between the latter, who was a simple peasant, and the bourgeois urban magical environments frequented by Crowley and Gardner.

After the Second World War, Wicca was often confused with Satanism, a remake of the ancient confusion between Satanism and witchcraft. Some little groups within the larger phenomenon of Wicca did contribute to the misunderstanding with their ambiguity. The great majority of modern supporters of Wicca, however, despise Satanism. They believe, like Crowley, that Satanism has already lost its battle against Christianity, by accepting at least implicitly the Bible through the acceptance of the Biblical story of Satan. On the contrary, most adepts of Wicca claim they are practicing the "old (pagan) religion", more ancient than Christianity. It survived, or so they claim, the Christian persecution of the Middle Ages by masking itself as witchcraft. It was handed

218 On the Gardner-Crowley connection, see R. Hutton, "Crowley and Wicca", in H. Bogdan and M.P. Starr (eds.), *Aleister Crowley and Western Esotericism: An Anthology of Critical Studies*, cit., pp. 285–307.

219 On Valiente, see Jonathan Tapsell, *Ameth: The Life and Times of Doreen Valiente*, London: Avalonia, 2013.

220 See Eric Maple, "The Witches of Canewdon", *Folklore*, vol. 71, no. 4, December 1960, pp. 241–250. Bill Liddell, a self-styled British witch who moved to New Zealand, popularized the idea that both Crowley and Gardner were part of the Pickingill tradition. See William E. Liddell and Michael Howard, *The Pickingill Papers: The Origin of the Gardnerian Craft*, Chieveley (Berkshire): Capall Bann, 1994.

221 R. Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*, cit., pp. 218–221.

down inside small family circles in the European countryside up to our days, until it was revealed to the world by Gardner.[222]

As Wicca is different from Satanism, it is also different from the Thelema system of Crowley. The latter may even have enjoyed favoring the rebirth of witchcraft and helping Gardner. But Wicca, the "old religion", was still too connected to a religious vision of the world to become part of Crowley's magical atheism.

Satan the Antichrist: Jack Parsons and His Lodge

Crowley spent several years in the United States, where he hoped to escape European controversies, raise the funds he badly needed, and gather his loyal followers, especially in California. There, Wilfred Talbot Smith (1885–1957)[223] had founded a Church of Thelema in 1934 and in 1935 a Lodge Agapé of the O.T.O., whose celebrations of the "Gnostic Mass" attracted the attention of the tabloids. Smith never mentioned the Devil in his writings, and was not particularly interested in Crowley's references to Satan.

In 1941, Marvel Whiteside Parsons, a scientist, engineer and expert in explosives, who had legally changed his name from Marvel to John and was normally referred to as "Jack", joined Smith's lodge together with his wife Helen Cowley (1910–2003). The mother of the latter, Olga Helena Nelson Cowley (1885–1949), widowed since 1920, married Burton Ashley Northrup (1872–1946), of Pasadena, who ran a credit recovery agency but was also an agent, or at least an informer, for the U.S. military intelligence.[224] From her second marriage, Olga had two daughters. One of them, Sarah Elizabeth "Betty" Northrup (1924–1997), joined the Smith-Parsons lodge at a very early age, on the impulse of her stepsister, with the magical name Soror Cassap.

Parsons[225] became in that period a well-known figure in his profession. He was a researcher at the California Institute of Technology (Cal Tech), and worked both for the American government and for private companies. For the

222 See on this point Michael York, "Le néo-paganisme et les objections du *wiccan* au Satanisme", in J.-B. Martin and M. Introvigne (eds.), *Le Défi magique. II. Satanisme, sorcellerie*, cit., pp. 173–182.

223 See Smith's biography by M.P. Starr, *The Unknown God: W.T. Smith and the Thelemites*, Bolingbrook (Illinois): Teitan Press, 2003.

224 See *ibid.*, p. 254.

225 See John Carter, *Sex and Rockets: The Occult World of Jack Parsons*, Venice (California): Feral House, 1999; George Pendle, *Strange Angel: The Otherworldly Life of Rocket Scientist John Whiteside Parsons*, New York and London: Harcourt, 2005.

government, Parsons and his colleagues carried out the experiments of Arroyo Seco, which were at the origins of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory and had a primary role in the American space projects. For the private industry, Parsons worked on a series of programs, which led to the incorporation of Aerojet General Corporation. In recognition of these merits, in 1972, twenty years after his death, a crater on the Moon would be baptized with the name of Parsons. Perhaps the International Astronomical Union, which gave the name of Parsons to the crater, did not know that this engineer and scientist lived and died surrounded by the dubious fame of being a leading Satanist.

Parsons was always attracted to radical and marginal movements. After having participated in the activities of a Communist cell at Cal Tech, he met Smith and joined the O.T.O. The lodge was under attack by the press as a congregation of subversives and Satanists, but this for Parsons counted as a recommendation. At the same time, Crowley and Smith were having differences on various topics, primarily on the money that the British magus, in deep financial troubles, believed he had the right to receive from his American disciples. Parsons thus attracted the attention of Crowley, who corresponded with him and became a source of inspiration for the writings of the Californian scientist.[226]

In 1942, Parsons, who was well paid by Cal Tech, rented a rather expensive home, called simply "1003", at the address 1003 South Orange Grove Avenue, in Pasadena's "Millionaires' Row". It became the new "convent" or "profess house", where a group of O.T.O. members started living communally. Among these were Smith, Parsons, his wife Helen, and Helen's stepsister Betty. Then, a soap opera developed. Parsons had started having intimate relations with Betty when the latter, who was now eighteen, was thirteen. His wife Helen finally discovered what was going on, and gave him a taste of his own medicine by starting a relationship with their superior in the O.T.O., Smith. When the Agapé Lodge moved to the new convent in Pasadena, Smith was already living openly with Helen, and Parsons with Betty. Crowley sardonically commented that the number 1003, the address of the home, was probably chosen as it coincided with the number of women conquered by Don Giovanni in the opera consecrated to him by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791).[227]

Crowley was everything but a moralist, but was afraid that, between love triangles and even more complicated amorous polygons, things at number 1003

226 See John Whiteside Parsons, *Freedom is a Two-Edged Sword and Other Essays*, ed. by Cameron and Hymenaeus Beta [pseud. of William Breeze], New York: Ordo Templi Orientis, and Las Vegas: Falcon Press, 1989; and J.W. Parsons, *Three Essays on Freedom*, York Beach (Maine): Teitan Press, 2008.

227 M.P. Starr, *The Unknown God: W.T. Smith and the Thelemites*, cit., pp. 271–273.

would end up badly. He instructed two people he trusted, both his future successors at the guide of the main branch of the O.T.O., Karl Germer (1885–1962) and Grady Louis McMurtry (1918–1985), to keep him informed concerning what was going on in Pasadena. McMurtry, in particular, sent vitriolic reports, suspecting Smith of having an affair with his ex-wife, who lived in the "convent" in Pasadena, and that he had made her abort: a capital sin for Crowley, who was against abortion. In 1943, Germer, on behalf of Crowley, removed Smith from his office of superior of the Agapé Lodge, substituting him with Parsons.

But the latter had his own problems. Cal Tech worked for the military. During both World War II and the Cold War, it was kept under surveillance by the secret services. Parsons had already been investigated as a suspected Communist. In 1943, Betty eventually revealed to her parents that not only did she live with Parsons, but also she had started sleeping with him when she was thirteen. Her father, as one can imagine, was not happy. Since he had connections with the military intelligence services, he put them on Parsons' trail, not only as a Communist but also as a dangerous "black magician".[228]

In this context, a new character appeared. One of the high-level initiates of the Agapé Lodge was pianist and composer Roy Edward Leffingwell (1886–1952). He had among his friends the science fiction writer Lafayette Ron Hubbard (1911–1986), who later would become famous as the founder of Dianetics and its successive religious development, the Church of Scientology. Leffingwell persuaded Hubbard to join the Lodge, and in 1945, the writer went to live at 1003. Parsons reported to Crowley that Hubbard was an excellent swordsman and well known in the California milieu of science fiction writers. Invited by Hubbard, even the prince of American science fiction, Robert Anson Heinlein (1907–1988), came to 1003 for a swordplay. McMurtry, always the gossip, commented that Hubbard preferred to train with Betty Northrup, and the two ended their duels by grappling "like a starfish on a clam".[229] Soon after, as McMurtry had correctly predicted, Betty left Parsons' bedroom to transfer to that of Hubbard.

Parsons suffered privately, but declared that in the O.T.O. women were free and there was no place for jealousy. He even asked Hubbard to help him accomplishing a series of rituals in the Mojave Desert, based on the Enochian system of magic but also on energetic magical masturbations.[230] As a result,

228 *Ibid.*, p. 254.

229 G. Pendle, *Strange Angel: The Otherworldly Life of Rocket Scientist John Whiteside Parsons*, cit., p. 256.

230 See Hugh B. Urban, *Magia Sexualis; Sex, Magic, and Liberation in Modern Western Esotericism*, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2006, p. 137.

Parsons expected the appearance of a "spirit" that would help him in his magical activities. In January 1946, a sculptress and painter, Marjorie Cameron (1922–1995), who, under the simple name of "Cameron", would subsequently become a well-known artist,[231] appeared at 1003, joined the lodge and came to live at 1003. Or so Parsons would later report. In fact, "Cameron had actually been at the house on South Orange Grove Avenue a short period before, but had not spoken with Parsons at that time".[232] Cameron quickly became the new lover of Parsons, and the latter concluded that the magical operations undertaken with Hubbard had been successful. Cameron was indeed the "spirit" promised to him.

With Cameron, Parsons began a new series of sex magic experiments. The purpose, this time, was the birth of a *homunculus*, both "artificial man" and vehicle of the Antichrist. Crowley himself had written a secret instruction on the *homunculus*,[233] and it was to this being that the novel *Moonchild* alluded. However, according to Crowley, not only the times were not mature, but also initiates of a much higher level than Parsons would have been necessary. Informed of the so-called "Babalon Working" the American scientist had started with Cameron and Hubbard, who acted as a "scribe" and took note of everything, Crowley wrote back that Parsons was simply "a fool".[234] Parsons continued all the same and went so far to produce a fourth chapter of the *Book of the Law*, although he probably never sent it to Crowley.[235] He eventually parted company with Crowley and concluded that Cameron herself, rather than the child she was supposed to produce with him, was the incarnation of "the Thelemic

231 See the book published in connection with the 2014–2015 Cameron exhibition at the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art, which later in 2015 traveled to the Jeffrey Deitch Gallery in New York: Yael Lipschutz, with contributions by William Breeze and Susan Pile, *Cameron: Songs for the Witch Woman*, Santa Monica (California): Cameron Parsons Foundation, and Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2014. See also *Songs for the Witch Woman. Poems by John W. Parsons. Drawings by Marjorie Cameron*, London: Fulgur Esoterica, 2014, and the biography by Spencer Kansa, *Wormwood Star: The Magickal Life of Marjorie Cameron*, Oxford (UK): Mandrake, 2014.

232 H. Bogdan, "The Babalon Working 1946: L. Ron Hubbard, John Whiteside Parsons, and the Practice of Enochian Magic", *Numen*, vol. 63, 2016, pp. 16–32 (p. 22).

233 "Of the Homunculus", in *The Secret Rituals of the O.T.O.*, cit., pp. 231–239.

234 F.X. King, *The Magical Word of Aleister Crowley*, 2nd ed., London: Arrow Books, 1987, pp. 162–166.

235 See H. Bogdan, "The Babalon Working 1946: L. Ron Hubbard, John Whiteside Parsons, and the Practice of Enochian Magic", cit., p. 23.

goddess Babalon".[236] If it did not produce a *homunculus*, the "Babalon Working" at least generated a schism in the O.T.O.

Parsons continued to trust Hubbard, including as a financial advisor. Between the spring and the summer of 1946, the two of them and Betty incorporated a company called Allied Enterprises. It should buy yachts in Miami, where they costed less, sail them to California through the Panama Channel, and sell them at considerably higher prices. Soon, however, Parsons became convinced that Hubbard and Betty were cheating him. Crowley, who had been informed by Germer, believed just the same.[237] On July 1, Parsons descended into Miami, where he obtained from the local court an order prohibiting Hubbard and Betty from leaving Florida. But they were already at sea, and Parsons had to summon the demon Bartzabel to stop them. He wrote to Crowley that the summoning was successful: on July 5, a storm, obviously created by Bartzabel, forced the couple to return.

Parsons, however, was less successful in court: he had to leave the yachts and most of the money to Hubbard, who signed a promissory note for $2,900 only. Parsons did not protest, as Betty had threatened to inform the police about the sexual relationship that the scientist had with her when she was still a minor.[238] A month later, Hubbard and Betty got married, though the marriage would be brief and end in a bitter divorce. In 1952, when Parsons died in the explosion of his laboratory, Betty participated at the funeral service organized by the Agapé Lodge with her new husband, and reconciled with her stepsister Helen. Hubbard did not attend, as by 1952 he had lost any interest in the O.T.O.

These activities of Hubbard are often used by critics of Scientology, who claim that its founder was in some way involved in "black magic" and Satanism. Scientologists reply that Hubbard, in fact, was acting as a double agent. He was working for the military intelligence, who had asked him to investigate the strange activities of a scientist who was working on vital military projects. As J. Gordon Melton has noted,[239] here we are confronted with two irreconcilable narratives. O.T.O. claims that Hubbard, although never formally initiated,

236 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

237 G. Pendle, *Strange Angel: The Otherworldly Life of Rocket Scientist John Whiteside Parsons*, cit., p. 269.

238 *Ibid.*, p. 270.

239 See J.[ohn] Gordon Melton, *Thelemic Magic in America: The Emergence of an Alternative Religion*, Santa Barbara: Institute for the Study of American Religion, 1981; J.G. Melton, "Birth of a Religion", in J.R. Lewis (ed.), *Scientology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 17–33; H.B. Urban, "The Occult Roots of Scientology? L. Ron Hubbard, Aleister Crowley, and the Origins of a Controversial New Religion", in H. Bogdan and M.P. Starr

was an active participant in the Agapé Lodge who later betrayed Parsons and cheated him out of his money. For Scientologists, Hubbard worked undercover in the interest of U.S. intelligence services, and his mission was substantially successful because he put an end to Parsons' "black magic" activities. It is possible, as Melton concluded, that the two stories are both, from their respective different points of view, genuine perceptions of the same events.[240]

The subsequent story of Hubbard's relationship with Betty is in turn a matter of controversy. Some deny that Hubbard was ever married to Parsons' ex-lover. Documents, however, indicate that the two were married on August 10, 1946 in Chestertown, Maryland. Hubbard himself, in a letter written on May 14, 1951 to the U.S. Attorney General, described Betty as a woman "I believed to be my wife, having married her and then, after some mix-up about a divorce, believed her to be my wife in common law".[241] The mix-up was about Hubbard's own divorce from his first wife Margaret Louise "Polly" Grubb (1907–1963). Hubbard was not yet legally divorced when he married Betty in 1946.

The marriage between Betty and Ron quickly deteriorated, and the girl found a lover in one of Hubbard's early associates in the activities of Dianetics, Miles F. Hollister (1925–1998). She later divorced Hubbard and married Hollister. Hubbard attributed both his marital difficulties and problems within Dianetics to Communist infiltration and Soviet-style mind control techniques. On March 3, 1951, he wrote to the FBI claiming that Hollister was "confessedly a member of the Young Communists", and that Betty was "friendly with many Communists. Currently intimate with them but evidently under coercion".[242] He reiterated the same accusations in a letter to the Attorney General he wrote in May 1951.

Betty's father had already reported to federal agencies his fear that Parsons had recruited his daughter into a Communist cell. Now, Hubbard concluded that Betty had succumbed to the sinister Communist technique of "pain-drug hypnosis". He named several members of the early Dianetics circle as suspects of Communism, including Gregory Hemingway (1931–2001), the son of the famous writer Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961). Gregory, a transsexual medical doctor, was shortly associated with Dianetics but is better known for his later

(eds.), *Aleister Crowley and Western Esotericism: An Anthology of Critical Studies*, cit., pp. 335–367.

240 J.G. Melton, "Birth of a Religion", cit., p. 21.

241 These documents have been posted online by critics of Scientology. See e.g. <http://www.xenu.net/archive/FBI/fbi-110.html>, last accessed on September 25, 2015.

242 See <http://www.xenu.net/archive/FBI/fbi-89.html>, last accessed on September 25, 2015.

change of name into Gloria. He died in 2001 in the women's section of a Miami jail, after his arrest outside a state park for indecent exposure.[243]

Hubbard was a complex character, naturally curious about a number of things. One cannot exclude that, while participating in Parsons' activities, he also took the opportunity of studying the ideas of Crowley. In a speech of December 5, 1952, Hubbard explained that "the magic cults of the eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth centuries in the Middle East were fascinating. The only modern work that has anything to do with them is a trifle wild in spots, but it's fascinating work in itself, and that's work written by Aleister Crowley, the late Aleister Crowley, my very good friend". Crowley, Hubbard added, "did himself a splendid piece of aesthetics built around those magic cults. It's very interesting reading to get hold of a copy of a book, quite rare, but it can be obtained, The Master Therion, T-h-e-r-i-o-n, The Master Therion by Aleister Crowley. He signs himself 'The Beast'; 'The Mark of the Beast, 666'". The interest, for Hubbard, lied in the fact that "Crowley exhumed a lot of the data from these old magic cults. And he, as a matter of fact, handles cause and effect quite a bit. Cause and effect is handled according to a ritual", and "each ritual is a cycle of some sort or another".[244]

There is no need to pay too much attention to the convoluted language and the imprecisions, since it is not an article but a literal transcription of a speech by Hubbard. Critics such as Helle Meldgaard accused Scientology of trying to suppress all information connecting Hubbard to the notorious Aleister Crowley.[245] A defensive attitude by Scientologists is understandable, if we consider the fame of "black magician" and of Satanist, which continues to surround Crowley even today. Hubbard never met Crowley personally, but the latter had some information on Hubbard from the letters of Parsons, McMurtry, and Germer. From his speech, where Parsons was not quoted, it seems that what Hubbard found interesting in Crowley was the possibility of transcending the normal relations of cause and effect, thanks to alternative forms of knowledge and ritual practices. Eventually, however, Hubbard elaborated a very different system. German scholar Marco Frenschkowski observed that Hubbard was curious about magic well before he met Parsons, something

243 Lynn Conway, "The Strange Saga of Gregory Hemingway", available at <http://ai.eecs.umich.edu/people/conway/TS/GregoryHemingway.html>, last accessed on September 25, 2015.

244 L. Ron Hubbard, *Conditions of Space/Time/Energy: Philadelphia Doctorate Course. Transcripts*, Los Angeles: Bridge Publications, 1985, vol. III, p. 12.

245 Helle Meldgaard, "Scientology's Religious Roots", *Studia Missionalia*, no. 41, 1992, special issue on *Religious Sects and Movements*, pp. 169–185 (p. 185).

that emerges from the study of his fiction, which many scholars of Scientology overlook. However, the system of Scientology is not inherently magical: magic "is no magical key to understand what Scientology is about".[246]

The Hubbard episode tends to dominate studies of Parsons, so that the relevance of the ideas of the Californian engineer for the history of magic and Satanism is somewhat neglected. His contrast with Crowley is extremely instructive. When in California Parsons started to take an interest in Wicca,[247] Crowley warned him that this was not an orthodox position inside the O.T.O. In fact, Parsons did not fully agree with Gardner and Wicca either. The "old gods" the Californian scientist intended to summon were not exactly foreign to the Bible, and did not coincide with Gardner's. Parsons dealt principally with Lucifer and Babalon, the "scarlet woman" of the Apocalypse. Babalon eventually manifested herself and revealed to Parsons a new holy book, the *Book of Babalon*, in fact the fourth chapter of Crowley's *Book of the Law.* Although he probably never read the *Book of Babalon*, Crowley regarded any innovation or addition to his canon as blasphemy, and this became one of the reasons for excluding Parsons from the O.T.O.

Excommunicated by Crowley, Parsons undertook in his last years a personal journey, trying to launch an independent Gnostic Church and promoting the cult of Babalon and the Antichrist. In 1948, he swore an "Oath of Antichrist" in the hands of his ex-superior in the O.T.O., Smith, and changed his name into Belarion Arminuss Al Dajal Anti-Christ. This oath preceded an apparition, dated October 31, 1948, of Babalon, thanks to which Parsons discovered he was the reincarnation of Simon Magus, Gilles de Rais, and Cagliostro. After the oath, Parsons believed he had become himself the Antichrist.

The ideas of Parsons' latter period are summarized in the *Manifesto of the Antichrist* he wrote in 1949. It was a strongly anti-Christian text, yet curiously it proclaimed its respect for Jesus Christ, who was not a "Christian" and in fact taught sexual freedom. Parsons promised to "bring all men to the law of the BEAST 666, and in His law I shall conquer the world". As "Belarion, Antichrist", he prophesied: "Within seven years of this time, BABALON, THE SCARLET WOMAN HILARION will manifest among ye, and bring this my work to its fruition. An end to conscription, compulsion, regimentation, and the tyranny

246 Marco Frenschkowski, "Researching Scientology: Some Observations on Recent Literature, English and German", *Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2009, pp. 5–49 (p. 37). Frenschkowski also notes that Hubbard mentioned Crowley in another lecture of December 11, 1952, in the context of a short history of religious liberty (*ibid.*, p. 36).

247 See J.W. Parsons, *Freedom is a Two-Edged Sword and Other Essays*, cit., pp. 71–73.

of false laws. And within nine years a nation shall accept the Law of the BEAST 666 in my name, and that nation will be the first nation of earth. And all who accept me the ANTICHRIST and the law of the BEAST 666, shall be accursed and their joy shall be a thousandfold greater than the false joys of the false saints. And in my name BELARION shall they work miracles, and confound our enemies, and none shall stand before us".[248] Parsons the Antichrist promised the destruction of Christianity. Before his prophecies could come true, he destroyed himself in the explosion of his chemical laboratory in 1952. Notwithstanding the old controversies, his writings are still popular in Crowleyan circles, and they remain in print thanks also to the fame of Cameron, who illustrated some of them, as an artist. A Cameron-Parsons Foundation was established in 2006 in California.

Was Parsons a Satanist? Just like Crowley, even in his case there is no lack of expressions that could induce a positive reply. However, in his "gnostic doctrine", Parsons also expressed a faith in the Trinity and an interest in a reformed Christianity, very much different from the teachings of the Christian churches. The Holy Ghost for him was Sophia, the female counterpart of Christ. God was manifested in the union of Christ and Sophia. Sophia was also identified with the couple Babalon-Lucifer. Some of his ideas on a coming "female" messiah, as well as certain techniques of sexual magic, were close to Naglowska. Unless Parsons knew of Naglowska, we may suspect the use of common sources.

Parsons was not yet someone who explicitly worshipped the Satan of the Bible, but at the same time he was no longer simply a follower of the magical atheism of Crowley. This explains his final break with the English magus. Both the magical atheism of Crowley and Parsons' esoteric world are populated with gods, including the Antichrist, the Beast, Lucifer, Babalon. It is unclear whether these entities for Parsons were simply projections of the individual or collective unconscious, as they were for Crowley. Sometimes, they seemed to have an independent existence. Parsons, thus, may be considered as a link between Crowley and the Satanism that would flourish in California in the decades following his death.

248 See J.W. Parsons, *The Collected Writings of Jack Parsons*, ed. by Eugene W. Plawiuk, Edmonton (Alberta): Isis Research, 1980, p. 7 (capitals in original).

PART 3

Contemporary Satanism, 1952–2016

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CHAPTER 10

The Origins of Contemporary Satanism, 1952–1980

Anton LaVey's Early Career

"There are three possibilities where Anton LaVey is concerned. The most likely is that he is a complete fake. It is also possible he is a tortured psychotic with grand delusions. The most frightening possibility, however, is that he really is the Devil incarnate – perhaps without knowing it".[1] This evaluation by journalist Larry Wright shows all the ambiguity of LaVey. With few exceptions, LaVey is at the origins of all contemporary Satanism. Both in Europe and in the United States, the claims by contemporary Satanist groups that they descend directly from 19th-century organizations, not to mention medieval witches, should be regarded as mythological. Few of these contemporary groups would exist without LaVey, and this circumstance must be recognized even before trying to reconstruct who LaVey really was.

Wright himself gave an important contribution, in 1993, to debunking a series of legends on the life of LaVey in the years before the foundation of the Church of Satan. After the death of her father, Anton's daughter Zeena LaVey, with her husband Nikolas Schreck, struck the myth of the "Pope of Satan" with further blows.[2] Previously, only two "authorized" biographies had been published: *The Devil's Avenger* by Burton H. Wolfe, in 1974,[3] and *The Secret Life of a Satanist*, by Blanche Barton (pseudonym of Sharon Densley), LaVey's own companion, in 1990.[4] Some biographical details had already been questioned by the former lieutenant of LaVey, Michael Aquino, in his voluminous history of the Church of Satan, which went through several editions between 1983 and 2013.[5] Aquino's book remains an important source on LaVey, although it was written after he broke with his former mentor, and may have reconstructed

1 Lawrence Wright, *Saints & Sinners*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993, p. 121.

2 Zeena LaVey and Nikolas Schreck, *Anton LaVey: Legend and Reality*, 2 February 1998, available on the Web site of the First Church of Satan at the address <http://www.churchofSatan.org/aslv.html>, last accessed on September 25, 2015.

3 Burton H. Wolfe, *The Devil's Avenger: A Biography of Anton Szandor LaVey*, New York: Pyramid Books, 1974.

4 Blanche Barton, *The Secret Life of a Satanist: The Authorized Biography of Anton LaVey*, Los Angeles: Feral House, 1990.

5 Michael A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, San Francisco: The Author, 1st ed., 1983, 6th ed., 2009, 7th ed. (2 vols.), 2013. The following quotes are from the 2009 edition.

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early events in the light of subsequent controversies. Another important book dealing with the Church of Satan has also been written by a member of Aquino's Temple of Set, Stephen E. Flowers.[6]

The official biographies give the date of birth of "Anton Szandor LaVey" as 11 April 1930 and claim he was the son of Joseph and Augusta LaVey. Wright examined records in Chicago and concluded that the date was either April 11 or March 11, since the certificate originally indicated March and was later corrected to April following a request from Anton's mother. The name was "Howard Stanton Levey", son of Michael Joseph Levey (1903–1992) and Gertrude Augusta Coulton (1903–?). No LaVey resided in the American city in 1930. Wright also had the opportunity of interviewing the father of the "Black Pope", who was still alive at the time of his research, and concluded that Anton Szandor LaVey, the Satanist, and Howard Stanton Levey, the son of Michael Joseph Levey, were one and the same.[7]

In the biography written by Barton, there is a photograph of LaVey near the road sign that indicates the small French village of Le Vey. Barton explained: "Though his true name was Boehm, Ellis Island officials characteristically renamed Anton's grandfather by his last place of residence, LeVey (France). He kept his new surname, changing the first 'e' to 'a'".[8] A Transylvanian grandmother, who had reportedly passed on to LaVey gypsy forms of witchcraft, is a further invention of the official biographies. Biographers, official or otherwise, agree that when Anton was nine or ten, his parents moved to San Francisco, where his father obtained a license to sell spirits. Barton also mentioned a strange anomaly in LaVey's anatomy, an extra vertebra, which had the form of a tail, removed around the age of twelve.[9] This detail had not emerged in the 1974 biography by Wolfe, and was probably just another step in building the myth of the "Devil Incarnate".

LaVey was described as a young introvert, who preferred reading adventure books, or spying in the girls' changing rooms, rather than exercising or participating in sport activities.[10] According to Wolfe, in 1945, at the age of fifteen, he was sent for by an uncle, who worked for the U.S. army in Germany, and joined

6 S.E. Flowers, *Lords of the Left-Hand Path: Forbidden Practices & Spiritual Heresies – From the Cult of Set to the Church of Satan*, Rochester (Vermont): Inner Traditions/Bear & Co., 2012 (first ed.: *Lords of the Left-Hand Path: A History of Spiritual Dissent*, Smithville, Texas: Runa-Raven Press, 1997).

7 L. Wright, *Saints & Sinners*, cit., p. 125 and p. 155.

8 B. Barton, *The Secret Life of a Satanist: The Authorized Biography of Anton LaVey*, cit., unnumbered photographic insert.

9 *Ibid.*, pp. 22–23.

10 B.H. Wolfe, *The Devil's Avenger: A Biography of Anton Szandor LaVey*, cit., p. 27.

him in Europe. There, he encountered the German horror cinema, developing a passion for movies like *Metropolis* and *The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari.* Official biographers claim that he also discovered in Germany secret SS movies with satanic rituals. But all this is false, his daughter Zeena replied: by interviewing relatives, she discovered that LaVey never went to Germany in his life, and that in 1945 the uncle he mentioned was in prison.[11]

Even more controversial is the life of LaVey in the years immediately after World War II. It is certain that he made money by taking advantage of his good self-taught musical education. He entered the world of circus and carnival, which had fascinated him from an early age. Hundreds of articles and a few books about LaVey report his version of the facts. At the age of fifteen, he claimed, he was hired by the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra to play oboe. At the age of seventeen, he entered the well-known circus of Clyde Beatty (1903–1965), where he supposedly worked first as a tamer and then as a musician. In 1948, he moved from circus to carnival and, at the end of the same year, to the dance and striptease clubs, working at the Mayan of Los Angeles. There, he supposedly met a young stripper destined to become famous, Marilyn Monroe (1926–1962). Anton fell in love with her and they spent a couple of weeks living together.

Even critics of LaVey recognize his talent as an organ player and some skill with fierce animals, which he often kept in his house. Wright, however, determined that a "San Francisco Ballet Orchestra" did not exist in 1945. The city ballet worked with the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, which in those years employed three oboe players, none of which was LaVey. The Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin, owns the register of the Clyde Beatty Circus, which does not mention any LaVey or Levey. Minor or seasonal workers were sometimes not mentioned in the register, but if he really had an important role as a tamer or organ player, he would have been included. In Gibsonton, Florida, there is a Museum of the American Carnival, where on the contrary Wright found a trace of LaVey, apparently as a "fire-eater", a profession the official biographies omitted to mention. The manager of the Mayan in 1948, actor Paul Valentine (1919–2006), excluded that the club housed stripteases, or that in that period either Marilyn Monroe or Howard Levey, or Anton LaVey, worked there.[12]

The agent of Marilyn at that time was Harry Lipton (1920–2002). Interviewed by Aquino, he denied the actress ever performed as an exotic dancer and excluded she had a relationship with LaVey. The details of Wolfe's volume,

11 Z. LaVey and N. Schreck, *Anton LaVey: Legend and Reality*, cit., p. 2.

12 L. Wright, *Saints & Sinners*, cit., pp. 129–131.

approved or perhaps written by LaVey himself, show, according to Lipton, that the story is clearly apocryphal.[13] Aquino was in daily contact with LaVey for several years, and describes him as constantly obsessed with the figure of Marilyn. Wolfe claims that "Marilyn was passive in her lovemaking, always allowing Anton to determine position and movements", and that he eventually left her for a richer woman.[14] This, however, was just wishful thinking, a desire destined to accompany LaVey for many years. Finally, in 1973, he solved the problem by magically summoning Monroe in soul and flesh, obviously naked, on the eleventh anniversary of her death, which had occurred on August 5, 1962.[15] To reporters, LaVey would show the famous naked Monroe calendar, *Golden Dreams*, inscribed: "Dear Tony, how many times you have seen this! Love, Marilyn".[16] The second companion of the "Pope of Satan", Diane Hegarty, later admitted having falsified the supposed autograph of the actress.[17]

After the imaginary interlude with Marilyn, Howard Levey changed his name into Anton LaVey. In 1948, he moved to San Francisco, where he married the fifteen-year-old Carole Lansing (1936–1975). According to the official biographies, the wedding took place in 1950.[18] Wright, however, obtained a certificate showing that the wedding occurred in Reno, in Nevada, in 1951. In 1952, Karla, the first daughter of LaVey, was born. Anton later reported that, in order to avoid military service during the Korean War, he enrolled in 1951 in a course on criminology at the San Francisco City College, which he never completed. In the meantime, he had also become interested in photography.

Official biographies claim that in 1952 he was hired as a photographer by the San Francisco Police Department. Reportedly, he strengthened his cynical view of the world by photographing corpses of victims of the most atrocious violent deaths. This would be significant, if it were not for the fact that, as Wright reports, according to the San Francisco Police Department, no one named Howard or Anton LaVey or Levey ever worked for them; nor does City College have a record of his enrollment in the archives. Frank Moser, a retired police officer who was in the photo department during that time, says that LaVey was never in that department under any name. LaVey himself suggests that the records were purged by the department to avoid embarrassment, due

13 M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., p. 7.

14 B.H. Wolfe, *The Devil's Avenger: A Biography of Anton Szandor LaVey*, cit., pp. 44–46.

15 M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., pp. 254–256.

16 L. Wright, *Saints & Sinners*, cit., p. 131.

17 Z. LaVey and N. Schreck, *Anton LaVey: Legend and Reality*, cit., p. 3.

18 I found myself Carole's death certificate, indicating her date of birth as August 20, 1936.

to his successive scandalous fame. He even showed a police tag where his number was 666, a circumstance too good to be true.[19]

LaVey claimed that in the 1950s he was very much sought after as a well-paid organ player, and in 1956, he managed to buy the expensive house at 6114 California Street, which he later painted entirely in black. LaVey also claimed that the house hosted a famous illegal brothel in the 19th century, with secret passages built to escape the police. Aquino, who knew the home very well, denied it was ever a brothel, dated its construction to the beginning of the 20th century, and suggested the secret passages were added by LaVey to impress his guests.[20] He did not really buy the home either. It was the property of LaVey's parents, who in 1956 allowed their son to live there with Carole. On July 9, 1971, they transferred the ownership to Anton and his new companion Diane.[21]

According to LaVey, he worked until 1966 as the "official organist" of the City of San Francisco. The records of his divorce from Carole, in 1960, mentions as his sole constant source of income his employment as an organ player in a night club called The Lost Weekend, together with "various infrequent affairs at the Civic Auditorium". According to Wright, "there actually was no such position as city organist in San Francisco".[22] The divorce in 1960 was due to the appearance on the scene of a new discovery of LaVey: seventeen-year old Diane Hegarty. She would live with him until 1984, considering herself as his second wife and signing "Diane LaVey", although there had been no legal wedding. Like the majority of LaVey's women, Diane was a flashy, Marilyn-like blonde.

The house on California Street would become known in the Church of Satan simply as "6114" and was, without doubt, a bit strange. Besides circus, photography, music, and blondes, LaVey had another passion, magic. The origins of LaVey's magical career are, however, even harder to reconstruct than his life before 1960. In different accounts, LaVey both affirmed and denied his debts to Crowley and Parsons. The influence of Crowley is clear in all of LaVey's writings. He mentioned that, some years prior to 1951, he wrote to Parsons to obtain Crowley's books,[23] and that in 1951 he began to frequent the Berkeley branch of the "Church of Thelema", i.e. the Gnostic Church of Smith and Parsons.[24] The publication of the first complete biography of Aleister Crowley, *The Great Beast* by John Symonds (1914–2006) in 1952, persuaded LaVey that

19 L. Wright, *Saints & Sinners*, cit., pp. 132, 141.

20 M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., pp. 8–9.

21 Z. LaVey and N. Schreck, *Anton LaVey: Legend and Reality*, cit., p. 4.

22 L. Wright, *Saints & Sinners*, cit., p. 133.

23 B. Barton, *The Secret Life of a Satanist: The Authorized Biography of Anton LaVey*, cit., p. 61.

24 *Ibid.*; B.H. Wolfe, *The Devil's Avenger: A Biography of Anton Szandor LaVey*, cit., p. 53.

the British magus "was a druggy poseur whose greatest achievements were as a poet and mountain climber".[25] Or so he claimed later. In 1952, LaVey was only twenty-two. By the age of thirty, when he started consecrating himself to magic as his primary activity, the influence of Crowley became crucial. He learned about Crowley by somebody who had personally known Parsons: Kenneth Anger.

In the mid-1950s, LaVey was just an eccentric young Californian of a kind that still exists today. He collected torture devices, books and pamphlets on horror movies, exotic animals to keep in his house, memorabilia of famous criminals. Magic was certainly a component of this collection of weirdness, but it was not the only one. Around 1957, LaVey, under the influence of his new companion Diane, a conjurer and self-styled witch, began to understand that his love for aberrations and weirdness could become a profession. He started offering, for a fee, Friday night lectures in his home on the most curious topics: ghosts, vampires, werewolves, but also psychotic murderers, torture methods, and cannibalism.[26]

A standard feature of the official biographies is the description of a lecture on cannibalism. By way of practical demonstration, Diane placed on the table the body of a woman of forty-four who had died in a San Francisco hospital and was given to LaVey by a doctor friend. Diane offered it to her guests marinated "in fruit juices, Triple Sec, and grenadine; and served it with fried bananas and yams", according to the tradition of the cannibals in the Fiji Islands.[27] When the biography of Wolfe was published in 1974, some New York members of the Church of Satan became worried about being associated with cannibalism. Aquino, at that time still the faithful lieutenant of LaVey, assured them that Diane simply served animal meat after the lecture, claiming it was human. After all, nobody knew what human meat really tasted like.[28]

In the years between 1960 and 1965, LaVey's lectures were attended by some regular visitors. Among these were "Baroness" Carin de Plessen (1901–1972), a Danish aristocrat, and a dentist, Cecil Evelyn Nixon (1874–1962), famous in San Francisco for his Isis automaton, one of the most perfect ever built.[29] Reportedly, anthropologist Michael Harner, the future founder of contemporary

25 B. Barton, *The Secret Life of a Satanist: The Authorized Biography of Anton LaVey*, cit., p. 61. See J. Symonds, *The Great Beast: The Life of Aleister Crowley*, Rider, London 1951.

26 For a list see M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., p. 11.

27 B.H. Wolfe, *The Devil's Avenger: A Biography of Anton Szandor LaVey*, cit., pp. 65–66.

28 M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., pp. 356–357.

29 See Doran Wittelsbach, *Isis and Beyond: The Biography of Cecil E. Nixon*, Vancouver (Washington): Bua Productions, 1997.

Neoshamanism, was also a participant.[30] With the exception of Togare, LaVey's pet lion, the most famous guest was Kenneth Anger. Although almost the same age as LaVey (he was born in 1927), Anger was already a celebrity in Hollywood. Child prodigy, this grandson of a cloakroom attendant had his first role in *Midsummer Night's Dream* by Max Reinhardt (1873–1943) and William Dieterle (1893–1972). At the age of seventeen, he directed his first movie, *Fireworks*. It was short (fourteen minutes), but destined to win prizes in four movie festivals, including Cannes. In the 1950s, his interests started focusing on magic. Anger became a member of the group created by Parsons, studied Thelemic magic seriously, and even rediscovered what remained of Crowley's Abbey of Thelema in Sicily.

In 1954, Anger directed his first Crowleyan film, *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*, where Cameron, the former companion of the now deceased Parsons, played the appropriate role of the "Scarlet Woman". He obtained international success in 1963 with another short film (29 minutes), *Scorpio Rising*, dedicated to Parsons. In the meantime, in 1959, he had published the most gossipy book about the world of cinema, *Hollywood Babylone*, cautiously printed quite far away from Hollywood, in Paris.[31] From the early 1960s, Anger was considering a film on the Devil. He began to shoot it in 1966, but the actor chosen for the part of Lucifer, Bobby Beausoleil, who was also his lover, ran away in stormy circumstances with the only existing copy of the unedited footage. In 1969, he managed to realize part of his project, with the short movie *Invocation of my Demon Brother*, which included music by Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones and LaVey in the role of Satan.

Lucifer Rising came out in a provisory version in 1970 and in a complete version in 1980. The first version included the music of Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page, a well-known fan of Crowley. In the final version, the music was by the orchestra of the jail where Beausoleil had been imprisoned after his involvement in the homicides instigated by Charles Manson. The differences between *Invocation of my Demon Brother* and *Lucifer Rising* were significant. For the second, where LaVey did not appear, Anger hired as a consultant Crowley's disciple, Gerald Yorke (1901–1983), and created a decidedly more Crowleyan movie. *Invocation of my Demon Brother* was produced at the time of the collaboration between Anger and LaVey in the foundation of two new institutions: the Magic Circle, around 1961, and the Church of Satan, in 1966.[32]

30 See A. Dyrendal, J.R. Lewis and J.Aa. Petersen, *The Invention of Satanism*, cit., p. 53.

31 Kenneth Anger, *Hollywood Babylone* [sic], Paris: J.-J. Pauvert, 1959.

32 On Anger, see Robert A. Haller, *Kenneth Anger*, published as a pamphlet by Film In The Cities, St. Paul (Minnesota), and The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (Minnesota) n.d.,

The Magic Circle was created by Anger and LaVey to gather those who attended regularly the Friday night lectures in the house in California Street. They recruited some Californian celebrities, including Forrest J. Ackerman (1916–2008), a leading expert in science fiction and Hubbard's literary agent,[33] who was also the creator of the comic book character Vampirella. "Of all the Magic Circle members, the most important turned out to be Ken Anger".[34] LaVey had just had some occasional contacts with Parsons, while Anger was one of the leading experts on Crowley in the United States and was part and parcel of the small world that had gathered the inheritance of the Californian "Antichrist". He was also attracted by the Devil and demonology. Even more than through books, it was through Anger that LaVey could encounter genuine teachings originating with Crowley and Parsons.

1966: Year One of Satan

In fact, the Magic Circle "was the nucleus of what would shortly become the Church of Satan".[35] The latter was founded, according to its own accounts, on April 30, 1966, in the night of Walpurgis. Probably, however, nothing special happened on April 30. A public relations professional, Edward Webber, suggested that LaVey converted his Friday evening lectures into services of a "Church", and the transformation happened between spring and summer of 1966. With Anger at his side, LaVey, with his head completely shaved, a new look suggested by Diane, presented the year 1966 as the Year One of Satan to Los Angeles socialites and the press. Anger knew all the right persons in Hollywood, and prospects for success looked good.

In October, the Church of Satan, which had been active for only six months, recruited its most famous adept, actress Jayne Mansfield (1933–1967). Even this story is, however, controversial. Some biographers of the actress reduce her relations with the Church of Satan to a publicity stunt. Others believe that, from the last months of 1966, Mansfield, who even had her photograph taken

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and reproduced as an article in *The Equinox*, vol. III, no. 10, 1966, pp. 239–260. See also Bill Landis, *Anger: The Unauthorized Biography of Kenneth Anger*, New York: HarperCollins, 1995; and Deborah Allison, "Kenneth Anger", in C. Partridge (ed.), *The Occult World*, cit., pp. 459–463.

33 B. Landis, *Anger: The Unauthorized Biography of Kenneth Anger*, cit., p. 155.

34 B.H. Wolfe, *The Devil's Avenger: A Biography of Anton Szandor LaVey*, cit., p. 71.

35 M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., p. 12.

while kneeling in front of LaVey dressed as the Devil, regarded herself for some time as a bona fide adept of the Church of Satan.[36]

If LaVey was publicity for Mansfield, Mansfield was in turn publicity for LaVey. The Church of Satan cannot be reduced to a creation or a provocation of Anger. LaVey brought to the Church something that Anger could not have found in the Crowleyan milieu and that could only come from an experience in the world of carnival. To the Church of Satan, LaVey offered above all his public persona. He was more than willing to present himself to the world as "the Devil", to dress up like a conventional Satan, complete with horns and tail, to attract in a few months the interest of the Californian press, and through it the national and international media. There is always a risk to underestimate LaVey. He played a part in a brilliant manner for many years, and he also brought to the Church of Satan ideas that complemented those of Anger.

In 1966, LaVey, unlike Anger, could not be described as an expert in esotericism, and perhaps he never became one. However, LaVey read more than what hostile sources claim he did. He could compete with Anger concerning his encyclopedic knowledge of the world of cinema, and his literary culture was not to be despised. Compared to Anger and other early members of the Magic Circle, he was also more interested in unconventional political theories, exploring both left wing and right-wing radicalism. The deepest political influence on LaVey was Russian-American novelist Ayn Rand (1905–1982), even if it is almost certain that LaVey and Rand never met.

Ayn Rand (pseudonym of Alice Rosenbaum) was a Russian Jew who escaped in adventurous circumstances from the Soviet Union in 1924. She became famous for her anticommunism, her successful novels, and "objectivism", a radically individualistic political philosophy. She proposed the apologia of the selfish capitalist who, rather than sacrificing for others, claimed absolute freedom against the tethers represented by socialism, moralism, and religions. These selfish intentions would eventually build a better and freer society. Many know Rand only for her novels and for the movies that were inspired by them, among which *The Fountainhead* (1949), directed by King Vidor (1894–1982) and starring Gary Cooper (1901–1961). The writer, however, always declared that she mostly wrote novels in order to promote "objectivism".[37]

The "objectivists" in the stricter sense constitute today a small group that lives in the cult of Rand, but many of her pupils and disciples have occupied positions of great importance in public American institutions. They include Alan

36 See *ibid.*, pp. 14–15.

37 See Ayn Rand, *The Voice of Reason: Essays in Objectivist Thought*, ed. by Leonard Peikoff, New York: New American Library, 1988.

Greenspan, who was president of the U.S. Federal Reserve from 1987 to 2006. In 1986, a controversial biography of Rand was published by her pupil Barbara Branden (1929–2013),[38] followed by the reply of the author's ex-husband, Nathaniel Branden (1930–2014).[39] The biography reported that, among Rand's closest disciples, "objectivism" was translated into a radical, and secret, sexual experimentation, including forms of polygamy and polyandry.

If Rand had ever known that, in some way, she had inspired contemporary Satanism, she would have certainly burst out laughing. Rand considered herself one of the most atheistic persons in the world. Reflecting in 1968 on the success of the film *The Fountainhead*, Rand was worried that in the movie the main character, Howard Roark, showed some sympathy or consideration for religion. But she concluded that there could be no doubt "on Roark's and my atheism". According to Rand, religion, with all its "man-degrading aspects", is among the worst influences on humanity. It should be replaced by atheism and "man-worship". "It is this highest level of man's emotions that has to be redeemed from the murk of mysticism and redirected at its proper object: man". "The man-worshipers, in my sense of the term, wrote Rand, are those who see man's highest potential and strive to actualize it (…), those dedicated to the exaltation of man's self-esteem and the sacredness of his happiness on earth".[40] Religion for Rand was, at the most, a primitive form of philosophy, destined to disappear with the progressive affirmation of a non-religious philosophical thought.[41]

Rand did not believe that her "man worship" could be expressed in liturgical or ceremonial terms. She despised magic, as something opposed to science and progress, not less than she despised religion, and did not pay any particular attention to the figure of Satan. However, Rand's "man worship" is close to the ideology of the Church of Satan. An important summary of the latter's ideas is included in the "Nine Satanic Statements", a credo of sort for the church founded by LaVey. The credo starts by proclaiming that "Satan represents indulgence, instead of abstinence", liberation, and the light of reason. It includes social Darwinism, as it claims that Satan represents "kindness to those

38 Barbara Branden, *The Passion of Ayn Rand*, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1986.

39 Nathaniel Branden, *Judgment Day: My Years with Ayn Rand*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989.

40 A. Rand, "Introduction to *The Fountainhead*", *The Objectivist*, vol. VII, no. 3, March 1968, pp. 417–422.

41 A. Rand, "Philosophy and Sense of Life", in *The Ayn Rand Lexicon: Objectivism from A to Z*, ed. by Harry Binswanger, 2nd ed., New York: Meridian, 1988, p. 415. See the entry "Religion", *ibid.*, pp. 411–416.

who deserve it, instead of love wasted on ingrates", and "responsibility to the responsible, instead of concern for psychic vampires". The statements celebrate the animal nature of man and "all of the so-called sins, as they all lead to physical, mental, or emotional gratification". They conclude that "Satan has been the best friend the church has ever had, as he has kept it in business all these years!".[42]

If we take Satan away from the Nine Statements, what remains is a cult of the human being, or perhaps of a Nietzschean superman, similar to that of Rand. George C. Smith (aka Lucas Martel), a member of the Church of Satan who later established the Temple of the Vampire, claimed in 1987 that the "Nine Satanic Statements" were simply taken from a speech by a Rand character, John Galt. He was the quintessential selfish capitalist who, thanks to his selfishness, "saved" the world in one of Rand's most famous novels, *Atlas Shrugged*.[43] Smith exaggerated the parallel[44] and there was in fact no plagiarism, since the language of LaVey was different from that of Rand. But there is no doubt that the ideas were analogous, and the founder of the Church of Satan never denied having found in Rand, to borrow the title of one of her novels, a real "fountainhead" of inspiration.

Rand's "man worship", whose main tools did not come from magic but from economy and finance, Crowley's magical atheism as transmitted by Anger, and LaVey's own insistence on the image of Satan, could not be kept together without some ambiguity. Ambiguity, in fact, became the main feature of the Church of Satan. Starting from the first years of his media success in San Francisco, reporters did not know whether to laugh at LaVey or take him seriously. At the beginning of 1967, LaVey managed to attract the media en masse to California Street for the first "Satanist wedding" in history, between journalist John Raymond and New York heiress Judith Case. The naked woman serving as an altar was one of the first adepts, Lois Murgenstrumm. The official photographs were taken by Joe Rosenthal (1911–2006), known for his famous photograph of the marines raising the American flag at Iwo Jima. In May 1967, the Church of Satan had its first baptism, of the three-year old daughter of LaVey and his companion Diane, Zeena Galatea. On December 8, the first Satanist funeral followed. LaVey and Anger officiated the last rites for a sailor, Edward D. Olsen (1941–1967), raising a wave of protests from many Christian

42 A. LaVey, *The Satanic Bible*, New York, Avon Books, 1969, p. 25.

43 A. Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, New York: Random House, 1957.

44 George C. Smith, "The Hidden Source of the Satanic Philosophy", *The Scroll of Set*, vol. XIII, no. 3, June 1987, pp. 4–6.

denominations. The protests, however, had the effect of consolidating the fame of the "Black Pope".

LaVey received less positive publicity, in the same year 1967, when on June 29, Jane Mansfield and her companion and lawyer, Sam Brody (1926–1967), died in a car accident. Brody was certainly no friend of LaVey, and the rumor spread immediately that he had been the victim of a deadly curse by the "Pope of Satan". LaVey was not disturbed by these rumors, and even enhanced them by inventing an affair with Mansfield, which seems as imaginary as that with Monroe. In the same months, LaVey also advertised himself using entirely different means, by organizing a show of topless dancers called the *Topless Witches' Sabbath* for a nightclub in San Francisco. One of the main dancers of the show, Susan Atkins (1948–2009), would never forget that experience and would become famous some years later as an assassin.

1967 was Year 11 of the Era of Satan and must also be remembered for another episode: the publication of the novel *Rosemary's Baby* by Ira Levin (1929–2007).[45] It contained an allusion to LaVey, since it cited 1966 as the "Year One" of Satanism. *Rosemary's Baby* was certainly not the first novel to put Satanists and Black Masses on show. Without returning to Huysmans, Dennis Wheatley (1897–1977) had made these themes well known to the English-speaking public.[46] The times and the context, however, made *Rosemary's Baby* more successful than other similar novels. The book was the story of a New York actor who, together with a group of Satanists, had his wife unknowingly conceive the son of the Devil. Director Roman Polanski immediately made a film out of the novel. LaVey claimed having been invited to Hollywood by Polanski, both as a consultant and to play the part of the Devil.[47] Aquino, however, stated he borrowed the Devil costume from the movie in 1971, tried it, and concluded that it could only be worn by a small and thin person, certainly not by a big man like LaVey. Polanski denied LaVey was ever present on the set of the movie.[48] At any rate, the participation of LaVey and some followers dressed in black cloaks at one of the showings of the film in San Francisco, on June 19,

45 Ira Levin, *Rosemary's Baby*, New York: Random House, 1967.

46 See for example, Dennis Wheatley, *The Satanist*, London: Hutchinson & Co., 1960. Wheatley's novels on Satanism contributed to the late Satanism scares. In his 1971 book, *The Devil and All His Works* (New York: American Heritage Press, 1971), Wheatley claimed that the scenes described in his novels were routinely happening in America and Europe. See Phil Baker, *The Devil is a Gentleman: The Life and Times of Dennis Wheatley*, Sawtry (UK): Dedalus Books, 2009; and P. Baker, "Dennis Wheatley", in C. Partridge (ed.), *The Occult World*, cit., pp. 464–468.

47 See B.H. Wolfe, *The Devil's Avenger: A Biography of Anton Szandor LaVey*, cit., p. 188.

48 M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., p. 17.

1968, did not fail to attract some media attention. At this event, if we believe his story, a young Michael Aquino, freshly graduated from the University of California in Santa Barbara, saw the "Pope of Satan" for the first time and was given his business card.[49]

Perhaps it was a sign of changing times when, in 1997, Levin published a sequel to *Rosemary's Baby* with the title *Son of Rosemary.*[50] The novel is set in 1999, when the son of Rosemary and Satan is thirty-three, the age of Jesus Christ at the time of his death. Rosemary, however, has been in a coma since childbirth in 1966. She wakes up in 1999, and the exit from her coma is a great media event, not only because it occurs after so many years but also because her son, Andy, is an international philanthropist, loved and admired throughout the world. The mother becomes involved in the activities of the son, which include the distribution of candles that should be lit by the majority of the world population a few minutes before the year 2000 will begin.

Rosemary starts suspecting that, behind the appearance of philanthropy, lies a diabolical conspiracy with possible apocalyptic consequences, and that her son is the Antichrist. When she is about to denounce him, Satan kidnaps her and takes her to Hell. But at this point Rosemary wakes up, we are in 1965, and all the events of *Rosemary's Baby* and *Son of Rosemary* were only a dream. In the final pages, there are signs that something diabolical *could* happen again, but by now the dream has placed Rosemary on guard. This, however, was not enough for the readers. Levin had effectively destroyed all the mythology he had created, explaining it away as a dream, an expedient as old as literature itself, and one that was not appreciated. Perhaps, in 1997, Levin thought his Satanists were less believable than in 1968, when LaVey was making headlines.

In 1968, in fact, even sociologists began to show some interest in the Church of Satan. Sociological studies were produced by Randall Alfred, James Moody, and Marcello Truzzi (1935–2003). Alfred infiltrated the organization without telling LaVey he was a sociologist. He estimated that members of the early Church of Satan were some 140 in San Francisco and 400 or 500 in the whole United States.[51] Moody became enthusiastic about Satanism. He was initiated

49 *Ibid.*, p. 1.

50 I. Levin, *Son of Rosemary: The Sequel to Rosemary's Baby*, New York: Dutton, 1997.

51 Randall H. Alfred, "The Church of Satan", in Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah (eds.), *The New Religious Consciousness*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1976, pp. 180–202 [reprinted in J.R. Lewis and J.Aa. Petersen (eds.), *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism*, cit., pp. 478–502].

as a priest by LaVey and became his correspondent in Ireland in 1970.[52] Truzzi, the best-known academic of the three, studied the organization of LaVey with detachment but not without sympathy. He correctly identified the rationalist "man worship" derived from Rand as a key aspect, more important than the occult ones.[53]

LaVey's Black Mass

We can locate the formative period of the rituals of the Church of Satan around the same year 1968. Some of them would be published in an edited form for the general public by LaVey himself in 1972.[54] The differences between the internal confidential version dated 1970, and the volume offered to the public in 1972 appeared particularly in the Black Mass. The structure was similar, and opened with the "Introit": "In nomine dei nostri Satanas Luciferi. Introibo ad altare dei nostri"…; "Quia tu es Diabolus, fortitudo mea"…; "Adiutorium nostrum in nomine Diaboli – Qui fecit Infernum et terram". It went on by inverting the Catholic ritual of the traditional Latin Mass as it existed before the Second Vatican Council, praising the Devil where God was praised by Catholics and vice versa, but with the *Confiteor* recited in English rather than in Latin.

The presence of a naked woman lying on the table, who acts as altar, and the insults directed against Jesus Christ in the Gloria, Gradual, and Offertory are present in the public edition as well, and came from Huysmans. It is, however, necessary to consult the confidential edition in order to understand what exactly are the "desecration" of a Catholic holy wafer and its subsequent satanic "consecration". The "desecration" "requires a consecrated host, which must be obtained from a Roman Catholic Communion". The holy wafer, among various insults, is introduced into the vagina of the woman who acts as an altar, who "proceeds to masturbate herself to climax or else, maintaining her original position, allows the Priest to masturbate her, employing the host as a device".

52 See Edward J. Moody, "Magical Therapy: An Anthropological Investigation of Contemporary Satanism", in Irving I. Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone (eds.), *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974, pp. 355–382 [reprinted in J.R. Lewis and J.Aa. Petersen (eds.), *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism*, cit., pp. 445–477]. For the role of Moody in the Church of Satan, see M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., p. 17.

53 Marcello Truzzi, "Towards a Sociology of the Occult: Notes on Modern Witchcraft", in I.I. Zaretsky and M.P. Leone (eds.), *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*, cit., pp. 628–645.

54 A.S. LaVey, *The Satanic Rituals*, New York: Avon, 1972.

The holy wafer will then be pulverized and burned. The satanic "consecration" opens with the ritual undressing of the celebrant, of all vestments. The celebrant then "masturbates (...) until he reaches an ejaculation. The semen is caught in a deep silver spoon and is placed upon the altar". The unedited ritual specifies that "the Deacon offers the Priest a towel to clean himself". After this ceremony, there is a second offertory. In the "Chalice of Ecstasy", the semen that was placed in the teaspoon is mixed with wine (later, LaVey would also use other spirits) and the chalice, which now contains "the elixir of life", is passed around those present.

The ceremony concludes with the blessing with the sign of the horns, made with two fingers. The horns, the rituals explain, both honor the Devil and, with the three fingers lowered in correspondence with the two elevated, deny the Trinity. The ceremony, in its unedited version, also includes various "blessings", in which both sperm and female urine, collected during the rite itself, have their place.[55] This ritual of the "Black Mass" was largely written by Wayne West, reportedly a defrocked Catholic cleric, who would later lead a short-lived schism called The First Occultic Church of Man. In a way, it was an important ritual, as this was the only Black Mass most contemporary Satanists knew and celebrated. Notwithstanding its claim of an ancient origin, the text was created in the Church of Satan in 1970. On the other hand, the original version was practiced in the Church of Satan for a few years only and many members who joined after its formative years never attended a Black Mass of this kind. Rituals such as the "Satanic High Mass", celebrated on June 6, 2006, for the 40th Anniversary of the Church of Satan at the Center for Inquiry West's Steve Allen Theatre in Los Angeles,[56] were milder versions of the original.

The creation was not entirely new. Its main source was the Black Mass described by Huysmans in *Là-bas*. The "elixir of life" and spermatophagy came from the ritual of the ninth degree of Crowley's O.T.O. and from his Gnostic Mass. Crowley, however, did not associate spermatophagy and references to Satan. The creativity of West and LaVey consisted in the fusion of Huysmans' Satanic Mass with Crowley's techniques of sex magic.

What kind of ritual, exactly, was the "Black Mass" of the Church of Satan? The public version explained very clearly that there was no worship of Satan

55 The unedited text appeared in The Church of Satan, *Rituals*, San Francisco: The Church of Satan, 1970; and can also be read in Wayne F. West, "Missa Solemnis", in M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., Appendix, pp. A-21-A-31. The edited text was published in A.S. LaVey, *The Satanic Rituals*, cit., pp. 37–53.

56 Available on YouTube's channel of The Church of Satan at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1zsIk6WcNM>, last accessed on October 4, 2010.

as a real person. Rather, the Mass put on show "a psychodrama in the truest sense", intended to free Christians from their "indoctrination" though shock therapy.[57] However, in the first celebration of the Black Mass in its solemn form, organized on California Street in 1970, at least the celebrant thought differently. It was not possible to obtain a consecrated Catholic holy wafer, and it was quickly substituted with a common cracker. The officiant was Michael Aquino, who, after the casual encounter with LaVey at the first screening of *Rosemary's Baby*, had joined the Church of Satan in 1969. Aquino was convinced that rationalism and atheism, together with the circus atmosphere, were a sort of curtain of protection invented by LaVey for the benefit of the curious and reporters. Few people, Aquino believed, knew "the central secret" of the Church of Satan: that, behind the rationalist and atheist façade, LaVey and the internal circle of the Church really believed in the existence of Satan and adored him, even if they were uncertain about what his form of existence was.[58]

The Satanic Bible

In 1968 through the Church of Satan's own label, Murgenstrumm, LaVey released *The Satanic Mass*, a vinyl disc with the first audio recording ever of some Satanist rituals, to be followed in 1970 by the documentary film *Satanis: The Devil's Mass*. In 1969, LaVey published what was destined to become his main theoretical work, *The Satanic Bible*.[59] The idea of publishing a *Satanic Bible* did not originate with LaVey but with an editor (and future CEO) at the Avon publishing company, Peter Mayer, who detected the possibility of commercial success in the aftermath of *Rosemary's Baby*.[60] If we believe Aquino's account,[61] LaVey quickly compiled his pamphlets for the publication, but the volume was too small. In order to add pages, he expanded the first part and included a final part about the Keys of Enoch by the 16th-century magician John Dee (1527–1608). These Keys had fascinated generations of occultists, including the founders of the Golden Dawn and Crowley, and were originally written in

57 A.S. LaVey, *The Satanic Rituals*, cit., p. 34.

58 M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., p. 51.

59 A.S. LaVey, *The Satanic Bible*, cit.

60 M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., p. 52.

61 For some doubts about Aquino's version, see A. Dyrendal, J.R. Lewis and J.Aa. Petersen, *The Invention of Satanism*, cit., p. 92.

the "Enochian" language, an "angelic" idiom transmitted by revelation to Dee and his medium Edward Kelly or Kelley (1555–1597).[62]

The Satanic Bible is divided in four parts, called the *Book of Satan*, the *Book of Lucifer*, the *Book of Belial*, and the *Book of Leviathan*. A good part of the Book of Satan derives from *Might is Right*,[63] an obscure volume published in Australia in 1890, promoting a fierce Darwinism and the right of the strong to oppress the weak. LaVey, however, himself of Jewish descent, eliminated the anti-Semitic references that were included in the Australian book. *Might is Right* was signed by "Ragnar Redbeard" and it is almost certain that the author was the anarchist New Zealander philosopher Arthur Desmond (1859–1929). The book was published in Australia, where the author emigrated from New Zealand in 1892, then reprinted in Chicago in 1896, and its intent was largely satirical.

When this origin was detected by critics, the Church of Satan quickly "adopted" *Might is Right* as one of its canonical texts. It even published a "centenary edition", with a preface by LaVey and an afterworld by his disciple Peter Howard Gilmore, a hundred years after the Chicago edition of 1896.[64] The book was published, or at least dated, in correspondence with the eminently symbolic date "6-6-6", i.e. June 6, 2006. LaVey and his followers attributed *Might is Right* to the American novelist Jack London (1876–1916), although scholars believe that this attribution was spurious.

If the *Book of Satan* is a fortress of social Darwinism, the *Book of Lucifer*, which largely collects previous writings and pamphlets by LaVey, presents a rationalist philosophy. "Every man is God, LaVey writes, if he chooses to

62 Occultists normally used the account by Meric Casaubon (1599–1671), published in 1659 with an introduction critical of Dee: *A True & Faithful Relation of what passed for many Yeers* [sic] *Between Dr. John Dee and Some Spirits: Tending* (*had it succeeded*) *to a General Alteration of most States and Kingdomes* [sic] *in the World*, London: T. Garthwait, 1659 (reprint, New York: Magickal Childe, 1992). How faithfully Casaubon reported Dee's ideas is a matter of contention. See Peter French [1942–1976], *John Dee: The World of an Elizabethan Magus*, Reading: Cox & Wyman, 1972; and György Szonyi, *John Dee's Occultism: Magical Exaltation Through Powerful Signs*, Albany (New York): State University of New York Press, 2004.

63 "Ragnar Redbeard", *Might is Right*, Sydney: The Author, 1890. This "first edition" was distributed by Desmond in only twenty-five typescript copies. The second edition was published in 1896 by Auditorium Press, Chicago; successive editions modified the title in *The Survival of the Fittest*.

64 "R. Redbeard", *Might is Right. Special Centennial Printing*, Bensinville (Illinois): M.H.P. & Co., 1996.

recognize himself as one".[65] Several passages in the *Book of Lucifer* became a matter of controversy, when members of the Church of Satan divided between those who regarded Satan as a mere metaphor and those who considered the Prince of Darkness a sentient being with an independent existence. The text remains deliberately ambiguous, and exhibits the same ambiguity on the subject of life after death. Although the *Book of Lucifer* is about enjoying this life rather than preparing for an afterlife, it also includes the statement that the Satanist's ego may become so strong that it "will refuse to die, even after the expiration of the flesh that housed it".[66]

The *Book of Belial* deals with magic, distinguished in lesser and greater magic. Lesser magic is the skillful art of psychological manipulation. Ceremonial magic includes a set of rituals, whose main effect is expected on the performer's own psyche. Ostensibly, LaVey's ritual magic is merely a form of psychodrama. On the other hand, the ambiguity of the *Book of Lucifer* is not absent in the *Book of Belial* either. The faction in the Church of Satan who would separate from LaVey because of its belief in the "real" existence of Satan would find in the *Book of Belial* statements confirming that ceremonial magic may indeed have "magical" effects going well beyond the psychodrama.

The Book of Leviathan would become another bone of contention with Aquino and his followers. The largest part of this fourth book of *The Satanic Bible* includes a new "translation" and interpretation of Dee's Enochian keys. As we saw, according to Aquino, LaVey had included Enochian references in his *Satanic Rituals* at the last minute before publication, and almost by chance. There are reasons to doubt this version. Dyrendal, Lewis, and Petersen suggest that, in order to bulk out a book that might otherwise have been too small for the publisher, the typographical distribution of the material was organized in order to fill more pages. The material, however, was already included in the original project, and an interpretation of the Enochian keys was part of LaVey's teachings before he wrote *The Satanic Bible*.[67]

LaVey, as noted by Egil Asprem, offered a "secularized" interpretation of the Enochian keys, emphasizing mostly their "psychological benefits", and finding in Dee's keys a confirmation of the general worldview presented in *The Bible of Satan*.[68] This scandalized occult interpreters of Dee, including Israel Regardie

65 A. LaVey, *The Satanic Bible*, cit., p. 96.

66 *Ibid*., p. 94. For a comment see A. Dyrendal, J.R. Lewis and J.Aa. Petersen, *The Invention of Satanism*, cit., p. 83.

67 See *ibid.*, p. 92.

68 Egil Asprem, *Arguing with Angels: Enochian Magic & Modern Occulture*, Albany (New York): State University of New York Press, 2012, pp. 113–117.

(1907–1985). They attacked LaVey, and Aquino answered in The Church of Satan's magazine *The Cloven Hoof*, astutely observing that Dee's text was open to multiple interpretations and the Crowley-Golden Dawn version advocated by Regardie was just one of them.[69]

The Satanic Bible includes statements that the real Satanist is proudly independent and does not believe in any holy script. However, in the course of the years, the book would be recognized as authoritative by a good part of late 20th-century Satanism, even beyond the borders of the Church of Satan. As Lewis noted, the text, besides being very successful and crucial for the national and international expansion of the Church of Satan, effectively *became* a holy script and the source of a tradition: which, if we consider its almost occasional genesis, is not the last of its paradoxes.[70]

The Growing Church of Satan, 1969–1972

In 1969, the Church of Satan started publishing a newsletter, *The Cloven Hoof*, originally titled *From the Devil's Notebook*. Its style was significantly different from *The Satanic Bible*, as the newsletter was much more interested in ancient divinities, magic, and astrology. In 1970, Aquino, a specialist in psychological warfare, was dispatched to Vietnam by the Army. There, he "received" in the middle of the war the *Diabolicon*, a book with prophecies and revelations by Satan, Beelzebub, Azazel, Abbadon, Asmodeus, Astaroth, Belial, and Leviathan. He did not present these demons as purely symbolic beings, and believed they were very much real.[71] LaVey wrote a letter to him, accepting the book as genuine. In fact, LaVey was so impressed with Aquino that he asked him, as we mentioned earlier, to act as celebrant in the first solemn Black Mass.

Later, LaVey would explain that his acceptance of the *Diabolicon* did not imply anything other than his appreciation for what he considered a literary work of Aquino. The latter disagreed, and insisted that LaVey in 1970 believed in a form of existence of the Devil. His late atheism came from the lack of results he experienced by practicing occultism. Certainly, even according to Aquino, "Satan is a symbol of the self". But "this symbolism is only part of the truth, because man's very ability to think and act in *disregard of* the

69 *Ibid.*

70 J.R. Lewis, "Diabolical Authority: Anton LaVey, *The Satanic Bible* and the Satanist 'Tradition'", *Marburg Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, September 2002, pp. 1–16.

71 M.A. Aquino, "The Diabolicon", in M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., Appendix, pp. A-57-A-69.

'balancing factor' of the Universe necessitates a source for that ability. And this source is thus the intelligence that made the Church of Satan far more than an exercise in psychodramatic narcissism. It is the intelligence of what mankind has personified as the Prince of Darkness himself". Satan was no mere "symbol or allegory, but a sentient being". This was, Aquino argued, "the central 'secret' – and the *heart* – of the Church of Satan. With the irony that so often accompanies great truths, it was proclaimed in the institution's very title; yet in its simplicity it confronted such a massive psychological block in the minds of even some of the most dedicated Satanists that it remained unnamed and unacknowledged".[72]

If we confront these observations of Aquino with the testimonies of other members of the Church of Satan, we can conclude that the institution created by LaVey lived in ambiguity, between the worship of Satan as "a sentient being" and a form of atheism inspired by the different systems of Crowley and Rand. This tension was creative, in its own way, until 1975. In that year, it exploded in the most serious schism in the history of the Church of Satan. John Dewey Allee was a member of the Church of Satan from 1971 until 1975. In 2003, he created his own organization, the Allee Shadow Tradition, after having been among the founders of the schism known as the First Church of Satan. He reported that LaVey "said one thing in public and then something quite different in private concerning his beliefs". In fact, "LaVey could be 'theist' or 'non-theist', depending on his audience and the social climate". He did not "worship" the Devil, because he regarded worship in general as the act of the slave, not of the fierce individualist. "So, to answer your question, Allee concluded in 2008, 'Did Anton LaVey worship the Devil?'. The answer would be, 'No'. But did he believe in a very real entity, given birth to by our collective thoughts and ideas, lurking around inside our subconscious, representing our shadow side? I'll leave the answer to that question with you".[73] This ambiguity left a margin for controversy, and a potential seed for schisms.

In the first months of 1970, the Church of Satan appeared to be a healthy organization. The Army relocated Aquino from Vietnam to Louisville, Kentucky, where he and his girlfriend, who had moved from Mormonism to Satanism, became vocal spokespersons for the Church of Satan, challenging if necessary the military authorities, which, however, did not disturb them too much. In 1970, in Louisville, Aquino founded the "grotto" Nineveh of the Church of Satan together with a former Wiccan, Clifford Amos. By now, the Church was operating through a system of local unities called "grottoes".

72 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

73 John D. Allee, "Did Anton LaVey Actually Worship Satan?" 2008, available at <http://www.churchofsatan.org/worship.htm>, last accessed on September 29, 2015.

In each grotto, members were divided into five degrees. The third was equivalent to the priesthood, and in the fourth one became a Bishop. The governing body of the Church of Satan was theoretically the "Order of the Trapezoid", a particularly satanic shape according to LaVey, with a "Council of Nine". In fact, the Church of Satan was directed exclusively by LaVey and his companion Diane, and no challenge to their authority was tolerated.

In 1971, LaVey published his second book, *The Compleat Witch.*[74] Members of the Church of Satan were perplexed when confronted with a work clearly destined to "outsiders", with little magic and very little Satanism. Instead, the book offered practical advice, both psychological and sexual, which should allow women to capture the men that they liked. Explaining male psychology to women, LaVey insisted that men desire what they cannot see, and the real witch has to know what to veil and what to reveal. Each man also has his own fetish: it is only a question of discovering what it is. The book had at first sight not much to do with Satanism, but got a small number of positive reviews, granting some further publicity to LaVey and the Church of Satan.

In later years, with the title *The Satanic Witch*, it would be kept in print by the Church of Satan, and somewhat rediscovered by second-generation scholars of Satanism. Despite its anti-feminist advocacy of traditional gender roles,[75] the book included in fact some genuinely counter-cultural remarks, such as the advice to women not to bath too much and to reconsider the scent of their feminine fluids, contrary to the advice of modern cosmetic industry, as a resource. This breaking of both ancient and modern taboos about menstrual blood, sweat, and urine was perhaps more attuned to LaVey's general philosophy than members of the Church of Satan were able to perceive in 1971.[76]

In the early 1970s, the system of grottoes was expanded to several cities. Aquino's grotto in Louisville was not the first to be founded. West, whose "hatred for Christianity was almost pathological",[77] had founded earlier the Babylon Grotto in Detroit, and Charles Steenbarger (aka Adrian-Claude

74 A.S. LaVey, *The Compleat Witch, or What to Do when Virtue Fails*, New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1970 (but 1971); 2nd ed., revised: *The Satanic Witch*, Los Angeles: Feral House, 1989.

75 See P. Faxneld and J.Aa. Petersen, "Cult of Carnality: Sexuality, Eroticism, and Gender in Contemporary Satanism", in H. Bogdan and J.R. Lewis (eds.), *Sexuality and New Religious Movements*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 165–181. See also P. Faxneld, "'Intuitive, Receptive, Dark': Negotiations of Femininity in the Contemporary Satanic and Left-Hand Path Milieu", *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, vol. 4, no. 2, November 2013, pp. 201–230.

76 See C. Holt, "Blood, Sweat, and Urine: The Scent of Feminine Fluids in Anton LaVey's *The Satanic Witch*", cit.

77 M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., p. 61.

Frazier, 1919–2004), a well-known psychiatrist, the Plutonian Grotto in Denver. One of the most important grottoes followed shortly thereafter, the Lilith Grotto in New York, led by Lilith Sinclair, who came from Wicca. Larry Green founded the Typhon Grotto in San Francisco. West's Babylon Grotto was in turn the "mother" of a Belphegor Grotto founded in the suburbs of Detroit, and of a Stygian Grotto, directed by John DeHaven, in Dayton (Ohio). In the cities where there were no grottoes, isolated members of the Church of Satan were referred to "regional agents".

But how many card-carrying members did LaVey's Church of Satan have before 1975? Members of the "grottoes" were not, if we believe Aquino, more than a hundred. A far greater number of people – LaVey, exaggerating, said tens of thousands – had paid the enrollment fee to become "lifetime" members of the Church of Satan, but were not affiliated to a grotto. LaVey explained that, excluding explicit resignation or expulsion, membership in the Church of Satan was for life. As resignations and expulsions were rare, the number of members could not diminish but only increase.[78] Probably the members of the Church of Satan, even in the period of its greatest expansion, never exceeded one or two thousand. LaVey's influence went, however, beyond the limited ranks of Church members. According to Wright, 600,000 copies of the *Satanic Bible* sold through twenty-eight editions prior to 1993.[79] To measure the influence of LaVey only by the number of members formally affiliated with the Church of Satan would certainly be reductive.

Not all the consequences of his influence were pleasant for LaVey. The first public Satanist rituals, baptisms, funerals, and weddings, generated protests by his neighbors. They also took exception to his lion Togare and his nocturnal roars, and the animal had to be sold to the San Francisco Zoo. The home in California Street was repeatedly attacked by anti-Satanist fanatics, including with firearms. LaVey had to spread the (false) information that he had several houses and lived in San Francisco only occasionally. In 1969, the Manson case (on which more later) generated negative publicity for LaVey. Beausoleil, who was closely associated with Anger, was arrested for the first of the murders connected with Manson.[80] Another of Manson's assassins, Susan Atkins, had danced in the topless shows organized by LaVey.

78 B. Barton, *The Church of Satan*, New York: Hell's Kitchen Productions, 1990, p. 67.

79 L. Wright, *Saints & Sinners*, cit., p. 122.

80 B. Landis, *Anger: The Unauthorized Biography of Kenneth Anger*, cit., pp. 143–158. This biography claims that the relation between Anger, "strictly gay", and Beausoleil, "naturally heterosexual", was rather complicated (p. 145).

Criminals, drug addicts, and young thugs also read *The Satanic Bible* and other texts by LaVey and began to reenact rituals, not always with a happy conclusion. In every such occasion, LaVey issued press releases stating that the Church of Satan was a law-abiding organization not condoning bloody sacrifices of either animals or humans, and not using illegal drugs in its ceremonies. The incidents, however, did damage the Church. In May 1971, a group of high school students of Northglenn, near Denver, started practicing animal sacrifices to the Devil. The reaction of the press and of the police was strong enough to convince Steenbarger, who was a respected psychiatrist, that his Plutonian Grotto should by then operate secretly.

In September 1971, reasons connected both to monetary questions and to an article by LaVey critical of Crowley in *The Cloven Hoof* led to the separation of West from the Church of Satan. In October, the Babylon Grotto was dissolved and LaVey excommunicated West. In the area of Detroit, there were still the Belphegor Grotto, directed by Douglas Robbins, and a local leader well known in the occult underground, Michael A. Grumboski: but the defection of West caused many problems. LaVey and Aquino, by now his lieutenant, reacted by improving the system of the grottoes and organizing regional "conclaves". New grottoes continued, notwithstanding the problems, to emerge. In 1971, James and Dolores Stowe founded the Karnak Grotto in Santa Cruz, California, with a subordinate Bubastis Chapel, in San José, led by Margaret A. Wendall.

New rituals were added, among which some written by Aquino, based on the literary myths created by H.P. Lovecraft. As mentioned earlier, the American writer was not a Satanist, nor was he particularly interested in magical rituals. Lovecraft referred to an "extremely dangerous" work of the "Mad Arab" Abdul Alhazred called *Al Azif* or *Necronomicon*, which was a satanic book of sorts. This book certainly did not exist in Lovecraft's time, and references to it were purely a literary tool. After the death of Lovecraft, several versions of the *Necronomicon* were written in England and the United States, the most successful a collective work edited by George Hay in 1978.[81] These books were supported by improbable stories, and were partially created by using ancient magical manuscripts. Magical groups, and also some Satanists, started using these *Necronomicons* in the 1980s. They claimed that they "worked" for magical evocations, independently of their apocryphal nature or of the intentions of who wrote them.[82] Popular occult author Colin Wilson (1931–2013) claimed

81 George Hay (ed.), *The Necronomicon*, London: Neville Spearman, 1978; 2nd ed., London: Skoob Books Publishing, 1992.

82 See Lars B. Lindholm, *Pilgrims of the Night: Pathfinders of the Magical Way*, St. Paul (Minnesota): Llewellyn, 1993, pp. 163–172.

that Lovecraft gained access to an ancient manuscript though his father, who was a member of a "fringe" Masonic order.[83] Lovecraft scholars remain skeptical about these claims.

Notwithstanding the new, Lovecraft-based rituals, the Midwest continued to be a source of problems for the Church of Satan. Between the end of 1971 and the beginning of 1972, the Stygian Grotto in Dayton was connected to an unpleasant story of drug dealing and its chief, DeHaven, was arrested. Promptly excommunicated, he involved in a controversy all of the Church of Satan in the Midwest, before founding a rival organization and finally converting to Evangelical Christianity. The repeated crises in the Midwest made LaVey dubious about the whole grotto system, even if new ones continued to be founded in several cities of the United States, Canada, and even Europe. In the years 1972–1973, the most visible grotto was in New York, where Satanists became involved in a controversy with the followers of Wicca. Criticized by the latter for accepting a theology of Satan that came from the Bible, the New York Satanists, as instructed by LaVey, replied that practicing witchcraft without pronouncing the name of Satan was the best gift one could offer to the Christian adversary.

The Satanic Rituals

1972 was the year of publication of the edited *Satanic Rituals* as a mass-market paperback. Besides a heavily edited version of the Black Mass, the baptisms for children and adults, the wedding and the funeral of the Church of Satan, the book included seven rituals. Two were created by Aquino based on the works of Lovecraft and five were allegedly of ancient origin but in fact came from LaVey. The first, the ritual of the "Stifling Air", enacts the vengeance of the Knights Templar against the King of France, who vanishes into nothingness, and against the Pope. The latter is deposed into a coffin, where there is a young woman waiting for him. Thanks to her, he will "convert" to the pleasures of the flesh and thus purge his sins. LaVey claimed to having derived this ritual from the internal circle of an American para-Masonic organization, the Shrine. Aquino correctly noted that parallels with Shrine rituals were quite vague.[84]

83 See Colin Wilson, *Introduction* to the 1992 edition of the *Necronomicon* ed. by G. Hay, cit., pp. 13–55. On the many apocryphal *Necronomicons*, see Daniel Harms and John Wisdom Gonce III (eds.), *The Necronomicon Files: The Truth Behind Lovecraft's Legend*, 2nd ed., revised, York Beach (Maine): Weiser, 2003.

