Satanists and Scholars:

A Historiographic Overview and Critique of Scholarship on Religious Satanism

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is a summary of scholarship on religious Satanism, a critique of claims, approaches, and methodologies within these studies, and a proposal for future considerations within the scholarship. It begins with the early academic mentions of the founding of the Church of Satan, as scholars approach it as evidence of the larger counterculture movement of American society in the 1960s. It is followed by a treatise on the schisms of the Church of Satan in the 1970s, and the scholarly studies surrounding questions of authority and legitimacy. It concludes with a summary and critique of contemporary research on the great variety of religious Satanic groups, and their internal dynamics and social tensions. This thesis summarizes this previous academic research on religious Satanism, discusses the methodological and theoretical approaches to these studies, provides selective commentary and analysis throughout, and finally, encourages further academic discussion and interplay in this emerging field. This thesis engages – concurring, countering, rejecting, and critiquing – with other researchers and their respective work, and as such, it is this dialog that is the primary focus of this study, as it partakes in the discussion of the academic study of religious Satanism.

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Introduction: Setting the Scene for this Research

The Church of Satan (CoS) began in San Francisco in 1966, founded by Anton Szandor LaVey. From its inception, the CoS staged several theatrical events to promote Satanism. Among these were: the wedding of a US senator's daughter; the baptism of LaVey's second daughter, Zeena; a Satanic funeral; and several public rituals featuring nude female altars. These events initially drew media attention from girlie magazines, gossip blurbs, and even the mainstream media, but attracted little interest from social scientists. A small number of sociological scholars eventually took note in the 1970s. These seminal studies were the few academic mentions in the 1980s and 1990s, apart from short notations or paragraphs in encyclopedias on magic, the occult, or esoteric groups, or handbooks on new religious movements or American religions. Over the next forty-odd years there has been relatively little academic interest on religious Satanism. That is, until the mid to late 1990s. With the advent of the Internet, scholars noticed virtual Satanic activity, and became re-invested in the study of religious Satanism.

This thesis is not about Satanism itself, nor about the history of the Church of Satan or its founder, nor about the modern schismatic Satanic movements. This thesis is an overview and critique of the history of academic work on Satanism. My goals are to summarize the academic research on religious Satanism, discuss the methodological and theoretical approaches to these studies, provide selective commentary and critique throughout concerning the field of "Satanism Studies," but mostly, I hope to encourage further academic discussion and interplay in this emerging field. As such, this work may appear as somewhat unfinished; many of my queries and concerns will go unanswered,

as they are beyond the scope of this thesis. As most scholars on Satanism come from diverse backgrounds – history, psychology, religion, anthropology, sociology – all approach the topic from a variety of discipline-specific standards. This is advantageous and confusing at the same time; diversity promotes insight as well as potential discrepancies across studies. As I advance in Satanism studies, my research engages (concurring, countering, rejecting, and critiquing) with other researchers and their respective work, and as such, it is this dialog that is the primary focus of this study.

My interest in the academic study of religious Satanism began in 2006 with a short assignment on Internet portrayals of the Church of Satan. Since then, I have continued to write about Satanism, and am conducting preliminary work for my PhD dissertation: an ethnographic study on the members of the Church of Satan and their self-understanding of Satanism as a lived religion. This MA thesis, however, is a lengthy examination of the scholarly context from which it emerges and to which it responds. It is an elaborate set-up to explain the void that an ethnographic study of the Church of Satan will fill, and the nature of the scholarly environment from which it arises. I introduce my own research as a counterpoint to other scholars, but the prime focus in this essay is other academic research on religious Satanism.

Jesper Aagard Petersen, a contemporary expert on Satanism, divides the history of religious Satanism into three phases. First, the initial founding and growth of the Church of Satan, from 1966 to 1975, characterized by the colourful public persona of Anton Szandor LaVey (1966-70), and the internal conflicts emerging from the increased routinization within the church (1970-1975) (in Lewis and Petersen 2005, 428). The second phase is marked by the schismatic forming of the Temple of Set by former

member of the priesthood of the Church of Satan, Michael Aquino, in 1975, and the dismantling of the grotto system (local cabals across different regions) and subsequent retreat to privacy by LaVey (1975-1995). Finally, the beginning of public Internet and LaVey's death (1997) sparked various schismatic groups of self-identifying Satanists (429). Petersen writes that these phases resulted in, "…a proliferation of the new Satanic movements online, battles within the CoS over legitimate authority, and fierce struggles both within CoS and the Satanic milieu in general over the ownership of the term 'Satanism.' Even though the dust has settled, the development has left the CoS an authoritarian movement and the Satanic milieu as visible and diverse as never before" (2011, 125). I have delineated this thesis in a mostly chronological fashion, divided into three chapters that more-or-less follow Petersen's timeline categories.

Chapter one introduces and summarizes the early studies. It begins by setting the social context of the counterculture movements in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s; the earliest studies on religious Satanism view the CoS as part of this larger current of social change, as evidence of the rising interest in "occultism" in America. The authors referenced in this section represent a sampling of the types of approaches to Satanism. First, a brief summary of mainstream media portrayals of the early sensationalized founding of the Church of Satan is presented to demonstrate that even though scholars were slow to look at Satanism, the nature of the titillating topic still gained exposure in the media. From a popular voice, Arthur Lyons, an American mystery writer, wrote two books on Satanism. His work, though not strictly scholarly, is often-quoted and referenced by scholars throughout all research on Satanism and continues today. As such, I have summarized a large portion of his work in order to

provide the reader with most of the foundational information possessed by later scholars. Francis King, a British writer of esotericism, writes from the perspective of research on occult magic. Richard Woods is a Dominican theologian writing as a concerned cleric on the rise of Satanism. Woods, an American preacher with a PhD in religion from Chicago (1978), has since written extensively on theological topics, such as angels and demons, Dominican mysticism, Christian health and wellness, and Celtic spirituality. His article is included here to show a theological reaction to Satanism, and to highlight a theological perspective to the alleged criminal activities by Satanists. Finally, I present the works of social scientists, beginning with a pivotal essay by Colin Campbell. Campbell does not write about Satanism, but his essay regarding the cultic milieu and the counterculture movements of the socially tumultuous 60s and 70s is used and applied by later scholars. His notion of the "cultic milieu" is explained and included here, as scholars on Satanism, notably Jesper Aagard Petersen, use this idea to frame contemporary studies on Satanism as the "Satanic milieu." The other three scholars summarized in this section are looking directly at the early existence of the Church of Satan: Edward J. Moody, Randall H. Alfred, and Marcello Truzzi. These seminal works are recapped and critiqued, as their approaches, framing, methodology, and conclusions are used today by all scholars on Satanism.

Chapter two discusses the nature of schisms within the Church of Satan and the beginnings of pan-Satanic groups, with an approximate time period beginning in 1975 with the Temple of Set, to the advent of the Internet in the mid-1990s. There are few scholarly studies done at the time of the early schisms themselves, so I have opted to include contemporary work that retroactively looks at these midyears of sectarian

Satanic groups, and theories regarding the nature of schisms, mostly by James R. Lewis and Jesper Aagard Petersen. These authors are included here to illustrate the scholarly approach to schisms, notions of legitimacy, claims to authority, and the reinterpretation and re-appropriation of religious ideas. Studies on the Temple of Set at the time are even scarcer than the Church of Satan, but one ethnographic book by Gini Graham Scott is briefly mentioned here for its portrayal of the Temple of Set, named the Temple of Hu by Scott to protect its members.

Other mentions of Satanism are the dictionaries, encyclopedias, and handbooks on religion, occultism, esotericism, magic and witchcraft, and new religious movements in America. These selected references are presented to show that great variety and discrepancy across volumes exists regarding Satanism, and that they were the scant sources for researchers during this period. Finally, I offer a discussion on the media hyperbole surrounding Satanic Ritual Abuse of the 1980s and early 1990s. It is not directly important to this thesis, but is significant in understanding Satanism and Satanists, and consequently academic work on Satanism.

Finally, chapter three focuses on academic studies of all forms of religious Satanism beginning from the late 1990s until the present. This section is a selective gathering, as there is now gradually increasing research being conducted on Satanism, far too many to all be included (yet there is still a relative minority of scholarly interest) so instead I have opted to focus on broad themes in the scholarship. First, I introduce the immediate context post-LaVey's death coinciding with Internet Satanic activity, and the struggle for legitimacy among Satanic groups. I then present contemporary considerations of the current Church of Satan and the lack of recent research on the CoS,

and then expand to focus on pan-Satanism and its varied groups. I discuss Petersen's notion of the Satanic milieu, and his three categories of Satanists: rationalist, esoteric, and reactionary; most scholarship looks at the first two.

The scholarly work in chapter three is divided into broad themes: legitimacy and authority, categories of Satanism, demographical statistics, and geographical studies. These are summarized, and then supplemented with commentary. Two authors are prominent in this section and throughout the entire essay, James R. Lewis and Jesper Aagard Petersen. Lewis and Petersen, while certainly not the only scholars, are perhaps the most published within Satanism studies.

Chapter five comprises suggestions for future considerations for research on Satanism, focusing on nomenclature and methodological approaches. As already stated, I often leave open some of the concerns I highlight throughout this essay, and it can appear incomplete. My intent is to propose these ideas to other scholars in the hopes of stimulating responses that improve the research overall: new approaches, emerging theories, addressing concerns, and disentangling problems.

Throughout this essay, the original source is directly consulted in most cases, as virtual reprints of older studies has allowed access to these previously obscure documents. In other times, the original copy cannot be found, and here I rely on summaries and interpretations provided by other scholars. In yet other cases, some contemporary research is published in a European language other than French or English, in which case I again rely on summaries and critiques contained in other studies.

This thesis is a summary of scholarship on religious Satanism, a critique of claims, approaches, and methodologies within these studies, and a proposal for future considerations within the scholarship. It grounds and frames my doctoral research, which is an ethnographic study on the Church of Satan; my future work directly engages and responds to this pre-existing scholarship, and this thesis can be considered my initial effort to partake in the discussion of the academic study of religious Satanism.

Chapter One: The Early Studies

Introducing the Research

American society during the 1960s and 70s saw many changes and upheavals of traditional worldviews: student protests, assassinated politicians, hippies, anti-war sentiment, birth control, sexual politics and feminism, drug culture, the civil rights movement, and rock/folk protest music, all reflecting a general critique of the status quo in public discourse. These types of events are familiar to contemporary students and the public at large, but to a reserved 1950s and 1960s polite society – at least on the surface – they were shocking, causing questions and concerns regarding the shift in social frameworks. Middle-class values, where divorce, pre-marital sex, interracial couples, and autonomous women were taboo, were being challenged by new ideologies. Portraits of the Church of Satan are displayed within this context, as part of a larger counterculture movement, as one of the many statements of a changing society. As such, they are presented as an indication towards a decrease of the hegemonic, traditional American society. The Church of Satan was but one example of movements, groups, and ideologies that challenged mainstream norms and values. It is important for the modern scholar to understand the context of the birth of the Church of Satan, as it was indeed directly addressing the historical particulars of its time, at once rejecting conventional views (in terms of religion and sexuality), yet also deviating from many of its counterculture contemporaries (in terms of violence and drug use). Scholars, in turn, examine the Church of Satan as evidence of this drastically changing society.

Media coverage of the Church of Satan begins in the late 1960s, a sampling of which consists of magazines with nudes (*Hustler,* 6.6. Dec. 1979; *Jaybird Journal,* 1967), men's periodicals (*Argosy,* June 1975), pulp tabloids (*The Exploiter*, 4.4, Jan. 24, 1975), and general interest magazines such as LaVey's cover on *Look* (Aug. 24, 1971). Mainstream newspapers also covered the Church of Satan, such as the Navy funeral of mate third class and CoS member, Edward D. Olsen (*The Miami News*, Dec. 12, 1967), a story about LaVey's pet lion (*Waterton Daily Times*, Mar. 4, 1967), a wedding with a nude altar (*Times Herald*, Feb. 2, 1967), and pieces focusing on the growth of Satanism (*The Deseret News*, Oct. 16, 1971). In 1972, *Time Magazine* published the cover article titled, "The Occult Revival: A Substitute Faith," which mentions LaVey and other occult activities (June 19). By 1986, LaVey made the cover of *The Washington Post* (Feb. 23). Media coverage is not within the scope of this essay, although I mention them here to indicate that even though scholarly work on Satanism was little, the sensationalized aspects of the Church of Satan made local and national news. The tone of most articles is one of curiosity and entertainment; they are presented as unusual events of general interest to their readers.

The earliest academic studies on Satanism began in the 1970s. Most approach the Church of Satan as part of the larger counterculture movement, one element of which was a drastic increase in "occultism." Occultism was a broad label applied to astrology, witchcraft, and magic, with each academic defining these terms in slightly different ways, not always accounting for nuance and baggage of these terms. For example, modern sensibilities tend not to include astrology as part of an occult practice, as only very conservative religious worldviews still apply this term; astrology columns

are part of most mainstream daily newspapers, and benign as an occult practice. Yet the context of these early studies in regards to public reaction to vaguely defined occultism is extremely important; it was titillating, even shocking, and certainly a drastic shift from conventional mores. Occultism in these studies can be generally understood as opposite to orthodoxy. The dark arts, magic, witchcraft, and Satanism ostensibly deviated from the reserved, respectable American society of the 1950s and 1960s,

The social setting is important in order to better frame the early academic studies on Satanism. Certain methodological approaches can be considered outdated by contemporary standards: dismissing Satanists as "deviant" and "abnormal"; scorning any agency on the part of practitioners; covert research; or labeling Satanism as devil worship and Christian heresy. There are a few that did examine the Church of Satan as a religion unto itself: Edward J. Moody, Randall H. Alfred, and Marcello Truzzi produced three seminal works in the early years of the Church of Satan. Truzzi has two articles, the first deals with the sociology of the occult (1971), and the second presents Satanism as a pop-culture group emerging from the New Age Movement (1972); Moody provides a socio-psychological analysis through the participant observer perspective (1974); and finally, Alfred discusses sociological symbolic systems that the Church of Satan addresses, highlighting the stark differences between the hedonistic counterculture movement and the strong anti-drug/crime position of the CoS (1976). These studies are extremely useful in providing an insight into the early years of the CoS. Data regarding frequency of meetings, demographic of attendees, conversations with and impressions of LaVey, and a general sense of the Satanic worldview according to active participants: such information is lacking even in modern research. Moody's, Alfred's, and Truzzi's

portrayals of the CoS are mostly positive, and considered to be somewhat partisan. Contemporary Satanism scholar, Jesper Aagard Petersen writes that, like Lyons, Alfred and Moody were "high-ranking and enthusiastic members of the Church of Satan, allegedly for ethnographic reasons," while "Truzzi was on very friendly terms with LaVey" (Petersen 2011, 25: footnote 7).

The next source considered is Colin Campbell's treatise on cults, written in 1972: "The Cult, The Cultic Milieu, and Secularization" (in Kaplan and Lööw, 2002). Campbell's essay does not mention religious Satanism, but it is important in understanding how scholars approached new religious movement studies in the 1970s, as they were viewed as deviating from orthodox society; the context of counterculture movements of the 1960s and 70s is fully explored, and adopted by most of the subsequent researchers presented in this section. Contemporary scholars on Satanism reference Campbell and his concept of the cultic milieu; it is included here because of its methodological importance in later works on religious Satanism.

Several other essays and publications either mention or contain small chapters on Satanism, with varying degrees of accuracy and objectivity. I have selected three such authors: Arthur Lyons, a mystery writer; Francis King, who published books on esotericism and mysticism; and Richard Woods, a Dominican theologian. These selected works are included here for their influence on scholarly work as well as providing an indication of the popular perspective. I dwell particularly on Lyons for two reasons. His work is often-quoted and referenced in contemporary scholarship, as it is one of the few to provide details on the early years of the Church of Satan. The second reason is that, by expanding on this text, the reader of this thesis will also garner a decent

understanding of the Church of Satan's worldview. Considering that schismatic Satanic groups later reinterpret and re-appropriate these ideas, summarizing a great deal of Lyons' text provides the reader a necessary overview of Satanic philosophy.

This chapter discusses the various works by each author, organized by publication date. Other works could have also been included; I limited the choices because these particular works are often referenced in later works, and as such, important to the history of scholarship on religious Satanism.