84 M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., p. 207.

One of the most significant ceremonies of the Church of Satan was "Das Tierdrama". Humans renounce to their supposed "spiritual" nature and celebrate their identity with animals. A mouse is present, closed in a cage, and in the end is freed and is followed by the initiates, now "animalized", who start to walk on all fours. "Man is God", repeat the participants, now symbolically transformed into animals, but we (animals) "are men" also, and thus we "are gods".[85] "The purpose of the ceremony, LaVey explained, is for the participants to regress willingly to an animal level, assuming animal attributes of honesty, purity and increased sensory perception".[86]

The scene is impressive, and it tells us a lot about the ideas of the Church of Satan, but is not original. According to LaVey, it derives from an ancient ritual of the Bavarian Illuminati. However, all the rituals of the Illuminati are now known,[87] and no similar ritual has been found. In fact, LaVey's *Tierdrama* is derived almost literally from the novel *The Island of Doctor Moreau* by Herbert George Wells (1866–1946).[88] LaVey often found inspiration in literary works, without feeling the need of quoting them, particularly from *The King in Yellow* by Robert William Chambers (1865–1933).[89]

The third ritual is called "Die Elektrischen Vorspiele", and is based both on German expressionist cinema of the 1920s and on the theories on sexual energy of Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957). By using light, sounds and an electrostatic generator, the ritual tries to produce "orgonic energy" (OR), which for Reich was the vital (sexual) energy of the universe. Then, the ritual tries to generate the static version of OR, called by Reich, DOR. For Reich, DOR was only negative and dangerous, while for the Church of Satan it appeared to have a complementary role, necessary in its own way. Aquino also found in this ritual quotes from a story written in 1929 by Frank Belknap Long (1901–1994).[90] There followed a "Homage to Tchort". Here, the naked woman who serves as an altar

85 A.S. LaVey, *The Satanic Rituals*, cit., pp. 103–105.

86 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

87 See *Die Illuminaten: Quellen und Texte zur Aufklärungsideologie des Illuminatenordens (1776–1785)*, ed. by Jan Rachold, Berlin (DDR): Akademie-Verlag Berlin, 1984. See also René Le Forestier [1868–1951], *Les Illuminés de Bavière et la franc-maçonnerie allemande*, Paris: Hachette, 1915 (reprint, Geneva: Slatkine-Megariotis Reprints, 1974); Renzo De Felice [1929–1996], *Note e ricerche sugli Illuminati e il misticismo rivoluzionario (1789–1800)*, Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1960; and M. Introvigne, *Les Illuminés et le Prieuré de Sion. La réalité derrière les complots du* Da Vinci Code *et de* Anges et Démons *de Dan Brown*, Vevey (Switzerland): Xenia, 2006.

88 Herbert George Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, London: W. Heinemann, 1896.

89 See Robert William Chambers, *The King in Yellow*, New York: F.T. Neely, 1895.

90 M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., p. 208.

is glorified in a hymn to sexual desire and the pleasures of the flesh. LaVey claimed that the Russian sect of the Khlisty practiced these rituals. Wendall, who speaks Russian, demonstrated that the rituals could not be of Russian origin.[91]

The last ritual, the "Declaration of Shaitan", was presented by LaVey as an adaptation of Yazidi rituals. The Yazidis, a religious group in Iraq, were almost unknown to the general public before 2014, when they felt victim to the persecution of ISIS, which caused widespread international outrage. ISIS' so called Caliphate agrees with LaVey in considering Yazidis as "Devil worshippers". Scholars have debunked the claim that Yazidis worship the Judeo-Christian Satan several decades ago.[92] The alleged Yazidi scripture *Book of Revelation* (al-Jalwa), also called the Black Book, which LaVey used for his ritual, is actually a forgery prepared in the 1910s for the benefit of Western travelers, although it does include some genuine Yazidi texts. LaVey's ritual is impressive, but has little to do with genuine Yazidism. In fact, few of any of LaVey's rituals have an ancient origin. Some ancient words and sentences come from the Golden Dawn and Crowley; others are written in Dee's Enochian language.

Aquino vs. LaVey: The Schism of 1975

In 1971, LaVey's elder daughter Karla debuted as a conference lecturer and young spokesperson for the Church of Satan.[93] Through Karla and Aquino, LaVey managed to recruit another Hollywood celebrity, willing for some time to make his participation in the Church of Satan public: the actor and singer Sammy Davis Jr. (1925–1990). 1973 and 1974 were still years of success for the

91 *Ibid.*, pp. 209–210.

92 Older sources include Alphonse Mingana [1878–1937], "Devil Worshippers: Their Beliefs and their Sacred Books", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol. 11, 1916, pp. 505–526; C.[ecil] J.[ohn] Edmonds [1889–1979], *A Pilgrimage to Lalish*, Royal Asiatic Society, London 1967. For contemporary scholarly assessments, see Philip G. Kreyenbroek, *Yezidism: Its Background, Observances and Textual Tradition*, Lewiston, New York, Queenston (Ontario): Edwin Mellen, 1995; Garnik S. Asatrian and Victoria Arakelova, *The Religion of the Peacock Angel: The Yezidis and Their Spirit World*, Durham (U.K.): Acumen, 2014. For Crowley and the Yazidis, see T. Churton, "Aleister Crowley and the Yezidis", in H. Bogdan and M.P. Starr, *Aleister Crowley and Western Esotericism: An Anthology of Critical Studies*, cit., pp. 181–207.

93 M. Pasi, "Dieu du désir, Dieu de la raison (Le Diable en Californie dans les années soixante)", in *Cahiers de l'Hermétisme – Le Diable*, Paris: Dervy, 1998, pp. 87–98 (p. 87), mentions a 1971 letter by well-known philosopher of science Paul Feyerabend (1924–1994), reporting a lecture at the University of Berkeley by the "beautiful daughter" of LaVey.

system of the grottoes and the regional conclaves. In 1973, Aquino separated from his first companion and moved to Santa Barbara, California, with Lilith Sinclair, the leader of the New York grotto. The two were later married.

One of the most serious crises came once again from the Midwest, where several splinter groups were operating, including the Church of Satanic Brotherhood founded by DeHaven before his 1974 conversion to Christianity, and the Ordo Templi Satanas created by Joseph Daniels and Clifford Amos, who had originally followed DeHaven. The most important Satanist leader in the Midwest in 1974 was Grumboski. He had asked to leave the Church of Satan temporarily in order to work at an ecumenical project aimed at uniting all the different branches of American Satanism, separated by subsequent schisms. But for LaVey and Aquino there was only one original Church of Satan, and all the other organizations were spurious. In the end, Grumboski aligned himself with the Order of the Black Goat, founded by another former local leader of the Church of Satan, Douglas Robbins, who had led the Belphegor Grotto. This order had tight connections with the National Renaissance Party, one of the American neo-Nazi parties, founded in New York by James H. Madole (1927–1979). Initially, LaVey himself thought that Madole might become a potential ally.[94] The Nazi leader, however, met the "Pope of Satan" in New York, discovered LaVey's Jewish origins, and did not pursue the matter further.[95]

In 1974, these were only part of LaVey's problems. Others came from Wolfe's official biography, which included details of LaVey as a problematic and insecure young man. It was not apologetic enough for members who had never met the "Pope of Satan" in person and considered him some kind of a superhero. The critics made LaVey even more intolerant towards the systems of the grottoes, and more favorable to a simple informal connection between individual members and the center in San Francisco. Kenneth Anger had suggested this solution to LaVey as early as 1970, when he started being inactive in the Church of Satan, which was moving far away from his own Crowleyan leanings. In 1992, Anger declared to Wright that he "never had a quarrel" with LaVey,[96] and regarded himself as a "sleeping" member of the Church of Satan, as were those from the Midwest who went underground at the times of the Northglenn incident.

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94 On these events, see Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity*, New York, London: New York University Press, 2002, pp. 214–220.

95 See Tani Jantsang, "Did I Ever Meet Anton LaVey?" available at <http://www.luckymojo.com/satanism/firstchurchofsatan/cosfiles/DID_I_EVER_MEET_ANTON_LAVEY.html>, last accessed on September 25, 2015.

96 L. Wright, *Saints & Sinners*, cit., p. 138.

Without the grotto system, the division in initiatory degrees of the members of the Church of Satan would also lose significance. The logical consequence would be that degrees would simply be connected to monetary contributions of increasing importance, just as other organizations make distinctions between ordinary and supporting members. The dissolution of the grottoes and the new system of the degrees were set to be announced in the summer 1975 issue of *The Cloven Hoof*. However, LaVey's project of reform caused a clash with his trusted lieutenant, Aquino. Rather than publishing in *The Cloven Hoof*, of which he was the editor, an article he regarded as suicidal for the Church of Satan, in June 1975, Aquino broke with LaVey. Aquino always claimed that the break of 1975 represented the "end" of the Church of Satan, since the most significant leaders from California (L. Dale Seago, M. Wendall), the East Coast (Robert Ethel of the Asmodeus Grotto in Washington D.C.). and other parts of the United States and Canada, all joined his splinter group, the Temple of Set. LaVey replied that "it was not a schism, it was a drop in the bucket. He [Aquino] took twenty-eight people with him and started spreading rumors that the Church of Satan was defunct and that he had a divine mandate word from the Man Downstairs to take over".[97]

In fact, the schism of 1975 cannot be read only in terms of numbers. Its evaluation implies a general examination of LaVey's role in the history of Satanism. In the story of the Church of Satan, two different styles were at work. The first was the carnival style of LaVey and his relations with the press. The other was the more "serious" style of *The Satanic Bible* and other writings of the "Pope of Satan". Where was the real LaVey? In the character dressed as the Devil, who cheerfully entertained journalists and photographers, or in the social Darwinism of the strong crushing the weak? Not all those interested in LaVey's social Darwinism despised the carnival style. Most realized that the masquerades and the public relations politics of LaVey were an effectively satanic stroke of genius. So photographable, so available, so open, to the extent of publishing his rituals, LaVey could be adopted by the media as the last of the California eccentrics and one among many quintessentially American curiosities. He achieved a double effect. He was not regarded as dangerous by the media and the authorities, and received free publicity through hundreds of articles. This LaVey of papier-mâché had at least the useful function of hiding the "real" LaVey.

Others were interested in the papier-mâché only. Among the mail order "members" of the Church of Satan, there were many who shared with LaVey the passion for macabre paraphernalia, horror movies, vampire and werewolf

97 *Ibid.*, p. 147.

mythology, and were not particularly interested in ascertaining what his "real" philosophy was. In the period between 1975 and 1984, a year he was awaiting as significant because of the homonymous novel by George Orwell (1903–1950), LaVey certainly winked an eye towards this kind of audience. He advertised his role as a consultant for horror and "satanic" movies and as a designer of automatons and mannequins. Behind the latest activity there was, in fact, something he regarded as serious: the theory of the artificial humanoid as a perfect "mechanical slave" of the future. Theory, however, was less interesting than show business for LaVey's new audience.

The anti-Satanist campaigns of 1980 would make this debate, in a certain sense, obsolete. Anti-Satanism would become so suspicious that it would no longer tolerate even papier-mâché. Halloween celebrations would be prohibited to many Christian children and American sport teams with a little devil as a mascot would have to change it rapidly.[98] LaVey would be attacked in any case, notwithstanding the low profile he maintained after the events of 1975.

For members of the Church of Satan, there was also another problem, thus summed up by one of them, Gavin Baddeley: the movement was "an organization dedicated to liberty, but run as a dictatorship" by LaVey.[99] It was not a new situation in the history of religious and political movements. Groups that promise absolute freedom from norms and rules often have authoritarian leaders. Petersen noticed how the post-1975 Church of Satan and its schisms were typical of the evolution of many new religious movements. On the other hand, there was also an element original to Satanism. The very definition of the movement exhibited a constant ambiguity and needed to be constantly renegotiated.[100]

Was Satan the symbol of a "man worship", as Rand called it, certainly tempered by Crowley's belief in magic, or was he a real living being? After 1975, LaVey's answer, both public and private, became less ambiguous. Satan was only a symbol, and whoever believed that he really existed was a "Catholic Satanist", a pseudo-Satanist who was playing the game of the Christian adversary.[101] The Satanism of LaVey became a variation of Crowley's magical

98 For some interesting episodes, see the gossipy account of Arthur Lyons [1946–2008], *Satan Wants You: The Cult of Devil Worship in America*, New York: The Mysterious Press, 1988.

99 Gavin Baddeley, *Lucifer Rising: Sin, Devil Worship and Rock'n'Roll*, London: Plexus, 2000, p. 218.

100 J.Aa. Petersen, "Satanists and Nuts: The Role of Schisms in Modern Satanism", in J.R. Lewis and Sarah M. Lewis (eds.), *Sacred Schisms: How Religions Divide*, Cambridge (Massachusetts): Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 218–247.

101 B. Barton, *The Church of Satan*, cit., p. 125.

atheism, although magic played a less important role compared to Crowley. Before 1975, things, however, were less clear. The more documents on the first years of the Church of Satan became available to scholars,[102] the more doubts arose.

LaVey never claimed he received revelations from Satan. But Aquino did. Again, in 1974, he received "The Ninth Solstice Message", where the Devil announced to LaVey that he had "emptied him of his human substance [so that LaVey can] become in himself a Daimon".[103] LaVey accepted these revelations gladly, if not enthusiastically. It is possible that the ambiguity not only had the functional role of keeping the Church of Satan together, but also actually existed in the mind of LaVey himself. The balance was, however, unstable and destined to break. After 1975, those who believed in Satan as a living person joined Aquino's Temple of Set, while those who regarded Satan as a metaphor either stayed with LaVey or, when they disagreed with him on organizational matters, formed a number of independent "LaVeyan" organizations.

On one point, Aquino was certainly wrong. The Church of Satan and its influence did not disappear in 1975. It experienced moments of extremely low profile in the 1980s, but was "reborn", in an unexpected way in the 1990s, as a reaction to the excesses of anti-Satanism. We will return to this revival of the Church of Satan, but we should cover first other groups that became well known in the 1970s and 1980s.

Satan the Jungian: The Process

Not all groups of late 20th-century Satanism found their origins in LaVey's Church of Satan. One exception was represented by a British group called The Process Church of the Final Judgement. Its founders read more Jungian psychology than occultism. Jung proposed a "reconstructive" interpretation of the Trinity, where from the subconscious a fourth "dark" element, the Devil, emerged, thus converting the Trinity into a "Quaternity".[104] Removing the shadowy element, the Devil, would cause psychological unbalance. There is no

102 A good number of documents, most of them coming from Aquino, can be found in the archives of the Institute for the Study of American Religion, Special Collections, University of California, Santa Barbara.

103 M.A. Aquino, "The Ninth Solstice Message", in M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., Appendix, pp. A-345-A-346.

104 See Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, New Haven (Connecticut), London: Yale University Press, 1960, pp. 88–111.

lack of groups who attempted to build religious rituals based on Jung. The passion for Jung united Mary Ann Maclean (1931–2005) and Robert De Grimston Moor (born in 1935 in Shanghai, China).

When they met, in 1961, both had rather colorful careers behind them. Between 1954 and 1958, De Grimston served in the British Household Cavalry in two different elite regiments, the second been the 19th Royal Hussars, stationed in Malaysia. Mary Ann lived for a year in the United States, where she dated the boxing champion "Sugar" Ray Robinson (1921–1989): or so she said, since the son of the boxer later claimed that "there was never a Mary Ann in his father's life".[105] Having ended her real or imaginary affair with the boxer, Mary Ann went back to England and from 1959 operated in her apartment as an upper class prostitute, receiving celebrities in business and politics. In 1962, Robert, fresh from divorce, and Mary Ann met while frequenting the London Church of Scientology. Neither had leadership positions in Scientology, although Mary Ann was an auditor. In 1962, both were declared by Scientology "suppressive persons", the equivalent of an excommunication,[106] and left Hubbard's organization, never to return.

In 1963, De Grimston and Mary Ann married. With the financial help of a lawyer friend, the two started a group based on the organizational methods of Scientology and the ideas of the psychologist Alfred Adler (1870–1937), called Compulsions Analysis. The name alluded to the "compulsive" behaviors, these small or big movements and acts that we are all constrained to carry out by the environment. When we become aware of our compulsive behaviors, we automatically begin to overcome them and to follow a path of liberation, which allows us to realize our full human potential. The difference with Scientology, De Grimston claimed, was that the benefits Compulsions Analysis promised were not "infinite": "we are not offering super powers, but a means

105 Timothy Wyllie, with Adam Parfrey, *Love, Sex, Fear, Death: The Inside Story of The Process Church of the Final Judgment*, Los Angeles: Feral House, 2009, p. 55.

106 The essential information on The Process is found in William Sims Bainbridge, *Satan's Power: A Deviant Psychotherapy Cult*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1978. The main characters were protected by pseudonyms, which were unveiled in my introduction to the Italian translation: *Setta satanica: un culto psicoterapeutico deviante*, Milan: SugarCo, 1992. See also S. Sennitt, *The Process*, Mexborough: Nox Press, 1989; N. Schreck, *The Demonic Revolution*, New York: Amok Press, 1993; T. Wyllie, with A. Parfrey, *Love, Sex, Fear, Death: The Inside Story of The Process Church of the Final Judgment*, cit. A collection of rituals and pamphlets published by The Process is in the archives of the Institute for the Study of American Religion, Special Collections, University of California, Santa Barbara.

that people can live on this side more effectively".[107] In 1966, regular clients of Compulsions Analysis had developed sufficient enough connections with the De Grimstons that a new organization could be created, The Process, which assumed an increasingly "religious" tone.

The "religious" change in The Process became clear in March 1966, when twenty-five members of the group began to live communally in a luxurious apartment at 2 Balfour Place, in the fashionable London neighborhood of Mayfair. There, the objectives of liberation from compulsive behavior were described in increasingly religious terms. In May 1966, the group decided to pursue its research far away from civilization, in the Tropics. On June 23, around thirty adepts and six German shepherds, which would become a trademark feature of The Process, left London for Nassau, in the Bahamas, where they spent the summer while waiting to find a suitable location. The evolution of the movement was illustrated by the fact that they started using magic in order to find where to go, as the members tried to create and transmit telepathically to each other images of ideal locations. In September 1966, the group moved to Mexico City, where an epic journey began on an old bus. Driven by meditation and visualization techniques, they looked for a place to settle in Yucatan.

Finally, they found a place called Xtul, and learned that in the Mayan language the name meant "The End". They took it as a sign that their journey should end there. It was a scarcely inhabited area, void of the luxuries they were used to in London. But they began to build a community, which they would always remember affectionately as "the real Process". In fact, it existed only for a month. Xtul was far away from an ideal world: the environment was complicated, the neighbors were not particularly friendly. In a few days, their "poetic" ideas on the Mayas and their civilization gave way to the hardship of everyday life.[108] At the end of September 1966, a tropical hurricane devastated Xtul and forced the De Grimstons and the majority of their followers to leave, although some stayed. The experience in Yucatan was brief, but was later mythologized as the sacred history of the small group. In Xtul, according to De Grimston, The Process "met God face to face", living an experience similar to that of Israel in the desert.[109]

It was in Xtul that Robert and Mary Ann, reflecting on the teachings of Jung, elaborated their own doctrine of the four "Great Gods of the Universe": Jehovah, Lucifer, Satan, and Christ. It was in Xtul, at the same time, that The Process began to clash with society and "anti-cult" movements, when the parents of

107 See S. Sennitt, *The Process*, cit., p. 3.

108 See W.S. Bainbridge, *Satan's Power: A Deviant Psychotherapy Cult*, cit., pp. 54–80.

109 *Xtul Dialogues*, The Process, n.p., n.d., p. 3.

some members tried to recuperate their children through legal actions. It was in Xtul that the members clarified the hierarchical structure of the group, with "the Omega", i.e. De Grimston and his wife, at the top, followed by "masters", "priests", "prophets", and "messengers". It was in Xtul, finally, that, as happened in other new religious movements, the members of The Process abandoned their "profane" names and took new sacred ones. After Xtul, the crucial distinction in The Process would be between those who went to Yucatan and the new members who did not participate in the Mexican experience.[110]

The fears of their parents that their children would live permanently in Mexico proved to be unfounded. The Xtul experiment did not survive the hurricane, and in November the majority of the members had already returned to London. There, between the end of 1966 and 1967, The Process began to effectively operate as a church. In London, a coffee shop open all night called Satan's Cavern and a library were inaugurated. The group added a magazine, called *The Common Market* and later *The Process*. The activities attracted the attention of music and movie celebrities, including Marianne Faithfull, who later became the companion of Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones. Jagger himself had an interest in Crowley and his song *Sympathy for the Devil* became a favorite of The Process and other occult groups.

The choice of the name "Satan's Cavern" was not coincidental. For The Process, Satan was not the only god but he was part of a "Quaternity" of gods. They believed that the dialectic between Jehovah and Lucifer, and between Christ and Satan, should be finally recomposed in a superior synthesis. However, the adoration of Satan, like those of Jehovah and Lucifer, represented a necessary passage in order to arrive with a correct approach at the adoration of Christ, the final objective of the spiritual itinerary. They had learned from Jung that recognizing the "satanic" element of one's own life and spirituality is difficult, since we are naturally resistant to exploring the "shadow". However, to approach Jesus Christ without having passed through Satan, as well as through Jehovah and Lucifer, meant for the De Grimstons running the risk of finding Christ in an immature and incomplete manner. Approaching Satan, however, did not mean embracing evil. On the contrary, evil is already part of man. Through history, Satan transferred all of his evil to human beings, thus today "humanity is the Devil" and the Devil is simply an icon of the Separation.

Satan "instills in us two directly opposite qualities: at one end an urge to rise above all human and physical needs and appetites, to become all soul and no body, all spirit and no mind, and the other end a desire to sink BENEATH all human values, all the standards of morality, all ethics, all human codes of

110 W.S. Bainbridge, *Satan's Power: A Deviant Psychotherapy Cult*, cit., p. 76.

behavior, and to wallow in a morass of violence, lunacy and excessive physical indulgence". Following, once again, Jung, the journey through the "sinking" is necessary and should not be avoided. A certain measure of unpleasant and even violent experiences is necessary. However, one must not remain eternally tied to Satan, and certainly not to the "sinking" aspect of Satan. Those drinking the satanic goblet until the end will realize that "Christ, the Emissary, is there to guide you. HE IS the way through. He is freedom from conflict and release from Fear".[111]

Is this "Satanism"? Robert De Grimston answered that, in a certain period of their life, all must become "Satanists" and consider Satan as their main god. The passage through Satanism is necessary in order to free oneself from conformity and "normality", which make a truly integrated spirituality impossible. However, one must not be a Satanist forever, just as the spiritual journey does not begin with being a Satanist but with being a "Jehovian" and then a "Luciferian". After having completed these three experiences, one will find the maturity to become a "Christian", since Christ "brings together all the patterns of the Gods, and resolves them into One". Certainly, with this journey, "the Gods give us a maze of tortuous passages to navigate". But "CHRIST shows us the way to navigate them".[112]

While navigating along the way, admittedly tortuous, of his spiritual itinerary, De Grimston wrote a series of pamphlets and traveled around the world with his wife. In 1967 and 1968, he visited the Far East, Germany, Italy (with a pilgrimage to Cefalù, to visit the Abbey of Thelema where Crowley had lived), and the United States, where the couple started spending most of its time from the end of 1968. The members of The Process began proselytizing, and this led them to open "Chapters" in many cities of the United States. The first was inaugurated in New Orleans, where the few members who had remained in Xtul had transferred. Some European Chapters followed, including Munich, London, and Rome. The references to Satan, the radical manner in which the problems of sex and violence were discussed, and the alarming presence of the German shepherds created around the group a satanic fame, which generated several police investigations.

Worse problems followed with the assassinations instigated by Charles Manson in 1969, to which we will soon return. During the anti-Satanist campaigns of the 1980s, it was often claimed that Manson was a member of The Process and had derived from De Grimston his ideology of destruction and death. No

111 *The Process*, no. 5, n.d., *Fear*, pp. 7–8 (capitals in original).

112 [Robert De Grimston], *The Gods and Their People*, n.p.: The Process Church of the Final Judgement, 1970, pp. 21–23 (capitals in original).

convincing proof has been offered for these allegations. Ed Sanders, a rock musician with some occult interests, spread the theory in his 1971 volume of *The Family.*[113] The Process immediately started a legal action against the publisher of Sanders' book, Dutton, at the District Court of Chicago. In 1972, the case was settled and Dutton issued a press release stating that "a close examination has revealed that statements in the book [of Sanders] about The Process Church, including those attributing any connection between The Process and the activities of Charles Manson, accused and convicted murderer, have not been substantiated". The publishing house also announced that "no additional copies of the book in its present form would be printed. This release will be inserted in all existing and unsold copies, not yet sold, of *The Family* still in Dutton's possession".[114] Unlike Dutton in the U.S., the British publisher refused to settle and won the case,[115] although the text by Sanders was subsequently republished without the incriminating parts.

It is improbable that Manson was a "member" of The Process before his incarceration, and he himself always denied it. It is, however, likely that he knew about The Process. Missionaries of The Process were regularly present in the famous hippie neighborhood of Haight Asbury, in San Francisco, where Manson lived and recruited many of his followers. The real collaboration between Manson and The Process, however, actually dates to a period successive to his incarceration. Manson was visited in jail by members of the group and accepted to write an article for the monographic number of *The Process* on death, completed in 1970 and published in 1971. As a result, when District Attorney Vincent Bugliosi (1934–2015) asked Manson whether he had ever heard of The Process, the criminal answered: "The Process? You are looking at it".[116] By ordering their adepts to secure the collaboration of Manson, the De Grimstons obeyed their constant impulse to *épater le bourgeois* and probably wanted to take advantage of the strange popularity the criminal was enjoying in some youth groups. The result was, however, what Bainbridge called the "Manson disaster",[117] a blow from which The Process would never recover.

Sociologist William Sims Bainbridge came into contact with The Process in 1970, while studying Scientology. He joined the group, clearly explaining to the De Grimstons that he was completing a doctorate in sociology and wanted to

113 Ed Sanders, *The Family: The Story of Charles Manson's Dune Buggy Attack Battalion*, New York: E.P. Dutton, 1971.

114 Photocopy of the press release in S. Sennitt, *The Process*, cit., p. 21.

115 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

116 Vincent Bugliosi, with Curt Gentry, *Helter Skelter*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1974, p. 201.

117 W.S. Bainbridge, *Satan's Power: A Deviant Psychotherapy Cult*, cit., p. 119.

be a participant observer. He became one of the most active members in the years 1970–1971, conquering the trust of the leaders and cooperating in the writing of promotional material for the group. Bainbridge states that he was completely skeptical about the doctrines of the movement during his two years of participant observation, but confesses having developed ties of sympathy with many members. In the years 1972–1974, Bainbridge, who was busy with other projects, conducted his observation of The Process only episodically and from far away, coming back onto the scene at the time of the movement's crisis, in the middle of 1974. His observation took place both before and after the "Manson disaster", when The Process became more visible. If for the members the crucial moment was the experience in Xtul of 1966, The Process obtained its maximum visibility in 1970 and 1971, with the Manson incident in Los Angeles and the inauguration of its largest Chapter, in Toronto, even if probably it never had more than a few hundred active members.

The "Manson disaster" influenced The Process in three different ways. Firstly, some young fans of Manson, who had elected the criminal as their folk hero, increased the ranks of The Process. In this way, however, the group also acquired some seriously undesirable elements. Second, the Omega – Robert and Mary Ann De Grimston – realized that being associated with "Satanism" had become dangerous. They started presenting the doctrine of the four divinities in a softer and diluted manner. The black uniforms and the German shepherds were put aside, although never entirely abandoned. In 1972, a monographic edition of *The Process* magazine was published, dedicated to love. As a third consequence, tensions were also generated inside the Omega, between husband and wife. Mary Ann believed they should go further, and simply declare that the "satanic" phase for The Process had ended forever, replaced by a "Christian" phase. Robert was not willing to push to this point. Thus in 1974, after a failed attempt at reconciliation by Bainbridge, whom both trusted, Robert and Mary Ann separated. During the crisis, Robert had already begun a relationship with a young girl, Morgana, who would become his third wife.

Timothy Wyllie met De Grimston at the London Polytechnic, where they were both students, and became one of the very first members of The Process. In 2009, he offered a reconstruction of its story alternative to Bainbridge's. The sociologist, he argued, told the story from Robert's perspective. This was somewhat misleading, Wyllie insisted, since the real leader was Mary Ann. She created most of the ideology and was considered by the followers a divine figure, an incarnation of Kali or of the Greek goddess Hecate, who in ancient mythology was always accompanied by dogs, just like Mary Ann. This role of Mary Ann, Wyllie added, was a secret for the non-initiates, before whom she

presented herself as a simple spokesperson for Robert. He was mistaken for the true leader, while in fact his position was subordinate to that of his wife.[118]

After the break in 1974, a majority of disciples followed Mary Ann into her Foundation Church of the Millennium. In 1977, it changed its name in Foundation Faith of the Millennium and in 1980 adopted the name Foundation Faith of God, but continues to be referred to by its followers simply as "The Foundation". It defines itself as "a Christian Church", which obligatorily requires its members to believe in the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the redemption, and an imminent second coming of the Savior. It insists on a healing ministry, influenced by Pentecostalism. The Church is led by a Council of Luminaries, of nine members, and has maintained, among the few vestiges of The Process, the division of the members in degrees. These include luminaries, celebrants, mentors, covenanters, witnesses, and aspirants.

Initially, the Foundation flourished and its publications reached around two hundred thousand readers. In 1977, however, tensions developed between Mary Ann and her principal collaborator, Wyllie. The latter founded in New York a group called the Unit, declaring it a branch of the Foundation, from which he did not want to separate. Mary Ann disagreed and sued Wyllie, but lost, although the Unit decided to disband anyway. Wyllie continued an independent career in the New Age milieu, specializing in communications with dolphins, angels, and extraterrestrials.

In 1982, the Foundation moved to Utah, and created a refuge for abandoned animals in Kanab. It also started publishing the *Best Friends Magazine* and declared to have refuted the "gnostic" and "satanic" ideology of The Process.[119] The success was considerable. In a few years the Foundation, which in 1993 changed its name to Best Friends, removing from its statutes all spiritual or religious references, became one of the most prestigious organization for the protection of animals in the United States. It welcomed in Kanab many dogs, cats, and other old and sick animals that other associations would simply eliminate. Best Friends claims as part of its history the founding experience in Xtul and the reflections of The Process during the 1960s and the 1970s about the relationship between human beings and animals. Outside of the internal circle, however, the connection with The Process was not advertised. Nor did this change in 2005, when Mary Ann died, leaving the management of Best Friends to her second husband Gabriel De Peyer, who was also a former member of

118 T. Wyllie, with A. Parfrey, *Love, Sex, Fear, Death: The Inside Story of The Process Church of the Final Judgment*, cit.

119 J.G. Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 4th ed., Detroit: Gale, 1993, p. 751.

The Process and in fact changed his first name from Jonathan to Gabriel in honor of the archangel.

The secrecy that surrounded Mary Ann continued within Best Friends. The group did not officially announce her death. Wyllie affirmed having somewhat reconciled with Mary Ann in the final years of her life. He reported rumors that the old woman "was taking an evening stroll, so the story goes, walking slowly around the far side of the lake [which is inside the property of Best Friends] that the tomblike house overlooks, when a pack of wild dogs set on her, tearing her throat out and ripping her body apart. If this wasn't irony enough for a woman who called herself Hecate, the wild dogs were believed to be escapees from the animal sanctuary, the very place that appears to be the final iteration of her brainchildren: Compulsions Analysis, The Process Church of the Final Judgement, and The Foundation Faith of the Millennium".[120] The story is not nice, and perhaps it is just too symbolic to be true.

Robert De Grimston, after the divorce from Mary Ann in 1975, tried to continue The Process in its original form for some years, but with little success. He gave up in 1979, using his talents to develop a career in the world of business. Other members of The Process who did not follow Mary Ann tried to recreate, in the years 1989–1990, a Process Church of the Final Judgment, at Round Lake in the State of New York, with a small number of followers[121] and a branch in England, in the Yorkshire.[122] They did not succeed either.

In the anti-Satanist campaigns, it was claimed for a long time that The Process continued to exist in a clandestine form, secretly controlled the Foundation Faith of God, and inspired, after Manson, other "satanic" assassins, including the "Son of Sam" David Berkowitz. In 1987, journalist Maury Terry popularized these theories in his book *The Ultimate Evil*.[123] Terry was sued and settled by acknowledging the defamation, and his conspiracy theories were certainly extreme and unbelievable. The thesis of a clandestine prosecution of The Process was also supported by the followers of the controversial American political leader Lyndon LaRouche. They had a special interest in The Process because John Markham, the deputy prosecutor in the Boston trial against LaRouche, once represented De Grimston's group when he was in private

120 T. Wyllie, with A. Parfrey, *Love, Sex, Fear, Death: The Inside Story of The Process Church of the Final Judgment*, cit., p. 124.

121 *Ibid.*, p. 762.

122 So claimed reporter John Parker, *At the Heart of Darkness: Witchcraft, Black Magic and Satanism Today*, London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1993, p. 253.

123 Maury Terry, *The Ultimate Evil: An Investigation into America's Most Dangerous Satanic Cults*, Garden City (New York): Doubleday & Company, 1987.

practice. The followers of LaRouche claimed they had traced some members of the early internal circle of The Process, such as Christopher De Peyer (1929–2006, "Father Lucius", brother of Gabriel De Peyer: he also changed his name to Raphael in honor of the archangel) and Peter McCormick ("Brother Malachi"), on the scene of particularly atrocious crimes.[124] In the eyes of those concerned, this was just another example of LaRouche's notorious paranoia.

On the other hand, it is not impossible that The Process attracted some unstable and violent characters. Its complicate Jungian theories notwithstanding, some of those who knocked at its door were perhaps really looking for Satanism. One might ask, however, whether The Process really represented a page in the history of Satanism, or was something entirely different. The theory of the "four gods" and the definition of Satanism as a stage in the spiritual itinerary that was only temporary made it clear that its doctrine was not Satanism in the more classical sense of the term. In a text that accepted some controversial anti-cult conspiracy theories, philosopher of religion Carl Raschke gave a definition of The Process that somewhat captured its essence: "The Church of the Process was chic, sixties-bred Catharism".[125]

Concerning its origins, The Process was born on a different field from other contemporary satanic groups. The London environment, Jungian psychoanalysis, the milieu of human potential movements, gave The Process a series of features very much different from the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set. De Grimston was familiar with Crowley's writings, and perhaps read some works of his English disciple Kenneth Grant (1924–2011), who however denied having ever met the leaders of The Process.[126] Crowley was a common root for The Process and Californian Satanism, but the branches developed differently.

In most contemporary occult subculture, The Process, when it is not simply forgotten, is accepted as part of the history of Western occultism, although its subtler implications are often lost. Perhaps, it was The Process' karma to be misunderstood. The intellectual elucubrations of the De Grimstons were just too complicated. Reflecting in 1991 on his research of twenty years before, Bainbridge wrote that The Process promised freedom to its followers, but continued to create "ever more complex intellectual structures that seemed

124 Carol White, with Jeffrey Steinberg, *Satanism: Crime Wave of the '90s*, Washington: Executive Intelligence Review, 1990, p. 91. Carol White is LaRouche's ex-wife.

125 Carl A. Raschke, *Painted Black: From Drug Killings to Heavy Metal – The Alarming True Story of How Satanism is Terrorizing our Communities*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990, p. 111.

126 S. Sennitt, *The Process*, cit., p. 39.

to the others ever more removed from the reality that oppressed them".[127] While some groups of young Satanists had not enough doctrine to survive, The Process died of its excess of complicated doctrinal structures.

Satan in Jail: The Case of Charles Manson

Thousands of t-shirts with his picture have been sold in all sizes for men, women and children. His face appeared on plates, cups, posters. His adventures were told in films, videotapes, books, and comics. His image, between 1970 and 1986, generated, according to one source, revenues of several million dollars.[128] These are normal figures for celebrities in the business of merchandising, but we are not dealing with a famous actor or basketball player. The record sales figures refer to Charles Manson, a criminal regarded in his time by the California police as "the most dangerous man alive". As it happened with other criminals, Manson became a folk hero. He is still receiving today love letters from women he has never met and requests from young people, many of whom were not even born at the time of his trial in 1972, who ask how to join his group.[129]

Contrary to his legend, Manson was never called "Satan" by his followers, although he occasionally presented himself as "God" or the reincarnation of Jesus Christ. The nickname "Satan" was created by the media during his trial. We already mentioned Manson when discussing the Church of Satan and The Process. Two of his followers, Beausoleil and Atkins, had something to do with the Church of Satan. While he was awaiting trial for the murders, members of The Process visited him in jail, and he cooperated with the group for a while. In the media, however, Manson became the archetype himself of the criminal Satanist, much more than a fellow traveler of LaVey and De Grimston. The truth was probably less sensational. The instant books of the first years[130] were

127 W.S. Bainbridge, "Social Construction from Within: Satan's Process", in James T. Richardson, Joel Best and David G. Bromley (eds.), *The Satanism Scare*, Hawthorne (New York): Aldine de Gruyter, 1991, pp. 297–310 (p. 300).

128 N. Schreck (ed.), *The Manson File*, New York: Amok Press, 1988, p. 176.

129 See Nuel Emmons, "Introduction", in N. Emmons, *Manson in His Own Words*, New York: Grove Press, 1986, pp. 13–14.

130 E. Sanders, *The Family: The Story of Charles Manson's Dune Buggy Attack Battalion*; V. Bugliosi, with C. Gentry, *Helter Skelter*, cit. Bugliosi was the district attorney in the trial against Manson and later became a novelist. His sensational account of the investigation and the trial is largely novelized. The less inaccurate instant book was written by John Gilmore and Ron Kenner, *The Garbage People: The Trip to Helter-Skelter and Beyond*

slowly replaced by the memoirs and the biographies of the people involved,[131] and a sober picture emerged.

The Manson case does not entirely belong to our story and can be considered from four different perspectives, considering who or what produced Charles Manson, where his followers came from, what were his relations with Satanism before the murders, and whether Manson influenced Satanism after his trial. We should first return to Manson's biography. He was the son of Colonel Walker Scott (1910–1954) and his lover, Kathleen Maddox (1918–1973). She successively married William Manson (1910–1991), who agreed to give his name to the boy. Charles was born on November 12, 1934 in Cincinnati, Ohio. His mother, a petty criminal, went in and out of jail. Manson lived alternatively with his mother and her different partners, with relatives, and in an orphanage. Later, he would remember the orphanage as the best place he was in, but its records show that he was restless and repeatedly tried to run away.

At the age of twelve, he was finally expelled from the orphanage. Since the mother refused to take him back, Manson tried to survive with small thefts. At the age of thirteen, he was arrested, tried as an adult, and sent to jail in Indianapolis, where he was described as "the youngest offender ever" in the local prisons.[132] He was sent to a reformatory in Plainfield, Indiana, of which he later offered a terrifying portrait. If one believes his story, he was at the mercy

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with Charlie Manson and the Family, Los Angeles: Omega Press, 1971; 2nd ed., revised: Los Angeles: Amok Press, 1995.

131 See the biography of Lynette Fromme by Jess Bravin, *Squeaky: The Life and Times of Lynette Alice Fromme*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997; and George Edward and Gary Matera, *Taming the Beast: Charles Manson's Life Behind Bars*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. Two of the main characters later converted to Evangelical Christianity and told their stories from their new viewpoint as Christians: Susan Atkins, *Child of Satan, Child of God*, Plainfield (New Jersey): Logos International, 1977; Charles Watson, with Ray[mond G.] Hoekstra [1913–1997], *Will You Die for Me?*, New York: Revell, 1978. Another ex-member turned opponent of the group is Paul Watkins, *My Life with Charles Manson*, New York: Bantam, 1979. Finally, in 1987, Manson himself dictated a memoir to a fellow convict who had become a writer, Nuel Emmons [1927–2002]: *Manson in His Own Words*, cit. Manson would later complain about how Emmons edited his words, making them more acceptable to the general public. Nikolas Schreck, a Satanist and the husband of Zeena LaVey, prepared a useful collection of documents by and on Manson, *The Demonic Revolution*, cit. Conspiracy accounts of Manson were produced by the followers of Lyndon LaRouche: see Carol Greene, *Der Fall Charles Manson: Mörder aus der Retorte*, Wiesbaden: Dr. Böttiger Verlags, 1992. See also Adam Gorightly, *The Shadow Over Santa Susana: Black Magic, Mind Control and the "Manson Family" Mythos*, San José, New York: Writers Club Press, 2001; 2nd ed., London, Berkeley: Creation Books, 2009.

132 N. Emmons, *Manson in His Own Words*, cit., p. 39.

of sadistic wardens, who raped him routinely and destroyed his trust in people and institutions. After three years of this hell, he managed to escape but was arrested again in Washington D.C. for a car theft. From then on, his life took a regular pattern: he was released from jail, committed new thefts, and was arrested again.

In the Chillicothe, Ohio, jail, he claims he met the famous gangster Frank Costello (1891–1973).[133] In 1955, Manson married eighteen-year old waiter Rosalie Willis, but was arrested again for one of his usual car thefts. While he was in jail, Rosalie gave birth to their son, Charles Manson Jr. (1956–1993), and then ran away with another man. By now, Manson was no longer in reformatories, but in an adult prison, Terminal Island, California, which he left in 1958, persuaded he had discovered the job that suited him the most: the pimp. He used his popularity with women to start a business with a small number of prostitutes, which did not make him rich but allowed him to live without working. He continued with his petty crimes, forging checks and stealing cars. Wanted by the police, he escaped to Mexico, where he experimented with new drugs, still unknown in the United States. In 1961, when he returned to California, he was promptly arrested and spent the subsequent six years in jail. Released in 1967, Manson had spent most of his life in reformatories and prisons. He learned with great effort to read and write, and explored in jail various brands of religion.[134]

It is hard to believe that jails and the subculture of petty crime produced a charismatic guru. When he left prison at age 33, Manson was not yet one. He earned his living as many hippies did: he played, quite well, the guitar and begged for money in the streets. He stayed mostly in the area of Haight Ashbury in San Francisco, a hippie favorite, where he quickly realized he was attractive to women younger and less experienced than he was. He took a librarian from the University of California, Berkeley, Mary Brunner, as his live-in girlfriend, and then persuaded her to live in a polygamous relationship with Manson and other women. Polygamy attracted some women in an era of radical social experiments, or perhaps they felt that a former convict such as Manson was able to offer protection in a dangerous neighborhood. Haight Ashbury was not only about flowers, and in the late 1960s, street criminality was rampant.

In 1967, Manson met Dean Allen Moorehouse (1920–2010), a former minister who hoped to convert him to Christianity. His daughter Ruth Ann eventually became Manson's new favorite lover. Dean was fascinated by Manson and his Christ-like appearance, and gave the group a piano as a present, which

133 *Ibid.*, p. 48.

134 *Ibid.*, p. 70 and p. 73.

was traded for a Volkswagen van. Manson and his "girls" began driving along the roads of California, playing and begging, but also trafficking in drugs and supplementing their income with small thefts. On the road, they met other runaway girls, among whom Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, who would become a column of the group. The name "Manson Family" was coined by the media, and by sociologists and doctors who worked at the famous Haight Ashbury Clinic, and in 1967–1968 studied the group as a typical San Francisco hippie free love community.

In 1968, the "Family", which by now had passed from the small van to a larger old school bus, was composed of some twenty members, mostly but not exclusively girls, and needed a base. They rented a ranch near Chatsworth, California, owned by George Spahn (1889–1974), once used for Western movies. A "refuge" was also prepared far from civilization, in the desert. Manson did not want to go too far from Hollywood, where he hoped to realize his life dream of becoming a professional musician. His music was not bad, and attracted the attention of Terry Melcher (1942–2004), the son of actress Doris Day. Manson's erratic behavior led, however, to the failure of his musical experiments. At the end of the 1960s, the police in California tolerated hippies less and less, and the frequent controls angered the group. Petty crime, clashes with the police, drug dealing, and the use of progressively stronger drugs were all factors leading, almost insensibly, to murder.

On July 31, 1969, the Los Angeles Police Department discovered the murder of Gary Hinman (1934–1969), a musician stabbed by someone who had left written with the victim's blood "Political Piggy" on a wall of his home. Hinman had been kept hostage in his own home by Manson, Atkins, and Mary Brunner, and finally killed by Beausoleil, after he failed to pay money he owed to the Manson Family for a drug deal. Beausoleil only was arrested, but this increased the tension and paranoia within the Manson group. Manson also believed the Black Panthers, the revolutionary African American organization, was after him, after he had wounded, or so he erroneously believed, one of its chiefs in a fight. Somebody in the group thought to help Beausoleil by committing new crimes with the same style, thus inducing the authorities to believe that the real murderer of Hinman was still at large. Manson later attributed the project to Atkins, who replied that the idea came in fact from the leader.

Between August 8 and 10, 1969, the Manson Family committed its two most famous crimes. In the house of the actress Sharon Tate (1943–1969), the wife of movie director Roman Polanski, five people were killed: the pregnant actress; her friend, socialite Abigail Folger (1943–1969), with her companion, the Polish actor Woyciek Frykowski (1936–1969); Jay Sebring (1933–1969), a well-known hairdresser and former boyfriend of Tate; and Steven Parent (1951–1969),

a friend of the house's janitor who was in the garden by chance. The following evening the Manson Family also killed supermarket executive Pasqualino Antonio "Leno" LaBianca (1925–1969) and his wife Rosemary (1930–1969). The details were horrifying: all of the victims were repeatedly stabbed and mutilated. With Tate's blood, the word "Pig" was written on the door of her house, while the blood of Leno LaBianca was equally used to leave three messages: "Death to Pigs", "Rise" and "Healter Skelter". The last message was an incorrect transcription of the words "Helter Skelter", the title of a song in The Beatles' 1968 White Album. For The Beatles, the words evoked "confusion". Manson used "Helter Skelter" to designate a clash between white and African Americans, a civil war that would ultimately destroy the United States.

Most victims had some contacts with drug dealers, and police initially suspected that the crimes were connected to drug deals gone sour. Only later, the authorities realized that Tate's house had previously belonged to Melcher, one of the persons Manson regarded as guilty of his failed success in the world of music. In the first months after the crimes, the Los Angeles Police Department remained in the dark. Manson and his group feared for the worst when the Spahn Ranch, where they lived, was raided by the police in the summer, until they realized the raid was about their old car thefts. The police had been tipped by a neighbor, Hollywood stuntman Donald J. Shea (1933–1969), who for good measure was also killed by the group. The Manson Family, however, was by now too big to keep a secret for long. It was also attracting several bikers, who were told about the homicides and saw an easy way to obtain the immunity for their petty crimes by helping the police solve what the media considered the most sensational case of the century.

Some bikers, Beausoleil's pregnant girlfriend, Kathryn "Kitty" Lutesinger, and a friend Manson trusted, "Little Paul" Watkins (1950–1990), decided to reveal the truth to the police. Initially, Susan Atkins only was arrested. She told the whole story to her cellmates, who reported it to the authorities. Her revelations led to the arrest of Manson and of numerous other members of his Family, among which was Linda Kasabian, who accepted to testify in exchange for immunity. In 1971, eight members of the "Family" were sentenced to death, among which were Manson, Atkins, and Beausoleil. In 1972, however, the State of California abolished the death penalty, and the Manson Family members ended up with life sentences. Most are still in jail, including Manson himself.

Some followers, however, were not directly involved in the homicides. They continued to promote the cause of Manson, took directions from him from jail, and started spreading propaganda pamphlets for a new ecological movement called ATWA (Air, Trees, Water, and Animals). As an inner circle, ATWA included a more secretive "Order of the Rainbow", but it survived only for a few

years. Manson feared for his safely in prison, and made a pact with the racist organization Aryan Brotherhood, which had hundreds of members in American jails. In exchange for Brotherhood's protection, Manson promised for its leaders the sexual services of those of his girls who had remained out of jail.

One of the girls involved was Lynette Fromme. She participated in the Aryan Brotherhood's criminal activities, but managed to spend in jail only a couple of months. In 1975, Lynette brought the Manson Family back onto the front pages of the newspapers when she tried to assassinate U.S. President Gerald Ford (1913–2006). In 1987, she made headline news again with a daring escape from the penitentiary of Alderson, West Virginia. She explained she wanted to "save" Manson, who was supposedly dying of an untreated testicular cancer. In 2008, at the age of sixty, Lynette was granted parole for her major crimes, but had still to spend a year in jail for her 1987 escape. She was released on August 14, 2009.

Manson had hardly ever an organized movement, and a few years after his trial virtually nothing of his Family was left, although some followers remained loyal to him.[135] The prosecution's theory at the trial, mostly developed by Bugliosi, was that the crimes were a fruit of Manson's "Helter Skelter" strategy. He wanted to kill rich white people in a way that would induce both the media and the police to believe that they were victims of Afro-American radicals. Manson and his followers, Bugliosi argued, seriously believed they could cause a civil war between whites and blacks, with the destruction of the first and the triumph of the second. The African Americans, incapable of governing the United States by themselves, would then end up asking Manson, safely hidden in his desert's shelter, to guide them. Manson certainly exhibited racist ideas, but declared having never believed in the theory of "Helter Skelter" in the terms of Bugliosi. He insisted that the Tate-LaBianca murders were committed in an attempt to exonerate Beausoleil from the murder of Hinman, which in turn simply responded to the logic of drug dealing, where those who do not have money pay their debts with their life.[136]

Manson, in fact, did develop something similar to Bugliosi's "Helter Skelter" theory, and started claiming he was the Messiah, but all this largely began after his arrest. He accepted to wear the garb invented for him by the prosecution and the media. Manson also identified with "Krishna Venta" (Francis Herman Pencovic, 1911–1958), a former convict who had founded a commune in California, The Fountain of the Word, proclaiming himself Christ and the Messiah. Venta died in a suicide bombing attack against his community instigated by two disgruntled ex-members in 1958, although Manson claimed the

135 N. Schreck, *The Demonic Revolution*, cit., p. 153.

136 See N. Emmons, *Manson in His Own Words*, cit., pp. 193–216.

police had in fact killed him. It is, again, unclear where the narrative about the Krishna Venta connection was developed before or only after the arrest of Manson in 1969.

Manson was the product of the drug dealing subculture and of a life largely spent inside the prison system. Some suggested he was also the victim of government-sponsored secret tests in Haight Ashbury, where new drugs were tested in view of a potential use in the chemical warfare. Conspiracy theories certainly exaggerated the extent and the results of this project, but did not invent it.[137] However, there is no solid evidence that Manson was personally involved. Another question is why Manson could recruit several dedicated followers with relative ease. The Manson phenomena cannot be understood without a larger reflection on the hippie subculture, sexual revolution, and the free drug movement. Hippies, in particular, described Haight Ashbury, as a paradise, a mythological Eden and a model of reference for a new society.[138] The image that emerged at the Manson trial was largely different.

One can perceive this idealization of Haight Ashbury in the editors' introduction to the reprint in 1991 of its legendary newspaper, *The San Francisco Oracle*, which was published from September 1966 to February 1968.[139] Reading the *Oracle* is instructive to understand the vastness of the notion of "alternatives" for the young of Haight Ashbury. A large part of the articles demanded the right to use drugs freely, to live a sexuality without moral constrictions of any kind, and to refuse military service. However, the search for "alternatives" extended to religion, from Buddhism and Hinduism to Kenneth Anger's esoteric ideas. Such a subculture was, almost by definition, extremely permeable. Next to idealists, it attracted opportunists and criminals. Elizabeth Mackenzie illustrated the story of Christiania, the hippie village in Copenhagen, in its aspects of utopia but also of "dystopia" and violence.[140] Manson's story may help reading the ambiguity of Haight Ashbury in the 1960s in similar terms.

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137 It is difficult to disentangle fact from fiction about these experiments. See Dick Anthony and M. Introvigne, *Le Lavage de cerveau: mythe ou réalité?*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006, pp. 99–105.

138 See Stephen Gaskin [1935–2014], *Amazing Dope Tales*, Summertown (Tennessee): The Book Publishing Company at The Farm, 1980; 2nd ed.: *Haight Ashbury Flashbacks*, Berkeley (California): Ronin, 1990.

139 *The San Francisco Oracle Facsimile Edition*, ed. by Allen Cohen [1940–2004], Oakland (California): Regent Press, 1991. For the larger context, see Timothy Miller, *The Hippies and American Values*, Knoxville (Tennessee): University of Tennessee Press, 1991.

140 Elizabeth Mackenzie, "The Utopian Vision of Christiania", *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 1, no. 1, Winter 1992, pp. 14–20.

What does all this have to do with Satanism? Manson certainly had some interest in alternative spirituality and revered countercultural spiritual masters such as Krishna Venta. This had little to do with Satanism but, in his memoirs, he also mentioned his visits to a building called The Spiral Staircase in Los Angeles. At first sight, it was just a place for experimenting with free love and drugs. Manson, however, spoke of "bad vibes" and of "sacrificing some animal or drinking its blood to get a better charge out of sex". He also described the Staircase owners as "pumped up about devil worship and other satanic activities".[141] Most probably, what Manson calls The Spiral Staircase was one of the locations of the Solar Lodge, a Californian group inspired by the ideas of Crowley that was active between 1962 and 1972. The Solar Lodge used the name O.T.O., but at that time the O.T.O. had fragmented itself into dozens of rival organizations.[142]

If he wanted information on Satanism or Crowley, Manson did not need to contact the Solar Lodge. Two of his adepts, Beausoleil and Atkins, came from the Church of Satan, and Beausoleil had been intimate with Anger. It is probable that these members of the Manson Family shared their previous experiences with their new friends. One of the killers of Sharon Tate, Charles Watson, entered the actress' house shouting: "I am the Devil and I want your money".[143] These references should not be overestimated, just as the equally occasional references by Manson to Jesus Christ, the Apocalypse, Hinduism,[144] Gnosticism (he called himself "Abraxas"), and "Count Bruno", i.e. the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno (1548–1600), burned at the stake by the Inquisition in 1600. Beausoleil claimed Manson was a reincarnation of the Italian philosopher and even that he "initiated" him in a ritual where he acted as Bruno. However, Manson's information about Bruno was quite limited.[145]

Manson, as we mentioned earlier, did in fact establish a relation with The Process, but this was after his incarceration in 1969. Manson's relations with Satanism were not inexistent, but they were scarce. Satanism played no part in

141 N. Emmons, *Manson in His Own Words*, cit., pp. 122–129.

142 On the Solar Lodge, and on its end in 1969, after its headquarters were destroyed by the fire caused by the son of a member, see Frater Shiva, *Inside Solar Lodge – Outside the Law: True Tales of Initiation and High Adventure*, York Beach (Maine): Teitan Press, 2007.

143 N. Emmons, *Manson in His Own Words*, cit., p. 204. In the successive Manson folklore, these words were incorrectly reported as: "I am the Devil and I am here to do the Devil's work".

144 Indologist Robert Charles Zaehner (1913–1974), in his book *Our Savage God*, London: Collins, 1974, claimed to having found precedents of Manson's ideology in antinomian sects devoted to Krishna that had been active in India.

145 N. Schreck, *The Demonic Revolution*, cit., p. 129.

his decision to instigate the murders. On the other hand, there is little doubt that Manson became a folk hero in the subculture of juvenile Satanism after his trial, although few knew the details of his criminal career. Manson also kept contacts with some Satanists from jail. Nikolas Schreck, LaVey's son-in-law, published in 1988 one of the most complete collections of documents about Manson,[146] with the help of Lynette Fromme and Manson himself. Schreck and his wife Zeena LaVey also produced in 1989 the movie *Charles Manson Superstar*.

Manson was a source of inspiration for other criminals and serial killers, although the label of murders "inspired by Manson" should be used with caution. The myth of Manson as a Satanist was largely created by the media and Bugliosi. Manson is not a Satanist in any meaningful sense of the word, although he maintains a role in the history of anti-Satanism, where he is constantly mentioned as the quintessential satanic criminal.

Satan the Egyptian: The Temple of Set

Among the various Satanist churches created by the schisms in the Church of Satan in the 1970s, only one managed to survive to the 21st century with a significant number of members and remain a small but influential part of a larger occult subculture. This is Michael Aquino's Temple of Set.[147] We discussed in a previous section how Aquino broke with LaVey in 1975 about the "sale" of degrees of the Church of Satan and the real existence of the Prince of Darkness. As other new religious movements, the Temple of Set is built around a new revelation. In fact, it traces its origins back to a direct message from Satan, transmitted to Aquino on June 21, 1975, in the middle of the crisis of the Church of Satan. The revelation, *The Book of Coming Forth by Night*, was not very long and consisted of three pages only. Its style was reminiscent of Crowley's *Book of the Law*, a text that Satan quoted explicitly in his revelation to Aquino. The revelation included a theology of the history of the 20th century, considered from the perspective of the Devil.

In a detailed study of how John Dee's Enochian magic influenced modern occultism, Egil Asprem emphasized the importance of the interpretation of Dee in explaining the genesis of *The Book of Coming Forth by Night*: "the key to

146 *Ibid.*

147 The primary source is M.A. Aquino, *The Temple of Set*, 2 vols., San Francisco: The Author, 2014.

it all had been the Enochian keys".[148] As mentioned earlier, Aquino defended LaVey's rationalist interpretation of the Enochian keys when it came under attack by occultists. Later, however, Aquino experimented himself with the Enochian keys in a distinctly non-rationalist manner. On March 8, 1975, he invoked Dee's thirteen Aethyr in order to visualize and access a realm where he met the Golden Dawn's "Secret Chiefs" who, however, did not particularly like him. On May 30, 1975, Aquino used again the Enochian key in order to evoke a sphinx and a chimera, with whom he discussed the *Dialogues* of Plato.

Finally, at the time of his separation from LaVey, Aquino was inspired to write a new "translation" of the Enochian calls, which "recovered" their supposed "original" version, as the "Word of Set". Aquino maintained the point he made in his earlier defense of LaVey: that Dee's Enochian was not a "real" language but a sequence of "arbitrary words" merely simulating a true language, with the consequence that all possible interpretations were arbitrary. Consequently, any interpretation that produced good magical results was acceptable.[149] Shortly after these experiences with the Enochian keys, Aquino received his new satanic scripture.

In *The Book of Coming Forth by Night*, Satan described his maneuvers to "end the horrors of the stasis of the death-gods of men" by destroying Christianity. The task, the Devil confessed, was not easy. He had first to emanate his "Opposite Self", Har-Wer, who in 1904 in Cairo revealed himself to Crowley and transmitted to him the *Book of the Law*. Not that Satan mistook Crowley for a Satanist. He knew that the British magus was not a follower of Satan, but of his double, the "strange presence" Har-Wer. The latter was not the Devil, but he announced the future revelation of the Devil. From 1904 to 1966, cosmic necessity dictated that Satan and Har-Wer must conduct two parallel and separate existences. In 1966, however, they "were fused as one composite being" ending the Aeon of Har-Wer. In 1966, in fact, the Aeon of Satan began. Satan revealed to Aquino that in that year he selected a specially gifted man, LaVey, asking him to "create the Church of Satan".

Through Aquino himself, Satan transmitted to LaVey a holy scripture, the *Diabolicon*. When the *Diabolicon* was proclaimed, Satan sent one of his demons to inhabit LaVey, to "honor him beyond other men". However, Satan now believed that "it may have been this act of mine that ordained his fall". Perhaps no human was ever ready to really become the Devil. "I cannot undo the hurt that has come of this, Satan regretted, but I shall restore to Anton LaVey his human aspect and his degree of Mage in my Order. Thus all may understand

148 Egil Asprem, *Arguing with Angels: Enochian Magic & Modern Occulture*, cit., p. 122.

149 *Ibid.*, pp. 119–121.

that he is dearly held by me, and that the end of the Church of Satan is not a thing of shame to him. But a new Aeon is now to begin, and the work of Anton Szandor LaVey is done. Let him be at ease, for no other man has ever seen with his eyes".

The Aeon of Satan, the Devil explained, lasted only from 1966 to 1975. In 1975, the Aeon of Set began, in which Satan revealed his true name as Set. The name "Satan" is just a Jewish corruption. "During the Age of Satan, the Devil explained, I allowed this curious corruption, for it was meant to do me honor as I was then perceived", but now it was time to correct the language and to talk about Set rather than Satan. However, even in the Aeon of Set, "those who call me the Prince of Darkness do me no dishonor", but the way to approach him must change. In the Aeon of Satan, "the Satanist thought to approach Satan through ritual. Now let the Setian shun all recitation, for the text of another is an affront to the Self. Speak rather to me as a friend, gently and without fear, and I shall hear as a friend (...). But speak to me at night, for the sky then becomes an entrance and not a barrier". Finally, Set threatened the enemies who would oppose the triumph of his Aeon, and revealed his new magical word, "Xeper" ("Become!").[150]

From 1975, armed with his new revelation, Aquino could devote himself to organizing a structure that was very similar to the Church of Satan of the early 1970s. In the place of the grottos, "pillars" appeared, with the six degrees of Setian, Adept, Priest or Priestess of Set, Magister or Magistra of the Temple, Magus or Maga, and Ipsissimus or Ipsissima. At the top, again similarly to the Church of Satan, there was a Council of Nine. All authority was, however, in the hands of a High Priest, who had the title of Ipsissimus. In fact, in 1975, most leaders of the first pillars of the Temple of Set were former grotto leaders in the Church of Satan, and they had left LaVey when he had abolished the grotto system.

Aquino created for the Temple of Set an ideological infrastructure that derived from his study of philosophy and his military formation as an expert in psychological warfare and disinformation. He started from a vaguely gnostic and substantially negative judgment on our "objective" universe, which is not the only nor the main reality. Although we are condemned to live in this "objective" universe, we are also, that we realize it or not, part of a higher

150 *The Book of Coming Forth by Night*, in appendix to M.A. Aquino, *The Crystal Tablet of Set*, San Francisco: Temple of Set, 1985, pp. 26–28; and in M.A. Aquino, *The Temple of Set*, cit., vol. I, pp. 254–258. See also M.A. Aquino, *The Book of Coming Forth by Night: Analysis and Commentary*, San Francisco: Temple of Set, 1985; reprinted in M.A. Aquino, *The Temple of Set*, cit., vol. I, pp. 259–289.

"subjective" universe that is in contradiction with the first one. Someone, "an intelligent entity distinguished from the objective universe and thus in incidental, if not deliberate conflict, with its laws", instilled in human beings a spark that induces them to rebel against "objective" laws. This "someone", the "Mysterious Stranger" who is the adversary of the objective order of the cosmos, is the Devil, the Prince of Darkness.

This does not necessarily mean, Aquino explained, that a gnostic Demiurge created the "objective" order. Perhaps the world, and even humanity, always existed, together with the Devil. The Prince of Darkness, at any rate, certainly exists as a living, sentient being, and revealed himself to the Egyptians as Set. Subsequently, in the Middle East, a misunderstanding about Set created the Jewish figure of Satan. This was an invention of the Jews, although it had an objective base in the reality of Set.

Aquino also believed that deep cosmic truths, perhaps beyond the intentions of its screenwriters, were revealed in the 1968 movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*, directed by Stanley Kubrick (1928–1999). Here, we saw a primordial event where "proto-man's intelligence was artificially boosted by a rectangular monolith". This monolith was in fact, Aquino believes, Satan or Set. "Presumably the spectacle of a tribe of man-apes thronging around Satan would have been a bit too shocking for audiences; hence the substitution of the more abstract monolith in the film". The movie revealed the true story of the origin of human intelligence. Surprisingly, "the monolithic Satan-symbol provoked no adverse criticism from viewers, religious or otherwise".[151] This happened because in *2001* the truth was hidden under the veil of a symbol. Only the Temple of Set, Aquino concluded, revealed the true meaning of this ancient event, which implied the personal intervention of the Devil.

Just as in the origins he instilled intelligence in human beings, allowing them to rebel against the "objective" laws, so today the Devil, in the Aeon of Set, teaches them the "lesser black magic" and the "great black magic". Although it enjoys a negative press, the expression "black magic", Aquino explained, must be maintained, in order to distinguish Setians from groups dedicated to "white magic" such as Wicca. White magic manifests a desire to enter into harmony with the "objective" order, while black magic wants to contrast it. The "lesser black magic" simply consists in "making something happen without expending the time and energy to make it happen through a direct process of cause and effect". With the "lesser black magic", the Setian manipulates the "objective" universe to his own advantage, "from simple tricks of misdirection to extremely subtle and complex manipulation of psychological factors in the

151 M.A. Aquino, *The Crystal Tablet of Set*, cit., pp. 78–79.

human personality". Here Aquino's experience as a professional in psychological warfare emerged, and he simply presented, using an occult terminology, techniques he had learned and taught in the course of his military activities.[152]

The "great black magic" is part of Xepering, a neologism that Aquino derived from Xeper, the "magical word" of the new aeon. In the Aeon of Set, collective rituals disappear. Xepering consists of a series of individual or couple rituals inspired by Crowley, the Golden Dawn, and the early Church of Satan. The initiate aims at realizing her or his "true will", according to Crowley's Law of Thelema, by creating a "magical double" (*ka*, according to Egyptian terminology), which will then be put in charge of executing the adept's commands on the astral plane. The techniques are largely derived from Crowley. The first is theurgy, in the shape of an evocation of Set, considered however by Aquino not as a simple figment of the human psyche, as Crowley believed, but as an independent intelligent entity. The second is "internal" alchemy, i.e. sex magic and spermatophagy.

The Temple of Set also includes within itself a series of "Orders", which changed over the course of time. These include the Orders of the Trapezoid (which already existed in the Church of Satan), of Amon, Anpu, Bast, Beelzebub, of the Black Tower, of the Great Bear, of Horus, Kronos, Leviathan, Merlin, Nepthys, Nietzsche, Sebekhet, of the Sepulcher of the Obsidian Masque, of Sethne Kamuast, Shuti, Taliesin, Uart, Xnum, of the Wells of Wyrd, and of the Vampyre.[153] The latter continues LaVey's fascination for vampirism, intended primarily not as the physical consumption of blood but as the psychological capacity to manipulate and dominate the weaker. The Order of Uart, formerly of Python, deals with the visual arts, and the Order of Taliesin with music. There is also an Occult Institute of Technology, dealing with the Internet and managing the Temple's Web sites.[154] These orders are quite small, considering that the total membership in the Temple of Set was assessed in the 21st century, in discussions in the various Internet Satanist forums, between 200 and 300.

Aquino's version of the Order of the Trapezoid has been at the center of controversies for its explicit connection with Nazism. As mentioned earlier, contacts with American Nazi organizations were not foreign to LaVey, and continued in the splinter groups when they separated from the Church of

152 *Ibid.*, pp. 1–25.

153 See M.A. Aquino, *The Temple of Set*, cit., vol. II, pp. 415–472. See also Clotilde d'Albepierre, *Michael Aquino. De l'Église de Satan au Temple de Set*, Rosières-en-Haye: Camion Noir, 2012, pp. 271–279.

154 See Roger L. Whitaker, "The Occult Institute of Technology", in M.A. Aquino, *The Temple of Set*, cit., vol. II, pp. 432–436.

Satan. Aquino introduced a distinction between anti-Semitic Nazism, which he regarded as a mistake, pointing out that several members of the Temple of Set were of Jewish origin, and the esoteric interests of Heinrich Himmler (1900–1945) and others, which in his opinion were not necessarily connected with anti-Semitism.[155] This is how, according to Aquino, one should read his text on the *Wewelsburg Working*, the main holy scripture of his Order of the Trapezoid. It is the record of a series of magical rituals conducted by Aquino in 1981 in Germany on the ruins of Castle Wewelsburg, which Himmler used for his "Black Order".

At that time, the Temple of Set was experiencing a crisis, which originated from the intolerance of some members towards Aquino's authoritarian leadership. Aquino had tried to solve the problem by stepping down in 1979, replaced by Ronald Keith Barrett (1944–1998). Barrett, however, proved no less authoritarian and finally in May 1982 resigned from his position and from the Temple of Set, replaced again by Aquino.[156] Barrett established the Temple of Anubis as a schismatic organization, who continued after his death until the early 2010s, with a small number of followers.

In Wewelsburg, Aquino positioned himself in what Himmler believed to be the "center of the world". There, the Ipsissimus of the Temple of Set received what was not exactly a new revelation from the Devil, but a vision of the "central features of the various principal occultisms of the 19th and 20th century", including their respective mistakes. In a state of "almost 'electrical' sort of exhilaration", Aquino became aware in Wewelsburg that "all the initiatory efforts that are not deliberate frauds – from the most childish to the most sophisticated – are conceits of the self-conscious intellect". Learning from ancient Gnosticism, the most successful occult orders discovered that the divine spark in human beings does not belong to the "objective" order. The latter is the negative universe from which the initiate must escape. However, they failed to understand where the divine spark really comes from. The pre-1975 Church of Satan and the Temple of Set obtained, according to Aquino, greater success than other occult organizations, because they became aware of the "alien" character of this divine spark, which did not exist originally in human beings and was a gift they received from the Devil.

However, even the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set faced an apparently intractable problem. The aim of their initiatory journey was to reinforce

155 The literature on the Nazi occult connections is abundant but often rather imaginative. For an academic treatment, see N. Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism*, Wellingborough (Northamptonshire): The Aquarian Press, 1985.

156 See M.A. Aquino, *The Temple of Set*, cit., vol. II, pp. 356–362.

"self-consciousness", which they believed to correspond to that divine spark instilled by the Devil in human beings. However, they realized that initiation, by strengthening self-consciousness, reinforced the "natural instincts" as well. When these instincts are strengthened, revolts and divisions follow, and every organization, no matter how stable, is destroyed. Not having understood this problem, LaVey blamed the grotto system, but "that organization per se was not at fault; if anything it was a stabilizing influence. When he decided to exploit [sic, for 'explode'] the organization in 1975, those working coherently with it felt wronged, said so, and formed the Temple of Set". The latter "was intended to be the perfect initiatory organization", but even there divisions appeared, and "the damage was devastating". It seemed that "there is no way out – that all initiation is merely Russian roulette in fancy dress".

These problems, Aquino insisted, were not due to the personalities of the leaders or the members of the Church of Satan or the Temple of Set. They were due to the paradox that, the more an occult Satanist order is successful in strengthening self-consciousness, the more it sows the seeds of its own ruin by strengthening at the same time natural instinct. There is indeed no way out. By reinforcing one, the other is also strengthened. And natural instinct always divides and destroys.

Seeking, "the Graal [sic] of the Prince of Darkness" among the ruins of the German castle, the High Priest of Set summoned the Devil: but the Devil did not appear. Aquino, however, understood that the only solution to his dilemma was to realize that there was no solution. Yes, there is no escape, no way out. As humanity becomes more self-conscious, it also becomes more animalistic and potentially violent. This is the secret of the Prince of Darkness, the "Law of the Trapezoid". As LaVey understood, if only for a while, "those who recognize the principle will be able to turn it to their deliberate use (whether to their ultimate benefit or detriment); those who do not will nonetheless be subject to it (whether to their ultimate benefit or detriment)". When we realize that there is no way out, the Devil offers to us "a grim enjoyment". "Here you are in a state of satanic self-awareness (…). You cannot escape it; you cannot change it for the better – or for the worse. Therefore: Experience it; savor its taste, sense its exquisite pain and pleasure. Do not wallow in it like an animal in warm mud; rather cut it as you would a fine gem and behold the brilliance of its facets".[157]

For the history of Satanism, the *Wewelsburg Working* was important, and confirmed once again the difficulties of anyone who tried to organize "churches" and "temples" within the Satanist subculture. Modern Satanism promotes individualism and selfishness, which are hardly compatible, at least in the long

157 M.A. Aquino, *The Wewelsburg Working*, n.p.: The Order of the Trapezoid, n.d. (1982).

run, with a pyramidal structure and an authoritarian leader. The *Wewelsburg Working* was also important for the history of anti-Satanism. Its philosophical content was largely ignored by those who wanted to expose the connections between Satanism and neo-Nazism. The gesture of going to Wewelsburg and paying homage to Himmler was regarded as more important than the content of the booklet. Aquino was denounced as a dangerous Nazi Satanist.

The first police investigations into the Temple of Set in California actually date back to the beginning of the 1980s, in the middle of particularly violent media campaigns. The military position of Aquino fueled the accusation that a Satanist had access to vital national strategic secrets. The American Army has a tradition of protecting its personnel when it is attacked from the outside. This is what happened in the early 1980s, when his military superiors, against the lively protests of the anti-Satanists, initially defended Aquino.[158] In 1983, sociologist Gini Graham Scott, after a participant observation, published a study concluding that the Temple of Set, hidden in her volume under the pseudonym "Church of Hu", was potentially dangerous.[159] This was not sufficient to make the military authorities change their mind immediately.

The campaign against the Temple of Set reached its apex between 1987 and 1989, with an investigation into alleged ritual sexual abuses of children at the pre-school operated by the Army Presidio in San Francisco, where Aquino also worked at the time as deputy director of reserve training. The investigation started in 1986, and did not focus on Aquino but on a Baptist pastor, Gary Hambright (1953–1990). The pastor was incriminated twice, but the accusations were dropped in both cases. He remained a controversial figure until he died of AIDS in 1990. The three-year old daughter of one of the Protestant chaplains of the Presidio had initially accused Hambright, but in June 1987, she started also mentioning Aquino and his wife Lilith. In August, the San Francisco police raided Aquino's home, but the investigation was rapidly closed. The Aquinos were able to prove that, during the weeks when the abuses reportedly took place, they were in Washington D.C. rather than in San Francisco. Anti-Satanists claimed Aquino was saved by his military protections, while Aquino considered himself a victim of anti-Satanist hysteria.[160]

158 For a typical example, see C.A. Raschke, *Painted Black: From Drug Killings to Heavy Metal – The Alarming True Story of How Satanism is Terrorizing our Communities*, cit., pp. 139–157.

159 Gini Graham Scott, *The Magicians: A Study of the Use of Power in a Black Magic Group*, New York: Irvington Publishers, 1983.

160 For an anti-Satanist perspective, see C.A. Raschke, *Painted Black: From Drug Killings to Heavy Metal – The Alarming True Story of How Satanism is Terrorizing our Communities*, cit., pp. 145–147 and 155–157. For the point of view of two sociologists, who were more

The nationwide coverage of the Presidio case alarmed several politicians and military leaders. They were not happy to read that one of the heads of American Satanism was at the same time a high-ranking officer in the U.S. Army. Among the protesters was a powerful Republican senator, Jesse Helms (1921–2008). The military authorities started their own investigation, independent from that of the San Francisco police. In August 1989, the Criminal Investigation Division (CID) of the Army produced a report, which claimed that there was some evidence against the leader of the Temple of Set and his wife, although it was not conclusive. Aquino asked the Army to formally modify the report by the CID, threatening legal action. The Army agreed only to remove the reference to his wife, Lilith, and Aquino turned to the civil courts. The District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, on July 1, 1991, and, on February 26, 1992, on appeal, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit, concluded that an Army report could not be modified by a civil court.

The Court of Appeals, in particular, stated that Aquino would be protected by civil courts of law against the Army if it would emerge that the CID treated him unfairly because of his religion, Satanism. But, according to the judges, there was no evidence that anti-Satanist prejudice influenced the activities of CID or of the Army. Aquino openly practiced Satanism for twenty years before the Presidio incident, without being disturbed by his superiors.[161] After these events, Aquino left the Presidio and was transferred to Saint Louis. He continued to occupy important military positions until 1994, when he was honorably transferred to the Retired Reserve and was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal in recognition for his years of service. In 2006, Aquino was transferred again to the Army of the United States, with the rank of a lifelong Lieutenant Colonel (Retired). He told his own version of the Presidio case and published the main legal briefs and decisions in his 2014 book *Extreme Prejudice.*[162]

In the middle of the Presidio case, Aquino managed to maintain the number of followers of the Temple of Set in the hundreds, with pillars erected besides the United States in Ireland, Austria, Finland, and Australia, although some of them were short-lived. He also continued to confront the insoluble problem he had described in the *Wewelsburg Working.* Not unlike the Church of Satan, the Temple of Set was plagued by several schisms. As he had done in

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skeptical on the guilt of Aquino, see D.G. Bromley and Susan G. Ainsley, "Satanism and Satanic Churches: The Contemporary Incarnations", in T. Miller (ed.), *America's Alternative Religions*, Albany (New York): State University of New York Press, 1995, pp. 401–409.

161 *Michael A. Aquino v. Michael P.W. Stone, Secretary of the Army*, 957*F.2d* 139 (4th Cr. 1992).

162 M.A. Aquino, *Extreme Prejudice: The Presidio "Satanic Abuse" Scam*, San Francisco: The Author, 2014.

1979, Aquino tried again in 1996 to reply to the accusations of authoritarianism by leaving the responsibilities of High Priest to a science fiction writer from Texas, Don Webb.[163] In 2002, Zeena LaVey succeeded Webb. Soon thereafter, however, she decided to leave the Temple of Set to found an independent organization, called originally The Storm and then Sethian Liberation Movement. The headquarters were in Berlin, where the daughter of the "Pope of Satan" transferred with her husband Schreck. She later announced her conversion to Tibetan Buddhism, although she also maintained her role as spiritual leader of the Sethian Liberation Movement.[164] After the departure of Zeena, Aquino returned for a while to his role of Supreme Priest. In 2004, however, he had Patricia Hardy elected as Supreme Priestess.

Aquino remained, however, the most visible spokesperson for the Temple of Set. As such, he was attacked both by anti-Satanists and by those followers of LaVey who considered his belief in the independent existence of Satan as a real, living being not only wrong but also dangerous, as it attracted the wrath of Evangelical critics against Satanism in general. Aquino was somewhat taken by surprise by the return to the public scene of the Church of Satan in the 1990s. He was also involved in controversies with other Satanist organizations, such as the Society of the Dark Lily and the Order of Nine Angles, with which the Temple of Set had cooperated for some time, and experienced defections and schisms.

Schisms, division, and conflicts are typical of most new religious movements. In the world of Satanism, a special tension also continued to exist between those who really believed in the existence of Satan and others who considered him only a symbol of the most radical individualism. Kennet Granholm suggested that the Temple of Set solved this tension by evolving into a "post-Satanism", for which the label "Satanism" should no longer be used. He believes that today the Temple of Set is part of a group of occult organizations of the so-called left-hand path, whose history does not belong to Satanism. "What are the essential differences, Granholm asked, between for example the Temple of Set and the Dragon Rouge that firmly position the former as

163 Some of his works are: *The Seven Faces of Darkness: Practical Typhonian Magic*, Smithville (Texas): Runa-Raven Press, 1996; *Uncle Setnakt's Essential Guide to the Left Hand Path*, Smithville: Runa-Raven Press, 1999; *Mysteries of the Temple of Set: Inner Teachings of the Left Hand Path*, Smithville; Runa-Raven Press, 2004. See Webb's interview in H.B. Urban, *New Age, Neopagan & New Religious Movements: Alternative Spirituality in Contemporary America*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2015, pp. 189–190.

164 See N. Schreck and Zeena Schreck, *Demons of the Flesh: The Complete Guide to Left-Hand Sex Magic*, London, Berkeley: Creation Books, 2002.

Satanism but not the latter?".[165] Perhaps today no essential differences exist. However, the Temple of Set was born as a schism of the Church of Satan, and is still marked by its origins. It is history, rather than language or belief, that in my opinion still justifies discussing the Temple of Set within a larger category of Satanism.

Satan the Pimp: The Society of the Dark Lily

Other organizations born in the late 20th and early 21st century had in common with the Temple of Set both the idea that Satan was a living and sentient being and some connections with neo-Nazism. They included the Society of the Dark Lily, the Order of Nine Angles, and Joy of Satan. I include Joy of Satan here, rather than in the following chapter where I deal with the 21st century, because it is yet another fruit of Nazi connections that the Satanist subculture developed in the 1970s and 1980s.

The name "Dark Lily" began to appear in 1977 as the title of the newsletter of the Anglican Satanic Church, a British organization founded, under the magical name of "Raoul Belphlegor" (*sic*), by Thomas Victor Norris. He had been in trouble with the police as both a neo-Nazi and a pimp, who had involved his own minor daughters in his prostitution ring. The existence of this group was little more than virtual, as was another Norris creation, the Anglo-Saxonic Church, which was however Odinist and neo-Pagan rather than Satanist. Norris' organization got a real start when he managed to ensure the cooperation of Magdalene Graham, aka "Mother Lilith". Although disabled by multiple sclerosis, Graham had some organizational talents.[166] She disliked the Nazi connections of Norris and ended up breaking with him, causing the dissolution of the group. At the time of this writing, Magda Graham was a severely ill woman, but she was still operating the Society of the Dark Lily as a one-woman show from her home in Scotland.

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165 K. Granholm, "The Left-Hand Path and Post-Satanism", cit., p. 211. On the Dragon Rouge see K. Granholm, *Embracing the Dark: The Magic Order of Dragon Rouge – Its Practice in Dark Magic and Meaning Making*, Åbo Akademi University Press, Åbo 2005; K. Granholm, "Dragon Rouge: Left-Hand Path Magic with a Neopagan Flavour", *Aries: Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism*, vol. 12, no. 1, 2012, pp. 131–156.

166 See Graham Harvey, "Satanism in Britain Today", *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol. 10, no. 3, October 1995, pp. 283–296 (p. 293); and G. Harvey, "Satanism: Performing Alterity and Othering", *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11, 2002, pp. 53–68 [reprinted in J.R. Lewis and J.Aa. Petersen (eds.), *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism*, cit., pp. 610–632].

Connections with neo-Nazism, prostitution, and pedophilia plagued for decades the small British Satanist organizations. Another case in point was the Orthodox Temple of the Prince, led by one Ray "Ramon" Bogarde in Manchester. It reinterpreted teachings of the O.T.O. and Wicca in a satanic perspective.[167] Some media connected this group to Sir Jimmy Saville (1926–2011), the British TV and radio host who was accused after his death of hundreds of instances of sexual abuse. British tabloids also tried to connect Saville to another notorious Satanist group, the Order of Nine Angles.