Arthur Lyons

Arthur Lyons is an American writer of popular mystery stories, with an interest in film noir. His book, *The Second Coming: Satanism in America* (1970), begins with listing the common popular associations of Satanism: the Manson Family, Witchcraft, the Process Church (a controversial New Religious Movement in the 1970s), drug use, and sexual promiscuity (6-7). Lyons correctly indicates that the association between Manson and Satanism is a journalistic imposition (6). He notes that movements deemed on the radical "fringe" are no longer so clearly defined – the line between normal and radical has been obfuscated (7). By making this statement, Lyons is setting the groundwork for his portrayal of the Church of Satan, as he presents it as a rational and appealing worldview, not an abnormal fringe movement.

Lyons introduces his topic with a discussion on the psychological and motivational factors of appeal to this fringe. He claims that hegemonic older religions are fading, causing existential angst, and creating a vacuum for identity. He names this a

“crisis of identification” (8). This crisis encourages a sense of meaninglessness and inadequacy, wherein people are “unable to turn inward for stability” (9).

This is perhaps the first instance where Lyons reveals his lack of training. His thoughts contain far too many broad generalizations and are riddled with pop psychology, even if they contain an element of truth. He presents somewhat of a contradiction – he names the receding of external institutions as the reason for internal existential crises as people are “unable to turn inward for stability” (9). Would not the opposite be true? If the external paradigm has been removed, the cause for the existential crisis is not the inward upheaval, but the removal of the external dictatorial paradigm; you are no longer being told what to do and feel by an outward entity. That is not an internal void, but an external one. Perhaps better stated, that the removal of the external has caused the gaze to turn internal, which has not yet been defined, and is therefore a cause of anxiety. I pause to digress on the semantics of word choices and phrasing as Lyons’ quasi-scientific psychologizing is prevalent throughout Lyons’ initial introduction. Dissecting each and every instance is not within the scope of this essay, but I highlight it here to demonstrate that Lyons is primarily a popular writer – certainly with some interesting insights into human behaviour, but not a mental health practitioner nor even a historian.

Lyons presents America as a hotbed of growing occult and esoteric movements, from astrologers (10), to witches (12), to black magicians (14). He details contemporary witchcraft’s distinction between black and white magic. The black witch will perform magic for selfish reason, despite the harm it could potentially bring to others (13), and the white witch makes an overt effort never to cause harm (13). Most research has

focused on the white magic variety. Lyons attributes this to its social acceptability, ease of access to practitioners by researchers, and a "whitewashing" of the popular perception of witchcraft (13). Lyons affirms that black magic groups do indeed exist, and he has observed their activities on a large scale (13). Black magic, Lyons claims, has existed in all cultures, while its association with the concept of Satan is a Judeo-Christian tradition (14). Magic, then, is defined as being performed for personal ends (14). The author attempts to distinguish between "religion" and "magic" (14). Religious prayer is a supplication, a bargaining with the divine to be in their beneficial, if fickle, favour. Magic is a will to power, a coercion of forces (14). Lyons emphasizes that the differences are not always clear; there are overtones of religion in magic, and magic in religion (15).

The question Lyons is attempting to answer in this book is why the image of the Devil is foremost in the minds of modern man (16)? "The answer is that Satan has survived and has derived all his strength from his functioning as a projection of man" (16-17). Citing Jungian theory, this particular form of the Prince of Darkness is but the outward manifestation of secret, uncomfortable desires (17). Externalizing these desires causes anxiety, as they then become a force unto their own, outside of mankind's responsibility (18). Lyons offers the subsequent text as a treatise on these "dark" undercurrents. Each chapter deals with a different aspect of his thesis. Chapter one details primitive man at the mercy of nature's violent waters, beating sun, and vicious animals (22). Early demons were projections of nature with either conscious or subconscious human characteristics, from Zoroaster to Christianity (23). Chapter two is concerned with the Inquisition, and underlying fears of a society at risk, manifested by

witch-hunts. He offers Margaret Murray's theories of a pre-existing pre-Christian occult Satanism/Witchcraft, which he names "pagan Satanism" (46). He bases this argument on the research conducted by Margaret Murray, which claimed that confessions under torture were indicative of an active practice of witchcraft being suppressed by Church authorities. "There is little proof, aside from the twisted screams welling up from the depths of Inquisitional torture chambers, that there existed any supreme Satanic Papacy, or even an internationally organized priesthood" (59). Despite this affirmation, Lyons continues on to claim that there were indeed organized independent sections performing ceremonies and rituals (59), loosely headed by a Grand Master that always, conveniently, remained out of sight, and never identified (61). Women's confessions under torture claimed that Satan himself officiated meetings, which proves that they had no knowledge of the actual heads of this Satanic church (61). Chapter three lists the Black Mass as a Christian perversion, a rebellion by the increasingly scientific minded liberal of the Renaissance.

Considering that Murray's claim of a pre-Christian witchcraft has been heavily criticized, and now, in 2012, almost completely debunked, it calls into question all of Lyons' claims. The current thinking is that we have very little concrete evidence of actual witchcraft practices – only accusations begat under torture – and certainly none indicating Satanism being practiced as a religion in and of itself. Even though Lyons, in his introduction, makes a distinction between witchcraft and Satanism as separate movements in the 1970s, he confusingly uses the terms interchangeably throughout much of his early chapters as the same type of pagan activity. Lyons equates paganism with Satanism using the phrase "Pagan Satanism," yet also states that this type of

activity is purely a Christian concept. He is attempting to equate the two to demonstrate that pagan practices were reinterpreted as Satanic in order to lend pagan traditions a certain historical legitimacy. Lyons fails to clearly make this point, as he at once rejects Satanism as a Christian fabrication and accepts it as a verifiable pagan practice.

The language of Lyons' text strongly reflects his profession as author of popular mystery novels. A typical paragraph reads:

> Through the smoke of smoldering campfires, through the drifting odors of roasting lamb and deer, over the ecstatic cries of sexual release, the chanting of hatred had come to dominate all, until the reasons for the chanting had disappeared and the movement had crumbled and fallen. But the echoes of the chanting, the chanting that was now meaningless and absurd, could still be heard, howling through the wastes of European society. (62)

This elegant prose is more fitting for narrative fiction that a book of historical research. It reveals his poetic understanding of Satanism as an ancient movement that has been twisted and perverted by Inquisitorial forces. Despite the questionable romantic stance on historical Satanism, discrepancies with his terms, pop analysis psychologizing, and debunked proof-texts (such as Margaret Murray), Lyons does present an overview of various Satanic groups and a fairly broad and in-depth portrayal of the Church of Satan in the early years.

Chapter six deals with different forms of Satanism in American. Lyons claims that there are various Satanic groups, numbering around one hundred thousand, seven thousand of these are members of the Church of Satan (113). These groups are primarily small and independent, consisting of a Master of the coven, which numbers never more than thirteen (113-114). Lyons claims that a private informant assures him that there is secret training and ordination of Satanic priests in many major cities across

the US (114). He asserts that the secretive nature of these groups is based on "paranoia" (114). Some groups employ narcotics during rituals, and have questionable recruiting membership tactics (114). The new Satanism is a mixture of religion and magic, wherein Satan is an approachable, less fearsome, ally (118). Ritual is a psychological tool, meant to be a creative force (119). Sex is divorced from its shameful Christian trappings, and either celebrated or even rendered banal (121-122). One Satanic group, the Process Church, advocates sexual indulgences in excess, denouncing marriage altogether (122), while some groups render the titillating Black Mass as obsolete (119).

Lyons asserts that an overt authoritarian nature of a god is absent in these groups, but has been replaced with devotion to the cult leader who acts as a spiritual guide source of knowledge (126). Some claim to be incarnations of Satan himself, but most merely present themselves as "advocates" (126). These Satanic priests are power hungry, seeking to control and manipulate others through their sense of failure (126-127). Paranoia and rigid control stem from fear of losing their status as a learned practitioner of the magical arts (127). He writes:

> The paranoia in some modern groups…is self-perpetuating. The cult leaders, desperately driven by their need to feel powerful, force themselves into a position where the danger of exposure becomes real. By carrying on certain illegal activities, such as extortion, they place their paranoia on more well-founded grounds. In such instances, the cycle becomes more and more vicious as the degree of commitment increases, until a group that started out as a harmless secret society might well end up a blind, rabid group of fanatics who would stop at nothing, including murder, to preserve secrecy. (128)

Lyons states that these groups run from the "harmless-disorganized to the dangerous-highly-organized" (130). An example of the harmless variety was in Hollywood, where Lyons was invited to attend a ritual. The altar contains mummified and etheric human

remains, and a formaldehyde jar containing a horned dead infant (131). The priest claimed that this was his stillborn son, Adrian (131). Attendees were young hippie types, from about fifteen to twenty individuals (132). A poem was read from Baudelaire, then an invocation to Satan (132-133). Four initiates were to be sworn in, their fingers pricked with a pin and then smeared on paper with their names (134). They made a Covenant, dedicated themselves to "life, happiness, and pleasure," and then drank what was reputed to be formaldehyde to seal their pact (134). Lyons observes that this act is "supposedly proving Satan's protective powers over his followers" (134).

Lyons describes other rituals by other groups, some at length. He repeatedly makes reference to these rituals in terms of how much they incorporate either magic or religion or both. He defines "religion" practices as theological holdovers from the medieval rebellious anti-Christian sentiment, whereas magic he defines as ceremonial rituals imbued with natural forces. These distinctions are arbitrary, and even confusing. By deconstructing each group's cosmogony and rituals into being composed of either "religion" or "magic" elements, Lyons is creating a false divide. He appears to contradict himself, as in later passages he dismisses this divide by claiming they are both born out of a need to feel purposeful (152). The debate itself demonstrates that he is heavily influenced by the social climate of his time, wherein "religion" was the established institution, and everything else was either fringe, magic, pagan, or merely foreign. By supplying a pop-psychology answer, he again reflects the existing secular debate: that all religion is caused by human's psychological weaknesses. Contemporary scholarship has steered away from these distinctions. A final question to pose is, where did this Californian group obtain human bodies? Even given the decade, it is rare that

decomposing body parts would not attract the attention of authorities – unless they were artificial. Lyons does not indicate one way or another.

Finally, Lyons comes to LaVey's Church of Satan in chapter eight. He notes, "The Church of Satan differs radically from most other Satanic groups in existence today in several respects" (171). These are: a disavowal of all other groups; sadism and puerile ritual are deemed "nonsense" (171); vandalism, animal sacrifice, and blood pacts are anathema; secrecy and paranoia are absent; membership is open and transparent; drug use prohibited; and the existence of god or devil is denied (172). The Church of Satan views Satan as a symbol of humanity's carnal nature (172). Lyons confesses: 'This strange band of Satanists states matter-of-factly that it would be futile for them to draw pentagrams on the floor during their ceremonies in order to conjure Lucifer or any of his demonic allies, for it is simply impossible to conjure something that does not exist" (173).

Anton Szandor LaVey, the founder of the Church of Satan, is named as an "uncommon Satanic Master" with an unusual background (173). LaVey joined a circus at sixteen, later becoming an assistant lion tamer, a fortuneteller, magician, and hypnotist (173). After leaving carnival life he played the piano in Burlesque shows in San Francisco, then took criminology, and was hired as a photographer for the San Francisco Police Department (173). This experience shaped his perspective that mankind used the notion of "God's will" to avoid responsibility (174). He began to study occult and magical practices, and held weekly classes called a "magic circle" (174). These meetings were the basis for the eventual forming of the Church of Satan. Lyons underlines that the media representation of sexual orgies is inaccurate (174). The CoS strongly

discourages members joining on the basis of participating in group sex, and emphasizes that women in the Church of Satan do not require the organization for personal dalliances (174). Membership requires three letters, a written exam, and an interview with an Inner Circle member (174). These measures act as a filter for "kooks" attracted by salacious details (175).

Extreme human emotion must be channeled and controlled, not suppressed and shamed (175). Christianity favours denying the base carnal desires in favour of spiritual ideals, and Satanism inverts this principal, by reclassifying the "deadly sins" as actions leading to "physical, mental, or emotional gratification" (175). Lyons asserts that there is little overt anti-Christian sentiment within the rituals, and instead offers that the CoS' stance on other religions is one of "benign contempt" (176). This disdain stems from the tendency of spiritual religions to diminish the importance of human's achievements and suppress humanity's animal instincts (177). Lyons illustrates this by referring to LaVey's comments regarding a mother, whose son was an astronaut, who thanked God repeatedly for keeping her son safe on a trip to the moon (177). LaVey notes that this is misguided, as the mother should be thanking the team of scientists that ensured every possible scenario entailed safety measures (177). They advocate "placing responsibility of moral judgment square on the shoulders of the individual" (177).

Indulgence, too, requires responsibility (178). All sexual practices that satisfy desire are accepted, from monogamous faithfulness to multiple partners to homosexuality and fetishism (178). LaVey underlines that their position is not "free-sex" but instead a freedom of choice for the individual to embrace their natural tendencies (178). Lyons observes that, "sexual practices…such as homosexuality and

fetishism, are usually considered by psychologists to be caused by neurotic conflicts imbedded deep within the participant's personality" (178). The CoS strongly disagrees, and again emphasizes that suppressing one's natural desires is the cause of anxieties (178).

The above mention of psychological categorization of homosexuality as a personality flaw is reflective of the mental health industry of the time. Current trends have almost entirely omitted this position, and are in agreement alongside the CoS. Considerations for fetishism (now related to BDSM) is somewhat less so, but also leans generally towards its acceptance as a non-harmful personal preference, and less towards sexual deviance.

Laws are to be respected and obeyed so as to succeed socially; they are necessary for order (180). Therefore, any self-indulgent act that threatens this order entails the responsibility of consequences, as Lyons comments, "we paradoxically come across a group of pro-Establishment Satanists" (180). The only possible exception is that they advocate changing unjust laws that limit individual rights, while still maintaining that law and order is paramount (180). A CoS pamphlet claims: "Only by working side by side with the Establishment can we create any sizable change in our society. Satanism is the only religion in which a person can 'turn on' to the pleasures around him without 'dropping out' of society" (180). This quote references, and subverts, the popular counterculture phrase promoted by Timothy Leary, a psychologist that promoted drug use during the 1960s, "Turn on, tune in, drop out" (Oxford Online, Accessed Aug. 10, 2012).

The rituals entail typical Satanic imagery – inverted pentagrams, bells, a nude altar – but with a materialistic, anti-mystical slant (182). They are designed to multiply pre-existing mental powers that harness and focus energy, which LaVey describes as "applied psychology multiplied tenfold" (182). This "magic is reconcilable with the materialistic philosophy of [LaVey's] Satanic teachings, since the forces released are in the realm of the natural, rather than the supernatural" (182).

Lyons provides useful information on the early church and its rituals performed during LaVey's magical sessions: his "lesser magic" classes with female acolytes, in which they learn how to manipulate with everyday interactions with other people, especially men (183); the Shibboleth ritual, a rite of inversion in which a participant acts in the character of a public figure as a parody, in order to subvert their influence (186); and the infamous curse on the lawyer-boyfriend of Jayne Mansfield (LaVey's paramour) at Jayne's request, Sam Brody (187). Brody and Mansfield died in a car accident soon after, and the incident drew the attention of the press (188). LaVey claims to have been "shaken up" by Mansfield's death, as the intent was not to cause harm to undeserving persons (188).

Currently there are no longer any type of public rituals, nor first hand participant observer research on CoS undertakings, and there has not been for several decades. Lyons' descriptions, then, provide a unique insight into group rituals and Church activities. Where Lyons lacks some understanding of Satanism is in regards to the notion of an afterlife. He claims that the CoS views on the afterlife as "quite ambiguous" (188). This is a curious statement considering that *The Satanic Bible*, published in 1969

and listed in Lyons' bibliography, outlines clearly this particular issue, and dedicates an entire chapter to their notion of an afterlife (Holt 2011; LaVey 1969, ch. X).