Satan the Prophet: The Order of Nine Angles

The Order of Nine Angles (ONA) is a secretive organization, which surfaced around 1970, when one "Anton Long", according to his own account, was initiated into a Wiccan group and later became its leader, transforming it into a Satanist movement. "Long" had also explored the Orthodox Temple of the Prince and later presented the ONA as a merger of three pre-existing organizations: his Wiccan group, called the Camlad Tradition, the Temple of the Sun, and the Noctulians.[168] In 1998, the left-wing magazine *Searchlight* published an exposé of the group, claiming that "Anton Long" was actually a pseudonym of the notorious British neo-Nazi David William Myatt.[169] That Long and Myatt were one and the same was confirmed by British scholar Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (1953–2012) in his 2003 book *Black Sun.*[170] The ONA declared that this was an "as yet unproven claim"[171] until 2013, when a text by Danish scholar Jacob C. Senholt offered a number of elements confirming that Long was indeed

167 See the text produced for internal circulation without the indication of an author (but by Ray Bogarde), *Niger Liber Benelus, Exoteric Lex*, Manchester: The Orthodox Temple of the Prince, 1968. Bogarde produced a second revised edition in 1986. Some information on this group can be found in Peter Hough, *Witchcraft: A Strange Conflict*, Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1991.

168 Connell R. Monette, *Mysticism in the 21st Century*, Wilsonville (Oregon): Sirius Academic Press, 2013, pp. 86–87. The book offers an extensive treatment of ONA (*ibid.*, pp. 85–122), with some updates in the second edition (2014).

169 See "Disciples of the Dark Side: The Satanist Infiltration of the National Socialist Movement", *Searchlight*, no. 274, April 1998.

170 N. Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity*, cit., pp. 216–231.

171 Ray Parker, "Preface" (2013), in Order of Nine Angles, "A Modern Mage: Anton Long and the Order of Nine Angles", available at <http://www.09a.org/wp-content/uploads/myatt-mage-v7.pdf>, last accessed on September 29, 2015.

Myatt.[172] Later, the ONA more or less acknowledged that "Anton Long" was a "nom de plume" of Myatt.[173]

Born in 1950, as a high school student Myatt met the neo-Nazi British Movement of Colin Jordan (1923–2009) in 1969. He became an enthusiastic supporter and one of Jordan's bodyguards. In 1974, however, he promoted a schism and founded the National Democratic Freedom Movement. He also pursued a parallel occult career and, according to Goodrick-Clarke, took over the ONA, which had already been founded, as a Wiccan organization, by a woman who later emigrated to Australia.[174] In 1998, Myatt publicly converted to a radical form of Islam. In 2010, he renounced Islam and announced that he had rejected all radicalism and adopted "the philosophy of pathei-mathos" or "numinous way", a gentle journey to love and compassion based on the ethos of Greek tragedies.[175]

Senholt has described all these evolutions of Myatt "for what they really are: all part of a 'satanic' game of 'sinister' dialectics".[176] Even as a Muslim, Myatt continued to direct the Order of Nine Angles, a Satanist organization, under his name of Anton Long. The ONA has been described as a synthesis of three different currents: hermetic, pagan, and Satanist, although Canadian scholar Connell Monette believes that "a critical examination of the ONA key texts suggests that the satanic overtones can be cosmetic, and that its core mythos and cosmology are genuinely *hermetic*, with pagan influences".[177] However, the "satanic overtones" are very much present in the thousands of pages produced by the ONA, which include novels such as the *Defoel Quintet* and texts for both individual (*Naos*) and group (*Codex Saerus*) ceremonies.[178]

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172 Jacob C. Senholt, "Secret Identities in the Sinister Tradition: Political Esotericism and the Convergence of Radical Islam, Satanism, and National Socialism in the Order of Nine Angles", in P. Faxneld and J.Aa. Petersen, *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity*, cit., pp. 250–274.

173 R. Parker, "Myatt, the Septenary Anados, and the Quest for Lapis Philosophicus", in Order of Nine Angles, "A Modern Mage: Anton Long and the Order of Nine Angles", cit.

174 N. Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity*, cit., pp. 215–224. See also the internal manual by Anton Long, *Hostia: Secret Teachings of the O.N.A.*, new ed., n.p.: Order of Nine Angles, 2013.

175 See David Myatt, *Understanding and Rejecting Extremism: A Very Strange Peregrination*, n.p.: The Author, 2014.

176 J.C. Senholt, "Secret Identities in the Sinister Tradition: Political Esotericism and the Convergence of Radical Islam, Satanism, and National Socialism in the Order of Nine Angles", cit., p. 270.

177 C. Monette, *Mysticism in the 21st Century*, cit., p. 87.

178 See Order of Nine Angles, *The Defoel Quintet*, 5 vols., n.p.: Order of Nine Angles, 1974–1985; Order of Nine Angles, *Naos*, 2nd ed., n.p.: Order of Nine Angles, 1989; Order of Nine Angles, *Codex Saerus*, n.p.: Order of Nine Angles, 2008.

Monette also believes that the ONA may include some two thousand members,[179] which would easily make it the largest Satanist organization in the world. He admits, however, that the secretive nature of the group makes assessing the exact number of members quite difficult. The ONA also maintains that, when an initiate reaches a certain level, he or she should form a semi-independent "spinoff", sometimes indicated as a "nexion", a word that has both a magic and an organizational meaning in the group.[180] Such spinoffs include the Tempel (sic) ov (sic) Blood in the United States, which particularly cultivates vampirism, intended as a magical "predatory" attitude;[181] the White Star Acception, also in the United States;[182] and the Temple of THEM, in Australia.

The latter originated with six Australian Satanists inspired by the ONA, who started meeting in 2003, adopted the present name in 2006, affiliated with the ONA, and left it in 2009, only to go back as an ONA nexion in 2010. "THEM" refers both to the initiates, some of whom sign their texts and messages as "One of THEM", and to the Dark Gods, a notion derived from ONA but largely reinterpreted through a liberal borrowing of texts from Lovecraft. The Temple of THEM appears less committed to right-wing extremism than its parent organization ONA, although it admits that some of its members have a "personal interest" in National Socialism.[183] In adapting one ONA ritual, the Temple of THEM even introduced references to Osama bin Laden (1957–2011) to replace the original mentions of Adolf Hitler (1889–1945).[184] The Temple of THEM is also "merchandise-oriented"[185] and sells luxury edition of its manuals and yearbooks through the U.S.-based Black Glyph Society, Fall of Man Publications, and its Web site.[186]

The White Star Acception is based in California, although its blog, before being shut down in 2012, indicated that there were "colonies" in New York, Arizona,

179 C. Monette, *Mysticism in the 21st Century*, cit., p. 89.

180 George Sieg, "Angular Momentum: From Traditional to Progressive Satanism in the Order of Nine Angles", *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2013, pp. 251–282 (pp. 252–253).

181 C. Monette, *Mysticism in the 21st Century*, cit., p. 90. See Tempel ov Blood, *Discipline of the Gods, Altars of Hell, Apex of Eternity*, Tampere: Ixaxaar, 2004; Tempel ov Blood, *Tales of Sinister Influence*, Tampere: Ixaxaar, 2006.

182 See G. Sieg, "Angular Momentum: From Traditional to Progressive Satanism in the Order of Nine Angles", cit., pp. 265–274.

183 *Ibid.*, p. 259.

184 See *ibid.*, p. 258.

185 *Ibid.*, p. 261.

186 See the Web site <www.thetempleofthem.com>.

and Malta. The group incarnates what Anton Long himself described as a "second phase" of the ONA, with "sinister tribes" and semi-autonomous colonies replacing the centralized organization. The White Star Acception rejects the self-identification of the ONA as "traditional Satanism" and prefers the label "progressive Satanism". The term does not have a political meaning, although the group's main spokesperson, Chloe Ortega, is herself of mixed South-Asian descent and draws liberally from Tantrism and Buddhism. She emphasizes that, as Myatt/Long himself stated in 1998–1999,[187] the West is so corrupted that salvation may eventually come from non-Western and non-white people. The ONA also introduced the name "Rounwytha" for specially gifted people, and they are not necessarily white. "Progressive Satanism" mostly implies a rejection of ceremonial magic in favor of extreme experiences. Theoretically, "the assault or rape of civilians [i.e. non-Satanists], robbery, and so forth are allegedly a part of the habitual practice of the group, although in the absence of recorded prosecutions there does not seem to be any way of verifying this directly".[188]

The name ONA has received different interpretations. The "nine angles" have several different meanings, one of which is astrological. They indicate the seven planets and satellites Sun, Moon, Venus, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, which together constitute the Tree of Wyrd (an Anglo-Saxon word for "destiny"), plus the entire system as a whole (the eight angle) and the "mystic" (the ninth angle).[189] The planets are connected with the "Dark Gods", including Satan and Baphomet (regarded as female). The ONA defines them as "actual entities", but "is not dogmatic about their existence".[190]

A special and important entity for the ONA is Vindex. He is not a god but a messiah or Antichrist, who will soon appear and usher in a New Age.[191] Vindex would lead the struggle against the Magians, a name widely used in the neo-Nazi subculture to indicate the Jews and the Christians. German philosopher Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) used the word "Magian" to designate

187 See David Myatt, *The Mythos of Vindex*, 1998–1999, available at <https://regardingdavidmyatt.wordpress.com/mythos-of-vindex-part-one/>, <https://regardingdavidmyatt.wordpress.com/mythos-of-vindex-part-two/>, and <https://regardingdavidmyatt.wordpress.com/mythos-of-vindex-part-two/mythos-of-vindex-appendix-i/>, last accessed on September 26, 2015.

188 G. Sieg, "Angular Momentum: From Traditional to Progressive Satanism in the Order of Nine Angles", cit., p. 271.

189 C. Monette, *Mysticism in the 21st Century*, cit., p. 105.

190 *Ibid.*, p. 103.

191 See D. Myatt, *The Mythos of Vindex*, cit.

the Zoroastrian civilization. An American disciple of Spengler and neo-Nazi leader, Francis Parker Jockey (1917–1960), called the Jews "Magians", believing they were the surviving exponents of the Zoroastrian Magian monotheism.[192]

The ONA proposes the Hebdomadry or Seven Fold Way, an initiatory system in seven degrees. It insists that, unlike in the Church of Satan, degrees are not for sale and require completing a serious training. ONA's teachings also include a system of magic, spelled "magick" as in Crowley, distinguished into external, internal, and aeonic magick. "The rituals are heavily sexually loaded, with orgies as part of most practices",[193] although sex magic is part of external magick, while the most advanced stage is aeonic magick. There, through chants and by playing in its most advanced form a "magickal game" called the Star Game, the initiates help the passage from the present aeon to the next, where the dark energies, including Satan, will deeply transform our current society.

Most of the rituals are part of a text called *The Black Book of Satan.*[194] It includes a Black Mass, derived from Huysmans and the rituals of the Church of Satan, and alternating Latin and English. In the ONA, the Black Mass has a threefold purpose. First, "it is a positive inversion of the mass of the Nazarene church, and in this sense is a rite of Black Magick". Second, as in LaVey's Church of Satan, "it is a mean of personal liberation from the chains of Nazarene dogma and thus a blasphemy: a ritual to liberate unconscious feelings". Third, "it is a magickal rite in itself, that is, correct performance generates magickal energy which the celebrant can direct".

The ONA claims, however, that "the Black Mass has been greatly misunderstood". "It is not simply an inversion of Nazarene symbolism and words". The "Nazarene", i.e. Christian, Mass may, in certain conditions, generate real energies through white magic. What the ONA's Black Mass claims to do is "'tune into' those energies and then *alter them in a sinister way*. This occurs during the 'consecration' part of the Black Mass. The Black Mass also generates its own forms of (sinister) energy". The Black Mass is not "simply a mockery", nor does it "require those who conduct it or participate in it to believe or accept

192 G. Sieg, "Angular Momentum: From Traditional to Progressive Satanism in the Order of Nine Angles", cit., p. 259.

193 J.C. Senholt, "Secret Identities in the Sinister Tradition: Political Esotericism and the Convergence of Radical Islam, Satanism, and National Socialism in the Order of Nine Angles", cit., p. 260.

194 ONA, *The Black Book of Satan*, available at <http://www.luckymojo.com/satanism/ona/blkbook.html>, last accessed on August 12, 2015. All quotes from the ONA's Black Mass are taken from this text.

Nazarene theology: it simply means that the participants accept that others, who attend Nazarene masses, do believe at least to some degree in Nazarene theology". The ONA claims to offer the most powerful Black Mass because it uses the energy produced by Christian beliefs "against those who believe in them, by distorting that energy, and sometimes redirecting it. This is genuine Black Magick".

The ONA's Black Mass requires four celebrants: an Altar Priest, who lies naked upon the altar, a Priestess in white robes, a Mistress of Earth dressed in scarlet, and a Master who wears purple. The congregation is dressed in black. A gay version is also available for those with different sexual preferences, and there is an alternative version where the Priestess rather than the Priest serves as altar. As for other rituals of the ONA, there is an indoor and an outdoor version. The Black Mass requires hazel incense, wine, black candles, and consecrated cakes baked by the Priestess and consecrated to Satan by the Mistress of Earth. These cakes "consist of honey, spring water, sea salt, wheat flour, eggs and animal fat" and should not be confused with "the ritual hosts". These "should be obtained from a Nazarene place of worship – but if this is not possible, they are made by the Priestess in imitation of them (unleavened white hosts)".

The Priestess signifies the beginning of the Mass by clapping her hands together twice. Then the Mistress of Earth turns to the congregation, makes the sign of the inverted pentagram with her left hand, and says: "I will go down to the altars in Hell". The Priestess responds: "To Satan, the giver of life". The congregation recites the satanic version of the "Our Father" Christian prayer: "Our Father, which wert in heaven, hallowed be thy name, in heaven as it is on Earth. Give us this day our ecstasy, and deliver us to evil as well as temptation, for we are your kingdom for aeons and aeons". There is also a satanic version of the Credo, where the initiate proclaims a belief "in one Prince, Satan, who reigns over this Earth, and in one Law which triumphs over all", and "in the Law of the Aeon, which is sacrifice, and in the letting of blood, for which I shed no tears since I give praise to my Prince".

The Mistress kisses the Master on the lips, chest, and penis, while they both chant "Veni, omnipotens aeterne diabolus!", and then proclaim a satanic version, very much inspired by LaVey, of the Sermon of the Mount. "Blessed are the strong for they shall inherit the Earth. Blessed are the proud for they shall breed gods! Let the humble and the meek die in their misery!". The Master "passes the kiss" on the Priestess, who kisses all the congregations. She then hands the paten with the Catholic holy wafers, or their symbolic substitutes, to the Mistress, who says: "Praised are you, my Prince and lover, by the strong: Through our evil we have this dirt; by our boldness and Strength, it will

become for us a joy in this life". The congregation answers: "Hail Satan, Prince of life".

In the version where the naked altar is a man, the Priest, the holy wafers are placed on his body, and the Priestess, "quietly saying 'Sanctissimi Corporis Satanas', begins to masturbate the altar-Priest. As she does, the congregation begin to clap their hands and shout in encouragement while the Master and the Mistress chant the 'Veni' chant. The Priestess allows the semen to fall upon the 'hosts'", then consecrates the wine by sprinkling some of it over the body of the Priest. "We have this drink, she says, let it become for us an elixir of life", showing that modern Satanists are taking into account Catholic liturgical reformations and include in their Black Mass imitations of the new post-Vatican II liturgy, which obviously did not exist in the time of Huysmans.

No Catholic liturgy would however include this formula: "With pride in my heart I give praise to those who drove the nails and he who thrust the spear into the body of Yeshua, the imposter. May his followers rot in their rejection and filth!". This introduces a dialogue between the Master and the congregation, which inverts the Catholic rite of baptism: "Do you renounce Yeshua, the great deceiver, and all his works? We do renounce the Nazarene Yeshua, the great deceiver and all his works. Do you affirm Satan? We do affirm Satan!". Persuaded now that the audience is indeed composed of Satanists, the Mistress undresses the Priestess, explaining that "nothing is beautiful except Man: but most beautiful of all is Woman", then gives the consecrated cakes and the wine to the congregation.

But what about the Catholic holy wafers? The Mistress shows them to the audience, saying: "Behold, the dirt of the earth which the humble will eat!". The hosts are then flung to the congregation, which trample them underfoot, while all dance and one by one go to the Priestess, who remove their robes. During the dance, the Mistress sings: "Let the church of the imposter Yeshua crumble into dust! Let all the scum who worship the rotting fish suffer and die in their misery and rejection! We trample on them and spit of their sin! Let there be ecstasy and darkness; let there be chaos and laughter, let there be sacrifice and strife: but above all let us enjoy the gifts of life!".

"The congregation then pair off, and the orgy of lust begins. The Mistress helps the altar-Priest down from the altar, and he joins in the festivities if he wishes". There are also alternative formulae for consecration, in a secret language whose meaning is revealed only to the higher initiates. These are "Muem suproc mine tse cob" for the hosts, and for the wine: "Murotaccep menoissimer ni rutednuffe sitlum orp iuq iedif muiretsym itnematset inretea ivon iem siniugnas xilac mine tse cih". Since it is obviously difficult to remember these words,

they are conveniently "printed on a small card, which is placed on the altar before the Mass begins".

The Black Mass and other rituals are important for the transition to the new aeons, but are not sufficient. Society should be disrupted by creating political unrest, and terrorism itself may play a creative role.[195] This explains why Myatt, leading the ONA as Anton Long and playing a political game as a Nazi or a radical Islamist, did not really perceive his two identities as separate. Members of the ONA who knew the truth did not necessarily put up with Myatt's antics, generating various schisms.

Although in general the ONA regards the Temple of Set as a "Magian" organization because it includes Jews and abides by the law of the State, the Temple of THEM expressed an interest in the works of Aquino.[196] The latter, however, perceived the competition as dangerous, particularly when in the late 1980s some members of the Temple of Set started considering themselves members of the ONA at the same time. In 1992, Aquino and his British representative David Austen launched an internal purge, expelling from the Temple of Set those members who also wanted to remain in the ONA. Austen had a neo-Nazi past and was a very controversial character. In 1993, the magazine published by the occult library in Leeds, The Sorcerers' Apprentice, which had previously been quite favorable to the Temple of Set, called Aquino and Austen "the Laurel and Hardy of Satanism".[197] Curiously, the magazine attacked Austen also for his Mormon religious background.[198]

The 1992 purge in the Temple of Set did not concern the ONA only. Aquino tried to distance himself from a group of organizations that kept mixing Nazism and Satanism. One was the English Order of the Jarls of Baelder,[199] founded by Stephen Bernard Cox, renamed Arktion Federation in 1998 and disbanded in 2005. It claimed to be "non-political" but co-operated for several years with the ONA and Myatt.

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195 See J.C. Senholt, "Secret Identities in the Sinister Tradition: Political Esotericism and the Convergence of Radical Islam, Satanism, and National Socialism in the Order of Nine Angles", cit., p. 262.

196 G. Sieg, "Angular Momentum: From Traditional to Progressive Satanism in the Order of Nine Angles", cit., pp. 261–262.

197 John Freedom, "Laurel & Hardy Satanism", *The Lamp of Thoth*, vol. IV, no. 6, n.d. (but 1993), pp. 49–54.

198 *Ibid.*, p. 49. On the problems of the Temple of Set in the United Kingdom, see G. Harvey, "Satanism in Britain Today", cit., pp. 285–290.

199 N. Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity*, cit., pp. 224–226.

Satan the Nietzschean: The Order of the Left Hand Path

In New Zealand, a well-known right-wing extremist, Kerry Raymond Bolton, founded in 1990 under the pseudonym Faustus Scorpius the Order of the Left Hand Path. The creation of the new organization was announced in January–March 1990 through the first issue of a new magazine published by Bolton, *The Watcher*.

Bolton and the Order struggled for years to keep information about their group confidential. In 2008, however, Roel van Leeuwen defended a masters' thesis on the Order of the Left Hand Path at the University of Waikato.[200] Unhappy with the dissertation, Bolton threatened to sue the university, which pulled van Leeuwen's work off its library shelves.[201] Van Leeuwen was then accused by New Zealand Satanists of all sort of wrongdoings, while the university was in turn criticized for not defending the academic liberty of one of its graduates.[202] In 2009, van Leeuwen's thesis returned to the library shelves of the University of Waikato and was also made available through the Internet. As a result, critics of van Leeuwen published several articles in the Web site Satanism in New Zealand, which also posted a full collection of *The Watcher.*[203] The critics were able to point out several factual errors in van Leeuwen's thesis, which remains, however, the only available academic source on the Order of the Left Hand Path.

"Our journal, Bolton explained in the first issue of *The Watcher*, is named in honour of the fabled Order of the Watchers who, under the leadership of Azazel, and at the instigation of Satan, rebelled against the tyrant-god Jehovah, descending to earth to establish familial relations with the 'daughters of man'".[204] Quoting Bakunin, Satan was identified as "the first free-thinker and Saviour of the world". "Satan and The Watchers, Bolton explained, are thus symbols of rebellion against tyrannical god and moral concepts which stifle human ascent. We take our stand on the side of rebellion leading to liberation from slave religions, moralities and ideologies, the chief one being in the West at this time

200 Roel van Leeuwen, "Dreamers of the Dark: Kerry Bolton and the Order of the Left Hand Path, a Case-Study of a Satanic/Neo Nazi Synthesis", M.A. Thesis, Hamilton (New Zealand): University of Waikato, 2008.

201 See "Controversial Thesis Taken Off Library Shelves", *The Dominion Post*, October 7, 2008.

202 See Joshua Drummond, "Dark Dreams: Waikato's and the van Leeuwen Thesis", *Nexus*, July 13, 2009, available at <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/ED0907/S00049.htm>, last accessed on November 10, 2015.

203 See <https://satanismnz.wordpress.com/>, last accessed on November 10, 2015.

204 "Our Aim", *The Watcher: New Zealand Voice of the Left-Hand Path*, no. 1, January, February, March 1990, p. 1.

Judaeo-christianity, with Marxism and the Puritan money ethic (ideological liberalism) being excrescences of this heritage".[205]

Here, the Order of the Left Hand Path was introduced as a group regarding Satan as a symbol of rebellion, in the tradition of LaVey and Romantic Satanism, with a special interest for politics and a criticism of both Marxism and liberalism. Bolton had a past both in New Zealand's Nazi organizations and in Neopaganism. In 1980, he co-founded a New Zealand branch of the First Anglecyn Church of Odin,[206] created in Australia in 1934 by Alexander Rud Mills (1885–1964). An Australian lawyer who had traveled to Germany and met Hitler, Mills had a crucial influence on subsequent Germanic Neopaganism, both in Australia and elsewhere.[207] Bolton was also for a time a member of the Mormon Church.[208]

Bolton published eleven issues of *The Watcher* between 1990 and 1992. The first issues advertised books distributed by the Church of Satan and included several references to LaVey. In May 1991, however, Bolton published an editorial where he criticized the key LaVeyan concept of "indulgence", which he also called "Carnal Doctrine". He explained that "in 1966 when LaVey founded the Church of Satan the Carnal Doctrine was still a relevant expression of rebellion against moral stasis". After twenty-five years, however, it should be recognized that the Christian moral codes have been largely abandoned. "The christian commandments relative to sexuality are broken without hesitation by all but the most puritanical and neurotic", with the consequence that "affirming the Carnal Doctrine today is about as relevant and heretical as affirming the need to eat sufficiently. The Carnal Doctrine ceased to be specifically Satanic when it replaced the old moral codes several decades ago. In fact, the Carnal Doctrine is today a well and truly entrenched part of the status quo".

As a consequence, Satanism should "move along". As it continues to refer to the Carnal Doctrine and indulgence, in the Church of Satan "the adversarial

205 *Ibid.*

206 See Paul Spoonley, *The Politics of Nostalgia: Racism and the Extreme Right in New Zealand*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1987, pp. 145–172.

207 See Allan Asbjørn Jøn, "'Skeggøld, Skálmöld; Vindöld, Vergöld': Alexander Rud Mills and the Ásatrú Faith in the New Age", *Australian Religion Studies Review*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1999, pp. 77–83.

208 Van Leeuwen ("Dreamers of the Dark: Kerry Bolton and the Order of the Left Hand Path, a Case-Study of a Satanic/Neo Nazi Synthesis", cit., p. 17) claims that Bolton was raised a Mormon. Bolton denies this, and claims he was a member of the Mormon Church "for around three months", "probably" in 1978 (see "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints", October 14, 2008, available at <https://satanismnz.wordpress.com/2008/10/14/church-of-jesus-christ-of-latter-day-saints/>, last accessed on November 10, 2015).

role of Satanism thereby becomes redundant, Satanism becomes irrelevant, a travesty of itself". Bolton called for a new Satanism, and the tool he proposed to use was the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900).[209] This argument was developed in Bolton's new magazine, *The Heretic*, which replaced *The Watcher* in July 1992.

The Watcher dealt only occasionally with political issues, mostly to criticize the official support for the Satanism scare that was developing in New Zealand and led in March 1992 to the arrest of Peter Ellis, a child care worker accused of sexually abusing children within the context of Satanic rituals. This was the start of the Christchurch Civic Creche investigation and trial, a New Zealand remake of the American McMartin case, which ended up with the widely criticized conviction of Ellis in 1993.[210] *The Heretic*, on the other hand, frequently dealt with political issues, fascism, and Nazism. To what extent *The Heretic* can be considered a neo-Nazi magazine is at the center of the controversies around van Leeuwen's thesis. On the one hand, van Leeuwen was able to quote a number of articles in *The Heretic* sympathetic to Nazism,[211] some of them derived from the Order of Nine Angles. On the other hand, between 1993 and 1994 the Order of the Left Hand Path was increasingly influenced by Tani Jantsang, whose group Satanic Reds, discussed later in this book, offered a strange mix of Satanism and Marxism.

Controversies about Jantsang played a role in the demise of the Order of the Left Hand Path in 1994 and its reconstruction as the Ordo Sinistra Vivendi. The official history of the order explains that "Tani Jantsang's writings had more of an Oriental influence, and a more Hermetic approach. However, by early January 1994, the OLHP jettisoned the Oriental influence and was re-constituted as the Ordo Sinistra Vivendi (Order of the Sinister Way)".[212] In fact, Jantsang was more than an Oriental esotericist, and an idiosyncratic form of Communism was an essential part of her worldview.

The Ordo Sinistra Vivendi became popular, including in the Black Metal musical subculture, for its correspondence course on Satanism, offered through a Collegium Satanas, actually the heir of a similar course proposed by the Order

209 "Perpetual Heresy", *The Watcher*, no. 8, May 1991, pp. 1–3.

210 See Lynley Hood, *A City Possessed: The Christchurch Civic Creche Case*, Dunedin: Longacre Press, 2001; and Jenny Barnett, Michael Hill, "When the Devil Came to Christchurch", *Australian Religious Studies Review*, vol. 6 (1994), pp. 25–30 [reprinted in J.R. Lewis and J.Aa. Petersen (eds.), *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism*, cit., pp. 56–63].

211 See R. van Leeuwen, "Dreamers of the Dark: Kerry Bolton and the Order of the Left Hand Path, a Case-Study of a Satanic/Neo Nazi Synthesis", cit., p. 24.

212 "History of the Order of the Left Hand Path", available at <http://olhp.50webs.com/olhp-history.html>, last accessed on November 10, 2015.

of the Left Hand Path. The four lessons of the course teach the basic worldview of the order. The first introduces Satan as an "archetype of opposition to stasis and conformity"[213] and presents the human beings in their animal nature in a LaVeyan style. However, the door is not completely closed to the existence of Satan as a sentient being existing independently from humans. The second lesson introduces the philosophy of Nietzsche as the most original and distinctive character of the order. Nietzsche is presented as "Satan's hammer" and a "Satanic philosopher" for his in-depth criticism of Christianity and promotion of a "master morality" in opposition to the Christian "slave morality". He is also identified as a main source of LaVey. "LaVey's concept of the Satanist as the 'highest embodiment of human life', the course explains, is that of the Nietzschean Higher Man towering above the mass".[214]

The third lesson proposes the Nietzschean itinerary as not only individual but collective. "When Satanists state that man is his own god there must be a clear recognition that we are not talking about man in the mass: universal, undifferentiated humanity. Higher Man, the transitory type between today's mass man and Nietzsche's vision of the Over Man of the future – this is the creative minority we are referring to". Satanism is "necessarily anti-egalitarian and anti-democratic" and works for the advent of a "coming God race" through eugenics.[215]

The fourth lesson introduces another distinctive reference of the order, Doctor Faust. The hero of the German legend is compared to Odin in the Nordic mythology and to Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit. As for the future, "either the presently-dominant dogmas, moralities, religions and ideologies will succeed in dragging humanity back to the primal slime of undifferentiated existence with their egalitarianism and collectivism, or the Faustian heretics of today in such realms as the arts, sciences and philosophy, will triumph over all and herald a new, Faustian Civilization".[216]

Having completed the correspondence course, the candidate may perform some rituals of self-initiation, answer a questionnaire, mail it to the order with a personal photograph, and receive a certificate of ordination into the Satanic priesthood. Again, a certain ambiguity exists on who or what Satan is in these rituals. "The demon the Satanist evokes, the course explains, is that which was understood by the Classical Greeks, the *daimon* (pronounced dymown):

213 Collegium Satanas, *Sinistra Vivendi*, 2nd ed., n.p.: Collegium Satanas, 2009 (1st ed., Paraparaumu Beach, New Zealand: Realist Publications, 1994), p. 4.

214 *Ibid.*, pp. 7–9.

215 *Ibid.*, pp. 11–13.

216 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

one's own guiding spirit or genius, a source of inspiration and creativity". "The aim of the Satanic ritual is to draw on the latent psychic, emotional and instinctual forces within the Satanist, to tap levels of his unconscious and relate them to archetypes, and other dimensions of being, forces of energy and entities which interact through the human psyche (most commonly in the form of dreams)". On the other hand, what concept each Satanist has of Satan is not important. "The Satanist, unlike the religious dogmatist, is not bound by 'divinely ordained' prescription in conducting his rituals. Whatever works for the Satanist is legitimate".[217]

Popular as it was, the correspondence course was not the last word of the order on Satan or politics. In April 1994, Bolton resigned from the Ordo Sinistra Vivendi, although he kept contributing articles and books. After some months, he also resigned from the Black Order, an international federation of movements with similar ideas he had contributed to establish.[218] He was replaced by John Richardson (Abaaner Incendium), another New Zealander, who came from the Black Metal milieu. Incendium was however openly gay, which was unacceptable for the homophobic American groups that participated in the Black Order. They broke away from the Black Order and formed a White Order of Thule, which continued until 2001.

The Ordo Sinistra Vivendi published for a short time a second magazine, *Suspire*, in addition to *The Heretic*, which was in turn replaced by *The Nexus*. Harry Baynes replaced Bolton as Grand Master, and led the Ordo Sinistra Vivendi into an alliance with the Order of Nine Angles. Baynes defined the doctrine of his order as "Traditional Satanism", and progressively eliminated references to LaVey's rationalism. The order itself stated that these "changes were brought about by the influence of, and relationship with, the Order of Nine Angles".[219]

In 1996, the notoriety of the Order of Nine Angles involved the Ordo Sinistra Vivendi in media accusations of advocating ritual human sacrifice. Most of the local temples of the order disbanded, and only one, the Temple of Fire, was left. Baynes decided to close the Ordo Sinistra Vivendi, but from the Temple of Fire a new organization, the Order of the Deorc Fyre (Dark Fire) was born. It collected the main material of the Ordo Sinistra Vivendi in three volumes,[220]

217 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

218 See N. Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity*, cit., pp. 227–231.

219 Collegium Satanas, *Sinistra Vivendi*, cit., p. 62.

220 Order of the Deorc Fyre, *ETHOS: A Basic Introduction to Satanism*, Paekakariki, New Zealand: Order of the Deorc Fyre, 1996; Order of the Deorc Fyre, *DISCOURSES: The Complete*

and also published books about Neopaganism and the Nordic tradition.[221] In 1997, however, the Grand Master who went under the name of "Fenris Wolfe" decided to disband even this order. It was revived in 2007, under the old name of Order of the Left Hand Path. Paradoxically, the national controversy about van Leeuwen's thesis generated a new interest in the organization, although it is hard to evaluate its present consistency. In the meantime, Bolton went his separate way, converted to Christianity in or around 2002,[222] and continued to be active in different right-wing New Zealand organizations and parties.

Satan the Alien: Joy of Satan

In the United States, the largest neo-Nazi organization is the National Socialist Movement, established in 1974 by Cliff Herrington and Robert Brannen, both former members of the American Nazi Party of George Lincoln Rockwell (1918–1967). In 1994, leadership passed to Jeff Shoep, but Herrington remained in the group as Chairman Emeritus. In 2006, a scandal rocked the National Socialist Movement when it was revealed that Herrington's wife, Andrea, served as high priestess of a Satanist group, Joy of Satan, under the name Maxine Dietrich, an allusion to German singer and one-time Nazi icon Marlene Dietrich (1901–1992). Both Cliff and Andrea Herrington were also accused of sexual activities with teenagers. While the latest accusations are difficult to evaluate, Maxine's Satanism was enough to persuade Shoep to expel Herrington from the National Socialist Movement.

Joy of Satan presents a unique synthesis of Satanism, Nazism, and theories about UFOs and aliens similar to those popularized by Zecharia Sitchin (1920–2010) and David Icke.[223] From these theories, Dietrich derived the

Manuscripts of The Order of The Deorc Fyre, Paekakariki, New Zealand: Order of the Deorc Fyre, 1996; Order of the Deorc Fyre, *FYRE WEGES: Sinister Hermetick Magick*, Paekakariki, New Zealand: Order of the Deorc Fyre, 1996.

221 See e.g. Order of the Deorc Fyre, *The Rokkrbok: The Magick of the Twylight Worlds of Norse Kozmology*, Paekakariki, New Zealand: Order of the Deorc Fyre, 1997.

222 See P. Spoonley, *The Politics of Nostalgia: Racism and the Extreme Right in New Zealand*, cit., p. 169.

223 On these theories and their influence, see Lewis Tyson and Richard Kahn, "The Reptoid Hypothesis: Utopian and Dystopian Representational Motifs in David Icke's Alien Conspiracy Theory", *Utopian Studies*, no. 16, 2005, pp. 45–75; David G. Robertson, "David Icke's Reptilian Thesis and the Development of New Age Theodicy", *International Journal for the Study of New Religions*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2013, pp. 27–47; D.G. Robertson, *UFOs, Conspiracy Theories and the New Age: Millennial Conspiracism*, London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2016.

idea of a mortal struggle between enlightened aliens and a monstrous extraterrestrial race, the Reptilians. One of the benign aliens, Enki (a name derived from Sitchin), also known as Satan, and his collaborators created on Earth the human beings of the "Nordic-Aryan" race through their advanced technology of genetic engineering. The Reptilians, in turn, created the Jews by combining their own Reptilian DNA with the DNA of semi-animal humanoids.

After the benevolent extraterrestrials left Earth some 10,000 years ago, the Jews, as agents of the Reptilians, created false religions, including Christianity. These religions maligned the benign extraterrestrials by labeling them as devils, and created a climate of terror, in particular regarding sexuality, in order to better program and control humans. Satan, however, did not abandon humanity. He has now revealed himself in *The Black Book of Satan*, not to be confused with the ONA's scripture of the same name, and the initiates of the Joy of Satan may "work directly with Satan" through meditation, rituals, and sex magic.[224] Satan is also identified with the preeminent angel of the Yazidis, Me'lek Taus. The satanic interpretation of the Yazidis is partially borrowed from LaVey.[225]

Joy of Satan, however, advocates a "spiritual Satanism", different from LaVey's rationalist Satanism. It believes that Satan is a real sentient being, although not a supernatural god but a powerful alien. The events of 2004, when the fact that Dietrich was the wife of a well-known American neo-Nazi leader became public knowledge, created serious problems within Joy of Satan itself. Several local groups abandoned Dietrich and started minuscule splinter organizations, such as the House of Enlightenment, Enki's Black Temple, the Siaion, the Knowledge of Satan Group, and the Temple of the Ancients. Some of these insisted that they were not Satanist, just pagan. Most are by now defunct, while Joy of Satan continues its existence, although with a reduced number of members. Its ideas on extraterrestrials, meditation, and telepathic contacts with demons became, however, popular in a larger milieu of non-LaVeyan "spiritual" or "theistic" Satanism.

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224 See *The Al Jilwah: The Black Book of Satan*, available at <http://www.angelfire.com/empire/serpentis666/Al_Jilwah.html>, last accessed on September 26, 2015. The same Web site also offers extensive commentaries to the book by Joy of Satan.

225 See Joy of Satan, "The Yezidi Devil Worshippers of Iraq", available at <http://www.angelfire.com/empire/serpentis666/Yezidis.html>, last accessed on September 26, 2015.

CHAPTER 11

The Great Satanism Scare, 1980–1994

From Anti-cultism to Anti-satanism

Preceded by some significant but isolated episodes in the 1970s, a great Satanism scare exploded in the 1980s in the United States and Canada and was subsequently exported towards England, Australia, and other countries. It was unprecedented in history. It surpassed even the results of Taxil's propaganda, and has been compared with the most virulent periods of witch hunting.[1] The scare started in 1980 and declined slowly between 1990, when the McMartin trial was concluded without convictions, and 1994, when official British and American reports denied the real existence of ritual satanic crimes. Particularly outside the U.S. and U.K., however, its consequences are still felt today.

The year 1980 is important for the publication of the bible of this anti-Satanist movement, *Michelle Remembers*.[2] Obviously, however, the great Satanism scare was not generated by one book. We cannot understand the anti-Satanism of the 1980s without looking at the anti-cult movement of the 1970s. Alternative religious movements such as Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons always had their opponents, motivated by both religious and political reasons. In the late 1960s and 1970s, America, followed by Europe, saw the sudden growth of a new wave of religious movements: Scientology, the Unification Church, the Hare Krishna, and the Children of God (who later changed their name into The Family). A significant number of young people, not only American, left their families and prospects of career to work freely and full time for the new movements.

This did not make sense, claimed their parents, soon supported by some psychiatrists: their children could not have changed so quickly. Something sinister should have happened to them: "brainwashing", which suddenly and radically transformed their personality. Many of the parents and psychiatrists who made up this first "anti-cult" movement in the early 1970s were not particularly religious nor concerned with the theology of the new movements. They were interested in deeds, not in creeds, in behavior, not in belief. FREECOG (Free Our Children from the Children of God) was founded in 1970 and evolved into the Citizen's Freedom Foundation and later into CAN, the Cult Awareness

1 S. Mulhern, "Souvenirs de sabbats au XXe siècle", in N. Jacques-Chaquin, M. Préaud (eds.), *Le Sabbat des sorciers* (*XVe–XVIIIe siècles*), cit., pp. 127–152.

2 Michelle Smith, Lawrence Pazder, *Michelle Remembers*, New York: Congdon & Lattés, 1980.

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Network.[3] CAN remained the world's largest anti-cult organization until 1996, when it went bankrupted and its assets and trademark were bought by a group connected with the Church of Scientology.

Parallel to this secular anti-cult movement, a religious counter-cult movement also appeared. I first proposed in 1993 the distinction, now widely adopted, between anti-cultists, who oppose the "cults" for purely secular reasons, and counter-cultists, who base their crusade against "cults" on religious motivations.[4] Of course, the two movements frequently overlap and often use the same arguments. Their background and ultimate aims are, however, different. Anti-cultists want to "free" the "victims" of the "cults", and in principle do not care what their philosophical or religious opinions will be, once they will have left the "cultic" movement. Counter-cultists want to attract the "victims" to Evangelical Christianity or to Catholicism. "What good is accomplished, wrote two leading counter-cultists in 1992, if people are extricated from cults but their spiritual needs (which drove them into the cults in the first place) including the question of their eternal destiny, are left unattended?"[5]

Another point of disagreement is that secular anti-cultists often find "cultic" behavior in high-demand Protestant and Catholic communities that counter-cultists regard as perfectly orthodox. Johannes Aagaard (1928–2007), who founded the Dialog Center in Denmark, one of the largest international counter-cult organizations, wrote in 1991 that secular anti-cult movements might easily become "anti-Christian".[6] The accusation of "brainwashing" may also be used against Christian groups.[7]

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3 There is an important sociological literature on the anti-cult movement. Early studies include Anson D. Shupe, Jr., David Bromley (eds.), *The New Vigilantes: Deprogrammers, Anti-Cultists, and the New Religions*, Beverly Hills, London: Sage, 1980; A. Shupe, D.G. Bromley (eds.), *Anti-Cult Movements in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, New York, London: Garland, 1994.

4 See M. Introvigne, "Strange Bedfellows or Future Enemies?" *Update & Dialog*, vol. III, no. 3, October 1993, pp. 13–22, reprinted and expanded as "The Secular Anti-Cult and the Religious Counter-Cult Movement: Strange Bedfellows or Future Enemies?" in Eric Towler (ed.), *New Religions and the New Europe*, Aarhus, Oxford, Oakville (Connecticut): Aarhus University Press, 1995, pp. 32–54.

5 William M. Alnor, Ronald Enroth, "Ethical Problems in Exit Counseling", *Christian Research Journal*, vol. XIV, no. 3, Winter 1992, pp. 14–19.

6 Johannes Aagaard, "A Christian Encounter with New Religious Movements & New Age", *Update & Dialog*, vol. I, no. 1, July 1991, pp. 19–23. For similar comments by American counter-cultists, see Robert Passantino, Gretchen Passantino, "Overcoming the Bondage of Victimization: A Critical Evaluation of Cult Mind Control and Exit Counseling", *Cornerstone*, vol. 22, 1993–1994, no. 102–103, pp. 31–40.

7 Barbara Hargrove, "Social Sources and Consequences of the Brainwashing Controversy", in D.G. Bromley, J.T. Richardson (eds.), *The Brainwashing/Deprogramming Controversy: Sociological, Psychological, Legal and Historical Perspectives*, New York: Edwin Mellen,

In 1994, in a study of anti-Mormonism, I proposed another distinction among Evangelical counter-cultists. Their movement, I argued, really consists of two wings that I proposed to call "rationalist" and "post-rationalist". "Rationalist" counter-cultists are still motivated by religious reasons, but they offer against the "cults" empirically verifiable arguments. "Cults" steal money, are potentially violent, or deny the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. While the truth about the Trinity cannot be ascertained empirically, what a group teaches about it can. "Post-rationalist" counter-cultists do not deny these arguments, but insist that we miss the key point if we do not understand that "cults" are in direct contact with Satan and the occult.[8]

The reader of this book may have at this point an impression of déjà vu. In fact, this distinction is similar to the one I proposed for different brands of Catholic anti-Masonism in the late 19th century, at the time of Taxil. Similarly, in the 20th century, we can distinguish between a secular anti-Satanism and a religious counter-Satanism and, within the latter, between a rationalist and a post-rationalist wing. For a casual observer, all enemies of Satanism in the 1980s might look similar. But there were internal tensions, which emerged in the 1990s and eventually contributed to the decline of the great Satanism scare.

Satan the Psychiatrist: Therapists and Survivors

In 1980, a Canadian medical doctor and psychologist, Lawrence Pazder (1936–2004), and a patient of his, Michelle Smith, published a strange bestseller called *Michelle Remembers*. In Victoria, British Columbia, Michelle Proby Smith had begun two years earlier a therapy with Doctor Pazder, which had lasted for two hundred hours. Little by little, on the psychologist's couch, Michelle understood she could be healed from her depression only by telling Pazder

1983, pp. 299–308 (p. 303). For my own perspective on this controversy, see M. Introvigne, J.G. Melton (eds.), *Gehirnwäsche und Sekten. Interdisziplinäre Annäherungen*, Marburg: Diagonal-Verlag, 2000; Dick Anthony, M. Introvigne, *Le Lavage de cerveau: mythe ou réalité?*, cit.; M. Introvigne, "Advocacy, Brainwashing Theories, and New Religious Movements", *Religion*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2014, pp. 303–319.

8 M. Introvigne, "The Devil Makers: Contemporary Evangelical Fundamentalist Anti-Mormonism", *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, vol. 27, no. 1, Spring 1994, pp. 153–169. Cfr. also M. Introvigne, "Old Wine in New Bottles: The Story Behind Fundamentalist Anti-Mormonism", *Brigham Young University Studies*, vol. 35, no. 3, 1995–1996, pp. 45–73; and "A Rumor of Devils: The Satanic Ritual Abuse Scare in the Mormon Church", *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 6, no. 1, Winter, Spring 1997, pp. 77–119.

something "important" lost in her memory: only, she did not know what.[9] At a certain point, Michelle remembered, and started talking with the voice of a five-year-old, her age when her mother consecrated her to Satan. Between cries of terror, Michelle told Pazder a long story complete with orgies, satanic rituals, sacrifices of animals and children, and herself tortured, raped, forced to eat worms, and lie down in a cage full of serpents.

Hers was not, Michelle told the doctor, only a small, depraved family circle. Twenty-two years before the therapy, she had been the victim of the "Feast of the Beast", a three-month ceremony during which she found herself in a sort of international reunion of "high priests" of an international "Satanic Church". In the ceremony, or so Michelle reported, Satan himself appeared and jumped on the girl, singing:

> The time is ripe, the time is near,
> The time of the Beast, this time of the year,
> The time to come, the time to begin,
> The time to spread, to thrive, to win.[10]

There is a certain ambiguity in *Michelle Remembers* about this personal appearance of the Devil. Smith and Pazder were Catholics and did believe in the personal existence of the Devil, but the method used to recall the diabolical memories was typical of secular psychotherapy. In the book, visits to Catholic priests and very secular psychiatrists follow one another and get the reader somewhat confused. Finally, in February 1978, Michelle and her psychologist, accompanied by their parish priest, Father Guy Merveille, and by the Bishop of Victoria, Remi Joseph de Roo, went to the Vatican, where they were received by Cardinal Sergio Pignedoli (1910–1980). According to Pazder, the Cardinal initially declared the experience of Michelle "impossible" but, by the end of the conversation, became more open. The book includes a brief comment by Bishop De Roo, dated September 28, 1977 and written before the visit to Rome, where he states: "Each person who has had an experience of evil imagines Satan in a slightly different way, but nobody knows precisely what this force of evil looks like. I do not question that for Michelle this experience was real. In time we will know how much of it can be validated. It will require prolonged and careful study. In such mysterious matters, hasty conclusions could prove unwise".[11]

9 M. Smith, L. Pazder, *Michelle Remembers*, cit., p. 11.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 284.

11 *Ibid.*, p. IX.

The Catholic hierarchy, in 1978, had perhaps another reason to be careful. Between Michelle and her psychologist, there was a growing and quite visible attraction, although both were married and Pazder had four children. The success of their book and their travels together around the world to promote it closed the circle. Patient and psychologist abandoned their respective families, got their divorces, and Smith became the second Mrs. Pazder. In the conservative Canadian Catholic milieu of the 1980s, Michelle and Pazder, now divorced and remarried, quickly lost the possibility of presenting themselves as good Catholics and speaking in parishes. But they no longer needed it. Hollywood got interested in the success of the book. Sales were good.

There was only one problem: in the book, one of the high priestesses of Satan, who tortures and sacrifices children, is Virginia Proby (1912–1964), the mother of Michelle. She was dead, but when the book came out her husband, Jack (1915–1992), was alive and ready to define the story of Michelle "the worst pack of lies a girl could ever make up". He categorically denied that his deceased wife was ever remotely interested in Satanism. His lawyers started a lawsuit, which scared the Hollywood producers who had expressed an interest. *Michelle Remembers* never became a film.[12]

Pazder had opened a Pandora's Box, although his book was still too "religious" for secular therapists. They read Michelle's story through their own interpretive model: multiple personality disorder (MPD). When, years later, the literature connecting MPD and Satanism was translated into French, local psychiatrists had the impression that these theories "finally came back home".[13] In fact, American MPD theories had several European antecedents. They were found in traditional Catholic exorcism, the writings of Paracelsus (1493–1541), and the literary character of Dr. Jekyll.[14] MPD patients presented two or three different personalities that did not necessarily "know" each other. Just like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in the 1886 novel by Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894), the same person could speak and behave, for example, alternatively like a thirty-year old woman or a five-year old girl. Normally, the child would not remember what the adult woman did or said, and vice versa.

12 See J. Parker, *At the Heart of Darkness: Witchcraft, Black Magic and Satanism Today*, cit., pp. 293–294.

13 Jacqueline Carroy, *Les Personnalités doubles et multiples. Entre science et fiction*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1993, p. 218.

14 See Carol S. North, Jo-Ellyn M. Ryall, Daniel A. Ricci, Richard D. Wetzel, *Multiple Personalities, Multiple Disorders: Psychiatric Classification and Media Influence*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 3–4; and pp. 116–117, where the authors also mention literary works featuring "alternate personalities, dissociation" by Luigi Pirandello (1867–1936), Marcel Proust (1871–1922), James Joyce (1882–1941), and Virginia Woolf (1882–1941).

Mesmer is an important antecedent. His "magnetized" patients exhibited a number of "multiple personalities". Mesmer influenced both Freud and Spiritualism. He also influenced theories of reincarnation, since it was easy to interpret the materials that surfaced in the course of "magnetizations" as referring to past lives. In the course of the 19th century, French psychiatry was confronted with psychic manifestations, occultism, and alleged satanic phenomena. It explained occult manifestations as coming from "alternate" personalities. Spiritualist mediums, in particular, were proclaimed typical cases of multiple personality.[15]

The itinerary went "from Mesmer to Freud".[16] The father of psychoanalysis had studied in France, where he read with interest the literature on the relations between hysteria, demonic possession, Spiritualism, and occultism. In 1895–1896, after having studied eighteen hysterical patients, Freud concluded he had found a new explanation for hysteria. He summarized it in four points. First, hysteria is caused by removed traumatic memories. Second, the removed trauma is most often of a sexual nature, and involves the "seduction" of a young woman, generally by her father or a relative, with frequent instances of rape and sadistic perversions. Third, patients oppose a strong resistance to the recovery of these memories. Fourth, finally the descent into the subconscious allows the barriers artificially constructed to fall. The traumatic memories are recovered, and the patient is restored back to health. Freud called this model the "theory of seduction", and believed he had given a decisive contribution to research on hysteria.

In the following months, however, between the end of 1896 and October 1897, something unexpected happened. Continuing with the analysis, Freud's patients offered horrific details about their "seductions", including cannibalism, satanic rituals, and apparitions of the Devil: in one word, all the paraphernalia of Satanism. By reading his correspondence from January to October 1897 with his friend Wilhelm Fliess (1858–1928), we see how Freud was initially enthusiastic about these discoveries, even if he did not believe in the existence of the Devil. He progressively became more skeptical and by October was ready to abandon the theory of seduction altogether.

Freud confessed to Fliess that his patients' fantasies about satanic rituals persuaded him that their so-called memories should not be taken at face value. If the satanic rituals were fantasies, Freud concluded, most probably stories of seduction, rape, and torture were also figments of the women's imagination.

15 See J. Carroy, *Les Personnalités doubles et multiples. Entre science et fiction*, cit.

16 See Adam Crabtree, *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing*, New Haven (Connecticut), London: Yale University Press, 1993.

Hysterical disturbances, he argued, derive from internal conflicts in the subconscious rather than from external traumatic episodes. This change of opinion was crucial for the birth of psychoanalysis.[17] It also led to the demise of theories about multiple personalities, which were "considered more or less extinguished" for several decades.[18]

In 1954, two psychiatrists, Corbett H. Thigpen (1919–1999) and Hervey Milton Cleckley (1903–1984), published in a specialized journal an article called *A Case of Multiple Personality*.[19] They presented the case of a woman, "Eve White" (Chris Costner Sizemore, born in 1927), who appeared to have developed three distinct personalities. In 1957, they expanded the article into a book.[20] While the psychiatric community was skeptical, the book reached a wider public and quickly became a Hollywood film, directed in 1957 by Nunnally Johnson (1897–1977), starring Joanne Woodward as Eve. Woodward won the Academy Award for Best Actress for that role.

The movie generated a rush of patients from every remote corner of the United States towards the two psychiatrists. Thigpen and Cleckley considered most of them as copycat cases influenced by the movie. However, other therapists, as part of a growing anti-Freudian wave, began to take MPD more seriously. Among the fourteen clinical cases discussed in the medical journals between 1944 and 1969, six came from the same psychotherapist, Cornelia B. Wilbur (1908–1992).[21] Dr. Wilbur had a decisive role in promoting the idea that Freud was right when he created the theory of seduction and wrong when he

17 See S. Mulhern, "Souvenirs de sabbats au XXe siècle", cit.; S. Mulhern, "The Demonization of Psychopathology", in J.-B. Martin, M. Introvigne (eds.), *Le Défi magique. II. Satanisme, sorcellerie*, cit., pp. 65–84; Ermanno Pavesi, "Le Concept du démoniaque chez Sigmund Freud et Carl Gustav Jung", *ibid.*, pp. 331–340; Sander L. Gilman, *The Case of Sigmund Freud: Medicine and Identity in the Fin de siècle*, Baltimore-London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993; P.C. Vitz, *Sigmund Freud's Christian Unconscious*, cit. Gilman and Vitz discuss the respective influences of Judaism and Christianity on Freud's theory of seduction.

18 Colin A. Ross, *Multiple Personality Disorder: Diagnosis, Clinical Features, and Treatment*, New York: Wiley, 1989, p. 3. See also C.A. Ross, *Satanic Ritual Abuse: Principles of Treatment*, Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1995.

19 Corbett H. Thigpen, Hervey M. Cleckley, "A Case of Multiple Personality", *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, vol. 49, 1954, pp. 135–151.

20 C. Thigpen, H. Cleckley, *The Three Faces of Eve*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1957. See also Eve's autobiography: Chris C. Sizemore, with Elen Sain Pittillo, *I'm Eve*, Garden City (New York): Doubleday, 1977.

21 C.S. North, J.-E.M. Ryall, D.A. Ricci, R.D. Wetzel, *Multiple Personalities, Multiple Disorders: Psychiatric Classification and Media Influence*, cit., p. 11.

renounced it. MPD, Wilbur insisted, really derives from traumas induced by sexual abuse undergone in infancy.

In the 1970s, California forensic psychiatrist Ralph B. Allison started publishing a newsletter called *Memos in Multiplicity*, which gathered some three hundred subscriptions. Mainline psychiatry remained very cautious. When Wilbur wrote an article about her most famous MPD patient, "Sybil" (Shirley Ardell Mason, 1923–1998), scholarly journals refused to publish it. Wilbur then approached a journalist, Flora Rheta Schreiber (1918–1988), who accepted to write a book on "Sybil",[22] which again caught the attention of Hollywood. Ironically, in the movie *Sybil*, Joanne Woodward, the actress who twenty years before had interpreted the patient, "Eve", in *The Three Faces of Eve*, now played the role of the therapist, Dr. Wilbur. Not unexpectedly, the movie provoked a new wave of MPD cases, but this time at least some psychiatrists were ready to accept them as genuine.

Wilbur worked in these years in the Department of Psychiatry of the University of Kentucky, where she had as a colleague Arnold M. Ludwig, who supported the anti-cult movement and its theories about brainwashing.[23] Ludwig told Wilbur that perhaps her MPD patients were not just victims of generic sexual abuse, but had been "brainwashed" by "cults" practicing sex magic and Satanism.

In the 1970s, MPD cases became several hundreds. In 1980, MPD was included in the diagnostic manual *DSM-III* of the American Psychiatric Association,[24] with the consequence that its treatment was made available in public hospitals and could be refunded by insurance companies. In the same year, as we know, Pazder published *Michelle Remembers*. MPD and memories of satanic rituals could thus meet. Dozens of therapists in the United States and Canada began to report cases of MPD induced by violence and torture their patients had reportedly undergone in childhood from Satanist groups, which were similar to those described by Michelle. But were these cases real or just figments of the patients' imaginations? Unlike Freud, therapists argued that the satanic abuses were very much real, and found allies in significant social movements.

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22 Flora Rheta Schreiber, *Sybil*, Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1973.

23 See Arnold M. Ludwig, "Altered States of Consciousness", *Archives of General Psychiatry*, vol. 15, 1966, pp. 225–234.

24 American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 3rd ed., Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1980; revised 3rd ed., Washington D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1987, pp. 269–272.

A first alliance emerged with fringes of the feminist movement persuaded that Freud, because of his male patriarchal prejudices, refused to believe his female patients, thus abandoning what he had started as a promising enquiry on Satanism. Some feminists, engaged in campaigns to raise public awareness of rape and incest, enthusiastically supported the idea that hundreds of satanic cults were plotting in the shadows and wildly abusing thousands of little girls.[25] The most important ally for the therapists, however, was the anti-cult movement. In 1984, psychiatrist Bennett Braun organized the first international MPD conference in Chicago, where an association called International Society for the Study of Multiple Personality Disorder and Dissociation was founded. In 1994, it changed its name to the International Society for the Study of Dissociation and in 2006 to the International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation.

From the first meeting on, there were routine references to Satanist cults, and in 1986 a leader of the anti-cult organization Cult Awareness Network, Julia Holland, was invited to the Society's annual conference, held again in Chicago. This episode marked the beginning of a regular cooperation between MPD therapists and the anti-cult movement. Holland took the stories of satanic abuse, which according to participants in that congress emerged from twenty-five percent of their patients, and offered an interpretation according to the anti-cult model of "programming" and brainwashing. The Chicago conference of 1986 also promoted a new development. MPD, it was argued, did not necessarily derive from a spontaneous defense of the victim against a trauma, which was too harsh to be tolerated. It could also be induced and programmed by Satanist cults, so that the victims would not remember the violence, or would remember it in such a bizarre and twisted way that they would not be believed.[26]

The anti-cult movement saw in the therapists an opportunity to expand its activities to the area of Satanism, of which it knew very little.[27] It also discovered that MPD and Satanic abuse were particularly attractive to the media. Survivors of Satanic abuse started appearing in talk shows, and told their stories in widely read volumes. In 1988, a psychiatrist, Robert S. Mayer, collected

25 See James M. Glass, *Shattered Selves: Multiple Personality in a Postmodern World*, Ithaca (New York): Cornell University Press, 1993.

26 See S. Mulhern, "The Demonization of Psychopathology", *cit.*

27 See also D.G. Bromley, "The Social Construction of Subversion. A Comparison of Anti-Religious and Anti-Satanic Cult Narratives", in Anson D. Shupe, D.G. Bromley (eds.), *Anti-Cult Movements in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, New York, London: Garland, 1994, pp. 49–75.

in one book the stories of many "multiple" patients,[28] and included the most scary details of satanic abuse, complete with human sacrifice and cannibalism, in a second volume published in 1991.[29] Books of adult survivors, willing and even anxious to tell their stories of satanic abuse to the world, multiplied in the early 1990s.[30] The number of MPD cases created a real "epidemic",[31] with thousands of cases in the United States and Canada and the first episodes in Europe and Australia.

This was only the beginning. Leading MPD therapists such as Dr. Colin A. Ross argued that most survivors ignored their condition and they were probably in the thousands.[32] Ross stated that five percent of prostitutes and fifty percent of strippers suffered from MPD and probably had been victims of satanic ritual abuse in their infancy. He also believed that in the year 2000, psychiatrists who had never diagnosed a case of MPD would be looked at with suspicion.[33] In fact, rather the opposite would happen: but at the moment, MPD seemed to have the wind at its back. Survivors also started their own journals independently from therapists, including *Beyond Survival*, edited by journalist Craig Lockwood,[34] and *Reaching Out*, promoted by a survivor who signed with the pseudonym Margaret Smith.[35]

The details mentioned in this literature were bloodcurdling. In the shadows lurked powerful Satanist cults, led by popular figures beyond suspicion: judges, lawyers, pastors of the mainline denominations, politicians. Parents willingly gave their children to the cults. Boys and girls were obliged to participate in human sacrifices, suffer sexual violence of all kinds, drink sperm and urine, eat

28 Robert S. Mayer, *Through Shattered Minds*, New York: Doubleday, 1988.

29 R.S. Mayer, *Satan's Children: Case Studies in Multiple Personality*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1991.

30 Other books were written by therapists, some of them Christian. See e.g. Gail Carr Feldman, *Lessons in Evil, Lessons from the Light: A True Story of Satanic Abuse and Spiritual Healing*, New York: Crown, 1993.

31 C.S. North, J.-E.M. Ryall, D.A. Ricci, R.D. Wetzel, *Multiple Personalities, Multiple Disorders: Psychiatric Classification and Media Influence*, cit., p. 13.

32 C.A. Ross, "Epidemiology of Multiple Personality Disorder and Dissociation", *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, vol. 14, 1991, pp. 503–517.

33 C.A. Ross, *Multiple Personality Disorder: Diagnosis, Clinical Features, and Treatment*, cit., p. 77. It is not surprising that a successful thriller of the early 1990s was also centered on a MPD case: see Leonard Simon, *Dissociated States*, London: Penguin, 1993.

34 See Craig Lockwood, *Other Altars: Roots and Reality of Cultic and Satanic Ritual Abuse and Multiple Personality Disorder*, Minneapolis (Minnesota): CompCare Publishers, 1993.

35 See Margaret Smith, *Ritual Abuse: What It Is, Why It Happens, and How to Help*, San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993.

excrements, copulate with animals and then sacrifice them. Many survivors of the 1990s remembered having been "breeders", producing children whose births were not registered with the authorities, in order to sacrifice them to Satan without running too many risks.

Readers of this book would find little new in the survivors' literature. Most of what they reported had already formed the spicier part of anti-Satanist books of the 19th century, including the *Diable*. Curiously, the survivors' movement was aware of these precedents, and did not deny them. Rather, it claimed that an international network of Satanists could not have been founded overnight. On the contrary, many Satanists were "multi-generational" and the result of Satanism transmitted within family circles for centuries, perhaps millennia. Satanist cults were ancient, but only modern psychotherapy could provide the "scientific" methods to uncover them.[36]

Unfortunately, survivors, journalists, and psychiatrists were not necessarily experts in the history of religion and occultism. When they tried to connect stories of modern survivors to the ancient Gnostics,[37] witchcraft, La Voisin, Boullan, Huysmans, or Crowley,[38] their sources were usually second or third hand, and their historical and sociological understanding of the events often non-existent. Sometimes, the *Diable* and Taxil were quoted as authoritative

36 See Mary De Young, *The Ritual Abuse Controversy: An Annotated Bibliography*, Jefferson (North Carolina), London: McFarland & Company, 2002. Several important articles were republished in J.R. Lewis, J.Aa. Petersen (eds.), *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism*, cit. For an overview, see also Debbie Nathan, Michael Snedeker, *Satan's Silence: Ritual Abuse and the Making of a Modern American Witch Hunt*, New York: Basic Books, 1995; and, for a historical perspective, David Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate: Rumors of Demonic Conspiracy and Ritual Abuse in History*, Princeton (New Jersey), Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008.

37 Sally Hill, Jean Goodwin, "Satanism: Similarities between Patient Accounts and Pre-Inquisition Historical Sources", *Dissociation: Progress in the Dissociative Disorders*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1989, pp. 39–42.

38 See Jerry Johnston, *The Edge of Evil: The Rise of Satanism in North America*, Dallas: Word Publishing, 1989; Tim Tate, *Children for the Devil: Ritual Abuse and Satanic Crime*, London: Methuen, 1991; Andrew Boyd, *Blasphemous Rumours: Is Satanic Ritual Abuse Fact of Fantasy? An Investigation*, London: Fount, 1991; Dominique Cellura, *Les Cultes de l'enfer. Le diable parmi nous*, Paris: Spengler, 1993; C. Lockwood, *Other Altars: Roots and Reality of Cultic and Satanic Ritual Abuse and Multiple Personality Disorder*, cit.; M. Smith, *Ritual Abuse: What It Is, Why It Happens, and How to Help*, cit.; Martin H. Katchen, "The History of Satanic Religions", in David K. Sakheim, Susan E. Devine (eds.), *Out of Darkness: Exploring Satanism and Ritual Abuse*, New York: Lexington, 1992, pp. 1–19; M.H. Katchen, D.K. Sakheim, "Satanic Beliefs and Practices", *ibid.*, pp. 21–39.

sources. Some survivors assured us that "ritual abuse" of adults and children was perpetrated in the Masonic lodges under the guide of Albert Pike.[39] Others claimed they were abused by Mormon parents who were part of Satanist cults started by Brigham Young, who had already been connected to Satanism by the *Diable*.[40] It was even more startling to read, in a text quoted approvingly by the president of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis, that "as early as the 1830s [there were] allegations of satanic rites being conducted as part of the freemasonry in Charleston, South Carolina".[41] The endnote referred to "Vaughan 1990". The reference, as incredible as it may seem, was to *Diana* Vaughan, whose apocryphal *Memoirs of an ex-Palladist* were republished in 1990, translated into English, by a Chicago organization known as Voices in Action, which gathered survivors and their supporters.[42]

These episodes throw some suspicion on stories of survivors in general. Details about satanic abuses they "remembered" came, more often than not, from books. One of the earliest survivors, "Sybil", was accused precisely of having literally derived some of her most gruesome accounts from books she had read.[43] In 1992, a self-styled survivor, Ann-Marie Germain, defended a M.A. thesis at the Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Germain discussed the connections between Satanism and Freemasonry. She listed as her sources memories that emerged during her own psychotherapy and confessions she allegedly received from her Masonic father. He led her to the Masonic "temple", where masons "do things [...] that can't be done in a lodge".[44] Some of her stories, however, came almost literally from Taxil and Bataille. Another survivor, Margaret Smith, claimed that in the years before 1993, "sixty-seven percent of the survivors said their ritual abuse perpetrators were members of

39 M. Smith, *Ritual Abuse: What It Is, Why It Happens, and How to Help*, cit., pp. 137–139; M.H. Katchen, "The History of Satanic Religions", cit., p. 10.

40 See C. Lockwood, *Other Altars: Roots and Reality of Cultic and Satanic Ritual Abuse and Multiple Personality Disorder*, cit., pp. 118–120; and Jerald Tanner, Sandra Tanner, *Satanic Ritual Abuse and Mormonism*, Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1992.

41 M.H. Katchen, "The History of Satanic Religions", cit., p. 10.

42 Diana Vaughan, *Memoirs of an Ex-Palladist*, Chicago: Voices in Action, 1990.

43 "Sybil spent considerable time in a university psychology library, where she read extensively on psychiatry and case histories" (C.S. North, J.-E.M. Ryall, D.A. Ricci, R.D. Wetzel, *Multiple Personalities, Multiple Disorders: Psychiatric Classification and Media Influence*, cit., p. 150).

44 Ann-Marie Germain, "Ritual Abuse: Its Effects and the Process of Recovery Using Self-Help Methods and Resources, and Focusing on the Spiritual Aspect of Damage and Recovery", M.A. Thesis, Carbondale (Illinois): Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 1993, p. 294.

secret societies or fraternal organizations. Thirty-three percent said perpetrating family members were Masons".[45]

Satan the Mormon: The Utah Satanic Abuse Scare

Mormons were accused of having something to do with Satanism from the times of Taxil and the *Diable* and even earlier, but the welding of these old false accusations and the moral panic that began in the 1980s created considerable damage from 1985 on. In 1985, Dr. Barbara Snow, a therapist strongly persuaded of the reality of satanic abuse, arrived in the small Utah town of Lehi. Soon, she started accusing respected members of the local Mormon community of satanic ritual abuse. While many Lehi citizens refused to believe her claims, others joined Snow in a parent-therapy group. Alan B. Hadfield and Rex Bowers, both active Mormons in Lehi's Eighth Ward, emerged as vocal supporters of the therapist. At their urging, the Utah County Sheriff's Office and the Utah Attorney General Office began a lengthy investigation. In the meantime, Snow continued to interview Lehi's children, and more shocking revelations came. In February 1986, the son of Bowers, in an interview with Snow, recalled instances of sexual molestation by his father. In May, both a daughter and a son of Hadfield told Snow that they had been forced by their father to have both anal and oral sex with him. Believing the allegations, Hadfield's wife abandoned her husband, never to return.

Snow claimed that the children had confessed to her that they had been initiated into Satanist cults and induced to worship Satan. They had apparently described rituals very similar to the horrible "Feast of the Beast" that Michelle Smith had remembered and described in her 1980 book. When the police concluded its investigation in 1987, Snow had accused forty adults of being ritual child abusers and members of a secret Satanist cult. Almost all of them were active Mormons in Lehi's Eighth Ward. Although Snow was publicly and vocally backed by the Intermountain Sexual Abuse Treatment Center and by Dr. Paul L. Whitehead, public-affairs representative for the Utah Psychiatric Association, prosecutors decided to file charges against only one individual, Hadfield. Both Snow and Whitehead testified against Hadfield at the 1987 trial.

It was, however, clear that a sizable share of public opinion in Utah did not believe the therapists. Some State legislators questioned whether it was wise for Utah to fund controversial institutions such as the Intermountain Sexual Abuse Treatment Center. The investigation was described as "a political

45 M. Smith, *Ritual Abuse: What It Is, Why It Happens, and How to Help*, cit., p. 138.

nightmare" by Utah's Deputy Attorney General Paul Warner.[46] At trial, it came out that both Wayne Watson, Chief Deputy Utah County Attorney, who had witnessed through a two-way mirror one of Snow's interviews, and Judy Pugh, a colleague of Snow at the Intermountain Sexual Abuse Treatment Center, thought the therapist had been coaching the children into admitting sexual and satanic abuses they had initially denied. A ten-year old girl testified that she had tried to persuade Snow that she had never been abused. Later, she had cracked under the pressure of the therapist, persuaded that the doctor would never let her go unless she agreed to accuse somebody of ritual abuse.[47] Hadfield's defense attorney called as an expert witness Dr. Stephen Golding, director of the Department of Clinical Psychology at the University of Utah. Golding labelled Snow's techniques as "subtly coercive and highly questionable".[48] A nervous and confused Hadfield did not help his case when he told the court: "If I did those things, I don't remember".[49]

Hadfield was convicted of four first-degree counts of sodomy on a child and three second-degree counts of sexual abuse of a child by an eight-member jury on December 19, 1987. He should have been sentenced to a minimum ten years jail term with no probation. However, Utah allows probation for abusers after six months in jail, with a further possibility of work release, if they accept to place themselves in a therapy program. Although most programs would not accept a convicted abuser who, like Hadfield, maintained he was innocent, Hadfield's case was unique. He was admitted for treatment and thereby escaped a long jail term.

Support for Hadfield in Lehi was massive. A rally in his favor after the 1987 decision drew eight hundred persons, and a benefit banquet for his legal defense attracted around a thousand, including State legislators and local Mormon leaders. Whitehead argued that such massive support for Hadfield in Lehi merely showed that the town was in fact controlled by a satanic child-abuse ring.[50] The press also largely believed that Hadfield was innocent. Reporters became still more suspicious of Dr. Snow's methods when they discovered that the therapist, who had moved from Lehi, had subsequently discovered other Satanist cults guilty of extended sexual abuse in Bountiful in 1986 and in the Salt Lake City area in 1988. No charges related to a specific "satanic" abuse were filed in Bountiful, and a fourteen months probe was quietly dropped in

46 *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 16, 1987.

47 *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 17, 1987.

48 *Deseret News*, December 17, 1987.

49 *Salt Lake Tribune*, December 27, 1987.

50 *Deseret News*, January 13, 1988.

Salt Lake City in April 1988.[51] In 1990, the Utah Supreme Court ordered a review of Hadfield's conviction, based on serious suspicions about Snow's methods. His conviction, however, stood and he was eventually released from probation in 1998. In the subsequent decade, Snow found herself repeatedly in trouble for her cavalier accusations of sexual abuse.

The other therapist involved in the Lehi scare, Whitehead, wrote the foreword of a book called *Paperdolls: Healing from Sexual Abuse in Mormon Neighborhoods*, written in 1992 by two Salt Lake Valley women using the pseudonyms April Daniels and Carol Scott, who told their own and other stories of sexual abuse.[52] The book used material from the 1987–1988 ill-fated Snow investigation in the Salt Lake area, and made only passing references to ritual or satanic elements in the abuses. The sacrifice of a baby kitten was however described, and the book claimed that in this particular incident the daughter and the son-in-law of a Mormon Apostle were involved.[53] In December 1991, the Mormon independent magazine *Sunstone* published a letter by Marion B. Smith, formerly the director of the Intermountain Sexual Abuse Treatment Center, mentioning "sex rings discovered in Bountiful" and adding again that "one aspect of the second alleged sex ring was that a daughter and a son-in-law of a general authority [of the Mormon Church] were named as the main abusers".[54] As mentioned earlier, no charges of satanic abuse were filed in the Bountiful and Salt Lake City cases, perhaps because police and prosecutors thought the controversies that had surrounded the Lehi scare were enough.

Sociologist Anson D. Shupe (1948–2015) examined the Lehi Satanism scare and concluded that "evidence against Hadfield was certainly contestable" and that "horrific possibilities gradually receded to become grotesque improbabilities".[55] However, the case of Lehi created an anti-Satanist panic in Utah, in three different environments: among anti-Mormons, who were interested in reviving old accusations; among local psychologists and psychiatrists, who came into contact with the MPD movement and participated in its national conventions; and inside the Mormon Church itself. The Lehi scare also influenced subsequent cases in Utah and nearby Idaho.

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51 *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 26, 1988. For Snow's version, see Barbara Snow, Teena Sorensen, "Ritualistic Child Abuse in a Neighborhood Setting", *The Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, vol. 5, no. 4, December 1990, pp. 474–487.

52 April Daniels, Carol Scott, *Paperdolls: Healing from Sexual Abuse in Mormon Neighbourhoods*, Salt Lake City: Palingenesia Press, 1992.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 108.

54 Marion B. Smith, "Letter", *Sunstone*, vol. 15, no. 6, December 1991, pp. 4–6.

55 A.D. Shupe, *The Darker Side of Virtue: Corruption, Scandal, and the Mormon Empire*, Buffalo (New York): Prometheus Books, 1991, pp. 122–123.

In early November 1989, in Minidoka County, Idaho, the dismembered and burned remains of a 4-to-8-weeks old female Hispanic infant were discovered in a garbage dump. Forensic experts ascertained that "Baby X", whose identity was never discovered, had been disemboweled and mutilated before she was burned. Rumors of a satanic sacrifice started almost immediately. In March 1990, a ten-year old boy, "Timothy", with his real name protected by privacy laws, entered therapy for disturbing dreams of sexual abuse and torture. He began drawing pictures that, although open to multiple interpretations, suggested that he had witnessed satanic rituals including sexual abuse. Timothy told therapists and later police detectives that his experiences had taken place in Rupert, a Southern Idaho town close to where Baby X's remains had been found. Shortly thereafter, Timothy claimed that during a satanic ritual he had witnessed the sacrifice of an infant who may well have been Baby X.

Timothy's recollections were later published in the *South Idaho Press* and included a graphic description of a satanic ritual. "They put me on a table with a Bible, Timothy reported. The devil is there. They pray to the devil. 18 people stand around. The devil makes these people hurt me. They hurt me so bad. They hurt me in the private parts. They have hurt me so many times. The devil makes bad people. They have sacrifices. It's done in the real Bible. The devil is there. 18 people are there. They sacrifice cats. They put them on a table and pray and sacrifice and give them to the devil. They do this all the time, even in the winter when it's cold. They sacrifice all animals. They even sacrifice babies. (Where do they get the babies?). From humans. They lay them on this table and give them to the devil. They pray to him from the real Bible. The Bible is on the table. Where do they get the babies, I don't know? The babies don't have any cloths on. They just put them on the table and pretty soon the devil makes a fire and they are on fire. My mom and dad are there, they watch".[56]

Although Timothy accused both his parents of being involved in a Satanist cult, authorities were reluctant to file charges. While the population of Minidoka County is predominantly Mormon, Timothy's family, described by the authorities as "severely dysfunctional", was associated for a short period with the Jehovah's Witnesses. Timothy had been impressed by graphic depictions of the Devil in the Witnesses' literature.[57] On November 8, 1991, with national TV networks in attendance, 500 persons attended a candlelight vigil for victims of satanic ritual abuse, including Baby X, in Rupert. Apparently, "several

56 *South Idaho Press*, September 13, 1991.

57 *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, May 17, 1992.

busloads" of survivors and their supporters from Salt Lake City came to Rupert for the vigil.[58]

In the same month of November 1991, the Idaho Attorney General's office took over the investigation of the case. A well-known pathologist, Dr. William Brady, re-examined the remains of Baby X, and a senior psychologist, Dr. Charles W. Gamble of Boise, examined Timothy. In 1992, the Attorney General's Office released his report. Dr. Brady reported that, although he could not tell exactly how Baby X had died, he had ascertained beyond doubt that there were: "(1) no evidence of mutilation with a knife or other sharp instrument, almost certain to be present had some person dismembered the body; (2) teeth marks on the body consistent with damage by small predators such as rats, mice or birds; (3) evidence of pneumonia in the infant's lung". Brady suggested that poor Baby X died of pneumonia and her illegal alien parents try to dispose of the body through amateur cremation, with animal predators later attacking the infant's remains. The Attorney General's report also noted that no member of Timothy's family was in the Rupert area "anywhere near the time of the infant's death and disposal".

As for Timothy himself, Gamble concluded that he "had never witnessed a satanic ritual and (...) may have invented the story". Randy Everitt, an investigator working for the Idaho Attorney General's Office, told the press that authorities were "fairly well convinced that the little boy didn't see anything. We believe the boy jumbled what he's been read [in Jehovah's Witnesses' literature], and other folks interpreted that as they wanted".[59] Although the Attorney General's Office told the press that the case was not closed and investigations continued on the possibility that Timothy had in fact been victim of sexual, but perhaps not satanic, abuse, and reporter Christopher Clarke of the *South Idaho Press* embarked on a personal crusade arguing that a Satanist cult may in fact exist in the Rupert area, no charges were ultimately filed.

An interesting part of the Baby X-Timothy case was the candlelight vigil held on November 8, 1991 in Rupert. This episode proved that a network of moral crusaders promoting the Satanism scare existed in Mormon Country, and that survivors from Salt Lake City had already formed a small lobby trying to persuade the public that their stories and those of the children like Timothy were basically the same, equally deserving public belief.

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58 Gode Davis, "In the Name of Satan", *Network: A Progressive Publication for Utah Women*, vol. 14, no. 12, March 1992, pp. 15–16.

59 *The Times-News* (Twin Falls, Idaho), May 19, 1992; *South Idaho Press*, May 19, 1992; *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, May 17, 1992.

The fact that satanic ritual abuse, perpetrated by active Mormons, was possibly taking place in their Intermountain "Zion" could not have been overlooked by the Mormon Church. On May 24, 1989, the LDS (Latter-day Saints, the official name of the Mormon Church) Social Services released for internal church use a report on Satanism, followed by another report from the U.S. attorney for Utah Brent Ward, an active Mormon, and a further memorandum from Bishop Glenn L. Pace, then Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, dated October 20, 1989. All these documents have never been published. A fourth document, a memorandum also authored by Bishop Pace and directed to the Strengthening Church Members Committee on July 19, 1990, although marked "Do not reproduce", came into the possession of Evangelical Salt Lake City counter-Mormons Jerald (1938–2006) and Sandra Tanner in 1991.

The Tanners at first questioned the authenticity of the memorandum, and even doubted that a Strengthening the Members Committee, later to become famous in Utah for reasons unconnected with Satanism, did in fact exist. Later, they were able to obtain from Pace's secretary a confirmation that the Strengthening Church Members Committee really existed and the report was genuine. In November 1991, the Tanners published the memo in their *Salt Lake City Messenger*. After its authenticity had not been challenged by the LDS Church, they reprinted it in a book published in 1992 under the title *Satanic Ritual Abuse and Mormonism*.[60]

In the memo, Bishop Pace reported that he had "met with sixty victims", all members of the Mormon Church, most of them adult survivors, the majority having "been diagnosed as having multiple personality disorder or some other form of dissociative disorder". In fact, the report included only passing references to stories told by children, and relied primarily on MPD and other adult survivors' cases. After satanic child abuse, Pace stated, echoing the survivors' typical argument, "the only escape for the children is to dissociate". "They will develop a new personality to enable them to endure various forms of abuse. When the episode is over, the core personality is again in control and the individual is not conscious of what happened. Dissociation also serves the purposes of the occult because the children have no day-to-day memory of the atrocities".

Pace's conclusion was that multiple personalities were willingly created by Satanist cults. Satanists had developed technologies enabling them to

60 J. Tanner, S. Tanner, "Ritualistic Child Abuse and the Mormon Church", *Salt Lake City Messenger*, no. 80, November 1991, pp. 1–15; J. Tanner, S. Tanner, *Satanic Ritual Abuse and Mormonism*, Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1992, pp. 7–18. See also "Mormon Leaders Fight Satanic Infiltration", *Salt Lake City Messenger*, no. 81, March 1992, pp. 1–15.

brainwash their victims in order to make disclosure less likely to occur. However, Satanists had not been entirely successful because after many years, when the children became adults, it might happen that "something triggers the memories and, consequently, flashbacks and/or nightmares occur". When therapy follows and the memory "is tapped, it is as fresh as if it happened yesterday".

Bishop Pace's main concern appeared to be with the features of satanic abuse peculiar to Mormon Country. While in Catholic settings survivors told of Black Masses, Mormon survivors reported that they had been abused within the context of a "black" version of Mormon temple ceremonies. One particularly disturbing consequence was, Pace noted, that "many of the victims have had their first flashbacks while attending the [Mormon] temple for the first time. The occult along the Wasatch Front uses the doctrine of the Church to their [sic] advantage. For example, the verbiage and gestures are used in a ritualistic ceremony in a very debased and often bloody manner. When the victim goes to the temple and hears the exact words, horrible memories are triggered".