Membership within the Church of Satan appears to be comprised of professionals that are "responsible, intelligent people" (189). Lyons claims that membership is kept limited in order to filter out the "lunatic fringe" (190). He claims that members consist of a variety of professionals: "doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, ex-FBI men, IBM executives and policemen as well as street cleaners" (190). They are mostly middle-class, come from a wide range of religious upbringings, aging mostly under thirty-five years (190). On one particular Friday night attended by eight people, Lyons counts two PhDs and two PhD candidates among them, one a sociology professor (190). Lyons makes the distinction between a distained "romantic, long-haired variety" of rebellious youth and Church of Satan members that exhibit more towards "realism, materialism, and intellectualism" (190). Lifetime membership costs an initial fee of twenty dollars, with additional two dollars and fifty cents to attend the weekly ceremonies; no further funds are solicited (191).

The above type of data is currently unavailable; the Church of Satan keeps their membership demographics under strict confidence (*Official Website of the Church of Satan,* Accessed July 20, 2012). As such, Lyons' work provides the researcher with an idea as to the general make-up of CoS membership, their goals and ideals, and can be matched to current research – limited though it may be – for comparison. Finally, Lyons presents the Church of Satan as a modern religion, answering to the anxieties of its time (such as humanity's "lack of emotional honesty"), and concerns for the future (such as emotional gratification as a "key to internal power") (193).

Lyons' book, *The Second Coming: The Satanism in America* (1970), can be used in various ways for the contemporary academic. His arguments on the historical precedent for what he calls "pagan Satanism" are based on Murray's debunked ideas of pre-Christian witchcraft, but are still useful in understanding contemporary Satanists' concern with historical legitimacy, as many of them use similar arguments. Lyons' lengthy psychological reasoning is also somewhat flawed, as it can read as outdated and amateurish, however, it does reflect a particular type of discourse at the time, which was concerned with the *why* of human behaviour and explaining it in psychological terms and ideas. His analysis is a good example of the popular understanding of these notions. Lyons' descriptions of Satanists are helpful in understanding the early days of this movement, and the variety of groups within the movement. My caution with some of his data is that his study was not far reaching enough to be a complete picture. His stated membership numbers (100,000) cannot be taken as fact, as he does not indicate where he obtained this information. We cannot, therefore, evaluate the methodology by which these numbers were procured. Apart from his direct involvement with LaVey and the CoS (which is consistent with later accounts; much of it could be written about the CoS today), Lyons provides little information about the other various Satanic groups – names, places, dates, numbers – and conveys this information in general statements, not specific, detailed accounts. The best use of Lyons' book for the Satanism scholar is to omit most of the book apart from his material on Satanists. The useful section can be used to provide a general idea of the various Satanic groups, and some specific data for the Church of Satan's initial years.

A final note on the use of Lyons within this work: his books are cited not because I consider him a strict scholarly source, but because all subsequent academics cite the same information, referencing Lyons. Because of this I have outlined most of his text; it is a seminal popular portrayal of early Satanism, and therefore important in understanding why later scholars have referenced his data.

Richard Woods, O.P.

Richard Woods, a member of the Order of Preachers, the Dominicans, wrote several works on Christian theology and mysticism. In the introduction to *Soundings in Satanism*, the editor writes that the contributors are all theologians, mostly European, and mostly Catholic, although Woods is an American preacher with a PhD in Religion from Loyola Chicago (1978). A typical, and telling, quote from Woods reads:

> The bodies were either carefully buried or burned, and no incriminating clues were left by the cautious Satanists. Despite the lack of physical evidence, and even given the fact that the participants were admittedly heavy drug users, [...] well-organized Satanic sects do exist and some, at least, are vicious and homicidal. ([1971] in Sheed, 1972, 100)

The above quote indicates the synthesis of his approach to Satanism, wherein, despite clear evidence, he insists that organized movements of devil-worshipping cults regularly commit criminal acts. His prime concern is the increase in groups or movements considered occult and theologians' seeming lack of alarm for this increase. Woods points out that the decrease in belief in the devil is most prevalent among the clergy, and not solely among psychiatrists and atheists, as might be expected (93). He notes that Satan has been "relegated…to an ever-greater distance from the center of speculation and preaching" (93). Despite the ostensible disbelief of the devil, occult

movements were on the rise in the 1970s. He names groups and events popularly associated with the occult as evidence: Hell's Angels, the Process Church (which he names as a Marcionite cult) (92), LaVey's Church of Satan (92), and the Manson Family slayings (93). Woods' goal is to investigate these curious shifts in popular thought regarding "fashionable and pathological diabolism" (93).

The author begins with a brief description of belief in malevolent spirits, since the beginning of recorded human history (94). This emphasis on evil is still prevalent in the 1970s, especially in areas such as Latin America, Africa, the West Indies, with unofficial exorcisms on the rise in England and Europe, and America (94-95). Woods then proceeds to describe medieval notions of Satan, the Black Mass, and the nineteenth-century cult rituals that appealed to Satanists and magicians as "Victorian diabolism" (97). He claims that what began as a Christian parody evolved into a rare but actual practice (95).

Woods does not appear to always make clear distinctions between accusations of alleged witchcraft, magic, and Satanism as moral panics and actual proven incidents of these practices. He laments unfair witchcraft burnings but is selective in these laments. He gives the impression that, while witchcraft accusations were indeed probably fabricated moral panics, that Satanism is still a threat. Many of his statements are far too broad and sweeping to be considered insightful.

The more interesting section, for our purposes, is Woods' discussion on Satanism as a contemporary movement in the 1970s. He begins by listing that some groups have reclaimed animal sacrifice as part of their practice, and suggests that human sacrifice is "not out of the question" (98). The occult revolution prominently features drug use and

sexual abandon among some groups, with even one Californian group's sadomasochistic rituals resulting in serious injury (98). Voodoo, black magic, gruesome rites, and the Tate-Bianca murders perpetrated by the Manson Family are a combination of "sex, drugs, witchcraft, and Satanism" (98). Woods continues by listing crimes of Satanic ritual: apart from the Manson murders, a young man was pushed to death in New Jersey; a man stabbed to death in Miami by a woman that believed she had seen the devil; and teenagers in Chicago offering their babies born out of wedlock as sacrificial victims (99).

Woods' claims are not terribly difficult to deconstruct. Throughout his entire text he makes far-reaching vague sweeping statements, especially considering the seriousness of his accusations; he presents his case as "some evidence," "several recent deaths," "some sects," and "enough circumstantial evidence" but never provides dates, names, places, legal documents, medical reports, law enforcement sources, or any actual data that could be verified externally. There are no bibliography or references apart from the newspaper names, which are seemingly reporting on similar type of "facts" as Woods.

Of LaVey's Church of Satan, Woods addresses it but briefly. He begins with a claim that, compared to the criminal and deranged Satanists of his previous chapters, the Church of Satan is "somewhat tame" (100). The CoS has gained in popularity because LaVey and his partner Diane Hegarty perform weddings, funerals, and Black Masses surrounded by occult imagery trapping: symbols, vestments and artifacts, as well as bells, candles, incense, swords, and aspergilla (100). LaVey does not believe in a literal devil, yet practices ritual magic (101). Woods notes that, while LaVey practices

ceremonial magic, the contemporary witchcraft movement has little in common with the Church of Satan (100-101). They deem LaVey's magic as more of a stunt than a form of worship, as entertainment to attract new members (101).

Woods' word choices reveal his negative and derisive framing of the Church of Satan. "Mumbo jumbo," "innocuous," "gimmick," claiming that *The Satanic Bible* contains "rhetorical flourishes," and putting the word "Church" in quotes – suggesting the questionability of the term applied to the CoS – are prime examples of a dismissal of Satanism as a legitimate religion, and denigrating it to a mere theatrical sideshow (100). He correctly distinguishes between modern witchcraft and the Church of Satan, but then fails to distinguish between Satanism and the Manson Family. Woods omits entirely a discussion on Satanism's reinterpretation of his topic (occultism); Satanic literature has probing and topical positions on magic, clerical belief in the devil, and the general increase in popularity of the occult movement. As Woods claims to be concerned with the increase of occultism, these are all topics of ostensible interest.

Woods asserts that Satanists number around seven thousand members, with several branches of grottoes throughout America, without citing a source (92). I assume, as Woods publishes a year after Lyons, that the "seven thousand" number is either taken from the same source as, or directly from Lyons. Woods does not specify his claim with a reference, so this number may or may not include solely the Church of Satan, but also every group or individual that Woods considers Satanic. As we have seen, this is a far-reaching category, as Satanism remains mostly undefined by the author. Woods' prime concern appears to be dismissal of Satanism as a religion in and of itself, and insist that secretive anti-Christian pathologically criminal Satanic movements are

subversively engaged in ritual killings and human sacrifices – despite the lack of physical evidence, witnesses being known drug-users, and skepticism on the part of law enforcement. The lack of physical proof, according to Woods, is evidence of a cover-up; a well orchestrated cover up by clever Satanists.

I have included Richard Woods' essay because his approach is indicative of later works by academics; they take for granted that accusations of criminal "Satanic" acts are evidence. Woods is certainly not alone in his unsound presupposition, but he is an early example of what later becomes a far-reaching and hyperbolic moral panic. This approach sets a dangerous precedent for the events of the "Satanic Panic" in the 1980s and 90s (see Victor 1993). His work is included here as an example of portrayals of Satanism; the Church of Satan is harmless if gimmicky, but criminal Satanism is rampant and a threat. Woods does omit the Church of Satan from his criminal accusations, but his overall portrait of "criminal Satanism" is an example of dehumanizing and demonizing a perceived threat. Within the context of this book, the threat is the decrease in orthodoxy. Woods is useful solely to demonstrate that this approach was and is prevalent. I have omitted all other works that frame Satanism as criminal diabolatry, but scholars of religious Satanism encounter this approach frequently. Woods' work is an example of scholarship that does not distinguish between unsubstantiated broad claims and factual data; if used, it requires careful dissection of its claims.

Francis King

Francis King (1934–1994) was a British writer on the occult, tarot, magic, and witchcraft (*Amazon,* Accessed July 24, 2012). He wrote *Sexuality, Magic, and Perversion*

in 1971. It discusses the history of occult sex magic from the nineteenth century to the 1970s. King examines sorcery, tantrism, and occultism, dividing the book by region: oriental, occidental, and sex and magic in the modern world. For our purposes, his most relevant section is chapter thirteen, "Sexual Magic in the United States" (142-159).

King begins by stating America represented an experimental laboratory for European radicals wishing to apply their theories in praxis: "At one time or another almost every charismatic sect, whether political or religious in its underlying ideology, made an attempt at communal living in North America" (142). Most of these groups held sexual beliefs that deviated from the norm, ranging from complete ascetics to sex as a sacrament. Political groups failed, while religious groups survived (142).

King presents the Church of Satan as a small, secretive yet publicity-conscious sect, which he names a "kooky" organization (149). He notes the famous connection with film star Jayne Mansfield, and comments that the popular obsession with large busts (such as Mansfield's) can be linked to either "infantile deprivation" or propaganda from the dairy industry (149). Mansfield joined LaVey's discussion group as she had an interest in "occult science" (150). Mansfield accompanied LaVey, who worked for the San Francisco Police Department and responded to the "nut calls," on several of these investigations; they drew media attention (151). King muses that Mansfield's attraction to the CoS was in part due to its "ultra-permissive morality" (151). He observes that she appeared to enthusiastically take part in the Shibboleth ritual, which he names a "crude form of psychodrama" (151).

King describes LaVey as a man of flamboyant dress with a shaven head, often photographed for girlie magazines (151). LaVey's notion of magic is a simplified version

of Aleister Crowley's Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.) (150). King notes that LaVey's notion of satisfying indulgence is a "pale" reflection of Crowley's mantra:

> There is no Grace, there is no Guilt
> This is the Law, Do what thou Wilt. (151)

LaVey's stance on sexuality is that sexual preferences are permitted, as they lead to emotional gratification (152). King laments that this is a "vulgarization and degeneration" of Crowley's ideas on sex-magic (152). The author claims that the exception to this is abstinence and chastity, which is deemed "unforgivable" (152). In this instance, King has either not read *The Satanic Bible* or has misunderstood it, as it clearly states that asexuality is a legitimate sexual preference, providing it is done in line with one's true nature, and not an enforced restriction based on external forces (LaVey 1969, 66-74). *The Satanic Bible* does not appear in King's selected bibliography. It could be possible that King was referring to specifically religiously imposed chastity, which the CoS would indeed label as unnatural, but this is not clear in his passage.

King observes that the media coverage of Mansfield's death was "ludicrous" (153). Despite this hyperbolic coverage, he observes that some members appear to be of "high intelligence" and some are "heavily involved in sex-magic" in which the goal is to transform orgasm into a magical rite (153). King does not provide CoS details on these rites. In an endnote King admits that he has no knowledge of the inner circle of the church (149). As such, it is uncertain as to where he gathered all of his information.

The few details provided about the Church of Satan are overshadowed by King's obvious disappointment in their (undefined) notion of sex-magic. He identifies Mansfield as a sex symbol but does not provide any insight as to how this status is a

manifestation of, or translates to, Satanic sex-magic practices. He laments their notion of sex as a purely physical gratification. King writes:

> As the reader of this book will by now have gathered there has, nevertheless, always survived the tradition that there is a hidden side to sexuality, an esoteric knowledge capable of transforming the orgasm into a supernatural rite by which the human mind is enabled to experience hitherto unknown modes of consciousness. Some variant of this ancient doctrine is taught to members of the secret, inner circle of the Satanic Church to which I have previously referred; it forms, however, no part of the Church of Satan's public teachings on sexuality, for these are crudely hedonistic, bearing more resemblance to the philosophy of the proprietor of a strip-joint than they do to the subtle intellectual systems of occultists as Reuss and Crowley. (152)

Given King's poetic emphasis on the mystical element to orgasm, and also given the Church of Satan's emphasis on materiality and carnality, it is not surprising that he judges the Church of Satan as a "crude" sexuality, void of an esoteric interpretation. What is most interesting to note, is that scholars and researchers that approach Satanism from the occult/esoteric/mysticism perspective often lament that the Church of Satan falls short of their expectations. The disappointment/lament indicates that King approached the Church of Satan with expectations that were not met, and this is clearly evident throughout his writing. King is included here as an example of the esoteric approach that mentions the Church of Satan as part of the larger history of Western Esotericism alongside Crowley. King's disenchantment is indicative of the esoteric approach, as in reality, the Church of Satan reflects more secular ideas than esoteric ones.

Colin Campbell

Colin Campbell, a British sociologist, first published his seminal essay on new religious movements, "The Cult, The Cultic Milieu, and Secularization," in 1972. It does not mention Satanism, but provides an integral insight into cultic studies that heavily influences later scholars in the field of NRMs, up to and including contemporary academics writing about religious Satanism. As such, his methodological considerations are important for understanding these later works.

Campbell's prime concern is the cultural environment that produces fringe groups. He coins the term "cultic milieu" to describe society's underground as a whole, as a type of social setting that encourages cult formation and – often – its subsequent decline (in Kaplan and Lööw 2002, 14). This environment includes all unorthodox ideas: unconventional science, alien and heretical religion, medicinal practices, the occult and magical, spiritualism, psychic phenomena, and mysticism (14). Despite this variety, the cultic groups generally tend towards tolerance of each other and syncretism in their notion of seeking an ultimate truth, through varied fragmentary paths (15). The cultic perspective's common thread is a deviation from the dominant and normative culture (14). Campbell notes that cultic movements are heavily reliant on circulating information for survival: "magazines, periodicals, books, pamphlets, lectures, demonstrations, and informal meetings through which its beliefs and practices are discussed and disseminated" (15). They are united by an "ideology of seekership," which is the search for meaning, interpretation, and revelatory experiences in relation to particular phenomena – religious, intellectual, or material (15). Institutions, such as various guilds, associations, churches, and leagues, support seekership; these orders are

dedicated to the pursuits of their respective "deviant" knowledge (23). Campbell argues that as established orthodox religions fade and scientific institutions grow, it leaves a void among the non-scientific and the newly non-religious. This void is filled with quasi-scientific beliefs, hybrid movements of spirituality and science (24). He writes:

> Processes of secularization which have been responsible for the "cutting back" of the established form of religion have actually allowed the "hardier varieties" to flourish, or possibly created the circumstances for the emergence, not of a secular scientific society, but of a society centered on a blend of mysticism, magic and pseudo-science. (24)

Campbell's general criteria for cults listed above describe common traits and patterns, despite the high turnover of cult members due to the "ephemeral and highly unstable" environment of new religious movements; they emerge and die out very quickly (14). Because of the transitory nature of cults, Campbell posits that scholars are best suited to examine the enveloping background itself, the cultic milieu (14). While individual groups may not always survive, the cultic milieu itself is in constant tandem with the orthodox culture (19). Traditionally this orthodox culture was a religious orthodoxy, but Campbell asserts that since the cultic milieu sits in between both science and religion, when dominant religious orthodoxies are replaced by dominant scientific orthodoxies through processes of secularization, the fringe status of the cultic milieu remains, and even grows. He concludes:

> A growth in the prestige in science results in the absence of control of the beliefs of non-scientists and in an increase in quasi-scientific beliefs. Ironically enough, therefore, it could be that the very processes of secularization which have been responsible for the "cutting back" of the established form of religion have actually allowed the "hardier varieties" to flourish, or possibly created circumstances for the emergence, not of a secular scientific society, but of a society centered on a blend of mysticism, magic, and pseudo-science. (Campbell in Kaplan and Lööw 2002, 23-4)

We must keep Campbell's thoughts in mind when examining religious Satanism, as many scholars view this movement through the gaze of Campbell's work. That is, as a fusion of the concerns of its time responding to the changing ideas on science and religion. Satanism is a deviant (compared to an orthodox) worldview, among many other counterculture movements, reliant on circulating literature, dissemination of ideas, and mobilization of activities in order to survive. The cultic milieu is the environment in which new religious movements are born and die out. It is a heterodox response to a dominant orthodox ideology, and a reflection of changing social norms.

Contemporary scholars apply Campbell's ideas on the cultic milieu to religious Satanism.[1] It is a foundational theoretical framework from which to view Satanism; as a counterculture movement that challenges orthodoxy.

Marcello Truzzi, PhD

Marcello Truzzi's article, "The Occult Revival as Popular Culture: Some Random Observations on the Old and The Nouveau Witch," was published in *The Sociological Quarterly* in 1972. Truzzi introduces the context of his topic, the rising interest in occultism, with a list of statistics: occult books sale have increased 100% in the past three years (16); 169 occult tiles were published in 1968 (16), and had jumped to 519 in 1969 (17); Ouija boards, after forty years of low revenue, reported sales of over two million in 1967 (17).

"It is likely," he writes, "that even though today's social scientists have only superficially examined the subject, a vast reservoir of magical and superstitious

[1] Notably Petersen: Petersen applies Campbell's concept of the Cultic milieu to the notion of the "Satanic milieu" discussed in chapter three.

thoughts exists in the American population" (17). Truzzi emphasizes that interest in the occult is not solely a fancy of youth, as 88% of a popular occult magazine has readers over the age of thirty-five (17), although the recent upsurge in general interest is mostly likely due to youth culture (18).

Truzzi's research into the occult milieu reveals four dominant areas of interest: astrology, witchcraft-satanism, parapsychology and extra-sensory perception, and Eastern religious thought (18). Occasionally these areas intersect, but predominantly commonly remain as separate interests (18). Truzzi names the first two as central to the occult revival, representing the majority of activity (18). He argues that astrology has become understood as a "belief-system" by a minority, functioning as an ideological identity that informs their worldview, while the majority view it as playful fun, a "leisure-time element of popular culture" (22).

Witchcraft and Satanism are the second most popular foci of the occult revival (22). They are commonly linked, writes Truzzi, but should be considered separate belief-systems, with different varieties of each kind (23). The prime debate between the two groups is the differentiation between white and black magic; white magic defined as for supposedly socially beneficent ends, and black magic defined as for supposedly malevolent ends (23). Black magicians, even if calling upon the names of demons, mostly view all magic as value-free, as a tool to be used (23). He notes that the contemporary witchcraft movement emphasize that their magic is only white as an effort to dissuade negative stereotypes (23). "The distinction between black and white magic is essentially a matter of the user's intent rather than of his technique" (23).

Witchcraft practitioners do not consider themselves Satanists (23), nor as an off-shoot of Christianity, but a pre-Christian folk religion (24). Satanists interpret the notion of the Devil either literally or figuratively, and often position themselves as somewhat oppositional to Christianity (24). Truzzi notes that many Satanists are, in fact, atheists (24). Most incidents of historical Satanism stem from Christian misrepresentations and propaganda: "The inquisitors so impressed some individuals with the fantastic and the blasphemous picture of Satanism that they apparently decided that they also would 'rather reign in hell than serve in heaven'" (24). For our purposes, we forgo Truzzi's discussion on the contemporary witchcraft movement, and instead focus on Satanism.

Truzzi notes two distinct types of Satanists: the sole practitioner, of which social scientists know very little, and operating groups, which come in different varieties (26). Truzzi identifies four of these groups. The smallest variety of Satanist adheres to a Gnostic influenced "non-heretical (to them) interpretation of Christianity in which Satan is perceived as an angel still to be worshipped" (26). Another variation incorporates Satanic imagery into pornographic literature, and the occasional sex or sado-masochistic club that performs rituals (26). A third sort of Satanic group uses narcotics, such as the Charles Manson group, and are over-sensationalized by the media (26), although it should be noted that the Manson-Satanists link was largely a media created correlation. Truzzi reports that other Satanic groups lament the sex-club and drug-focused Satanists as giving authentic Satanism a "bad name" (27). The dominant group is the Church of Satan, founded by Anton Szandor LaVey (27).

Truzzi then presents us with a portrait of the Church of Satan and LaVey that is already reflected in other authors in this section. Instead of repeating these details, I highlight new information, or a previously unexamined perspective.

Truzzi, from the onset, establishes the Church of Satan as indeed a legitimate church, not a cult, based on four criteria: its largeness, hierarchical organization, complex initiations, and "the success of the church no longer focuses on the founder's charisma" (endnote 26, 27). The contemporary scholar may[2] steer away from the arbitrary distinctions between "legitimate" church and cult, but this division represents debates of scholars at the time, and the notion of legitimacy itself was and remains an issue for religious Satanism as a whole.

Truzzi names the now familiar figure of seven thousand members, attributed to a claim made by LaVey himself (27), but adds that he witnessed the extensive amount of mail received at the San Francisco headquarters, and notes, "Even if only a small percentage of represented mail is from new persons seeking membership, the volume itself reinforced my opinion of the accuracy of this figure" (endnote 28, 27). As for circulation of Church of Satan literature, Truzzi lists: four printings of *The Satanic Bible* for a total of one hundred and twenty-five thousand copies in circulation; LaVey's weekly column in *The National Insider* and *Exploiter*; and the member information bulletin, *The Cloven Hoof* (27). The growth of the Church goes beyond central headquarters, and now has grottos in the Bay Area, and several other secret branches across the country (27).

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[2] I am of the camp that, at the very least, encourages further discussion on the usefulness and/or accuracy of the distinction between a "legitimate church" and a cult. For functional purposes within the context of 1970s sociological methodology and this essay, I retain Truzzi's definition.

The philosophical aspect of Satanism is "elitist, materialist, and basically atheistic," influenced by Machiavelli, Nietzsche, and Rand (28). Their notion of magic is defined as a manifestation of the will, not supernatural, but supernormal (28). Truzzi qualifies that, "Unlike most atheisms, the position of the Church of Satan is that these symbolic entities are powerful and indispensable forces in man's emotional life and that these forces are necessary conditions for the success of greater (Ritual) Magic" (28). That is, myth and ritual are requisite tools to be judiciously applied, to manipulate the self or others. "The Satanist," Truzzi states, "is the ultimate pragmatist" (28).

Truzzi presents the Church of Satan as fitting in alongside movements that reflect disillusionment with orthodox religion (28). Unlike other forms of mystical, esoteric, or even counterculture movements, they deny the existence of a spiritual dimension, denounce the use of narcotics, and reject hippie notions of altruism (28). Interestingly, Truzzi observes that, while the Church itself is apolitical, these deviations from the typical cult movements have attracted many conservative and patriotic members (endnote 33, 28). In closing, Truzzi observes that the occult revival (including Satanism) can be viewed as "pop religion," which is in fact, a demystification process of the fearful arcane religions (29).

Marcello Truzzi's report, though brief, presents us with the first balanced study on religious Satan. He does not write extensively about other groups besides the Church of Satan, but does provide detailed endnotes, in-text references, and bibliography. As such it can be extremely useful for the scholar seeking academic studies on American occultism in the 1960s and 1970s. He provides a few kernels of new, and seemingly accurate, information, even if his treatment of the CoS is relatively brief. The sole

discrepancy is that Truzzi states that the Church of Satan began in 1965 (endnote 25, 27), not 1966 as is commonly known. This date, however, could be attributed to the Magic Circle meetings regularly hosted by LaVey well before the official founding in 1966. Truzzi does not specify. This article is very useful in providing an overview of the environment for occultism in the 1970s, and a small window into the early years of the Church of Satan. Perhaps the only drawback is that it is a short article; being a seminal work, it is unfortunate that more details and elaborations are not provided.

Edward J. Moody

Edward J. Moody's article, "Magical Therapy: An Anthropological Investigation of Contemporary Satanism," was first published in 1974.[3] He establishes the context of his study as being sparked by the growing occultism in the modern Western world (in Lewis and Petersen 2008, 445), and focuses on the function of magical ritual within the Church of Satan (446). Research was conducted over a two-year period as a participant observer, beginning in 1967 (446).

From the onset, Moody uses several different names to describe the group – First Church of the Trapezoid, Church of the Trapezoid, First Church of Satan, and Church of Satan – all interchangeably (445-6). This caused some confusion, as in my years of research on the Church of Satan, I have not come across these terms in other literature. The closest reference would be the Order of the Trapezoid, which is the name given to the inner ruling body of the Church of Satan (Barton 2003). Since none of my documents

[3] This article was originally published in *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*, by Irving I. Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974): 355-82. I have used the reprint in Lewis and Petersen's, *Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism* – see bibliography.

provided an answer to this curiosity, I emailed one of my contacts within the Church of Satan, Magister Sprague, a high-ranking member of the priesthood from the United States. I have occasionally verified other questionable factoids through emailed correspondence when a printed work was not useful. He usually responds within a few days, after presumably checking some of his own sources. He reveals no details about his internal sources (name, title or rank of the person consulted, nor which document or publication referenced), and as such, I cannot fact-check his responses. Magister Sprague confirms my initial suspicion: the name "Church of the Trapezoid" was never used, nor were any of the other terms apart from "Church of Satan." My guess is that Moody conflated the name of the inner circle with the name of the organization itself, and was adding unnecessary flourishes of variety into his text.

Moody begins his arguments by summarizing the history of witchcraft accusations. He states that the common characteristics of those accused of witchcraft were people that were "envious, resentful, or powerless," people on the margins of a community, and not fully recognized as citizens (447). Citing Mary Douglas, Moody notes that accusations are based on fear of resentment and envy from peoples of lower class levels (447). These suspects are usually powerless and frustrated, asocial and marginal (447).

Having explained the above, Moody then correlates Satanists' use of magic with witchcraft accusations. He writes:

> This characterization of persons accused of witchcraft in other cultures is a surprisingly accurate depiction of many if not all of the satanists [sic] I encountered. They, too, turn to witchcraft out of envy and frustration. They desire successes denied them – money, fame, recognition, power – and with all legitimate avenues apparently blocked, with no apparent means by which legitimate effort will bring reward, they turn to satanism and witchcraft. (447)

Moody is correlating medieval witchcraft accusations with contemporary witchcraft practice in an unusual way; the feelings that sparked accusations of witchcraft in the medieval period – envy, frustration, fear – are also the feelings that compel the practice of witchcraft today (448). That is, emotions of powerlessness, of impotence in the face of frustrated desires, induce one to turn to black magic, the occult, and witchcraft (448). Moody, unlike many of the previous authors, makes little distinction between the contemporary witchcraft movement and Satanism, apart from a brief endnote where he remarks that there are "many" different varieties of witchcraft and Satanism (endnote 3, 475). It can be assumed that he uses "witchcraft" here to mean magical rituals/workings by Satanists. Moody likely uses the terms witchcraft and magic interchangeably to further his thesis, which links medieval witchcraft and modern occult phenomena. The term is not necessarily inappropriately used, but the failure to make the differences between the modern groups clearer demonstrates a lack of knowledge in the area.

Moody admits that all people occasionally feel envious, unfulfilled, and angry at their own failings (448). He states that this is because we have difficulty facing our own shortcomings in the face of people that out-perform us (448). What distinguishes Satanists is that they are deviant and abnormal (449). Moody defines deviant as abnormal socially unacceptable behaviour (449). This type of person is predisposed to seek out venues for their anger and being a social outcast; Moody calls this the "pre-Satanist," a person that exhibits the criteria but has not yet become a Satanist (450).

Throughout his research Moody claims that many Satanists admitted to circumstances that signaled their abnormal social status: divorced and alcoholic

parents, violent siblings, and "so on" (450). He notes that the models for behaviour, i.e. parents, failed in their task of parenting by not properly socializing the pre-Satanist (450). They were most likely poorly socialized themselves (450). This pre-Satanist will seek help in accepted places, such as psychotherapy or Judeo-Christian religious counselors, in order to learn socialization (451). Such efforts fail, claims Moody, because the pre-Satanist refuses to admit their own shortcomings (451). The psychotherapist attempts to reframe the feelings of alienation only to be met with resistance; the pre-Satanist is unwilling to admit that their behaviour is deviant (451). "Moreover," Moody adds, "in the case of the religious specialist, success is usually of a spiritual nature, while the satanist is concerned with immediate results" (451). The pre-Satanist is oblivious to their own inadequacy, and cannot recognize being complicit in failing to achieve society's symbols of success: wealth and sexual partners (451). Moody states:

> Unaware of the covert rules by which others operate, the type of implicit understanding that aids one in successful social interaction, the satanist can see no good reason for the inordinate success of one man as opposed to another, just as they can, even more to the point, see no good reason for their own failure. (451)

The pre-Satanist is then drawn to astrology or magic through bookstores or magazines, and investigates further with meetings or lectures (453). Most of these groups, too, fail the pre-Satanist, as they require monies, or have ephemeral and unorganized teachings (453). It is then that the pre-Satanist finds Anton LaVey and the Church of Satan (454).

At this point commentary is necessary. Moody's approach is problematic, as it entails certain unexamined presuppositions. The premise of his study is that Satanists are, by default of being attracted to Satanism, deviant and abnormal. It is cyclical logic,

as their involvement with the Church of Satan alone is considered evidence of abnormality, for which he then finds retroactive causalities. Approaching Satanists from a standpoint of abnormality, Moody then seeks data to confirm his flawed premise. He states that his summation is a type case, and "does not provide a list of characteristics that would allow one to predict just who becomes a satanist and who does not" (448-9). His research was conducted over a period of two years, but he does not list his methodology. Did he hand out questionnaires? Interview members extensively? How many personal histories did he record, and, if a significant amount, did these accounts reflect his thesis of socially maladaptive upbringings? Moody dedicates much of his text explaining his "model" pre-Satanist – that is, a type case – but explains little of the hard facts that lead him to his conclusions.

Moody's depiction of Satanists (and as he calls members before they join, "pre-Satanists") as impotent juvenile deviants decidedly contradicts other research of this time (Alfred, Lyons, Truzzi). From the onset, he appears primarily concerned with explaining the social-psychological causalities based on a flawed supposition – not to mention that, as a sociologist, it is also somewhat presumptive to judge Satanists' mental health without sound, and vetted, case studies. He offers, again in an endnote, that when he returned three years later the body of the membership had shifted: the Church of Satan became increasingly structured, decreasingly marginal, had stricter membership criteria, and a formalized process of advancement (endnote 3, 475). Given this drastic shift in portrayals, it warrants more discussion than two sentences at the end of his study. Perhaps follow-up research would have provided some necessary critical insight.

His model-type Satanist theory somewhat contradicts itself. In a telling paragraph he claims:

> Famous and obscure, wealthy and poor, "successes" and "failures," upper to lower class, young and old, right-wing to left-wing political opinions – all were represented in the early church membership, along with a baker's dozen or more assorted psychological "syndromes" ranging from transvestism to sadomasochism. A single factor seemed to typify all of them: all were deviant or abnormal in some aspect of their social behavior. Although they usually were behaviourally "normal" in most social contexts, in some areas each exhibited maladaptive or abnormal responses. (449)

If the members were from all walks of life, many even successful professionals, does that not contradict his claim that Satanists are frustrated and unsuccessful? Moody claims they are socially normal ("normal" is put in quotes, suggesting that it is a dubious claim) but then clarifies that "some" other areas are abnormal. Moody does not clearly define these areas, nor provide tangible evidence. Finally, the above paragraph is so broad that it could define almost any group; who among the general population does not have difficulty in "some areas"?