"We have recently been disturbed, Pace told the Strengthening Church Members Committee, with members of the Church who have talked about the temple ceremony [whose details, in principle, should not be publicly disclosed]. Compared to what is happening in the occult along the Wasatch Front, these are very minor infractions. The perpetrators are also living a dual life. Many are temple recommend holders", i.e. they have received the "card" confirming that they are church members in good standing and can enter the Mormon temples. For legal reasons, Pace asked the survivors not to name the perpetrators, but to explain what offices the Satanists held in the Mormon Church. "Among others, Pace reported, there are Young Women leaders, Young Men leaders, bishops, a patriarch, a stake president, temple workers, and members of the Tabernacle Choir. These accusations are not coming from individuals who think they recognized someone, but from those who have been abused by people they know, in many cases their own family members".

There was, according to Pace, ample cause for alarm. "Not only do some of the perpetrators represent a cross section of the Mormon culture, but sometimes the abuse has taken place in our own meetinghouses". Pace also speculated on the extension of the problem. Since he had met with sixty victims, "assuming each one comes from a coven of 13, we are talking about the involvement of 800 or so right here on the Wasatch Front". The idea that all Satanist "covens" have thirteen members, in order to mock Jesus Christ and the twelve Apostles, came to Pace from survivors' anti-Satanist literature. In fact, none of the Satanist movements active in the last decades of the 20th century was organized in groups of thirteen, and only a few used the name "coven", which is more typical of Wicca, a different phenomenon from Satanism.

Asking the Strengthening the Members Committee to "excuse me if I am being presumptuous", Pace concluded his memo with seven good pages of references to Mormon scriptures. He claimed that the latter-day emergence of satanic ritual abuse had been prophetically foreseen in the *Book of Mormon*, which "is replete with descriptions of these secret murderous combinations as well as prophecies that they will always be with us". Pace quoted the prophecy of *Mormon*, 8:27, on "a day when the blood of saints shall cry unto the Lord, because of secret combinations and the works of darkness", a passage that in the 19th century was widely understood as referring to Freemasonry. Finally, Pace concluded that he did not "want to be known as an alarmist or a fanatic on the issue" and in fact hoped "to take a low profile on the subject". Because of the unknown hand who passed the memo to the Tanners, this was not to be.

As reported later by Utah's *Network* magazine, "soon after the memo [by Bishop Pace] was written and released to the Strengthening Church Members Committee of the church organization, the Utah Governor's Commission for Women and Families formed a subcommittee and task force to address issues of ritual (including satanic) child abuse".[61] According to an article in the *Deseret News* (a daily newspaper owned by the Mormon Church) of September 8, 1991, the first of a four-part series who introduced Utah readers to the survivors' stories, the subcommittee was in fact formed "in February 1990", before Pace's memorandum.[62] When released in 1992, the task force report stated that the subcommittee "was created in March 1990". Twenty-seven community leaders were sitting on the ritual-abuse subcommittee, including former U.S. Attorney Brent Ward, Utah governor's wife Colleen Bangerter (1935–2011), and Bishop Pace himself.[63]

The prime force and the co-chair of the Committee was Dr. Noemi P. Mattis, a Belgian-born therapist who had received a Ph.D. in psychology from Columbia University. Mattis described herself to the *Deseret News* in September 1991 as "a New York humanist Jew and a quintessential skeptic", part of a group of people who "don't even believe in Satan". She was also referred to as "a Holocaust survivor".[64] The other co-chair was Aileen Hales Clyde, a counsellor in the LDS Relief Society. The subcommittee appeared to be so stuffed with Mormon leaders that it could hardly be called a secular enterprise. It also included Reverend Richard W. Bauer, of the Catholic Community Services and Rabbi Frederick I. Wenger of the Congregation Kol Ami. As early as 1987, Mattis was one of

61 G. Davis, "In the Name of Satan", cit., p. 14.

62 *Deseret News*, September 8, 1991.

63 *Deseret News*, October 25, 1991.

64 *Deseret News*, September 9, 1991.

Utah therapists attending the MPD yearly conferences in Chicago, and later described the "emotional moment" when the attendees realized that the majority of them, unknown to each other, were hearing the same stories about Satanist cults from their patients.[65]

Mattis was a typical MPD therapist, who believed that survivors' stories about Satanism were factually true. There were dozens of them in the U.S. at that time. What added unique features to the case was the Mormon setting and the publicity that surrounded the publication of Bishop Pace's memorandum by the *Salt Lake City Messenger* in November 1991. The involvement of Bishop Pace and the fact that a confidential memorandum had been published by anti-Mormons produced more excitement than the previous *Deseret News* September series, which had interviewed both skeptics and believers.

Immediately following the publication by the Tanners, between October 24 and October 25, 1991, both KTVX (Channel 4) and Mormon-owned KSL (Channel 5) TV networks reported on Bishop Pace's document and interviewed survivors of Satanist cult abuse, readily supplied by Salt Lake therapists. A survivor told KTVX: "My grandfather was a Bishop and my grandmother was a Relief Society President. My grandparents were the leaders of what was happening to me as a child. As a very small child, I witnessed my baby brother being murdered by the cult. Everyone participated in this. I do remember the evidence was often burned and, for instance, when I was an adolescent, I was pregnant and the cult literally aborted my baby and burned it". A woman giving "Jody" as her name told KSL that at age three she "unknowingly became trapped in the scene of ritualistic abuse. It lasted five years. Twenty years of therapy has triggered her memory of the most heinous rituals in which she was forced to participate", including "infant sacrifice and cannibalism – a lot of torture".[66]

On October 25, 1991, the *Deseret News* released full information on the Mormon Church investigation, whose existence the Church had not previously admitted publicly. The *Deseret News* published a short statement by the LDS Church Public Affairs Department, stating that "satanic worship and ritualistic abuse are problems that have been around for centuries and are international in scope. While they are, numerically, not a problem of major proportions among members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, for those who may be involved they are serious".

The statement went on quoting from a previously unpublished letter of September 18, 1991 from the First Presidency to Church leaders. The letter,

65 G. Davis, "In the Name of Satan", cit., p. 16.

66 Transcripts in J. Tanner, S. Tanner, *Satanic Ritual Abuse and Mormonism*, cit., p. 45.

later called the *First Presidency's Statement on Evil Practices and the Occult* and worth quoting in full, read as follows: "We occasionally receive reports from some areas about the activities of people who engage in ritualistic practices including forms of so-called Satan worship. We express our love and concern to innocent victims who have been subjected to these practices by conspiring men and women. We are sensitive to their suffering and assure them that help is available through the mercy and love of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. We caution all members of the Church not to affiliate in any way with the occult or those mysterious powers it espouses. Such activities are among the works of darkness spoken of in the scriptures. They are designed to destroy one's faith in Christ, and will jeopardize the salvation of those who knowingly promote this wickedness. These things should not be pursued as games, be topics in Church meetings, or be delved into in private, personal conversation".[67]

The First Presidency's Statement mentioned a "conspiracy" and "Satan worship" but, unlike Bishop Pace in his confidential memorandum, did not take an explicit stand on the survivors' question. Mormon and other therapists who did believe in the survivors' stories felt, however, encouraged. On November 10, 1991, Mattis appeared on the program *Take Two* on Channel 2 in Salt Lake City. The therapist announced that at least 360 victims in the Salt Lake area had been treated for ritualistic abuse by "a total of 32 therapist". Later, appearing on the same TV station, Dr. Corydon Hammond, a research associate at the University of Utah who had been elected president of the American Society of Clinical Hypnosis and a member of the Governor's subcommittee, raised the number to 366.

Questioned by reporter Rod Decker, Mattis said that "doctors and morticians" were involved in Utah Satanist cults, and this explained why Satanists were successful with their "rather devious ways of disposing of bodies", which were never found. Mattis also repeated the story of the so-called "breeders", by then a familiar feature in the national media coverage of survivors. "There are, Mattis told the reporters, a number of people who report having given birth to babies who were never registered officially – babies who were born in home, in home deliveries, and who were then sacrificed, and those babies may never

67 *Deseret News*, 25 October 1991; and R. Clayton Brough, *Teachings of the Prophets: Statements of LDS Leaders on Contemporary Issues*, Bountiful (Utah): Horizon Press, 1993, p. 80. The only other LDS document on Satanic abuse Brough mentioned, but did not reproduce, was Bishop Pace's memorandum, and it is somewhat strange to see this devout (although unofficial) compilation of LDS documents referring its readers to the Tanners' anti-Mormon *Salt Lake City Messenger* as the only source where the memorandum could be found.

have had a legal existence. There are reports of women who have said that they have been breeders – that they have had a number of babies raised specifically for sacrifice".[68]

Although Mattis did not mention that extensive investigations by police and FBI never found the slightest evidence of "breeding" practices for Satanist cults, skeptics were not late in manifesting themselves. David Raskin, a professor of psychology at the University of Utah, told the *Salt Lake Tribune* after Mattis' *Take Two* interview that "mass hysteria" was being fomented "in the form of a non-existent evil called satanic ritualistic child abuse". Raskin criticized the Governor's Task Force as well, arguing that "State government has become the pawn of those who believe ritualistic child abuse exists despite a lack of supporting evidence". "All this, Raskin concluded, is fantasy".[69] Raskin, however, was criticized on November 18 in an editorial of the same *Tribune*, Salt Lake City's non-Mormon daily newspaper, that adopted a cautious but not skeptic position.[70]

In the meantime, a tragic parallel development had occurred in Logan, Utah. Michelle Tallmadge (1968–1991), age 23, had committed suicide after repressed memories of childhood satanic abuse had surfaced in therapy. Michelle had been disturbed by various psychiatric diseases since she was fifteen, and was diagnosed as suffering of MPD. Michelle, an active Mormon, left a note confessing that, while participating in Satanist rituals, she "saw several babies bleed to death after I was forced hand over hand to cut their throat". "Lord, Michelle wrote, I have some repenting to do. I did many horrible things. I raped little children". Ultimately, the memories were too much for Michelle to bear and she saw suicide as the only alternative.

Her parents, active Mormons themselves, told the local press that "unless we align ourselves with God, we will not win" against Satanists. "We will not win with Governor's task forces, they said. We will not win with law enforcement. We will not win with public awareness. We must align ourselves with God and pray that this evil will be made public".[71] While some therapists were quick to argue that Michelle's sad story was a confirmation that satanic ritual abuse was "widespread" in Mormon neighborhoods, skeptics raised the question whether Michelle's death could not be evidence of the dangers involved in therapy itself.

68 *Take Two*, November 10, 1991, transcript.

69 *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 13, 1991.

70 *Salt Lake Tribune*, November 18, 1991.

71 *The Cache Citizen* (Logan, Utah), December 18, 1991.

On January 18, 1992, Mormon-owned KSL TV interviewed another survivor, "Jane", who reported "human sacrifices" and other "horrific things", which had happened in a canyon near Kamas, Utah, when she was a child. Jane told the TV reporters that "her father and others raped, tortured and killed people in their worship of Satan". "I know it happened, Jane explained, because I was forced to commit murder. I committed several sacrifices myself".[72]

In March 1992, *Network*, a feminist Salt Lake City magazine, published an in-depth article and interviewed both Utah and national believers and skeptics. Overall, the point of view of the skeptics sounded more convincing, although the reporter, Gode Davis (1953–2010), claimed he had not reached a final conclusion.[73] Mattis told Davis that Satanist behavior is "as secretive as the Mafia – as strictly enforced as the Mafia" and that, although in its first sessions the Governor's Task Force heard several skeptics, in the end, to the therapist's satisfaction, believers prevailed. When the Task Force report was released in April 1992 (although dated "May 1992"), it clearly presented the point of view of believers.[74] Ritual abuse, the report claimed, comes from three different "traditions": Satanism, "a reversal of Christianity", in which "members worship the anti-Christ"; Black Magic, which is "a reversal of Witchcraft"; and "ceremonial magic", which is "a reversal of tribal religion". All three traditions are most dangerous when they take the form of "generational cults", handed down within families. They "reverse" whatever established religion they come across, including Mormonism.

Generational Satanist cults in a given area, according to the report, "will mock the predominant church group in that area, for example, doing 'Black Masses' and other distortions of the traditional service in Catholic worship". It is not surprising, the Task Force concluded, that "in predominantly Mormon areas, LDS ceremonies are copied, distorted, and sadistically profaned. Scriptures and other religious wordings are perverted. Ritual group members are subjected to experiences that mock not only [Mormon] baptism, but marriage and other ordinances. When those victims are later involved in the legitimate services of the benign religion, their programmed terror is triggered, and the baptism or the wedding becomes a nightmare". This, according to the report, constituted a specific category of "spiritual abuse", often co-existing in Utah with sexual, physical, and emotional abuse.

72 KSL, January 18, 1992, transcript in J. Tanner, S. Tanner, *Satanic Ritual Abuse and Mormonism*, cit., p. 45.

73 G. Davis, "In the Name of Satan", cit.

74 *Report of* [*Utah*] *Governor's Task Force on Ritual Abuse*, Salt Lake City: n.p., May 1992.

The subcommittee, which included two LDS general authorities, described Mormonism as a "benign religion" and the Mormon temple ceremonies as "legitimate services", in order to make it clear that members did not share the most outrageous conclusions of anti-Mormons. The authors of the report were also aware of the skeptics' growing opposition, and released a statement executed in early 1992 by sixty-six Utah therapists, reading as follows: "We, the undersigned mental health professionals, have each heard memories of ritual abuse recounted by some patients, as have therapists across the nation. We believe these patients allegations to have basis in fact. We are dismayed by accusations that therapists brainwash their patients or collude to create a mental health problem where none existed. We urge our public officials to take appropriate actions to counter ritual crime".

The crucial question of where to find evidence that survivors' stories were actually true was answered by the report listing five different elements. First, "independent identification, by victims unknown to each other, of the same perpetrators". Second, "reports of *recent* ritual abuse strikingly similar in their particulars to the abuse remembered by adult survivors whose trauma was perpetrated *decades ago*". Third, "independent detailed reports, *in many different states and in foreign countries*, of identical acts of ritual abuse". Fourth, successful prosecution of cases of child abuse, which contains elements of satanic abuse. Fifth, "perhaps the most persuasive of all, documentation from mental health professionals throughout the nation showing that *patients get well when their memories of ritual abuse are dealt with*, even patients who have not responded to years of other therapy".[75]

All five elements were not unique to Utah and had been often mentioned in the national controversy. Their selection reflected the composition of the Task Force, which included mental health and law enforcement professionals, religionists, and children rights activists, but no historians, sociologists or anthropologists. Significantly, the report's bibliography included 15 titles, only one of them written by sociologists[76] and all the remaining by either mental health professionals, including *Michelle Remembers*, survivors, or reporters.[77] Ignored altogether were works by skeptics and by academic scholars of Satanism and the occult.

For skeptics, of course, what was offered as evidence merely proved that therapists throughout the United States and internationally were reading

75 *Ibid*., p. 6, emphasis in original.

76 David Finkelhor [misspelled in the *Report*, p. 11 as "Finklehor"], Linda M. Williams, Nancy Burns, *Nursery Crimes: Sexual Abuse in Day Care*, Newbury Park (California): Sage, 1988.

77 See "Bibliography", in *Report of* [*Utah*] *Governor's Task Force on Ritual Abuse*, cit., pp. 11–12.

the same literature and conducting their hypnosis investigations in the same manner, thus predictably obtaining the same results. The report also ignored that, by 1992, another category of academics had entered the controversy: folklorists, specialized in explaining how urban legends and rumors were born and spread. To folklorists, the fact that the same narratives about satanic abuse were "strikingly similar" or "identical" throughout the nation or even the world – just as legends about a "vanishing hitchhiker" were reported identically in California, Italy, and Japan – was precisely evidence that the stories followed the typical cycle of expansion of rumors and were *not* factually true.[78]

In April 1993, *Utah Holiday* published a further article on ritual abuse in Utah, taking openly the side of the believers. The latter were, at that stage, actively engaged in an exercise of name-calling against the skeptics. Hammond reported that, perhaps as a response to the subcommittee report, in 1992 the skeptic False Memory Syndrome Foundation had established a chapter in Utah, whose membership was growing. These skeptics were, Hammond claimed, merely "clever propagandists lobbying and doing public relations for pedophiles. They engage in a classic propaganda ploy of tainted scholarship, trying to appear scientific by selectively quoting only research that appears to support their premise".[79] Hammond and his colleagues in the Governor's Task Force had however produced a selective document of their own, relying almost entirely on stories told by survivors and on the national anti-Satanist literature. Their typology of ritual abuse cults could not fail to raise eyebrows among scholars of the occult. In the subcommittee's report, a number of therapists, with the help of some lawyers and a few religious leaders, had embarked in what could only be described as amateur history and typology of the occult, ignoring the growing academic literature on the subject.

The part of the subcommittee report dealing with "black" versions of Mormon temple ceremonies seems to be taken verbatim from Bishop Pace's memo, minus the references to Mormon prophecies of "secret combinations". In fact, rather than the subcommittee borrowing from Bishop Pace, perhaps both documents had a common source. In the early 1990s, Mattis gave a number of speeches on the issue of satanic ritual abuse. In 1993, she published, through the semi-official press of the Mormon Church, a paper, co-authored with Elouise M. Bell, a professor of English at Brigham Young University and a member

78 See J.S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend*, Chicago, La Salle (Illinois): Open Court, 1993; B. Ellis, "The Devil Worshippers at the Prom: Rumor-Panic as Therapeutic Magic", cit.

79 Alf Pratte, "Too Bizarre to Believe: Ritual Abuse in Utah", *Utah Holiday*, April 1993, pp. 20–25.

of the Governor's Task Force. Bell was well known in Mormon Circles, and a former member of the General Board of the LDS Church's Young Women's Organization.

Most of Mattis and Bell's paper was hardly original, and summarized the usual arguments of the advocates of the satanic conspiracy theory. Survivors tell us, the two women explained, that in their childhood they have been "subjected to sexual activities of bizarre, deviant and extremely painful sorts" by well-organized Satanist cults. These groups routinely practice "sacrifice of animals (…); the torture and sometimes murder of babies, including in some cases the infants of young girls required to bear children specifically for sacrifice; the torture and sometimes murder of adults; and the systematic disposal of bodies".

Survivors of ritual abuse "have been programmed ('brainwashed') to dissociate and to develop multiple personalities" through a "prolonged and carefully structured mind control or programming" devised by the Satanist cults. Admittedly, no one had been convicted of any major crime based on the survivors' stories. This, however, Mattis and Bell insisted, did not mean that satanic crimes, including murders, were not committed by Satanists. Bodies had not been found because the Satanist cults "include morticians, pharmacists, and butchers. These individuals have access to techniques and equipment useful in eliminating evidence of the cult crimes". Second, "more often, those killed are infants *born and bred* within the cult for that express purpose" and "not recorded on any public records". Third, "survivors have blocked the memories of their experiences and retrieve them only in therapy". They have been astutely "*programmed* early on to tell contradictory stories" and for this reason their accounts "rarely holds up in court under the present rules of evidence": these rules, the paper implied, should perhaps be changed. Fourth, the best "cultists' protection" is "public disbelief", actively promoted by skeptic historians, mental health professionals, and sociologists, some of them perhaps hired guns or even associated with the Satanist ring.

"If solid evidence is so hard to come by, Mattis and Bell asked, how do we, in fact, know that ritual abuse truly exists? Essentially, it is the cumulative experience of many therapists across the world that has led to increased understanding of ritual abuse". Therapists have also discovered that "cult activities are often part of a multigenerational tradition. That is, particular families have been involved in ritual activities, children of successive generations being indoctrinated and programmed by parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles".

What was peculiar in the Mattis-Bell paper, otherwise representative of a larger category, was the Mormon connection. "Cult members, they reported, sometimes hold respected and even elevated positions in the churches in their

areas: in the East, they may be prominent Catholics or Episcopalians; in the South, active Baptists; and in the West, Mormons with priesthood and auxiliary callings. These respectable facades may be designed as 'fronts', thought to earn the cultists additional favor with their [satanic] god". However, the Satanist cults go beyond mere facades, since they "pervert religious rituals for their own purposes". While in Catholic communities the Satanists "do 'black masses'", "in Mormon communities, scriptures and other religious wordings may be perverted. Latter-day Saint ordinances, such as baptism, marriage, or temple ceremonies, may be mocked or distorted. When victims are later involved in the authentic services, their programmed terror is triggered, and the ordinance becomes a nightmare". Although a self-styled atheist, Mattis also believed that "LDS scriptural suggestions" are evidence that multi-generational "secret combinations" of Satanists do in fact exist.[80]

It is easy to see how the Mattis-Bell paper was very close, not only in arguments but also in its very wording, to Bishop Pace's memo, which in turn paralleled the Governor's Task Force report. Since the paper was in fact a modified version of speeches of the early 1990s, Mattis may be a likely common source for both the Mormon memo and the Task Force report. The latter document was hailed by believers as an act of courage. Skeptics called it, more crudely, "hocus pocus".[81]

What was the impact of the report? Not great, apparently. Before its official release, the independent LDS magazine *Sunstone* reported in November 1991 that "Utah Governor Norm[an Howard] Bangerter [1933–2015] suggested that the state task force on Women and Families, which included the investigation on child abuse, should disband", although he also "budgeted more money for investigators to follow up on [individual] complaints". *Sunstone* also reported that, consistently with their conspiracy theories, "some supporters of the task force publicly speculated whether the governor has been pressured by 'influential people' in the state who are satanists".[82] A spokesperson for the Catholic Diocese of Salt Lake City, on the other hand, told *Sunstone* that "no one has ever complained to the diocese's office about ritual abuse".[83]

80 Noemi P. Mattis, Elouise M. Bell, "Ritual Abuse", in Anne L. Horton, B. Kent Harrison, Barry L. Johnson (eds.), *Confronting Abuse*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1993, pp. 180–200.

81 A. Pratte, "Too Bizarre to Believe: Ritual Abuse in Utah", cit., p. 23.

82 "Leaked Bishop's Memo Spotlights LDS Ritual Satanic Sexual Abuse", *Sunstone*, vol. 15, no. 5, November 1991, p. 58.

83 *Ibid.*

The issue also divided the anti-Mormon community. When they came first in publishing Bishop Pace's memo, the Tanners had their scoop, and their obscure newsletter was mentioned by all major newspapers and TV networks in Utah. The Tanners, however, were aware that some of their friends in the Evangelical counter-cult community did not believe that survivors' stories in general were true, also because survivors had often accused respected Evangelical pastors. The Tanners, however, felt that Utah survivors, with their stories accepted at face value by senior Mormon Church officers, were simply too good an opportunity to attack and embarrass the LDS Church. They wrote that "we differ in our views concerning satanic ritual abuse" from leading national Evangelical counter-cult agencies, including the Christian Research Institute,[84] and went on with their campaign.

They also noted that references to a "multi-generational" satanic conspiracy had a particular meaning in Utah. While little was known about the ancestors of other survivors throughout the United States, when the survivors were Mormon Utahans, their ancestors could only have been the Mormon pioneers. The Tanners, thus, suggested that the remote origins of the "multi-generational" satanic rings in Mormon Country might lay in the unholy practices of early Utah polygamists, who might have indulged in marriages between brothers and sisters and other forms of incest. They quoted historical works by academics to this effect.[85]

This theory, in fact, was not unique to the Tanners. A connection between possible issues of incest among polygamous Mormon pioneers and Satanist cults exposed by survivors had been quoted in lectures by one Linda Walker, who described her profession as "genealogy researcher". Through Walker, it had found its way into the national survivors' lecture circuit and literature. Walker claimed as early as 1990, in an interview with the survivor community newsletter *Beyond Survival*, that she "could document" not only satanic "ritual abuse" but also "mind control" and "breeding" in Utah, dating back to the times of the first settlers and involving prominent Mormon pioneers, including John Taylor and possibly Brigham Young himself.

One wonders whether Walker had read the pseudo-Diana Vaughan's *Memoirs*, just translated and republished by a survivors' group in 1990, that mentioned the satanic connections of John Taylor. Walker claimed that "along with congenital diseases, multiple personality disorder is also found in greater frequency among polygamous Mormon families", a telling evidence of satanic ritual abuse. She said she had also noticed a "startling fact", that among "early

84 J. Tanner, S. Tanner, *Satanic Ritual Abuse and Mormonism*, cit., p. 24 and p. 34.

85 See *ibid.*, pp. 70–74.

Mormon patriarchs", "marriages and deaths seemed to occur in a higher-than-random ratio on three suspected occult holidays: October 31, February 2, and April 13".[86] How 19th-century Mormon elders could have access to lists of occult dates that only surfaced in the 1970s among both Wiccan groups and anti-Satanists was not explained, nor were sources quoted for the supposed statistical prevalence of MPD among polygamists.

The Tanners also quoted the criminal activities of some present-day polygamist groups in Utah and elsewhere, and mentioned that at least one contemporary polygamist leader, John W. Bryant, had been accused of officiating bizarre sexual ceremonies. They also speculated that the "second anointment", a ceremony that, for selected Mormons, followed the common temple endowment in the 19th century, might have included sexual ritual practices between husband and wife.[87] All this might have been interesting, but had little to do with Satanism. Polygamy, violent behavior in polygamist groups, the second anointing, and even incest among early Mormons are not evidence of Satanism. Far from being Satanists, most Mormon polygamist would argue that polygamy is in fact a powerful tool for fighting Satan and his minions.

One element was peculiar to the Utah Satanism scare, and made it particularly relevant. It was not surprising that anti-Mormons, including the Tanners, used accusations of Satanism to promote their own agenda and attack the LDS Church. It was not surprising that the national conflict about alleged survivors of ritual abuse between believers and skeptics reproduced itself in Utah. However, it was quite surprising that the main religious organization in Utah, the Mormon Church, at least for a while, decided to align itself with those believing that a great Satanist conspiracy threatened the United States, and released official and semi-official documents proclaiming that survivors should be believed. These documents encouraged the State authorities in Utah to take a similar stand. The Mormon Church's position was unique. Although individual religionists and members of the clergy of several denominations supported the survivors' claims, no other church ventured to take an official stand.

This peculiar Mormon attitude, however, did not last for long. In 1995, the Utah Attorney General published a new report, *Ritual Crime in the State of Utah*.[88] Although reluctant to criticize the report of 1992, the new document

86 See C. Lockwood, *Other Altars: Roots and Reality of Cultic and Satanic Ritual Abuse and Multiple Personality Disorder,* cit., pp. 118–120. Lockwood interviewed Walker in 1990, when he was the editor of *Beyond Survival.*

87 J. Tanner, S. Tanner, *Satanic Ritual Abuse and Mormonism*, cit., pp. 81–82.

88 Utah Attorney General's Office, *Ritual Crime in the State of Utah: Investigation, Analysis & A Look Forward*, Salt Lake City: Utah Attorney General's Office, 1995.

concluded that the police had not been able to ascertain even one clear case of satanic ritual abuse, although it did identify episodes of abuse of minors by schismatic polygamist groups, which, however, had nothing to do with Satanism. On abuses of minors by polygamists, the controversy would become even more animated in the 21st century, fueled by the success of the HBO's TV series on polygamy in contemporary Utah, *Big Love*. But in these incidents, again, Satanism was never mentioned. After the 1995 report, the moral panic concerning Satanism retreated to the margins of the scene in Utah, cultivated only by some anti-Mormons and by therapists who still lectured on satanic abuse to increasingly smaller audiences.

In the Mormon Church, a march backwards began in the same year 1992, with a speech by Richard G. Scott (1928–2015), one of the Church's Twelve Apostles, in the General Conference. Although Scott deplored the "tragic scars of abuse", he also cautioned against "improper therapeutic approaches", "leading questions", and "excessive probing into every minute detail of past experiences". The LDS Apostle argued that such techniques may "unwittingly trigger thoughts that are more imagination or fantasy than reality. They could lead to condemnation of another for acts that were not committed. While likely few in numbers, I know of cases where such therapy has caused great injustice to the innocent from unwittingly stimulated accusations that were later proven false. Memory, particular adult memory of childhood experience, is fallible. Remember, false accusation is also a sin".[89]

Therapists wrote letters of protest[90] and the day after his speech, a protest against Scott's talk was staged on Salt Lake City's Temple Square by ten women carrying placards.[91] Of course, protesters were not wrong in claiming that Elder Scott's remarks on the fallibility of survivors' memories contradicted Bishop Pace's statement in his memo, that these same memories were highly reliable and "as fresh as if it happened yesterday". Scott, on the other hand, had in 1992 the benefit of two more years of scholarly research that had debunked the claims of the survivors. After his speech, the Mormon Church no longer offered any institutional support to survivors and their therapists. By 1996, the great Utah Satanism scare had largely ended.

89 (Elder) Richard G. Scott, "Healing the Tragic Scars of Abuse", *Ensign*, vol. 22, no. 5, May 1992, pp. 31–33.

90 See letters by Marion B. Smith in the *Salt Lake City Tribune*'s "Public Forum", April 19, 1992; and by Robert Buck and Susan G. Aldous, *ibid.*, April 21, 1992.

91 *The Salt Lake City Tribune*, April 6, 1992.

Satan in the Kindergarten: The Pre-school Cases

In the 19th century, American nativist defense of the nation's Protestant identity targeted together Freemasons, Mormons, and Catholics.[92] All were accused of miscellaneous sexual perversions, although accusations of Satanism were almost non-existent. In the 1980s, in the context of the Satanism scare, old accusations were revived, and this time Satanism was included. Well before the very real problem of pedophilia created one of the worst crises in the history of the Catholic Church, some survivors and therapists became concerned about the fact that Catholics operated the largest network of pre-schools in the U.S. If there was a Satanist ring inside the Catholic Church, just as in the therapists' mind it existed inside the Mormon Church and Freemasonry, then thousands of children were at risk. No evidence of Catholic Satanism was found, and the scare moved to secular pre-schools. For some years, however, survivors kept mentioning Satanist rings within the Catholic Church, with the support of popular TV talk show host Geraldo Rivera.[93]

Thanks to Rivera, millions of television viewers were able to listen in 1987 to Dr. Rebecca Brown and the survivor she cured, "Elaine", who claimed without hesitation that the ultimate objective of Satanists was that of controlling the whole world.[94] Elaine claimed that Satanists had indeed infiltrate the Catholic Church, up to the highest levels. Based on Elaine's stories, Brown published a volume,[95] followed by two further books[96] and by several articles and lectures. She proclaimed that Elaine spoke with a special authority, as she was, in fact, the Devil's own wife. According to Brown, Elaine had married Satan in a Presbyterian church, but this should not be taken as evidence that Satan was Presbyterian. In fact, after the wedding Satan took Elaine on his private jet to the Vatican. Apparently, the old times when the Devil flied on his own wings

92 See D.B. Davis, "Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature", cit.

93 Rivera was also the author of the preface in J. Johnston, *The Edge of Evil: The Rise of Satanism in North America*, cit., p. XI.

94 "Geraldo", *Satanic Cults and Children*, November 19, 1987, Transcript no. 206, New York: Journal Graphics, 1988, p. 7.

95 Rebecca Brown, *He Came to Set the Captives Free*, Chino (California): Chick Publications, 1986 (2nd ed., Springdale, Pennsylvania: Whitaker House, 1992).

96 R. Brown, *Prepare for War*, Chino (California): Chick Publications, 1987 (2nd ed., Springdale, Pennsylvania: Whitaker House, 1992); R. Brown, *Becoming A Vessel of Honor*, Chino (California): Chick Publications, 1990 (2nd ed., Springdale, Pennsylvania: Whitaker House, 1992).

were gone. There, the woman was introduced to Pope Paul VI (1897–1978), who was Satan's good friend and a leader of the international satanic conspiracy.[97] Later, Elaine discovered that Satan was a polygamist and she was not his only wife.

Elaine's real name was Edna Elaine Moses, née Knost (1946–2005), and her therapist was not really called Dr. Rebecca Brown either. She had once been Dr. Ruth Bailey, and under this name she had been stripped of her license to practice medicine in the State of Indiana in 1984. She had administered to her patients, including Moses, dangerous doses of Demerol, dragged by her own "mental problems".[98] The State also accused her of threatening with a gun patients she believed were Satanists or possessed by demons. Bailey had met Moses at the Ball Memorial Hospital in Muncie, Indiana. Expelled by the hospital, she had started sharing a home in Lapel, Indiana, with Moses, while working in private practice. There, she found again Satanists on a daily basis, and tried to cure them with bizarre and dangerous remedies, until her license was finally revoked. She moved to Michigan, where she tried without success to get a new license to practice medicine. Finally, Brown and Moses were hired by California Evangelist Jack T. Chick, publisher of particularly vicious anti-Catholic and anti-Masonic comics and pamphlets, to work for him in California.

Brown was never readmitted to practice medicine in any American State, but for several years was able to earn a living as a full time anti-Satanist. Eventually, Moses left her, after Brown had married Daniel Michael Yoder, whose real name is William Joseph Stewart, in 1989. Yoder added yet another chapter to Brown's anti-Satanist saga. He claimed he was a Jew educated in secretive rabbinic schools, where he was abused and tortured by a Satanist cult that also existed within Judaism. In 1996, Yoder and Brown published a book telling this story, as well as detailing Yoder's conversion to Christianity and promoting the couple's evangelistic activities.[99] Later, reporters discovered a less glamorous past of Yoder in the world of petty crime.[100] Although Brown's national fame

97 See Mike Hertenstein, Jon Trott, *Selling Satan. The Tragic History of Mike Warnke*, Chicago: Cornerstone Press, 1993, p. 271.

98 See *ibid.*; *Indianapolis News*, March 16–18, 1984; G. Richard Fisher, Paul R. Blizard, M. Kurt Goedelman, "Drugs, Demons and Delusions", *The Quarterly Journal*, vol. 9, no. 4, October-December 1989, pp. 1 and 8–15. *The Quarterly Journal* was the organ of the Saint Louis Evangelical organization Personal Freedom Outreach.

99 R. Brown, Daniel Yoder, *Unbroken Curses: Hidden Source of Trouble in the Christian's Life*, Springdale (Pennsylvania): Whitaker House, 1996.

100 See G.R. Fisher, M.K. Goedelman, *The Curse of Curse Theology: The Return of Rebecca Brown, M.D. and the Shady Background of Daniel Yoder,* Saint Louis: Personal Freedom Outreach, 1996.

was a thing of the past, in the first decade of the 21st century, she continued working as an evangelist with her husband.

Notwithstanding the extreme variety of their tales on the great diabolical international conspiracy, with Masonic, Catholic, Mormon, and Jewish ramifications, survivors and their therapist alone would perhaps not have been capable of triggering a hunt for Satanists destined to last for at least a decade. A second wave of cases, however, came in the 1980s to confirm the survivors' stories. Survivors told they had been abused by Satanist cults as children, but they remembered the abuse some twenty to thirty years later, when verification of their stories was hardly possible. Some of their therapists started asking the question whether it would not be possible to save some children by detecting the satanic abuses while they were occurring. Cases of children who declared themselves victims of satanic abuse and cases of adults who remembered the abuses after several decades were not the same. Survivors' so-called memories usually emerged under hypnosis, and there were many reasons to believe that they were simply figments of the patients', or the therapists', imagination. Sexual abuse of children, in different contexts, is of course a very real tragedy. But was the "satanic" element in stories of abuse told by children equally believable?

Beginning in 1983, three years after *Michelle Remembers*, some children, under the guidance of therapists who had already worked with survivors, started to introduce Satanism into reports of sexual abuse. Scenes of sexual torture, human sacrifice, cannibalism, and apparitions of the Devil were described by children as routinely happening in apparently respectable places, particularly in elite preschools for the sons and daughters of the rich and powerful. One such place was the McMartin Preschool, owned by the McMartin Buckey family in Manhattan Beach, an elegant suburb of Los Angeles. This quiet preschool became the theatre in 1983 of the most famous American case of supposed satanic abuse.

In that year, Judy Johnson (1954–1986), the mother of a two-year old pupil of the McMartin Preschool, reported to the police her suspicions that her son had been sexually abused by both her estranged husband and Raymond Buckey, grandson of McMartin's founder. Although Johnson had her own psychiatric problems, the police arrested Buckey and sent a notification to all the parents of past and present pupil of McMartin, asking them to report similar incidents. The result, not hard to expect, was a mass panic, with tens and then hundreds of children – in the end, they would be 350 – claiming to have been abused by McMartin's staff and educators, including the founder, Virginia McMartin (1907–1995), and her daughter, Peggy McMartin Buckey (1926–2000).

The authorities sent the pupils to the Children's Institute International, where they were examined and interviewed by a therapist, Kee MacFarlane,

who knew the stories of survivors and believed them. Soon, stories started emerging from the children of Satanism, necrophilia, and human sacrifices to Satan. The result was the longest and most expensive trial in the whole history of the United States before 1995, when it would be overtaken by the O.J. Simpson case. The McMartin trial lasted for six years, from 1984 to 1990, with a cost for American taxpayers of over sixteen million dollars.

For all these years, the McMartin case often took the front pages of newspapers, even if gradually most of the accusations collapsed and eventually, in 1990, there remained only two defendants, Peggy McMartin Buckey and her son Raymond Buckey. Peggy was found not guilty. Prosecutors had focused on Raymond, but their efforts only produced a hung jury, a retrial, and another hung jury, until they finally gave up and all charges were dismissed. Finally, the defense theory that stories of satanic abuse had been created by therapists, who submitted children as young as three or four to endless interrogations, had prevailed.

The controversy between those who believed the McMartin teachers guilty or innocent lasted for years and never really ended.[101] The fact, however, remains that, notwithstanding years of investigation and millions of dollars spent, no evidence that a Satanist cult was operating at the McMartin Preschool ever emerged. In the meantime, the lives of teachers courts finally declared innocent were ruined forever. This was a key feature of the 1995 TV movie *Indictment*: *The McMartin Trial*, produced by Oliver Stone and directed by Mick Jackson, which clearly believed the defendants innocent.

The defeat of the prosecution in the McMartin case in 1990 was a crucial event, and marked at least the beginning of the end for the great American Satanism scare. But during the long years of the trial, with the enormous publicity that surrounded it, the case became a national and international model. Between 1983 and 1985, 270 cases of satanic abuse of children were reported in the United States and in Canada.[102] In the following five years, they became several thousand. At the beginning of 1983, a study by the American

101 See Paul Eberle, Shirley Eberle, *The Abuse of Innocence: The McMartin Preschool Trial*, Buffalo (New York): Prometheus Books, 1993; Edgar W. Butler, Hiroshi Fukurai, Jo-Ellan Dimitrius, Richard Krooth, *Anatomy of the McMartin Child Molestation Case*, Lanham (Maryland): University Press of America, 2001; Richard Beck, *We Believe the Children: A Moral Panic in the 1980s*, New York: Public Affairs, 2015.

102 See D. Finkelhor, L.M. Williams, N. Burns, *Nursery Crimes: Sexual Abuse in Day Care*, cit. See also Mary de Young, *The Day Care Ritual Abuse Moral Panic*, Jefferson (North Carolina), London; McFarland & Company, 2004.

Bar Association, reported that 27% of courts in the United States had been involved in at least one case of "satanic or ritual" sexual abuse of a minor.[103]

The fashion was also exported to England, where for some years it was taken seriously by the authorities and especially by social workers. The most sensational British cases may be attributed to the influence of lectures in 1989 by two American "experts" invited to England by anti-cult groups, Chicago policeman Robert "Jerry" Simandl and therapist Pamela Klein. However, all cases collapsed in the courts. Academics and even some mainline media ridiculed the "experts", and consequences were catastrophic for social workers: some even wondered whether their profession should continue to exist. Three regional directors of the British social services lost their jobs, due to their promotion of weird ideas concerning ritual and satanic abuse of children.[104] Although tabloids were happy to spread the Satanism scare, British common sense appear to have limited it, in comparison to United States, among the subjects of Her Majesty.

In the United States, however, at least until the end of the 1980s, the number of cases of satanic abuse constantly increased, although only a handful resulted in convictions. Advocacy organizations such as Believe the Children were created, to argue that the children reporting satanic abuse to their therapists were generally believable. These groups tried to form an alliance with the anti-cult movements. The latter, however, were very cautious. Some ended up believing that, if brainwashing was at work in these cases, it was rather by the therapists who brainwashed the children into telling fantastic stories of satanic abuse. The answer was that those who did not "believe the children" were hired guns for the Satanists and the pedophiles.

The question was, in fact, more general: should we always believe children who denounce a sexual abuse? In the United States, academics such as Elizabeth Loftus[105] and others supported both the False Memory Syndrome Foundation of Philadelphia, and other more controversial organizations such as the Institute for Psychological Therapies, founded by the Lutheran pastor

103 See Jeffrey S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend*, cit., p. 109.

104 See Gary Clapton, *The Satanic Abuse Controversy: Social Workers and the Social Work Press*, London: University of North London Press, 1993; Philip Jenkins, *Intimate Enemies: Moral Panics in Contemporary Britain*, Hawthorne (New York): Aldine de Gruyter, 1992; Jean Sybil La Fontaine, *Speak of the Devil: Tales of Satanic Abuse in Contemporary England*, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

105 See Elizabeth Loftus, Katherine Ketcham, *Witness for the Defense: The Accused, the Eyewitness, and the Expert Who Puts Memory on Trial*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991; E. Loftus, K. Ketcham, *The Myth of Repressed Memory*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.

and psychologist Ralph Underwager (1929–2003),[106] and VOCAL (Victims of Child Abuse Laws). These academics popularized the notion of "false memories", induced in children by therapists or by one of their parents, particularly in cases of divorce. Children, they argued, should not always be believed. Again, they were accused by Believe the Children and other groups to submit the abused children to a new form of the violence. Underwager and his wife Hollida Wakefield did not help their case when, in 1993, they gave an interview to the Dutch journal *Paidika*, which favors a (limited) decriminalization of pedophilia.[107] Underwager resigned from the scientific committee of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation, of which he was a member, and stated that the interview was misinterpreted and he was against any depenalization of pedophilia.[108] But the damage was done.

The general problem of true and false memories in children who accuse adults of sexual molestation should, however, be kept distinct from the specific question of "ritual" and "satanic" abuse. Whether or not we conclude that children are generally believable, the fact remains that several thousand cases of "satanic" abuse brought to the attention of the American authorities in the decade between 1983–1993 generated only minor results in terms of convictions. According to the more generous count, supplied by the anti-Satanist camp, the U.S. cases that generated a conviction were thirteen.[109]

Some of these cases were rather peculiar. Perhaps no one was more tragic than that of Olympia, Washington, where a local deputy sheriff, Paul Ingram, confessed to having abused his daughters for years in a satanic context. The case was investigated in 1993 in a series of articles, later collected in a book, by Lawrence Wright, the same journalist from the *New Yorker* who studied LaVey. After his two daughters accused him of horrific sexual abuses in a satanic context, Ingram, an Evangelical Christian, started having religious scruples, could not believe that the girls were deliberately lying, and concluded: "I can't see myself doing this, but there may be a dark side of me that I don't know about".

106 See Ralph Underwager, Hollida Wakefield, *Accusations of Child Sexual Abuse*, Springfield (Illinois): Charles C. Thomas, 1988; R. Underwager, H. Wakefield, *The Real World of Child Interrogations*, Springfield (Illinois): Charles C. Thomas, 1989. For the position of the False Memory Syndrome Foundation, see Eleanor Goldstein, Kevin Farmer, *True Stories of False Memories*, Boca Raton (Florida): Social Issues Resource Series, 1993.

107 R. Underwager, H. Wakefield, "Interview", *Paidika: A Journal of Pedophilia*, vol. 3, no. 1, Winter 1993, pp. 2–12.

108 See *FMS Foundation Newsletter*, July 3, 1993, p. 7.

109 C. Lockwood, *Other Altars: Roots and Reality of Cultic and Satanic Ritual Abuse and Multiple Personality Disorder*, cit., pp. 269–271. Some of the defendants were acquitted on appeal in the following years.

The wife and colleagues of Ingram initially sided with his daughters. However, when the girls, in a crescendo reminiscent of the Salem witch trials of 1692–1693, began to accuse their mother and their father's law enforcement colleagues as well, they changed their attitude. While the girls continued to accuse other people, only Ingram was convicted. Wright concluded that the policeman of Olympia was innocent, a tragic victim of his own scruples.[110] Sociologist Richard Ofshe had previously interviewed Ingram in jail, and had reached the same conclusions.[111] Finally, even Ingram himself retracted his confession. In September 1992, the High Court of the State of Washington refused his request for a retrial. In 1996, his son followed his sisters and claimed he had also been abused from age 4 to 12. In 2003, having served his sentence, Ingram was released.

While Ingram was most probably innocent, it is possible that some of the other defendants convicted during the Satanism scare were indeed guilty of sexual abuse of minors. However, these isolated cases are no evidence of a vast Satanist conspiracy, "multi-generational" and international. They prove, at the most, that in the dramatic and very real context of sexual abuse of children, some pedophiles *might* have used satanic paraphernalia in order to terrorize and manipulate children. There is even a more disturbing possibility. Some suggested that in in the end perhaps nature imitated art rather than vice versa. Perhaps some pedophiles got excited by reading the wild stories of satanic sexual abuse in *Michelle Remembers* and elsewhere, and tried to reproduce them. While this hypothesis has not been proved, a safer conclusion is that in most cases the spasmodic pursuit of "satanic" elements by law enforcement personnel and prosecutors in cases of child abuse made ascertaining what really happened harder rather than easier.[112]

Another negative effect of the large circulation, especially through television and movies, of stories of survivors and satanic abuse of children was

110 L. Wright, "Remembering Satan", *The New Yorker*, May 17, 1993, pp. 60–81, and May 24, 1993, pp. 57–76; L. Wright, *Remembering Satan*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994. See also J. Trott, "Satanic Panic: The Ingram Family and Other Victims of Hysteria in America", *Cornerstone*, vol. 20, no. 95, 1991, pp. 9–12.

111 Richard J. Ofshe, "Inadvertent Hypnosis During Interrogation: False Confession Due to Dissociative State, Mis-Identified Multiple Personality, and the Satanic Cult Hypothesis", *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis*, vol. 40, no. 3, July 1992, pp. 125–156.

112 See G. Clapton, *The Satanic Abuse Controversy: Social Workers and the Social Work Press*, cit.; J.S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend*, cit.; and Robert D. Hicks, *In Pursuit of Satan: The Police and the Occult*, Buffalo (New York): Prometheus Books, 1991.

the emergence of scary urban legends and moral panics. Sociologist Jeffrey S. Victor listed dozens of cases, very similar to each other, of "satanic" panics, that from rural areas of the United States spread as far as Australia and the Netherlands. Starting in 1982, the same story kept being repeated. A "satanic festival", or a "Feast of the Beast", it was said, was about to be celebrated in a city, and Satanists would sacrifice a blonde child with blue eyes or a virgin. Victor noticed that in no cases the police detected any Satanist cult, but in some rural areas "gothic" teenagers dressed in black, or simply foreigners or immigrants with a more or less "sinister" look, were beaten up by local citizens who mistook them for Satanists.[113]

In the cities, urban legends also spread, including the one, which persisted well into the 21st century, claiming that the old logo of Procter & Gamble, which included thirteen stars, had a satanic meaning. It was also repeated that the president of this company had admitted in TV he was a member of the Church of Satan. Procter & Gamble later reported that in the early 1980s, it received by mail or telephone more than a hundred-thousand requests for written explanations. It answered that the logo, created in 1872, had nothing to do with Satanism and that none of its executives had ever been remotely connected with the Church of Satan. Rumors, however, persisted, until in 1985, Procter & Gamble gave up and discontinued the use of the logo.[114]

Similar urban legends spread about other American companies, or particular houses, buildings or monuments. Both in France and the United States, rumors had it that the Louvre Pyramid, built in 1988, had been designed by Satanists and had a "satanic meaning".[115] Folklorists who specialize in urban legends later produced several valuable studies of the Satanism panics of the 1980s and beyond.[116] They insisted that the fact that the same story was repeated in different times, places, and even continents was typical of modern urban legends and was no proof of its truthfulness.[117]

113 J.S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend*, cit.

114 See Véronique Campion-Vincent, Jean-Bruno Renard, *Légendes urbaines. Rumeurs d'aujourd'hui*, Paris: Payot, 1992, pp. 297–299.

115 See *ibid.*, pp. 248–252.

116 See B. Ellis, "The Devil-Worshippers at the Prom: Rumor-Panic as Therapeutic Magic", cit.; B. Ellis, *Raising the Devil: Satanism, New Religions, and the Media*, Lexington (Kentucky): The University Press of Kentucky, 2000; B. Ellis, *Lucifer Ascending: The Occult in Folklore and Popular Culture*, Lexington (Kentucky): University Press of Kentucky, 2004.

117 See Gary Alan Fine, V. Campion-Vincent, Chip Heath (eds.), *Rumor Mills: The Social Impact of Rumor and Legend*, New York: Aldine Transaction, 2005.

Satan the Preacher: Religious Counter-Satanism

With some exceptions, such as Rebecca Brown and the Mormon leaders who participated in the Utah Satanism scare, survivors and children who reported satanic abuse were promoted by secular therapists, who did not believe in the existence of the Devil. Some therapists admitted that religious counseling could help the victims of Satanists,[118] but they insisted that believing in a widespread conspiracy of Satanists did not require believing that the Devil exists. However, books written from a religious perspective sometimes popped up in their bibliographies. One such book, and a bestseller with more than one million copies sold, was *The Satan Seller*, published in 1972 by Mike Warnke. The author would later become famous as a preacher and Christian comedian.[119]

In 1972, Warnke promoted his book by participating in the campaigns of evangelist Morris Cerullo, driving a "witch-mobile" that exhibited a collection of cups, swords, and other occult paraphernalia. Warnke reported he had already become a "Supreme Priest" of a Satanist cult while attending high school in San Bernardino, California. Warnke was a Catholic before converting to Protestantism, and the satanic ceremonies he described were inspired by the Catholic Mass and possibly by Huysmans. Or perhaps he did not read Huysmans, but simply managed to obtain materials from LaVey. Aquino later reported that one Mike Warnke asked, unsuccessfully, for a personal meeting with LaVey in San Francisco.[120] Secular therapists were interested in Warnke, because he claimed that he got in touch with secret Satanist cults that existed in the United States before 1980. This countered the skeptics' argument that nobody had heard of these cults before the publication in 1980 of *Michelle Remembers*.[121]

Warnke, in the meantime, got in trouble with an Evangelical magazine called *Cornerstone*, published by the Chicago community Jesus People USA.

118 See Daniel Ryder, *Breaking the Circle of Satanic Ritual Abuse: Recognizing and Recovering from the Hidden Trauma*, Minneapolis: CompCare Publishers, 1992.

119 Mike Warnke, with Dave Balsiger and Les Jones, *The Satan Seller*, Plainfield (New Jersey): Logos International, 1972.

120 M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, cit., p. 218.

121 See as an example D. Ryder, *Breaking the Circle of Satanic Ritual Abuse: Recognizing and Recovering from the Hidden Trauma*, cit., p. 100. Believing he was quoting an authoritative source, he wrote that Warnke, "who reports having been a satanic cult high priest before leaving the cult, not only talks about infiltration on these levels, but also says there are actually select cult members targeted to influence those in top governmental positions all over the world".

Cornerstone was an Evangelical magazine,[122] and certainly its reporters did believe in the existence of the Devil, but it had a reputation for exposing anti-Satanist frauds. In 1990, after several years of investigation, reporters Mike Hertenstein and Jon Trott were ready to reveal to the world, publishing several documents and photographs, the real story of Mike Warnke. He could not have been a Satanist in high school, they claimed. The reporters interviewed Warnke's high school girlfriend and classmates, who reported he was a nice boy whose unusual activities would not have gone unnoticed in the small school community. In his book, Warnke described himself as a longhaired rebellious youth, while photographs of the time show him with short hair, dressed impeccably with jacket and tie.

After high school, the two journalists continued, Warnke went to Vietnam and could not have operated, as he claimed, a Satanist cult in the United States. *Cornerstone* also revealed that Warnke, after his well-publicized conversion to Evangelical Christianity, was twice divorced, had several extra-marital affairs, and had used most of the funds gathered in his evangelistic campaigns to live in luxury. The final blow was the revelation that, again after he converted to Protestantism, Warnke had been ordained first as a priest and then as a Bishop in a bizarre Catholic splinter group, the Holy Orthodox Catholic Church, Eastern and Apostolic, whose leader was Richard Morrill (1941–1991).[123]

Another controversial case in the world of Evangelical counter-Satanism was that of Lauren Stratford (pseudonym of Laurel Rose Wilson, 1941–2002). In 1988, she published a successful book, *Satan's Underground*, where she told how she was raped and tortured by Satanists when she was a young girl, was forced to have sex with animals, and was photographed for the underground pornographic market. Finally, she served as a breeder, and for many years was almost continuously pregnant, producing children destined to being sacrificed by Satanists.[124] Lauren Stratford found herself scrutinized by various reporters of *Cornerstone*, including Robert "Bob" Passantino (1951–2003) and his wife Gretchen (1953–2014), both popular Evangelical counter-cultists and authors of textbook against Satanism.[125] Warnke's foe, Jon Trott, also looked into Stratford.

122 On Jesus People USA's peculiar brand of Evangelicalism, see Shawn David Young, *Gray Sabbath: Jesus People USA, Evangelical Left, and the Evolution of Christian Rock*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

123 M. Hertenstein, J. Trott, *Selling Satan. The Tragic History of Mike Warnke*, cit., p. 319. On the rise and fall of Warnke, see also John Smulo, "Mike Warnke", *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11, 2002, pp. 233–243.

124 Lauren Stratford, *Satan's Underground*, Eugene (Oregon): Harvest House Publishers, 1988.

125 See Bob [Robert] Passantino, G. Passantino, *When the Devil Dares Your Kids*, Guildford (Surrey): Eagle, 1991; B. Passantino, G. Passantino, *Satanism*, Grand Rapids (Michigan): Zondervan, 1995.

The reporters discovered that Stratford's neighbors and relatives never saw her pregnant in the years in which she claimed she had been a breeder. On the other hand, several witnesses caught her in acts of self-harm and mutilation, which later she attributed to Satanists. Stratford had also accused of sexual abuses a number of people later found to be innocent.[126] In the Stratford case, *Cornerstone*'s expose, published with the title "Satan's Sideshow", left its mark. In 1990, her publisher decided to withdraw the book from the market.[127] Warnke, meanwhile, had to admit that many of the accusations against him were true. In 1992, he asked to be "judged" by a commission of pastors in Kentucky, among which many were his friends, who blandly censored him but encouraged him to continue in his ministry.[128]

Evangelical counter-cultists found Satanist cults hidden almost everywhere, behind Freemasonry, Wicca, Mormonism, and Roman Catholicism. It is surprising that comparatively little was published in the 1990s by Evangelicals about Satanists hidden behind a "heresy" they often denounced, the New Age movement, although they certainly claimed that the New Age was just another tool of Satan. One of the reasons, although certainly not the only one, was the 1991 scandal involving Darrick Evenson. In a vaudeville irresistibly remembering Taxil, Evenson managed to sell in exactly the same period material in which he denounced New Age and Mormonism as satanic conspiracies, writing with the pseudonym of Troy Lawrence,[129] and publications signed with his real name where, presenting himself as a devout Mormon, he viciously attacked Evangelical anti-Mormons.[130]

After *Cornerstone* told his Evangelical readers that Troy Lawrence and Darrick Evenson were the same person, Evenson, like Taxil, in the end confessed to being an impostor. He declared, however, to having offered a clue to his readers by adopting "Troy" (Lawrence) as a pseudonym, an allusion to the Trojan Horse.[131] Evenson's anti-New Age and anti-Mormon career collapsed, not to mention his parallel business as a Mormon apologist, although he successively

126 G. Passantino, B. Passantino, J. Trott, "Satan's Sideshow", *Cornerstone*, vol. 18, no. 90, December 18, 1989, pp. 24–28.

127 "Satanism Book Withdrawn", *Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom of the American Library Association*, no. 39, 1990, p. 81.

128 M. Hertenstein, J. Trott, *Selling Satan. The Tragic History of Mike Warnke*, cit., pp. 390–395.

129 See Troy Lawrence, *New Age Messiah Identified: Who is the Lord Maitreya?*, Lafayette (Louisiana): Huntington House, 1991.

130 See Darrick Evenson, *The Gainsayers. A Converted Anti-Mormon Responds to Critics of the LDS Church*, Bountiful (Utah): Horizon Publishers, 1989.

131 See "Trojan Horses in Mormon Land", *Salt Lake City Messenger*, no. 79, August 1991, pp. 1–15. See also Eric Pement, "Troy Lawrence Identified", *Cornerstone*, vol. 20, no. 95, 1991, p. 16 and p. 24.

claimed he had found new Satanist cults among the Daheshists, i.e. the followers of Lebanese mystic Salim Moussa Ashi, known as Dr. Dahesh (1909–1984). Controversies between the Daheshists and Evenson continue to this day on the Internet.

Mormon Temples of Satan: The Strange Saga of Bill Schnoebelen

The story of William ("Bill") Schnoebelen is similar to Warnke's. Just like Warnke, Schnoebelen was raised as a Catholic. He was born on August 24, 1949 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. As a young man, he dabbled in occultism. He then became a teacher at the Catholic Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, and finally found his true career as a professional convert. He started to convert to anything and everything and even to competing groups at the same time: for example, to Wicca, LaVey's Church of Satan, Freemasonry, two different Catholic splinter groups, where he was ordained both as a priest and a Bishop, and finally to Mormonism in 1980.

Since the Mormons with whom Schnoebelen came in contact did not know the intricacies of small Catholic splinter groups, which should not be confused with the mainline Roman Catholic Church, they accepted Schnoebelen's claim that he had been a Roman Catholic priest at face value. These claims were included in the book published in 1983 by the Mormon press Bookcraft and edited by Stephen W. Gibson under the title *From Clergy to Convert*.[132] The following year, Schnoebelen converted again, this time from Mormonism to Protestant Christianity, and began to offer himself as a witness and speaker in Evangelical counter-Mormon circles. He insisted that, before moving from Roman Catholicism to Mormonism, he had also been a Satanist. As such, he had credentials to state that, at its highest levels, the Mormon Church was hiding a Satanist cult. In fact, the leaders of his Satanist group had suggested that Schnoebelen received the initiations of the Mormon temple as a crowning to his occult career.[133]

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132 William J. Schnoebelen, Alexandria Schnoebelen, "We Waited for Six Years", in Stephen W. Gibson (ed.), *From Clergy to Convert*, Bookcraft: Salt Lake City, 1983, pp. 67–73. Schnoebelen also falsely stated that his wife Sharon, who went under the name "Alexandria Pendragon" during her years in the occult milieu, had been a Catholic nun. On Schnoebelen, see M. Introvigne, "Quand le Diable se fait mormon. Le mormonisme comme complot diabolique: l'affaire Schnoebelen", *Politica Hermetica*, no. 6, 1992, pp. 36–54; and "The Devil Makers: Contemporary Evangelical Fundamentalist Anti-Mormonism", cit.

133 W.J. Schnoebelen, *Joseph Smith and the Temple of Doom*, Issaquah (Washington): Saints Alive in Jesus, 1986; W.J. Schnoebelen, James R. Spencer, *Mormonism's Temple of Doom*, Idaho Falls (Idaho): Triple J. Publishers, 1987.

Schnoebelen started a cottage business of anti-Satanist books and lectures, where he did not attack the Mormons only. He exposed as ultimately controlled by Satanists both Wicca[134] and Freemasonry,[135] and revealed to the world the most hidden secrets of Satanism in 1993 and 1994.[136] In the meantime, he also found Satanism within Catholicism.[137] Finally, in years when vampire movies and TV series were particularly successful, Schnoebelen confessed to having been not only a Satanist but also a vampire. The back cover of his 1993 book stated: "If Schnoebelen, crazed by blood lust and headed for murder, could be changed by Jesus Christ, ANYONE can!".

Schnoebelen, however, became famous, or notorious, mostly for his claims about the relationships between Mormonism and Satanism. These claims were not new and dated back to Brownson and the *Diable*. They were revamped by the Utah satanic abuse scare of the 1980s. Schnoebelen, however, did not only claim that satanic pedophiles operated in some Mormon communities. He insisted that the highest authorities of the Mormon Church were consciously worshipping the Devil. Those looking for Satanism should not focus on LaVey's carnival-like activities but should rather try to penetrate the secrets of the Mormon temples. That these theories might be taken seriously in some Evangelical milieus was only possible because a new type of anti-Mormonism, or more exactly counter-Mormonism, based on the accusation of Satanism, had become a significant social phenomenon before Schnoebelen became part of it.

On December 31, 1982, a film entitled *The God Makers* premiered at Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California, before an audience of 4,000 Evangelical Protestants. According to Ed Decker, an ex-Mormon who was the main producer of the film, its premiere marked the beginning of a new epoch. Decker and his associate, Dave Hunt (1926–2013), a well-known author of Christian counter-cult literature, published a book version of *The God Makers* in 1984.[138] Decker later claimed that *The God Makers* movie and book had prevented millions of conversions to the Mormon Church between 1982 and 1989, and that

134 W.J. Schnoebelen, *Wicca: Satan's Little White Lie*, Chino (California): Chick Publications, 1990.

135 W.J. Schnoebelen, *Masonry Beyond the Light*, Chino (California): Chick Publications, 1991.

136 W.J. Schnoebelen, Sharon Schnoebelen, *Lucifer Dethroned*, Chino (California): Chick Publications, 1993; W.J. Schnoebelen, S. Schnoebelen, *Blood on the Doorposts*, Chino (California): Chick Publications, 1994.

137 See W.J. Schnoebelen, *Roman Catholicism: A Biblical Critic*, Issaquah (Washington): Saints Alive in Jesus, 1990.

138 Ed Decker, Dave Hunt, *The God Makers*, Eugene (Oregon): Harvest House Publishers, 1984.

Mormon authorities had publicly admitted it. He was eventually forced to retract this extravagant claim.[139] *The God Makers*, however, was really successful in Evangelical circles. On December 13, 1992, ten years after the original film, Decker premiered in a Salt Lake City Evangelical church the sequel, *The God Makers II*. A book followed in 1993, co-authored by Decker and Caryl Matrisciana, who grew up in India and specialized in finding Satanist rituals hidden within yet another religion, Hinduism.[140]

Daniel C. Peterson, a Mormon apologist from Brigham Young University who specialized in studying anti-Mormonism, echoed Decker's claim that something new was happening when he wrote, in 1991, that "a new form of anti-Mormonism" had come on the scene. Peterson reviewed a book by one Loftes Tryk, called *The Best Kept Secrets in the Book of Mormon*.[141] He placed Tryk in a movement that he called "New Age anti-Mormonism". According to Peterson, Tryk, Decker, and other "New Age anti-Mormons" could be contrasted to "traditional" anti-Mormons such as Walter Martin (1928–1989), Wesley P. Walters (1926–1990), and Jerald and Sandra Tanner. "It is not", Peterson noted, "the old-time traditional anti-Mormonism in both its Protestant and its secular variants". The latter are "content to argue that Mormonism is untrue", either because it is a fraud or "is incompatible with the Bible". But generally

139 In January 1990, Decker erroneously attributed to Mormon Apostle M. Russell Ballard a statement that the Mormon Church experienced a three million shortfall from projected conversions primarily because of the film (*Saints Alive in Jesus Newsletter*, January 1990). The speech referred to by Decker, which Ballard delivered at Brigham Young University on November 14, 1989, mentioned nothing about a "shortfall". Instead, it celebrated the continuing growth of the church notwithstanding the opposition of "a band of enemies". Ballard included the film *The God Makers* among his examples. Decker later admitted in his newsletter in July 1990, under the title "We Stand Corrected", that he had "misunderstood" the meaning of Ballard's speech (*Saints Alive in Jesus Newsletter*, July 1990). The claim that *The God Makers* had prevented the conversion of millions to Mormonism is still repeated today in anti-Mormon circles.

140 E. Decker, Caryl Matrisciana, *The God Makers II,* Eugene (Oregon): Harvest House Publishers, 1993.

141 Daniel C. Peterson, "A Modern 'Malleus maleficarum'", *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. III, 1991, pp. 231–60. See Loftes Tryk, *The Best Kept Secrets in the Book of Mormon*, Redondo Beach (California): Jacob's Well Foundation, 1988. In 1997, one Scott Spendlove, who had been a member of the same Mormon community in Santa Paula, California, where Tryk was active, sent a mail to Peterson claiming that Tryk had been arrested for sexual abuse and had actually written his book in jail. Spendlove also confirmed that "Loftes Tryk" was his real name, as Tryk had already written to me in a personal correspondence. Spendlove's letter is posted at <http://www.shields-research.org/Critics/Trykback.htm>, last accessed on August 14, 2015.

traditional anti-Mormons have insisted that "Joseph Smith's environment and his (wicked or pathological) character, perhaps assisted by a co-conspirator or two, are enough to account for Mormonism with no residue left over".

"New Age anti-Mormonism", according to Peterson, "is quite different". It "admits the presence of the supernatural in the founding events of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and is quite willing to acknowledge continuous supernatural influence in the life of the [Mormon] Church today". However, "unlike faithful Latter-day Saints, New Age anti-Mormons see the supernatural agents involved in the founding and progress of the Church as demonic, occultic, diabolical, luciferian", in one word, inspired by the Devil and his minions. "Obsessed with demons", they offer "a mirror image, a thoroughgoing transvaluation of the views of the Latter-day Saints". Building on his claims about something "new" being at work in anti-Mormon circles, Peterson contended that Tryk "was genuinely original – and a spectacular illustration of the perils of innovation". After all, "even in anti-Mormonism, tradition may well have a legitimate place".[142]

Satan's possible involvement in Mormonism was not totally absent, but was only mentioned occasionally by those who appeared to be the leaders of the Christian counter-Mormon movement in the 1960s and 1970s. Although these activists were usually lacking in scholarly education, they were anxious to be taken seriously by at least a portion of the scholarly community and by the secular anti-cult movement. An insistence on Satan would certainly not have helped them achieve this goal. Additionally, the religious counter-cult movement traditionally insisted that an unhealthy and exaggerated interest in Satan was typical of the "cults" themselves; hence the necessity to be careful, to avoid being accused of the same mistake.

In the late 1980s, however, a different register of language became more prominent both in the Christian counter-cult discourse in general and in counter-Mormonism in particular. Decker sounded very different from traditional counter-Mormons. According to *The God Makers*, there existed in Mormonism "something more sinister (…) than even most ex-Mormons suspect". While "most critics of Mormonism regard Joseph Smith as a fraud who deliberately deceived his followers into joining a church of his own making, and whose doctrines and rituals were borrowed from Freemasonry and other pagan religions, and embellished by his vivid imagination to suit his giant ego", Decker regarded these classic anti-Mormon theories as only "partially correct". Rather, he insisted, "a careful investigation indicates that Joseph Smith was in touch with a superhuman source of revelation and power that has been the

142 D.C. Peterson, "A Modern 'Malleus maleficarum'", cit., p. 10 and p. 55.

common inspiration behind all pagan religions down through history". This "superhuman source" was Satan.[143]

The opposition between what Peterson called "traditional" and the new, "New Age" Christian counter-Mormonism was not only theoretical. Although the two camps had initially co-operated, eventually the "traditional" camp started a campaign to discredit Decker. Sandra Tanner had been featured in the movie version of *The God Makers*, and in the book version was described with her husband as "former Mormons who have established an international reputation for their impeccably accurate and thorough research".[144] By the time the book was released, however, the Tanners were already criticizing *The God Makers* because of its overemphasis on Satan's role in Mormonism. The two brands of counter-Mormonism were slowly parting company.

In fact, by the time their book was published, Decker and some of his friends were already attracted to even more extreme counter-Mormons such as Tom Kellie. Another ex-Mormon, Kellie claimed he had been "ordained to be an apostle in the Church", but for some reasons was finally not "allowed in the Council of the Twelve [Apostles]". He claimed he was also "ordained to be a God". Kellie insisted that, in the Mormon Church's highest levels, "all those who were ordained to the Godhead had the satanic number '666' written on their foreheads in Roman numerals". If this was not enough, Kellie also claimed that "the wives of the Mormon apostles were compelled to submit to a special sexual type of operation" and that "it would 'blow the minds' of non-Mormon doctors if they could examine the wife of an apostle". He also "strongly implied that he had the original metal plates of the *Book of Mormon*, which he had stolen from the Mormon Church". Although Decker later realized that Kellie "was either a deceiver or not working with a full deck", he used him for a number of months as an authoritative witness of wild, secret Mormon practices.[145]

Decker was later involved in a number of other controversies, including discussions that centered on his claim, certainly false by any linguistic or philological standard, that the words "Pay Lay Ale" in the Mormon temple ceremony meant "Wonderful Lucifer" in Hebrew language. He also claimed that an alleged prophecy by Israeli rabbis existed, which taught that the Great Salt

143 E. Decker, D. Hunt, *The God Makers*, cit., pp. 20–21.

144 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

145 See J. Tanner, S. Tanner, *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*, 2nd ed., Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1988, pp. 9–17. Sandra Tanner kindly allowed me to access her collection of Kellie and Decker audio tapes.

Lake would submerge Salt Lake City if Brigham Young University did not abandon the projects for opening a BYU Jerusalem Center in Israel.[146]

In 1986, Decker met Schnoebelen, and reprinted the ex-Catholic's pamphlet *Joseph Smith and the Temple of Doom*.[147] The title came from the movie *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, released two years before. James R. Spencer, pastor of Shiloh Christian Center in Idaho Falls, Idaho, and publisher of the counter-Mormon newsletter *Through the Maze*, was particularly enthusiastic about Schnoebelen's text. Before meeting Schnoebelen, Spencer was already teaching that the God of Mormonism was Satan and that Mormons celebrates Satan in their temple ceremony. According to Spencer, Mormonism was in good company with Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and Zoroastrianism, that also worshipped Satan and whose roots were "in Hell". He believed "as surely as I believe that Jesus came in the flesh [that] the Devil has spawned false religion from Babylon to Salt Lake City".[148]

In 1987, Spencer and Schnoebelen published a book together, entitled (again) *Mormonism's Temple of Doom*. In the book, Spencer introduced Schnoebelen as a "former witch, Catholic priest, Mason and Mormon", thus neglecting half a dozen other memberships he acquired during his conversion career. Schnoebelen then attempted to build his case for the satanic nature of Mormonism, starting from the well-known theory that the Mormon temple ceremony had its origins in Freemasonry. He took for granted that Freemasonry was in itself wholly satanic and concluded that Mormons were not less "demonized" than Freemasons were. He also claimed that the rituals of both Mormonism and Freemasonry are identical to those found in Wicca, and that some of these rituals are devised to sexually excite both men and women. For example, Schnoebelen maintained that the marks on the Mormon temple garments "are held together by a subtle occult web of sexual energy, which is activated by pressure from the two highest grips in the LDS Temple endowment".[149] While the connection between early Mormon temple rituals and Freemasonry has been recognized by scholars,[150] the parallels with Wicca and Satanism were invented by Schnoebelen.

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146 *Ibid.* Decker clarified that, rather than on his own linguistic skills, for the Satanic meaning of "Pay Lay Ale" he relied on a visionary experience of his friend Dolly Sackett.

147 W.J. Schnoebelen, *Joseph Smith and the Temple of Doom*, Salt Lake City: Aletheia, 1985.

148 See Spencer's newsletter, *Through the Maze,* no. 19, reproduced in the documentary part of E. Decker, W.J. Schnoebelen, *The Lucifer-God Doctrine: Shadow or Reality?*, Issaquah (Washington): Saints Alive in Jesus, 1987.

149 W.J. Schnoebelen, J.R. Spencer, *Mormonism's Temple of Doom*, cit., p. 30.

150 The most comprehensive treatment of the issue is in the book by Michael W. Homer, *Joseph's Temples: The Dynamic Relationship between Freemasonry and Mormonism*, cit.

As was usual in this milieu, if *Mormonism's Temple of Doom* was Schnoebelen's public statement, he also propagated private teachings that were still more astonishing. Among the twelve Apostles of the Mormon Church at that time, and until 2007, there was James E. Faust (1920–2007), who had been a well-known lawyer in Salt Lake City before becoming an Apostle. The last name of the Apostle, the same of the famous Doctor Faust who sold his soul to the Devil in the German legend and became famous through the poem by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), represented an irresistible temptation for Schnoebelen. He claimed that Apostle Faust received him and his wife Alexandria and confessed that the god worshipped in the Mormon temple was Lucifer.[151] In 1993, Schnoebelen confirmed the interview with the Apostle and added the further detail that, recognizing in him a fellow Satanist, Faust suggested that the ex-Catholic move to Salt Lake City to become a Mormon general authority.[152]

Schnoebelen also claimed in 1987 that the architecture of the Mormon temples, in particular "the trapezoidal shape" of the spires on the Salt Lake City temple, "draw demons like flypaper": "the Salt Lake Temple is, in fact, a perfectly designed habitation for devils".[153] Not to be outdone, Decker wrote during the same year that the Temple's spires really "represent an upside down nail, pointing defiantly toward heaven – as if to impale the Lord Jesus anew when He comes in the clouds of glory!".[154]

At this point, the "traditional" counter-Mormon community said enough is enough. Wesley Walters prepared a critical reply to Schnoebelen and Decker's ideas on Mormon temple architecture.[155] The strongest reaction was by the Tanners. In 1987, they published a small book, *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*, in which they refuted the idea that Mormonism was Satanism in disguise and that Satan was worshipped in Mormon ceremonies.[156] Various attempts to reconcile the two sides for the sake of the common counter-Mormon battle, including through an "arbitration" by Walter Martin, did not succeed. Decker and Schnoebelen published a strong anti-Tanner rebuttal under the title *The*

151 According to J. Tanner, S. Tanner, *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*, cit., p. 3, Schnoebelen first told this story at the Capstone Conference, a well-known counter-Mormon gathering, on July 25, 1987.

152 W.J. Schnoebelen, S. Schnoebelen, *Lucifer Dethroned*, cit., p. 305.

153 This claim was made at the 1987 Capstone Conference. It is mentioned in J. Tanner, S. Tanner, *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*, cit., p. 3. I had the opportunity to watch a video of Schnoebelen's 1987 speech in Sandra Tanner's Salt Lake City office.

154 See *Saints Alive Journal,* Spring 1987.

155 Wesley P. Walters, *A Habitation of Devils?*, Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1987.

156 J. Tanner, S. Tanner, *The Lucifer-God Doctrine*, cit.

Lucifer-God Doctrine: Shadow or Reality?.[157] The title tried to make fun of the Tanners' most well-known book, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?*.[158]

The Tanners, who were persistent if not always scholarly investigators, published a second enlarged edition of *The Lucifer-God Doctrine* in 1988, in which they exposed some previously unknown skeletons in Schnoebelen's closet. They conclusively demonstrated that he had never been a Roman Catholic priest and that he had associated with some questionable characters in the world of small Catholic splinter groups and the so-called "Wandering Bishops". The Tanners also noted that similarities in doctrines and rituals between Mormonism and some small contemporary magical groups was evidence that the magical movements borrowed from Mormonism rather than vice versa.

The Tanners' investigation of Schnoebelen was fairly complete, but some details were missing. One such detail concerned the circumstances of Schnoebelen's consecration as a Bishop. Schnoebelen had never mentioned the name of the Bishop who consecrated him, and when he was interviewed by the Tanners, he claimed that he had lost his certificate. The lost document was found by me, while I was working at my articles on Schnoebelen. It shows that Schnoebelen, under the name of Christopher P. Syn – he had changed his name during his period in the Church of Satan to honor, as he said, *sin* –, was consecrated as a "gnostic and theurgic Bishop" by Michael Bertiaux in Chicago on July 23, 1977.[159] Bertiaux is a well-known figure in the international network of post-Crowleyan groups, and was at that time the leader of a Gnostic church known as Ecclesia Gnostica Spiritualis. Under the pseudonym of "Aquarius", Bertiaux was mentioned by Schnoebelen in his 1993 book *Lucifer Dethroned* as "certainly the oddest man I have ever met, and possibly the most dangerous".[160]

Incidentally, Bertiaux was interested in the activities of William Conway (1865–1969), a strange character who provided a link between the Mormon splinter groups that still practiced polygamy and the magical/occult community. Conway preached a strange mix of occultism and old-style polygamist Mormonism, spiced with the doctrine of reincarnation.[161] It is not probable

157 E. Decker, W.J. Schnoebelen, *The Lucifer-God Doctrine: Shadow or Reality*?, cit.

158 J. Tanner, S. Tanner, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?*, rev. ed., Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1982.

159 Certificate of consecration of Christophe [sic] P. Syn, Chicago, July 23, 1977, personal archives of Michael Bertiaux, Chicago.

160 W.J. Schnoebelen, S. Schnoebelen, *Lucifer Dethroned*, cit., p. 75.

161 On Conway, see Steven L. Shields, *Divergent Paths of the Restoration: A History of the Latter Day Saint Movement*, 4th ed., Los Angeles: Restoration Research, 1990, pp. 165–166. The Tanners did meet Conway, and later wrote that "it is possible also that the [Mormon]

that Schnoebelen met him when he was part of Bertiaux's group, since Conway died, age 104, when Schnoebelen was twenty years old. But probably Bertiaux mentioned Conway to Schnoebelen, who was thus exposed to a fringe version of Mormonism well before he met the Mormon missionaries who converted him in 1980. Both Conway and Bertiaux were members of branches of the O.T.O., and ideas about sexual magic coming from the O.T.O. occasionally popped up in Schnoebelen's books and were attributed to different groups such as the Mormons, Wicca, or Freemasonry.[162]

Decker's and Schnoebelen's reaction to the Tanners' exposé was fairly typical. In 1990, they circulated a report prepared by Blaine and Randy Hunsaker and Donald and Gwenda Meyer, all counter-Mormons of the Decker camp, under the title "The Tanner Problem".[163] The report summarized the controversy and offered two alternative or complementary explanations of the Tanners' attitude. First, "there has been information from several high level LDS sources that the LDS Church has supplied information to the Tanners for years to provide a controlled, benign criticism of the Church". "The evidence is mounting, and it would seem that the Tanners have indeed been used by the LDS Church". Of course, no Mormons would recognize the Tanners' criticism as "controlled" and "benign", but for Decker's friends "benign" meant not exposing Mormonism as a form of Satanism.

Another explanation was "discovered" by Schnoebelen, Spencer, and Blaine Hunsaker during a meeting with the Tanners in Salt Lake City. According to the report, Jerald Tanner during the meeting "raised up, his body shook" and he spoke "in a different sounding voice"; his "eyes were fixed and piercing". The reaction of the authors of the report was predictable: "We looked at one another, recognizing what this was – a demonic manifestation. We offered a ministry

church's reputation for promoting polygamy during the 19th century might catch the attention of those in the occult who have radical views on sexual behaviour. About thirty years ago we encountered an occultist by the name of William C. Conway who was trying to combine the teachings of Mormonism with those of Druids. He believed in Joseph Smith and accepted the Mormon Fundamentalist doctrine that polygamy should still be practiced, but combined these beliefs with the teaching of reincarnation" (J. Tanner, S. Tanner, "Ritualistic Child Abuse and the Mormon Church", cit., p. 13). The Tanners, however, failed to notice the possible connection between Conway and Schnoebelen through Bertiaux.

162 On the Conway-Bertiaux-Schnoebelen connection, see P.-R. König, "Das OTO-Phänomen [13]: Per Aftera [sic] ad Astra", *AHA*, no. 4, January 1992, pp. 4–11.

163 Blaine Hunsaker, Randy Hunsaker, Donald Meyer, Gwenda Meyer, "The Tanner Problem", typescript, July 16, 1990.

to the Tanners to break this spiritual bondage, but they refused".[164] "We asked", the report continued, "if they [the Tanners, who were converted ex-Mormons] had ever broken the generational ties to Mormonism and they said no, they did not believe in it, and refused any kind of ministry. We went away very saddened and discouraged".[165] We know from the reply issued by the Tanners in 1991 that the Hunsakers actually recommended that they see an exorcist.[166] The message was clear: whoever opposed the idea that Mormonism was a form of Satan-worship was, if not a Satanist, at least a victim of demonic possession.

Loftes Tryk also entered the controversy, and wrote that Jerald Tanner was "a Mormon double agent, an apologist, another fake".[167] Tryk, however, regarded Decker himself as too timid in promoting the idea that high level Mormons consciously worshipped Satan. Being a particularly suspicious fellow, Tryk even suspected that "Ed Decker has been in collusion with the Tanners". After all, "if Mormonism is guided by Satan there would be no plan too elaborate in order to cover up facts".[168] Later, Tryk reconciled with Decker. However, he maintained his suspicions against whomever may "contain, redirect, or moderate investigations into the satanic nature of Mormonism" and "lead Mormonism's opponents on a merry chase" after such obviously irrelevant arguments as whether Joseph Smith "plagiarized from books of contemporary authors when writing the *Book of Mormon*". This was not really interesting if one, like Tryk, believed that the real author of the Book of Mormon was Satan, not Joseph Smith, "that Mormonism is so insidious and such a diabolical plot, that it is actually a form of devil worship, that the head ringleader behind the scenes is Beelzebub, himself, Satan".[169]

The feud went on for many years, at least until Jerald Tanner's death in 2006. Finally, as one might have expected from the beginning, Taxil, the *Diable* and Diana Vaughan came back with a vengeance. In the early 1990s, Schnoebelen

164 *Ibid.*

165 *Ibid.*

166 J. Tanner, S. Tanner, *Serious Chargers Against the Tanners*, Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1991.

167 L. Tryk, "Opposition in All Things", *The Jacob's Well Report*, Spring 1989, pp. 7–8.

168 Tryk's "Opposition in All Things" was circulated initially in an unpublished manuscript version (quoted in J. Tanner, S. Tanner, *Serious Charges Against the Tanners*, cit., p. 3). The anti-Decker reference appears to have been deleted from the version published by Tryk in *The Jacob's Well Report*, Spring 1989.

169 *The Jacob's Well Report*, Spring 1989, pp. 5–9. For the subsequent evolution of Tryk's anti-Mormonism, see Louis Midgley, "Playing with Half a Decker: The Countercult Religious Tradition Confronts the Book of Mormon", *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 5, 1993, pp. 116–71.

started claiming that all satanic activities, in their various Masonic, Wiccan, and Mormon ramifications were ultimately controlled by a secretive group, the Palladists. The Tanners, with a little help from the author of this book, pointed out that Schnoebelen was simply recycling Taxil. In 1993, Schnoebelen replied that Palladism was not an invention of Taxil. In fact, it still existed in Chicago and he had been duly initiated into it. He even produced a certificate of initiation into the Order of Palladium signed by one "D. DePaul".[170]

It appears that "D. DePaul" really existed. According to information I managed to obtain from Bertiaux, who had been Schnoebelen's occult mentor in Chicago, DePaul was "a real person", a "Roman Catholic from an orphan home". When DePaul sought Bertiaux's help to establish a new Satanist order, the Chicago occultist, half-jocularly, suggested that "he make contact astrally with the 19th-century Satanist movement in France, the Palladium. He [DePaul] believed that Diana Vaughan was a real spirit trying to contact him. He also stated that she came to him and directed him in setting up a mystical society that would continue the work of the Palladium, of which he was chief". In the 1980s, DePaul moved from Chicago to Georgia and Bertiaux "lost contact with him".[171] Accordingly, it was not impossible that Schnoebelen had been initiated in an organization established by Diana Vaughan. What he failed to explain was that it was the *spirit* of Diana Vaughan, channeled by DePaul, who had founded the Chicago Palladium in the 1970s. Why Diana, having converted to Catholicism, should now bother from Heaven, unless she was in Hell, to contact mediums in Illinois to establish Satanist cults remained unclear.

One may question whether characters of this sort are worthy of scholarly investigation. The question, however, is not whether these ideas deserve to be taken seriously, but whether they were taken seriously by social movements of some significance. Although the Evangelical counter-Mormon movement is not as large as it claims to be, it is also not totally insignificant, and its literature enjoys a large circulation. *The God Makers* and Schnoebelen's books remain in print, and many Evangelicals still believe their claims to be literally true.

Signs and Wonders: Satanism and Spiritual Warfare

Authors such as Warnke, Stratford, and Schnoebelen had their opponents, but also enjoyed a real support within a larger Evangelical counter-cult community. As late as 1989, Evangelical counter-cultist Johanna Michaelsen offered

170 W. Schnoebelen, S. Schnoebelen, *Lucifer Dethroned*, cit., p. 205.

171 Letter by Michael Bertiaux to the author, February 12, 1994.

these suggestions to the parents of a young boy interested in the occult: "Tell him about Lauren Stratford and what Satanists did to her. Give him *Satan's Underground* and Mike Warnke's *The Satan Seller* and encourage him to read these books".[172] In order to understand how it was possible for this lunatic fringe of counter-cultism to be taken seriously, we need to examine the broader context of the spiritual warfare movement.[173]

In the world of secular psychotherapy, the frame of reference of survivors was constituted by theories on dissociative disorders. In the Evangelical world, the context was a theology describing a war between humanity and Satan, known as the theology of spiritual warfare. The origins of this new theology, which had of course a prehistory, date back to the academic year 1981–82, when Course MC510, with the name *Signs and Wonders*, was taught at Pasadena's Fuller Theological Seminary.[174] In Course MC510, professors C. Peter Wagner and John Wimber (1934–1997), two experts of missionary campaigns, taught their "power evangelism". It was a strategy that presented the Christian message as persuasive because of the "powers" manifested in the believers: healing, miracles, and the capacity to exorcize demons, who were responsible for the majority of evils in this world.[175]

Wimber and Wagner agreed with the Protestant tradition that rejected the Catholic notion of diabolical possession as "non-biblical". Demons, they confirmed, cannot completely "possess" a human being. However, Christians as well as non-Christians, they argued, can be "demonized": they will not behave like the victims of possession described in Catholic literature, but will be effectively controlled by Satan. Without too many spectacular manifestations, the Devil will systematically control the fundamental choices of their life and will, with different degrees of awareness and personal responsibility on their part, make them his agents in the world.[176] Those "demonized" may or may not

172 Johanna Michaelsen, *Like Lambs to the Slaughter*, Eugene (Oregon): Harvest House Publishers, 1989, p. 274. The reference was maintained unaltered in the second edition of the book, of 1990.

173 For a general overview, see Sean McCloud, *American Possessions: Fighting Demons in the Contemporary United States*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

174 On the leading role of the Fuller Theological Seminary in the American Evangelical world, see George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism*, Grand Rapids (Michigan): William B. Eerdmans, 1987.

175 See John Wimber, with Kevin Springer, *Power Evangelism*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1986.

176 See J. Wimber, with K. Springer, *Power Healing*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. On Protestant theology and demonic possession, see John Warwick Montgomery (ed.),

join a Satanist cult, but should be considered as Satanists in the broader sense of the word.

History thus becomes a "war", a "spiritual warfare", fought primarily by angels and demons, who very much intervene in human affairs, but at the same time by "demonized" Satanists and those who detect and fight them. Even angels, in their struggle with demons, may benefit from a human "prayer cover", while the multiplication of sin would strengthen the demonic side. The bad guys may convert, but they need to be liberated from "demonization" through what in this Protestant context was called deliverance rather than exorcism. The "demonized" person does not stop being loved by Jesus Christ and can always be snatched from the Adversary, who would thus be deprived of a precious agent.[177]

The theology of spiritual warfare spread quickly outside of the academic context and generated a cottage industry of seminars, books, and TV programs. Some claimed that it was very important to know the names, which went from "Terror" to "Mormonism", of the different types of demons in order to fight them with efficiency. Every demon had his own specialization and should be fought with an appropriate strategy.[178] One of the early spiritual warfare Web sites, which is still in operation, www.demonbuster.com, identified demons called "Easter Bunny", "Santa Claus", and "Scientology". Later, they also identified the culprits of many frequent technological incidents in a couple of twin demons called "Boyce" and "Boice", not to be confused with each other: "BOYCE and BOICE are two demons that interfere with any electronic equipment, i.e., phone, computer, printer, automobile, etc. If something malfunctions, command these two demons to leave your equipment, in the name of Jesus. We get many emails saying this worked. If it does not work, demons are not causing the problem".[179]

Demon Possession: A Medical, Historical, Anthropological and Theological Symposium, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1976.

177 See C. Peter Wagner, *Warfare Prayer*, Ventura (California): Regal, 1992; C.P. Wagner, Douglas F. Pennoyer (eds.), *Wrestling with Dark Angels*, 2nd ed., Tunbridge Wells: Monarch, 1992; and Ed Murphy, *The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992.

178 See Frank Davis Hammond [1921–2005], *Demons and Deliverance*, Chichester; New Vine Press, 1991; and a text published before the Fuller course by F.D. Hammond, Ida Mae Hammond [1925–1997], *Pigs in the Parlor: A Practical Guide to Deliverance*, Kirkwood (Missouri): Impact Books, 1973. Spiritual warfare and deliverance practices spread also into Europe, inter alia through Italian Pentecostal evangelist Giovambattista Racioppi (1919–2010). See his book *Nel mio nome cacceranno i demoni*, 2nd ed., Marchirolo (Varese): Uomini Nuovi, 1992.

179 See <www.demonbusting.com>, last accessed on July 15, 2015.

It was also affirmed that particular demons were busy with "demonizing" not only people but also buildings, cities, nations, and organizations. These "territorial" demons should also be banished with appropriate techniques,[180] including spiritual housecleaning and spiritual mapping. While spiritual housecleaning exorcizes objects and homes inhabited by demons, spiritual mappings identifies neighborhoods, cities and entire countries as infested by devils and populated by Satanists.[181] Finally, revisiting under a new light the doctrine of predestination, but taking into account at the same time survivors' accounts about Satanism transmitted along family lines, it was also claimed that demonization could be "generational". Parents, especially when they practiced occultism and Satanism, could automatically transmit demonization to their children through generation.[182]

Spiritual warfare was described as including three levels: ground (delivering individuals), occult (fighting non-Evangelical religions and organizations, including Freemasonry and Satanism), and strategic (fighting "territorial spirits" who control entire countries or cultures).[183] Strategic spiritual warfare verged dangerously on racism, when it was claimed that Native American and African gods, who came into the Americas with the African slaves, were actually demons. However, spiritual warfare theologians tried to balance these statements by claiming that the evils of slavery and the injustices perpetrated against Native Americans also attracted demons. In spiritual warfare narratives, Native Americans served "two complementary roles". On the one hand, their spirits and gods were regarded as part of the "demonic hordes". On the other, it was claimed that "the exploitation and violence perpetrated by white European colonizers has also resulted in demonic presence".[184]

A similar narrative was proposed about African Americans and was also used to explain the alleged disappearance of ships in the Atlantic's so called Bermuda Triangle. Wagner himself endorsed the story of a missionary, Kenneth McAll (1910–2001), who claimed to have been himself in trouble in

180 See Noel Gibson [1922–1997], Phyl Gibson [1918–2013], *Evicting Demonic Squatters and Breaking Bondages*, Drummoyne (Australia): Freedom in Christ Ministries Trust, 1987; C.P. Wagner (ed.), *Territorial Spirits: Insights on Strategic-Level Spiritual Warfare*, Chichester: Sovereign World Limited, 1991.

181 For the distinction, see S. McCloud, *American Possessions: Fighting Demons in the Contemporary United States*, cit., p. 10. For a scholarly discussion of spiritual mapping, see René Holvast, *Spiritual Mapping in United States and Argentina, 1989–2005: Geography of Fear*, Boston, Leiden: Brill, 2009.

182 See Marilyn Hickey, *Break the Generation Curse*, Denver: Marilyn Hickey Ministries, 1988.

183 See S. McCloud, *American Possessions: Fighting Demons in the Contemporary United States*, cit., p. 21.

184 *Ibid.*, pp. 57–58.

the Bermuda Triangle. McAll claimed to have discovered that slave traders had thrown overboard in the Bermuda Triangle some two million African slaves in order to collect insurance. These slaves prayed, to no effect, to their gods, who were in fact demons. "The combination of the slave traders' sins and the slaves' pagan religion" "invited" demons to take possession of the Bermuda Triangle as territorial spirits. Fortunately, in 1977, McAll performed a Jubilee Eucharist in Bermuda, "released" the souls of the assassinated slaves, and exorcized the demons. In spiritual warfare folklore, it is maintained that disappearances and other phenomena in the Bermuda Triangle, which were caused by demons, ceased altogether after 1977.[185]

Native populations and African Americans are also criticized for having reportedly entered into pacts with territorial demons, whose consequences are still felt today. George Otis, one of the founders of spiritual mapping, claimed that the legacy of pacts entered into with demons centuries ago plays a role in maintaining alcoholism as a serious plague among Native Americans in Canada. In 2010, American televangelist and presidential candidate Pat Robertson caused an international controversy by claiming that the earthquake in Haiti was a consequence of a pact the African American country founders made with Satan in 1804.[186]

In the 1990s, both non-Pentecostal[187] and Pentecostal theologians[188] criticized the theology of spiritual warfare for its excessive insistence on the Devil, raising doubts that a Christian can really be demonized. On the other hand, many Pentecostal communities adopted the theology with enthusiasm. Those who were engaged in an ecumenical dialogue with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal also transmitted the theology of spiritual warfare to a number of Catholic groups. Serious efforts were made for translating into terms acceptable to Catholics concepts such as demonization, territorial demons, and the possibility of being demonized from birth through generational ties.[189]

185 *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59.

186 *Ibid.*, p. 102.

187 See for example Michael G. Moriarty, *The New Charismatics: A Concerned Voice Responds to Dangerous New Trends*, Grand Rapids (Michigan): Zondervan, 1992. For a reply to these critics, see Charles E. Hummel, *Fire in the Fireplace: Charismatic Renewal in the Nineties*, 2nd ed., Downers Grove (Illinois): InterVarsity Press, 1993.

188 See Thomas D. Pratt, "The Need to Dialogue: A Review of the Debate on Signs, Wonders, Miracles and Spiritual Warfare in the Literature of the Third Wave Movement", *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, Spring 1991, pp. 7–32; Robert A. Guelich, "Spiritual Warfare: Jesus, Paul and Peretti", *ibid.*, pp. 33–64.

189 See Matthew Linn, Dennis Linn, *Deliverance Prayer: Experiential, Psychological and Theological Approaches*, New York: Paulist Press, 1981.

However, not everything went smoothly in the dialogue on demonization between charismatic Catholics and Pentecostal Protestants. The Devil, so to speak, put his tail in it. A rather painful incident was connected to the theology of territorial demons. In 1996, Wagner went to Turkey, following certain prophetic communications received by his collaborators. He was convinced that the goddess Diana, with whom Saint Paul clashed in *Acts* 19, was in fact a territorial demon of the highest and most dangerous rank. Diana, Wagner came to believe, was the Greek name for the "Queen of the Sky", or the "Queen of Heaven", the first territorial demon and the most direct collaborator of Satan. In another incarnation, as the "Moon Goddess", the Queen of the Skies was also, according to Wagner, "at the spiritual roots of Islam".[190] Defeated by Saint Paul in her incarnation as Diana, the Queen of the Skies immediately tried again to seduce Christians by introducing herself as "a counterfeit Mary". While the real mother of Jesus remained in Heaven, the demon once knows as Diana, from the first centuries, appeared to gullible Christians making them believe she was the Virgin Mary.[191]

The "Mary worship" that many Protestants traditionally reproached to Catholics became in Wagner's theology much more than a theological mistake. It was the adoration of the Queen of the Skies, the most powerful territorial demon and Satan's own lieutenant. Wagner then proceeded to visit the places of Marian apparitions, particularly in Latin America, performing deliverance rituals in order to exorcize the Queen of the Skies. Wagner targeted popular Catholic shrines such as Aparecida in Brazil and Guadalupe in Mexico, and then proceeded to the most famous sites of Marian apparitions in Europe, Lourdes in France and Fatima in Portugal. All these places, Wagner believed, should be cleansed through spiritual deliverance, since it was not the real Virgin Mary who appeared there but the demonic Queen of the Skies. Understandably, when the local Catholic pilgrims understood what was going on, they were not pleased, and some brawls followed.

In 1997, Wagner's crusade against the Queen of the Skies was in full swing. Guided by prophecies and revelations, he gathered thousands of "intercessors"

190 C.P. Wagner, *Operation Queen's Palace* (*also known as "Love Turkey"*), typescript, 1999, p. 2; see also C.P. Wagner, *Confronting the Queen of Heaven*, Colorado Springs (Colorado): Wagner Institute for Practical Ministry, 1998 [2nd ed., revised: Colorado Springs, Colorado: Wagner Institute for Practical Ministry, 2001]; and C.P. Wagner (ed.), *The Queen's Domain: Advancing God's Kingdom in the 40/70 Window*, Colorado Springs (Colorado): Wagner Publications, 2000. For an analysis, see S. McCloud, *American Possessions: Fighting Demons in the Contemporary United States*, cit., pp. 24–27.

191 See C.P. Wagner, *Confronting the Queen of Heaven*, cit., p. 32.

in Ephesus, Turkey. He even performed a dangerous ascension of Mount Everest in September 1997, called "Operation Ice Castle", as it had been revealed that the mountain was one of the main "territorial sites" of the Queen of the Skies.

These developments were very serious for the Catholics who were engaged in the ecumenical dialogue with Protestant Pentecostals. Not only was Wagner a leading Pentecostal academic and theologian, he had also been one of the participants in the dialogue with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, together with Cindy Jacobs, who was also active in the campaign against the Queen of the Skies. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal regards dialogue with Protestant Pentecostals as a part of its mission, but at the same time is very devoted to the Virgin Mary and to Marian apparitions and shrines. To hear Pentecostals they considered as their friends claim that at Marian shrines Catholics were really worshipping a dangerous demon, and to see rosaries burned and statues of the Virgin May destroyed was a shock for several Catholic Charismatics. Between 1999 and 2000, a correspondence between Wagner and a Catholic Charismatic leader, Ralph Martin,[192] tried to repair the damage. Things, however, worsened, when in 2003 Rome and Santiago de Compostela, the two main places of pilgrimages for Catholics, were identified by Wagner as "the two major seats of the Queen of Heaven [i.e. the Queen of the Skies] in Europe".[193]

In May 2003, after a conference organized in Naples, Wagner and his friends went to Rome. In St. Mary Major, Rome's main Marian basilica for Catholics, "we found", one of Wagner's associates reported, that "the spirit that visited Pope Liberius [?–366] to request the construction of the Basilica was an ancient spirit linked with Juno, a part of the Queen of the Heaven system". Baptisms performed there were used by Satan "to capture generation after generation by placing a spiritual blinder on each child baptized into this system".[194] In the Sistine Chapel, where the conclaves to elect Catholic Popes are held, Wagner also discovered that, next to Biblical prophets, Michelangelo (1475–1564) painted sibyls and pagan oracles. Thus, even the latter "preside and determine

192 A copy of the correspondence is in the collection of CESNUR, Turin, Italy. See also the declaration of the Service Committee of the German Catholic Charismatic Renewal: "Gegen katolische Marienverehrung – Zur 'Gebetsoffensive für das 40/70er-Fenster'", September 19, 2001.

193 Chuck D. Pierce, "Letter to Intercessors", May 17, 2003.

194 *Ibidem*.

the outcome of the papal elections" and "divination holds the papacy captive to hell's will".[195] The Basilica of Saint Peter itself, the heart of the Vatican, was also declared full of references to "Spiritualism".[196]

In November 2003, Wagner personally approved and distributed a document written by his Italian associate, Apostle Bruno Interlandi, according to which the Pentecostal dialogue with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal could not continue, since the Catholic Church kept in its churches "statues inhabited by demons". "Although in the beginning we hoped that God will have brought renewal in the Catholic Church, with the passing of time it became clear this will not have been possible without compromising on the essential points of the Biblical faith. As painful as it may be, I reached the conclusion that to maintain a pure conscience it is necessary to withdraw from these attempts to build a bridge between the evangelical and the Catholic faith. Personally, I do not consider the Catholic Church to be a real Church. I believe it is only a religious organization from which the life of God moved far away some time ago. I do not deny that single Catholics can save themselves, because we all receive the salvation from faith and not from a specific religion".[197]

Interlandi and Wagner distinguished between three different aspects of the Pentecostal-Catholic relationships. An "attitude" of forgiveness and mercy towards single Catholics, in particular their friends in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, should be maintained. The "participation" of these Catholics, as individuals, in the Pentecostal "meetings", should still be accepted, because "if we did not allow them to come to our meetings, they could not hear the Gospels and be saved". A "covenant" with the Catholics, i.e. institutional relations with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, should be avoided, as long as these Catholics would maintain a "covenant" with the "Papacy".[198]

Rosaries and statues were not the only victims. Ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Pentecostals suffered a serious blow. The damage would be slowly repaired in subsequent years, until the election of Pope Francis, who as a Cardinal in Argentina was an active participant in this dialogue, would open new perspectives. It is worth noting that, although this is seldom noticed

195 *Ibidem*.

196 *Ibidem*.

197 Bruno Interlandi, "Attitude, Participation, and Covenant are Three Different Things", and C.P. Wagner, "Position on Relationships with Roman Catholics", *What's New*, November 19, 2003.

198 *Ibidem*.

by the international media, Pope Francis shares with Pentecostals an interest in the action of the Devil, a frequent topic of his homilies.[199]

In fact, spiritual warfare warriors claimed that demons may deceive with false apparitions not only Catholics but also Protestants, including those engaged in deliverance ministries and fighting Satan themselves. From the mid-1990s and in the subsequent decades, several incidents occurred where women engaged in spiritual intercession reported visions where "Jesus appears and begins to touch them physically and sexually". Rather than calling a psychoanalyst, who might have supplied an easy explanation for these incidents, leaders of the movement quickly concluded that the strangely libertine "Jesus" was in fact a demon.[200]

Wagner spoke of power evangelism and the theology of the spiritual warfare as the third wave of the renewal of the Holy Ghost, after the Pentecostal movement (first wave) and the penetration of the charismatic renewal inside the Catholic Church and some mainline Protestant denominations (second wave).[201] Although the third wave started as inter-denominational, it also led to the creation of new denominations. With the academic year 1985–1986, the Fuller Theological Seminary decided to discontinue its MC510 course, which had become too controversial.[202] Wagner continued with a new course, MC550, on *The Ministry of Healing and World Evangelization*, inviting Wimber there as a guest lecturer.[203] In the meantime, Wimber had become the leader of a new Pentecostal denomination, the Vineyard Christian Fellowship (subsequently called Association of Vineyard Churches), founded by Ken Gulliksen in 1974 and headquartered in Anaheim, California. From the original Vineyard of Anaheim, hundreds of sister communities were created in the United States and the world, and a new medium-sized denomination was born.[204]

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199 See M. Introvigne, entry "Diavolo", in Antonio Carriero (ed.), *Il Vocabolario di Papa Francesco*, Turin: Elledici, 2015, pp. 100–105.

200 S. McCloud, *American Possessions: Fighting Demons in the Contemporary United States*, cit., pp. 93–94.

201 C.P. Wagner, *The Third Wave of the Holy Spirit: Encountering the Power of Signs and Wonders Today*, Ann Harbor (Michigan): Vine Books, Servant Publications, 1988.

202 The history of the course was told by C.P. Wagner, *Signs and Wonders Today: The Story of Fuller Theological Seminary's Remarkable Course on Spiritual Power*, Altamonte Springs (Florida): Creation House, 1987.

203 See T.D. Pratt, "The Need to Dialogue: A Review of the Debate on Signs, Wonders, Miracles and Spiritual Warfare in the Literature of the Third Wave Movement", cit., p. 9.

204 For a critical examination by Protestant theologians, many of which were Mennonites, see James R. Coggins, Paul G.[ordon] Hiebert [1932–2007] (eds.), *Wonders and the World:*

The theology of spiritual warfare was not confined to Vineyard, and even spread beyond Pentecostalism.[205] The spiritual warfare movement, and the idea that conscious or unconscious Satanists were at work behind prominent religious and political institutions, gained national and international prominence in 1986, when the best-selling novel by Frank Peretti, *This Present Darkness*, was published.[206] A sequel followed in 1989,[207] after the first book had sold one and a half million copies. By 2015, Peretti had sold fifteen million copies of his different novels.[208]

This Present Darkness is about a war between the forces of Heaven and Hell, fought by both supernatural and human warriors to control a small town in the United States. At stake, however, is much more. Satan wants to use the town to establish a stronghold for two of the worst evils in this world, at least in the eyes of conservative Christians, the New World Order and the New Age. On the spiritual level, the war is between the General, a silver-haired angel who is one of the closest associates of Jesus Christ in Heaven, and the Strongman, described as one of the few devils in intimate terms with Lucifer himself. The angelic military commander is Tal, and the commander of the demonic forces is Ba'al Rafar, the Prince of Babylon.

Among the human warriors on the side of the angels are the pastor of a small, struggling Evangelical church and a reporter who is active in exposing cults and the occult, whose sister had been killed by Satanists. "Demonized" warriors for Satan include the pastor of the large local liberal church, a psychology professor, the local chief of police, who stands for the evil of governmental bureaucracy, and a foreigner, definitely un-American, who works as the local representative for a multi-national corporation. The battle is fought through deliverance rituals and prayers. Finally, the battle ends when good triumphs over evil, but it is also made clear that the war will continue in the future, thus allowing a sequel.

In Peretti's 1989 follow up to his successful novel, the "sin cover" helping the demons is offered both by the New Age, and a "cult" that resembles the Church of Scientology, and by full-blown Satanists.[209] The theology that supported

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An Examination of Issues Raised by John Wimber and the Vineyard Movement, Winnipeg (Manitoba), Hillsboro (Kansas): Kindred Press, 1989.

205 See T.D. Pratt, "The Need to Dialogue: A Review of the Debate on Signs, Wonders, Miracles and Spiritual Warfare in the Literature of the Third Wave Movement", cit.

206 Frank E. Peretti, *This Present Darkness*, Ventura (California): Regal, 1986.

207 F.E. Peretti, *Piercing the Darkness*, Wheaton (Illinois): Crossway Books, 1989.

208 Statistics are published on Peretti's Web site www.frankperetti.com, last accessed on August 15, 2015.

209 See F.E. Peretti, *Piercing the Darkness*, cit.

Peretti's novels was criticized[210] but the success was phenomenal, and the novelist was instrumental in spreading ideas on spiritual warfare and Satanism well beyond Pentecostal churches. In subsequent years, Peretti continued to be interested in the themes of demonization and Satanism, and occasionally appeared as a guest lecturer in conferences on Satanism organized by Christian counter-cultists. In 1995, he returned to the themes of spiritual warfare and the fight of Christians in a small American town against the Dragon and the Satanists in *The Oath.*[211] Nor must the influence of Peretti be forgotten on the series of novels by Tim LaHaye (1926–2016) and Jerry B. Jenkins *Left Behind*, published between 1995 and 2007, the greatest success ever in the history of Evangelical fiction with over seventy million copies sold throughout the world. There, however, the underlying theology is partially different and the Antichrist, rather than the Devil, is at the center of this series on the Apocalypse.[212]

Satan at Play: Evangelicals vs. Role-Playing Games

The national prominence in the United States of the spiritual warfare theology dates back to the same years when the survivor movement was in full swing. The latter was secular and the former was Christian, but we may ask whether they interacted in some way. Evangelical counter-cultists were often suspicious of modern psychology, and much more of psychoanalysis, regarding them as hostile to religion in general. Some fringes of Evangelical counter-cultism even suspected that Satan and Satanists might have infiltrated secular psychology.[213]

Little by little, however, the spiritual warfare movement incorporated a religious version of what secular therapists were doing with the survivors, known as "inner healing". The community, or the pastor, prayed on the afflicted person, sometimes for hours, until the memory emerged of traumatic events, often a satanic "ritual abuse", which were at the root of the difficulties. After the memory was recovered, the prayer did not stop, until the Holy Spirit came with his healing grace. The context, of course, was entirely religious, but similarities

210 See R.A. Guelich, "Spiritual Warfare: Jesus, Paul and Peretti", cit., pp. 52–64.

211 F. Peretti, *The Oath*, Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995.

212 The series started with Tim LaHaye, Jerry B. Jenkins, *Left Behind: A Novel of the Earth's Last Days*, Wheaton (Illinois): Tyndale House Publishers, 1995.

213 See Martin Bobgan, Deidre Bobgan, *PsychoHeresy: The Psychological Seduction of Christianity*, Santa Barbara (California): EastGate Publishers, 1987; M. Bobgan, D. Bobgan, *Prophets of PsychoHeresy I*, Santa Barbara: EastGate Publishers, 1989; and the Bobgans' *PsychoHeresy Awareness Newsletter*.

with secular therapy and survivors were obvious. Inner healing had its critics in the 1990s, even among those who accepted spiritual warfare theology in general.[214] In addition, a specific Catholic criticism emerged when sectors of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal adopted the practice.[215] Yet, inner healing further fueled the idea that ritual abuse and hidden networks of Satanists were at work in the United States and elsewhere.

Inner healing was not simply a mirror image of secular therapy. During the prayer, both those healed and persons in the audience received revelations and prophecies, and some disclosed satanic activities that had eluded the secular therapists. Satanists, it was revealed, were indoctrinating teenagers through textbooks for the schools, certain kinds of games, and rock music. Campaigns followed, involving a significant part of the Evangelical world and some Catholics.

In the early 1990s, a strong Evangelical movement opposed the use of the *Impressions* series of textbooks, adopted by more than 1,500 American primary schools, claiming Satanists had been involved in their preparation and the manuals promoted "Satanism, violence, cannibalism" through stories including sorcerers and witches.[216] Hundreds of American churches gathered signatures against *Impressions*, although it was generally recognized that criticism was grossly exaggerated and the textbooks remained popular. Evangelicals mobilized to exclude from American public libraries LaVey's books, including *The Satanic Bible*, but also scholarly books on the history of witchcraft. They asked that schools do not induce children to read classics of literature or fairy tales where witches appear or magic is presented as being effective. At the end of the 1990s, the novels of the *Harry Potter* series by the English writer Joanne K. Rowling became the main target of this battle, which continued into the 21st century, involving Evangelicals and some Catholic groups.

However, the main target of Evangelical counter-Satanism were not books but role-playing games,[217] particularly *Dungeons and Dragons*, which in its heydays involved the record number of twenty million players worldwide. *Dungeons and Dragons* was inspired by fantasy literature: players must select roles and overcome obstacles and enemies that included sorcerers, fairies, and

214 See, for a reply by supporters of inner healing, John Loren Sandford, Mark Sandford, *A Comprehensive Guide to Deliverance and Inner Healing*, Grand Rapids (Michigan): Chosen Books, 1992 (British ed.: *Delivered or Healed? A Guide to Christian Wholeness*, London: Marshall Pickering, 1993).

215 See "Two Views on Inner Healing", *New Covenant*, vol. 23, no. 7, February 1994, pp. 7–10.

216 See J.S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend*, cit., pp. 156–160.

217 *Ibid.*, p. 172.

witches. The game was created in 1974 and in the 1980s became a target of the largest Christian counter-cult organizations, including the Christian Research Institute and Spiritual Counterfeits Project, who suspected Satanist influences.[218] What drove the campaign against *Dungeons and Dragons* was a suicide in 1982. On June 9, seventeen-year old Irving L. "Bink" Pulling (1964–1982) killed himself in Montpelier, Virginia. His mother, Patricia "Pat" Pulling (1948–1997), could not understand why Bink, a successful and popular high school student, should have committed suicide. Finally, she explained her son's suicide with his emotional involvement in *Dungeons and Dragons*, and in particular with a "spell" cast against Bink in the game by one of his high school teachers, who was also a player.

Dungeons and Dragons was not only allowed, but also promoted as an educational tool by Bink's school. Pat Pulling sued the school, but lost the case. From then on, she devoted her life to expose the satanic nature of role-playing games though her newly founded organization BADD (Bothered About *Dungeons and Dragons*). Although media reported that, before his suicide, Bink had manifested serious psychological problems unconnected with *Dungeons and Dragons*, his mother continued her crusade and became a popular lecturer in the Evangelical circuit of counter-Satanism until her death in 1997.[219]

BADD disappeared with Pulling's death, and *Dungeons and Dragons* itself became progressively less popular. Counter-cultists went on to target as possibly connected with Satanism the new live-action role-playing games (LARP), which were similar to *Dungeons and Dragons* but were acted out in the streets. Claims about LARP's possible satanic connections became so exaggerated that they were quickly ridiculed. This situation was reflected in the 1998 novel *Vampire Bytes* by Linda Grant, part of her series about San Francisco private detective Catherine Sayler. The novel is about the homicide of a LARP player, and contrast the skeptical Sayler with a San Francisco police officer called Prize, who is persuaded that the crime has been committed by Satanists controlling a LARP game about vampires. Prize declares that "the scene is consistent with a Satanist cult. They [Satanists] drain the blood to use in future rituals". To the objection that there is no evidence that Satanists routinely commit homicides

218 See John Weldon, James Bjornstad, *Playing with Fire*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1984.

219 See Pat Pulling, with Kathy Cawthon, *The Devil's Web: Who Is Stalking Your Children for Satan?*, Lafayette (Louisiana): Huntington House, 1989. For critical accounts, see R.D. Hicks, *In Pursuit of Satan: The Police and the Occult*, cit., pp. 286–301; and Joseph P. Laycock, *Dangerous Games: What the Moral Panic over Role-Playing Games Says about Play, Religion, and Imagined Worlds,* Oakland: University of California Press, 2015.

in the Bay Area, and no corpse has ever been found, Prize answers: "That's because Satanists are so good in destroying or hiding the body".[220]

Sayler, a no-nonsense detective, has some concerns of her own about kids taking too seriously LARPing and their vampire identities in the game. Officer Prize and an Evangelical preacher, however, believe they are after a large Satanist conspiracy and fuel the panic by publicly burning comics and paraphernalia. In fact, by pursuing the false path of ritual crime, they unwittingly help the real murderer, who has nothing to do with Satanism. When their strategy leads to no results, they blame Sayler and the more skeptical police detectives, suspecting they are Satanists in disguise. These counter-cultists are not bad people. They act in good faith, but they read the wrong books and attend the wrong seminars. In the end, they will even be able to recognize they were wrong and apologize.

The novel was a testament to the fact that, by the end of the 1990s, popular culture was no longer taking the idea that Satanists were behind role-playing games very seriously. In the previous decades, however, BADD and its supporters, including Mike Warnke, managed to create a widespread moral panic. In his comprehensive history of the movement denouncing role-playing games as satanic, Joseph P. Laycock concluded that Pulling, Warnke, and other crusaders "condemned the fantasy worlds of others while using them to forge waking fantasies in the form of a conspiracy theory".[221]

Dancing with Demons: The Crusade against "Satanic Rock"

The campaigns against books and role-playing games were quickly overtaken in intensity by the attacks on certain forms of rock music as yet another satanic tool for attracting young people. The controversy was as old as rock music. Early pioneers of the counter-cult movement, such as Bob Larson[222] and the somewhat extreme Jack Chick,[223] started claiming that rock music was controlled

220 Linda Grant, *Vampire Bytes: A Crime Novel with Catherine Sayler*, New York: Scribner, 1998, p. 97.

221 J.P. Laycock, *Dangerous Games: What the Moral Panic over Role-Playing Games Says about Play, Religion, and Imagined Worlds*, cit., p. 277.

222 See Bob Larson, *The Devil's Diversion*, Carol Stream (Illinois): Creation House, 1967; B. Larson, *Rock and the Church*, Carol Stream (Illinois): Creation House, 1971.

223 See Rick Jones, *Stairway to Hell: The Well-Planned Destruction of Teens*, Chino (California): Chick Publications, 1988; Jeff Godwin, *Dancing with Demons: The Music's Real Master*, Chino (California): Chick Publications, 1988; J. Godwin, *The Devil's Disciples: The Truth about Rock*, Chino (California): Chick Publications, 1985.

by Satanists in the 1960s. Later, the expression "satanic rock music"[224] came to mean two different things. Some detected explicit satanic messages in some songs. Others denounced messages that were allegedly hidden or "subliminal". The first accusation focused on the segments of rock music that promoted occultism, the figure of Satan, and even violence and suicide. Chick went one step further, and proclaimed that all rock music, because of its violent and disturbing rhythm, was essentially "satanic", including so-called "Christian rock" produced by Evangelicals. Against the violence and Satanism included in some expressions of rock music, ad hoc organizations were created, such as the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) founded, with others, by Tipper Gore, wife of the future American vice-president, Al Gore, established in 1985 and active until 1999.

These groups were able to mention some facts. A well-known musician, Sammy Davis Jr., was a member of the Church of Satan, although his music was not rock. The Church of Satan also recruited Marilyn Manson (Brian Hugh Warner, whose stage name honored both Marilyn Monroe and Charles Manson)[225] and the Danish musician King Diamond. In 1994, Marilyn Manson publicly accepted the title of "reverend" from LaVey, but never had any real activity in the Church of Satan. The musical genre of Marilyn Manson is hard to categorize, but Diamond belongs to Heavy Metal, a milieu we will explore in the next chapter. Christian counter-cultists, however, were largely unaware of the intricacies of the different subgenres. They simply kept warning against "satanic rock" in general.

For several musicians, hailing Satan in songs was mostly a marketing operation. Young people love to buy what scandalizes their parents, and, in a world where sex and cursing were no longer really scandalous, perhaps only Satan remained provocative. But was listening to such songs only an innocent and harmless vent? Many parents doubted it. They were supported by Cardinal John O'Connor (1920–2000), the Catholic Archbishop of New York, who attacked "Satanic rock" in a famous sermon in March 1990.[226] Soon, musicians

224 In Catholic circles, the expression was popularized by Italian demonologist Mgr. Corrado Balducci (1923–2008). See his *Adoratori del Diavolo e rock satanico*, Casale Monferrato (Alessandria): Piemme, 1991.

225 This is not the only relation between Marilyn Manson and new religious movements. In the 1990s, Manson lived for three years with actress Rose McGowan, known for her role as Paige Matthews, one of the witches in the television series *Charmed*. McGowan was born and raised in an Italian community of the Children of God (the movement later known as The Family), although she was no longer part of it when she met the controversial singer.

226 See Peter Steinfels, "Rise in Satan Cult Activity Alarms Cardinal", *The New York Times*, March 6, 1990.

such as Judas Priest and Ozzy Osbourne (John Michael Osbourne) found themselves in court, sued by parents of teenagers who had committed suicide, who blamed them for the acts of their children. Courts, however, normally found against these parents, noting that out of millions of teenagers who listened to such music only a handful killed themselves. And studies, the courts added, failed to prove that suicide percentages were higher among teenagers who listened to this kind of music than among those who did not.[227]

Concerned parents switched to a different accusation. Rock music had, they said, a subtler method to influence young people in a "satanic" and violent sense, through subliminal messages. The controversy about the use of subliminal messages in advertising dated back to the 1950s and to the famous book *The Hidden Persuaders*, published in 1957 by journalist Vance Packard (1914–1996).[228] Packard noticed the presence in music and films of messages that the audience were unable to perceive consciously but influenced the subconscious. The worries of the 1950s turned out to be exaggerated, and academic studies failed to confirm the almost omnipotent character attributed to subliminal messages. It was, however, true that subliminal messages had some effectiveness. For example, department stores employed, with moderate success, subliminal messages such as "I am honest and do not steal" in the music transmitted in their shops, in order to lower the incidence of kleptomania and petty theft. From the late 1970s, technological improvements made it less expensive to insert subliminal messages in vinyl discs and music tapes.[229]

In the 1980s, Bob Larson and other lecturers on the Evangelical countercult circuit started claiming that Satanists were using subliminal messages to their own advantage. These messages, they told worried parents, were hidden in vinyl discs of such well-known groups as The Beatles, and actually incited young people to Satanism. The evidence offered was rather scarce, but someone advanced a new theory. A vinyl disc can be played backwards, normally resulting in an undistinguished gabble. Occasionally, however, words in

227 See R.D. Hicks, *In Pursuit of Satan: The Police and the Occult*, cit., pp. 302–307; J.S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend*, cit., pp. 161–172. Sociological investigations also suggested that young people do *not* listen very carefully to the lyrics, and are mostly focused on the music: Lorraine E. Prinsky, Jill L. Rosenbaum, "'Leer-ics' or Lyrics: Teenage Impressions of Rock'n'Roll", *Youth and Society*, vol. 18, no. 4, 1987, pp. 384–397. See also Elizabeth F. Brown, William R. Hendee, "Adolescents and Their Music: Insights into the Health of Adolescents", *Journal of the American Medical Association*, vol. 262, no. 12, 1989, pp. 1659–1663.

228 Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders*, New York: David McKay Co., 1957.

229 See John R. Vokey, J. Don Read, "Subliminal Messages: Between the Devil and the Media", *American Psychology*, vol. 40, no. 11, 1985, pp. 1231–1239.

the backward playing could be distinguished, or so the theory claimed. The new technique of stereophony offered vinyl discs with multiple tracks. Some of these tracks were normally destined to remain empty. However, in these empty tracks somebody could include "hidden" messages, which would be discovered only when the vinyl disc was played backwards. This technique, called backward masking or backmasking, should not be confused with the insertion of direct subliminal messages, which does not require the disk to be played backwards. And making discs play backwards would become an increasingly enthusiastic task for the Christian opponents of Satanism.

The first to listen to vinyl discs of rock music "backwards" looking for subliminal messages were Baptist pastors Gary Greenwald and Jacob Aranza; the latter, in 1983 and 1985, published two volumes on the issue.[230] In 1982, the idea that backmasking was used to include satanic messages in vinyl discs of well-known rock bands had already been discussed in the columns of *Contemporary Christian Music*, although there was no shortage of skeptics.[231] In the same years, legislators in several U.S. States introduced the first proposals, some of which eventually matured into laws, compelling the music companies to include in the labels information about backmasking, when it was present. In 1983, Catholics entered the field, when the Canadian Charismatic priest Father Jean-Paul Régimbal O.SS.T. (1931–1988), who had already written anti-Masonic books, published a work in support of the Greenwald-Aranza theory that was translated into several languages.[232]

These texts did not target only Black Metal groups that explicitly hailed Satan in their lyrics. They claimed that, when playing backwards vinyl discs of mainline groups, including The Beatles or Led Zeppelin, as well as of lesser known bands such as Black Oak Arkansas, messages could be heard such as "Satan moves through our voices", or "Satan… Satan… Satan… He is God, he is God, he is God", incitements to suicide, and cursing against Jesus Christ. Skeptics were invited to listen to tapes where the incriminated music was effectively played backwards, and judge for themselves.

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230 Jacob Aranza, *Backward Masking Unmasked; Backward Satanic Messages of Rock and Roll Exposed*, Shreveport (Louisiana): Huntington House, 1983; J. Aranza, *More Rock, Country and Backward Masking Unmasked*, Shreveport (Louisiana): Huntington House, 1985. See also Dan Peters, Steve Peters, with Cher Merrill, *Rock's Hidden Persuader: The Truth about Backmasking*, Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1985.

231 See "Backward Masking", *Contemporary Christian Music*, April 1982, pp. 44–45; "More on Backward Masking", *ibid.*, July 1982, p. 6; "Bob Larson – A Case of Evangelical Gullibility?" *ibid.*, August 1982, pp. 17–18.

232 Jean-Paul Régimbal and collaborators, *Le Rock'n'Roll. Viol de la conscience par les messages subliminaux*, Sherbrooke: Les Éditions Saint-Raphaël, 1983.

The accusation was both sufficiently serious and bizarre enough to induce academics to take note. In 1984, a year after the publication of the books by Aranza and Régimbal, the respected *Journal of Psychology* published an article by Stephen Thorne and Philip Himelstein, who carried out different experiments and began to report their findings.[233] Between 1985 and 1988, several other studies were published in peer-reviewed journals, particularly in *Psychology and Marketing*, a publication that has traditionally been interested in the issue of subliminal messages in general.[234]

Meanwhile, the supporters and the adversaries of the theory of "satanic" backmasking clashed in the trial of the members of the rock band Judas Priest, which followed the suicide of two young people. Both Judas Priest and their co-defendant, the head of the musical company CBS, were found not guilty.[235] Professor Howard Shevrin, from the University of Michigan, testified against Judas Priest and argued that backmasking was a real and dangerous phenomenon, but his strictly Freudian approach failed to impress the jury.[236] In a parallel case, originating from the suicide of young John McCollum (1965–1984) of Indio, California, singer Ozzy Osbourne was also found not guilty. The trial, however, focused on the lyrics of Osbourne's songs rather than on backmasking.[237]

These trials, and the academic research, concluded that the so-called backmasking really existed, in the sense that empty tracks of stereophonic vinyl discs were in fact used to record messages. Some of them could be listened to only by playing records backwards. Scientists and juries were allowed to listen to playful messages such as "Congratulations, you have just discovered the secret message", included by Pink Floyd in their classic album *The Wall*. They also read declarations of components of rock groups, who admitted practicing backmasking for the most varied reasons, from technical experiments to pranks, or even superstition in order to secure good luck. However, real cases of

233 Stephen B. Thorne, Philip Himelstein, "The Role of Suggestion in the Perception of Satanic Messages in Rock-and-Roll Recordings", *Journal of Psychology*, vol. 116, 1984, pp. 245–248.

234 See J.R. Vokey, J.D. Read, "Subliminal Messages: Between the Devil and the Media", cit., and the articles published in vol. 5, 1988, of *Psychology and Marketing*, pp. 297–372: Timothy Moore, "The Case Against Subliminal Manipulation", pp. 297–316; Anthony R. Pratkanis, Anthony G. Greenwald, "Recent Perspectives on Unconscious Processing", pp. 337–353; Philip M. Merikle, "Subliminal Auditory Messages: An Evaluation", pp. 355–372.

235 For a discussion of this case, see J.T. Richardson, "Satanism in the Courts: From Murder to Heavy Metal", in J.T. Richardson, J. Best, D.G. Bromley (eds.), *The Satanism Scare*, cit., pp. 205–217.

236 *Ibid.*, p. 215.

237 See R.D. Hicks, *In Pursuit of Satan: The Police and the Occult*, cit., pp. 304–305.

backmasking should be distinguished from imaginary ones. The experiments of Thorne and Himelstein demonstrated that, if one *expects* to find satanic messages, it would be more likely that words such as "Satan" will be heard in what for most people are indistinct and casual sounds.

In the most controversial case, the 1971 song *Stairway to Heaven* by Led Zeppelin, a certain amount of imagination is required to hear the word "Satan" when the vinyl disc is played backwards. The fact that Led Zeppelin's guitarist Jimmy Page was a well-known Crowley fan, and even lived for several years in Boleskine House, Crowley's former home in Scotland, obviously fueled speculations. After Aranza's book, moreover, some bands included backmasking messages for the explicit purpose of poking fun at the Christian foes of their music.

The problem, however, was not only whether, for whatever reasons, backmasking messages were included in certain records. The crucial question was the possibility for the human brain to perceive the results of backmasking, even when records were played in the normal way rather than backwards. All articles published in scholarly journals agreed on this point: only a very minor percentage of humans, with particular skills, is able to perceive the meaning of a simple verbal message read backwards, putting it mentally in the correct order, going, for example, from "Dog, si he natas" to "Satan, he is god". This example refers to a sentence pronounced backwards, more or less quickly, in a clearly perceivable way. The case of messages included in a song through backmasking goes one step further. While there is no doubt that a great number of people is influenced by direct subliminal messages such as the ones detected by Packard, Vokey and Read concluded that, after repeated tests, "we could find no evidence that subjects are influenced either consciously or unconsciously by the semantic content of backward messages".[238]

Backward messages may be there, but the human brain does not perceive them, unless the disc is played backwards with the explicit purpose of looking for these messages, something the normal teenager listening to a vinyl disc obviously would not do. In 1983, Father Régimbal wrote: "Research is being undertaken that allows the formulation of the hypothesis of a double phenomenon: firstly, the subconscious can perceive a sentence pronounced backwards; subsequently, it can decipher this message even if it is expressed in an unknown language".[239] Research was indeed undertaken, but it gave the opposite results.

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238 J. Vokey, J.D. Read, "Subliminal Messages: Between the Devil and the Media", cit., p. 1237.

239 J.-P. Régimbal, *Le Rock'n'Roll. Viol de la conscience par les messages subliminaux*, cit., pp. 15–16.

Those who claimed that the effects of backmasking could be perceived disagreed, and claimed that at least one scientist was on their side. They quoted the studies of William H. Yarroll, II, who in the 1980s was the director of the Applied Potential Institute of Aurora, Colorado, before moving to a pastoral ministry in favor of anorexic teenagers. They claimed Yarroll was a "scientist" and a "neurologist", and quoted his comments on backmasking that "in the base of our brain, there is a check valve commonly known as Reticular Activating System. The left side of our brain is logical while the right side is creative. If the left side of our brain cannot decode the meaning of the strange word or phrase, the right side which is the creative one takes over and the message is acknowledge and stored". Yarroll went on to explain that "the brain is divided in two parts, the right and the left, the right-hand side controls the conscious, and the left-hand side contains the subconscious. By using sub-limo [sic] all the information skips across the conscious and settles into the subconscious, thereby taking away any knowledge of receiving the message".[240]

Yarroll, however, was investigated by *Cornerstone*, which reported that his scientific credentials were non-existent. When interviewed, Yarroll admitted he never earned a doctorate and none of his articles had been accepted by peer-reviewed journals, even if he claimed that he had co-operated with scientists with excellent credentials, though they preferred to remain anonymous. *Cornerstone* concluded that Yarroll's theories were largely inspired by ideas on the brain promoted by one of the main spokesperson for the New Age movement, Marilyn Ferguson (1938–2008).[241]

In 1993, the theory of satanic backmasking joined the Taxil case and the Loch Ness monster in an encyclopedia of famous frauds.[242] It was however still found in the 21st century, in fringes of the Evangelical and Catholic countercult literature. The controversy should have ended with the demise of the vinyl discs. In 2000, however, Microsoft, followed by its main competitors, started offering programs for digital audio editing that allowed both listening to music backwards and easily recording on secondary tracks. Some musicians began experimenting with new techniques of backmasking. The cases were less frequent than in the 1980s, but were mentioned by those who wanted to keep the old controversy alive.

240 Cit. in Ross Pavlac [1951–1997], "Backward Masking: Satanic Plot or Red Herring?" *Cornerstone*, vol. 11, no. 62, 1982, pp. 41–43.

241 *Ibid.*

242 Entry "Backward Masking", in Gordon Stein, *Encyclopedia of Hoaxes*, Gale, Detroit 1993, pp. 281–282.

Satan the Police Officer: The Years of the Cult Cops

In the second half of the 1980s, the religious counter-Satanist movement appeared to be a significant force. It had induced several States of the U.S. to pass laws on backmasking. In 1989, a book published by a veteran counter-Satanist such as Bob Larson enjoyed significant sales.[243] Larson published another book in 1991, *Dead Air,*[244] which was labeled as "Christian pornography" by *Cornerstone* for its "disgusting" descriptions of sexually-based Satanic rituals.[245] Although discredited in the more respectable Evangelical milieus, the preacher would make a spectacular comeback in the 2010s as the father and teacher of Brynne Larson, one of the three female "teenage exorcists" who would attract international media attention as the youngest exorcists in the world.[246]

In the late 1980s, secular anti-cultists decided that a co-operation was now in order. Secular anti-Satanists and religious counter-Satanists started to co-organize joint conferences. Their co-operation, however, really flourished in an unexpected environment: the American police stations, in particular the provincial and rural ones.

When survivors and children claimed they had witnessed human sacrifices, the principal objection of the skeptics was: where are the bodies? Anti-Satanists replied that Satanists were very skilled in disposing of the bodies, and the children sacrificed were often those of breeders, who had not been legally registered. But skeptics were not satisfied, and countered that at least now and again a body should emerge. Criminologists insisted that no criminal organization, no matter how ancient or powerful, could hide thousands or even only hundreds of bodies.[247] Finally, in the mid-1980s, after the Manson trial, cases emerged where corpses were found. Serial killers such as Richard Ramirez (1960–2013) celebrated Manson and even Satan, but this was hardly evidence of Satanist cults at work. There were, however, also different cases, where murders appeared to having been committed by youngsters who were part of more or less satanic groups.

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243 Bob Larson, *Satanism: The Seduction of America's Youth*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989.

244 B. Larson, *Dead Air*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991.

245 J. Trott, "A New Genre: Christian Porn", *Cornerstone*, vol. 20, no. 95, 1991, p. 18.

246 See S. McCloud, *American Possessions: Fighting Demons in the Contemporary United States*, cit., pp. 1–2.

247 Kenneth V. Lanning, *Satanic, Occult, Ritualistic Crime: A Law Enforcement Perspective*, Quantico (Virginia): National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, FBI Academy, 1989.

Most of the incidents repeated the same pattern. A group of teenagers, impressed by books, songs, or movies, began to perform homemade satanic rituals, spiced by an abundant use of drugs and animal sacrifices. Some mentioned LaVey's *The Satanic Bible* and *The Satanic Rituals*, easily available in paperback editions for a few dollars. The cost for becoming a mail-order member of the Church of Satan was another matter. Few teenagers could afford it, and none of those involved in the murders was a member of the Church of Satan, the Temple of Set, or other mainline Satanist groups.

LaVey strongly advised against animal sacrifice and recommended respect for the law, but his warnings were ignored by these youngsters. They often sacrificed a cat or a dog, and vandalized cemeteries and churches by tracing satanic symbols. In the 1980s and 1990s, both in the United States and in Europe, there were several groups of young people of this kind, often with a number of members inferior to ten, which disbanded as easily as they had been formed. Psychologists called this phenomenon "adolescent Satanism", and also "acid Satanism", because of the liberal use of drugs. Although the teenagers occasionally read LaVey, their groups were more a product of juvenile deviance and marginalization than Satanism.[248] Most of these young people committed only minor crimes, although they were occasionally interviewed by the police after activities such as animal sacrifices or vandalism.[249]

In a very limited number of cases, their self-styled satanic ceremonies involved crimes that were more serious. Girls who had accepted to participate in the rituals but would have preferred not to go further were raped. In an even more limited number of cases, not just a cat was killed, but a human being. It is difficult to estimate the exact number of the victims of adolescent Satanism, since some "satanic" murders were in fact connected to drug trafficking and other criminal activities unrelated to the occult. According to anti-Satanists, "satanic" crimes by adolescents discovered by the police were in the hundreds.[250] One Christian activist, Jackie Balodis, who ran a counter-Satanist group called Overcomers Victorious, stated that "it's plausible that 50,000 humans a year are sacrificed in satanic rituals", and was taken seriously by some

248 See Joyce Mercer, *Behind the Mask of Adolescent Satanism*, Minneapolis: Deaconess Press, 1991. For a less balanced treatment of adolescent Satanism, influenced by the anti-Satanist literature, see Anthony Moriarty, *The Psychology of Adolescent Satanism: A Guide for Parents, Counselors, Clergy, and Teachers*, Westport (Connecticut): Praeger, 1992.

249 See J. Mercer, *Behind the Mask of Adolescent Satanism*, cit.

250 See Michael Newton, *Raising Hell: An Encyclopedia of Devil Worship and Satanic Crime*, New York: Avon Books, 1993.

media.[251] Sociologists who tried to collect all cases concluded that in the twenty years between 1969 and 2009, those killed around the world in a context connected with adolescent Satanism were less than twenty.[252]

Some episodes were admittedly gruesome. In 1970, Stanley Baker of Big Sur, California, and Steven Hurd, of Los Angeles, led two different bands of teenagers who killed three people, offered their bodies to Satan and ate them in bizarre cannibalistic rituals. In 1984, Richard Kasso (1967–1984) and James Troiano organized a group in Long Island, New York, called Knights of the Black Circle. On June 17, 1984, they sacrificed to Satan one of their own members, Gary Lauwers (1967–1984), and were promptly identified and arrested. Kasso hung himself in jail on July 7. Troiano claimed that the murder was committed by Kasso only, and eventually converted to Evangelical Christianity. The Knights of the Black Circle case is one of those normally included in the lists of "satanic" murders, although Lauwers was also killed after discussions about how to manage the group's drug dealing business. Kasso was nicknamed "Acid King", and this name passed to a Heavy Metal band who regarded the murderer as its folk hero.[253]

In 1985, the body of a tramp who would never be identified was found in San Francisco. "His lower lip was cut, allegedly so that the killer could drink his blood. His chest and neck were vigorously slashed with a knife, his genitals slit, a pentagram carved on his chest, and wax dripped into his right eye". Two years after the murder, while he was serving time in jail for different crimes, Maurice Bork told the police that the tramp had been killed by his former lover, Clifford St. Joseph. The two of them, Bork claimed, were part of a small satanic band, and the tramp had been a sacrifice to Satan. St. Joseph was arrested, tried and sentenced in 1988 to a minimum of 34 years in jail. He admitted being a Satanist, but denied having killed the tramp.[254] Both Kasso and St. Joseph owned LaVey's book *The Satanic Bible*, and were even able to quote some lines by heart.[255]

In 1986, sixteen-year old Sean Sellers (1969–1999) killed his mother and stepfather in their Oklahoma City home. Arrested, Sellers confessed that in

251 Melissa Berg, "Satanic Crime Increasing? Police, Therapists Alarmed", *The Kansas City Times*, March 26, 1988.

252 See R.D. Hicks, *In Pursuit of Satan: The Police and the Occult*, cit.; J.S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend*, cit. My own count after a survey of a number of different sources gave the same results.

253 Mara Bovsun, "Justice Story: Satan runs amok on L.I. as a teen confesses to grisly murder", *New York Daily News*, November 29, 2011.

254 Bernice Yeung, "Case Study: Clifford St. Joseph", *San Francisco Weekly*, October 29, 2003.

255 See R.D. Hicks, *In Pursuit of Satan: The Police and the Occult*, cit.

1985 he had also murdered a clerk in a convenience store, who had refused to sell him beer. He also stated that he was a Satanist, and showed a familiarity with LaVey's *The Satanic Bible.* Sellers was sentenced to death in 1986 and became extremely popular among Evangelical counter-Satanists, after he announced his conversion in jail.[256] Others doubted whether this was only part of a strategy connected with his appeal case, where he claimed he committed the crimes while he was either possessed by a demon called Azarate or suffering of MPD. His appeal was denied, and Sellers was executed in 1999 by lethal injection.

One of the latest cases in this wave of "satanic" crimes was the murder of three boys in West Memphis, Arkansas, in 1993, as part of a Satanist ritual allegedly conducted by three teenagers, the "West Memphis Three", Damien Echols, Jessie Misskelley, Jr., and Jason Baldwin. In 1994, Echols was sentenced to death and Misskelley and Baldwin to life imprisonment. The convictions were upheld on appeal. However, a strong movement affirming the West Memphis Three's innocence was supported by academics, literary figures, and popular musicians. In 2007, new forensic evidence was presented, including genetic material found at the crime scene and not attributable to either the victims or the Three. Evidence of heavy-handed police interrogation of both defendants and witnesses also surfaced. In 2010, the Arkansas Supreme Court accepted the new evidence. In 2011, the Three reached a plea bargain with the prosecutors and were released from jail, accepting 10-year suspended sentences. They had spent in jail more than 18 years for a crime they probably never committed.[257] The publicity surrounding the 2010–2011 events revamped the debate on the satanic crime scare, and persuaded many that the American judicial system in the 1990s had quickly accepted questionable evidence about satanic crimes that perhaps never happened.

In the 1990s, American public learned of these murders through true crime books hastily composed by journalists, often a few weeks after the events, and rich in horrifying details.[258] In 1993, an *Encyclopedia of Devil Worship and Satanic Crime* was also released,[259] ironically by the same Avon Books that

256 See Sean Sellers, *Web of Darkness*, 2nd ed., Tulsa (Oklahoma): Victory House Publishers, 1990.

257 On the West Memphis Three, see Mara Leveritt, *Devil's Knot: The True Story of the West Memphis Three*, New York: Atria Books, 2002. The book inspired the 2013 movie *Devil's Knot*, directed by Atom Egoyan.

258 For typical examples, see Rose G. Mandelsberg (ed.), *Cult Killers*, New York: Pinnacle Books, 1991; and, on the Kasso-Troiano case, David St. Clair, *Say You Love Satan*, New York: Dell Publishing, 1987.

259 M. Newton, *Raising Hell: An Encyclopedia of Devil Worship and Satanic Crime*, cit.

had published the paperback versions of LaVey's books *The Satanic Bible* and *The Satanic Rituals*. Sociologists skeptic about satanic conspiracy theories labeled these murders "pseudo-Satanism". They claimed they were "legend trips" where misfit adolescents, without really believing in the Devil, acted upon their own frustrations.[260] The debate, however, was mostly nominalistic. Ultimately, it was not perhaps too important to know whether teenagers who committed "satanic" murders were "real" Satanists or misfit "pseudo-Satanists". The cases demonstrated that adolescent Satanism, with its ambiguous and certainly not purely "religious" nature, was an effective problem, although fortunately limited in extent.

With adolescent Satanism, counter-Satanists and anti-Satanists finally found their corpses. Their next step was to persuade the police that cases of satanic murder were many more than it was commonly believed, although only a few were discovered and prosecuted. Anti-Satanists and counter-Satanists found an excellent ground for cooperation. Secular anti-Satanists, unlike religious counter-Satanists, did not believe the Devil really existed. However, it was not necessary to believe in the existence of the Devil in order to believe that hundreds of murders were committed every year in his name. Together, anti-Satanists and counter-Satanists offered to law enforcement personnel lectures and seminars, from which a generation of "cult cops" eventually emerged. In turn, they tried to convince their colleagues that Satanism was a serious problem, which needed adequate attention, time, and resources.

Having attended a few seminars organized by activists, the cult cops started themselves offering lectures to high school teachers, parents, and professors, and a new network of "experts" of Satanism emerged. All these seminars and lectures went beyond the satanic murders and included references to satanic abuse of children, the experiences of the survivors, and even Satan's alarming presence in rock music and role-playing games. The cult cops compiled calendars of satanic holidays, in which it was more probable that murders would be committed, just as *Michelle Remembers* and the survivors had claimed. They added broadly illustrated lists of satanic symbols which, found at the scene of a crime, should put investigators on the track of Satanists. Since Pagan organizations often reacted with legal actions when their symbols were included, they added the disclaimer that Wicca and Paganism should not be confused with

260 See B. Ellis, "Legend Trips and Satanism: Adolescents' Ostensive Traditions as 'Cult' Activity", in J.T. Richardson, J. Best, D.G. Bromley (eds.), *The Satanism Scare*, cit., pp. 279–295; se also J.S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend*, cit., pp. 133–153.

Satanism and included in their ranks many responsible and decent citizens. Wiccans and Pagans, in turn, published their own educational materials, aimed at convincing law enforcement personnel that they were not Satanists and did not commit "ritual" crimes.[261] These distinctions, however, were often lost to the cult cops' audiences.

The cult cops of the 1980s and 1990s were part of a peculiar subculture. The seminars never managed to convince the FBI, nor the majority of law enforcement personnel in the larger American cities. Instead, they prospered in smaller towns, in rural areas, among simple agents, even if higher officials were occasionally involved. The model proposed in most seminars portrayed Satanism as a continuum, within which it distinguished four levels. The first, the less interesting for law enforcement, was the "religious Satanism" of the various Churches of Satan. The second was adolescent Satanism. The third was the "self-styled Satanism" of serial killers and others who tried to imitate Manson. Finally, the fourth and most dangerous level was "multi-generational" Satanism, the secret cult transmitted from generation to generation described by survivors.

Seminars were often organized by police departments, and had to remind their audiences of the principles of freedom of religion, from which even the Church of Satan should in principle benefit. But, in the course of the presentations, the themes of secular anti-Satanism subtly blended with that of religious counter-Satanism. Evangelical crusaders such as Warnke and Larson lectured in the seminars together with very secular therapists specializing in MPD. Rural law enforcement rarely objected. Surveys show that, when larger cities were excluded, Evangelicals were more numerous in the police than in any other American public institution.[262]

That a fundamentalist version of Evangelical Christianity was widespread among cult cops was proved by the fact that the most successful publication in their subculture was *File 18 Newsletter*, edited in Boise, Idaho, by Larry Jones, a lieutenant in the Boise Police Department who would eventually leave the police to pursue an activity as a full time counter-Satanist. *File 18 Newsletter*

261 See *Witchcraft, Satanism and Ritual Crime: Who's Who and What's What. A Manual of Reference Materials for the Professional Investigator*, 3rd ed., Ukiah (California): Green Egg, 1991.

262 See R.D. Hicks, *In Pursuit of Satan: The Police and the Occult*, cit. While Hicks, a criminologist, offered a skeptic and critical account, an apology for the cult cops was published by journalist Larry Kahaner, *Cults That Kill: Probing the Underworld of Occult Crime*, New York: Warner Books, 1988.

frequently featured articles by Evangelical preachers. It also contributed, more than any other source, to spreading the so called *WICCA Letters*, a document which was allegedly confiscated from Satanists and illustrated their plan to take control first of the United States and then of the world. Jones admitted in 1987 that the apocryphal *WICCA Letters* had been "developed" by his associate David Gaerin, a deputy sheriff from San Diego with fundamentalist leanings.[263]

Satan the Drug Dealer: The Tragedy of Matamoros

In 1989, a particularly brutal episode appeared to support the cult cops and others who were engaged in the hunt for Satanists. In March of that year, a Texas student, Mark Kilroy (1966–1989), disappeared after having been seen for the last time in a saloon in Matamoros, Mexico. Pressures from the United States induced the Mexican police to launch a large-scale search operation, which ended up in Rancho Santa Helena, not far from Matamoros, which served as the base for a sub-group of the Hernandez drug cartel, led by Adolfo de Jesús Constanzo (1962–1989). There, the police discovered the remains of Mark Kilroy and fourteen other people, who had been killed between May 1988 and March 1989. Most of the victims were rivals, traitors, police officers, and others who got in the way of Constanzo and his cartel. The police, however, found a *nganga*, the cauldron for sacrifices used in some forms of the Afro-American religion known as Palo Mayombe, magical literature, and ritual objects. Cartel members who turned against Constanzo testified that young Kilroy, as opposed to the previous victims, had been randomly selected in the street and then killed as a propitiatory sacrifice.

In a few days, the macabre discoveries at Matamoros, made headline news around the world, while the Mexican authorities tried to capture Constanzo and his companion Sara Aldrete, a young girl from a good middle class Mexican family who had studied physical education at Texas Southmost College in Brownsville, Texas. On May, 1989, the police discovered the apartment where Constanzo was hiding in Mexico City with Aldrete and two loyal followers. When the police officers knocked at his door, Constanzo, who preferred death to jail, asked one of his men to shoot him, while Aldrete was arrested. She would later be sentenced to 30 years in prison. The episode also inspired the 2007 film *Borderland*, directed by Zev Berman.

263 See *File 18 Newsletter*, February 22, 1987.

According to the media, a "Satanist cult" had been discovered.[264] In Mexico, both religious and secular literature hostile to the "cults" created a new category of Satanism, which was called "narco-Satanism".[265] The shadow of "narco-Satanism" did not fail to reach Ciudad Juarez, the Mexican city at the border with Texas devastated by the mysterious murders of several hundred young women, which started in 1993 and remain mostly unsolved to this date. Hollywood offered its own interpretation, not connected with Satanism, with the 2007 movie *Bordertown*, directed by Gregory Nava and starring Antonio Banderas and Jennifer Lopez, and the 2013–2014 TV series *The Bridge*, a remake of an earlier Danish series. In fact, no evidence that the Ciudad Juarez murders were connected with Satanism has emerged.

As for Constanzo, was he really a Satanist? He was born in 1962 in Miami's Little Havana. Reportedly, his mother initiated him into the Afro-Cuban religion of Santeria and when he moved to Mexico City in 1983 he added an initiation into Palo Mayombe. Constanzo was certainly interested in magic, and for a while he made a living as a tarot card reader. However, his rituals had also other sources. His accomplices revealed that he was a fan of the movie *The Believers*, directed in 1987 by John Schlesinger (1926–2003), which told the story of ritual crimes in New York connected with a perverted form of Santeria. Another source was Sara Aldrete.

Although she studied physical education, Aldrete was also interested in anthropology and religious studies. It is possible that some information on Afro-American religions and magic reached Constanzo not from the slums of Mexico City or Miami but from the courses at an American college, although Aldrete later claimed she invented some rituals based on the movie *The Believers* rather than of her academic studies.[266] At any rate, references to the Devil

264 For journalistic accounts of the Matamoros events, see Clifford L. Linedecker, *Hell Ranch: The Nighmare Tale of Voodoo, Drugs & Death in Matamoros*, Austin (Texas): Diamond Books, 1989; Gary Provost [1944–1995], *Across the Border: The True Story of the Satanic Cult Killings in Matamoros, Mexico*, New York: Pocket Books, 1989; Jim Schutze, *Cauldron of Blood*, New York: Avon, 1989. Mark Kilroy's father told his story in Jim Kilroy, with Bob Stewart, *Sacrifice: A Father's Determination to Turn Evil into Good*, New York: Avon, 1990. For a sociological perspective, see Thomas A. Green, "Accusations of Satanism and Racial Tensions in the Matamoros Cult Murders", in J.T. Richardson, J. Best, D.G. Bromley (eds.), *The Satanism Scare*, cit., pp. 237–248.

265 See Jorge Mejía Prieto, *Satanismo y sectas narcosatanicas en México y en el mundo*, Mexico City: Editorial Diana, 1989.

266 T.A. Green, "Accusations of Satanism and Racial Tensions in the Matamoros Cult Murders", cit., pp. 237–238.

in Matamoros were quite scarce. The human sacrifice of Mark Kilroy belonged more to a deviant form of the Afro-American religions than to Satanism.

Governmental Reports and the End of the Great Satanism Scare

For a while, the tragedy of Matamoros was used as evidence that deadly Satanist cults were indeed an international threat, by both secular[267] and religious opponents of Satanism. In 1989, the year of the Matamoros incident, a task force of the Los Angeles County Women Commission produced a report on ritual abuse that fully embraced the most alarming theories.[268] Anti-Satanism and counter-Satanism, however, ran into a number of unexpected difficulties and conflicts. We can distinguish three kinds of controversies, which in the end lead to the demise of the great Satanism scare.

First, academic scholars of new religious movements took an interest in Satanism and debunked the claims of anti-Satanist crusaders. They included David G. Bromley, a professor of Sociology at Virginia Commonwealth University;[269] James T. Richardson, a professor of Sociology and Law at the University of Nevada, Reno;[270] Jeffrey S. Victor, a sociologist with the State University of New York and later with the Jamestown Community College;[271] the American anthropologist Sherril Mulhern, at that time professor at the French University of Paris VII; Anson D. Shupe, a sociologist at Indiana Purdue University; and J. Gordon Melton, the leading American expert in new religious movements.[272]

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267 See for example M.D. Langone, Linda O. Blood, *Satanism and Occult-Related Violence: What You Should Know*, Weston (Massachusetts): American Family Foundation, 1990, pp. 11–13.

268 The Ritual Abuse Task Force, Los Angeles County Commission for Women, *Ritual Abuse: Definitions, Glossary, the Use of Mind Control*, Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Commission for Women, 1989.

269 See D.G. Bromley, "Satanism: The New Cult Scare", in J.T. Richardson, J. Best, D.G. Bromley (eds.), *The Satanism Scare*, cit., pp. 49–72; D.G. Bromley, "The Satanism Scare in the United States", in J.-B. Martin, M. Introvigne (eds.), *Le Défi Magique. II. Satanisme, Sorcellerie*, cit., pp. 49–64.

270 See J.T. Richardson, "Satanism in the Courts: From Murder to Heavy Metal", cit.

271 See J.S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend*, cit.

272 See J.G. Melton, *Encyclopedic Handbook of Cults in America*, New York, London: Garland, 1986, pp. 76–79 and 250–251; J.G. Melton, "The Evidences of Satan in Contemporary America: A Survey", unpublished paper presented at the conference of the Pacific Division of the American Philosophical Association, Los Angeles, 27–28 March 1986. In this paper, Melton also examined a prehistory of the anti-Satanist panic, when in the 1970s carcasses of killed and mutilated animals were found in different American States and

These academics, particularly Bromley and Melton, knew the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set very well, but insisted on the difference between these organizations and the imaginary stereotype of the Satanist cult created by the survivors and the literature against Satanism. Scholars also demonstrated that real Satanists in the United States were not hundreds of thousand, but a few thousands if not a few hundreds only. Curiously, in 1993, this position generated the protests of Blanche Barton, LaVey's companion, who thanked the scholars for debunking the wildest claims of anti-Satanists, but concluded that, by underestimating the Church of Satan, "academics who refuse to acknowledge a modern satanic movement are taking one step forward but two steps back".[273] Only in the 21st century, a new generation of academics would take modern Satanism more seriously.

In the 1990s, the academics were increasingly successful in influencing governments and public policies. In 1994, two official reports were prepared respectively by anthropologist Jean Sybil La Fontaine for the British government[274] and by a group coordinated by psychologist Gail S. Goodman for the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect in the United States.[275] The La Fontaine report described satanic ritual abuse as a largely imaginary evil, a social construction that became part of the professional folklore of certain therapists and social workers. According to the American report, cult cops, therapists, and Evangelical crusaders had informed the media of some 12,000 cases of satanic ritual abuse in the past fifteen years. Not even in one case was a satanic organization or cult discovered by the police and the courts, although in a handful of cases a single individual or a small group mentioned Satanism as a motivation for their crimes. The conclusion was that a very limited number of self-styled Satanists did commit crimes, but there was no conspiracy to systematically abuse children or sacrifice human beings to Satan by organized, international and "multi-generational" Satanist cults. The two 1994 reports were a severe blow for anti-Satanists and represented at least the beginning of the end for the great Satanism scare.

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were attributed to the rituals of mysterious satanic groups. Official investigations, however, concluded this was the work of stray dogs and predatory animals, whose teeth are often capable of creating precise cuts, which to some journalists appeared as clearly of human origin.

273 B. Barton, "Elbow-Patch Commandos", *The Black Flame*, vol. 4, 1993, pp. 3–4.

274 J.S. La Fontaine, *The Extent and Nature of Organised and Ritual Abuse*, London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1994.

275 Gail S. Goodman et al., *Characteristics and Sources of Allegations of Ritualistic Child Abuse*, Davis (California): National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1994.

Confronted with these problems, the fragile alliance between secular anti-Satanists and religious counter-Satanists slowly collapsed. They blamed each other for the lost credibility of their camp. A secular voice for the survivors, Lockwood, wrote that, among many doubts "'there is one reasonable certainty (...), there are no "spirits" or "demons" or "forces" other than those created by the human mind and projected or perceived as real, which are responsible for what humans are doing to other humans. The devil isn't making them do it. Humanity's worst is bad enough. We have never needed help from spirits'".[276] Religious counter-Satanists, on the other side, had as "the only reasonable certainty" exactly that the Devil existed, and started wondering whether secular therapists should really be trusted. In Peretti's novels, therapists were often among the villains and induced children of good Evangelical families to accuse their parents of abuses that never occurred. Secular survivors' spokesperson Margaret Smith answered with a statistics of her own, claiming that 22% of the perpetrators of ritual abuse were ministers, pastors, or priest[277] and 63% of the parents who initiated their children into Satanist cults were Evangelical Protestants, against 19% of Catholics and only 4% of atheists.[278] The cooperation between secular anti-Satanism and fundamentalist counter-Satanism was collapsing.

Both the secular and the religious camp also experienced internecine struggles. Earlier on in this book, I proposed a distinction between a "rationalist" and a "post-rationalist" wing of the movements against "cults", Freemasonry, Mormonism, and Satanism. "Rationalists" try to rely on empirically verifiable evidence, while "post-rationalists" use arguments that cannot be rationally proved or disproved. In the secular camp, the main "rationalist" organization that offered a criticism of "cults" and alleged paranormal phenomena was CSICOP, the Committee for the Scientific Investigation into the Claims of the Paranormal. In 1989, CSICOP produced a report on Satanism in America,[279] which systematically demolished both the theories of the supporters of the satanic conspiracy and their professional and scientific credentials. Although, quite understandably, the report mostly criticized Evangelical counter-Satanists, it

276 C. Lockwood, *Other Altars: Roots and Reality of Cultic and Satanic Ritual Abuse and Multiple Personality Disorder*, cit., p. 254.

277 M. Smith, *Ritual Abuse: What It Is, Why It Happens, and How to Help*, cit., p. 115.

278 *Ibid.*, p. 18.

279 Shawn Carlson, Gerald Larue [1916–2014], *Satanism in America: How the Devil Got Much More Than His Due*, Buffalo (New York): CSER, 1989; 2nd ed.: El Cerrito (California): Gaia Press, 1989. For the answer by the anti-cult camp, see M.D. Langone, L.O. Blood, "Interesting Times", *The Cultic Studies Journal*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1991, pp. 151–190.

also mentioned in its list of "non-experts" the secular anti-cult organization Cult Awareness Network and some of its directors.

The waters were not calmer in the religious counter-Satanist milieu. Here, naturally, everybody agreed on the fact that the Devil existed and Satanists were dangerous and harmful. On whether a great satanic conspiracy existed opinions were, on the other hand, divergent. We saw how journalists of *Cornerstone*, a conservative Evangelical magazine, exposed the frauds and exaggerations of characters such as Warnke or Stratford. In 1992, the leading Evangelical counter-cult publication, the *Christian Research Journal*, suggested that its readers interested in Satanism read the book *The Satanism Scare*, edited in 1991 by sociologists Richardson, Best and Bromley, a real Bible of skeptic academic research. The Evangelical journal concluded that "a careful investigation of the stories, the alleged victims, and the proponents has given us every reason to reject the satanic conspiracy".[280]

The authors of this 1992 article, Bob and Gretchen Passantino, also wrote for *Cornerstone*, and in 1991 published a book where they warned against the dangers of juvenile Satanism but declared at the same time that "as a general observation, adult survivor stories are not reliable" and the idea of a "multi-generational conspiratorial satanism" was a "urban myth".[281] Finally, in 1993, *Christianity Today*, the most authoritative magazine for American Evangelicals, mentioned the "lack of proof" in support of the thesis of a satanic conspiracy and invited its readers to a "healthy skepticism". The authors of the article were two Evangelical academics, sociologist Robin Perrin and psychologist Les Parrott III. They concluded with a Biblical quote from *Proverbs* 12:11: "he who chases fantasies lacks judgment".[282]

Naturally, the fear of being classified among those "lacking judgment" by the Bible did not stop the most aggressive theorists of the satanic conspiracy. Others had more doubts. Even Pazder, the psychiatrist who wrote *Michelle Remembers* in 1980, had concluded by 1994 that perhaps the survivors' accounts should better be understood as metaphors of incest endured at a young age outside

280 B. Passantino, G. Passantino, "The Hard Facts About Satanic Ritual Abuse", *Christian Research Journal*, vol. 14, no. 3, Winter 1992, pp. 20–23 and 32–34.

281 B. Passantino, G. Passantino, *When the Devil Dares Your Kids*, cit., p. 212.

282 Robin Perrin, Les Parrott III, "Memories of Satanic Ritual Abuse: The Truth Behind the Panic", *Christianity Today*, vol. 37, no. 7, June 21, 1993, pp. 19–23. In March 1994, *Christianity Today* recommended, with a favorable review, the work of the skeptical sociologist J.S. Victor (see Susan Bergman, "Rumors from Hell", *Christianity Today*, vol. 38, no. 3, March 7, 1994, pp. 36–37).

of any satanic context.[283] In 1990, among the protests of the survivors, the annual MPD conference in Chicago invited as speakers anthropologist Sherril Mulhern and psychologist Richard Noll, both well-known skeptics. From then on, yearly conferences on MPD (later renamed dissociative identity disorder, DID) increasingly featured lecturers such as psychiatrist George Ganaway, who stated they did "not believe there's any satanic conspiracy".[284]

Writing in 1993, Victor predicted a future of "marginalization" for anti-Satanism, as a phenomenon that would remain confined "to small towns and rural areas affected by lingering economic problems, and locations where there are many fundamentalists predisposed to be believers in a threat from secret satanic criminals".[285] At least in the United States, by the year 2000 the great Satanism scare had almost disappeared, replaced after 9/11 by the fear of Islamic radicalism and terrorism. Anti-Satanism, which was a large phenomenon in the 1980s and early 1990s, became truly marginalized in the 20th century, as had occurred before with the movements against Freemasonry, Catholicism, and Mormonism, once social movements of importance before being reduced to marginal concerns shared only by some sectors of the Evangelical and fundamentalist Protestantism.

On the other hand, academic scholars of the 1990s mostly focused on anti-Satanism and the controversies about satanic ritual abuse. They considered the Satanism of the LaVeys and the Aquinos as a marginal phenomenon, with little hope of surviving into the 21st century. The new century proved these predictions wrong.

Death of a Priest: The Sad Story of Father Giorgio Govoni

When in the 1990s, the hunt for satanic ritual abuse began to decline in the United States and Great Britain, although some cases would still appear later, it had just reached continental Western Europe, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. There, local Satanism scares continued well into the 21st century, with courts and medias not necessarily aware of the events that had surrounded

283 R. Perrin, L. Parrott III, "Memories of Satanic Ritual Abuse: The Truth Behind the Panic", cit., p. 23.

284 See the critical account by C. Lockwood, *Other Altars: Roots and Reality of Cultic and Satanic Ritual Abuse and Multiple Personality Disorder*, cit., pp. 13–17. By Richard Noll, see *Vampires, Werewolves, and Demons: Twentieth Century Reports in the Psychiatric Literature*, New York: Brunner/Madzel, 1992.

285 J. S Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend*, cit., p. 297.

the rise and fall of militant anti-Satanism in English-speaking countries. One of the most disturbing cases happened in Italy, where a portion of the social workers community was avidly reading American literature on ritual abuse and survivors.

Father Giorgio Govoni (1941–2000) was the esteemed Catholic parish priest of San Biagio di San Felice sul Panaro, a tiny village in the rural area known as Bassa Modenese, near the Central Italian city of Modena.[286] Among different good works, he tried to gather and help children from problematic families, whose parents were often in jail. This determined a conflict with a group of social workers, who saw in the priest's activities a competition by an amateur with what they were doing, for the benefit of the same children, on behalf of the State. As the conflict escalated, one particular social worker claimed that a child, then others, had reported to her that they were being abused by a Satanist cult.

On May 17, 1997, two men, father and son, were arrested in Massa Finalese, near Modena, accused of sexual abuse on the elder man's daughter and four-year old son. Based on the children's accounts, another six persons were involved in what the local prosecutor believed was a network of pedophiles. One of them, a woman, committed suicide, and another died of a heart attack. The others were found guilty at their 1998 trial, which did not include any reference to Satanism. The young girl involved was one of those helped by Father Govoni, who never met the younger brother. The latter, however, continued to tell new and more horrible stories to the social worker. Or so the latter claimed, supported by other social workers, since under Italian law a four-year-old boy cannot be interrogated by prosecutors or judges, and it is the social worker in charge who reports to the authorities what she has heard from the child.