Moody reflects common assumptions of his time in the 1970s; that children from divorced homes are at increased risk for crime and depression, that certain sexual behaviours are psychological abnormalities caused by neurosis, that counterculture movements are, by their very nature, a reflection of lack of character – all claims that recent scholarship has either debunked, or at the very least, provided insight and nuance to the derisive claims.

As many of Moody's observations and conclusions are highly problematic, such as denoting that Satanists are "anxious and socially inept" (451), his work can be used with caution; it is useful for providing some insight into the early Church of Satan, but

his broad claims about members and his poorly conceived notion of the “model type pre-Satanist” should be discarded.

Randall H. Alfred

Randall H. Alfred’s article, “The Church of Satan,” was first published in 1976.[4] Like most of the authors of his time, he approaches his topic as part of the occult revival phenomenon (in Lewis and Petersen 2008, 478). He also introduces his study in a similar fashion; the distinctions between black and white magic; the underground survival of pagan nature worship (479); the link between purported “acid-Satanists” and Charles Manson; and the multiple diverse groups practicing witchcraft and Satanism (481).

Alfred’s methodology for research with the Church of Satan is thoroughly detailed. He engaged in covert participant observation from April 1968 to August 1969. He attended fifty-two weekly group rituals, participating in forty-four. He sat on twelve ruling councils (the inner ruling body of the church), took twelve classes on Satanism, attended six parties, and slept over at the church headquarters (the Black House, LaVey’s Victorian residence in San Francisco) six times. He met members socially at local restaurants, saw movies, and conversed on the streets (481). Between 1969 and 1973 he maintained contact with members, leaders, or groups on approximately one hundred occasions, totaling around six hundred hours, producing as many pages of notes. He cites an additional fifty pieces of media coverage, forty-four copies of *The*

[4] This article appeared in *The New Religious Consciousness*, Charles Y Glock and Robert N. Bellah, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976): 180-202. I have used the version printed in Lewis and Petersen’s, *Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism* – see bibliography.

Cloven Hoof, and two-dozen copies of correspondence with headquarters as part of his pool of information (483). Alfred presents a summary of LaVey's colourful history – as lion tamer, calliope player, autodidact – and adds that LaVey was "in many ways a law and order man," condemning the use of drugs and other illegal activities (485). Post-research Alfred revealed his covert status to LaVey, and asked permission to publish (483). Alfred reports that LaVey had suspected the covert nature of his research, but assumed he also had a personal interest in the philosophy. Alfred's response is that he joined solely for research purposes, but later became personally involved.

Alfred argues that the body of members of the Church of Satan responds to Satanism for six reasons: hedonism, magic, diabolism, iconoclasm, millenarianism, and LaVey's charisma (486). Firstly, hedonistic notions, while sensationalized, are curtailed with the mantra, "indulgence, not compulsion," a phrase meaning that the pursuit of pleasures should entail responsibility and pragmatism. Additional epicurean attractions are parties, which may turn into orgies, lust spells, and the nude altars (487). Alfred notes that a change of emphasis occurred during his time researching; less focus on the salacious nature of the church as it appeared in pulp magazines, and more effort to depict a respectable and modest CoS in order to attract different types of media (492). Articles, cover features, newspapers, pictorial weeklies, and national television shows all ran pieces on the Church of Satan (493).

Secondly, Alfred states that magic, the greater and lesser kind, are attractive because they are deemed to be successful in three ways: i) Learning to control specific situations, with specific techniques under LaVey's tutelage; ii) the emotional intensity of magical ritual creates confidence; iii) ritual implants positive suggestions, and creates

real-world results. These are all deemed successful magical workings, and powerful psychodrama (487).

Diabolism, the third element of appeal, while historically defined as the worship of the devil, is interpreted differently among the Church of Satan: Satan is a symbol. Alfred states that a subgroup of members place more emphasis on rituals such as the Black Mass (a parody of the Catholic mass) and view Satanism as somewhat of an inversion of Christianity (488). He notes that this subgroup has strong religious upbringings in common (488). Alfred does not state it clearly, but the implication is that these members have more (possibly negative) emotional reactions to their childhood religious experiences, and address this reaction through emphasizing their opposition to Christianity. Other scholars above agree with Alfred, and have also noted that this type of overt anti-Christian sentiment is relegated to a small number of members, and, while certainly present, not the fundamental view of members in general.

This brings us to Alfred's fourth reason for an attraction to Satanism, iconoclasm. This notion frees the individual from values and custom, not only religious institutions, but "current sacred cows" (488). Alfred describes LaVey as crushing an LSD tablet underfoot during one such ritual, to symbolically liberate oneself from the exalted "revolutionary" ideal that enveloped popular culture. LaVey's disdain toward recreational drug-use, and its biggest proponents, the hippie movement, is noted by many of the researchers examined here.

The fifth reason members are attracted to Satanism is millenarianism. Alfred compares the notion of the New Satanic Age to the Christian Revelation of Saint John the Divine, as *The Satanic Bible* opens with a poetic call to a new beginning. It is a passage

that denigrates the “ice age of religious thought” – that is, religions such as Christianity that exalt the spiritual and denigrate the carnal (488) – and promotes “undefiled wisdom” – that is, understanding the world as it truly is (489).

Alfred does not elaborate much on this millenarian notion, but a slight interjection is necessary; Satanic millenarianism is not an apocalyptic worldview. There is no eschatological ultimate punishment, nor do they view the present world as somehow irreparably flawed and worthy of destruction, and then rebirth, which is typical of most millennial groups. The material world is not viewed as imperfect, nor the spiritual world exalted as the transcendent ideal. Instead, Satanic millenarianism views the world as neutral, and religious leaders promoting it as flawed and imperfect have skewed humanity’s perspective on the world. Satanic millenarianism is then a statement of liberation from the historical social constructs; an intellectual destruction and rebirth, not a physical one. Later on in the text, Alfred calls Satanic millenarianism an “ego-glorifying, objectivist-Nietzschean-Wagnerian” variety (494).

Finally, the sixth reason of appeal is LaVey’s charismatic authority. Citing Max Weber, Alfred observes that this type of authority is based on, “the belief in magical powers, revelations, and hero worship,” and that all are central to LaVey’s authority (489). Members accept LaVey’s demonstrations of magical abilities as evidence of power. His lively background and unconventional experiences entail a hero worship. LaVey claims to have had a “’blinding flash’ of his own Satanic dawning,” indicating revelation. In an endnote, Alfred claims that LaVey discussed these revelations during a Satanism Study Seminar:

> The Law of the Trapezoid states that obtuse angles, and hence all trapezoidal forms, are magically harmful or dangerous. If this form and its power are

> recognized, however, it is no longer so dangerous and can even be used to advantage against those who are unaware of it. Thus, all to whom LaVey has taught this are benefitted by his magical prowess and have a basis for charismatic trust in him. (endnote 18, 499)

Alfred states that LaVey deliberately converts the stigma of diabolism into charisma, and has been "eminently successful" (491).

The membership and recruitment composition for the Church of Satan is where we find information that is currently unavailable to researchers. Alfred lists the now-familiar seven thousand membership number, although he clarifies that only four to five hundred were considered active due to paying the annual ten dollar fee (491). This is the first claim of an annual fee in the studies looked at thus far; the current Church of Satan has no such practice, although I am uncertain exactly when it was abolished.

At the San Francisco headquarters (the Central Grotto) ritual turnout was about twenty to thirty people from about fifty to sixty active members (491). Alfred makes mention of a recently disbanded Grotto in another part of the city due to political and personality differences, but does not mention the name of the leader nor the Grotto itself.[5] Other active Grottoes are in California, the Midwest, and the East, while several members live in smaller disparate communities and are unlikely to form groups (491). Attendees are: mostly middle-class, professional Caucasians, from their late-twenties to forties (491). Rituals attracted regular new members that maintained contact for approximately six months, but many failed to return without formally leaving.[6] The most active members were a smaller group that attended weekly meetings and helped

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[5] Schisms and pan-Satanism are discussed in chapter two.

[6] As a side note, this type of activity in new religious movements reflects research done by Rodney Stark, which claims that 81% of new recruits in new age (ufology, occult, esoteric, etc.) religions are educated middle-class, and withdraw within the first year (1996).

with various church tasks (491). The Central Grotto was occasionally visited by out of town members (492).

During Alfred's research between 1968-69, few young persons were members of the Church of Satan (493). He counts one hundred and forty different members, forty of which were younger than thirty, many of these in their late twenties (493). He cites a survey conducted in the Bay Area on youth that revealed that just over 52% or respondents were aware of Satanism, but were neither active nor even attracted to it. Alfred accounts for this phenomena – that is, youth ambivalence towards Satanism – by referencing his own six reasons for attraction to Satanism: Satanic hedonism may be sexually permissive, but categorically against drugs (493); attraction to magic among youth veers less towards the organized and dogmatic, and more towards the altruistic and tribal white magic (494); diabolism is identified by popular figures such as Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones, and experiences related to contemporary rock music are an alternative to occult involvement; Satanic iconoclasm and millenarianism are too institutional and conservative to appeal to youths; finally, LaVey's devilish persona, while popularly appealing, is repelled by the "law-and-order, generally right-wing, and patriotic nature of his charisma," considering that most of the polled youths describe themselves as radical and/or activist (494). In general, the Church of Satan's ideals may be too materialistically radical, even for the self-described radicals of the counterculture movement, as it "deals almost exclusively with manipulation, egotism, and power and very little with communication, altruism, and love" (496).

This article offers insights into the early formation and development of the Church of Satan as an organization: frequency of meetings, composition of guests, and

topics of conversation. Considering that policies for meetings have changed since the grotto system was abolished, this is useful foundational information. Much of his portrayal of the Satanic worldview could be written today, as little has changed philosophically.

I disagree with Alfred on some smaller points. For instance, Alfred states that the emphasis on indulgence is at odds with the strong discipline and authoritative component (496). Satanic literature clearly outlines this supposed contradiction; that is, that responsibility is the foundational element of Satanism that necessarily and deliberately allows for a safe and productive engagement in earthly pleasures. It openly acknowledges that "hedonism" requires parameters, and that blind hedonism is anathema (*Official Website of the Church of Satan*, Accessed Aug. 30, 2012). A last point that needs highlighting: Alfred's research was originally conducted clandestinely, as was common for social science researchers at the time. Contemporary ethical considerations would negate this type of covert research, requiring instead explicit consent prior to any data collection, as well as thorough vetting from ethics boards on the methodology itself.

Final Thoughts on the Early Studies

Every source in this section broadly defines the amorphous "Various Satanic Groups." These references are always vague (for example, Lyons' claim of one hundred thousand practicing Satanists, without listing a source), rarely including specific names and places. This stands in stark contrast the direct descriptions of Alfred, Lyons, Moody, and Truzzi of LaVey and the Church of Satan. This could certainly be indicative of these

groups being less organized and more paranoid, but could also be an indication that these groups were not nearly as large nor as active as is described. Lacking direct and in-depth research on these groups at the time, we cannot make firm claims. Considering the time elapsed since this research was conducted, these articles are useful for insight into the beginnings of the Church of Satan and its process of institutionalization, but necessitate careful corroboration of some of its claims.

The broader themes of the articles included in this section echo the historical circumstances; social unrest, counterculture movements, and a decrease of traditional values underpin the portrayals of the CoS. It is examined as: criminal diabolism, theatrical gimmick, inadequately esoteric, abnormal and deviant, and finally, a curious phenomenon reflecting the broader changes in society. These contrasting portrayals demonstrate that the scholar seeking information on early religious Satanism must sift through and be discriminate of claims. Scholarly research on the Church of Satan essentially ceased until the mid-1990s, and because of this, these early studies are often referenced by virtually all Satanism researchers; they were the sole academic sources for information on Satanism until recently. Even contemporary scholarship provides little in-depth information on the Church of Satan itself, and no ethnographic research on members of the CoS has been conducted since Alfred, Lyons, Moody, and Truzzi.

Chapter Two: Schisms and Pan-Satanism

The 1970s saw the first major schisms in the Church of Satan, creating what would eventually become a broad spectrum of groups self-identifying as Satanists. These groups are heavily influenced by LaVey's codification of Satanic philosophy, but reinterpreted and redefined with a wide variety of nuances. This section will focus on studies pertaining to the major break from the Church of Satan, the Temple of Set (ToS), spearheaded by Michael Aquino, a once-magister in the CoS and editor of its newsletter, *The Cloven Hoof*. Scholarly works in this section focus on the nature of religious schisms and the conditions under which it occurred in the Church of Satan. Other works discussed are the dictionaries, encyclopedias, and handbooks that mention the Church of Satan or the Temple of Set in brief paragraphs. These types of publications are usually encyclopedias on magic, esotericism, and the occult, or handbooks of new religious movements or American religions. I have chosen a few select examples in order to demonstrate the variety – and scarcity – of information on the CoS and ToS between approximately 1975 until the mid-1990s.

Jesper Aagard Petersen discusses the schism between the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set in the article, "Satanists and Nuts: the Role of Schisms in Modern Satanism" (2011, 117-146).[7] The title comes from an infamous quote of LaVey's, in which he claims, "There are no categories of Satanists – there are Satanists and nuts.

[7] I use the version printed in Petersen's 2011 PhD dissertation (NTNU). However, this article first appeared in, *Sacred Schisms: How Religions Divide*, edited by James R. Lewis and Sarah M. Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

The Satanic know-it-alls try to fabricate a division" (Barton in Petersen 2011, 117).[8] This brief quote neatly establishes the firm position of the Church of Satan in regards to branch-off forms of Satanism: all are disavowed as "pseudo" Satanism, and the CoS never sanctions deviations from their particular "true" Satanism (Petersen 2011, 141).

Petersen posits that the schism is a result of two interconnected dynamics. The first causality is the twofold ideal of productive self-assertion and the emphasis on non-conformity (a challenge to the status quo), and second, the constant reinterpretation of the definition of "Satanism" by various offshoots, and their attempt to redefine, and protect, these particular interpretations (2011, 118). He claims that Satanism itself is a negotiation of the positive ideal of individuality versus the negative concept of non-conformism, embroiled with and responding to the larger cultic milieu from which it is part (118).

Petersen frames the Church of Satan's founding as a schism from pre-existing Christian ideas as well as the stereotypical view of Satanism in Western popular culture. The nature of schisms reinterprets available ideas, and the CoS is no exception; it re-appropriates Satan as a positive symbol of self-empowerment (126). LaVey made an appeal to tradition as a "black magician" using stereotypical diabolist imagery and occultist knowledge (128), but also rejected the mystical and esoteric elements (130). The emphasis on "magic" as a psychological phenomenon is an additional appeal for legitimacy, but this time it is an appeal to science (130). From the onset, the CoS maintains a dual position, as both a counterculture and secular movement. Thus,

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[8] I reference LaVey's quote with the title of this very thesis.

Petersen claims, the "early Church of Satan is both steeped in the occult underground and holding it at arms length" (130). In the formative years between 1966 and 1975 the Church of Satan fluctuated between an anti-organization and a centralized organization (131). As the grotto system began to have its issues with leaders challenging the authority of the CoS, several smaller schisms appeared before the Temple of Set, all short-lived.

Arthur Lyons wrote a follow-up to his 1970 book in 1988, titled, *Satan Wants You: The Cult of Devil Worship in America*. In the years between publications, the Church of Satan grew in membership and organization, with an increased institutionalization. It also grew in internal conflicts. Lyons describes grottos emerging in many American cities. Membership numbers are, again, widely variant: one "disgruntled ex-member" claims three hundred, while a Church of Satan spokesperson claims ten thousand, but Lyons estimates probably five thousand (1988, 115). LaVey himself was vague about exact numbers, but states that *The Cloven Hoof* had two thousand subscribers (123).