According to the social worker's story, the young boy had been systematically abused in the course of satanic rituals held in local cemeteries. Worse still, in these rituals other children had been tortured and killed. No child had disappeared in the area in the previous decade, and no bodies were found, but the social worker, who was very familiar with the American literature of survivors, explained this with the activities of breeders and with the fact that Satanists were very skilled in disposing of bodies. She also claimed that the

286 See Andrea Menegotto, "Italian Martyrs of 'Satanism': Sister Maria Laura Mainetti and Father Giorgio Govoni", in J.Aa. Petersen (ed.), *Contemporary Religious Satanism: A Critical Anthology*, cit., pp. 199–209; Ettore Rovatti [1934–2015], *Don Giorgio Govoni. Martire della carità, vittima della giustizia umana*, Modena: Artioli, 2003. For this and other Italian cases, I also rely on my own files. As mentioned in the text, I was an expert witness for the defense in the case of Father Govoni.

corpses of some sacrificed children had been eaten in cannibalistic rituals. Other children were forced, she added, to dress as vampires or tigers and to drink the blood of the adult Satanists in order to be initiated as "children of the Devil". Every week generated a new revelation, and a mysterious satanic leader started emerging called "the doctor" or "the mayor", whose first name was "Giorgio". This is not an uncommon name in Italy, but was also the first name of Father Govoni.

In September 1997, the social worker, who already disliked the priest, started claiming that he was the leader of a dangerous group of Satanists. On September 13, she leaked the information to the media. The following day, September 14, was a Sunday, and Father Giorgio at the end of the Mass read a message proclaiming his innocence. He was immediately supported by his Archbishop, Mgr. Benito Cocchi (1934–2016), by his fellow priests of the area, and by his community. This support never wavered, although Modena's district attorney did believe the social worker, investigated Father Giorgio, and committed him to trial in 1999.

In the meantime, the social worker interviewed another thirteen children and identified fifteen adults as members of the Satanist cult. Among the details that emerged, it was claimed that Father Giorgio personally operated a guillotine to behead children during the satanic masses, whose corpses were then thrown in the nearby river. Cemeteries were excavated and the river was dredged, with costs in excess of $150,000, but no corpses or bones were found. The priest was also accused of an insatiable sexual appetite during the orgies following the satanic rituals, although a medical examination later revealed that he had in fact become impotent after an accident he suffered as a young man.

The trial took place in Modena in 2000. I testified, in writing as it is customary in Italy, as an expert witness for the defense and pointed out that most of the details reported by the social workers came from available literature about American cases, including the McMartin Preschool's saga. I also interviewed Father Govoni, reviewed the depositions of the social workers, and concluded that, while some of the children were probably victims of domestic sexual abuses, the story of the Satanist cult was totally imaginary.

On May 16, 2000, the prosecutor reiterated in his final conclusions that the priest was indeed the leader of a homicidal Satanist cult. Three days later, in the office of his lawyer, while reviewing the prosecutor's speech, Father Govoni died of a heart attack. Archbishop Cocchi celebrated his funeral, assisted by three other Bishops and more than one hundred priests, with thousands in attendance. The Archbishop also ordered that a plaque be placed in San Biagio's parish church honoring Govoni as "a priest who helped those in need and an innocent victim of slander".

The verdict of the Court of Modena was handed down on June 5, 2000, and found fifteen defendants guilty of sexual abuse, although no homicides had been proved. The verdict made it clear that the judges also regarded Father Govoni as guilty and believed in most stories of satanic abuse. At the announcement of the verdict, the bells of all local churches tolled in mourning, in what was one of the most spectacular conflicts between the Catholic Church and the State in post-World War II Italy. The Archdiocese did not limit itself to protests, but promptly filed an appeal aimed at vindicating the memory of Father Govoni.

Both the Court of Appeal of Bologna in 2001 and the Court of Cassation, Italy's court of final recourse, in 2002, overturned the first degree decision and accepted my hypothesis that social workers impressed by American cases had invented the Bassa Modenese's Satanist cult. Some of the defendants were recognized as guilty of domestic sexual abuses, but the decisions made clear that there had been no rituals in cemeteries and no Satanist cults. The only fault of Father Govoni had been to pick up a fight with the social workers and to try to help some children who had been abused by their parents and relatives. The appellate judges reached this conclusion more easily after they had learned that the main social worker involved in the Modena case had moved, together with her star witness, the child who started the case, to two other Italian cities, and in each one had "discovered" Satanist cults, of which no evidence was ever found by the police. This time, the bells of Modena Catholic churches tolled in jubilation. In 2007, Archbishop Cocchi inaugurated a hospice for the poor near Father Govoni's former parish that bears his name. Every year, his death is remembered with a candlelight vigil, and there is a movement asking the Vatican to consider the unfortunate priest as a candidate for beatification.

In the meantime, the other defendants who had been found guilty of crimes related to the satanic abuses also filed their appeals. Most were cleared of all accusations, including the local schoolmistress, who had been accused by the social workers of being the priest's "girlfriend" and the co-leader of the Satanist cult. The longest lasting case involved Delfino Covezzi (1959–2013) and his wife Lorena. After the social workers had suggested that their four children had been victims of Father Govoni's Satanist cult, the Covezzis reacted quite strongly, supporting the priest and arguing that the whole story was a political fabrication.

As a result, on November 12, 1998, the police raided their home in the early morning and placed their children in the custody of the social workers. There, they "remembered" having been taken by their parents to cemeteries, where they had been abused by Father Govoni and the Satanists. In 2002, the Covezzis were found guilty and sentenced to twelve years of prison, although

the decision was not enforceable pending their appeal, and Lorena had moved to France with their fifth child, to be as far as possible from the social workers. The Covezzis sought the help of their senator, Carlo Giovanardi, who had also been a friend of Father Govoni, and started making noise about their case. It took three trials and twelve years of hotly contested court cases before the couple was finally cleared of all accusations on December 4, 2014. Only the wife was in court that day to celebrate the verdict. Her husband had died of a heart attack on August 8, 2013.

The Modena Satanism scare became the model for other Italian cases. In 2010, the Court of Cassation confirmed the innocence of a priest and five teachers of a public pre-school in Brescia called Sorelli, who had been accused of operating a Satanist cult that routinely abused children. In 2007, Italian media discovered another preschool in Rignano Flaminio, near Rome, whose name was Olga Rovere. There, according to the accusations, satanic rituals were a daily occurrence, children were raped by teachers and their friends dressed as demons, and a teacher had burned a crucifix in front of the children shouting that Jesus was evil and Satan was good.[287] The teachers spent several months in jail, before being found not guilty both in the first-degree trial in 2007 and on appeal in 2014.

In 2002, in Pescara, four people were accused of having organized a Satanist cult known as the Angels of Sodom, which abused minors in local cemeteries. Their leader, Gianni Carbotti, was accused of luring teenagers into his satanic rites by dressing as a priest and introducing himself as "Reverend Jan Ash". This story was popularized by Father Aldo Buonaiuto, a well-known Italian counter-Satanist priest and a consultant to the Italian police.[288] At trial, in 2006, two of the defendants were acquitted, while Carbotti, who was sentenced to nine years of prison, and one accomplice were found guilty of operating a drug dealing ring and having illegally entered a cemetery where they had organized a drug party. In all this there was a macabre touch, but the court found no evidence of satanic rites and stated that "Angels of Sodom" was just a nickname given to the drug dealers by the police.

Real abuses happened in the Bassa Modenese case. Children were abused by their parents and relatives, some of them ex-convicts who operated a

287 For a journalistic account, see Claudio Cerasa, *Ho visto l'uomo nero. L'inchiesta sulla pedofilia a Rignano Flaminio tra dubbi, sospetti e caccia alle streghe*, Rome: Castelvecchi, 2007.

288 See his book: Aldo Buonaiuto, *Le mani occulte. Viaggio nel mondo del satanismo*, Brescia: Città Nuova, 2005.

prostitution ring. As it happened before in other countries,[289] the hunt for non-existing Satanist cults made the identification of the real perpetrators much more difficult, and it took more than a decade for the courts to sort out facts from fiction. Although these cases made Italian prosecutors more skeptic about claims of satanic abuse, there is still a handful of Catholic priests and anti-cultists in Italy claiming that hundreds of secret, criminal Satanist cults operate in the country. Similar Satanism scares continue to appear from time to time in Latin America and Eastern Europe.

289 See Joan Acocella, *Creating Hysteria: Women and Multiple Personality Disorder*, San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1999.

CHAPTER 12

Satan the Musician: Black Metal and Satanism

The Gothic Milieu

The Gothic milieu, occasionally called the Dark Wave, as a sub-milieu of the 1970s' New Wave, was largely created by rock music, although fiction, comics, movies, and role-playing games also had a relevant influence. Although the term "Gothic" was created by outsiders, it was quickly accepted by the movement. Gothic music should not be confused with Heavy Metal. Metal played on the power of extreme human emotions and feelings. Gothic concentrated on human reactions to particular emotions associated with death, corpses, blood, the macabre, and vampires. The Devil was often mentioned but he was not always a key player in the Gothic scene. Besides, Satan was mentioned in many brands of rock music that were not Gothic. *Sympathy for the Devil*, a 1968 song by the Rolling Stones where the Devil tells his story in the first person as a "man of wealth and taste" is just one among many examples. Music critic Peter Bebergal argued that occult and Satanic themes in fact revitalized rock music in the late 1960s and early 1970s, offering the Rolling Stones as an example.[1] The reverse is also true: music, and other forms of popular culture, somewhat revitalized Satanism.[2]

The origins of Gothic came from many different sources. Gothic themes emerged in the late 1960s in England and the United States with artists and groups like Alice Cooper (pseud. of Vincent Damon Furnier), Coven, and Black Widow. Almost simultaneously, the most ancient significant references to Satan were introduced to rock music by Coven, an American psychedelic rock band founded in Chicago in 1967, which explicitly sought the patronage of the Church of Satan,[3] and Black Widow, a British group in the progressive rock current that debuted in Leicester in 1970 as the new version of a band active from

1 Peter Bebergal, *Season of the Witch: How the Occult Saved Rock and Roll*, New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2014, pp. 77–79.

2 See C. Partridge, Eric Christianson (eds.), *The Lure of the Dark Side: Satan and Western Demonology in Popular Culture*, London: Equinox, 2009; and A. Dyrendal, "Satanism and Popular Music", *ibid.*, pp. 25–38.

3 See B.H. Olson, "I Am the Black Wizards: Multiplicity, Mysticism and Identity in Black Metal Music and Culture", M.A. Thesis, Bowling Green (Ohio): Bowling Green State University, 2008, p. 11.

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1966 under the name Pesky Gee. At the end of their first album, *Witchcraft Destroys Minds & Reaps Soul* (1969), Coven included thirteen minutes of a spoken word ritual they called a "Satanic Mass". As Bebergal later commented, it "claimed authenticity but was a mix of popular novels on Satanism, some medieval sources, and even some Crowley".[4] Coven may also have been the first band to routinely "throw horns", i.e. salute its audience with the two-finger sign of the horns,[5] although the sign already appeared in The Beatles' movie *Yellow Submarine* (1968).

Black Widow came into contact with the flamboyant Alex Sanders (1926–1988), the controversial self-styled "King of the Witches" who started the Alexandrian tradition of Wicca. Sanders even "loaned" his high priestess, and later wife, Maxine Morris, for two Black Widow ritualistic live shows.[6] While Christian critics later mentioned the Sanders connection as evidence of Black Widow's Satanism, in fact in Sanders' magical system satanic elements were conspicuous only for their absence.[7] Although not all these musicians were technically Gothic, fans of Alice Cooper were largely responsible for introducing the Gothic outlook, with its black-leather clothing and silver earrings for males, in many European countries. In 1976, in England, David Letts founded The Damned, a band that was originally a punk group, but later moved to Gothic. Letts changed his name to David Vanian (from "Transylvanian") and focused on the vampire theme.

Nazi symbols were also occasionally introduced. In the same year 1976, Bernard Sumner, Peter Hook, Ian Curtis (1957–1980), and Terry Mason, later replaced by Stephen Morris, decided to start a band in Manchester. Originally called Warsaw, it changed its name to Joy Division in 1978 in order not to be confused with a pre-existing London punk group, Warsaw Pakt.[8] The name Joy Division came from the line of huts where young deported women were forced to prostitute themselves to German soldiers in Nazi concentration camps. Notwithstanding the name, Joy Division denied any Nazi sympathies, and in fact appeared at the Manchester Rock Against Racism benefit concert in 1978. Joy Division eluded classification, but its haunted and ghostly atmospheres had a

4 P. Bebergal, *Season of the Witch: How the Occult Saved Rock and Roll*, cit., p. 116.

5 *Ibid.*

6 The story is told in the Black Widow's Web site: "Alex Sanders (1926–88) – King of the Witches", available at <http://www.blackwidow.org.uk/sanders.htm>, last accessed on October 15, 2015.

7 See P. Bebergal, *Season of the Witch: How the Occult Saved Rock and Roll*, cit., pp. 116–117.

8 On Joy Division, see Deborah Curtis, *Touching from a Distance: Ian Curtis and Joy Division*, London: Faber and Faber, 1995; and Peter Hook, *Unknown Pleasures: Inside Joy Division*, London: Simon and Schuster, 2012.

deep influence on later Gothic. On May 18, 1980, just before Joy Division was to leave England for their first U.S. tour, Ian Curtis hung himself in his kitchen. Without its talented singer and lyricist, replaced by Bernard Sumner, the group continued as New Order, a name referring to the political order Nazi Germany wanted to impose in Europe after its military expansion, and remained influential on the alternative but much less on the Gothic music scene.

In the years when Joy Division was becoming popular, a more cultivated version of Gothic was introduced in England by singer Suzie Sioux (Susan Janet Ballion, "Siouxsie"). Sioux came from punk, and was inspired by groups like the Sex Pistols. An artist who was influential on this milieu was Genesis P-Orridge (Neil Andrew Megson), an Aleister Crowley enthusiast and the founder in 1975 of the British band Throbbing Gristle with Peter Christopherson (1955–2010), Chris Carter, and Cosey Fanni Tutti (Christine Newby). The band was at the origin of the industrial music, and Orridge was a friend of Curtis and knew Sioux. In 1982, Orridge and Christopherson founded the Temple of Psychick Youth (TOPY). Orridge's music was not Gothic, but his influence did much to introduce Crowley in the Gothic milieu. Later, Orridge would become an inspiration for the birth of the "second wave" of industrial music, much closer to Gothic. This further subgenre would emerge in the late 1980s around the Wax Trax circle in Chicago, would become well known with the Nine Inch Nails of Trent Reznor and their influential album *Pretty Hate Machine* (1989), and would eventually influence Marilyn Manson. In the late 1970s, Sioux founded Siouxsie and The Banshees. Robert Smith, the leader of a much more famous band, The Cure, worked with Siouxsie and the Banshees in 1983–1984 following four influential Cure albums.

Largely responsible for defining Gothic as a genre was Bauhaus, whose leader Peter Murphy continued as a popular Gothic musician after the dissolution of the group in 1983. By 1983, the year when another early Gothic group, The Misfits, also separated, Gothic music was experiencing a boom. New groups emerged, including The Sisters of Mercy and later, in 1988, Dark Theater whose leader, Vlad (Scott Vladimir Licina), used to wear portable fangs and claim to actually drink blood. The name Vlad, or Vlad Tepes, was adopted by several musicians and bands, not all of them Gothic. It comes from Prince Vlad III of Wallachia (1431–1476), nicknamed "Țepeș" (Impaler) and also referred to as Vlad Dracula, meaning "son of Dracul", i.e. of Vlad II (?–1447), in turn nicknamed Dracul (Dragon). The name of Vlad Dracula was used by the Irish novelist Bram Stoker (1847–1912) for the main vampire character in his phenomenally successful 1897 novel *Dracula*.[9] Blood-drinkers were a small distinct

9 Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, London: Archibald Constable and Co., 1897.

subculture within the Gothic milieu, perhaps closer to sado-masochism than to mainline Gothic. Contrary to some media accounts, most of them had nothing to do with Satanism.

While classic punk was experiencing a crisis, Gothic groups, including the 45 Grave, inherited some of its features and fans. By 1990, the Gothic scene was truly international, with bands in countries such as Japan, Sweden, Finland, New Zealand, Poland, and Italy, in addition to Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The Gothic subculture was well established, with specialized magazines, including *Propaganda*, established in New York by photographer Fred H. Berger and perhaps the most important voice for the Gothic, and *Ghastly*.

Non-Gothic groups such as Kiss felt compelled to issue at least an album with Gothic themes. Kiss' macabre attire later inspired Black Metal, although they had no special interest in the occult. Christian counter-cultists, however, spread the rumor that their name was really an acronym for "Knights In Service of Satan".[10] On the other hand, readers of *Propaganda* and other members of the Gothic subculture typically skipped the most famous groups as being too commercial. They rather regarded themselves as part of an elite subculture, lionized less well-known groups, and remained apart from the larger world of rock fans. Being part of the Gothic milieu for many was not a Saturday evening affair, but a permanent lifestyle. "True" Goths dressed in black every day of the week, wore peculiar jewelry, and used their own jargon. Rather macabre allusions and jokes were a trademark feature of their style. Their meaning was often lost to outsiders, who frequently mistook Goths for Satanists.

Around 1990, the Gothic milieu, born from music, started to be increasingly defined by its literary preferences as well, focusing on Anne Rice's vampire novels. Gothic events, including the 1989 Theatre of the Vampires held in Long Beach, California, musicians such as Tony Lestat, a main participant in the 1989 event and the singer of the band Wreckage, shows such as Tony Sokol's *La Commedia Del Sangue, Dances from a Shallow Grave* and *The Vampyr Theatre*, Gothic bands such as Lestat, and the Italian Theatre des Vampires, fanzines such as *Savage Garden*, all borrowed their names, and much more, from Rice. Later, in 1992, another female New Orleans horror writer, Poppy Z. Brite, wrote a cult novel for the Gothic milieu, *Lost Souls*, featuring the encounter of real undead vampires with the American Gothic subculture.[11]

As of the early and mid-1990s, the very success of the Gothic threatened its existence as a separate genre in rock music. Contemporary rock was eclectic,

10 See B. Ellis, *Raising the Devil: Satanism, New Religions and the Media*, cit., p. 270.

11 See Poppy Z. Brite, *Lost Souls*, New York: Delacorte Press, 1992.

and it was often difficult to tell what genre a group was part of. Such labels as punk, with its disparate subgenres, and garage rock were difficult to define and often included Gothic themes. If anything, some of the new labels meant to convey a passion for the outrageous and the extreme, and regarded the Gothic bands of the 1970s and early 1980s as moderate. This wish to scandalize often used the name and image of Satan.

The First Wave of Black Metal

On November 13, 2015, terrorists associated with ISIS attacked the Bataclan theatre in Paris and started killing those attending a concert there. Before the French police entered the theatre, 89 were dead. Playing at the Bataclan that day was a band called Eagles of Death Metal. One of their songs was called *Kiss the Devil*, and proclaimed "I will love the Devil" and "I will kiss the Devil on his tongue". Both Muslim and Christian fundamentalists around the world commented that "Satanists" had been punished, and connected the band with satanic themes in the Heavy Metal music in general. In fact, this was a misunderstanding. The members of Eagles of Death Metal have no connection with Satanism, their references to the Devil notwithstanding. Neither are they part of Heavy Metal or its subgenre Death Metal. Their genre is rock rather than metal, and the name "Eagles of Death Metal" came from a conversation with a drunken man in a bar, which led the band to wonder how a cross between the well-known American rock band Eagles and Death Metal would look like.[12] The Paris tragedy, however, generated a new interest on the connection between Metal music and Satanism.

While "Gothic" increasingly defined an aesthetic and a lifestyle rather than a specific musical genre, "Heavy Metal" (or simply "Metal") originated as a label for a distinctive kind of music, characterized by heavy drums and bass, distorted guitars, and a macabre and transgressive vocal style including screams and growls. Those in the Metal subculture often insist that their music and lifestyle have "nothing to do with goth",[13] although a certain influence of the earlier Gothic milieu is hard to deny.

12 See Converse music.co.uk, "Eagles of Death Metal Interview", available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9AEh5s3wdw>. In an alternative version, the band claimed that "the Eagles of Death Metal" was originally how a friend designated the Polish Death Metal band Vader. They liked so much the name that they adopted it for themselves. See Sarah Borufka, "Putting Some Fun in Death Metal", *The Prague Post*, March 12, 2009.

13 B.H. Olson, "I Am the Black Wizards: Multiplicity, Mysticism and Identity in Black Metal Music and Culture", cit., p. 18.

In fact, within the general category of Heavy Metal, several violent subgenres appeared such as Speed Metal, Thrash Metal, Doom Metal, and Death Metal, some of them mentioned together as Extreme Metal,[14] and it is often difficult even for the specialist to classify each band in the appropriate category.[15] While a specific subgenre, Black Metal, was more especially connected with Satanism, references to Satan and the occult appeared from the very origins of Heavy Metal.

The group more often credited with creating, or at least defining, the earlier incarnation of Heavy Metal, Black Sabbath, included mentions of Satan in its songs since the foundation of the band in Birmingham around Ozzy Osbourne in 1968.[16] Its vocalist Ronnie James Dio (Ronnie James Padavona, 1942–2010) popularized the gesture of "throwing horns", which had already been adopted by Coven, in the international Heavy Metal culture. Dio, however, maintained that the gesture was not satanic. "It's NOT the devil's sign, Dio insisted, like we're here with the devil. It's an Italian thing I got from my Grandmother [...]. It's to ward off the Evil Eye or to give the Evil Eye, depending on which way you do it. It's just a symbol but it had magical incantations and attitudes to it and I felt it worked very well with Sabbath".[17]

Black Sabbath's relationship with religion was somewhat ambiguous and was often misunderstood. Bassist Terence Michael Joseph "Geezer" Butler and lead guitarist Anthony Frank "Tony" Jommi were raised Catholics, and maintained that their worldview always remained Christian. They mentioned Satan and evil in their songs because, Butler explained, "we weren't interested in writing songs about the 'nice' things in the world – everyone else was writing about that. We wanted to inject some reality into music".[18] Their lyrics, however, ultimately affirmed God's power over Satan. Black Sabbath's song *After Forever* in their 1971 album *Master of Reality* was referred to as "the first Christian rock

14 See Keith Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2007.

15 As an example of these problems, Kahn-Harris (*ibid.*, pp. 3–4) includes Grindcore as a fifth subgenre that is part of Extreme Metal (with Thrash Metal, Death Metal, Doom Metal, and Black Metal). He describes Grindcore as "a punk-influenced radicalization of death metal". Others deny that Grindcore is part of Heavy Metal at all.

16 See Steven Rosen, *Black Sabbath*, London: Sanctuary, 2000.

17 EvilG, "Ronnie James Dio Interviewed", *Metal Rules* (online), March 9, 2001, available at <http://www.metal-rules.com/zine/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=666>, last accessed on December 17, 2015 (capitals in original).

18 Jeff Giles, "Geezer Butler Shrugs Off Black Sabbath's Satanic Image: 'People Like to Find Negative in Everything'", *Ultimate Classic Rock* (online), June 11, 2015, available at <http://ultimateclassicrock.com/black-sabbath-satanic>, last accessed on December 17, 2015.

song",[19] and admonished the band's audience: "Perhaps you'll think before you say that God is dead and gone. Open your eyes, just realize that he's the one. The only one who can save you now from all this sin and hate".

Other British groups, including Led Zeppelin and Deep Purple, also had an influence on the birth of Heavy Metal. In the mid-1970s, the so-called "British New Wave of Heavy Metal" (BNWHM) emerged, defined by bands such as Iron Maiden and Motörhead. The BNWHM in turn influenced the first American Heavy Metal groups and the birth of Extreme Metal. The latter became popular with two American bands that debuted in 1983, Metallica and Slayer. The subgenre, in this case, was Thrash Metal, but Death Metal, Speed Metal, and Doom Metal followed in the mid- and late 1980s.[20] Slayer "emphasized a 'Satanic' image from the start",[21] as did three German Thrash Metal groups created in the same year, 1982: Kreator, Sodom, and Destruction. It has been argued, however, that Slayer's "Satanism was almost exclusively for show and provocation. Singer Tom Araya is, in fact, a professed Catholic and his explanations of his musical forays into Satanism are confusing at best".[22] Indeed, not all Metal groups are against Christianity. Christian Metal has emerged as a subgenre involving hundreds of bands and thousands of fans in different countries.[23]

Death Metal was the most radical form of Extreme Metal available before Black Metal was born. Several leading Death Metal bands had satanic lyrics, including American group Morbid Angel, which contributed to make Tampa, Florida, a world capital of the subgenre between the late 1980s and the mid-1990s.[24] Another American Death Metal band, Deicide, had a singer, Glen Benton, whom Per Faxneld described as "the most vocal and fanatical Satanist in music, before being surpassed by Nordic radicals".[25] Deicide would in turn

19 *Ibid.*

20 See K. Granholm, "'Sons of Northern Darkness': Heathen Influences in Black Metal and Neofolk Music", *Numen*, vol. 58, no. 4, 2011, pp. 514–544 (pp. 524–525).

21 Dayal Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, Port Townsend (Washington): Feral House, 2013, p. 65. Patterson's books include an invaluable number of interviews with Black Metal musicians, both original and reprinted from hard-to-find fanzines, to which I will often refer in this chapter.

22 B.H. Olson, "I Am the Black Wizards: Multiplicity, Mysticism and Identity in Black Metal Music and Culture", cit., p. 17.

23 See Marcus Moberg, *Christian Metal: History, Ideology, Scene*, London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.

24 See K. Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*, cit., pp. 103–104.

25 Per Faxneld, "Bleed for the Devil: Self-injury as Transgressive Practice in Contemporary Satanism, and the Re-enchantment of Late Modernity", *Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2014, pp. 101–132 (p. 110).

inspire Ferocity, a minor Italian Death Metal band created as a front for the Satanist group Beasts of Satan, discussed in the next chapter.

Entombed, a prominent group within the Scandinavian branch of Death Metal, debuted in 1990 with an album significantly called *Left Hand Path*, which became a classic of the subgenre. The band stated that it had found the term, and inspiration for its lyrics, in LaVey's *The Satanic Bible*.[26] Satanism did not disappear from Death Metal in later years either. A British band, Akercocke, founded in 1997 and active until late 2011, was involved in several controversies because of its extreme anti-Christian and Satanist lyrics.

Benton, according to Faxneld, also performed acts of self-injury and was the first to frame "self-injury as an act of Satanic devotion".[27] Self-injury, both onstage and off-stage, would become an important part of Black Metal, together with "corpsepaint", a black-and-white makeup making the musicians appear corpse-like and demonic. Both practices were not invented by Black Metal, nor by Metal in general, but Black Metal was the first subgenre that converted them into ritualistic homages and sacrifices to Satan. In fact, some Black Metal musicians even argued that corpsepaint and similar practices were "ritualistic means of inviting the deity, or 'inner demons', to inhabit the participant and manifest itself/themselves on stage".[28]

There was a clear difference, however, between Death Metal and Black Metal. "Insofar as death metal was interested in Satanism, Olson argued, it was an interest based on provocation and rebellion rather than spirituality. The gore-oriented death metal bands were discussing death and horror as a means of confronting and overcoming them. Satan, zombies and serial killers are all lumped into the same category in death metal". With Black Metal, Satan moved to the center stage. At least for some groups, "black metal songs are meant to be like Calvinist sermons; deadly serious attempts to unite the true believers under the twin banners of Satan and misanthropy".[29]

Black Metal emerged in the 1980s as the most extreme subgenre of Metal. The relation of Black Metal with the other subgenres is not one of total discontinuity. As Keith Kahn-Harris observes, "commonalities exist between black

26 See J.[ohn] Bennett, "Left Hand Legacy: The Making of Entombed's *Left Hand Path*", in Albert Mudrian (ed.), *Precious Metal: Decibel Presents the Stories Behind 25 Extreme Metal Masterpieces*, Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2009, pp. 109–119 (p. 113).

27 Per Faxneld, "Bleed for the Devil: Self-injury as Transgressive Practice in Contemporary Satanism, and the Re-enchantment of Late Modernity", cit., p. 111.

28 B.H. Olson, "I Am the Black Wizards: Multiplicity, Mysticism and Identity in Black Metal Music and Culture", cit., p. 48.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

metal discourses and other within the [Extreme Metal] scene as a whole".[30] Although occasional mentions of Satan and occult interests may be found in all the subgenres of Heavy Metal, the focus on Satanism became a trademark feature of Black Metal. Generally credited with starting Black Metal is a British band, Venom. Formed in 1979 in Newcastle by members of previously existing bands, including Guillotine and Oberon, Venom introduced Satanism as a main Heavy Metal theme. Venom's *Welcome to Hell* (1981) was the first Black Metal album. It was followed by *Black Metal* (1982), which gave the name to the subgenre and became an anthem for the movement. Venom's classic trilogy was completed in 1984 with *At War with Satan*.

Proclaiming themselves the "Sons of Satan", Venom's musicians called in *Welcome to Hell* to "live like an angel, die like a devil". Their singer assured that he "got a place in hell reserved for me, (…) gonna burn in Hell, that's where I'm gonna be". Another of Venom's most famous songs was significantly called *In League with Satan* (1981): "I'm in league with Satan, I was raised in Hell, I walk the streets of Salem"….

There was something new with respect to groups like Black Sabbath. The latter merely described scenes of Satanism and witchcraft. Venom wanted to move from the third to the first person and proclaim to the world that the band's musicians were actually Satanists. As one of them explained, "I'm not gonna sing about Satanism in the third party, I'm going to fucking speak about it as if I'm the demon, or I'm Satan".[31] Guitarist Conrad Lant (Cronos) explained that two other members of Venom, Tony Bray and Jeff Dunn, took their stage names Abaddon and Mantas "from [LaVey's] *The Satanic Bible*".[32] The cover art of their albums was also often borrowed from publications of the Church of Satan.

Not everybody took all this seriously. In his fieldwork among Black Metal fans, Kahn-Harris found "a clear consensus that the band were not 'really' Satanists and that their attitude to Satanism was tongue-in-check".[33] Faxneld also believes that Venom's so called Satanism was "never more than kitschy entertainment",[34] and Olson describes it as "largely a promotional technique".[35]

30 K. Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*, cit., pp. 41–42.

31 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 10.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

33 K. Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*, cit., p. 150.

34 P. Faxneld, "Bleed for the Devil: Self-injury as Transgressive Practice in Contemporary Satanism, and the Re-enchantment of Late Modernity", cit., p. 43.

35 B.H. Olson, "I Am the Black Wizards: Multiplicity, Mysticism and Identity in Black Metal Music and Culture", cit., p. 14.

Certainly, Venom's satanic references were different from those of later Norwegian bands. They were to LaVey, and one can argue that the Black Pope himself was more than occasionally guilty of "kitschy entertainment". LaVey would have replied that kitsch, parody, and Satanism are not mutually exclusive. When, later, Norwegian Black Metal bands took their grim Satanism so seriously that they "claimed never to laugh",[36] others poked fun at them with fake interviews and comics, and even parody bands were started.[37] These parodies often came from the Extreme Metal milieu itself, occasionally from people who claimed that their more relaxed lifestyle was no less satanic than the misanthropic Satanism of the Scandinavian musicians they criticized.

Venom started what is often called the first wave of Black Metal. In Kennet Granholm's opinion, Satanism is normally more connected with the second wave, but this is only partially true. If anything, "the 'first wave of Black Metal' was far more explicitly Satanic when it comes to lyrical content". The second wave certainly included Satanist groups but most of its components, Granholm argued, eventually evolved from Satanism to Nordic forms of Neopaganism.[38] On the other hand, one can ask whether the first wave bands really took Satanism seriously, and there were second waves groups that never abandoned Satanism. And the distinction between the first and the second wave is not clear-cut. As Dayal Patterson observed, "far from being two entirely separate entities, the 'first wave' gently bled into the 'second wave' as the eighties ended".[39]

There was, however, a difference. The first wave was characterized by frequent references to LaVeyan Satanism, while the second wave was critical of LaVey. After Venom, the most important groups of the first wave were Mercyful Fate, Bathory, and Hellhammer. Mercyful Fate was formed in 1981 in Denmark around Kim Bendix Petersen, who had already performed with other bands under the name King Diamond. Besides using on stage a microphone stand made of human bones, Diamond was the first Black Metal musician who actually joined the Church of Satan.

When LaVey learned that one of his Danish followers was a well-known musician, he invited him to San Francisco. "I was so fortunate, Diamond later recalled, to be invited to the Church of Satan in San Francisco and spend the whole night there with Anton LaVey". The musician "spent two hours in the ritual chamber with him at a time when it had not been open to anyone

36 K. Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*, cit., p. 150.

37 See *ibid.*, pp. 148–149.

38 K. Granholm, "'Sons of Northern Darkness': Heathen Influences in Black Metal and Neofolk Music", cit., p. 527.

39 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 58.

but him. It was reenergizing energy and I believe I was the only one who had been there in the last year and half at that time. It was very interesting and we became… I can't say *close* friends, but friends who had a high respect for each other". "If you're referring to the philosophy that LaVey has in his book [*The Satanic Bible*], yes, I lived by that philosophy even before I read that book, if that makes me a Satanist, then yes I am".[40] As Patterson comments, much more than with Venom, "a line had been drawn in the sand: there were now bands who believed and practiced in Satanism and those who merely sang about it".[41]

Bathory took its name from the infamous Hungarian countess Elizabeth Báthory (1560–1614), who killed hundreds of girls to bathe in their blood, persuaded this would make her younger. The band was started in Sweden in 1983 by Thomas Börje Forsberg ("Quorthon", 1966–2004), and was originally very much influenced by Venom, but by 1987, with *Under the Sign of the Black Mark*, started evolving towards a new style, later called modern or Viking Metal. Violent anti-Christian polemics and provocation were always a trademark feature of Bathory, but it was by listening to Venom that they "'deepen[ed]' the Satanic aspect", as Quorthon reported.[42] Members of the band, however, "were not serious Satanists", according to an interview the same Quorthon granted to Per Faxneld in 1995.[43]

The Swiss group Hellhammer, founded by Tom Gabriel Fischer, aka Tom G. Warrior, was in existence with this name only between 1982 and 1984 but was one of the bands that defined Black Metal. Their second demo, dated 1983, was called *Satanic Rites*. A decisive influence on Hellhammer was the Swiss surrealist painter Hans Ruedi Giger (1940–2014). Images of Satan and Baphomet often appeared in his paintings, including in the celebrated *Satan I*, where the Devil is holding the crucified Jesus in one hand and a string with a Catholic host wafer in the other. Although Giger gave a Jungian interpretation of Satan, as the shadow we need to embrace in order to complete our spiritual evolution,[44] in late 1983 he answered a letter from Fischer and granted to Hellhammer the right to use *Satan I* in their shows and covers. According to Fischer, Giger "could indeed see parallels between our music and his work" and

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

43 P. Faxneld, "Bleed for the Devil: Self-injury as Transgressive Practice in Contemporary Satanism, and the Re-enchantment of Late Modernity", cit., p. 110.

44 See H.[ans] R.[uedi] Giger, *Baphomet: Tarot der Unterwelt*, with a set of Tarot cards, Neuhausen am Rheinfall: Urania, 1992.

became "a mentor" to the band.[45] In 2006, a press release in Giger's official Web site celebrated the "legendary collaboration and enduring friendship" between the painter and the band, which had lasted for more than twenty years.[46]

Hellhammer was renamed Celtic Frost in 1984 and its music evolved outside of Black Metal proper, while satanic themes continued to be present. Fischer, however, insisted that he hated all organized forms of religion, "including Satanism". "At one time, he reported, we had problems with a local grotto of Satanists that tried to infiltrate Hellhammer to convey their message. Since they also had National Socialist tendencies, Martin [Eric Stricker, aka Martin Eric Ain, Hellhammer's bass player] and I completely blocked them off".

Later, however, they became friends with the "grotto" (a term used only in the Church of Satan) and "Martin was briefly involved with a female member of that grotto, she was his first girlfriend".[47] Ain, writing for Fischer's 2009 history of Hellhammer, later recalled his first meeting with this girl, Lilith Wehrli, "a true Satanic witch" who "had long, straight black hair and wore leather booths with high heels, skintight black spandex, a tightly strung black corset that accentuated her breasts, and occult jewelry". She was eighteen, and sixteen-year old Ain lost his virginity with her. It came out, however, that Lilith's main purpose was to persuade Hellhammer to include her brother Markus Wehrli, who went under the nickname Baphomet, in the band. When Fischer refused, "Baphomet prophesized that we would never get a painting from HR Giger. He said that Giger was one of the true adepts who would recognize that we weren't willing to support the cause of Satanism". This prophecy, and another by Baphomet that Hellhammer "would not attain any success", did not come true. When Lilith tried to introduce Nazi references in the Hellhammer imagery, Fischer refused, and in the end Ain reluctantly ended the relationship.[48] Markus Wehrli, under the name Frater Sartorius, went on to establish an independent Satanist organization, the Schwarzen Orden von Luzifer (Black Order of Lucifer).

Through Giger and the Satanists, the band also learned about Crowley, and Celtic Frost's debut album in 1985 was called "To Mega Therion" ("The Great

45 Tom Gabriel Fischer, with Martin Eric Ain, *Only Death is Real: An Illustrated History of Hellhammer and Early Celtic Frost, 1981–1985*, Brooklyn (New York): Bazillion Point Books, 2009, p. 147.

46 "Press Release, August 27, 2006", <http://www.hrgiger.com/music/celtic4.htm>, last accessed on December 2, 2015.

47 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., pp. 49–51.

48 T.G. Fischer, with M.E. Ain, *Only Death is Real: An Illustrated History of Hellhammer and Early Celtic Frost, 1981–1985*, cit., p. 161.

Beast" in Greek) as an homage to the British magus. Fischer claimed that in the world of Black Metal "all basically believed in Satan", but there were several competing understandings of both Satan and Satanism. For Fischer, it was "infinite hatred for mankind [...]. The misanthropic angle is very legitimate to me".[49]

What was Satanism for the first wave of Black Metal? A certain ambiguity was a distinctive feature of the movement. The bands that defined the first wave were all exposed to LaVeyan rationalist Satanism. King Diamond even joined the Church of Satan and met LaVey personally. Despite these contacts, the Satan they were singing about had all the attributes of the traditional Christian figure and did not resemble the rationalist liberator portrayed by LaVey. Satanism, in Black Metal lyrics, was not LaVey's human potential movement but a dark, terrifying, and nocturnal affair. Perhaps this was what the audiences expected. After all, as Venom's Cronos put it, "we're entertainers. This *isn't* Anton LaVey's Church of Satan, this *is* a rock band".[50] The contradiction, however, would explode with the second wave.

Metal Rules the World: The Globalization of Black Metal

Black Metal was always a globalized phenomenon. Bands were not born in Western Europe and the United States only. The groups that marked the transition from the first to the second wave came from all over the word, from Brazil to the Soviet bloc countries. As mentioned earlier, the transition was not strictly chronological. First wave groups continued to be active during the 1990s, in the heydays of the second wave. Certain second wave groups were founded in the 1980s. In addition, some bands belong to a transitional phase or sphere leading from the first wave to the second.

These bands include Brazilian groups such as Vulcano, which released its first album in 1986 but was the prosecution of a band known as Astoroth created as early as 1978, and Sarcófago, founded in 1985. The lyrics included Satanist and viciously anti-Christian themes. Sarcófago's co-founder Wagner Lamounier was nicknamed "Antichrist". In Japan, the globalization eventually produced an internationally famous group, Sigh, formed in 1989 and originally called Ultra Death. It had several contacts with the Norwegian Black Metal milieu, and later adopted an eclectic sound not easy to classify. It was, and remains today, part of the minority groups prominently featuring a female

49 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 57.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

performer, in this case "Dr Mikannibal", an attractive Japanese girl who has a real doctorate in Physics and goes under the name Mikai Kawashima, although she is not legally married to the band's leader, Mirai Kawashima. The latter claimed in 2009 that he used to be "into occultism a lot", but had abandoned occult themes and practices in the last years.[51]

In Asia and Africa in general, Black Metal is not unknown. It is a testament to the power of its globalization that in a small and politically tormented country such as Nepal several Metal bands emerged. Some were anti-religious, and criticized the Hindu gods, with Thrash Metal band UgraKarma particularly active in this field. "We are against religion", its members proclaimed, even if they added that "we are also Hindus even if we do not believe in God".[52]

There is also an interesting Metal scene in Israel, including some Black Metal groups. One of the first was Impurity, created in 1991. Israeli Metal musicians, however, were often discriminated internationally, due to the anti-Semitic sentiments prevailing in parts of the Metal scene in other countries.[53] But some reacted by embracing, rather than rejecting, the old stereotype of the Jew as satanic and proudly proclaiming "Jewishness as the highest level of Satanism", a theme Kahn-Harris found in the album *Satanic War in Jerusalem* by the Israeli Black Metal band Arallu.[54]

Not even the Iron Curtain stopped the globalization of Black Metal. Hungary produced Tormentor, a name common to several other bands, and what was then Czechoslovakia, Root and Master's Hammer. Tormentor's leader, Attila Csihar, later cooperated with several leading Western Black Metal bands, including Mayhem. According to the recollections of the co-founder of Master's Hammer, František Štorm, Root's founder Jiří Valter ("Big Boss") "became a local leader of The Church of Satan". Štorm himself illustrated *The Satanic Bible* for his diploma work at the Art Academy in Prague. Significantly, Štorm quoted as a predecessor in Satanism Czech symbolist painter Josef Váchal. Just as for Váchal, Štorm's references were eclectic. In 1989, Master's Hammer produced *The Mass*, about a ritual that was "not Christian, not black but totally occult",

51 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Prelude to the Cult*, London: Cult Never Dies, 2013, p. 39.

52 Paul D. Greene, "Electronic and Affective Overdrive: Tropes of Transgression in Nepal's Heavy Metal Scene", in Jeremy Wallach, Harris M. Berger, P.D. Greene (eds.), *Metal Rules the Globe: Heavy Metal Music around the World*, Durham (North Carolina): Duke University Press, 2011, pp. 109–134 (pp. 125–126).

53 See K. Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*, cit., p. 77; K. Kahn-Harris, "'You Are from Israel and That Is Enough to Hate You Forever': Racism, Globalization and Play within the Global Extreme Metal Scene", in J. Wallach, H.M. Berger, P.D. Greene (eds.), *Metal Rules the Globe: Heavy Metal Music around the World*, cit., pp. 200–223.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 222.

and Štorm got in trouble with Satanist purists by writing in one of his lyrics that "God is our servant and Satan as well". "I'm tired of explaining, he answered, that Satanism is not a goal by any means, it's just a path".[55]

What was true for the Iron Curtain was also true for Islam. The American academic and musician Mark LeVine has documented the presence of Heavy Metal in several countries with an Islamic majority.[56] Thrash, Death, and Doom Metal are, perhaps understandably, more present than Black Metal in these countries. However, the fact that thousands of young boys and girls, many of the latter veiled, regularly attend rock events featuring Metal bands in Casablanca, Dubai, where Iron Maiden in 2007 and Motörhead in 2009 performed at the Dubai Desert Rock Festival, Abu Dhabi, home of a famous Black Sabbath concert in 2014, Pakistan, and even Iraq, shows that the post-9/11 image of the Islamic youth prevailing in the West is largely stereotypical. Hard-line fundamentalists coexist with Metal musicians and fans. The latter often regard themselves as good Muslims. "Look, you can be a metalien [the prevailing word in the Middle East to identify a Metal musician or fan] and a good Muslim at the same time", two of them told LeVine.[57] In 2007, the documentary *Heavy Metal in Baghdad*, directed by Eddy Moretti and Suroosh Alvi, showed how the first Iraqi Heavy Metal band, Acrassicauda, named after a black scorpion of the local desert, was able to perform during the second Iraqi war, despite being falsely accused of spreading Satanism.[58] Pressures, however, later induced members of the band to seek refugee status in the United States.

In fact, Metal bands in the Muslim world normally stay away from Satanism and the satanic forms of Black Metal, and criticism of Islam is minimal or absent. There are, however, exceptions. In Indonesia, some Black Metal bands imported satanic themes from the West, including Satan Venerator, which however had to change its name into Fadhalius in 2000, the short-lived Satanic, and Satanic Mantra.[59] Indeed, Black Metal music is the only vehicle through which

55 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Prelude to the Cult*, cit., pp. 100–102.

56 See Mark LeVine, *Heavy Metal Islam: Rock, Resistance, and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam*, New York: Three Rivers Press, 2008; M. LeVine, "Doing the Devil's Work: Heavy Metal and the Threat to Public Order in the Muslim World", *Social Compass*, vol. 56, no. 4, December 2009, pp. 564–576.

57 M. LeVine, *Heavy Metal Islam: Rock, Resistance, and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam*, cit., p. 99.

58 Eddy Moretti, Suroosh Alvi (dirs.), *Heavy Metal in Baghdad* (video documentary), New York: VBS, 2007. See also the companion volume: Andy Capper, Gabi Sifre, *Heavy Metal in Baghdad: The Story of Acrassicauda*, New York: Pocket Books, 2009.

59 See entries on these groups in the online *Encyclopaedia Metallum*, available at <http://www.metal-archives.com/lists/black>, last accessed on October 15, 2015.

Western Satanism can penetrate into certain Islamic countries. There, some musicians struggle to adapt ideas born in Norway and elsewhere in the West to the Islamic theological scenario that includes Satan, the Lucifer-like Iblis, and the genies called jinn.[60] The results are sometimes surprising. In Saudi Arabia, of all places, a band called Al-Namrood (The Unbelievers) sings about "the demons and jinn of pre-Islamic Arabia" and incorporates in its lyrics a strong criticism of organized religion.[61]

Al-Namrood circulates its music more or less clandestinely, and never performs in public. In countries such as Iran, Egypt, and Morocco, where a sizable Metal scene exists, many bands, including non-satanic Death Metal groups, were labeled as Satanist by the media and the religious establishment, and police crackdown followed. In Egypt, the Metal scene was disrupted by the arrest in 1997 of more than 100 musicians and fans, all accused of Satanism.[62]

A remake of the Egyptian 1997 scare happened in Morocco in 2003, but with different results. 14 Metal musicians and fans were arrested and convicted as "practicing Satanists". The reaction was, however, unpredictable. Thousands of Moroccan young fans took to the street and even held an unauthorized concert in front of the courthouse. Fearful of the possible politicization of the movement, the government quickly moved to overturn the verdict.[63] The incident was kept alive by the 2007 Moroccan movie *Les anges de Satan* (Satan's Angels), directed by Ahmed Boulane, a fictionalized account of the arrest, trial, and campaign to release the alleged Metal Satanists of 2003. The movie was criticized by Metal fans for depicting their milieu somewhat stereotypically. On the other hand, it showed the police and the judges as prejudiced and bigot, and clearly implied that the accused were innocent. The movie quickly sold in excess of 100,000 tickets, more than any other film in Morocco in 2007.[64]

While in the Middle East Black Metal Satanism was largely an invention of the media, the situation was different in other countries. Canadian group Blasphemy, founded in 1984, had a peculiar relation with anti-Satanism. They

60 See M. LeVine, "Doing the Devil's Work: Heavy Metal and the Threat to Public Order in the Muslim World", cit., pp. 568–569.

61 See Nick Chester, "Meet the Saudi Arabian Black Metal Band That's Breaking Saudi Law By Being a Black Metal Band", *vice.com*, April 21, 2015, available at <http://www.vice.com/read/anti-religious-black-metal-band-in-saudi-arabia-666>, last accessed on November 15, 2015.

62 See M. LeVine, "Doing the Devil's Work: Heavy Metal and the Threat to Public Order in the Muslim World", cit., pp. 571–572.

63 See *ibid.*, p. 572.

64 M. LeVine, *Heavy Metal Islam: Rock, Resistance, and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam*, cit., pp. 55–59.

were from British Columbia, just as Michelle Smith of *Michelle Remembers* and her therapist. Their claim that Victoria, British Columbia, was "one of the Satanic capitals of the world"[65] largely came from *Michelle Remembers*. Smith's book also mentioned satanic rituals held in the Ross Bay cemetery in Victoria.[66] It is difficult to know whether the cemetery was really associated with satanic rituals in local folklore before *Michelle Remembers*, although Blasphemy's co-founder, Gerry Joseph Buhl ("Nocturnal Grave Desecrator and Black Winds"), believes that "this place points to the gates of Hell, Satanists have known this for two hundred years".[67] At any rate, Ross Bay cemetery became a place of pilgrimage for some Black Metal fans in the 1980s, thanks to Blasphemy's songs.

After Hellhammer, Switzerland produced Samael, formed by Michael Locher ("Vorph") in 1987. Locher rejected Satanism as "a religion", since he was against religion in general, but his lyrics evidenced a familiarity with occult subculture and included several references to Satan. Writing in the specialized fanzine *Holocaust* about Samael's debut album, *Worship Him* (1991), an insider such as Tomasz Krajewski wrote: "When I read the lyric [sic] of Samael's song *Worship Him*, I felt [sic] to knees over the ground and gave servitude to Satan".[68] Twenty years later, with *Antigod* (2010), Samael was still pursuing its crusade against religion and Christianity.

The same was true for the Greek band Rotten Christ, formed in 1987 by Sakis Tolis and whose first demo was a *Satanas Tedeum* (1989). Tolis' attitude was typical of several Black Metal musicians of his generation. He was hostile to all religious organizations, including those based on Satanism, yet admitted that Satanism was a crucial influence on his life and music. "I do consider myself, he stated, more as anti-religion than a Satanist, but still believe that Satanism influences me in my everyday life".[69]

In their 2010 album *Aealo*, Rotten Christ cooperated with a musician and artist foreign to the Black Metal scene, Greek-American avant-garde composer and performer Diamanda Galás, whose first album, *The Litanies of Satan* (1982) and anti-Catholic performances also influenced the first American Black Metal band, VON, formed in 1987 in Hawaii. VON's co-founder Jason Ventura recalled that he "was into many things in my development years, and Satan was a pure

65 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 70.

66 See M. Smith, L. Pazder, *Michelle Remembers*, cit., pp. 88–93.

67 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 70.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 92.

constant indeed".[70] He also claimed that the inclusion of explicit references to Satanism gave the band its originality within the crowded American Metal scene.

The Finnish band Beherit deserves a closer look. Although often considered part and parcel of the second wave of Black Metal, Beherit occupied a distinctive position. Its conflict with the second wave milieu of Norway illustrates how different understandings of Satanism were present at the same time in Black Metal culture. The very name Beherit came from LaVey's *The Satanic Bible* and the band, formed in 1989 in the Northern Finnish city of Rovaniemi, maintained in its first years a distinctly LaVeyan orientation. Or at least this was the position of the leader, Marko Laiho, also known as Nuclear Holocausto Vengeance or simply Holocausto. Bass player Jari Vaarala ("Demon Fornication") told a Norwegian fanzine in 1991 that he was becoming a Satanist priest with New Zealand's Order of the Left Hand Path,[71] whose Satanism, as we have seen, was somewhat different from LaVey's.

However, neither the Church of Satan nor the Order of the Left Hand Path were acceptable forms of Satanism for the group of Black Metal musicians, primarily Norwegian, who came to dominate the movement as it evolved from the first to the second wave. Varg Vikernes, a leading second waver to whom we will return in the next section, wrote that the "so-called Church of Satan is not in my view a church of Satan... It's rather a humanistic individualistic organization that worships happiness and life ... I worship death, evil, and all darkness".[72] Another leader of the Norwegian second wave, Euronymous (Øystein Aarseth, 1968–1993), criticized Beherit by stating: "I believe in [a] horned devil, a personified Satan. In my opinion, all other forms of Satanism are bullshit".[73] Not only did the Norwegians believe in Satan as a personal being rather than a simple metaphor. Unlike Aquino and the great majority of modern occult Satanists, they worshipped Satan as the God of evil and darkness, not as a humanistic liberator of men and women.

The conflict extended to other bands. Another leading Finnish Black Metal group, Impaled Nazarene, was also primarily LaVeyan. Although in 1993 Vikernes and Impaled's leader, Mika Luttinen, met and somewhat reconciled,[74] for a while the Norwegians and the Finns engaged in a rather bitter controversy, whose subject matter was the definition of Satanism and its relationship

70 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

71 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

72 *Ibid.*, pp. 121–122.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 121.

74 *Ibid.*, p. 122.

with Black Metal. To make the question even more complicated, later Beherit's Marko Laiho converted to Buddhism, although he claimed at the same time that after his conversion Beherit became "more Satanic than ever" and that his brands of Buddhism and Satanism were somewhat compatible.[75]

Satan the Arsonist: The Second Wave of Black Metal

The readers of *The Satanic Bible* aspired to happiness, and were told that the Satanist is a good citizen who tries not to violate any laws. But this, the second wave of Black Metal objected, was only "idiotic humanism". Real Satanism does not create a climate of happiness but of despair and terror, of crime and suicide, is proud to violate the laws, and wants above all that whoever would meet a Satanist would be "really afraid".[76] With the second wave, opposing LaVey and promoting a much less respectable Satanism became a trademark feature of Black Metal.[77] In fact, some musicians preferred to call their approach "Devil Worship" rather than "Satanism", because the word "Satanism" had become more or less synonymous with the ideology of LaVey.[78]

The musician who largely defined the second wave, Euronymous, explained that "the Church of Satan call themselves Satanists because they think it's funny and provoking. They are really atheists and are against the church because it has caused too much evil upon the time. They predicate that the Christians are evil and theirself [sic] are good ones. We are against the Church of Satan because we are against goodness".[79]

The second wave of Black Metal was born in Norway,[80] and spread to Sweden, Finland, and Poland as well as to other countries. Its center was a music shop in Oslo called Helvete ("Hell" in Norwegian), where in 1991, musicians

75 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Prelude to the Cult*, cit., p. 23.

76 See Gry Mørk, "'With My Art I Am the Fist in the Face of god [sic]': On Old School Black Metal", in J.Aa. Petersen (ed.), *Contemporary Religious Satanism: A Critical Anthology*, cit., pp. 171–198 (pp. 188–189).

77 See P. Faxneld, "Kom, Ondska, bliv mitt goda: Black metal-nyreligiositet och motdiskursens ordning", *DIN: Tidsskrift for religion og kultur,* vol. 17, no. 1, 2015, pp. 62–94.

78 See B.H. Olson, "I Am the Black Wizards: Multiplicity, Mysticism and Identity in Black Metal Music and Culture", cit.

79 *Ibid.*, pp. 54–55.

80 On the genesis and development of Norwegian Black Metal, see Håvard Rem, *Innfødte skrik: norsk svartmetall,* Oslo: Schibsted, 2010; Ross Hagen, "Musical Style, Ideology, and Mythology in Norwegian Black Metal", in J. Wallach, H.M. Berger, P.D. Greene (eds.), *Metal Rules the Globe: Heavy Metal Music around the World*, cit., pp. 180–199; and Harald

from various Black Metal groups began to meet. The owner of the shop was Euronymous, the founder of Mayhem in 1984, and the main owner of the music company Deathlike Silent Productions. Mayhem came gradually to embrace its hard form of Devil Worship. Early members of the band, including Eirik Nordheim ("Messiah") and Kjetil Manheim, later told the story of how at age 16–17 they had started by reading Crowley and mail-ordering *The Satanic Bible* from the United States. Originally, "this was what Satanism was: do what you want".[81] Later, however, things changed.

On April 8, 1991, Per Yngve Ohlin (1969–1991), better known as "Dead", Swedish-born Mayhem's vocalist, killed himself by cutting his wrists and shooting himself in the head. Dead had been largely instrumental in propagating in the Black Metal scene the practice of musicians cutting themselves on stage as a sacrifice to Satan. This practice has been studied by Faxneld as a real Satanic ritual, not to be reduced to simple entertainment or artistic performance, at least in certain Black Metal groups.[82] Upon discovering his colleague dead, before calling the police, Euronymous took a series of gruesome pictures of him, one of which would later be used as a cover for a Mayhem bootleg (i.e. a non-official recording of a live performance). It was said that he also ate a part of the brain of Dead, although this was later denied by him and his friends, and it seems certain that he gathered fragments of Dead's skull to make necklaces for Mayhem and other Black Metal groups of the Helvete shop entourage. These and other details appeared later in books telling in epic and sensationalist tones the story of Black Metal's second wave, the most famous of which was *Lords of Chaos*, co-written by American journalist and musician Michael Moynihan and Norwegian musical critic Didrik Søderlind.[83]

Taking macabre souvenirs from a corpse might have been against the law, but, starting in 1992, more serious crimes were committed. Members of Black Metal bands set fire to ancient wooden churches, and between 1992 and 1996 deprived Norway of around fifty ancient religious buildings, often of great artistic value. The number of churches actually burned by Black Metal musicians, as opposed to simple imitators, is disputed, but it is certain that the

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Fossberg, *Nyanser av svart: historien om norsk black metal*, with photographs by Paal Audestad, Oslo: Cappelen Damm, 2015.

81 Pål Aasdal, Martin Ledang (dirs.), *Once Upon a Time in Norway* (video documentary), Oslo: Grenzeløs Productions, 2007.

82 See P. Faxneld, "Bleed for the Devil: Self-injury as Transgressive Practice in Contemporary Satanism, and the Re-enchantment of Late Modernity", cit.

83 See Michael Moynihan, Didrik Søderlind, *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground*, Venice (California): Feral House, 1998 (2nd ed., Venice, California: Feral House, 2003).

church-burning project did originate in the Helvete circle. Why burn churches? The question goes to the very heart of the phenomenon. The musicians of the Helvete shop, where a mysterious Black Circle or Inner Circle met, more directly connected to Satanism, preached an anti-aesthetic of hate, in which Christianity was compared to an infection, a plague, a form of spiritual AIDS that must be eradicated. Satan was seen as the force capable of liberating from the Christian religion, Jesus Christ, God himself. The group praised Hitler, Stalin, and Mao Tse-Tung (1893–1976), not so much for their political ideas but because they persecuted Christians.

Most of these musicians had only a primary school education and deep theological considerations might hardly be expected from them. They mixed Satanism, paganism, and radical politics in a sort of primitive cocktail. It was not culturally sophisticated, but it was dangerous. What distinguished the second wave of Black Metal, at least in Norway, was its stated need of "passing into action". As opposed to LaVey, and also to the earlier generations of "satanic" musicians, they believed that talking, or singing, was not enough. It was a question of acting to spread death, destruction and terror, all in the name of Satan and against Christianity. Some musicians took their knives and started to stab imaginary or real enemies. On August 21, 1992, Norwegian drummer Bård G. Eithun, "Faust", killed a gay man who had tried to seduce him in a park in Lillehammer. The following day he went to Oslo and told Euronymous and Vikernes that he planned to turn himself on to the police. Instead, the two Black Metal leaders took Faust with them to burn the historical Holmenkollen Chapel in Oslo.[84] Soon, Black Metal musicians started killing each other as well.

At the time of Dead's suicide, Mayhem was preparing an album, *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas*, whose long gestation went from 1987 to 1994. They enlisted the co-operation of a young bassist, Kristian Larssøn "Varg" Vikernes, born in 1973, who also had his own project, Burzum. By his own account, Vikernes' interest in politics and religions other than Christianity began when he was six years old, while he was attending a school in Iraq, where his father had gone to work as an engineer.[85] Subsequently, he became interested in *The Lord of the Rings* saga created by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien (1892–1973), but he read it in an alternative way, rooting for the villains. In his musical career, which he started when he was fourteen, he called himself "Count Grishnákh", from the name of the leader of a band of evil orcs in *The Lord of the Rings*. His group took the name Uruk-Hai, a race of orcs in the Tolkien saga, and then Burzum. The latter

84 See D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 167.

85 M. Moynihan, D. Søderlind, *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground*, cit., pp. 147–148.

name also came from *The Lord of the Rings*, where it means "darkness" and is part of the inscription that appears on the Ring of Power when this becomes red-hot. It also corresponds to the words pronounced by the Dark Lord, Sauron in the moment he forged it: "…one Ring to bring them all and in the *darkness* ['Burzum', in Sauron's 'Dark Speech' of Mordor] bind them".[86]

Later, Vikernes met the Norwegian pagan movement and changed his name from Kristian to Varg, "wolf" in the ancient Norwegian language. He also adopted as his second name "Quisling", reportedly a reference to Norwegian Nazi collaborator Vidkun Quisling (1887–1945), executed in 1945, whose name became synonymous with betrayal all over Europe. In subsequent years, when he would try to distance himself from Nazism, Vikernes would claim that the last name Quisling was simply part of his family tree.

In 1993, Vikernes was among the musicians who talked a bit too much with the journalists about the attacks against the wooden churches. He ended up in jail, and Euronymous closed the Helvete shop as a precaution. This was the beginning of a series of quarrels between Vikernes and Euronymous, which had different sources: competition for the role of prima donna on the Black Metal scene, issues of money and women, and a different use of political symbols. Euronymous was a self-styled communist who celebrated Stalin and Mao, while Vikernes preferred references to Hitler.

On August 10, 1993, Vikernes, accompanied by another musician, Snorre Westvold Ruch ("Blackthorn"), who would later be sentenced to eight years in prison as an accomplice, went to the apartment of Euronymous in Oslo and killed him with twenty-three stabs. Arrested, Vikernes was sentenced in 1994 to twenty-one years of incarceration, both for the murder and for setting fire to four churches. In the same year, over the objections of Euronymous' relatives, the album *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas*, where the murderer and the victim sang and played together, was released.

In jail, Vikernes found new friends in the members of the Norwegian Pagan Front, a neo-pagan and neo-Nazi organization, even if how much he became involved in this group is unclear.[87] He was also authorized to continue his

86 Black Metal culture in general shared a fascination with Tolkien's villains: see B.H. Olson, "I Am the Black Wizards: Multiplicity, Mysticism and Identity in Black Metal Music and Culture", cit., pp. 82–87. Trolls, an important part of Nordic folklore, were also often mentioned because, according to some legends, they hate Christianity: see *ibid.,* pp. 72–76.

87 See Matthias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism*, Durham (North Carolina), London: Duke University Press, 2003, p. 307; N. Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism and the Politics of Identity*, cit., p. 205.

musical activities and recorded two further albums. On May 24, 2009, Vikernes was released on probation and took up his musical career again, with another four albums between 2010 and 2013. With his French wife Marie Cachet, he moved to France, where he changed his name to Louis Cachet. From his jail years, Vikernes was no longer describing himself as a Satanist but as an Odinist, or better still "Odalist", a neo-pagan worshipper of Odin, the god of war in Scandinavian mythology. Satan, he now proclaimed, is only one "modality" of Odin. Interviewed for the book *Lords of Chaos*, he claimed that Satanism for him was just a passage towards the maturity of the pan-Germanic paganism called Ásatrú. Once again, he criticized LaVey and stated that his early use of satanic symbols and slogans was mostly intended as a provocation.[88]

On the other hand, Euronymous always advocated "a genuine theistic approach, literal devil worship, as opposed to the approach of organizations such as the Church of Satan".[89] He told the *Orcustus* magazine that in his opinion this kind of Satanism defined the very concept of Black Metal: "If a band cultivates and worships Satan, it's black metal". If musicians "are not Satanists", theirs "is NOT a black metal band". For Euronymous, Black Metal was not defined by the sound: "black metal has nothing to do with the music itself (...). It's the LYRICS, and they must be SATANIC".[90] After Euronymous' death, other members, or former members, of Mayhem such as bassist Jørn Stubberud ("Necrobutcher") and drummer Kjetil Manheim, claimed that the band included no real Satanists, "not even Øystein",[91] and that Satanism was really a metaphor of an anti-social and anti-Christian attitude.

Even Mayhem's trademark anti-Christian sentiment has been qualified in interviews by Sven-Erik Kristiansen ("Maniac"), who was a vocalist for the band in 1986–1988 and again between 1995 and 2004. Maniac declared that his quarrel was with "constitutionised [sic] Christianity" and that "Jesus was probably one of the nicest, coolest guy on Earth". This perhaps also explains Maniac's fascination for, and cooperation with, David Tibet (pseud. of David Michael Bunting), whose musical project, Current 93, has a name inspired by Crowley but also explores esoteric Christianity. "There's a lot of David Tibet in Mayhem's lyrics", Maniac stated in 2008.[92] Tibet cooperated also with another

88 M. Moynihan, D. Søderlind, *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground*, cit., p. 153.

89 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 151.

90 *Ibid.*, pp. 151–152 (capitals in original).

91 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

92 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Prelude to the Cult*, cit., p. 30.

leading Black Metal group, the Japanese band Sigh.[93] As for Mayhem, however, that Satanism and unmitigated hatred of Christianity were not crucial features of the early band is contradicted by Euronymous' clear and repeated statements.

Black Metal after Euronymous

In 1992, the two leading protagonists of the second wave of Black Metal left the scene, Euronymous definitively and Vikernes for the following seventeen years, when he would be able to make his voice heard from jail only. This did deliver a hard blow to the movement and represented the end of the Black Circle, but the second wave of Black Metal did not stop. Mayhem replaced Euronymous and continued.[94] Other groups who claimed the heritage of the Norwegian bands, continued to declare themselves "misanthropic" Satanists, and criticizing LaVey was still regarded as de rigueur.

Norwegian bands such as Thorn, Darkthrone, Gehenna, Trelldom, and Emperor kept Euronymous' ideas alive. Drummer and lyricist Gylve Nagell ("Fenriz") of Darkthrone maintained that "a belief in the Christian conception of Satan and hell was an integral part of the genre". "That's a good part of Black Metal, Fenriz stated. If we didn't have *any* sort of belief in that, a lot of it would feel wasted. Certainly that belief in a *real* hell and a *real* devil would be one of the things that pushed back Black Metal to become what it became, and make it worshipped".[95] Emperor's Terje Vik Schei, "Tchort", told about the musicians' background that "we were into self-made rituals, sacrificing animals, going into trances, drinking blood. It evolved into violent assaults against the Christians", and became a more conscious Satanism through contacts with the Helvete store and Euronymous.[96]

Later, Emperor co-operated with the British band Cradle of Filth, overcoming the widespread criticism of the latter in Norwegian circles for having "sold out" to commercial circuits. In fact, Emperor's co-founder Tomas Thormodsæter Haugen ("Samoth") ended up marrying Cradle of Filth's Andrea Meyer, who was also a self-styled satanic priestess. In 1993, Emperor and Cradle of

93 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

94 See Jørn Stubberud, with Svein Strømmen and Christian Belgaux, *Dødsarkiv: Mayhem 1984–1994*, Oslo: Aschehoug, 2015.

95 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 199.

96 Interview in P. Aasdal, M. Ledang (dirs.), *Once Upon a Time in Norway* (video documentary), cit.

Filth shared a tour in England, which included a pilgrimage to Dashwood's Medmenham Abbey.[97] In 1995, Samoth was imprisoned, together with another band member, for his participation in the Norwegian church burnings. Released on parole in 1996, he celebrated by proposing a musical version of Carducci's *Hymn to Satan*.

In 1992, the year of the murder of Euronymous, Roger Tiegs, "Infernus", founded in the Western Norwegian county of Sogn og Fjordane the band Gorgoroth, another name taken from *The Lord of the Rings*, where it indicates a desolate land in the infernal wilderness of Mordor. The titles of Gorgoroth's albums could perhaps be sufficient to give an idea of its worldview and aesthetic: *Pentagram* (1994), *Antichrist* (1996), *Under the Sign of Hell* (1997), *Destroyer* (*or About How to Philosophize with the Hammer*) (1998), *Incipit Satan* (2000), *Twilight of the Idols* (*in Conspiracy with Satan*) (2003), *Ad Majorem Sathanas Gloriam* (2006), *Quantos Possunt ad Satanitatem Trahunt* (2009), *Instinctus Bestialis* (2015). The independent musical company created by Infernus in 2006 was called Forces of Satan Records.

The greatest scandal created by Gorgoroth was the so-called "Black Mass of Krakow" of 2004. In Poland, activities offensive to the Catholic religion are considered illegal. Gorgoroth selected Krakow to record a DVD that showed the Norwegian musicians while they played on a stage full of Satanic symbols, blood, decapitated sheep, and crucified naked models. Gorgoroth, unlike other Black Metal bands, forbids reproduction of its lyrics, on the Web or elsewhere. They are, at any rate, full of references to Satan and celebrate the musicians who burned wooden churches in Norway. "The Satanic ethics of the band is the bottom layer, Gorgoroth proclaimed in 2006, and the most important thing to build the music upon".[98]

While not aligned with the Church of Satan, Gorgoroth talked of Satan in terms somewhat similar to LaVey's. In 2004, the band performed in Belgrade, and his vocalist, Kristian Eivind Espedal, "Gaahl", who later left the group in 2007 and changed some of his ideas, was interviewed about Satanism by a local fanzine. He started with some rather racist remarks. "I usually explain, he said, the word Satan is from Hebrew religions and has nothing to do with my blood. I deny everything that comes from this semitic root. God has nothing to do with our race in any way. We use the word 'Satanist' because it is Christian world and we have to speak their language. To the world I am a Satanist, which means resistance to everything that holds you down. Satanist is what wants to grow. But my language has no word for Satan in that manner".

97 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 224.

98 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Prelude to the Cult*, cit., p. 7.

But was Satan for the musician just a metaphor? "I use it for what it means, he replied, and if people see me as a Satanist, they are right in many ways, but in my native tongue, I would not use the name Satan". However, Gorgoroth's songs used the name Satan quite regularly. Requested for an explanation, Gaahl answered: "I am opposed to everything that denies the individual to grow, so for me Satan is natural in that matter. When I use the word Satan, it means the natural order, the will of a man, the will to grow, the will to become the superman and not to be oppressed by any law such as the church, which is only a way to control the masses and has nothing to do with god".[99]

As Vikernes and Euronymous would have said in their heydays, Gorgoroth musicians talked a lot and "claimed to be dedicated Satanists",[100] but they did not "take action". Infernus was not exactly a model citizen and between 2006 and 2007, he spent four and a half months in prison for sexual abuse during a turbulent party in 2004 in Bergen. Other members of Gorgoroth, including Gaahl, ended up in jail as well. But there was never a plan to unleash anti-Christian terror by burning churches and stabbing enemies. Some churches have still been burned in the 21st century, not only in Scandinavia, and arsonists left writings celebrating Vikernes, but these were copycat crimes rather than manifestation of a new Black Metal organized anti-Christian campaign.

In the words of a critic, the second wave of Black Metal ended up like the first, producing what "Euronymous most of all dreaded: a rather acceptable, decent, commercial, standardized, mainstream and trendy music culture – although there still are musicians, bands and fans who scorn this development".[101] This criticism, as mentioned earlier, was mostly directed against the British Cradle of Filth, as well as against the successful Norwegian group Dimmu Borgir. Both sold millions of albums, and eventually moved away from Black Metal and into different Metal subgenres, including Symphonic Metal. This did not prevent Cradle of Filth and Dimmu Borgir from including "members with an active interest/involvement in Satanism" and from proposing "openly Satanic songs".[102]

On the other hand, there were also Black Metal groups that adopted an uncompromising anti-commercial attitude, to the point of selling their music only within an underground circuit. Around 2000, Taake and other groups created the "True Norwegian Black Metal" logo, identifying those who wanted to

99 "Gorgoroth Interview", 2004, *Tartare and Desire*. Available at <http://www.tartareandesire.com/interviews/gorgoroth.html>, last accessed on August 15, 2015.

100 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 256.

101 G. Mørk, "'With My Art I Am the Fist in the Face of god [sic]': On Old School Black Metal", cit., p. 196.

102 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 304.

"keep it as it was in the old days". The attitude of Taake's frontman, Ørjan Stedjeberg ("Hoest"), towards Satanism was different from Euronymous'. He stated that he did not believe in the existence of supernatural beings, and "would not use the word 'Satanic', because too many people who call themselves Satanists have a totally different opinion of what it's all about". "But I have sold my soul to the devil", he added.[103]

Satan à la française: Les Légions Noires and Beyond

After Euronymous' death, satanic Black Metal did not remain alive in Norway only. The Belgian band Enthroned, founded in 1993, also continued with "a fiercely Satanic agenda".[104] Enthroned was born in 1993 and his founders came from Death Metal, as was the case for several other Black Metal musicians and bands. This was, for example, the itinerary of the Norwegian guitarist Jørn Inge Tunsberg, one of the founders of Hades Almighty. Although identifying himself as a Neopagan and an opposer of Christianity rather than a Satanist, Tunsberg participated in the burning of the Åsane wooden church in 1992 together with Varg Vikernes. As a consequence, he spent two years in jail.

One of the founders of Enthroned, Dan Vandeplas ("Cernunnos", 1971–1997), committed suicide in 1997. In the same year, Enthroned achieved international fame with its second album, *Towards the Skullthrone of Satan*, which featured a new guitarist, Régis Lant ("Nornagest"), a first cousin of Venom's Conrad Lant, better known as Cronos. Nornagest was asked in 2009 whether he was a Satanist. "I was, am and will always be, he replied. Satanism and occultism is not something you are being as part of a teenager crisis or period. It's a part of yourself or it's not – you do not choose to be a Satanist, you just are one or not. Spirituality is a part of myself, just like my arms or eyes…".[105] In the same interview, Nornagest told the story of how members of Enthroned were asked to become part of the legendary French collective Les Légions Noires (The Black Legions) and declined.[106]

Les Légions Noires were a unique attempt to create a communal Satanist movement within the Black Metal milieu. In 1991, a group of young Black Metal musicians decided to "live in a forest, away from modern society".[107] They

103 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Prelude to the Cult*, cit., p. 42.

104 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

105 *Ibid.*, p. 46.

106 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

107 *Les Légions Noires*, Geneva, Paris: Greyscale Press, 2015, p. 294.

adopted a secret language known as "Gloatre", and swore "pledges of loyalty to the Satanic Black Metal cause".[108] Their leader was one "Vórdb Dréagvor Uèzréèvb", whose real name was probably Stéphane Zarratin.[109] They called themselves The Black Legions, but decided later to "honor their mother tongue"[110] and traditions changing it to the French Les Légions Noires. Living conditions in the forest were too harsh for the young musicians, and the experiment quickly collapsed. By 1993, all members had left the forest.

Together with at least one girl called Valérie, the founding members of Les Légions Noires were Vórdb, "Lord Meyhna'ch" (William Roussel, born in 1976), "Wlad Drakksteim", "Vorlok Drakksteim" (Nicholas), "Aäkon Këetreh", and "Laimnambre" (Dorothé). "Krissagrazabeth" (Kriss Auvenant), "Dark Wizard of Silence" (Jean-Luc) and "Mørdred" may have joined shortly after the foundation. The group remained so secretive even after the forest experiment that the real names of most members remain unknown to this day.

Between 1991 and 1993, the leading bands of Les Légions Noires started producing limited releases and demos for a small circle of trusted friends within the French Black Metal scene. Lord Meyhna'ch formed Mütiilation in 1991, the two Drakksteims created Vlad Tepes in 1992, and Aäkon Këetreh followed with Belkètre in the same year. Vórdb had founded Moëvöt in 1991, and was involved in several other projects, including Torgeist, Dvnaèbkre, and Dzlvarv. Krissagrazabeth left the movement before the release in 1995 of Mütiilation, and Les Légions' Noires' first full-length album, *Vampires of Black Imperial Blood*, which included in its back cover a label stating "NO KRISS". Later, Aäkon Këetreh also left the group, or was expelled by Vórdb, after several fights.[111]

All this is largely conjectural. Les Légions Noires went to some extremes to keep their secrecy. Although a book that purports to be authoritative and produced from insiders has been published in 2015,[112] different versions of which bands and musicians were really part of Les Légions Noires continue to circulate on the Web and elsewhere. The book, for instance, claims that "Lord Beleth'Rim" (Richard) "was never officially in LLN [Les Légions Noires]".[113] This was the official line after Beleth'Rim violated the main rule of Les Légions Noires: to distribute the music only through underground channels, in limited

108 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 324.

109 *Ibid.*, p. 322. Vórdb's real name was mentioned in several documents as "Stéphane Z." (see *Les Légions Noires*, cit., p. 120).

110 *Les Légions Noires*, cit., p. 294.

111 *Les Légions Noires*, cit., p. 296.

112 *Les Légions Noires*, cit.

113 *Ibid.*, p. 290.

editions, and with a "do not reproduce" label. The bands became so paranoid about secrecy that certain tapes were "limited to sometimes less than 10 copies, and given away to people of *thrust* [sic]".[114] Finally, with the spread of the Internet, piracy and unauthorized releases of both music and confidential information became rampant, although members of Les Légions Noires "were threatening to kill owners of record labels and metal magazines".[115] All this caution was justified by the violent anti-Christian and Satanist lyrics of the groups involved, glorifying vampirism and violence, which were somewhat extreme even for Black Metal standards.

To put Les Légions Noires in context, the mid-1990s were years of sustained anti-cult activism in France. The Order of the Solar Temple, an esoteric (but not satanic) movement, shocked the public opinion with its suicides and homicides in 1994 in Switzerland and 1995 in France.[116] A commission of the French Parliament published at the end of 1995 an official report on cults, strongly influenced by anti-cult literature and activists.[117] The French police raided several "cults". Although Satanism was mentioned but was not a main target of the parliamentary report, things changed on December 19, 1996. On this day, the popular Catholic parish priest of Kingersheim, Alsace, Father Jean Uhl (1928–1996), was stabbed to death in his presbytery by a young man called David Oberdorf. Although Oberdorf's account of his motivations was never completely coherent, and he later converted to Christianity in jail, he did mention Satanism, Black Metal, and extreme anti-Christian lyrics as factors leading to the crime.[118]

After the Kingersheim murder, the police took a renewed interest in Satanism, connecting the crime to allegedly satanic desecrations of French cemeteries that had occurred earlier in 1996 and would continue for several years. The investigations didn't find much. There were a few scattered members

114 *Ibid.*, p. 294.

115 *Ibid.*

116 See M. Introvigne, "The Magic of Death: The Suicides of the Solar Temple", in Catherine Wessinger (ed.), *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases*, Syracuse (New York): Syracuse University Press, 2000, pp. 138–157; and M. Introvigne, Jean-François Mayer, "Occult Masters and the Temple of Doom: The Fiery End of the Solar Temple", in D.G. Bromley, J.G. Melton (eds.), *Cults, Religion and Violence*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 170–188.

117 Assemblée Nationale, *Les Sectes en France. Rapport fait au nom de la Commission d'Enquête sur les sectes* (*document n. 2468*), Paris: Les Documents d'Information de l'Assemblée Nationale: 1996. The report is dated, and was released to the media on, December 22, 1995.

118 See Alain Lemaître, "La repentance du tueur satanique", *Le Parisien*, April 3, 2001.

of both the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set, while a grandiosely named, but probably tiny, Fédération Sataniste Française would be created in 1998 and operate until 2003.[119] However, the media insisted that Satanism was a serious problem in France, and the only place where a sizable number of satanic references could be found was the Black Metal milieu. Later, the MIVILUDES, the French Inter-Ministerial Mission for Preventing and Combating Cultic Deviance, France's governmental anti-cult body, claimed that there were 25,000 Satanists in France.[120] Sociologists answered that there were a few dozens only,[121] but they were counting differently. MIVILUDES tried to evaluate the number of Black Metal fans in France and to include them in the list.

The official attention only increased the paranoia of Les Légions Noires. They felt under attack and disbanded between the end of 1996 and the first days of 1997, just after the Kingersheim murder. Some abandoned Black Metal altogether, but others continued. Lord Beleth'Rim, after leaving Les Légions Noires, achieved a certain success with his projects Amaka Hahina and Vermeth.

Quite independently from their founders and members, Les Légions Noires influenced a larger French Metal scene with their extreme attacks on Christianity. Even some industrial bands, including Dissonant Elephants and Non, jumped onto the anti-Christian bandwagon, although with a different musical style. In 1996, Dissonant Elephants released a CD, *Our Eyes Like Daggers,* with quotes from Crowley and a cover featuring Jesus Christ on the cross with a clown-like red nose. The activities of these groups were among the reasons for the establishment of a Catholic Anti-Defamation League in France in 1997.

At the end of the 1990s, new French Black Metal bands emerged, with no direct derivation from Les Légions Noires, yet exhibiting the same uncompromising devotion to Satanism. The most well-known was probably Deathspell Omega, founded in Poitiers in 1998. Deathspell Omega insisted on the metaphysical reality of Satan as an independent being, and strongly criticized LaVeyan and other forms of rationalist Satanism. "Satan as a metaphysical entity, they stated, this cannot be said loud enough. All other interpretations

119 See Alexis Mombelet, "Entre metanoïa et paranoïa. Approches sociologique et médiatique du satanisme en France", *Social Compass*, vol. 56, no. 4, December 2009, pp. 530–540.

120 MIVILUDES, *Rapport 2007 au Premier ministre*, Paris: La Documentation française, 2008, p. 109.

121 See A. Mombelet, "Entre metanoïa et paranoïa. Approches sociologique et médiatique du satanisme en France", cit.; Olivier Bobineau, "Le satanisme ou le 'religieusement incorrect'", *Social Compass*, vol. 56, no. 4, December 2009, pp. 503–514; O. Bobineau (ed.), *Le Satanisme. Quel danger pour la société?*, Paris: Pygmalion, 2008.

of Satan are intellectually invalid" and derive from human "small-minded rationality".

Although it cooperated with Mütiilation, Deathspell Omega claimed that its Satanism was indeed more mature than the one once professed by Les Légions Noires, because it both recognized more clearly the "divine essence" of Satan and was based on a deeper analysis of human nature derived from Nietzsche and the French philosopher Georges Bataille (1897–1962). They professed an "orthodox" Satanism, and explained that "the main implication of the word 'orthodox' in this context is a proud statement of the recognition of Satan being of divine essence, of the location of Devilworship [sic] on a religious and metaphysical level. The easy escape of using the word ideology instead of confronting oneself with the real challenges only portrays the terribly low level on which the major current of 'Satanism' is crawling".[122]

Deathspell Omega's music was distributed by the French label Norma Evangelium Diaboli. The label emerged in the late 1990s and also distributed another French group, Antaeus, and the German band Katharsis, in addition to the Swedish acts Malign, Funeral Mist, and Sorhin, and the Spanish group, coming from Death Metal, Teitanblood. Together with the Swedish Ofermod, another group with a Death Metal origin, these bands were the main exponent of an "orthodox" Black Metal Satanism. Mika Hakola (Michayah Belphagor) of Ofermod was in and out of jail for several years for incidents of assault and violence, some of them directed against immigrants with racist motivations. Hakola claimed that prejudices against Satanism played a role in his arrests and convictions and started a group of Black Metal musicians for mutual support, called The Black Luciferian Flame. Later, Hakola joined the Dragon Rouge.[123]

Labels were always, and remain, important in shaping the ideology of the Black Metal scene. Faxneld emphasized the key role played by Norma Evangelium Diaboli for keeping Black Metal strictly satanic. "This label, he wrote, was without doubt the most prominent institutional support ideas of this sort ['orthodox' Satanism] had, and it provided a transnational rallying point and hub for pan-European exchange and cooperation".[124]

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122 See "Interview with Deathspell Omega from AJNA Offensive", available at <http://ezxhaton.kccricket.net/interview.html>, last accessed on November 11, 2015. The AJNA Offensive is an American independent record label, releasing both music and printed material on occultism and magic.

123 See K. Granholm, "Ritual Black Metal: Popular Music as Occult Mediation and Practice", cit., p. 24.

124 P. Faxneld, "Bleed for the Devil: Self-injury as Transgressive Practice in Contemporary Satanism, and the Re-enchantment of Late Modernity", cit., p. 112.

Satan the Nazi: Poland and National Socialist Black Metal

Nazism was always a feature of *some* Black Metal groups, although Euronymous was a Communist and left wing political activists were also present in the milieu. While in jail, Vikernes emphasized the Nazi references, and this had an important influence on certain segments of the Black Metal subculture internationally, particularly in the United States and Eastern Europe, including Poland, Ukraine, and Russia. Poland had an important Death Metal and Black Metal scene,[125] with several groups interested in the occult and Satanism. One of the oldest groups in the Polish Death Metal scene was Vader, founded in 1983.[126] The group's frontman, Piotr Paweł "Peter" Wiwczarek, was described by the specialized magazine *Spin* as "into the occult, the Necronomicon; he respects the powers of darkness, reads Crowley".[127] Some Polish bands, however, rather than going from Satanism to Neopaganism, traveled in the opposite direction, as did Mastiphal, a group founded in Katowice in 1991 and originally named Dissolution.[128]

One of the earliest Polish Black Metal bands was Xantotol, which included on the sleeve of their album *Cult of the Black Pentagram* (1993) a quote from Faustus Scorpius (Kerry Raymond Bolton), the founder of the Order of the Left Hand Path. Xantotol's drummer Jacek Szczepański ("Venom") took the correspondence course of Bolton's Collegium Satanas and remained in contact with the Order of the Left Hand Path, which he described, perhaps inaccurately, as "the second biggest Satanic organization in the world after the Church of Satan". He started distributing in Poland promotional material of the Order of the Left Hand Path and other Satanist groups, and also defended LaVey against the criticism prevailing in the Black Metal milieu.[129] "In fact, Venom later reported, I was in contact with both the Church of Satan and the Luciferian Light Group", in addition to the Order of the Left Hand Path.[130]

Poland also produced in the 1990s a variant of the subgenre, called National Socialist Black Metal (NSBM), although not all Polish Black Metal groups were

125 See Tomasz Godlewski, Wojciech Lis, *Jaskinia hałasu*, Poznán: Kagra, 2012.

126 On Vader, see Jarosław Szubrycht, *Vader. Wojna Totalna*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Sine qua non, 2014.

127 "In Search of Death", *Spin*, vol. 10, no. 1, April 1994, pp. 52–58 (p. 58).

128 See D. Patterson, *Black Metal The Cult Never Dies – Volume One,* London: Cult Never Dies, 2015, p. 159.

129 *Ibid.*, pp. 141–142.

130 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

part of it.[131] As it happened in Sweden, Polish Black Metal musicians of different bands created in 1993 a secret Satanist organization modeled after Norway's Black Circle, known as The Temple of Infernal Fire. Rob Fudali ("Darken") of Graveland described it as "a Satanist lodge opposing LaVey philosophy" and verging towards a more theistic Satanism. Later, he and others "changed the character of The Temple, placing emphasis on political issues". Reportedly, the name was changed into The Temple of the Fullmoon,[132] but a practice started under the old name was not discontinued: "There are many wooden churches in Poland and many of them were burnt, [though] many were [actually] burnt because of the left-wing anarchist movement that started to use this method in their fight against Christian church". As it had happened in Norway and Sweden, burning churches was followed by the murder of a homeless man, and the subsequent police crackdown led to the dissolution of the Temple.[133]

Later, a "second generation" of Polish Black Metal emerged, which dropped most political themes but kept a strong interest in Satanism and, both musically and ideologically, went back to the Norwegian Black Metal tradition of the early 1990s.[134] Important bands of this second Polish wave included Mgła, formed in 2000, and Kriegsmachine, which debuted in 2002. Mikołaj Żentara ("M."), the son of the well-known Polish actor, Edward Żentara (1956–2011), participated in the foundation of both bands. In an interview, Żentara distinguished between three different images of Satan in Black Metal: the "shining Lucifer associated with knowledge", the "hedonism and Satanic symbolism used as a tool of negation of Judeo-Christian or modern humanistic values", and the "pure and simple admiration for devil-themed aesthetics". His, he explained, was a fourth path: Satan as "the representation of stasis, inertia, spiritual black hole".[135]

NSBM remained, however, a vital component of Eastern European Black Metal, spreading to Ukraine, Russia, and beyond. This determined a strong reaction by more purist second wave musicians, who insisted that Black Metal was about Satanism rather than politics. In an interview with the online newsletter *Beyond the Dark Horizon*, Swedish musician Erik Danielsson explained: "I ascribe as much raison d'être to NS Black Metal as to Christian 'Black' Metal,

131 For a critical account, see Christian Dornbusch [pseud. of Martin Langebach], Hans-Peter Killguss, *Unheilige Allianzen. Black Metal zwischen Satanismus, Heidentum und Neonazismus*, Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2005.

132 In fact, it is unclear when and even whether the change of name took place: see D. Patterson, *Black Metal The Cult Never Dies – Volume One*, cit., p. 143.

133 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., pp. 363–364.

134 See D. Patterson, *Black Metal The Cult Never Dies – Volume One*, cit., p. 186 (capitals in original).

135 *Ibid.*, pp. 196–197.

in other words: NAUGHT. Black Metal is a cult of Satan, its foundation is the cultivation of Chaos and Darkness, and no little pimple-ridden Internet-nazi movement can change this".[136] Some Polish bands heard the message. Błażej Kazimierz Adamczuk ("Skyggen") publicly distanced his band Thunderbolt "from their NSBM past in favor of a Satanic ideology".[137] Scandinavian Black Metal musicians such as Finland's Mikko Aspa, later part of the French band Deathspell Omega, attacked Nazism for its "conservative values, family values". "Ten years ago, he stated in 2001, every black metaller from Norway to Poland remembered to tell how LaVey sucked because of his humane and life-loving ideology". Now the same people switched to Nazism, in his opinion just another life-loving ideology incompatible with the Black Metal cult of evil, death, and chaos.[138] In the 21st century, Black Metal groups inspired by Satanism came to reject Nazism (and vice versa). As Olson noticed, "Satanic black metallers' rejection of Nazism and neo-Nazism had nothing to do with notions of a universal humanity or a rejection of hate". It was the other way round. Nazism was dismissed because "its hatred is too specific and exclusive". Black Metal Satanists claimed to hate human beings in general, not just non-Aryans and Jews.[139]

Others went in the opposite direction. Confronted with the problem that coexistence between Satanism and right wing politics was somewhat difficult, Polish bands such as Graveland abandoned Satanism in favor of a vitalistic pagan ideology. "In the Third Reich, Graveland's Darken explained, Satanists would end in [the] gas chamber". While "Satanism is based on lies and egoism" and "very often worshippers of Satan fight against one another", "heathen religions" promote a healthy brotherhood of like-minded individuals. Darken realized that his early Satanism was just paganism in disguise. "I approved Satan in all his personifications because I believed so-called Satan [was] in fact pagan entities that got evil names from Christians who stigmatized them and made them Christian enemies".

"Finally, I dissociated myself from Satanism when I understood that as a heathen I should not identify myself with Judeo-Christian religion and culture and Satan and Satanism are part of Judeo-Christian tradition… Approving the idea of existence of Satan implicates approving the Christian vision of world. And these are the things I do not believe in".[140] It was not coincidental that

136 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 367.

137 *Ibid.*, p. 368.

138 *Ibid.*, p. 371.

139 B.H. Olson, "Voice of Our Blood: National Socialist Discourses in Black Metal", in Titus Hjelm, K. Kahn-Harris, M. LeVine (eds.), *Heavy Metal Controversies and Countercultures*, Sheffield (UK), Bristol (Connecticut): Equinox, 2013, pp. 136–151 (p. 149).

140 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., pp. 370, 380.

Darken was repeating Crowley's criticism of Satanism, as another member of his band Graveland, Grzegorz Jurgielewicz ("Karcharoth", 1976–2004), who committed suicide in 2004, was a Crowley devotee.

Erich Gliebe of the label Resistance Records, who played a key role for making NSBM popular in the United States and Canada, was interviewed by Benjamin Hedge Olson for his 2008 master's thesis and expressed a similar opinion. "We have no part in that Satanic stuff, that's exactly what we are against. We are totally against that Satanic nonsense. There are many people in the NSBM scene that would like to see the whole scene cleaned out of all the Satanic stuff…We consider Satanism to be a Jewish creation".[141]

Eventually, several leading Polish bands, including Graveland, distanced themselves from the NSBM label and Nazism as well, although they maintained a strong anti-Christian stance. Criticism of Christianity was, and remains, a trademark feature of one of the most famous Polish Extreme Metal groups, Behemoth.[142] It rejects labels, but it is musically close to Death Metal. Its frontman Adam Darski ("Nergal") repeatedly destroyed Bibles on stage, which did not make him popular with both the Polish Catholic Church and the anti-cult movement. Nergal, however, is more a follower of Crowley and Chaos Magick than of Satanism. Labeled as a Satanist and a criminal by Polish anti-cultist and former member of the Parliament Ryszard Novak, Nergal won two court cases against him.[143]

One of the reasons why Nergal and Behemoth became the epitome of Satanism in Polish political and religious discourse is their visibility. Although the group was already well-known in the Polish Metal scene, Nergal became a household name in Poland when he got engaged in 2009 with Doda (Dorota Rabczewska), one of the most famous pop singers in the country. The relationship raised eyebrows in the Polish Extreme Metal community, but Doda publicly supported Nergal's anti-Christian attitudes and was herself convicted in 2012 in Warsaw for blasphemy, after having stated in a television interview that the Bible had been written by people intoxicated by wine and drugs. The

141 B.H. Olson, "I Am the Black Wizards: Multiplicity, Mysticism and Identity in Black Metal Music and Culture", cit., p. 112.

142 On Behemoth, see Łukasz Dunaj, *Behemoth – Konwistadorzy Diabła*, Warsaw: Mystic Production, 2012.

143 See D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 387. See also Nergal's book-length interview: Adam Nergal Darski, with Piotr Weltrowski and Krzysztof Azarewicz, *Spowiedź heretyka. Sacrum Profanum,* Warsaw: Burda Publishing Polska, 2012; and the partially different English edition: A. Nergal Darski, with Mark Eglinton, Krzysztof Azarewicz and Piotr Weltrowski, *Confessions of a Heretic. The Sacred and the Profane: Behemoth and Beyond*, London: Jawbone Press, 2015.

engagement between Doda and Nergal was called off in 2011, while the Metal musician was struggling with rehabilitation, after a diagnosis of leukemia and a bone marrow transplant.

He returned to music after the transplant, and in 2014, Behemoth released its award-winning album *The Satanist*, with lyrics more explicitly satanic that in their previous production. Titles included *Ora pro nobis Lucifer* and *Messe noire*. A careful reading of the texts shows, however, that Nergal and Behemoth are far away from Black Metal's theistic Satanism. They are closer to LaVey's idea of Satan as a metaphor for freedom and liberation from Christianity. When God disappears, humans become their own gods: "Knock God off the pedestal and you will take his place".[144]

"But the fact that I assume that God does not exist, Nergal explains, does not mean that I'm automatically deprived of spirituality". He confesses that he has a tattoo on his back "with the whole Hieroglyphic Monad of John Dee", and quotes Crowley and his disciple Austin Osman Spare (1886–1956).[145] In the hospital, he took the crucifix off the wall and in its place "hung a rosary with Mahomet's figurine. Next to it there were portraits of Bruce Lee, Crowley, and Nietzsche".[146] While the reference to martial arts instructor and actor Bruce Lee (1940–1973) is explained by Nergal's exposure as a young man to Oriental martial arts as quasi-religious disciplines, his main focus remains Crowley's magical atheism, with Satan as a metaphor for the Sun, human freedom, and rejection of Christianity. This does not prevent opponents to consistently label Behemoth as Satanist, and concerts have been canceled in Poland and elsewhere for this reason. On May 22, 2014, the musicians of Behemoth were deported from Russia, after a spokesperson for the Krasnodar Orthodox Union had denounced that "at concerts they often perform kabbalistic and demonic rituals". Orthodox activists had disrupted Behemoth concerts in Russia before.[147]

Exiting Satanism: Viking Metal and "Post-Black Metal"

In Poland, some of the leading Black Metal bands moved from Satanism to Neopaganism following a controversy about politics. With different motivations,

144 *Ibid.*, p. 270.

145 *Ibid.*, p. 271.

146 *Ibid.*, p. 166.

147 See Nadia Beard, "Polish Black Metal Band Behemoth Deported from Russia", *The Calvert Journal*, May 22, 2014, available at <http://calvertjournal.com/news/show/2554/polish-black-metal-band-behemoth-deported-from-russia>, last accessed on November 20, 2015.

the same trend was visible elsewhere and led scholars such as Granholm to argue that Nordic Neopaganism is a more appropriate label than Satanism to describe the worldview of Black Metal in general.[148] This argument is supported by the evolution towards a non-Satanic Neopaganism, sometimes called Viking Metal in Scandinavia and Folk Metal elsewhere, of bands such as Norway's Ulver and Isengard, Russia's Temnozor, Ukraine's Nokturnal Mortum, Latvia's Skyforger, Lithuania's Anubi (verging towards Dark Metal), Poccolus, and Ha Lela, Finland's Wyrd and Haïve, and Romania's Negură Bunget.

Events such as the Kilkim Žaibu festival in Varniai, Lithuania, feature mostly this subgenre and attract thousands of fans. Gradually, several Black Metal groups and musicians evolved into Folk and Viking Metal. This was the case for Isengard, a project created by Darkthrone's Fenriz and active between 1989 and 1995. Ulver might well have been the first group mixing Black Metal and Folk Metal elements in its 1995–1997 "Black Metal Trilogy", including *Bergtatt*, *Kveldssanger*, and *Nattens Madrigal*. After 1997, Ulver abandoned Metal altogether and continued a distinguished career in the field of experimental and electronic music.

Interviewed by Dayal Patterson for his 2013 book, even a former member of such a quintessential Satanist band as Gorgoroth, Gaahl, preferred to refer to "Norse shamanism and Odinism". "I would say I am part of Odin, Gaahl declared. As I always try to explain, I use the word Satanist only because the world speaks with a Christian tongue and in their words I would be a Satanist – it is the opponent. I would not say [I was] solely Odinist, [but] if I am Odin, then I am an Odinist".[149] In fact, Gaahl and fellow Gorgoroth member Einar Selvik ("Kvitrafn") were among the founders of the Nordic folk music band Wardruna in 2003. Fans "were surprised to see two members of one of the most famous Satanic bands on the planet suddenly singing about Nordic spiritualism".[150] In fact, Selvik ended up as a "practicing Pagan" and a member of the Neopagan movement Ásatrú.[151] In 2006, another former member of Gorgoroth, drummer Erlend Erichsen, published the novel *Nasjonalsatanisten* (National Satanist), where he told the story of Norwegian Black Metal Satanism in a sarcastic tone, saving only the "genuinely Norwegian" nature spirituality.[152]

148 See K. Granholm, "'Sons of Northern Darkness': Heathen Influences in Black Metal and Neofolk Music", cit.

149 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 263.

150 D. Patterson, *Black Metal The Cult Never Dies – Volume One*, cit., pp. 106–107.

151 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

152 Erlend Erichsen, *Nasjonalsatanisten: Roman*, Oslo: Damm, 2006.

The personal and musical evolution of different groups and artists went in a similar direction. They came to regard Satanism and a purely oppositional aesthetic as an early phase of their journey, which should be gradually replaced to a more mature approach focusing on the Viking tradition and northern folklore in general. On the other hand, the Nordic element in Black Metal is not always the result of an evolution. Some bands included Nordic and Medieval themes from the beginning, including Satyricon, a very successful Norwegian band formed in 1991.[153] In 1995, Satyricon's vocalist and guitarist Sigurd Wongraven ("Satyr") stated: "I haven't moved from Satanism to something else. I have never been a Satanist. Though I have shared a lot of ideologies with Satanists. I look upon dark powers as something else than just Satan. I have never claimed to be a Satanist, therefore I must claim that cultural pride [about the Nordic roots] is not anything new, it has been there for a long time".[154]

Turning to Neopaganism was not, however, a universal phenomenon in the Black Metal scene of the late 20th and early 21st century. In the next sections, we will examine bands strictly connected with new Satanist organizations, such as Black Funeral in the U.S. and Dissection in Sweden. Other bands moved from Black Metal to a different subgenre, Industrial Metal, generating a hybrid known as Industrial Black Metal. Examples include the Norwegian bands Dødheimsgard and Mysticum, the Italian Aborym, and the French Blacklodge. Aborym had among its members, between 2000 and 2005, Hungarian Attila Csihar, and its lyrics often featured satanic themes. Csihar had evolved in the meantime into a central figure of the Black Metal scene. He had already performed in Mayhem's landmark album *De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas* in 1994 and joined again the band in 2004.

Dødheimsgard's move from "pure" to Industrial Black Metal coincided with the passage from the 1998 album *Satanic Art* to the one released in 1999, *666 International*. The titles confirmed that the musical style changed but references to Satanism were not abandoned. Mysticum's Web site, while emphasizing the musical differences between their "Industrial Black Metal" and classic Black Metal, proclaims: "We are representing total destruction of civilizations and human minds, because we are the true worshipers of the black cosmos and the ones that will guide you to planet Satan, collecting your souls. Damn

153 On Satyricon, see D. Patterson, *Black Metal The Cult Never Dies – Volume One,* cit., pp. 15–49. On recent developments, see also D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Into the Abyss,* London: Cult Never Dies, 2016.

154 "Satyricon", interview originally published in *Descent Magazine*, vol. 11, 1995, available at <http://members.tripod.com/black_metal/satyricon/descint.html>, last accessed on November 11, 2015.

you all, Hail Satan!".[155] *Planet Satan* was also the title of Mysticum' second album, released in 2014.

Mysticum and Blacklodge were representative of a trend combining Satanism and hard drugs. Blacklodge's *Login: SataN* (2003) included a song called "Whiten Your Nose for Satan". The band's leader, Saint Vincent, explained the combination of drugs and Satanism: "After years being attracted by Satanism and occult stuff, I had finally the real possibility to do black magic and feel the presence of demons through psychoactive chemistry". This "Luciferian chemistry" did not rely only on drugs, as Vincent's meditations on Lucifer also used texts by British Theosophist Anna Kingsford (1846–1888). One result was Blacklodge's 2012 album *MachinatioN*, which, Vincent claimed, unveiled "the infernal process Satan put in shape to enslave humanity and establish the last ultimate empire on Earth ruled by him". To this end, Satan uses a "trident" including Medusa, the destruction, Caesar, the oppression, and Lucifer, the revolution. "Those three prongs are three sides of modern Satanism, preparing the ultimate reign of the beast on Earth".[156]

There is, on the other hand, a current in Black Metal distancing itself from Satanism. Patterson calls it "post-Black Metal" and classifies groups in this category based not on when they were formed but on the combination of Black Metal with entirely different styles of aesthetic and music. In fact, he traces the origins of post-Black Metal back to Fleurety, a band created in Norway in 1991, although he regards Solefald, another Norwegian group formed in 1995, as "in many senses, *the* first" band in this category.[157] Typically, Solefald's vocalist, guitarist, and bassist Cornelius Jakhelln ("Cornelius von Jackhelln") later declared in 2010: "We never gave a damn about upside-down crosses or Satanism".[158]

Patterson regards as typical of this trend France's Amesoeurs and U.S.' Wolves in the Throne Room, one of the groups of the so called Third Wave of Black Metal, whose center is in the United States. Wolves in the Throne Room evolved into an Eco-Metal and a dream of communion with the energies of their Pacific American landscape. For this, they claim, they do not need Satanism: "How does one go about raising Satanic children? What does a Satanic farm look like?".[159]

A different "post-Black Metal" development led to a new subgenre, Depressive/Suicidal Black Metal (DSBM), whose ancestor was the German group

155 <http://www.mysticum.com>, last accessed on November 20, 2015.

156 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., pp. 464–467.

157 D. Patterson, *Black Metal The Cult Never Dies – Volume One*, cit., p. 80.

158 *Ibid.*, p. 96.

159 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 482.

Bethlehem, formed in 1991. Bethlehem included references to Satan in some of their early lyrics, but quickly distanced themselves from Satanism.[160] One of the bands commonly seen as crucial for DSBM, although it does not like the label,[161] is the Italian Forgotten Tomb, founded in late 1998 or early 1999 by Ferdinando Marchisio ("Herr Morbid") in Piacenza. In fact, Forgotten Tomb evolved from a previous band, Sacrater, which, according to Marchisio himself, "shared the whole fascination for Satanic/blasphemous topics", "insisted on the occult side of things" and included in their shows "corpsepaint, self-mutilation, impaled cow-heads and such".[162] Later, the group went from the cult of Satan to the cult of death, a development typical of DSBM.

Black Metal and Satanism: Some Final Remarks

Unlike Granholm, to the question "to what extent is Satanic ideology and a 'traditional' aesthetic still a defining characteristic of black metal for its practitioners and followers?", Patterson replied that "these are essential", yet he admitted that for some contemporary "protagonists it clearly is not".[163] Patterson concluded that "in the bigger picture there really is no post-black metal",[164] and Black Metal is defined by its original characteristics, including Satanism. Faxneld also criticized Granholm's "surprising claims" that "Black Metal has always been more pagan than Satanic", and insisted that "the explicit ideological core of the 1990s Black Metal was consistently adherence to Satanism, and it largely remains so today".[165]

This is not the position of all Black Metal bands, but corresponds to some authoritative statements. Infernus of Gorgoroth claimed in 2006 that in Black Metal Satanism is "the most important thing, the fundament. The music is merely of secondary importance".[166] Gorgoroth's Gaahl, before changing his mind, was persuaded that "Black metal *is* Satanism…there is no other answer. My only goal is to procreate Satan. The main goal in the world, you'd have to be able to remove the word Satan from every man's tongue and simply *become*

160 See D. Patterson, *Black Metal The Cult Never Dies – Volume One*, cit., p. 226.

161 See *ibid.*, p. 271.

162 *Ibid.*, pp. 265–267.

163 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 480.

164 *Ibid.*, p. 483.

165 P. Faxneld, "Bleed for the Devil: Self-injury as Transgressive Practice in Contemporary Satanism, and the Re-enchantment of Late Modernity", cit., p. 113.

166 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Prelude to the Cult*, cit., p. 8.

it".[167] A veteran of the Black Metal scene in Finland, Kai Puolakanaho ("Ritual Butcherer"), concurred. "The whole meaning of black metal, he said, [is] based upon death and destruction as well as on Satanism": it is "a Satanic death cult", "a musical Black Mass".[168] Another Finnish well-known Black Metal musician, Ville Pystynen ("Shatraug"), added that "Finnish black metal is not a business for anyone – it's a cult of worship, practised by Satanic peers".[169]

From these statements, some scholars derive the radical conclusion that Black Metal goes well beyond music and should be rather interpreted as a satanic new religious movement. According to Benjamin Hedge Olson, "while black metal's musical roots are undoubtedly to be found in the genealogy of heavy metal music, it has moved beyond the confines of metal culture into the realm of religious sects and millenarian cults". Black Metal concerts, Olson argues, are much more than concerts, and cannot be compared to similar events organized by Death Metal bands. "Death metal concerts are designed to be, first and foremost, fun. Black metal concerts are religious rituals designed to achieve mystical transcendence of the mundane and physical worlds; having fun is often seen by participants as being negative".[170]

There are, of course, also those who disagree. Satyricon's drummer Kjetil-Vidar Haraldstad ("Frost"), who was a member of a Satanist band par excellence, Gorgoroth, in 1994–1995, stated that "there's this misconception that black metal has anything to do with Satanic philosophy, which it hasn't, it really hasn't. The music should have a dark character and atmosphere, no doubt, but I think darkness can be expressed in many different ways (…). Satanism is just one of a billion possible directions".[171]

For his 2007 book, Keith Kahn-Harris conducted several interviews of Black Metal fans and musicians. He found several references to Satanism, but Satan was more often perceived as "a potent symbol" than as "a literal personality". His interviewees were "more concerned with liberation from the perceived constraints of humanity than with worshipping the devil". This position, Kahn-Harris noted, was similar to LaVey's: except that most maintained "a strong

167 Peter Beste (dir.), *True Norwegian Black Metal* (video documentary), New York: VBS TV, 2007. See also the companion volume: P. Beste, *True Norwegian Black Metal: We Turn in the Night Consumed by Fire*, ed. by Johan Kugelberg, New York: Random House, 2008.

168 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Prelude to the Cult*, cit., pp. 11–12.

169 *Ibid.*, p. 26. Shatraug's name is incorrectly spelled as "Shautrag".

170 B.H. Olson, "I Am the Black Wizards: Multiplicity, Mysticism and Identity in Black Metal Music and Culture", cit., p. 51.

171 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

suspicion of anything that might turn Satanism into anything resembling a religion", including the Church of Satan.[172]

Extreme Metal, Kahn-Harris argued, was about transgression. It proposed three kinds of transgression at the same time: sonic, with its music; discursive, with its references to Satanism; and bodily, with sexual perversions, corpse-epaint, self-mutilation, and sometimes actual violence. There is little doubt that Black Metal concerts may be transgressive, violent events. Mayhem's 1990 concert that generated the well-known 1993 CD *Live in Leipzig* "featured such props as rotting meat thrown into the crowd, decapitated pig's heads impaled on spikes adorning the stage, and a dead raven in a plastic bag for the singer to inhale the smell of". Additionally, "Dead would intentionally cut himself, particularly on his wrists, as a part of the performance". At Gorgoroth's already mentioned 2004 "Black Mass" in Krakow, "the overtly Satanic stage presentation involved 120 decapitated sheep heads, fire, four nude male and female hooked models, drenched in blood, and hanging from crucifixes".[173]

As one subgenre replaced the other, up to the first and second waves of Black Metal, old forms of transgression were perceived as no longer shocking, and new ones were introduced, including references to Nazism, a transgressive topic par excellence.[174] These Nazi references, according to Kahn-Harris, did not mean that Extreme Metal's transgression was primarily political. Other musical genres, such as punk and rap, were "much more concerned with social criticism than extreme metal".[175]

Scandinavian Black Metal, with its serious crimes, was the exception rather than the rule within the larger Extreme Metal scene. However, as Phillipov noted, these crimes confirmed that "the relationship between metal and violence is not always one entirely exaggerated or fabricated by conservative critics".[176] Violence was perceived by some as a legitimate and even necessary tool of transgression.

It would be tempting to add that, as they matured and in some cases entered the musical mainstream, Extreme Metal musicians who had proclaimed themselves Satanists went one step back and started claiming that what they had called Satanism was, in fact, Neopaganism, which also allowed for the

172 K. Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*, cit., p. 40.

173 P. Beste, *True Norwegian Black Metal: We Turn in the Night Consumed by Fire*, cit., p. 54.

174 K. Kahn-Harris, *Extreme Metal: Music and Culture on the Edge*, cit., pp. 30–47.

175 *Ibid.*, p. 48.

176 Michelle Phillipov, "Extreme Music for Extreme People? Norwegian Black Metal and Transcendent Violence", in T. Hjelm, K. Kahn-Harris, M. LeVine (eds.), *Heavy Metal Controversies and Countercultures*, cit., pp. 152–165 (p. 164).

introduction of folk Nordic elements in their music. But this statement, which may be true for some bands, is not applicable to all. Some bands still maintain a reference to Satanism today. And some were never Satanist and introduced folk themes from the beginning.

Perhaps the question of whether Satanism is essential to Black Metal may receive different answers for different regional scenes and periods of time. Finland's Mikko Aspa stated in an interview: "Most of my favorite black metal bands are not explicitly Satanic. At least not in modern standards. I have respect for the Satanic bands with insight, dedication etc. obviously, but I have no time for the hordes of weak and lame copycats and posers". He added that, with respect to the question of Satanism, "one can't assume that a band from UK in '80 would be like band [sic] in Norway '92. Or 1996 in Poland. Or 1997 in France. Or 2000 in Finland. And so on".[177]

Although Black Metal is a truly global phenomenon, an interesting question is why it developed more in some countries than in others. Scandinavian sociologists had already asked themselves why LaVeyan Satanism seemed to prosper more in their countries than elsewhere. LaVeyan Satanism in Scandinavia, although not irrelevant, was a tiny phenomenon compared to Black Metal. Their answer was that Nordic Satanism in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Denmark was not purely Nordic but was "constructed by importing American ideas and discourse". The latter, however, were "refracted through the lens of local culture". The result was the creation of an oppositional narrative, singling out Christianity and the bourgeois "social-democratic project" as responsible for what a percentage of youth perceived as a grey, dull, and oppressive cultural climate.[178]

The same may apply to Black Metal. Oppression, religious and cultural monopoly, and the lack of spiritual diversity are mentioned in many interviews. The power of the Catholic Church or of the Islamic religious and political establishment are mentioned in Poland and, respectively, in Egypt or Iran. Local situations are of course very much different. But protest and transgression flourish where the spiritual climate is perceived as dominated but one single oppressive monopolistic culture. And Satan is transgression par excellence.

The online *Encyclopaedia Metallum* includes, under the genre Black Metal, listings for more than 27,000 currently active and defunct bands from all over

177 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Prelude to the Cult*, cit., p. 53.

178 T. Hjelm, H. Bogdan, A. Dyrendal, J.Aa. Petersen, "Nordic Satanism and Satanism Scares: The Dark Side of the Secular Welfare State", *Social Compass*, vol. 56, no. 4, December 2009, pp. 515–529 (pp. 525–527).

the world, and the number is constantly growing.[179] Not all the Black Metal, and certainly not all Heavy Metal, celebrated Satan. Nor were all musicians who referred to Satanism part of the various Metal currents. Only a small percentage of those who attended Black Metal concerts or bought the bands' albums were really interested in Satanism, although others cultivated magic or read Crowley.[180] However, a significant number of Black Metal musicians developed a serious interest in Satanism. While some read LaVey and a few had some contacts with the Church of Satan, a larger number was more oriented toward an occult or theistic Satanism. In fact, some Black Metal musicians were among the few Satanists who really accepted the Christian theology depicting Satan as evil, and worshipped him as such.

In its later incarnations, Black Metal evolved from Satanism to different forms of Neopaganism. Satanic references, however, were never entirely dropped. As for the millions who listened to Black Metal music, few of them joined a Satanist organization. A higher percentage, however, became part of a larger "satanic culture" and "satanic milieu",[181] which often manifests itself online and should be regarded as a larger circle with respect to the small number of actual members of Satanist churches and orders.

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179 See the list in the Web site *Encyclopaedia Metallum – The Metal Archive*, cit.

180 See M. Introvigne, "The Gothic Milieu", in Jeffrey Kaplan, Heléne Lööw (eds.), *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization*, Walnut Creek (California), Lanham (Maryland): Altamira Press, 2002, pp. 138–151.

181 On the concepts of "satanic culture" and "satanic milieu", see A. Dyrendal, J.R. Lewis, J.Aa. Petersen, *The Invention of Satanism*, cit., pp. 218–224.

CHAPTER 13

From the 20th to the 21st Century, 1994–2016

Satan the Wiccan: Michael Ford and the Greater Church of Lucifer

In 1993, Michael W. Ford formed in Indianapolis a Black Metal band called Black Funeral. Ford was among the few Black Metal musicians to join the Order of Nine Angles (ONA), where he served as the local Indianapolis leader between 1996 and 1998. In 1998, he separated from the ONA, criticizing its Nazi political orientation, and established the Order of Phosphorus. He offered to initiates also the opportunity of joining a companion organization, the Black Order of the Dragon, proposing "Adversarial Magick and Vampyrism".[1] In 2007, he founded the Church of Adversarial Light and in 2013, the Greater Church of Lucifer (GCOL). In 2015, Ford announced on his Facebook page that in two years the GCOL had expanded to include "several U.S. state based chapters, a Canadian chapter, chapters in Spain, several chapters in South America and we currently have branches in every country in Central America". In the same post, he explained that the Order of Phosphorus would be integrated into the GCOL "in order to give those that are interested in deep Luciferian study, as well as the Magickal Aspect of Luciferianism, an avenue to pursue their studies".[2]

Ford made headlines in 2015 by inaugurating on October 30 the first Satanist temple open to the public in the Old Town Spring suburb of Houston, Texas.[3] Ford insisted that the GCOL welcomes both occult and rationalist Satanists, as well as pagans and miscellaneous followers of different occult spiritualities. However, Ford's ideas are clearly stated in a voluminous corpus of writings, and in 2015 an official statement of the GCOL's ideas was published under the title *Wisdom of Eôsphoros*.[4] Eôsphoros is a Greek name for Lucifer, and the GCOL

1 See Fredrik Gregorius, "Luciferian Witchcraft: At the Crossroads between Paganism and Satanism", in P. Faxneld, J.Aa. Petersen (eds.), *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity*, cit., pp. 229–249 (p. 245).

2 See post at <https://www.facebook.com/LuciferianMichaelWFord/posts/10152923544491571>, last accessed on October 15, 2015.

3 See Keith Garvin, "Church of Lucifer Set to Open in Old Town Spring", *click2houston.com*, October 6, 2015, available at <http://www.click2houston.com/news/church-of-lucifer-set-to-open-in-old-town-spring/35693648>, last accessed on October 15, 2015.

4 Michael W. Ford, Jacob No, Jeremy Crow, Hope Marie, *Wisdom of Eôsphoros: The Luciferian Philosophy*, Houston: Succubus Productions, 2015.

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describes itself as "Luciferian". The book embraces a social Darwinism and a notion of Satan that is not far away from LaVey. "We are above the duality of the cult of Jesus and Yahweh, it proclaims. Luciferians do not recognize the existence or cosmological structure of Yahweh in some literal sense; nor do we accept the reality of a conscious 'Satan' inspiring us to revolt! Luciferians view Lucifer as the symbol for our potential and a strong archetype of spiritual self-liberation, knowledge, and power".[5]

On closer examination, however, the ambiguity of the early Church of Satan resurfaces in the GCOL. Ford's books are part of Luciferian witchcraft, a galaxy of small groups that try to keep together Wicca and Satanism by reviving the old distinction between Lucifer, the god of the witches, and Satan. It is a contentious milieu, where not all like Ford's approach and taste for publicity. It is not easy, as Swedish scholar Fredrik Gregorius noted, to "force Ford's ideas into a coherent structure".[6] However, at least in his earlier writings, including *Luciferian Witchcraft*, published in 2005, it seems that some "primary forces" may exist independently of human consciousness. To Lucifer and Lilith, Ford added Cain, who is both the son of the god of the witches and the Lord of the Sabbath himself.[7] One possibility is that LaVeyan Satanism is proposed in the GCOL to an outer circle and the media, while those interested in ritual magic and the Order of Phosphorus are introduced to more occult notions about Lucifer and Cain.

Media reactions to Ford's announcement that a Satanist temple would be inaugurated in Texas generated imitations throughout the world. In the town of Calarcá, Colombia, situated near the country's coffee capital, Armenia, Víctor Damián Rozo (a pseudonym for Héctor Londoño Villegas) made in turn international headlines by announcing the opening of a Luciferian temple at first for December 27, 2015, then for June 6, 2016. Although the first public opening in 2015 was forbidden by the authorities, Rozo started the operations of the "temple", in fact a small chapel, notwithstanding the protests of the local Catholic Bishop. Rozo operates a huge number of different Web sites and Facebook pages. Although he claims that the temple is home to a congregation of some 200 members, incorporated as the Asociación Templo Semillas de Luz (Association Temple Seeds of Light), worshiping Lucifer as a god of light and happiness, Rozo's main purpose seems to be the sale of "Luciferian" rituals

5 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

6 F. Gregorius, "Luciferian Witchcraft: At the Crossroads between Paganism and Satanism", cit., p. 246.

7 See M.W. Ford, *Luciferian Witchcraft*, self-published at Lulu.com, 2005.

promising to improve his customers' financial conditions.[8] Colombian Black Metal musicians such as Héctor Carmona, of the band Luciferian, dismissed Rozo's group as offering religious "paraphernalia" imitating Christianity in reverse. The prevailing Colombian Black Metal scene seems to regard Satan and Lucifer, not unlike LaVey, rather as the symbol of an "existentialist" rebellion against mainline morality and religion.[9]

Satan the Misanthrope: Dissection and the Temple of the Black Light

In the second half of the 1990s, Sweden was perhaps the most important country where a "religious" and actively Satanist Black Metal was created.[10] A 1995 album of Marduk, evolving from an already notorious 1991 demo, was called *Fuck Me Jesus*, and its cover showed a young girl masturbating with a crucifix. Founder Morgan Håkansson ("Evil") insisted on "Satanic philosophy and belief" as a defining feature of Black Metal.[11] Daniel Rostén ("Mortuus"), who joined Marduk in 2004, expressed a position similar to Euronymous': "If it's not about devil worship, or destructive Satanism, I couldn't call it black metal (…). If it's not Satanic, it's not black metal".[12]

Swedish groups formed a secret organization modeled after Norway's Black Circle, called the True Satanist Horde and originally founded by Tony Särkkä of Abruptum. A key player in the Horde was Dissection, a Death Metal band (with some Black Metal features) founded in 1989 around Jon Nödtveidt (1975–2006). In 1995, Nödtveidt and another member of Dissection, Johan Norman, joined The Misanthropic Luciferian Order (MLO), later renamed Temple of the Black Light, a "theistic" part of the Swedish small Satanist scene. Norman left the MLO in 1997, but Nödtveidt remained. For the Order, Satan was one of the

8 See Oliver Gómez Solarte, "Las 5 'diabluras' del luciferino quindiano Víctor Damián Rozo", *Cronica del Quindio*, January 19, 2016, available at <http://www.cronicadelquindio.com/noticia-completa-titulo-las_5_diabluras_del_luciferino_quindiano_vctor_damin_rozo-seccion-la_regin-nota-95430.htm>, last accessed on January 22, 2016.

9 See John Fredy Nagles Soto, "El Luciferianismo, la doctrina que llegaría al Huila", *Diario del Huila*, January 18, 2016, available at <http://www.diariodelhuila.com/cultura/el-luciferianismo-la-doctrina-que-llegaria-al-huila-cdgint20160117122251112>, last accessed February 10, 2016.

10 See Ika Johannesson, Jon Jefferson Klingberg, *Blod eld död: En svensk metalhistoria*, Stockholm: Alfabeta, 2011.

11 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 332.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 339.

eleven gods and was about to unleash chaos in our world. Nödtveidt described Dissection as the "sonic propaganda unit" of MLO.[13] In 1995, he had left the True Satanist Horde to concentrate only on MLO's peculiar brand of Satanism. Dissection's innovative style of Metal music had a phenomenal success in the early 2000s, with some 200,000 copies of their albums sold internationally. This success spread the fame of MLO, although it always remained a small and secretive organization.

In 1997, Nödtveidt and "Vlad" killed a randomly selected gay man, the Algerian immigrant Josef Ben Meddour (1960–1997), in what became known as the Keillers Park murder in Göteborg. The story was later told in the movie *Keillers Park* by Susanna Edwards, released in 2006. "Vlad", or "Nemesis", remains to this day a mysterious character. He is from an Iranian immigrant family and was age 20 at the time of the murder. His real name was Amir (Shain) Khoshnood-Sharis[14] and he might have been the founder of the MLO, and the same person who signed the Order's main books as "Frater Nemidial" and later "N.A.-A.218". "Vlad" has been also identified with the person using the pseudonym "Victor Draconi", who registered in 2005 the trademark "Dissection" with the Swedish Patent Office. But nothing is certain.[15]

Nödtveidt and Vlad, in whose homes the police found altars and paraphernalia of the Misanthropic Luciferian Order, confessed they had intended to sacrifice Ben Meddour to Satan, also honoring Bård Eithun, who had committed a similar crime against a gay man in Norway. Nödtveidt received a ten years sentence but was released in 2004, and Dissection started again its musical activities.

In 2006, however, Nödtveidt committed suicide. He was found with a book in front of him. The media reported that it was LaVey's *The Satanic Bible* but, after the Church of Satan protested, they admitted it had nothing to do with LaVey and was in fact a text of the MLO, probably its sacred scripture published in 2002 and known as *Liber Azarate.*[16] It was a ritual suicide. The musician had told the Norwegian fanzine *Slayer* that "the Satanist decides over his own life

13 *Ibid.*, p. 344. See also B.H. Olson, "At the Threshold of the Inverted Womb: Anti-Cosmic Satanism and Radical Freedom", cit.

14 See the comments by the police officer who investigated the murder: Lars Ohlin, "Satanist-mordet i Keillers park", in *Nordisk Kriminallkrönika 1999*, Stockholm, Göteborg, Malmoe: Nordiska Polisidrottsförbundet, 1999, pp. 113–126.

15 See the ongoing discussion in the Swedish forum flashback.org: "Vlad/Nemesis – Black Metal Artist?", <https://www.flashback.org/t774371>, last accessed on October 14, 2015.

16 "DISSECTION Guitarist: JON NÖDTVEIDT Didn't Have Copy Of 'The Satanic Bible' At Suicide Scene" (capitals in original), *Blabbermouth.net*, August 23, 2006. Available at <http://www.blabbermouth.net/news/dissection-guitarist-jon-n-dtveidt-didn-t-have

and death and prefers to go with a smile on his lips when he has reached his peak in life, when he has accomplished everything and aim[s] to transcend his earthly existence".[17] Shortly before dying, he told another fanzine, *Evilution*, that for him "Satan represents something so much bigger than this world, than this universe, than the creator of this universe. It is a force that is constantly counteracting the creation and breaking it down until everything has returned to its totally unlimited primal state of chaos".[18]

As a result of Nödtveidt's suicide, Dissection disbanded and the MLO was reduced to a handful of members. It changed its name into the Temple of the Black Light, in order to distance itself from the Black Metal past and the related murders and suicides. From 2006 to 2009 operated a Web site, but this was closed in 2009 and the Temple's next public statement was through *The Book of Sitra Achra*, published in 2013.[19] "The result of an almost two decades long work",[20] the book paid homage to, and used materials by, both the Golden Dawn and the Jewish self-styled messiah Sabbatai Zevi (1626–1676) and his prophet Rabbi Nathan of Gaza (1643–1680). The book, however, turned Nathan's theology upside down. "While the prophet Nathan of Gaza, the introduction explained, never sided with the Dragons of the Other Side and instead strived for a union between the two sides of divinity (…) our own approach is dedicated to an opposite cause":[21] separating darkness from light and celebrating darkness.

Sitra Achra is a Satanist grimoire, including lists of spirits, incantations, and rituals and sigils to seek contacts with the dark forces. Among the rituals mentioned, the book suggests to celebrate a blood sacrifice, preferably on November 11 and of a snake. The snake "holds the highest position when it comes to the work of blood sacrifice. The snake chosen for such rites should preferably be poisonous". The snakes to be used in the sacrifice "should be taken care of and adored as representations of the Messiah of Black Light for 7 or 11 days", during which the adept who will perform the sacrifice should fast and "remain clean both in body, soul and mind, with attention directed only towards Spirit, glimpsed within the dark of the eyes of the venerated serpent".[22]

-copy-of-the-satanic-bible-at-suicide-scene/#20w51ZmFPElEcYxC.99>, last accessed on August 15, 2015.

17 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 346.

18 *Ibid.*

19 *The Book of Sitra Achra: A Grimoire of the Dragons of the Other Side*, Tampere: Ixaxaar Occult Literature, 2013.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 308–309.

Swedish scholar Carl Karlson-Weimann, himself a participant in the Black Metal subculture, assessed in 2015 the total membership of the Temple of the Black Light at 20–30, although many more are influenced by its publications and by the music of Dissection. He ascribed the Temple, the MLO, and Dissection to a "deeply theistic" current of Satanism, rooted in an idiosyncratic interpretation of the Kabbalah and influenced by Chaos Magick but lacking the humorous side of the latter.[23]

After Nödtveidt's suicide, while the Temple of the Black Light tried to stay away from Black Metal, other Swedish bands saw themselves as the heirs of Dissection. The most well-known group that evolved towards anti-cosmic Satanism was Watain. This band managed to enter the mainstream, winning musical awards and being featured in programs of the national Swedish television, while at the same time maintaining its emphasis on Satanism. In 2013, Watain's frontman Erik Danielsson told a Phoenix online newspaper that "strong religious connections" were crucial for the band. Not only its members practiced "summoning rituals", but they remained convinced that church burning and other crimes might actually have served as evocations of demonic beings. Asked about the crimes of an older generation of Black Metal musicians, Danielsson answered: "We very much identify with that. And when you're working with these kind of anarchies in their primal forms, and you evolve with them, you are calling upon things that eventually will have to manifest physically. And that is why the history of black metal is filled with stories of big buildings being set on fire, of big mass suicides, of people who have been murdered, and people who have murdered. It is those things coming to life from the music. They are very natural outcomes".[24]

Danielsson also stated that "the Satanist is the *enemy of the world as we know it*. He is the enemy of order, the enemy of society, the enemy of the upholding of moral or ethical codes and he is the enemy because he has no other possibility, because the entrance of Satan into someone's heart means a transformation into someone who only feels for that".[25] In another interview, Danielsson explained that "Satanism is part of transcendence, the becoming;

23 C. Karlson-Weimann, "Anti-Cosmic Kabbalah: Esoteric Re-Interpretations in Contemporary Left Hand Path Satanism", a paper presented at the XXI World Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, Erfurt (Germany), August 24, 2015.

24 Lauren Wise, "Watain's Erik Danielsson Talks Satanism, Pig's Blood, and Privacy", *Phoenix New Times*, July 22, 2013, available at <http://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/music/watains-erik-danielsson-talks-satanism-pigs-blood-and-privacy-6609465>, last accessed on December 1, 2015.

25 D. Patterson, *Black Metal: Evolution of the Cult*, cit., p. 349.

the start in a way is irrelevant as is the person. The only thing is that you never let anything block your path". With an allusion to the Temple of the Black Light's later criticism of Black Metal, Danielsson stated that "if the line that people go for in Satanism is black metal, if that's how far their interest in the left hand path goes, fine but there is an abyss and you can step into it if you want".[26] The starting point is not important, and many paths lead to Satanism. Watain, at any rate, when asked, proclaims that it still "fully supports the MLO. But some questions should not be asked. Those who put their hands in the fire very often burn".[27]

Satan Redux: The Resurrection and Death of Anton LaVey

The 1989 CSICOP report on Satanism, while denouncing as "non-experts" the most famous anti-Satanists, recommended among reliable "experts" LaVey's daughter Zeena, defined as "an authority on Satanism; Official spokesperson for The Church of Satan". The Church of Satan was mentioned among the sources to consult for information on Satanism, although the report cautiously specified that "the authors do not endorse the beliefs or practices of [this and similar] organizations".[28] History, once again, repeated itself: the discredit of anti-Satanist campaigns made Satanists somewhat respectable. At the time, however, many believed that the Church of Satan had entered an irreversible crisis, and that other organizations would benefit from the discredit of anti-Satanism.

To the surprise of many, including Michael Aquino, who had already published more than an obituary for the Church of Satan, in the 1990s, LaVey's group experienced a resurrection of sorts. In a previous chapter, we left LaVey at the beginning of the 1980s, prophesying important events for the Orwellian year 1984. What in fact happened in that year was that LaVey broke up with Diane, who had been his companion for twenty-four years. The separation was stormy, and was concluded in a civil court.[29] Considering the role of Diane in the organization of the Church of Satan, a further decline of the

26 B.H. Olson, "I Am the Black Wizards: Multiplicity, Mysticism and Identity in Black Metal Music and Culture", cit., p. 127.

27 "Watain", interview in the online magazine metal.de, available at <http://www.metal.de/heavy-metal/interview/watain/36518-watain/>, last accessed on November 20, 2015.

28 S. Carlson, G. Larue, *Satanism in America: How the Devil Got Much More Than His Due*, cit., pp. 137, 140.

29 B. Barton, *The Secret Life of a Satanist: The Authorized Biography of Anton LaVey*, cit., p. 198.

institution appeared inevitable. In 1984, LaVey predicted for himself a destiny of metaphysical solitude,[30] although, after some years, he found a new companion, once again blonde. Her name was Blanche Barton, and she would have a prime role in the revival of the Church of Satan.

American television offered the opportunity for this revival. Talk shows should normally offer two opposite viewpoints. When their guests where anti-Satanist activists and survivors, talk show hosts looked for opponents. It was difficult to find spokespersons for the elusive satanic "multi-generational" cults to appear on television, and, willing to show a Satanist to their audience, the hosts cannot but approach the Church of Satan. Even Geraldo Rivera, who had fueled for years anti-Satanist hysteria, played the game. On October 25, 1988, he invited to his show *Geraldo* Zeena LaVey. The young girl declared that hers was a "legitimate religion", "perfectly legal", not to be confused with the criminal activities of some adolescents, and with a sizable number of followers. "Hundreds of thousands?", Geraldo asked. "I cannot say hundreds of thousand, Zeena replied, but thousands easily".[31] The Church of Satan commented that many of those who saw the show wrote to state that they found young, beautiful Zeena much nicer than her opponents.[32]

Capitalizing on the TV success of his daughter, LaVey launched a "pentagonal program" in five points. He proposed "stratification", i.e. the right of the strong to prevail over the weak, and of the intelligent to dominate the stupid. He added the "strict taxation of all Churches", including the Church of Satan itself, and the re-establishment of "Lex Talionis", by which he meant the right *not* to offer the other cheek and to seek revenge on one's enemies. The fourth point was the construction of "humanoids", robots that would serve as perfect slaves for humans, and the fifth the development of "total environments", Disneylands for adults where all fantasies could be freely lived, from vampirism to group sex.[33]

This social program, once again, was vaguely inspired by the libertarian theories of Rand, and did not explicitly mention Satan. In November 1988, however, LaVey added a *Hymn of the Satanic Empire,* the music of which he

30 *Ibid.*, p. 224. See also B. Barton, *The Church of Satan: A History of World's Most Notorious Religion*, New York: Hell's Kitchen Productions, 1990.

31 "Geraldo"*, Devil Worship. Exposing Satan's Underground*, October 25, 1988, Transcript no. 6, New York: Journal Graphics, 1988, p. 8.

32 B. Barton, *The Church of Satan: A History of World's Most Notorious Religion*, cit., p. 76.

33 Anton S. LaVey, "Pentagonal Revisionism: A Five-Point Program", *The Cloven Hoof*, vol. 21, no. 2, 2nd quarter 1988, pp. 1–3.

had already composed in 1967. He claimed that the hymn was a compendium of his "pentagonal program". It also included anti-religious slogans.[34]

After his 1988 comeback, LaVey also took advantage of the renewed interest in vampires and werewolves, and claimed that the philosophy of the Church of Satan allowed to experience the full power of these images. He pointed out that his early rituals, celebrating the animal side of human beings, already included the essential of the werewolf's image.[35] As for vampires, LaVey did not believe they really existed. They were just a metaphor for the strong's right to feed on the weak, a key point of his philosophy. One of his followers, George C. Smith, aka Lucas Martel or "Nemo", disagreed. Martel believed that vampires were real beings, more powerful than humans, and around this belief created the Temple of the Vampire (ToV) in Lacey, Washington.

Although in fact founded in 1989, the Temple claimed its origins dated back to the ancient Sumerians. Its members were told that ancient vampires created the major world religions, including Judaism and Christianity, in order to better dominate the human masses, and also spread false information about themselves. "The reality of Vampires is insulated from popular belief by the credulity of the masses. We have carefully created a firm disbelief in Our reality and have no concern that those few who recognize Us for what We are shall sway the massive ignorance of humanity as a whole".

Theoretically, the Temple of the Vampire considered vampirism as possible in the physical sense of the term. In fact, it tried to distance itself from gothic "vampire wannabes", to the point that it expelled members who promoted blood drinking, and mostly advertised a form of social Darwinism similar to LaVey's. The Temple's credo stated: "I am a Vampire. I worship my ego and I worship my life, for I am the only God that is. I am proud that I am a predatory animal and I honor my animal instincts". The vampires proclaimed that they held "no belief that is in defiance of reason". "I know, the credo went on, that my beliefs in Ritual are fantasy but the magic is real, and I respect and acknowledge the results of my magic".[36]

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34 See B. Barton, *The Church of Satan: A History of World's Most Notorious Religion*, cit., pp. 89–91.

35 A.S. LaVey, *The Devil's Notebook*, Portland (Oregon): Feral House, 1992, pp. 120–125. On the myth of the werewolf and its popularity, see also Adam Douglas, *The Beast Within: Man, Myths and Werewolves*, London: Chapmans, 1992; and Willem de Blécourt, "Monstrous Theories: Werewolves and the Abuse of History", *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2013, pp. 188–212.

36 *The Vampire Creed*, Lacey (Washington): Temple of the Vampire, 1997, p. 1. See also *The Vampire Bible*, Lacey (Washington): Temple of the Vampire, 1997.

Perhaps because of the similar philosophy, Martel kept a good relationship with the main leaders of the Church of Satan, and LaVey's *The Black Flame* published, for a fee, publicity for the Temple of the Vampire. Martel also taught that a vampire initiate has a public or "dayside" self and one secret or "nightside". While the dayside self is skeptical and materialist, the nightside self tries to contact the Undead Gods. In which sense the latter "exist" was not fully clarified, but the ambiguity was sufficient to allow many leaders and members of the Church of Satan to belong at the same time to the Temple of the Vampire, and vice versa.

LaVey's relationship with werewolves was more difficult, perhaps because family problems were involved. LaVey's son-in-law Nikolas Schreck founded in 1987 the rock band Radio Werewolf. The name derived from a Nazi military radio that remained on air until the very last days of World War II. For Schreck, the werewolf was the agent selected by Satan to bring confusion and destruction to Earth. That he realized it or not, Charles Manson was one such werewolf and Schreck, a Manson fan, organized periodical ceremonies in his honor. Schreck had a good taste for provocation and scandal, and was often photographed in Nazi uniforms. He was also interviewed by Geraldo Rivera but, unlike his nice wife, hailed assassinations and bloodbaths, and explained that the majority of humans does not deserve to live and murdering them would not make the planet any worse.[37]

Schreck's relationship with LaVey was plagued by the usual Church of Satan problem, the tension between occult and rationalist Satanism. At the beginning of the 1990s, Schreck, and Zeena herself, started arguing that perhaps Satan was not just a metaphor but a real, personal being. After Aquino's schism, LaVey was not prepared to tolerate this kind of heresy, even at the cost of losing such an active member as Schreck and his own daughter Zeena. In 1991, Schreck and Zeena parted company with LaVey, and Zeena wrote: "I officially and ritually ended my position as Church of Satan representative-defender and daughter of Anton LaVey". "While I have no regrets, Zeena continued, in my battle with the forces of ignorance, and my own unswerving dedication to *my* religion has only grown, I could no longer defend such an ungrateful and unworthy individual such as the so-called Black Pope". LaVey, interviewed, mentioned Zeena's psychological problems and her "father fixation", and suggested that his blonde daughter was simply trying to "be recognized by the world". He also predicted that she would end up creating "a more authoritarian structure" than the Church of Satan.[38]

37 "Geraldo", *Devil Worship: Exposing Satan's Underground*, cit., pp. 15–16.

38 See L. Wright, *Saints & Sinners*, cit., pp. 138–139, 154.

In fact, Zeena's relationship with the Church of Satan and her father were damaged by the bitter separation fight between LaVey and Zeena's mother, Diane Hegarty. In the court case started in San Francisco in 1988, Diane claimed that both the "Black House" in California Street and the Church of Satan were shared properties, which should be equally divided between her and LaVey. In 1991, Zeena and Schreck testified in favor of Diane, while Zeena's stepsister Karla, the daughter of LaVey and his first wife Carole, took the side of her father. In the same year 1991, the court ordered an equal division between Diane and LaVey of the properties of the Church of Satan, which were not conspicuous, and the sale of the Black House. LaVey reacted by declaring bankruptcy, a move that at least prevented the immediate sale of the house in California Street. On May 8, 1992, Diane and LaVey settled and agreed to sell the Black House, for a sum below the market price, to an old family friend, the wealthy San Francisco developer Donald Werby, who allowed LaVey to continue to live there for free.

The long lawsuit with Diane created both economic and health problems for the aging Pope of Satan. He developed a heart condition, which plagued his last years, and died in San Francisco's St. Mary's Hospital on October 29, 1997. His followers wrote on his death certificate the date of October 31, Halloween, a last touch to the legend of the Black Pope. Zeena, however, had the date corrected. Blanche Barton had her companion's remains cremated, and took the ashes with her to the Black House. The house, however, was falling into disrepair and his owner, Werby, believed it should be demolished. In 1998, the same years she gathered the last writings of LaVey in a book prefaced by Marilyn Manson, *Satan Speaks!,*[39] Blanche was evicted from the Black House. She tried to raise money to purchase the house, but what she raised was not enough. On October 16, 2001, the Black House was demolished. Where once LaVey's Satanist headquarters defiantly stood, a quiet apartment block was built.[40]

Schisms in the Church of Satan did not end with the death of LaVey. Who was the successor to the Black Pope? On November 7, 1997, Blanche Barton and Karla LaVey held a press conference in San Francisco to announce that the Church of Satan was continuing its activities with two "High Priestesses" of equal rank and authority, Blanche and Karla. Shortly thereafter, however, Blanche produced a testament where LaVey nominated her as the sole trustee of the Church of Satan and of its residual properties until their son, Satan Xerxes LaVey, born in 1993, would come of age. The unavoidable litigation followed, and the court hold the testament to be invalid. A settlement

39 A. LaVey, *Satan Speaks!*, Venice (California): Feral House, 1998.

40 For a gossipy account of these events. see M.A. Aquino, *The Church of Satan*, 6th ed., cit., pp. 437–448.

was reached, leaving to Blanche the name and organization of the Church of Satan, while LaVey's personal belongings and copyrights were divided in three equal parts among his children Karla, Zeena, and Satan.

In the meantime, Karla had founded a splinter group, the First Satanic Church, mostly active through radio shows and concerts, and not to be confused with the First Church of Satan, founded by a dissident disciple, John Dewey Allee, aka Daemon Eagan, an occult rather than a rationalist group. Egan was quick enough to secure for himself the valuable domain name churchofsatan.org, while the original Church of Satan had to settle for churchofsatan.com, and Karla selected satanicchurch.com.

Schisms are a constant in new religious movements, not only in Satanism.[41] They also tend to weaken the leaders. Blanche Barton remained High Priestess until 2002, and continued since then in the Church of Satan as chairperson of the Council of Nine. Gradually, she had to transfer her leadership position to the head of the very active New York group of the Church of Satan, Peter Gilmore, and to his wife Peggy Nadramia, who became High Priest and High Priestess after Barton. The headquarters of the Church of Satan were moved from San Francisco to New York, from where Reverend Gilmore, sometimes wearing a clergyman, tried to have Satanism recognized as a legitimate religion. Gilmore also took on the role of the perennial enemy of Aquino, whose misfortunes he continued to record with pleasure.[42]

Not all schisms in the Church of Satan originated from the succession struggle after LaVey's death. Some existed before, such as the Temple of Set and the World Church of Satanic Liberation (WCSL) established in New York in 1986 by Paul Douglas Valentine. Its members were largely recruited among the Manhattan clients of the Magickal Childe bookstore, founded by a Wiccan, Herman Slater (1935–1992), affectionately known to his customers as "Herman the Horrible". Valentine announced in 2011 that he was discontinuing the WCSL, an organization that had always remained very small.[43]

What was, and is, the dimension of the Church of Satan? Statistics are not easy. In 1993, American historian J. Gordon Melton estimated there were

41 See J.Aa. Petersen, "Satanism and Nuts: The Role of Schisms in Modern Satanism", cit.; Maxwell Davies, "Self-Conscious Routinization and the Post-Charismatic Fate of the Church of Satan from 1997 to Present", in J.Aa. Petersen (ed.), *Contemporary Religious Satanism: A Critical Anthology*, cit., pp. 75–84.

42 See Peter H. Gilmore, "Pretenders to the Throne: Regarding the Temple of Set", *The Black Flame*, vol. 4, 1993, no. 3–4, pp. 8–9.

43 His radio announcement is available at <http://www.blogtalkradio.com/thenakedsatanist/2011/07/24/the-end-of-the-worldwide-church-of-satanic-liberation>, last accessed on August 17, 2015.

"a few thousand" people who were in contact with LaVey's organization, most by mail only.[44] Those participating in the Grotto system were never more than a few hundreds. When the Grotto system collapsed, membership in the Church of Satan became almost exclusively a mail order affair. Since the fees were comparatively expensive, only a minority of those who shared LaVey's ideas bothered to join, particularly after his texts became easily available via the Internet.

"LaVeyan" groups independent of the Church of Satan multiplied. A list of the organizations, many of which ephemeral or defunct, which adopted a few ideas, or many, from LaVey would look like the Yellow Pages of Satanism. Early examples from the last years of the 20th century included: the Church of War of Altadena, California, which defined its philosophy as "virtually the same as the Church of Satan";[45] the Infernal Garrison of Mississauga, Ontario; the DOM Grotto of Stratford, Connecticut; the Shiva Grotto of Kokomo, Indiana; IZM Enterprises of Maple Park, Illinois; the Order of Xanastia of Langhorne, Pennsylvania; the Embassy of Lucifer of Stewart, British Columbia, and his splinter groups, the Embassy of Satan (Embasat) of Whitehall, Pennsylvania; and the Luciferian Light Group, in turn connected with the Order of Shaitan led by Jay Solomon ("Jay Nomolos") in Baltimore.

A disciple of Solomon, the Canadian Tsirk Susuej, created in 1991 the Embassy of Lucifer, whose textbook, *The Demonic Bible,*[46] had obvious debts to LaVey's *The Satanic Bible*, although it also proclaimed a belief in the "real" existence of Satan derived from Aquino. A curious feature of Susuej is his involvement since 2002 in the Bahá'í Faith and his persuasion that this religion shares a "commonality" with Satanism and his prophets where inspired by the same "Dark God" who manifested himself to Crowley and Aquino.[47]

Other groups included The Infernal Grotto, whose founder, William Gidney, tried to unite several small Satanist organizations into the First Occult Church; the Knights of Satan of Ancaster, Ontario; the Temple of Nepthys of Novato, California.[48] Not all these groups defined themselves as LaVeyan or even Satanist, although all borrowed ideas from San Francisco's Black Pope. Some were one-man or one-woman shows, and the total number of their followers should certainly not be overestimated. To follow the history of these

44 J.G. Melton, *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 4th ed., cit., p. 854.

45 "Church of War", self-published pamphlet, 1993.

46 Tsirk Susuej, *The Demonic Bible*, n.p.: Embassy of Lucifer, 1999 (3rd ed.: 2005).

47 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

48 See D.G. Bromley, S.G. Ainsley, "Satanism and Satanic Churches: The Contemporary Incarnations", cit.

groups, which continuously divided, reunited, were plagued by all sorts of schisms, is almost impossible, although James R. Lewis, collected many of them in his 2011 encyclopedia *Satanism Today.*[49] Other groups became known when Gilmore, on behalf of the Church of Satan, attacked them as illegitimate or unorthodox.[50]

Not all of Gilmore's rivals were in the United States. LaVey had already thought about establishing some outposts in Europe and one Kerk van Satan, or Magistralis Grotto of the Church of Satan, was founded by Maarten Lamers in 1971 in Amsterdam. Lamers was an actor who had performed in *Oh Calcutta!*, and in 1976, he opened something in the middle between a branch of the Church of Satan, a brothel, and a night club with live sex shows in the red light district of Amsterdam. Lamers lost his lawsuit against the Dutch revenue authorities, which he had unsuccessfully petitioned for tax exempt status, claiming his club was in fact a church. In 1988, he moved to Las Vegas, continuing an activity independently from the Church of Satan.[51]

It was long assumed, including by scholars, that Lamers' Kerk van Satan was just a tax elusion scheme. In 2014, however, a student at the University of Leiden, Susanne Kuipers, who described herself as "close to the LaVeyan Satanism movement in The Netherlands", wrote a B.A. term paper on the Kerk van Satan. Based on a study of the Kerk's newsletter *Shemhamforash*, the pamphlets published by Lamers, accounts of the visits to Amsterdam of Anton and Karla LaVey, and other documents, she concluded that a genuine religious research was pursued within the organization. She explained that Lamers himself came from a cultic milieu of sort – his father was a Freemason and his mother a yoga teacher – and that the Kerk van Satan and LaVeyan Satanism continued to this day in The Netherlands after Lamers moved to Nevada.[52]

An independent LaVeyan Satanism developed in the 21st century in many European countries, as well as in Australia and New Zealand. Some groups even sought, without much success, an official recognition as religions. A request by the Satanic Church in Estonia, later renamed the Order of the Black

49 J.R. Lewis, *Satanism Today: An Encyclopedia of Religion, Folklore and Popular Culture*, cit.

50 Gilmore's criteria for recognizing genuine Satanist organizations were summarized in his *Satanic Bunco Sheet*, available at <http://www.churchofSatan.com/Pages/Bunco.html>, last accessed on August 17, 2015.

51 D.G. Bromley, S.G. Ainsley, "Satanism and Satanic Churches: The Contemporary Incarnations", cit.

52 Susanne Kuipers, "The Rise of Dutch Satanism", B.A. term paper, January 5, 2014, University of Leiden. Available at <https://www.academia.edu/6924916/The_Rise_of_Dutch_Satanism>, last accessed on August 17, 2015.

Widow, was rejected in 2006.[53] A similar organization in Lithuania, called the Fraternity of Darkness, never sought legal recognition.[54]

A particularly significant number of LaVeyan Satanist groups were established in Scandinavia. Most declined joining the Church of Satan, or left it, claiming it was a typical American organization ill-suited to Europeans. In Denmark,[55] a Prometheus Grotten of the Church of Satan was established in 1997 and declared its independence from the parent American organization in 2000. In 2001, it split in two groups, one (very small) under Hr. Vad eventually associating with the Satanic Reds, discussed in the next section, and one, with some 200 members, maintaining a LaVeyan approach under the leadership of Amina Lap, Max Schmeling, and Ole Wolf. The second group publishes a *Satanisk Bulletin* and is very active on the Web through a Satanisk Forum. A similar split happened in Norway[56] between Det Norske Sataniske Samfunn (The Norwegian Satanic Society) and the Ordo Illuminatorum. The second focused more on Crowley and disappeared around 2009. The first is more clearly LaVeyan and has several hundred participant to its online forum.[57] In Sweden,[58] a Svenska Satanistkyrkan (Swedish Satanist Church), founded in Udevalla in 1996 by Tommy Eriksson, was a LaVeyan organization which tried to compete with the non-LaVeyan Misanthropic Luciferian Order, until it disappeared around the end of the first decade of the 21st century. In Finland,[59] at the same time, there were LaVeyan Web sites but no organized Satanist activity, outside of course of the Black Metal groups.[60]

History and chronicle are different enterprises, and a complete list of LaVeyan groups would be impossible to compile and would rapidly become

53 See Ringo Ringvee, "Satanism in Estonia", in J.Aa. Petersen (ed.), *Contemporary Religious Satanism: A Critical Anthology*, cit., pp. 129–140.

54 See Milda Ališauskienė, "The Peculiarities of Lithuanian Satanism: Between Crime and Atheism in Cyberspace", *ibid.*, pp. 121–128.

55 See J.Aa. Petersen, "Satanism in Denmark", in H. Bogdan, O. Hammer (eds.), *Western Esotericism in Scandinavia*, Leiden: Brill, 2016, pp. 463–473.

56 See A. Dyrendal, "Satanism in Norway", in H. Bogdan, O. Hammer (eds.), *Western Esotericism in Scandinavia*, cit., pp. 481–488.

57 See D. Søderlind, A. Dyrendal, "Social Democratic Satanism? Some Examples of Satanism in Scandinavia", *ibid.*, pp. 154–170.

58 See H. Bogdan, "Satanism in Sweden", in H. Bogdan, O. Hammer (eds.), *Western Esotericism in Scandinavia*, cit., pp. 489–493.

59 See T. Hjelm, "Satanism in Finland", in H. Bogdan, O. Hammer (eds.), *Western Esotericism in Scandinavia*, cit., pp. 474–480.

60 See T. Hjelm, H. Bogdan, A. Dyrendal, J.Aa. Petersen, "Nordic Satanism and Satanism Scares: The Dark Side of the Secular Welfare State", cit.

outdated. Three general comments are however in order. First, there are many organizations but not many members. When rituals and gatherings are organized outside of the Internet, participants rarely, if ever, exceed forty or fifty. Second, there are more LaVeyan "rationalist" groups than "theistic" organizations that believe in the personal existence of the Devil or follow Aquino. Third, the situation has been deeply changed by the Internet. If a few hundred people worldwide attend the meetings of the Satanist movements, some thousands express their opinions regularly on forums, blogs and sites dedicated to Satanism. In countries such as Poland[61] and Finland,[62] in the first decade of the 21st century, it was not even certain that there were Satanist organizations able to propose regular meetings to their adepts, but hundreds regularly followed Satanist forums on the Internet. Most were glad to remain "cyber-Satanists", who did not participate to any organized Satanist activity outside of internet.

Significant scholarly research on cyber-Satanism was produced in the early 21st century.[63] In a pioneering study published in 2001 and carried out using questionnaires sent to the regulars of the main Satanist forums, James R. Lewis

61 See Rafal Smoczynski, "Cyber-Satanism and Imagined Satanism: Dark Symptoms of Late Modernity", *ibid.*, pp. 141–151; R. Smoczynski, "Polish Cyber Satanism: A Group in Statu Nascendi", *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11, 2002, pp. 111–117; R. Smoczinsky, "The Making of Satanic Collective Identities in Poland: From Mechanic to Organic Solidarity", in P. Faxneld, J.Aa. Petersen (eds.), *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modern Culture*, cit., pp. 189–203.

62 See Merja Hermonen, "Rationalistic Satanism: The Individual as a Member of the Countercultural Tribe", *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11, 2002, pp. 69–117 [reprinted in J.R. Lewis, J.Aa. Petersen (eds.), *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism*, cit., pp. 558–592].

63 See e.g. Roald E. Kristiansen, "Satan in Cyberspace: Study of Satanism on the Internet in the 1990's", *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11, 2002, pp. 11–36; J.Aa. Petersen, "Binary Satanism: The Construction of Community in a Digital World", *ibid.*, pp. 37–52 [reprinted in J.R. Lewis, J.Aa. Petersen (eds.), *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism*, cit., pp. 593–609]; M. Ališauskienė, "Manifestations of Satanism in Catholic Lithuania: The Case of www.satan.lt", *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11, 2002, pp. 105–117; J.Aa. Petersen, "Modern Satanism: Dark Doctrines and Black Flames", cit.; Luigi Ferraro, "Le sette Sataniche su internet", M.A. Thesis, Rome: University of Rome "La Sapienza", Faculty of Communication Sciences, 2006; J. Aa. Petersen, "From Book to Bit: Enacting Satanism Online", in E. Asprem, K. Granholm (eds.), *Contemporary Esotericism*, cit., pp. 134–158. On the German scene, online and offline, see Dagmar Fügmann, *Zeitgenössischer Satanismus in Deutschland. Weltbilder und Wertvorstellungen im Satanismus*, Marburg: Tectum Verlag 2009.

established "the centrality of LaVey's influence on modern Satanism".[64] LaVey remained the most revered Satanist, and a good fifth of those who replied to Lewis discovered Satanism thanks to *The Satanic Bible.* Besides, debunking a widely held opinion, few Satanists were neo-Nazis: a significant number, on the contrary, manifested left-wing political ideas. This conclusion was strengthened by a second study Lewis carried out in 2009, including a greater number of questions concerning politics. "Two-thirds of my current sample expressed either a negative or an extremely negative evaluation of Nazism. These statistics speak for themselves".[65] As opposed to the previsions of Aquino, who influenced a number of early scholars of Satanism, in the Satanist movement of the 21st century, LaVey's ideas were alive and well. They were also developed quite independently of right-wing political affiliations.

Satan the Communist: The Satanic Reds

LaVeyans have no problems in being referred to as Satanists. Others prefer not to use the word "Satanism" and insist they simply belong to the "Left-Hand Path". This is a wider category, whose definition in turn is not without problems. Some include in the Left-Hand Path all the movements that propose a magical or ritual use of sexuality. Others insist, rather than on specific techniques of sex magic, on an ideology of antinomian refusal of all rules and precepts. All of Crowley's "Thelemic" current, a significant part of Wicca, and several other forms of ceremonial magic would thus be part of the Left-Hand Path, without being Satanist. As mentioned earlier, at least one contemporary scholar, Kennet Granholm, proposed to use the category "Left-Hand Path" for Satanists too, progressively abandoning the use of "Satanism", which is not value-free and "arouses predominantly negative presumptions in the general public as well as in scholars not familiar with the subject matter".[66]

I do not agree with this proposal, since I believe that LaVeyan and other groups belong to a specific Satanist subgenre within the wider Left-Hand Path.

64 J.R. Lewis, "Who Serves Satan? A Demographic and Ideological Profile", *Marburg Journal of Religion*, vol. 6, no. 2, June 2001, pp. 1–25 (p. 5) [reprinted in J.R. Lewis, J.Aa. Petersen (eds.), *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism*, cit., pp. 531–557].

65 J.R. Lewis, review of Chris Mathews, *Modern Satanism: Anatomy of a Radical Subculture* [Westport (Connecticut), London: Praeger, 2009], *Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2009, pp. 109–113 (p. 112). Mathews claimed that most contemporary Satanists have Nazi sympathies.

66 K. Granholm, "Embracing Others than Satan: The Multiple Princes of Darkness in the Left-Hand Path Milieu", cit., p. 97.

Some prominent groups of the Left-Hand Path are, in my opinion, not Satanist, although they are close to Satanist groups both historically and ideologically. This applies to "Chaos Magick" and to the groups inspired by Crowley's independent disciple Austin Osman Spare; to the Rune-Gild, whose magic is centered on ancient runes, even if it was founded in Texas, in 1980, by a member of the Temple of Set, Stephen E. Flowers; and to the Order of the Dragon Rouge, founded in Stockholm in 1989 by Thomas Karlsson. The Dragon Rouge's foundations are eclectic, from Crowley to Evola, and include Lovecraft, Tantrism, Kabbalah, and Nordic mythology, but Chaos Magick appears to be the main reference. The Dragon Rouge summons dozens of gods and demons in its rituals, among which there are also Satan and Lucifer, but "the order's understanding of these beings is very different from the one found in Christian contexts".[67] Worshiping Satan or Lucifer does not seem to be the main aim of the order. Although doubts may remain,[68] the Dragon Rouge appears to lie outside our definition of Satanism.[69]

However, a group in the United States, although using many of the references of Dragon Rouge, deserves a closer look: the Satanic Reds. The group was founded by Tani Jantsang, who in the 1960s came into contact with Lovecraft's writings. In 1965, she was given in New York material of one Societas Selectus Satanas, based in Hollis Queens, New York, of which she later claimed author Lin Carter (1930–1998), who wrote several Lovecraft pastiches, was a member. Jantsang's family is from Mongolia, and she came to believe that Lovecraft was in contact with a "Black Tradition" of "Turanian" magic, originating in Mongolia and other Central Asian countries. Jantsang herself claimed having received through her family a "generational" initiation into this form of magic.[70] In 1969, Jantsang joined a magical group inspired by Lovecraft, Starry Wisdom, and in

67 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

68 In personal communications, Per Faxneld suggested to me a series of arguments for including the Dragon Rouge within a larger category of Satanism. These include the identification of the Dragon Rouge with Lucifer or Satan in writings of the leaders of the group, the display of satanic imagery, and other uses of Satan as a "root metaphor".

69 On the Dragon Rouge see K. Granholm, *Embracing the Dark: The Magic Order of Dragon Rouge – Its Practice in Dark Magic and Meaning Making*, cit.; K. Granholm, "Dragon Rouge: Left-Hand Path Magic with a Neopagan Flavour", cit. By Thomas Karlsson, see *Uthark: Nightside of the Runes*, Sundbyberg: Ouroboros, 2002.

70 Tani Jantsang, Philip Marsh, "The Roots of the Satanic Reds", available at <http://www.satanicreds.org/satanicreds/sr-roots.html>, last accessed on August 17, 2015. See also "The Nine Satanic Postulates: Statements of Satano-COMMUNE-ist Reality, Satanic Comm-UNITY", in J.R. Lewis, J.Aa. Petersen (eds.), *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism*, cit., pp. 741–742.

1974, together with her friend Philip Marsh, she founded her own organization called the Kishites. She took the name of an ancient Sumerian city near Babylon, Kish, which, according to Sumerian mythology, was connected to the origins of our world.

Up to this point, the attention of her groups was mostly concentrated on Lovecraft. Jantsang, however, tried to eliminate all the fictional elements and to reconstruct the "Black Tradition" in its original state. From 1989, Jantsang started presenting her ideas to Satanists, claiming she had found the very foundation of their religious doctrines, the Black Tradition. LaVey simply tried to co-opt her in the Church of Satan, but cooperation proved impossible. In fact, while most American Satanists in these years were, if not right-wing extremists, at least apologists for capitalism in the Ayn Rand tradition, Jantsang was a self-styled socialist. In 1997, she founded the Satanic Reds. Their symbol overlapped the classic Satanist pentagram with the Communist hammer and sickle and the slogan "Power to the People – Join the Revolution!". Thanks to an intensive use of the Internet, the Satanic Reds became a noticeable presence in the international network of Satanists, although it was hard to establish their numbers.

To the question whether they were really Satanists, the Satanic Reds replied "yes and no": "Some of the members and founders of the SR [Satanic Reds] prefer to see what we represent as wholly outside such Western notions of Satan or Satanism. Then again, there are many others that categorically state that the Dark Tradition is Real Satanism. We have no problem agreeing to disagree – one man's God is another man's Satan".[71] In any case, the Satan of the Satanic Reds is conceived as Sat and Tan, Being and Becoming, like the Nyarlathotep of Lovecraft, the mediator of chaos, and in the movement there is a conscious effort to use "Turanian" or oriental terminologies, outside the Judeo-Christian tradition. Petersen classified the Satanic Reds, with the Temple of Set, inside "religious Satanism", distinguished from the rationalist one of LaVey.[72]

Another question to which the Satanic Reds might reply "yes or no" is whether they are really Marxist. The use of Marxists symbols, in fact, goes together with a social program closer to Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882–1945) than to Karl Marx (1818–1883). "SR" means Satanic Reds but also "Social Realism", something different from classic Marxism. The proposal is a renewed New Deal, a moderate program of social reform, not really incompatible with the American idea of free enterprise. At any rate, Marxist or Rooseveltian, the

71 The Founders of SR, "FAQ for Satanic Reds – Social Realist Organization", available at <http://www.satanicreds.org/satanicreds/faq.html>, last accessed on August 17, 2015.

72 J.Aa. Petersen, "Modern Satanism: Dark Doctrines and Black Flames", cit., p. 439.

Satanism of the Satanic Reds, a cocktail of social reform, Central Asian folklore, and Lovecraft is different from that of other Satanists.