The nature of Satanism attracted certain people with emotional disorders. Lyons recounts a woman that offered to pay LaVey to crucify her in the woods with her own provided gold stakes, and leave her for five days, "Not…like that wimp Jesus" (109). In 1973, a defrocked priest and grotto master from Detroit, Wayne West, was accused of stealing funds and injecting his sexual preferences into group rituals (116). West was expelled from the CoS and began his own Universal Church Man, which eventually faded (116). Another grotto in Detroit was disbanded after the leaders were caught stealing goods (116). Several disaffected ex-members formed the Church of the Satanic

Brotherhood, which entailed an anti-LaVey emphasis. It dissolved after a year. Another splinter, the Ordo Templi Santanas was formed in 1974 by Joseph Daniels, who eventually moved to Florida, became a disc jockey, and declared himself a Christian on air (117).

The Temple of Set

In 1974 Michael Aquino, a member of the hierarchy of the Church of Satan, and Lilith Sinclair, a grotto master in New Jersey, formed the splinter group, The Temple of Set. Arthur Lyons writes that Aquino joined the Church of Satan in 1968, after attending a lecture by LaVey (1988, 125). Diane, LaVey's partner, was overwhelmed by the demands of administrative communication, and welcomed the contribution of Aquino, who eventually became the editor of *The Cloven Hoof* (Lewis 2001a, 256; Lyons 188, 124-4). In Lyons' correspondence with Aquino in 1971, Aquino states his "true mission" within the Church of Satan:

> To destroy the influence of conventional religion in human affairs. I understand that to mean not so much that we want everyone to be converted to Satanism as an institutional religion, but that we want to unravel the web of fear and superstition that has perpetuated all formal beliefs. Satanism should not be just another religion, it should be an unreligion. (Aquino in Lyons 1988, 126)

LaVey grew displeased with Aquino's "ego-motivated and overintellectual" stance, while Aquino was impatient that LaVey kept a stronghold on the CoS' administrative powers and awarded degrees based on material success, not esoteric knowledge (Lyons 1988, 126). In addition, Aquino increasingly began to understand Satan as a spiritual entity, in stark contrast to the atheistic – and sterile, according to

Aquino – understanding of Satan by LaVey (Lewis 2001a, 256; Lyons 188, 126). In Aquino's lengthy history of the Temple of Set (available online through Michael Aquino's website), he writes:

> The Church of Satan had struggled for the entire decade of its existence with the central, inevitable issue of the reality of the supernatural, or more precisely the metaphysical. The puerile myths and images of the world's conventional religions we had long since dismissed as worthless nonsense – indeed, as pertaining to their devils and demons, the stuff for amusing, spooky psychodrama, sarcastic lampoon, and occasionally Lesser Black Magical control of gullible minds still psychologically enslaved to superstition.
>
> Yet within carefully-crafted magical ritual environments, some Satanists had also sensed a reality beyond that apparent to the ordinary senses. This was an entirely new and positive form of "Satanism" that had almost nothing in common with traditional "Devil worship" except the preliminary seriousness of formal atmospheres. It was a chill that went up one's spine when commencing, then culminating a Black Magical working. We were not just play-acting; we had really opened, or at least begun to open a door which profane humanity had only vaguely imagined to exist. What we would see when we got it fully open we did not know; we only sensed that, for all of its faults and failings, the Church of Satan had somehow managed to discover its key. (Aquino 2009, 18)

Aquino establishes the premise on which the Temple of Set is built; that is, LaVey's Church of Satan was a flawed, but extremely important, esoteric philosophy that had managed to tap into a metaphysical force, a force now explored by Aquino independently of the Church of Satan. Aquino rejects the atheistic stance of the CoS, and instead considers Satan a real spiritual force.

On June 21, 1975, Aquino performed a ritual in which Satan appeared to him as an oryx-headed god of death and destruction, the Egyptian god Set, dating back to 3,400 B.C.E. (Lyons 1988, 126). This event is detailed in Aquino's, *The Book of Coming Forth by Night*, in which this manifestation of Satan claimed that a new era had begun in 1904 when a guardian angel, Aiwass, appeared to Aleister Crowley, ushering in the "Aeon of

Horus." This is followed by LaVey's Church of Satan as the "Aeon of Satan," and finally Aquino's "Aeon of Set" (127). Aquino received a mandate from Set as the steward of this new era, a movement away from the Church of Satan, and consecrated the Temple of Set (Lewis 2001a, 256).

The Temple of Set is based upon the ancient Egyptian notion of *xeper*, translated as "self-improvement" or "self-creation" (Lewis 2001a, 257), "becoming" (Lyons 1988, 128), or "coming into being" (Keane 2009, 7). This ancient principle is a process of exploring our own natures (light and dark) in order to become psychologically mature and powerful (Keane 2009, 7). Setians come to know Set through three paths: self-knowledge; Set's influence through history, such as the existence of secret societies, esoteric ideas, or events that challenged societal norms; and by communing with Set directly, a potentially dangerous endeavor (Keane 2009, 6). On his essay examining Setian practice through the lens of Jungian analytical theory, Keane writes, "The Self can be experienced paradoxically as a blessing and threat or as both the 'light' and 'dark' aspects of the psyche" (3). Individual self-development is the prime emphasis of the Temple of Set, which Lewis notes is the "cornerstone of the Left Hand Path" movements (2001a, 257).

The Temple of Set practices black magic, defined as, "consciously self-beneficial, rather than evil" (Lewis 2001a, 258). They do believe Set to be real; he is not to be worshipped, but is viewed as a father or older brother (257). Magic efficacy is not attributed to deities (257). A successful magical working is meant to "break down the objective and subjective worlds" by striving to commune with our inner magical counterpart – defined as the Egyptian concept of *ka* (Lyons 1988, 128). This double of

the psyche is dispatched unto the astral plane to execute the bidding of the particular Setian (Lyons 1988, 128). Its symbol is an image of Set imposed on an inverted pentagram, a Pentagram of Set (Lewis 2001a, 258).

Certain prime texts are revealed solely after a certain level of participation (Petersen 2005, 436). Aquino claims that this is so because certain material is hazardous, not secret, and must be handled with a level of caution: "Some truths of the Priesthood of Set can be dangerous if misapplied, just as a loaded gun in the hands of a child is dangerous" (in Petersen 2005, 436).

The structure of the Temple of Set is borrowed from the Church of Satan, but it also reorganized itself based on perceived mistakes of the CoS. All the initial members were ex-Church of Satan hierarchy (Lyons 1988, 127). Its internal organization entails membership from first to sixth levels, although it is understood that most Setians reach solely the second or third level (Lewis 2001a, 258). Lyons states that members initially made first contact through adverts in newspapers, and maintained subsequent contact through their newsletter, the *Scroll of Set* (1988, 129).

Local groups are called pylons, and larger gatherings conclaves (Lewis 2001, 258). Annual conclaves serve to reconstitute a Setian as active and involved (Petersen 2005, 435). Lyons claims that members are "firmly Caucasian, white-collar, and middle-class, and tend to be educated" (1988, 130). He quotes from a study by Gini Graham Scott done in 1983 (*The Magicians*) that Setians numbered around forty active members (138).

Scott's book was published using a pseudonym for the ToS, and she called it instead the Temple of Hu, in order to protect their identities. She describes them as a

tightly knit group, focused on magic and personal growth (135). Achieving their magical goals is rewarded by a hierarchical degree system, which Scott notes is a cause of anxiety: "The groups' beliefs about who is in and who is out, its ideas about a coming destruction, and its rigid hierarchical structure can be very stressful, as they are concerned with whether or not they are performing well enough for the group to survive the coming annihilation" (Scott 1983, 135-6). Because the definition of personal growth itself is vague and mysterious coupled with the Priesthood's unclear directives, initiates can be puzzled as to whether or not they are actually improving (136). The Temple emphasizes balance between their mundane and magical selves, but when this difficult task is not achieved, it can lead to alcoholism or psychological problems (137). Their emphasis on being an elite group translates to alienation of the outside world and increased inward focus among each other, in order to protect themselves from outside influence (138). Scott remarks that this has the potential for violence, as the group could then redirect their alienation as rage towards outside society (139).

Social scientists psychologizing new religious movements is a contentious approach, although it was common enough at the time and still somewhat present today. In 1983, Scott is writing in the aftermath of the Jonestown events, which claimed the lives of over nine hundred people by cyanide poisoning. All new religious movements were considered suspect because of such tragedies. Scott's claim that members feel alienated, and thus are potentially dangerous, is a superficial argument. Alienation was deemed the default causality for joining a new religion, and Scott's argument that this alienation could potentially create alcoholism and psychological problems is conjecture. It is a more concrete claim if based on supportive data, such as

higher-than-average reports of alcoholism or explicit violent threats, which Scott does not provide. By comparing new religious movements to larger, more socially accepted groups, we can see some of the issues; substitute the above names for close-knit Christian groups and magic for prayer, and suddenly we are less likely to *automatically* frame them as "potentially dangerous." All groups have some form of in-group versus out-group dynamic, and the scholar's approach is more useful when based on actual evidence of violence or emotional instability, carefully distinguishing venting from incitement.

Reinterpreting Authority

Petersen notes that when Aquino declares he "destroyed" the CoS, Aquino, in turn, constructs an appeal to tradition the same as LaVey, through an "emic historiography" (2011, 136). That is, LaVey made a conscious break from diabolism while still placing himself in a historical line of magicians and critical thinkers, while Aquino embraces diabolism and places it within a "sacred legitimating timeline from the dawn of time" (136). Aquino thus proclaims a transfer of charisma and authority through prophecy and communion with Set (136). He adopts the mystical elements that LaVey rejected, discards CoS secular views as bland, and then revitalizes the occult milieu; thus, "organized esoteric Satanism is born" (137).

The Church of Satan reacts to the Temple of Set in a typical fashion; they view it as good riddance to people incompatible with the rational interpretation and symbolic approach of the CoS (137). LaVey comments: "I held this belief in the beginning as I do now. If others re-interpret my organization and philosophy into a fundamental kind of

supernaturalism, it stems from their need to do so" (in Petersen 2011, 137-8). Aquino denigrates the CoS' focus on "money and play" as esoterically offensive (139), while LaVey portrays Aquino as insecure, pompous, and un-Satanic (137).

Much like the Church of Satan, the Temple of Set saw its own schisms. In 1985 Lynn Johnson, who became the wife of Aquino's brother-in-law, William T. Butch, became dissatisfied with what she deemed as an anti-feminine bias, coupled with an emphasis on Nazi occultism (Lyons 1988, 131). The Temple of Nepthys set up headquarters in San Francisco, encompassing similar philosophical tenets imbued with a feminine slant (131). It had nine founding members, which grew to twenty-three full-time and sixty-three corresponding, who were primarily female between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four (131). The Church of Satanic Liberation began in 1986 in New Haven, Connecticut, by Paul Douglas Valentine (Lyons 1988, 132). It claims that Satan is a real entity, while simultaneously borrowing heavily from *The Satanic Bible* and criticizing LaVey and the Church of Satan (Lewis 2001a, 52). Zeena Schreck, LaVey's daughter, who has once been prominent and active in the CoS, joined the Temple of Set in 1995, and led a schism in 2002 (Petersen 2005, 435), the Sethian Liberation Movement (*Official Zeena Schreck Website*, Accessed Aug. 30, 2012).

Petersen's discussion on schisms concludes with an emphasis on the tension within the environment surrounding religious Satanism itself. It becomes a negotiation between the individual versus the collective (2011, 142), antinomianism versus leadership (138). Sole practitioners are unaffected, but groups and subgroups, and subgroups within subgroups, are engaged in a constant negotiation and re-negotiation of authority and legitimacy (143). This type of tension is present in all discussions on

religious Satanism. It begins with the CoS and ToS, but becomes even more prevalent with pan-Satanism and the multiple other groups.

Dictionaries, Encyclopedias and Handbooks

Many encyclopedias and various reference books on esotericism, magic, and occultism mention either the Church of Satan or the Temple of Set. The discrepancy between publications is what is remarkable, and they deserve a brief mention here. The *Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religion* (1981), edited by Keith Crim, notes three kinds of Satanists that view the Devil as: the true deity of the world, with God as a sinister tyrant; a prince of evil to be embraced and revered; a symbol of liberation with the goal of guiltless carnality and materialism, spearheaded by LaVey (658). In *Man, Myth and Magic* (1983), edited by Marshall Cavendish, the passage on Satanism notes that Satanists are inconsistent, possibly even dangerous: "They can be found…insisting that all forms of sexuality are good provided other people are not hurt, while in another context they are preaching the delights of brutality" (2477). The *Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft* (1989), edited by Rosemary Ellen Guiley, contains a "Satanism" entry with brief but accurate histories of the CoS and ToS, consistent with other texts (310). The entry then makes a link between criminal activities and Satanism, "Some satanic cults are alleged to be involved in drug, prostitution and pornography trade and to have real estate holdings" (310), and notes that Neo-Pagan Witches are often "wrongly blamed for satanic activities" (311). The passage does not clearly distinguish between alleged criminal accusations and the lived religions. The sentence implying that having "real estate holdings" is equated with drugs and prostitution is a curious correlation. Is

owning land somehow a nefarious activity? The passage itself does not state the reason for including this tidbit. By stating that Neo-Pagans are *wrongly* blamed for criminal activities, the passage also implies that Satanists are *rightly* blamed; it does not affirm that the accusations are unfounded for either group.

The *Encyclopedia of Occultism and Parapsychology* (3rd ed., 1991), edited by Leslie A. Shepard, lists "Satanism" as: teenage drug addiction and crime; inverse-Christianity that "rejects such values as tolerance, self-sacrifice and forgiveness"; and the sexual abuse of children by adult Satanists (1454). The entry is cross-referenced to "Church of Satan," under which is a brief blurb describing it as contrary to Christianity (289), while LaVey's entry notes that his ideas prompted, "sordid criminal black magic all over the world, and the association…with Satanism culminated in the horrifying murders of the Charles Manson gang" (935). In this particular volume, Satanism as a religion itself is barely defined, and overtly linked to criminal acts, drug use, and sexual abuse.

The *Dictionary of Mysticism and the Esoteric Traditions* (1992), edited by Nevill Drury, lists the Church of Satan as "defunct" and "ceased functioning in 1975 and has now been replaced by the Temple of Set, headed by Michael Aquino" (48). James R. Lewis, a contemporary expert on Satanism, edited *Cults in America: A Reference Handbook* (1998), in which he notes that the Church of Satan is "highly theatrical but probably not dangerous," and "provides a convenient target for the conservative Christians with vague fears about the machinations of the Prince of Darkness" (52).

More recent volumes contain more factual and accurate portrayals, although discrepancies remain. A comprehensive entry on Satanism is found in *Dictionary of*

Contemporary Religion in the Western World (2002), which is the sole volume consulted that contained mentions of Satanic groups other that the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set (336-9). *The Gale Encyclopedia of the Unusual and Unexplained* (2002), edited by Brad Steiger, provides the most accurate and detailed entry on the Church of Satan and its philosophy and is the only publication to include current details about LaVey's successor, Peter H. Gilmore (299-303). The Temple of Set and Michael Aquino also receive mention and elaboration (303-4). The *Dictionary of Gnosis and Western Esotericism* (2006), edited by Wouter J. Hanegraff, includes a lengthy entry, written by Massimo Introvigne, listing the CoS and ToS, but primarily focusing on the Satanic Panic and its eventual debunking (1035-7). The *Encyclopedia of Witchcraft: The Western Traditions* (2006) lightly mentions Satanism as a religion, focusing instead on witchcraft accusations and its Satanic association, claiming, "Formal religious Satanism sometimes seems calculated to provoke shock, outrage, and panic among Christians" (1002). The entry does print a photo of LaVey from 1966, but does not explain LaVeyan ideas, nor mention the Church of Satan (1001-4).

These passages are mentioned in order to highlight the widespread inconsistencies in details regarding Satanism, the Church of Satan and Temple of Set, LaVey and Aquino. During the period prior to the advent of the Internet, the dictionaries, encyclopedias, and handbooks were the sole scarce sources for academic information on Satanism (apart from studies by Harvey and Scott, which both focus on the Temple of Set). As evident here, they are widely variant in their accuracy and objectivity in terms of information and portrayals.