A possible question is whether the Satanic Reds are not part of Romantic Satanism rather than of the Satanism *stricto sensu* we deal with in this book. Per Faxneld demonstrated that the image of Satan as a symbol of revolution and progress had a venerable tradition in socialism and anarchism.[73] The Satanic Reds themselves did claim this heritage. "Using the word 'Satan', they wrote, Carducci, in his 'Hymn to Satan', echoed the same concepts and ideas we echo for Social Realism; and Michael Bakunin regarded Satan in the same manner as us when we speak of Social Realism. When Jules Michelet wrote 'Satanism and Witchcraft', a book that the majority of people interested in the Left Hand Path or Wicca had back before the late 1960s, it was about exploited peasants rallying around a mythic-heroic figure: Satan – in opposition to an oppressive Christian political feudalism of that time period".[74] However, unlike Carducci and Michelet, Jantsang founded an *organization* with *rituals*, including a baptism,[75] honoring the Dark Forces. Unlike Bakunin, her organization was not purely political, but occult and, in its own way, religious.

Was this organization Satanist or just part of the Left-Hand Path? "Left-Hand Path" is a label the Satanic Reds claim with pride, just as other Satanists do. In a way, all Satanists are adepts of the Left-Hand Path. But not all adepts of the Left-Hand Path are Satanists. The Satanic Reds are a very peculiar case, but they do not reject the label of Satanists and their "Sat and Tan" Dark Force is as valid as a definition of Satan as any other found in modern Satanism.

Satan the Webmaster: The Return of "Theistic" Satanism

In the first Internet survey carried out by James R. Lewis in 2000–2001, 60% of those interviewed regarded themselves as atheists, and only 14 respondents were clearly "theistic" Satanists. They had become Satanists through a process somewhat different from the usual conversion to new religious movements. They were not recruited into Satanism, but discovered through books and Web sites a worldview they recognized as their own, even if before its discovery they would not have been able to give it a name. Although roughly half were not

73 See P. Faxneld, *Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as the Liberator of Woman in Nineteenth-Century Culture*, cit., pp. 113–160.

74 The Founders of SR, "FAQ for Satanic Reds – Social Realist Organization", cit.

75 See "BAPTISM – not of a child", available at <http://www.satanicreds.org/satanicreds/rtl-baptism.html>, last accessed on August 17, 2015.

interested in joining organized groups, their prevailing worldview was largely LaVey's. In 2009 and 2012, Lewis carried out further surveys, and discovered that, although rationalist Satanists were still a majority, the number of "theistic" Satanists had more than tripled. There was also a growing number of respondents critical of LaVey.[76]

While LaVey's ideas had a significant presence on the Internet starting around 1993, occult or theistic Satanism also produced extensive Web sites. Two feminist Satanists who contributed to spreading "theistic" Satanism online operate their Web sites under the names of Venus Satanas and Diane Vera.[77] Vera also proposed in 2006 a classification of different forms of theistic Satanism.[78] Her first distinction is between a primary and a secondary theistic Satanism. The secondary form mentions Satan but does not focus on its worship. This form, which for Vera includes Crowley's O.T.O., is not part of my own definition of Satanism. The primary form is further distinguished in six sub-categories.

The first includes LaVeyan Satanists who interpret LaVey's writings as theistic in disguise. One example is the Reformed Church of Satan, founded in 2003 by Mike Grace ("Noxaura"). Grace's sources were eclectic, and included Scientology. Although his church had a presence outside of the Internet and gained some publicity in the Detroit area,[79] its most recent activities seems to be largely confined to the Web and the social networks.

Vera's second sub-category includes the Temple of Set and his schisms. The third is pantheistic or panentheistic Satanism, which regards Satan as the universal cosmic principle. Part of this category is the already mentioned First Church of Satan, founded by John D. Allee. In 2002, this church had an internal crisis, which led to the schism of the Society of the Onyx Star, although it later recovered. While the First Church of Satan partially originated in LaVeyan Satanism, a pantheistic but not LaVeyan Satanist tradition was started in 1997 by Stephanie Connolly under the name of Demonolatry. Connolly's Ordo Flammeus Serpens never had a sizable presence offline, but generated a number of Web sites and quality publications, including the *Black Serpent Magazine*.

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76 For a summary and assessment of these surveys, see A. Dyrendal, J.R. Lewis, J.Aa. Petersen, *The Invention of Satanism*, cit., pp. 156–217.

77 On Venus Satanas and Diane Vera, see P. Faxneld, "'Intuitive, Receptive, Dark': Negotiations of Femininity in the Contemporary Satanic and Left-Hand Path Milieu", cit., pp. 214–217.

78 Diane Vera, "The Varieties of Theistic ('Traditional') Satanism", 2006, available at <http://theisticsatanism.com/varieties/index.html>, last accessed on September 29, 2015.

79 See "The Kindler, Gentler Satanist", *Detroit Metro Times*, October 25, 2006, available at <http://www.metrotimes.com/detroit/the-kindler-gentler-satanist/Content?oid=2185765>, last accessed on September 29, 2015.

Vera's fourth sub-category is polytheistic Satanism, where Satan is seen as an important deity within a pantheon of several gods. Joy of Satan may be included in this group, together with Vera's own Church of Azazel. Besides being "one of the more stable and well-respected theistic Satanist groups online", the Church of Azazel organizes gatherings and rituals for like-minded Satanists in New York.[80]

The fifth category is Luciferian Gnosticism, which insists that Lucifer is different from Satan. Vera includes here Sloane's Our Lady of Endor Coven. The Neo-Luciferian Church, to which we will return later, is not mentioned by Vera but should probably also be included. Finally, the sixth category, "Christian based duotheism" or "reverse Christianity", accepts the Christian theology of Satan but sides with him in his conflict with God, believing Satan to be the champion of reason and freedom. This position, Vera argues, is mostly found in literary Romantic Satanism rather than in contemporary organized groups. She could have found examples of "reverse Christianity" also in the worship of Satan as evil by several Black Metal groups.

As Lewis and his colleagues suggested, theistic Satanism will probably not be able to challenge the dominant position of rationalist Satanism, as long as *The Satanic Bible* remains in print as a main reference for those approaching Satanism for the first time.[81] However, well-arranged Web sites such as Vera's and Satanas' have a significant number of followers and, rather than disappearing as the Church of Satan's spokespersons occasionally argue, theistic Satanism appears to be actually growing.

Satan the Prankster: Turin as "The City of the Devil"

In the city of Turin, Northern Italy, "at the end of the 19th century there were the worst conditions for young people's development: Freemasonry was in full swing, not even the Church could do anything, there were priest haters, there were also Satanists… It was one of the worst moments and one of the worst places in the history of Italy". These were not the words of some marginal anti-Satanist. Pope Francis offered this rather grim picture of their city to the youth of Turin when he visited the capital of Piedmont in 2015.[82] Were there really

80 P. Faxneld, "'Intuitive, Receptive, Dark': Negotiations of Femininity in the Contemporary Satanic and Left-Hand Path Milieu", cit., p. 215.

81 A. Dyrendal, J.R. Lewis, J.Aa. Petersen, *The Invention of Satanism*, cit., p. 180.

82 Pope Francis, "Meeting with Children and Young People – Address of the Holy Father", Piazza Vittorio, Turin, June 21, 2015, available at <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/

Satanists in Turin? And when? Since I live in Turin myself, and had a certain part in this controversy,[83] a few words are perhaps in order.

A quick Google search associating "Turin" and "Satanism" would persuade many that Turin was indeed, and remain to this day, a city with a record number of Satanists, part of a "satanic triangle" with either Lyon and Prague, or London and San Francisco. Almost nothing of this is true, but how the idea developed and acquired international prominence is an interesting story in itself. In the 19th century, Turin was the capital of the Kingdom of Savoy, whose leadership conceived the ambitious projects of conquering, one after the other, all the small states then existing in the geographical area of present-day Italy, take from Austria the Northeastern part of the country, and finally transform itself into a Kingdom of Italy. This project, which eventually succeeded with the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy, with Turin as its first capital, in 1861, found an enemy in the Catholic Church, for two different reasons. First, conquering all of Italy would mean conquering also the Papal States in Rome, and put an end to the secular political power of the Popes. Second, the ideology of those who ruled the Kingdom of Savoy was a form of secular nationalism with anticlerical overtones.

One of the strategies the Turin government adopted, with mixed success, to counter the opposition of the Catholic Church, was to be more tolerant than any other Italian state towards religious minorities. The logic was that, while the Catholic Church was busy fighting the competition, it would have fewer resources to devote to the political opposition to the Kingdom of Savoy's great national plans. From Baptists to Mormons, all sorts of non-Catholic missionaries were allowed to operate more or less freely in Piedmont. This tolerance extended to magnetists and "Mesmerists" such as the Belgian Alfred Edouard D'Hont (1840–1900), a friend of Papus known in Italy as "Donato", whose shows were allowed in Turin and forbidden in other Italian cities, and to some extent to Spiritualists mediums and clairvoyants. While Donato and others mistook the attitude for open-mindedness, in fact, rather than by a sympathy for the occult, the Piedmontese government was moved by a desire to harass the Catholic Church. When Rome was conquered in 1870 and the Kingdom of Italy safely established, in 1890, the Turin police arrested a number of non-local

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en/speeches/2015/june/documents/papa-francesco_20150621_torino-giovani.html>, last accessed on August 17, 2015.

83 I told this story in the chapter "La città delle meraviglie. Torino città magica?" in M. Introvigne, *Il ritorno della magia*, Milan: Ancora, 2002, pp. 151–186.

clairvoyants and Spiritualist mediums, and judges expelled them from the city. The tolerance was over.[84]

Although there is no evidence that even a single Satanist operated in Turin because of this temporary tolerance, Spiritualist mediums, magnetizers, and clairvoyants were easily depicted as agents of Satan by a Catholic press that used their presence in Piedmont as evidence that the government was up to no good. By the 20th century, the story would have been almost forgotten, but was kept alive by a particular group of people, the Goliards. Heirs of the Medieval "clerici vagantes", members of the "Goliardia" were university students who congregated in fraternities known for their pranks and humorous initiation rituals.

The Goliardia made a lot of noise, and not all citizens appreciated its practical jokes. Goliards, however, were so much a part of the local traditions in cities with large universities such as Turin, Padua, or Bologna that even their worst pranks were more or less tolerated. The Goliardia almost disappeared at the end of the 20th century, but in the 1960s in Turin it was still very much alive. Playful references to Satan and to Turin as the "City of Satan", reinterpreting as a joke the serious political controversies of the 19th century, appeared in the Goliardia after World War II. In 1968, some Turin Goliards read about LaVey's Church of Satan, and included references to San Francisco in their folklore.

One of the leaders of the Turin Goliardia, although no longer a university student, was Gianluigi Marianini (1918–2009). He was a typical character of old Turin, who went around dressed like a 19th-century British dandy. He was nationally known as a winner in 1956 of the extremely popular Italian TV quiz show hosted by Michael "Mike" Bongiorno (1924–2009), *Lascia o raddoppia?* (Leave or Double?). Marianini did have real spiritual and esoteric interests, and later in life became the leader of a neo-Templar order. He was also a famous prankster, in the true spirit of the Goliardia. In 1969, Marianini and his fellow Goliards prepared a document allegedly emanating from a "Church of Satan", claiming that there were 40,000 Satanists in Turin, and that the city was part of a magical triangle with London, because of Crowley, and San Francisco, because of LaVey. This was, they added, a new triangle, as the first one in the 19th century had included Turin, Prague, and Lyon.

The document was accepted as genuine by Turin's leading evening newspaper *Stampa Sera*. The Goliards, in fact, had a mole inside the newspaper, young reporter Vittorio Messori, who later would convert to Catholicism and become world-famous for his exclusive interviews with Pope John Paul II

84 For this trial and its antecedents, see C. Gallini, *La sonnambula meravigliosa. Magnetismo e ipnotismo nell'Ottocento italiano*, cit., pp. 243–255.

and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, who later became Pope Benedict XVI. As he confirmed himself many years later, Messori was quite enthusiastic to become part of such a well-organized prank, "not alone, but with some colleagues and co-conspirators, creating false but believable news and providing figures that no-one would be able to confirm or deny". This fantastic story, Messori would later write, "met the desire, after all so very much human, to be surprised, to dream, to fantasize" and was also "an antidote to the obsessive, mournful political news at a time when Italy was plagued by terrorism".[85]

Between 1969 and 1972, the number of forty-thousand Satanists active in Turin, the "City of Satan", was mentioned all over the world, including in Japan. Twenty years after the original prank, in 1988, something happened. Senior sociologist Filippo Barbano (1922–2011) organized at the University of Turin a very serious conference that, under the title *Diábolos, Diálogos, Daímon*, sought to explore the figure of the Devil as a social and literary archetype. The conference, and its sponsorship by the City of Turin, were criticized by some media as offering an opportunity to Satanists to spread their unholy propaganda. Although no Satanists showed up, Barbano decided to ask his research assistants to look into the rumors of Satanism in Turin. They concluded they originated with a prank, although they did not find out all the details.[86] Shortly thereafter, I interviewed Marianini, Messori, and others, and reconstructed the whole story. I offered a first cautious reconstruction in 1993,[87] although it took several years before I was authorized by the old pranksters to name names. Finally, in 2004, Messori himself publicly confirmed my version and admitted his role.

Telling the story of the Goliards' prank did not entirely destroy the myth. There are still journalists who continue to come to Turin hoping to see at least one Black Mass. One of the reasons the rumor did not die is that there is a kernel of truth in it, or perhaps four. First, as mentioned earlier, although there were no Satanists, for peculiar political reasons in the 19th century there were in Turin more Spiritualist mediums, psychics, and clairvoyants than anywhere else in Italy. Second, one of the co-conspirators in the 1968 prank was painter Lorenzo Alessandri (1927–2000), a good friend of Marianini. Alessandri played the game, and let Marianini spread the rumor that he was Turin's Black Pope,

85 Vittorio Messori, Aldo Cazzullo, *Il mistero di Torino. Due ipotesi su una capitale incompresa*, Milan: Mondadori, 2004, pp. 226–227.

86 See F. Barbano (ed.), *Diavolo, diavoli. Torino e altrove*, cit.

87 See M. Introvigne, "La città delle meraviglie. Nuovi movimenti religiosi, esoterismo e magia a Torino", in Luigi Berzano (ed.), *Terziario esoterico a Torino*, Turin: Il Segnalibro Editore, 1993, pp. 179–209.

the Piedmontese counterpart of Anton LaVey. He never confirmed the rumor, but did not deny it either. When I interviewed Alessandri after the prank had been exposed, he told me that the rumor did not hurt sales of his paintings. Alessandri, however, was not just one of the Goliards. As he confirmed in his autobiography, published posthumously, he was a Freemason with serious occult interests,[88] and his magical surrealism did include references to witchcraft and Lucifer. These were themes often featured in the work of Alessandri and his colleagues in the Turin art groups Soffitta Macabra (Macabre Attic) and Surfanta, a word indicating a fantastic form of surrealism. In 1998, he completed a collection of paintings about 33 "rooms". Together with the posthumously published surrealist novel *Hotel Surfanta*, they represent a summa of his artistic and esoteric ideas.[89] The painter was also an avid collector of occult paraphernalia.

While remaining, in his own way, "very much a Roman Catholic",[90] Alessandri was fascinated by Tibet and its Tantric Buddhism. He was able to visit Tibet only in 1991, but Tibetan references appeared on his art since the 1940s. He became an important collector of Tibetan sculptures,[91] and Tibetan wrathful deities appearing in his works were easily confused with demons by his critics. He also included in his paintings a demon of his own creation, whom he called Wulwur and represented often as an anthropomorphic long-beaked bird. Alessandri did not worship Wulwur but depicted him as his enemy. In some texts, he identified the demon with lust and the "female temptation".[92] He also mentioned another mysterious and threatening being, Iks, who was "perhaps the Devil".[93]

The third reason why rumours about the "Satanic city" spread was that Turin had for several years a record number of exorcists, officially appointed by the Catholic Church. This was, however, in part a consequence of the prank. Although some of the exorcists did believe that there were Satanist cults in Turin, I interviewed most of them and all admitted that those coming to them and claiming they were threatened by Satanists were mostly influenced by (post-prank) wild reports in the media.

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88 See his autobiography: Lorenzo Alessandri, *Zorobabel. Memorie*, Milan: Skira, 2012.

89 See L. Alessandri, *Hotel Surfanta*, Milan: Skira, 2013.

90 Robi Vitali, with Robi Rubiolo, "Terrifici sino-tibet e dintorni ovvero l'immaginario lamaista di Alessandri", in Concetta Leto (ed.), *Il Tibet di Alessandri*, Turin: Consiglio Regionale del Piemonte, 2016, pp. 38–49 (p. 47).

91 See C. Leto (ed.), *Il Tibet di Alessandri*, cit.

92 See C. Leto, "Il Tibet di un visionario", in C. Leto (ed.), *Il Tibet di Alessandri*, cit., pp. 9–17 (p. 16). On Wulwur, see also L. Alessandri, *Hotel Surfanta*, cit., p. 125.

93 *Ibid.*, p. 119.

Fourth, within the Turin occult subculture, there were at least two small groups who, perhaps after reading so much about Satanism in the media, decided to check it out. They were secretive groups active in well-to-do neighborhoods, but in the mid-1990s I managed, not without problems, to interview some members. One group was LaVeyan, bought books of rituals from the Church of Satan, and tried to reproduce them in Turin. The leader of this small group died at the end of the 1990s. Trusting that I would keep protecting his desire to remain anonymous, his heirs invited me to see the small "temple" he had built for his rituals in a "secret" room of his office. It looked very much as if the plan for it came from LaVey's *The Satanic Rituals*.

The second group had a much more bizarre story. For whatever reason, they came to believe that the Church of Satan was just a sideshow, and that for real Satanist initiations they should look to France. In France, in 1963, a book with a promising title had been published, *Les Évangiles du Diable*, and in 1967 its paperback edition had followed.[94] The author, Claude Seignolle, born in 1917 and still alive at the time of this writing, was a self-taught but respected folklorist, who collected legends about witchcraft and the Devil in several French regions.[95] He was taken seriously by academic folklorists, but was also part of the occult milieu. *Les Évangiles du Diable* was not a textbook on Satanism, but a lively collection of stories of encounters between French peasants and the Devil, spiced with details on werewolves and magical filters.

Seignolle was a very peculiar character, an "adventurer of the unusual".[96] He enjoyed playing the role of the countryside magician of old. His own friends wondered whether he had really been initiated in some magical circle or he just liked to tell his tales tongue-in-cheek. In 1969, a small group of "fringe" Freemasons of Turin with strong occult interests managed to meet Seignolle in France. Seignolle described the meeting to his friends in a playful tone; he was however afraid that the Turin occultists came home persuaded of having been initiated into a very ancient Satanist organization.[97] On the other hand, when I interviewed one of the members of this circle in 1993, he told me that Seignolle's humorous attitude was just a mask, hiding the fact that he was a real

94 Claude Seignolle, *Les Évangiles du Diable*, Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1963; paperback ed., Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1967.

95 See C. Seignolle, *Le Rond des sorciers*, Paris: Éditions des Quatre-Vents, 1945; C. Seignolle, *Le Diable en sabots*, Paris: Le Terrain Vague, 1959; C. Seignolle, *Le Diable dans la tradition populaire*, Paris: Maisonneuve, 1959.

96 See Bernard Planque [1938–2000], *Un Aventurier de l'insolite. Claude Seignolle*, Périgueux: Pierre Fanlac, 1960.

97 Seignolle told the story to his friend Robert Amadou, an important figure in the French occult subculture. Amadou in turn discussed the incident with me.

initiate. By reading his books in the right way, one would find genuine Satanist rituals. In fact, this group went on with "occult" Satanist rituals in Turin for several years.

Members of these two groups were not young in 1969, and most have died since. By the second decade of the 21st century, the groups were effectively defunct, although those inspired by Seignolle still celebrated some occasional rituals until at least 2009. Both groups were very small, and none had ever more than thirty members. As far as I know, they were never involved in any illegal activity.

Unpleasant stories of necrophilia and rape were told to both the Turin exorcists and the police by some who claimed they were defectors from a "Church of Satan". Nobody was ever prosecuted for these crimes. If they ever happened, it is much more likely that the perpetrators were bands of teenagers connected with adolescent Satanism rather than the two Churches of Satan inspired respectively by LaVey and Seignolle.

Satan Bolognese: The Luciferian Children of Satan

If the two Turin small groups managed to keep going for many years thanks to their discretion, other Italian Satanists sought publicity and opened up to the media. In the early 1980s, in Bologna, Roberto Negrini, a member of the UFO subculture and a Crowley enthusiast who was in touch with several different international branches of the O.T.O., founded what he called a "Luciferian O.T.O.".[98] Under the pseudonym "Robert Klartal", Negrini published an Italian translation of Crowley's *The Book of the Law*. In his introduction, he offered his work to "the dispersed heirs of the Temple of Lucifer". He claimed the book included the "Holy Word of Satan" to be preached against the religion of the Christians, "this filthy cult that the Caesars were unfortunately unable to suffocate in the adepts' own blood". Negrini prophesied a new aeon, when the new initiates "will dance on the putrefied corpses of 'reason' and 'faith'" and "the Fires of SATAN will be lighted again on the mountains!!!".[99] Not only the media, but also some scholars, easily mistook Negrini for a Satanist. He claimed, however, that he was a follower of Crowley, that the British magus was not a

98 See P.L. Zoccatelli, "Notes on the Ordo Templi Orientis in Italy", cit., pp. 279–294. In 2013, Negrini was accused of being in possession of child pornography and arrested by the Italian police.

99 Robert Klartal [pseud. of Roberto Negrini], "Prefazione introduttiva", in *Proclamazione e Trascrizione del Liber AL vel Legis*, Bologna: O.T.O., n.d., p. 3 (capitals in original).

Satanist, and that his references to Satan were meant in a strictly Crowleyan sense.

Other small groups were happy to present themselves to the media as Satanist. One was Rome's Confraternita (Brotherhood) of Efrem Del Gatto (pseudonym of Sergio Gatti, 1945–1996). Although claiming initiation in a pre-existing Luciferian tradition, Del Gatto was a self-styled Satanist and a publicity-seeker without a sizable following. At the end of the 20th century, there was no shortage of similar personalities also in other European countries: one of the most famous was Ulla von Bernus (1913–1998), daughter of the German alchemist Baron Alexander von Bernus (1880–1965), variously presented in the press as "witch" or "Satanist" before publicly converting to Christianity.[100] Similar tiny groups in Italy were the Temple of Pan, also known as Satanic Empire of the Infernal Light and Church of the Great Order of Satan, in Ancona, whose founder, Master Loitan, converted to Catholicism in 1998; Satanael – Universal Brotherhood of the Black Light in Santeramo in Colle, near Bari, who published the newsletter *Black Star*; 666 Satanic Reality, founded by Filippo Scerba, in Milan; and The Black Lodge in Rome.

One group only was, and remains to this date, comparatively large, the Bambini di Satana Luciferiani (B.S.L.) (Luciferian Children of Satan), also based in Bologna. Its founder was Marco Dimitri, born in Bologna on February 13, 1963. As a young man, he became a member of Negrini's UFO group Cosmic Brotherhood. Through Negrini, he learned about Crowley at a very young age and loved what he read in *The Book of the Law*. "I was the Law, he later wrote, because I saw no other valid law besides what I saw!".[101] At age nineteen, in 1982, Dimitri parted company with Negrini. Unlike his mentor, he wanted to explicitly call his magical activities Satanism. He started organizing, and advertising, satanic rituals on the Italian Adriatic coast, between Rimini and Riccione, in the area of Pesaro, and around his native city, Bologna, under the label of Luciferian Children of Satan. The name, he explained, referred to the "inner child", "that personal creation whose structure originates in the Magical Work managed by the Will".

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100 See Wolfgang Weirauch, "Von Satan zu Christus: Interview mit Ulla von Bernus", *Flensburger Hefte*, no. 12, 1995, pp. 6–27.

101 This and the following references are taken from Marco Dimitri, Stefano Lanzi, Susi Medusa Gottardi, *I Bambini di Satana – Vangelo infernale*, Bologna: Bambini di Satana Luciferiani, n.d. Other publications of the group include: M. Dimitri, Alessandro Chalambalakis, *Il Chiodo nel Chiodo. Dialoghi fra Satanisti*, Bologna: Bambini di Satana Luciferiani, n.d.; M. Dimitri, *Re Bled. Racconto surreale*, Bologna: Bambini di Satana Luciferiani, n.d. Other information in this section comes from personal interviews with Roberto Negrini, Marco Dimitri, and Stefano Lanzi.

Dimitri's group met in "old crumbling cottages, desecrated cemeteries, forests and places far from prying and curious eyes". He attracted enough followers, a few dozens, to find the money to open a temple in Bologna with black curtains, diabolical masks, skulls, and statues of the Devil. The rituals included "Black Masses" and "Red Masses" where, according to Dimitri, "everybody had intercourse with everybody else, both heterosexual and homosexual" and sadomasochistic practices were used to "trigger certain energies". New members were initiated by tracing the number 666 with the blood of Dimitri himself on their foreheads, after they had stripped naked in front of the congregation. Each new initiate should also subscribe with his or her own blood a handwritten pact with Satan, reading: "I swear to be faithful to the Work of the Children of Satan and to Satan, and by Satan I mean myself in my higher nature and in my divine ego. I swear loyalty in my operations, in being faithful to them, in my form of initiation. Sealing with my signature and a drop of my blood, I proclaim myself Satan".

Dimitri insisted that the initiation was free of any monetary cost, but "the card of affiliation instead has a price, to be paid yearly; it is graphically perfect, with the emblem and Gothic characters in gold on a black base. One can access the special rituals only by showing this card". "As strange as it may seem, Dimitri explained, a magical oath sealed with one's own blood cannot be broken. Not even if the paper on which it was written is burned or torn. Such an oath is like a street with no exit, one cannot go back".

The Luciferian Children of Satan offered a full range of services to their members, distinguished in fourteen ritual categories. They included the "wedding between two people, man-woman", "man-man", or "woman-woman", or even three people, "man-woman-man", "man-woman-woman", "man-man-man", "woman-woman-woman". Incest was admitted, as Dimitri offered "wedding among relatives (any level of relation or gender)". For Catholics and member of other religions, there was a "ceremony for the annulment of baptismal rites of any cult", a necessary pre-requisite for the "baptism or initiation into the Satanic Empire". There was also a ritual for "divorce", and the crescendo closed with the "diabolical possession rituals" and "the rituals for the damnation of people and objects for libertine purposes". Some of the rituals were probably never celebrated, although Dimitri's money came largely from reporters, who paid for attending and photographing his rites.

One of the first members of the group, Susi Medusa Gottardi, was a professional comic artist, specialized in pornographic comics. The *Vangelo Infernale* (Infernal Gospel), the holy book of the Children of Satan, included descriptions of all kinds of sexual relations in a language that often recalled pornographic magazines. According to Dimitri, "Satan is money, art and orgasm, music,

lesbianism, and betrayal. The real damned does not care even for his or her depraved accomplices: they are just used and fucked".[102] Another part of the *Infernal Gospel* was a list of names of demons, largely taken from old grimoires and books about Wicca.[103] The most original chapter, although clearly influenced by Crowley and LaVey, listed the principles of Dimitri's satanic philosophy. They included vice, as "a deeper state of Black Mass: the Black Mass with oneself, the orgy with oneself"; art, as the "demonic" activity par excellence; war, which is "life"; science, exalted because it is "one of the main enemies of religion"; "spirit", which is proud confidence in oneself; and wealth, as Satan is "matter made perfect under the perspective of pleasure".

There followed an "amoral catechism", which proclaimed Satanism "the only possibility of materially obtaining one's wishes". From this perspective, "we are Satan; we gave the name Satan to the Matter of the universe". One "litany" of the Black Mass of the Children of Satan, written by another early member, Stefano Lanzi, recited: "We are Satan. We do not admit to any god besides Ourselves". In fact, "Satan and his demons are the nucleus of eternal matter, in eternal transformation, in continuous movement. Satan, the Human and not god… god cannot where Satan reigns!".[104] Dimitri hailed Crowley and criticized LaVey. However, his idea of Satan was not very far from *The Satanic Bible*. Dimitri believed he would eventually be recognized internationally as the only genuine leader of a new generation of Satanists. "I, Marco Dimitri, after the death of Crowley, the fall of LaVey and of Manson (both useless before and after their end), given the idiocy of the idea of the existence of a Church of Satan, a ridiculous contradiction, offer myself as a world point of reference for the Satanist cult. My destiny is to be the young guide of all demons of the Earth".[105]

Rather than being recognized as the world leader of Satanism, Dimitri ended up in jail for crimes he never committed. The whole story was reconstructed in a dissertation written by Simone Zanin (1978–2004),[106] a young scholar who died prematurely. Between 1989 and 1992, the Italian military police infiltrated various undercover agents in the Luciferian Children of Satan. In 1992, a ritual was raided in Savignano sul Rubicone, near Rimini. Dimitri was eventually

102 M. Dimitri, S. Lanzi, S.M. Gottardi, *I Bambini di Satana – Vangelo infernale*, cit., p. 9.

103 One grimoire Dimitri appears to have used was published by Ottavio Adriano Spinelli et al., *Le legioni di Shaytân. Grimorio dell'arcaico prossimo venturo. Sussurri, vibrazioni e immagini demoniache. Vol. I*, Turin: Edizioni Librarie Franco Spinardi, All'Insegna di Ishtar, 1990.

104 M. Dimitri, S. Lanzi, S.M. Gottardi, *I Bambini di Satana – Vangelo infernale*, cit., pp. 89–97.

105 *Ibid.*, p. 87.

106 Simone Zanin, "Rappresentazione e amplificazione della devianza nel caso dei Bambini di Satana", M.A. Thesis, Bologna: Faculty of Law, University of Bologna, 2004.

acquitted, but he lost his job as a security guard and had to live on his earnings as a magician. He was, however, invited to several TV talk shows and saw his adepts grow from the initial thirty to a number around one hundred.

In 1996, however, more serious accusations emerged, of sexual violence on a minor girl and on a child. Dimitri was arrested with two followers within the framework of a police investigation that involved also Del Gatto and the Roman actress Cristina Bagnolini, a friend of the Bolognese Satanist. Dimitri and his followers spent thirteen months in jail, before being acquitted in first degree in 1997 and on appeal in 2000 of all the most serious charges. They were found guilty only of tax evasion.

In 1999, Dimitri was involved again in the police investigation of a splinter group in Southern Italy that had departed from his organization, called the Elected of Satan. Again, the investigation involved Del Gatto, as well as Black Orgasm, a tiny group active near Rome. Dimitri denied he ever cooperated with the Roman groups,[107] and claimed he was the victim of a judiciary persecution orchestrated by Catholic counter-Satanists. Dimitri was supported by a collective of artists and performers that took the name of Luther Blissett,[108] an ironic reference to a Jamaican-born British footballer who came to play in the Italian major league and was referred to as the worst football player ever. The Luther Blissett group was not Satanist, but was popular in the Italian countercultural scene, and helped portray Dimitri as an innocent victim of bigotry. Although the number of his followers dwindled after the court cases, Dimitri maintained what was probably in the first decade of the 21st century the largest Satanist organization in Europe, if by organization we mean a group legally incorporated, with a regular newsletter and meetings and a hierarchy, rather than a mere network.

He always insisted his Satanism was "rationalist" and atheistic, and was even an unsuccessful candidate in the 2013 Italian national elections for the party Democrazia Atea (Atheistic Democracy), headed by astrophysicist and outspoken atheist, Margherita Hack (1922–2013). Dimitri's peculiarity was always his ability to sell himself to the media as the quintessential Satanist. However, this over-exposure became for the Children of Satan a double-edged sword: it gave them publicity but was also the main cause of their judicial misadventures.

107 On the Roman Satanism scene, two sensational books were published by reporters: Enrica Cammarano, Letizia Strambi, *Satana alle porte di Roma. Un viaggio nel mondo delle messe nere*, Rome: Mediterranee, 1995; Aldo Onorati, *Magia nera e riti satanici nei Castelli Romani*, Rome: Armando, 1995.

108 See "Luther Blissett", *Lasciate che i bimbi*, Rome: Castelvecchi, 1997.

Satan the Artist: The Neo-Luciferian Church

We met Michael Bertiaux in a previous chapter, as the mentor in things occult of William Schnoebelen, who later converted first to Mormonism and then to Evangelical Christianity, claiming he had evidence that Mormons worship Satan in their temples. Bertiaux is an important figure in the occult subculture and in the international network of groups inspired more or less directly by Crowley. As is typical in the occult milieu, Bertiaux has operated, for several decades, half a dozen esoteric societies at the same time, including a branch of the O.T.O., one of the Fraternitas Saturni, and a Gnostic church known as Ecclesia Gnostica Spiritualis. As other occult masters, Bertiaux also regards as important having been consecrated as a Bishop along a lineage descending from the Roman Catholic Church.

Unlike the Eastern Orthodox Churches, whose theology on this point is different, the Roman Catholic Church maintains a broad theory of apostolic succession. Even separated from Rome and preaching unorthodox doctrines, a Bishop duly consecrated in the Roman Catholic Church, until he dies, maintains the power of consecrating other men as Bishops: not women, and the Vatican has specified that any consecration of women as Bishops is automatically invalid. These Bishops would be consecrated "illicitly" but "validly": they would not be part of the Roman Catholic Church but would be "real" Bishops, with the power of ordaining "real" priests, i.e. priests who would validly (although not licitly) celebrate the Mass. The difference is very important for Catholics. In a valid Mass, they believe, licit or otherwise, the bread and the wine are converted into the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. If the Mass is not valid, the bread and the wine remain simply what they are.

In the course of history, dozens of Bishops have separated from the Catholic Church. Most have consecrated other Bishops, who have in turn consecrated further Bishops, and so on for centuries. Hence the phenomenon of "Wandering Bishops", i.e. Bishops who may have no followers at all and preach the wildest doctrines, but whose consecrations of other Bishops and ordinations of priests from a Catholic point of view are potentially valid. Nobody knows how many "Wandering Bishops" there are today, but they are counted in the hundreds.[109]

Starting in the 19th century, leaders of occult societies started believing that it was important for them to obtain "real" episcopal powers, i.e. powers

109 See, on the Wandering Bishops, the two classical works of Henry R.[enaud] T.[urner] Brandreth [1914–1984], *Episcopi Vagantes and the Anglican Church*, London: S.P.C.K., 1947; and Peter F.[rederick] Anson [1889–1975], *Bishops at Large*, London: Faber & Faber, 1964.

potentially recognized as valid by the Roman Catholic Church. "Potentially", here, is the operative word, because the "Wandering Bishops" are "valid" Bishops in theory, but in practice, all depends on whether their line of succession is unbroken and all the ceremonies of consecration were performed in the proper way, with the "intention of truly doing what the [Catholic] Church does", as requested by the formula used by Catholic Canon Law. Sometimes, this is impossible to ascertain. This is why wise occultists seek to be consecrated as Bishops along these dubious lines of succession not only once, but several times, the logic being that among many lines of consecrations at least one would probably be valid.

This premise was necessary in order to understand why Bertiaux claims to have been consecrated as a Bishop along no less than twenty-one different lines of succession,[110] just as he insists he has been initiated in several different occult orders. Regular initiation, and consecration as a Bishop, at least "Wandering", serve as important sources of legitimization in the occult milieu.

Two of these lines descend from Vintras and Boullan, although Bertiaux himself admits that it is dubious they were even validly consecrated at Bishops, and even more dubious that an unbroken lineage went from the two French spiritual adventurers to him. As a young man, Bertiaux spent time in Haiti, where he developed an interest in Voodoo, and he claims that, directly or indirectly, the Boullan succession came to Haitian occult leader Lucien-François Jean-Maine (1869–1960), who also operated an independent branch of the O.T.O. The elder Jean-Maine in turn consecrated his son Hector-François (1925–1984), who consecrated Bertiaux.

What does all this have to do with Satanism? Within the large number of occult orders he operates, Bertiaux includes a "Neo-Luciferian Church", established in 2005 together with Danish occultist Bjarne Salling Pedersen. It seems that there were two roots for this foundation, one historical and one artistic. On the one hand, Bertiaux and Pedersen wanted to "reactivate" the magical current connected with Ben Kadosh, whose book *Den ny morgens gry* Pedersen had translated into English in 1993. The fact that Kadosh in 2006 was discussed as an early Satanist by a scholar, Per Faxneld, made him popular in the milieu of Scandinavian Satanists, although a Danish and Swedish congregation of the Neo-Luciferian Church, with a total of some twenty members, was originally established by persons who were not directly influenced by Faxneld's writings.[111] There was a reason for some Satanists to join a church claiming a

110 See <http://www.neoluciferianchurch.dk/successionlines-nlc.php>, last accessed on August 21, 2015.

111 P. Faxneld, personal communication.

link with Kadosh, as Faxneld himself astutely noted. Kadosh provided some Satanists with a holy scripture dating back to 1906, sixty years before LaVey established the Church of Satan. Tradition and genealogy are not unimportant for Satanists.[112]

There is, however, also a second root of the Neo-Luciferian Church. Bertiaux has an interest in the visual arts, is an artist himself, and is taken quite seriously in those artistic circles that regard Crowley and his disciples as crucial for the modern renaissance of an art inspired by magic and the occult. Bertiaux claimed in an interview that "satanic artwork" "is therapeutic" for freeing artists who had been "brainwashed" by a puritanical version of Christian ethics.

Bertiaux believes that the Belgian artist Félicien Rops founded in 1888 a school that "was the nucleus in modern Satanism". Certainly Rops was a ferocious anticlerical, whose anti-Catholic works sometimes used the symbol of the Devil. Bertiaux, however, claimed he was much more, and established a real Satanist school in Paris. "Some members, Bertiaux added, later left the school of Rops to start the more theistic organization Temple of Boullan", which eventually found its way to Haiti and to Bertiaux. He presented Satanism, in the tradition he attributed to Rops, as a form of "art-as-therapy": "Now if we want to talk about the Temple of Boullan and satanic art as options for spiritually minded individuals, I think they're very exciting". In fact, Satanism enhances creativity, and "many individuals became artists as a result of this impulse, called 'Luciferianism'".

In his typical conciliatory style, Bertiaux explained in the interview that Satanism and Christianity can coexist, and that one is not more "true" than the other is. "They exist as the right wing and the left wing and balance each other. And I think that the Temple of Boullan is for serious minded individuals who are interested in what we'll call the darker tradition". True, "most people that are Satanists actually tend to be very depressed because Satanism, like the power of Saturn, tends to be quite heavy – a heavy load or heavy burden. But at the same time it can be terribly illuminating, because individuals have different approaches, and we see new spaces and worlds". At the very least, "some satanic groups are important as a catalyst to the stifling effect of too much social theology, in Protestantism, concluded Bertiaux, I think that when an individual is programmed too much by Puritanism it is very sad". It is also bad for

112 See P. Faxneld, "The Strange Case of Ben Kadosh: A Luciferian Pamphlet from 1906 and its Current Renaissance", cit., pp. 13–21.

the arts, and for Bertiaux the ultimate "barometer" of the validity of Satanism or Luciferianism is whether they are able to generate a significant art.[113]

Bertiaux granted the interview in 2003, before the foundation of the Neo-Luciferian Church in 2005. The latter added the reference to Kadosh. The Neo-Luciferian Church teaches that the oldest representations of the Gods are the Sun and the Great Mother, Lucifer and the Goddess. "The God is the outer, manifested part of the Goddess, like the Goddess is the hidden inner core of the God. In this way we may say that the Goddess is Lucifer and Lucifer is the Goddess".[114]

Lucifer is conceived as an inner energy, and "the main idea is to take responsibility for your own life and act as an individual moral agent, using the full potential of your own genius and thereby optimizing your own possibilities. For this purpose, we use common sense, Magick and creativity". Magic for Bertiaux is very much real, but on the other hand his conception of Lucifer is not very far away from LaVey's Satan. He proclaims that "Lucifer is the deity of illumination, education and insight", as well as of "pride", "freedom", "prosperity", and "primeval force".[115] A complex system of legitimation through lines of succession and the arts generated yet another group of Satanism as a human potential movement.

Satan the Bible Scholar: Erwin Neutzsky-Wulff and His Groups

Ben Kadosh's influence in contemporary Denmark goes beyond Pedersen. Scholars have described the science fiction writer and occultist Erwin Neutzsky-Wulff as an "ideological successor" of Kadosh.[116] Born in 1949 in

113 Bjarne Salling Pedersen, "Art and the Occult: An Interview with Michael Bertiaux", 2003, posted on the Web site of Fulgur Esoterica, a London art gallery and publishing house focusing on the relationship between art and esotericism: <http://fulgur.co.uk/artists/michael-bertiaux/arts-and-the-occult-an-interview-with-michael-bertiaux/>, last accessed on August 20, 2015. In 2016, the interview was removed from Fulgur's Web site and replaced by one with the same title but with no references to Satanism: <https://fulgur.co.uk/artists-and-writers/michael-bertiaux/arts-and-the-occult/>, last accessed on April 19, 2016.

114 Neo-Luciferian Church, "Teachings", available at <http://www.neoluciferianchurch.dk/luciferian-teachings.php>, last accessed on August 20, 2015.

115 Neo-Luciferian Church, "Luciferianism", available at <http://www.neoluciferianchurch.dk/luciferianism.php>, last accessed on August 20, 2015.

116 T. Hjelm, H. Bogdan, A. Dyrendal, J.Aa. Petersen, "Nordic Satanism and Satanism Scares: The Dark Side of the Secular Welfare State", cit., p. 517.

Copenhagen, Erwin Neutzsky-Wulff is the son of the Danish writer and poet Aage Neutzsky-Wulff (1891–1967), who wrote several occult books and maintained a lifelong interest in Anthroposophy.[117] Although he never finished his studies at the University of Copenhagen, Erwin became proficient in Greek, Hebrew, and philosophy. He also became an expert in computer programming, and read widely in the fields of Kabbalah, ancient Gnosticism, and esotericism, as well as neurosciences.

In 1971, Neutzsky-Wulff made his debut as a science fiction writer, a field where he would write some 25 novels, gaining a loyal and enthusiastic following in Denmark. His novels often introduced occult and esoteric themes. Neutzsky-Wulff claimed that at an early age he came into contact with a group of "Satanists", but remained deliberately ambiguous about them. Sometimes, they were depicted as merely anti-Christian scholars, while in other novels, including *Indsigtens sted* (The Place of Insight, 1980),[118] and accounts they emerged as Satan-worshippers and were portrayed in less than sympathetic terms.

As a consequence of these references, Neutzsky-Wulff was identified as a Satanist in the popular media and criticized as such by Danish Christian counter-cultists, including Johannes Aagaard of Aarhus' Dialog Center. The controversy was fueled by two subsequent non-fictional books by Neutzsky-Wulff, *Okkultisme* (1985)[119] and *Magi* (1986).[120] There, he proposed a history of religions, depicting Christianity as the most degenerate form and mentioning Satanism, again in ambiguous terms, as the emerging anti-Christian ideology of modern society.

In 1986, a controversy about Satanism was fueled for several months in Denmark by the sensationalist newspaper *Ekstra Bladet*. The remote background were the incidents in the small Danish island of Anholt, located between Jutland and Sweden, where in 1973 the locals found magical objects and paraphernalia interpreted by the media as evidence of the presence of a satanic cult. Although folklorists and other scholars identified the findings as connected either, or both, to a hoax or to non-satanic magical rituals, the media kept alive for years the myth of Satanists operating in Anholt.[121]

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117 See Sara Møldrup Thejls, "Erwin Neutzsky-Wulff and the Neurological Landscape of the Sefirot", in Boaz Huss, M. Pasi, Kocku von Stuckrad (eds.), *Kabbalah and Modernity: Interpretations, Transformations, Adaptations*, Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010, pp. 301–325 (p. 302).

118 Erwin Neutzsky-Wulff, *Indsigtens sted*, Copenhagen: Borgens Forlag, 1980.

119 E. Neutzsky-Wulff, *Okkultisme*, Copenhagen: Borgens Forlag, 1985.

120 E. Neutzsky-Wulff, *Magi*, Copenhagen: Borgens Forlag, 1986.

121 See A. Dyrendal, Amina Olander Lap, "Satanism as a News Item in Norway and Denmark: A Brief History", *Syzygy: Journal of Alternative Religion and Culture*, vol. 11, 2002, pp. 197–231

Neutzsky-Wulff actually fueled the controversy by granting himself several interviews to *Ekstra Bladet*, only to complain later that he had been misquoted. The writer explained that "Satanists had been organized in Denmark since the 1920s", presumably a reference to Kadosh, and that they were now "recruiting and teaching young, 'talented' men and women, and financing a three year long secret education in classics (Latin, Babylonian), natural sciences, history of religions, languages, and medicine". He added that there were at present some 200 Satanists in Denmark, including "young people down to the age of 16, with whom a teacher later developed intimate, sexual relationships", and that they had developed "the ability to kill by occult means".[122]

Although Neutzsky-Wulff later denied that he was himself part of the group he described, for several years he "did not reject his characterization as a Satanist, and even reinforced [it] in numerous interviews and debates in the media".[123] The curriculum of the supposed Satanist school more or less corresponded to Neutzsky-Wulff's own interests, and he had started gathering followers in what might be described as a loosely organized initiatic group.[124]

In the 1990s, Neutzsky-Wulff continued these activities and did not make himself popular among Danish Lutherans such as Aagaard by engaging in a systematic criticism of the official translations of the New Testament published by the state-sponsored Lutheran Church in Denmark. Although countercultists quickly labeled this criticism as a Satanist conspiracy, Neutzsky-Wulff's command of the Hebrew language made him difficult to ignore. In 1996, associates and disciples of Neutzsky-Wulff started publishing the journal *Faklen* (The Torch), which criticized the Lutheran Church, Danish universities, and Scandinavian society in general. It also kept alive the Biblical translations controversy.

In 1997–1998, Neutzsky-Wulff organized a religious role-playing experiment involving mostly those writing in *Faklen* called Mesterspillet (The Master Game). Participants explored alternative religious narratives and received initiations of sort. The game, and ultimately Neutzsky-Wulff's relationship with *Faklen*, collapsed over the issue of the writer's relationship with one of the participating girls, Lene Wittrup Jensen. Neutzsky-Wulff was married to another woman, and not even in libertarian circles was polygamy tolerated in Denmark. The writer left Copenhagen and settled with Lene, whom he later

(p. 201) [reprinted in J.R. Lewis, J.Aa. Petersen (eds.), *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism*, cit., pp. 327–360].

122 *Ibid.*, pp. 207–208.

123 S.M. Thejls, "Erwin Neutzsky-Wulff and the Neurological Landscape of the Sefirot", cit., p. 303.

124 See *ibid.*, pp. 303–305.

married after having divorced his first wife, in a former school located in Vinstrup, Jutland, where he kept gathering his followers and giving seminars and courses. He would divorce Lene too in 2007, and marry for the third time, with Anne Kristine Jacobsen.[125]

There is little doubt that Neutzsky-Wulff is a flamboyant and controversial character and a popular writer, and that he has also operated during his long occult career a number of small and secretive esoteric groups. But is he a Satanist? His public statements are contradictory and do not allow for a clear conclusion. An answer would require an exploration of his main theoretical work, *Det overnaturlige* (The Supernatural), published in 2004.[126] In this book, Neutzsky-Wulff proposed again his theory of the history of religions as degeneration, but focused on one particular reason for his criticism of Christianity. Christians divorced religion from sexuality. As a consequence, sacred sexuality disappeared and, with it, the possibility of accessing hidden and higher regions of our self. These regions are described in the Kabbalah, which is "a map of the brain" or "a map of the cognitive universes that lie behind sense perception and communicative language".[127]

References to sacred sexuality were, of course, not new, but Neutzsky-Wulff offended a number of his readers by advocating a revival of sacred prostitution and sexual relations with demons in the shape of female succubi. Women, he argued, can reach initiation only by becoming "slaves" of a male initiate and accepting him as their "god". He described a fictional – or, according to his critics, real – academy, where girls seeking initiation accepted to "spend a couple of days", with their clothes off, in a "cage made of iron bars, one meter high and wide and one and a half deep". After this, they submitted to a "disciplinary training". Neutzsky-Wulff listed its tools as follows: "The collar reduces the slave to a pet; the handcuffs make her give up resistance towards sexual advances and the foot fetters prevent escape. Another effective means of discipline is the pillory where she is freely available in a humiliating position". Of course, countless pornographic novels described this sort of discipline. Neutzsky-Wulff, however, emphasized the religious meaning of the process, which became an "experience of transcendence" for both the man and the woman.[128]

As the woman cannot be initiated without acting as a slave to a male master, so the man needs a suitable woman. She may be difficult to find. The alternative

125 See *ibid.*, pp. 304–305.

126 E. Neutzsky-Wulff, *Det overnaturlige*, Copenhagen: Borgens Forlag, 2004.

127 S.M. Thejls, "Erwin Neutzsky-Wulff and the Neurological Landscape of the Sefirot", cit., p. 323 and p. 312.

128 *Ibid.*, pp. 308–309. Thejls quotes from E. Neutzsky-Wulff, *Det overnaturlige*, cit., pp. 170–172.

for the man is to attract a female demon or succubus. In a series of articles in his magazine *Bathos*, Neutzsky-Wulff explained that this is by no means easy. Female demons come only when they believe that the man is "accessible and unthreatening". The man seeking initiation should take a shower and enter naked in a cell-like small room. There, he should chain himself to the wall – not forgetting to keeping the key at his disposal, Neutzsky-Wulff wisely advised, since he should be absolutely alone. Chained in a sound-proof and dark room, in a state of sensory deprivation, the man would appear as unthreatening to the female demon, who would come and initiate him through sacred sexuality.[129]

Crowley, the Kabbalah, and accounts of Medieval witchcraft are among the sources of Neutzsky-Wulff. Sexual magic, including in the sadomasochistic version advocated by the Danish writer, is not found in Satanism only. On the other hand, before downplaying it in a later phase of his occult career, Neutzsky-Wulff gladly embraced the label of Satanist, part as provocation and part because he believed it was adequate in order to describe his new esoteric system. As a consequence, he became the quintessential Satanist for Danish Christian counter-cultists and media.

Satan the Criminal: The Beasts of Satan

In the night between January 23 and 24, 2004, in a hut immersed in the Golasecca forest, near Varese, Northern Italy, Mariangela Pezzotta (1977–2004) was brutally murdered, and her body was summarily buried in a nearby greenhouse.[130] Caught almost in the act, her former boyfriend, thirty-year old Andrea Volpe, and his girlfriend, Elisabetta Ballarin, 19, were immediately arrested. The crime led the investigators onto a trail of drug dealing, alcohol, wild sex, and petty crime. However, they also discovered an unprecedented form of criminal Satanism.

The arrests also allowed the police to solve a cold case: the disappearance on January 19, 1998 of two teenagers, Fabio Tollis (1982–1998), and Chiara Marino

129 S.M. Thejls, "Erwin Neutzsky-Wulff and the Neurological Landscape of the Sefirot", cit., pp. 310–311.

130 For an account of the events by two reporters, see Luigi Offeddu, Ferruccio Sansa, I *ragazzi di Satana. La setta delle "Bestie": alla scoperta di un'Italia sconosciut*a, Milan: Rizzoli, 2005. In 2010, a Varese policeman wrote a M.A. thesis on Satanism, where he also mentioned the Beasts of Satan: Lorenzo Baranzini, "666. Religione o disagio sociale?", Milan: School of Law, University of Milan-Bicocca, 2010. For the context, see also M. Introvigne, "Le satanisme moderne et contemporain en Italie", *Social Compass*, vol. 56, no. 4, December 2009, pp. 541–551.

(1979–1998), last seen in a Milan's pub where Heavy Metal fans used to congregate. It came out that Volpe was in the same pub on the same evening. In May 2004, the corpses of Tollis and Marino were found buried in a forest around Somma Lombardo, not far from where Pezzotta had been killed. These murders, the police concluded, had not been carried out by Volpe alone. Between June and July 2004, the police arrested another six people: Nicola Sapone, Mario Maccione, Pietro Guerrieri, known as Wedra, Eros Monterosso, Marco Zampollo, and Paolo Leoni, who preferred to be called Ozzy after musician Ozzy Osbourne. The police also re-examined the death of Andrea Ballarin (1977–1999, no relation to Elisabetta Ballarin), found hanged in 1999 in the courtyard of his high school, and Andrea Bontade (1979–1999), both initially classified as suicides.

Some of those arrested started to talk, and it appeared that in 1995, Sapone and Leoni had founded a secretive Satanist group called "Bestie di Satana" (Beasts of Satan). It had fifteen members in the Milan-Varese area, and supported itself through a lucrative drug dealing business. They knew Satanism mostly from Extreme Metal music, with a special interest in the satanic antics of Thrash Metal group Slayer and in the Satanist Death Metal band Deicide,[131] and from comics, although Volpe and Leoni may have read some books. Fabio Tollis, who would be assassinated in 1998, Maccione, and Massimiliano "Massimino" Magni, arrested in 2011 and sentenced to seven and a half years in jail for complicity in the homicides, formed a Death Metal band called Ferocity, which acted as a front for the Satanist group. A small altar was kept until 1999 in Marino's home, with black candles, a length of cloth with a five-pointed star, a plastic goat's foot, and a skull. One of the members, Maccione, acted as a medium, and claimed that when in trance Satan spoke through him. Guided by the Devil's revelations, the Beasts of Satan determined that human sacrifice was necessary in order to usher in Satan's new aeon. They never even considered sacrificing outsiders. Divination and mediumship designated which members of the group should die.

In fact, the homicides were not carried out for metaphysical reasons only. Marino threatened to leave the group and talk about its activities. Maccione's revelations also indicated her as the reincarnation of the Virgin Mary,[132] a character seen as specially negative by the very anti-Christian Beasts of Satan. But it was also true that Marino kept in her home a significant sum of money,

131 See the account by one of the members: Mario Maccione, *L'inferno tra le mani. La mia storia nelle Bestie di Satana*, ed. by Stefano Zurlo, Milan: Piemme, 2011, pp. 60–61.

132 See F. Sansa, "Balli sulla fossa delle vittime. 'Adesso siete solo zombie'", *La Repubblica*, July 29, 2004.

that the group wanted to steal. Tollis had joined the group because of his interest in Extreme Metal music, but did not take seriously the satanic rituals and also manifested the intention to leave. Reportedly, the leaders of the group, i.e. Leoni and Sapone, and the medium Maccione, ordered them killed in 1997, but two attempts failed. Finally, in January 1998, Sapone, Volpe, and Maccione asked Marino and Tollis to join them in a satanic ritual in the forest and killed them with hammers and knives. They then urinated on the corpses of the two "traitors" and shouted: "Zombies, now you are just zombies". Reportedly, Bontade should have participated in the killings, but at the last moment did not show up, and for this reason may have been induced to commit suicide.[133]

The trial took place in 2006, and the court never had any doubt about the basic structure of the Beasts of Satan, with some of the members giving full confessions, and the homicides of Pezzotta, Tollis, and Marino, although the cases of Andrea Ballarin and Andrea Bontade remained less clear. Possibly the two young men were induced to commit suicide, but no one was found guilty of their death. Penalties were severe, and Sapone received a sentence of life imprisonment. In 2007, the Court of Appeal and the Court of Cassation substantially confirmed the first-degree decision, but converted Leoni's first degree sentence of 26 years in jail to life imprisonment, recognizing his leadership role.

In the jail of Ferrara, Central Italy, Volpe met a well-known Italian Baptist pastor, Leonardo De Chirico, who gradually converted him. Volpe, De Chirico reported, "made a declaration of recantation, of repudiation, and total removal from those pacts he made with the Devil, committed to faith, and attested his desire to seek the Lord and love his neighbor. It is important to be aware that the human and legal consequences of what he did cannot be changed. However, it should also be clear that, thanks to the power of God, every claim by the evil forces on Andrea [Volpe] could be repelled. The contract he made at that time with Satan was formally terminated. The debt was paid, so the pact was no longer valid. Jesus paid on the cross the price for sin and the Devil can no longer claim anything from whoever believes in Christ. I led Andrea to study the Credo, and he signed it after he renounced his pacts with the Devil. He broke with Satan and started a new journey with God".[134]

133 *Ibid.*

134 Leonardo De Chirico, "Da bestia di Satana a figlio di Dio", roneotyped, 2008. See also De Chirico's interviews by Mario Catania, "'Ho convertito io il capo delle Bestie di Satana'", *Visto*, May 23, 2008, pp. 75–78; and by Stefano Lolli, "'Io con la Bestia di Satana, per pregare e per capire come agisce il maligno'", *Il Resto del Carlino*, October 10, 2013: and two interviews with Volpe himself: Luca Arnaù, M. Catania, "'Ho ucciso per noia nel nome

In 2013, the Italian Catholic daily newspaper *Avvenire*, owned by the Catholic Bishops' Conference, revealed that Elisabetta Ballarin, under the guidance of a nun, in turn had followed a path of conversion to Catholicism in jail.[135] Ballarin also claimed that she was not really part of the Beasts of Satan, but only helped her boyfriend Volpe in the Pezzotta case.[136] Other members of the Beasts of Satan insist that they are innocent, and still have some supporters on the Internet, although a final decision of the Italian judicial system stated otherwise.

Not surprisingly, the tragic case of the Beasts of Satan in Italy revamped anti-Satanist campaigns in continental Europe. In 2006, the official French anti-cult agency MIVILUDES published a report on Satanism.[137] Compared to other documents by the same agency, it was surprisingly moderate and did not find any evidence that satanic criminal groups were active in France, although it offered some inflated estimation of the number of Satanists in the country. In Italy, some Catholic priests, including Father Buonaiuto, and anti-cultists suggested again that there were dozens of hidden Satanist groups similar to the Beasts of Satan, but were not able to supply any evidence of these statements. Nor were they able to connect bands like the Beasts of Satan, consisting mostly of marginal drug addicts, with the organized Satanism of the Luciferian Children of Satan and other groups.

In a way, the Beasts of Satan were the real thing. They worshipped Satan, although in a somewhat primitive way and without being even aware of what other groups did, and they performed human sacrifices. They were also a truly exceptional case. Although, as discussed in an earlier chapter, self-styled adolescent Satanists did commit murders in the United States, the Beasts of Satan were unique as they kept a group organized, although loosely, with at least a sketchy set of rituals for nine years.

Other cases mentioned in connection with the Beasts of Satan were both tragic and notorious, but not technically part of Satanism. In France, the Italian

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di Satana'", *Gente*, no. 38, September 15, 2008, pp. 38–43; and L. Arnaù, M. Catania, "'Ho cacciato il diavolo con la fede'", *Gente*, no. 39, September 22, 2008, pp. 49–50 and 138.

135 See Lorenzo Galliani, "Satana? Sconfitto dalla preghiera e dalla bellezza", *Avvenire*, February 1, 2013.

136 See her interview to the Italian-language chain of the Swiss television, available at <http://www.tvsvizzera.it/attualita/Elisabetta-Ballarin-la-verit%C3%Ao-sulle-bestie-di-Satana.-4229240.html>, last accessed on October 4, 2010.

137 MIVILUDES (Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires), *Le Satanisme. Un risque de dérive sectaire*, Paris: La Documentation Française, 2006.

case was compared to the tragic end of the Wicca Française, one of the French branches of Wicca, in 1995. Its founder, Jacques Coutela (1925–1995), appointed two subsequent High Priestesses for the group, first Nicole Martin L'Hotellier, aka "the Luciferian Diana" (1946–1995) and later Dominique Desseaux (1969–1995), a former actress of pornographic films he had also legally adopted as his daughter. In 1995, Desseaux killed L'Hotellier and was subsequently hanged by Coutela, who then hung himself. Tragic as they were, these events belonged to a deviant form of Wicca rather than to Satanism.[138]

Another tragedy often compared to the Beasts of Satan's homicides took place in Chiavenna, near the mountains of Northern Italy, on June 7, 2000. A Catholic nun, Sister Maria Laura Mainetti (1939–2000), was killed by three girls, all minors, who stated they wanted to sacrifice a nun to Satan. The nun, now a candidate for beatification in the Catholic Church, died asking God to forgive her murderers. The three girls were not in contact with any Satanist group, though in the course of their trial they declared they would have liked to found one.[139] Their information on Satanism, which proved surprisingly scarce, came once again from music and the Internet.

Satanism popped out also in the most famous Italian criminal case of the 20th century, connected with the so-called Monster of Florence. The case included eight double homicides, where between 1968 and 1985, the perpetrators killed couples who had sought the privacy of the Tuscan countryside to make love in their cars at night. After one of the lengthiest police investigation in Italian history, the authorities determined that the Monster of Florence was not a single serial killer but a group of three people, Pietro Pacciani (1925–1998), Mario Vanni (1927–2009), and Giancarlo Lotti (1940–2002), all three former convicts with a career in petty crime. Various reasons were given for the crimes, and Satanism was mentioned in connection with two different aspects of the case. One was that the trio met in jail one Salvatore Indovino, who died in 1986, whose last name literally means "fortune teller" in Italian. Because of his last name, Indovino persuaded himself he was a clairvoyant, and performed rituals for fellow criminals, some of which might have included invocations to Satan, or so some of the participants testified.

138 See Old Mélusine, "Petite mise au point sur l'ancienne Wicca française dite Wicca International Witchcraft", *EzoOccult, le Webzine d'Hermès*, July 12, 2005, available at <http://www.esoblogs.net/3960/petite-mise-au-point-sur-l-ancienne-wicca-francaise-dite-wicca-international-witchcraft/>, last accessed on September 29, 2015.

139 See on this point A. Menegotto, "Italian Martyrs of 'Satanism': Sister Maria Laura Mainetti and Father Giorgio Govoni", cit.

More relevant was the theory, developed by some of the investigators and prosecutors who handled the case, that the trio of criminals did not act completely alone. The murdered women had been dismembered and their vaginas and breasts cut off. Since these macabre trophies were never found, the theory advanced that Pacciani, Vanni, and Lotti sold them to persons who wanted to use the women's body parts for magical rituals. At the time of this writing, some of the very complicate ramifications of this case are still awaiting final decisions in Italian courts, although most of those accused of purchasing the body parts from the Monster of Florence trio are already dead. I was an expert witness for the prosecution in the main case against these accused, reviewed the whole file, and testified that, although in the evidence found by the prosecutors there were elements indicating occult interests and rituals, there was nothing I was able to connect to Satanism.[140]

None of these cases was really an antecedent for the Beasts of Satan. They remained a group different from any other. English-speaking anti-Satanists might have quoted the Beasts of Satan to claim that finally their theory that dangerous criminal cults of Satanists really existed had been vindicated. They did not do this, for three different reasons. First, by 2004 anti-Satanism was in a state of crisis, for the reasons explained in the precedent chapter. Second, very few American and British anti-Satanists, if any, had the linguistic skills required to read the original sources about the Beasts of Satan in Italian. Third, and most importantly, the Beasts of Satan did not really conform to the image of powerful, "multi-generational" Satanist cults including members from the higher echelons of society. The Beasts of Satan were recruited among marginal teenagers, drug addicts and dealers, and small-scale criminals. Their case confirmed that it is not impossible that Satanism may offer a language to express a pre-existing marginalization and deviance. However, this deviance is not caused by Satanism.

Satan the Activist: The Satanic Temple

At the beginning of 2013, a page "The Satanic Temple" was created on Facebook, with the purpose of recruiting amateur actors for a documentary on a new form of Satanism. The project was the brainchild of Douglas Mesner, who used the pseudonym Lucien Greaves, although he would later claim that the Satanic

140 See also the book by the policeman who was the main investigator in the case: Michele Giuttari, *Il Mostro. Anatomia di un'indagine*, Milan: Rizzoli, 2006.

Temple "was actually conceived of independent from me by a friend and one of his colleagues".[141] Mesner's involvement in Satanism was connected with two episodes discussed earlier in this book: LaVey's use of "Ragnar Redbeard"'s *Might is Right* for his *Satanic Bible*, and the promotion by some therapists of alleged survivors of satanic ritual abuse.

As mentioned earlier, *Might is Right* was reprinted in 1996 on LaVey's initiative. The reprint was published by Shane Bugbee, who later became a member of the Church of Satan. Mesner, a young artist and illustrator, was enthusiastic about the book. He contacted Bugbee and eventually illustrated a new limited leather-bound edition of *Might is Right*, published by the same Bugbee in 2003.[142] "I met you, Shane – Mesner remembered in a conversation with Bugbee in 2013 – and you were a priest in the Church of Satan who was conferred with that title by Anton LaVey himself. You and I found and interviewed inner-circle members of the notorious Process Church of the Final Judgment, which was said by some to be the world's most dangerous 'Satanic' cult. Through you, I met a variety of self-proclaimed Satanists of the LaVeyan school and others".[143]

Mesner studied neuroscience at Harvard and became familiar with 20th-century literature on satanic ritual abuse and survivors. He was deeply disturbed when he discovered that a small group of therapists was still spreading this literature and the narrative of satanic ritual abuse, despite the fact that it had been largely debunked by academic critics in the 1990s. One organization that promotes the survivors to this very day is SMART (Stop Mind Control and Ritual Abuse Today), founded in 1995 by Neil Brick. In 2013, Mesner, using the pseudonym of Greaves, announced that the mysterious leader of The Satanic Temple was "Neil Bricke", a pun aimed at the founder of SMART.

"Bricke", Greaves announced, would speak on January 25, 2013, at a rally in front of the Florida State Capitol in Tallahassee where Satanists would express their support for Governor Rick Scott's controversial proposal of a bill allowing students to read religious messages in assemblies and sport events. While freethinker and liberals opposed the bill, which was supported by the religious right, Greaves decided to stage a rally where he and his friends, in full satanic garbs, welcomed the Governor's proposal as an opportunity for Satanist

141 Shane Bugbee, "Unmasking Lucien Greaves, Leader of the Satanic Temple", *vice.com*, July 30, 2013, available at <http://www.vice.com/read/unmasking-lucien-greaves-aka-doug-mesner-leader-of-the-satanic-temple>, last accessed on September 29, 2015.

142 "R. Redbeard", *Might is Right*, n.p.: Bugbee Books, 2013.

143 S. Bugbee, "Unmasking Lucien Greaves, Leader of the Satanic Temple", cit.

students to read excerpts of *The Satanic Bible* and other texts of their choice during school events.[144]

The rally drew considerable media attention, and Greaves followed up on June 14, 2013 with a "Pink Mass" celebrated at the gravesite of Catherine Idalette Johnson Phelps (1907–1935), the mother of Fred Phelps (1929–2014), the pastor of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas. Phelps had become notorious for his bombastic remarks against homosexuals, and the "Pink Mass", celebrated by Greaves with a "satanic" horned hat, while two homosexual couples kissed, was allegedly intended to turn the pastor's mother into a lesbian in the afterlife. Predictably, the Westboro Baptist Church was not amused, and the police charged Greaves for desecration of a grave.[145]

In 2012, the State of Oklahoma authorized the installation of a privately funded Ten Commandment monument in front of the State Capitol in Oklahoma City. In 2013, the Satanic Temple petitioned the Oklahoma Legislature for installing in the Capitol grounds a statue of Satan, depicted as Éliphas Lévi's Baphomet sitting in a pentagram-adorned throne and teaching two children. The application was rejected, although a nine-foot tall bronze statue was realized and unveiled by the Satanic Temple at an event on June 25, 2015 in Detroit, attended by a crowd of around 700 and advertised as "the largest public satanic ceremony in history".[146] The Satanic Temple had good reasons to celebrate. On June 30, 2015, the Supreme Court of Oklahoma had ruled that, while the State was not required to place other statues on Capitol grounds, the Ten Commandments monument should be removed, as it "operates for the use, benefit or support of a sect or system of religion", thus breaching the principle of church-state separation.[147]

The same strategy worked in 2016 in Arizona. The Phoenix City Council traditionally opened his sessions with prayers offered by local religious bodies. The Satanic Temple asked to deliver one of these opening prayers, threatening a lawsuit for discrimination in case its request would not be granted. The

144 See Paige Lavender, "Rick Scott Praised by 'Satanists' at Mock Rally", *The Huffington Post*, January 26, 2013, available at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/26/rick-scott-satanists_n_2559018.html>, last accessed on September 29, 2015.

145 See Andres Jauregui, "Lucien Greaves, Officiant of Satanic Temple's Anti-Westboro 'Pink Mass', Charged with Desecration of Grave", *The Huffington Post*, July 24, 2013, available at <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/07/24/lucien-greaves-satanic-temple-westboro-pink-mass-charged_n_3644281.html>, last accessed on December 9, 2015.

146 Nash Jenkins, "Hundreds Gather for Unveiling of Satanic Statue in Detroit", *Time.com*, July 27, 2015, available at <http://time.com/3972713/detroit-satanic-statue-baphomet/>, last accessed on September 29, 2015.

147 *Prescott v. Oklahoma Capitol Preservation Commission*, 2015 OK 54, June 30, 2015.

Satanic Temple prayer was thus scheduled for February 17, 2016. Public outrage led the City Council to vote on February 3, 2016 to replace its longstanding tradition of prayers offered by ministers with a moment of silent prayer. It thus avoided both the embarrassing prayer by a Satanic Temple representative and the threatened lawsuit. Once again, the Satanic Temple had achieved its result, by effectively ending the presence of Christian and other ministers in the sessions of the Phoenix City Council.[148]

The Satanic Temple also scheduled a public Black Mass to be celebrated on the Harvard University campus on May 12, 2014, followed by a lecture on religious liberty by Christopher Robichaud, a lecturer at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. The Catholic Archdiocese of Boston reacted, and organized for the same day a Eucharistic procession and holy hour at Saint Paul church, located on the Harvard campus. More than 1,500 attended the Catholic event, including Harvard President Drew Faust, while the Satanic Temple moved its own ceremony off campus.[149]

Among those who did not appreciate the Satanic Temple's campaign was Peter Gilmore, the leader of LaVey's Church of Satan. In a statement obviously directed at Greaves, although not naming him, Gilmore called the former's "self-proclaimed Satanist group" a "political activist prank rather than a legitimate philosophical organization". The statement noted that this group borrowed liberally from LaVey, but wondered whether it really understood what the Church of Satan was all about. "If these people truly embrace the philosophy as codified by Anton LaVey and maintained by the Church of Satan, Gilmore added, they do a disservice to Satanism by creating public confusion regarding its actual principles and tenets".[150]

There was, however, a misunderstanding. Gilmore criticized Greaves for the "Pink Mass" at the grave of Pastor Phelps' mother, where the Satanic Temple was "ritually dealing with spirits in an afterlife, which is absolutely not part of the Church of Satan's philosophy".[151] This was not, however, what Greaves wanted to do. He does not believe in spirits, nor in the afterlife. What he staged was a symbolic ceremony, intended to criticize Phelps' homophobia.

148 See Paul Davenport, Felicia Fonseca, "Phoenix Council Subs Opening Prayer for Moment of Silence", *Azdailysun.com*, February 4, 2006, available at <http://azdailysun.com/news/state-and-regional/phoenix-council-to-take-up-hot-potato-of-prayer-at/article_1bbe8a01-18e3-5080-858e-82e059181bcb.html>, last accessed on February 4, 2016.

149 Jolie Lee, "Satanic Black Mass at Harvard Canceled", *USA Today*, May 13, 2014.

150 Peter H. Gilmore, "Conjuring Confusion", n.d. Available at <http://news.churchofsatan.com/post/55795677751/conjuring-confusion>, last accessed on September 29, 2015.

151 *Ibid.*

All of Greaves' other initiatives were aimed at legally challenging the presence of Christian activities and symbols in public institutions as contrary to the principle of church-state separation. If Christianity has a place in these institutions, Greaves claimed, then Satanist ceremonies and symbols should also be allowed. His success in the Oklahoma case confirmed that Greaves' real aim was not to have Satanism publicly recognized, but Christian symbols eliminated, based on Constitutional principles forbidding the official promotion of any religion.

From this, one could easily conclude that Gilmore was at least right in claiming that the Satanic Temple is not a Satanist group but a form of political activism using satanic symbols for its own purposes. Greaves, however, disagreed. To the question whether the Temple "is a satanic or a satirical group", he answered: "Why can't it be both? We are coming from a solid philosophy that we absolutely believe in and adhere to. This is Satanism, and to us it couldn't be called anything other than Satanism. However, our metaphor of Satan is a literary construct inspired by authors such as Anatole France [1844–1924] and Milton – a rebel angel defiant of autocratic structure and concerned with the material world. Satanism as a rejection of superstitious supernaturalism".

To Gilmore, Greaves objected that "the Church of Satan has never fully renounced supernaturalism, as we have", since it believes in the effectiveness of magical ritual. For Greaves, "LaVey is an excellent jumping-off point, but his work was a product of its time, and it's appropriate to recontextualize it to today's reality". What the Satanic Temple promotes is an atheistic "non-believing religion", separating "religion from superstition. Religion can and should be a metaphorical narrative construct by which we give meaning and direction to our lives and works. Our religions should not require of us that we submit ourselves to unreason and untenable supernatural beliefs based on literal interpretations of fanciful tales. Non-believers have just as much right to religion – and any exemptions and privileges being part of a religion brings – as anybody else". One may wonder whether this position is really distant from LaVey's. As for publicity stunts and psychodramas, they were always part and parcel of LaVey's satanic campaigns.

Satan Forever?

Will there still be Satanists in 2030, or in 2050? Will beliefs and practices that some may regard as anachronistic and old-fashioned survive in the third millennium? In one sense, the question is naïve. Satanism is not an ancient phenomenon. Certainly, belief in the Devil is very old. But Satanism, as we

defined it, is not. The organized cult of the Devil by structured groups with a specific ritual was born only in the modern era. The first proto-Satanist episode at the court of Louis XIV had already a somewhat modern flavor. It became famous and generated some small and local imitations or parodies, from Medmenham to the erotic adventures of Father Costantini in Reggio Emilia. All this was only an embryo of Satanism. However, it was enough to fuel a robust anti-Satanism, which interpreted a good part of world history as a conspiracy of Satanists. If Fiard and Berbiguier were largely derided, although they were later read with interest by some occultists, respected scholars such as Gougenot des Mousseaux, Mirville, or Bizouard were taken very seriously in Christian circles. They spread the theory that there were secretive and powerful Satanist groups, and they were behind apparently unexplainable social phenomena such as the French Revolution or Spiritualism.

In the 1880s, their theories were presented in a largely fictional form by Jules Bois and Huysmans, although I would not exclude that in the rich occult subculture of the late 19th century some peripheral group did explore the cult of Satan or Lucifer. This hypothetical Satanist activity in France or Belgium should not be confused with the bizarre tales of Taxil and Dr. Hacks/Bataille, which discredited anti-Satanism for decades.

My pendulum model predicts that, when anti-Satanism is truly discredited by its own excesses, it leaves a certain room for Satanist groups to re-emerge. This happened after Taxil, although the groups that emerged in different parts of the world – around Kadosh in Denmark, Przybyszewski in Poland and elsewhere, some followers of Crowley in Germany and California (while I do not consider Crowley himself a Satanist), Naglowska in Paris – were all very small. Anti-Satanism, as evidenced by the events surrounding the book *L'Élue du Dragon*, had problems of its own, and did not react very strongly.

In 1966, in a climate prepared by the short-lived cult of the Antichrist of Jack Parsons and other independent Crowleyan branches, the first unequivocally Satanist group in history with a sizable, if not huge, organization, LaVey's Church of Satan, was founded in San Francisco. Eventually, in 1975, the controversy between LaVey and his one-time lieutenant, Michael Aquino, manifested the separation between the rationalist and the occult wing of modern Satanism, which continued into the 21st century. Most post-1966 Satanist groups can be classified in one of these two categories, rationalist and occult Satanism, although idiosyncratic exceptions such as The Process and groups with a different origin such as the Order of Nine Angles also existed.

The visibility of these groups, and the crimes committed by the Manson Family, which was widely labeled as Satanist only after Manson's arrests, contributed to the largest Satanism scare in history, which had both a secular

and a religious wing, and which also targeted the Mormon Church as hiding Satanists and practicing satanic rituals in its temples, something Taxil and others had already suggested in the 19th century.

The exposure of some of the leaders of the anti-Satanist campaigns as hoaxers not more serious than Taxil, and the reaction of the academic world against the myths and legends of anti-Satanism, became factors that led to the end of the global Satanism scare in the 1990s, although local incidents continued to appear well into the 21st century. The pendulum switched again: LaVeyan rationalist Satanism had an unexpected resurrection in several countries, and new forms of occult Satanism also emerged, some of them connected with, or supported by, the Black Metal rock groups.

In some fringes of the Extreme Metal musical milieu, in groups of adolescent Satanism, and in certain forms of folk Satanism connected with organized crime, murders were committed. The most serious case involved the Beasts of Satan and was discovered in Italy in 2004. In the first decades of the 21st century, however, anti-Satanism had lost most of its strength, and these crimes were not enough to start anti-Satanist crusades comparable to those of the 1980s.

If my pendulum model is valid, the process could easily continue with a similar scheme. If the new Satanism would acquire an excessive prominence, and tragedies such as that of the Beasts of Satan will be repeated, a new significant anti-Satanist campaign is predictable. It could easily use the material from the previous campaigns, and its duration will be determined by its capacity to control its own excesses. However, it is also true that both the Evangelical and the Roman Catholic world are not what they used to be in the 1980s, and include new voices. One example is Baptist pastor John Smulo, active in both the U.S. and Australia. Smulo proposes a dialogue between Evangelical Christianity and the Left-Hand Path, including Satanism. The Baptist pastor argues that some ideas of the Left-Hand Path are indeed valid, including the rejection of moralism, not to be confused with morality, of social conformism, and of unnecessary obstacles to individual creativity. All this, Smulo claims, is compatible with Christianity. Smulo can thus challenge Satanists to discuss with him a "left hand Christian philosophy".[152]

Christians also understand that their own shortcomings may have facilitated the emergence of an occult subculture, including Satanism. "When the

152 See John Smulo, "Reaching Nietzschean Individualists: Toward a Contextualized Apologetics to LaVeyan Satanism", in Irving Hexham, Stephen Rost, John W. Morehead II (eds.), *Encountering New Religious Movements: A Holistic Evangelical Approach*, Grand Rapids (Michigan): Kregel, 2004, pp. 243–259.

Christian message lost its strength, wrote German historian Joachim Fest (1926–2006), research turned towards a substitute for God and the afterlife, mostly found in this-worldly utopias. And perhaps tomorrow some new cults will gain more converts: gurus, preachers of the end of the world, or catechists of the Black Masses".[153]

My guess is that Satanism, both LaVeyan and occult, will not become a major religious movement, and will remain small in numbers, but will not disappear. New incarnations are continuously proposed and do attract some followers. Will technology and globalization destroy Satanism? I do not think so. Satanists, as we noted earlier, have turned the Internet into a major opportunity for broadening their audience. Internet, on the other hand, may have been a mixed blessing for Satanists. Some of them are so busy debating between themselves on the Internet that they have no time left for meetings or rituals. In 2014, Lewis described contemporary Satanism as "a movement whose members rarely if ever meet face to face, and who almost never engage in group religious activities. The primary activity of contemporary Satanists appears to be emailing or otherwise engaging in online discussions with other Satanists".[154] Although this is not true for all groups, the rise of a generation of "online Satanists" who may have a different identity offline is certainly an interesting phenomenon.

As for globalization, in 1920, Gilbert Murray (1866–1957), an eminent professor of Greek Studies at the University of Oxford, published an interesting booklet on the relations between Satanism and the "World Order". Every now and again in history, according to Murray, a new World Order rises. Historical examples are the Roman Empire and the British Empire. But there is always someone who does not appreciate the advantages of a New World Order. Among these contrarians, Satanists are born.

"Satanism in this sense, Murray wrote, is perfectly intelligible, and may be strongly sympathetic". "The essence of the belief" goes beyond the figure of Satan and is that "the World Order is evil and a lie". The spirit of Satanism, "the spirit of unmixed hatred towards the existing World Order, the spirit which rejoices in any widespread disaster which is also a disaster to the world's rulers, is perhaps, Murray wrote in 1920, more rife to-day than it has been for over a thousand years. It is felt to some extent against all ordered Governments, but

153 Joachim Fest, *Der Zerstörte Traum. Vom Ende des utopischen Zeitalters*, Berlin: Wolf Jobst Siedler Verlag, 1991, p. 80.

154 James R. Lewis, *Sects & Stats: Overcoming the Conventional Wisdom about Cult Members*, Sheffield (UK), Bristol (Connecticut): Equinox, 2014, p. 127.

chiefly against all imperial Governments; and it is directed more widely and intensely against Great Britain than against any other Power".[155]

Evoking the ghost of Satanism for making some post-World War I propaganda on behalf of the British Empire can make us smile today. Murray, however, was after something serious. The promises of a "New World Order" do not make everybody happy, and create contradictions with which Satanism may fuel itself. But why Satanism and not something else? Why, to quote Fest again, do "catechists of the Black Masses" continue to appear? Are not "gurus" and "preachers of the end of the world" enough? One answer is that the presence of the Devil is still strong and powerful in the social imagination. Satan's image is immediately understandable and needs no introduction.

Another answer is that, at least since the French Revolution, anti-Satanists created an image of Satanism as a powerful conspiracy explaining the main events of modern history. Hateful for many, this imaginary Satanism may appear as seductive to some who see in it a powerful tool to subvert the World Order. This is why it would have been ultimately impossible to write a social history of Satanism without including a history of anti-Satanism. Satanism is fueled, if not created, by anti-Satanism, much more than anti-Satanism is generated by a real prominence of Satanism. Anti-Satanism is a manifestation of both Christian and secular fears of modernity and post-modernity. As these fears are not likely to disappear, both anti-Satanism and Satanism will likely remain a small but significant feature of 21st-century religion and esotericism.

155 Gilbert Murray, *Satanism and the World Order*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1920, p. 9 and p. 33.

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