Contemporary scholars mark this period as the “quiet” period of the Church of Satan, and even the Temple of Set was not overtly publicly active; scant information regarding their private activities during this time is available. What can be said for certain is that most scholarship during the 1980s and 1990s was overwhelmingly focused on the events surrounding the “Satanic Panic” or the Satanic Ritual Abuse scare.

Satanic Ritual Abuse

Satanic Ritual Abuse, or SRA, was a headline coined during the 1980s concerning the media propagated claim that children were regularly being victimized by a widespread and organized Satanic cult (Lewis 2001a, 240-4). A book that helped prompt the outcry was *Michelle Remembers*. It claimed that Michelle was a victim of horrendous sexual and physical abuse through Satanic Rituals, in order to increase the “black magic” powers of her abusers. The author, a psychologist, claimed that his patient “Michelle” had recalled her initially forgotten trauma thanks to Recovered Memory Syndrome, a technique in which mental health counselors aid in the recovery of repressed memories due to shock. Several similar books surfaced after the popularity of *Michelle Remembers*, and a media bombardment ensued, furthering the fear among the public and inquiries from law enforcement (*Religious Tolerance*, Accessed November 2, 2008).

After the widespread public terror and arrests of alleged child abusing parents and teachers, a full Federal Bureau of Investigation inquest yielded a curious result for psychologists and victims of SRA; the F.B.I. Lanning report (1992) found no evidence of a systematic, widespread, or organized abuse of children. The rumours were dismissed

as slanderous hyperbole. Several lawsuits were filed against psychologists who helped patients “recover” their lost memories. Lawyers petitioned the release of accused child molesters, based on the total lack of evidence. Lanning writes:

> There is little or no evidence for the portion of their allegations that deals with large-scale baby breeding, human sacrifice, and organized satanic conspiracies. Now it is up to mental health professionals, not law enforcement, to explain why victims are alleging things that don't seem to have happened. Professionals in this field must accept the fact that there is still much we do not know about the sexual victimization of children, and that this area desperately needs study and research by rational, objective social scientists. (*ReligiousTolerance,* Accessed Nov. 8, 2008)

Since the Satanic Panic, no new evidence has been produced to support accusations of an organized Satanic movement consistently abusing children. I mention the Satanic Panic and the SRA debunking because these events produced massive amounts of scholarship. Little of it acknowledges Satanism as its own religion, divorced from the notion of inverse Christianity or alleged criminal acts. Outlining the scholarship on SRA is not within the scope of this essay. What can be stated is that the media craze likely caused many Satanists, as well as Neo-Pagans, occultists, and other types of “fringe” groups caught up in the sweeping accusations, to be discreet in their activities and affiliations. It is also likely that the Church of Satan, and to some degree the Temple of Set, were less active, and therefore less visible to scholars. Since little data is available on the participants themselves during this time, we cannot make firm claims about Satanists’ religious activities unless new studies are conducted on current members and their retroactive statements about activities in the 1980s and 1990s.

Synthetizing the Second Phase

As Petersen has noted, the period between 1975 until approximately the mid-1990s are considered the quiet period of research on religious Satanism. This is possibly because Satanists were more underground, or simply inactive, but mostly likely a combination of both. While the fear of Satanic Ritual Abuse scares received overexposure and was a media blitz of sensationalism, actual practicing religious Satanists (as opposed to the perceived criminal Satanic "acts") were barely acknowledged in this media coverage. Because of this public inactivity, scholarship during this time reflects the absence of Satanism as socially significant.

Most research on this period is done retroactively. The academic discussion primarily surrounds the nature of schisms, questions of authority, and methods of legitimization. The Church of Satan's cohesive worldview first develops in the context of the socially turbulent 1960s, but the 1970s saw an internal turbulence, where that cohesiveness cracked. Small nuances regarding the symbol of Satan become the prime divisive factor for the schismatic Temple of Set. When they split, the foundational presupposition of each group is diametrically opposed: an atheistic versus a theistic stance. Scholarship examines these differences and dissects each group's claim to authority and legitimacy. Even though the CoS and ToS share a similar aesthetic, families of resemblance, and initial material, their respective opposing premises is what caused the tension, leading to the break.

The nature of schisms – when they happen, under what circumstances, and by whose initiative – is important to scholarship on Satanism as schisms still occur today, and will likely continue. Thus is the nature of religious ideas, continually engaged in a

cycle of synthesizing pre-existing ideas, reinterpreting these notions to adapt to current circumstances, and then re-appropriating them as new influences come along. Scholarship, in turn, engages in a similar process; evaluating pre-existing theories and methodologies, and readapting them to different groups and areas. The amorphous quality of Satanic groups is reflected, at times, in the shifting approaches to the academic study of Satanism.

Chapter Three: Contemporary Scholarship

LaVey, *The Satanic Bible*, and Legitimacy

Towards the end of the 1990s, the resurgence of interest in Satanism brought the tensions between groups to the forefront. Despite the efforts of many Satanic groups to "debunk" the Church of Satan or LaVey, LaVey's influential ideas are still prominent among all varieties of Satanists. Jesper Aagard Petersen explains that *The Satanic Bible* has a "privileged place" among Satanists (2009, 131), even if LaVey's Church of Satan does not:

> Both cultural and subcultural discourse on the satanic certainly existed before San Francisco became the satanic capitol of the world; […] 'Satanists' did exist before LaVey. Yet his galvanizing influence cannot be overstated. What LaVey did was to codify an extremely influential satanic discourse within the cultic milieu and beyond into mainstream culture, opening space for a different type of mimetic performance that was organized as a satanic religion. Similar to other diffuse alternative religious 'movements' appropriating a discursive other, such as modern Witchcraft and Vampirism, the terms Satan and Satanist were 'de-otherized' into a positive identify of alterity. (Petersen 2011, 18)

James R. Lewis has conducted research on Satanists and the Church of Satan for decades. In his book, *Satanism Today: An Encyclopedia of Religion, Folklore, and Popular Culture*, he writes:

> However one might criticize and depreciate it, *The Satanic Bible* is still the single most influential document shaping the contemporary Satanist movement. Whether LaVey was a religious virtuoso or a misanthropic huckster, and whether *The Satanic Bible* was an inspired document or a poorly edited plagiarism, their influence was and is pervasive. (2001a, *xiv*)

Lewis notes that Satanists do not consider *The Satanic Bible* a sacred document, or even an inspired one, but they do name it as fundamental in shaping their worldview

and as an authoritative document (2009a, 56). Despite the fact that various groups or individuals use *The Satanic Bible* authoritatively, there is a dispute over the definition of Satanism itself, which Lewis notes is, "reflected in the *many* attacks on non-CoS Satanists found on the Church of Satan website" (47). The CoS uses the authority of text to justify their hegemonic stance (48).

Lewis posits that this appeal to the authority of text, despite Satanism rejecting the appeal to tradition, is a holdover from CoS members being raised in a religious household (2009a, 56). The authoritative nature of a proof-text such as the Christian Bible as imbued with special properties or as divinely inspired document influences CoS members; their childhood experience in Christianity has a ripple effect among Satanists, as they, in turn, regard *The Satanic Bible* as authoritative (as adults) in the same way they did the Christian Bible (as children) (55). LaVey appealed to science and rationality as a legitimation strategy, and rejected the authority of tradition (2009a, 56), and Lewis notes that this is somewhat contradictory:

> In light of his radically secularist legitimation strategy, it is ironic that his organizational successors have subsequently attempted to legitimate their positions by appealing to LaVey as if he had actually been some kind of "Black Pope," and to *The Satanic Bible* as if it was truly a diabolically-revealed scripture. It appears that being raised in a religious tradition that locates the source of authority in religious figures and sacred texts creates an unconscious predisposition that can be carried over to other kinds of person and books – even in the unlikely context of contemporary Satanism. (2009a, 56)

I agree with Lewis only to a point. LaVey's successors do indeed present LaVey's work as authoritative, and never hesitate to assert dominance over the definition of Satanism. Their unapologetic stance creates tension and potentially alienates researchers, while certainly alienating other Satanic groups. Where I disagree is the

argument on the authority of text being a holdover from a childhood experience. I suggest, instead, that this notion is embedded in western culture as a whole; one does not have to have literally been raised in Christianity in order to feel its influence, as we are all raised in western culture. We are only ostensibly secular, but the notion of authority of text is a fundamental tool for all rhetoric, whether religious, political, or rational. The notion of an appeal to authority of text is entirely pervasive in western societies and thus insignificant as a factor; it excludes no one.

I highlight the above conclusions of Lewis and Petersen to emphasize that the notions of legitimacy is a contentious issue across Satanic groups. LaVey's philosophical influence is obvious among schismatic groups, but his authority (and that of the Church of Satan) is contested in various ways, especially in the contemporary virtual Satanic communities.

As Satanic movements grow, "Satanism" begins to refer to more than simply the Church of Satan, or even the Temple of Set. Petersen, taking a cue from Campbell's "cultic milieu," proposes the phrase "Satanic milieu" (2011, 5). The Satanic milieu is a subgroup of the cultic milieu, alongside New Age, UFO, Neo-Pagan, Theosophical, and Esoteric subgroups (5). Petersen writes:

> The satanic milieu is in itself a polythetic category with fuzzy borders, and could be conceived of as a cult-producing substance of key terms and practices as well as the reservoir of ideas uniting the broad movement of modern Satanism, mirroring the larger cultic milieu in a fractal sense. Thus the satanic milieu is a trend in popular culture….a collective style and identity within satanic neo-tribes… and the reference points of the satanic subcultures that crystallize around distinct interpretations or manifestations of Satanism today. (2009, 5)

Just as Campbell's notion of the cultic milieu was not contingent on the survival of each individual cult and, more often than not its ephemeral existence, so is the Satanic milieu

itself the constant. This milieu is defined by the explicit symbol (metaphorical or literal) of Satan as the self, a force, or model, advocating “sex, pride, non-conformity, rebellion, and individualism” (2). Various Satanic groups may be transitory and shifting, but the prime ideas and foci remain. I adopt Petersen’s notion of the Satanic milieu as it is a fitting phrase to describe the social environment corresponding to the subgroups of active religious Satanism.

The Contemporary Church of Satan

After the dismantling of the Church of Satan’s grotto system in the mid-1970s (partly as a response to the problem of schisms), LaVey reorganized the CoS as a “fellowship of individuals” (Lewis 2001a, 256). This “cabbalistic underground” no longer had local chapters or grotto masters from which to disseminate authoritative information (Petersen 2011, 133). The lineage of authority shifted from central-authority-to-group-leader, to central-authority-to-individual (133). Members thus became independent practitioners, not required to befriend, or ever interact with other Satanists. An emphasis was placed on achievements in the world, not socializing with other members or participating in group activities, activities now deemed entirely voluntary. It was a major reorganization, based on the notion of attracting remarkable individuals from the outside that did not require a sense of community in the traditional sense. The Church of Satan was dubbed a cabal of the “alien elite” (133).

The Church of Satan itself has remained very much the same philosophically. The changes within the CoS have been more within the structure of the institution. Leadership shifts occurred after LaVey’s death, with Blanche Barton initially as head,

and then Peter Gilmore taking the role of high priest, his wife Peggy Nadramia as High Priestess, while Barton retains the title of Magistra Templi Rex (Petersen in Lewis and Petersen 2005, 429). Between the mid-1970s and the surge of Internet activity, most members made contact through written correspondence, newsletters, and the unofficial meetings between members of like-minds. Maxell Davies writes that the post-charismatic fate – that is, after the death of LaVey in 1997 – of the Church of Satan is not reliant on close social ties between members (in Petersen 2009, 77). They are dispersed geographically, and contact with others is not required to consider oneself a Satanist or live "Satanically" in the world. Authoritative statements come from the Council of Nine, the CoS' anonymous ruling body. Even if ruling pronouncements stemmed from LaVey during his tenure, the authority was diffused. As such, the death of LaVey did not affect the CoS as much as it could have, as its members were already relatively independent (77).

Contemporary ethnographic work on the Church of Satan itself has been limited. LaVey and the Church of Satan are mentioned in almost every academic treatment, but mostly as primer information to then discuss pan-Satanic activity, focusing on Satanic texts; little research deals directly with members themselves, or how Satanism is understood and lived in modern times.

It is interesting to note how many studies or encyclopedia entries – both old and new – report that the Church of Satan is obsolete, dismantled, inactive, struggling, or simply irrelevant: Drury calls it "defunct" (1992, 48); Davies suggests that it is struggling (in Petersen 2009, 83); and Lewis states that it will continue its present decline (2010, 24). This, despite the multiple publications, movies, and articles

produced, either by or about the CoS, as well as various other projects by openly-affiliated members. There are several reasons that the Church of Satan is reluctant to participate in academic research. Firstly, they are wary of academics and journalists misquoting, taking words out of context, or generally misrepresenting or misunderstand their worldview (Holt 2011). Second, the Church of Satan keeps their members' identities in strict confidence, and research could potentially jeopardize that anonymity. The CoS does not make available their membership numbers, nor put any member into contact with another. Access to CoS members is therefore logistically difficult; a researcher would have to approach participants without the help of the administration, and given the dispersed nature of its members, the means of contact is limited. As sectarian Satanic groups are generally more eager to participate as a method of legitimizing their religion, academics, in turn, tend to bypass conducting current research on the CoS altogether. When the Church of Satan is mentioned in contemporary academic work, it usually focuses on textual histories of their literature rather than ethnographic studies. Third, apart from addressing criminal accusations, the CoS sees little benefit to actively participate in research, as they do not seek external legitimization. Finally, the Church of Satan dislikes being involved in research that includes other Satanic groups. Viewing the CoS website will provide many examples of the CoS' firm denigration of other self-identifying Satanists. Their unwillingness to be compared to other groups, alongside their vigilant stance as the sole "true" Satanism, prompts them to be viewed as a strong-armed intimidator within the Satanic milieu.

The Church of Satan, for its part, does not lament its status as the "bully" of the Satanic milieu; it sees no need to apologize for insistence on hegemony, nor engage in

ecumenical outreach. I do not have an official statement regarding academic research except for its stance regarding my own,[9] but my impression is that they might see too much attention as a negative; functioning under the radar serves their ideal as a somewhat subversive and secretive religion.

Jesper Aagard Petersen responds to the lack of contemporary in-depth research on the Church Satan in this way. First, he observes that the CoS was largely quiet during the late 1970s and most of the 1980s, and in between 1997 and approximately 2007. Scholarship, in turn, mirrors their non-presence in the public sphere. Second, he emphasizes the difference between ethnography and history; sound historical-critical research to counteract the early partisan ethnographies of Alfred, Lyons, Moody, and Truzzi, who are considered known CoS sympathizers. Ethnographical research is needed to balance the dependence upon stable sources and the tendency to reiterate claims that are now decades old (pers. comm. July 19, 2012).

Labeling the Church of Satan as defunct or struggling is perhaps premature given we have scant new research. I do, however, agree that scholarship has adjusted its focus to other forms of Satanism; the Church of Satan is no longer the sole group actively practicing, and research reflects this reality.

Given that most contemporary scholarship deals with pan-Satanism, the rest of this chapter is dedicated to other Satanic groups and its subsequent scholarship; the Church of Satan is mentioned when my own research can provide a counterpoint, but

[9] Magus Peter H. Gilmore's official position regarding my research is thus: the Church of Satan does not endorse nor support my research. Any agreement reached is solely between myself, as the researcher, and the particular informant. Research is conducted outside the auspices of the Church of Satan. Despite this stance, the Church of Satan will not actively discourage members from participating (as they have been known to do), and will allow me to recruit willing participants as I see fit.

the CoS is not central to this chapter. A brief sampling of Satanic groups or organizations friendly to theistic Satanists is provided by the websites of Diane Vera, a prominent theistic Satanist on the Internet. It includes: Church Lucifer, Church of Theistic Satanism, Darks Pagans, Demonolatryas, First Church of Satan, Joy of Satan, Luciferians, Modern Satanic Church, Ordo Templi Orientis, Order of the Nine Angles, Reformed Church of Satan, Temple of Set; as well as Christian-based duotheists, Coven of Bel's Fire, Cathedral of Satan, Church of the Infernal, Church of Lucifer, Order of Phosphorus, Synagogue of Satan, Temple of Hel, and Temple of Kal. Vera herself self-identifies as an Azazelian polytheistic Satanist (Vera, *Theistic Satanism*, Accessed June 3, 2012; Vera, *Thoughts by an Azazelian*, Accessed June 3, 2012).[10] Because the groups vary widely in their understanding of Satanism, it is quite impossible to examine them all. My impression is that most may be sole practitioners or even small groups of less than ten, probably active solely on the Internet, while a small amount of other groups have begun to create firmer ideologies, assemble offline, construct hierarchies, and increase membership. Scholars have not extensively studied most of the above apart from Internet presence and textual analysis of available literature; hard statistical data about these groups as a lived religion is absent.

There are too many contemporary scholarly works to analyze one by one in this chapter, ranging from critical methodological approaches, discussions of legitimacy, and surveys, to the poorly conceived and erroneous,[11] although Satanism scholars remain

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[10] Several of the links on Vera's website are invalid as the date of publication, suggesting the highly transitory nature of many Satanic groups.
[11] For example, Matthews (2009) writes a particularly negative portrayal of Satanism. He appears to have misunderstood what he opposes, and, based on a flawed premise that Satanism is inherently immoral, his arguments are skewed in an overly emotional

perhaps a few dozen. I have instead grouped this chapter by themes: the Satanic milieu, demographics, geographical studies, and moving beyond Satanism.

The Satanic Milieu: Three Categories

Jesper Aagard Petersen observes that the Satanic milieu is embroiled in a "process of othering": Christian groups, scholars, in-group versus out-group dynamics all excluding each other (2009, 6). He notes that most Satanists do not identify as a cohesive group, but a "diffuse 'occultural' movement" (5). Despite this, he identifies three categories: rationalist, esoteric, and reactive. Rationalistic Satanism is the highly secularized and atheistic stance, such as the Church of Satan's (6). Esoteric Satanism is a religion of self-actualization, a theistic tradition incorporating paganism, western esotericism, Buddhism, and Hinduism (7). Reactive Satanism is unorganized youth rebellion engaged in various defiant or even criminal actions (such as church burnings). This last category is set aside, as it is not considered part of religious Satanism, and the overwhelming majority of Satanic groups strongly condemn criminal activity.

Petersen defines modern Satanism as a self-religion, an individualized worldview consisting of the "double negotiation of a positive identity construction – self-actualization – and a negative identity construction – lack of conformity," framed in the imagery of Satan (or Devil, Lucifer), and inheriting a countercultural position from LaVey (2009, 8). "Balance, satanic nature, aesthetics, iconography, and rituals are general currency in the milieu" (8). All Satanists adhere to a stance of rebellion against the status quo, heralding ideals such as non-conformism and individualized

position that Satanism is immature fascism for the violent and rebellious. Lewis calls his work a, "moralistic diatribe against religious Satanism" (2009a, 10).

transgression of the norm (12). A Satanist is "a carnal and emotional individualist against the cold ratio of science, the arid morality of Christianity, and the tyranny of political repression" (12). This stance is symbolized by the "most powerful symbol of resistance," Satan (17).

I adopt the above definition as befitting for common traits of Satanists discussed in this section, although I emphasize a similar concern as Petersen: the lines of the Satanic milieu are "fuzzy," and individuals or groups understand the above with variety and nuance.[12] The lines between the rationalistic and esoteric are particularly intertwined, as some atheistic Satanists are widely knowledgeable of esoteric texts and ideas, while others are firmly secular with little interest in occult writings. Esoteric Satanists range from gnostic interpretations to magical and occult perspectives, with varying degrees of secular worldviews, some of which practically mirror rationalistic Satanism. The division between an atheistic/secular and theistic/esoteric Satanism is necessary for the academic in order to quantify their areas of research, and identify the larger themes within the movement. These distinctions, despite being necessary, are not firm separations within religious Satanism itself.

[12] For example, my own research with the Church of Satan would emphasize that non-conformism is not an ideal in and of itself, but instead place the emphasis on critically understanding current social trends. One would not reject a particular idea or cultural element simply because it is popular, but instead criticize the "herd" for blindly going along with popular thought without self-awareness or taking responsibility for one's choices; it is a Machiavellian position, not solely a rebellious one. The ideal is not non-conformism, but actually a critique of reactive, *automatic* conformism. The difference may appear subtle on the surface, yet important enough to mention in order to highlight that working definitions are necessary for the academic, but require further explanation when delving into specific groups.

Demographics

Few statistical data on Satanists is available, with a few notable exceptions.[13] Most contemporary scholars conclude that membership ranges from a dozen or so to no more than a few thousand. Kennet Granholm suggests that Satanists, "regularly generate a level of mass media and public interest not implied by [the] relatively low membership numbers" (in Petersen 2009, 93). While this is certainly true, it brings us no closer to the actual numbers of practicing Satanists. The following (**figure 1**) is a selected compilation of membership numbers cited by scholars:

[13] See Lewis 2001b, 2009a, and 2010.

Recap of select membership claims			
Year	**Author**	**Number**	**Claimant**
1970	Lyons	100,000	Author
		7,000 CoS	
1971	Woods	7,000 CoS grouped into 25 offshoots	Author
1971	Truzzi	7,000 CoS	LaVey
1972		10,000 CoS	Author
1974	Alfred	7,000 CoS	Author
		400-500 Active CoS	
1981	Crim	"miniscule": real Satanists	Ellwood
1986	Scott	40 ToS	Author
1988	Lyons	300 CoS	"disgruntled ex-member"
		10, 000 CoS	CoS spokesperson
		5,000 CoS	Author
1989	Guiley	(exagerated) 25,000 "at its peak"	Author
1993	Nelson and Taub	1,000	Alexander 1990
		1,000,000	Forsyth and Olivier 1990
1995	Harvey	50 ToS Britain	Author
		< 10 ONA Britain	Author
2002	Lewis	“Still technically the largest Satanist group in terms of formal membership” : CoS	Author
2002	Melton	< 1,000 CoS	Author
2002	Harvey	No evidence of growth since early years: CoS	Author
2005	Lewis	300 ToS	Author
2005	Jones	< 1,000 "active"	Bromley 2005
2006	Hanegraff	< 1,000 CoS + ToS	Introvigne
2009	Evans	1,525 England and Wales	2001 National Census
2009	Granholm	200 ToS	Author
		400 Dragon Rouge	
2009	Mombelet	25,000 France	Miviludes 2008
		4,000 France	Author
2009	Hjelm, et al.	500-600 CoS	Author
		200-300 *Satanisk Forum* Denmark	
2009	Introvigne	No more than 100 CoS	Author
		50 *Enfant de Satan* France	
2009a	Lewis	335 Canada	1991 National Census
		850 Canada	2001 National Census
		1,167 New Zealand	2006 National Census
		2,251 Australia	2006 National Census

Figure 1: Recap of membership number claims. Unless otherwise noted, membership claims are unspecified as to the affiliation, location, or type of Satanist.

As viewed above, the numbers vary. Early citations contain the often-quoted seven thousand Church of Satan members, while recent numbers claim on average one or two thousand. Most scholars themselves offer the same objections that I offer here. Firstly, there is a decided reluctance to stand up and be counted among most Satanic groups. For example, the following announcement was posted on a Church of Satan forum regarding Lewis' online survey:

> If you are contacted or approached by any person who asks you to complete a "Questionnaire" called "*The Satan Census*"...please refrain from participating in it. A "Census" is designed to track and monitor habits of a specific type of person (in this case Satanists). If you really think about it, do you want to be tracked and monitored? Would you really want the "habits" of Satanists around the world available in a public document that anyone can access, and I mean *anyone*! (Frost 2009, *Letters to the Devil*. Accessed August 3, 2012)

The statement then concludes with a warning to report any spamming of survey requests, and that administrators will delete the profiles and ban the users as a consequence. Compare this discouraging warning to the website of theistic Satanist Diane Vera, on which she is responding to my own article on the Church of Satan (Holt 2011) wherein I use – after a lengthy explanation of my process – the term Satanism to apply solely to the Church of Satan exclusively within the context of that particular essay. She laments my application of the term (i.e. noting that "LaVeyan Satanism" would be more appropriate), and encourages other groups to be counted and volunteer for study:

> We need to prove to the academic world that we exist in sufficiently large numbers to be worth studying. So, if you are a theistic Satanist who does not want the CoS to succeed in their attempts to monopolize the definition of "Satanism," please respond ASAP to James Lewis's current survey. (*Theistic Satanism*, Accessed June 3, 2012)

Vera then links to Lewis' census (http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/GC2RHKF).

Vera is not the only one eager to be being involved in studies, as I received several emails from various types of Satanists after being published in 2011, offering to be included in my future work.[14]

I highlight the different positions above in order to stress that most scholarly claims of membership are extrapolations based on a formula; X amount of respondents multiplied by a number that not only varies from study to study, but also relies too much on guesswork and estimates. In addition to this, it is important to note that the sample groups are extremely limited; they certainly provide some insight into their respective worldviews, but I am doubtful that they can be understood as reflective of the Satanic milieu as a whole.

As an example, I refer to my own research with the Church of Satan. If one looks at the Church of Satan news page, many members will advertise their various projects and activities. To view the website itself, and to judge membership solely on the types of projects advertised there and count the amount of persons involved, presents the CoS as metal music, gothic, dark art/literature/film loving types of people reflecting a particularly "Satanic" aesthetic, numbering perhaps one hundred or so. In a similar vein, known CoS members' blogs, facebook pages, and websites will demonstrate the same thing; if tallied, these public profiles and known-affiliated members may number about one hundred. Instead of then concluding that all Satanists are gothic/dark/Satanic and that they are no more than a hundred, one should conclude instead that CoS members

[14] I have kept their information, but also referred them to Lewis' study, as I am currently focusing on the CoS.

whose association with Satanism actually helps their professional development are openly affiliated online, and therefore easily counted, but not indicative of every member of the Church of Satan. For every "dark" Facebook page, there are a multitude of professionals whose personal pages never give any indication or hint of their Satanic religion. I have known and conversed with dozens of members who are lawyers, physicians, teachers, professors, military personnel, engineers, librarians, masseuses, and stay-at-home parents. Their online personas (if they even engage much virtually besides exchanging emails for business or personal matters) provide no suggestion of their membership – some go as far as to avoid visible contact with other CoS members who are openly affiliated (i.e. not adding Facebook friends whose profiles reveals their affiliation, not linking to CoS material, never discussing Satanism on their respective blogs, and keeping associates ignorant of their religious inclination), preferring to keep those communications private. We can perhaps assume that groups aside from the Church of Satan have similar circumstances, although corroborative research would have to confirm my suspicion. Given my claims, albeit anecdotal and certainly not tested against more extensive quantitative research, I posit that current estimates of membership numbers are unreliable; in reality, scholars simply do not know.

The national censuses are another problematic source, as it is uncertain how many of the self-identified Satanists are actual practitioners of religious Satanism. For comparison, take the Canadian 2001 national census, which, in addition to the eight hundred and fifty Satanists, also listed twenty-one thousand Jedi. Some journalists surmised that the large number of Jedi is actually a form of protest of the government enforcement of the long-form census, and not because there are actually practicing

religious Jedis. I posit that, perhaps, self-marked Satanists may also fall under this category, although the exact percentage is unknown. There is the additional caveat that many Satanists would not risk self-marking oneself as such in a census for fear of lapse of confidentiality and breaches of security.

Diane E. Taub and Lawrence D. Nelson note in their article, "Satanism in Contemporary America: Establishment or Underground?" that the prime obstacle in acquiring reliable numbers is gaining and maintaining access to the groups themselves (1993, 536). With the increase of public attention given Satanic groups during the Satanic Panic came the decrease of public activity among Satanists. The relative silence of the Church of Satan at the time of Taub and Nelson's research resulted in decreased exposure overall (536). Given this, I contend that there is still much reluctance among Satanic groups to participate due to fears of professional and personal repercussions. The Church of Satan itself has always advocated self-interest above self-sacrifice, and pragmatism over rebellion; "Our religion does not require martyrs," is an often-quoted claim by the current CoS High Priestess, Peggy Nadramia (in Frost 2007, *Letters to the Devil.* Accessed Aug. 3, 2012). I do not advocate abandoning quantitative research; it is an important aspect of social scientific studies. My contention is for scholarship to place more emphasis on the caveat that members are protecting themselves; silence does not equal inactivity.

The scarce studies that do exist provide some interesting trends. Between Lewis' two internet surveys, 2001 and 2009, the Satan Census revealed that the average age of self-identified Satanists rose, and thus had more children and long-term relationships (2009a, 22). Over the eight years, he had over twice the number of respondents (one

hundred and forty to three hundred) (3). There is a decline in the prominence of LaVey and the Church of Satan among respondents (although this is not surprising given their likely avoidance of the survey) and a surprising presence of the Joy of Satan. Lewis predicts that theistic/esoteric Satanism will continue to grow, that the Church of Satan will continue to wane, although remain present as long as *The Satanic Bible* remains the (sometimes unacknowledged) (23) standard text of the Satanic milieu (24). As scholarship on contemporary religious Satanism grows, we will hopefully be able to expand our knowledge with more statistical data, and find quantitative research methods that address the unique qualities of reclusive groups.

Geographical Areas

Many of the contemporary scholars on religious Satanism are European. Even the American scholar James R. Lewis is currently teaching at the University of Tromsø, Norway. As such, much of recent scholarship has focused on groups throughout Europe.

Graham Harvey presents his research with the Temple of Set and the Order of Nine Angles in Britain (in Lewis and Petersen 2008, 612).[15] Eleven members of the Temple of Set responded to a questionnaire, but Harvey estimates that there are about one hundred active Satanists in Britain (613). They consist of different levels (degrees, orders, and pylons), seven male and four female, have a spectrum of professions (from clairvoyant to software engineer), five voted Conservative, and the rest vote Labour, Liberal, and Liberal Democrat (613-4). Harvey notes that even this small sampling demonstrates that the stereotypical image of Satanists (presumably he means the image

[15] Harvey also includes the Church of Satan, although I have omitted this information in order to focus on pan-Satanism.

of them as anarchic or ultra liberal) is inaccurate, and their political leanings vary greatly.

The Order of the Nine Angles (ONA), a schismatic Satanic group, is described by the leader Stephen Brown as a "difficult and dangerous path of self-development, the goal of which is an entirely new individual. This path is fundamentally a quest for self-excellence and wisdom" (Harvey in Lewis and Petersen 2008, 623). Members are expected to partake in retreats that challenge the individual and face their dark natures in survivalist exercises as well as magical occult rituals. They advocate a "culling or Satanic sacrifice" by assassinating certain weak and cowardly "victims" (624). This assassination is "not always a criminal act" but can be performed magically. Harvey posits that the inflammatory language of their texts is almost certainly intentional, and that he sees "no evidence that what they assert is actually practiced" (624). The sinister content of their texts is meant to dismantle binary thinking, and force the individual to view "reality" without conceptual constructs (625). Harvey notes that there are probably less than ten people actively ONA (625). Harvey closes his discussion with a thoughtful paragraph:

> While the everyday is often dully mundane, part of the enchantment that maintains our interest is that it is also suspect. Does the everyday provide a mask for unspeakable horrors? If so, the majority of the few people who identity as satanists are not part of such possible horrors even when they (perhaps playfully, certainly deliberately) perform the transgression of "normal" social discourse in order to appear as the alterity the rest of us seem to need. (2008, 631)

Various other regional studies demonstrate similar variety and questions. Milda Alisauskiene looks at Lithuanian Satanism ([2003] in Petersen 2009). She observes that Satanism first made its appearance in Lithuania when *The Satanic Bible* was translated

into Lithuanian in the late 1990s (122). Her focus is on the Brotherhood of the Dark, founded by twin brothers, Vaidotas and Evaldas Jocys. They have a staunch hostility to Christianity, and advocate a “weakening of religion” (123). They name themselves Satanists as an oppositional position against social norms, although claim *The Satanic Bible* is “too weak, the same propaganda as the Christian bible,” and call the American version of Satanism a “business” (122). She posits that the Brotherhood is a response to the increased revival of Catholicism in Lithuania, and that the group proposes freethinking, atheistic, and secular views (124-5).

Ringo Ringvee adopts a similar opinion when looking at Satanism in Estonia, that is, that Satanism is a response to the predominant Christian society of Estonia, despite Estonia being a firm secular state (in Petersen 2009, 136). Ringvee notes that political parties used the issues of legitimating Satanism as a religion as a political rhetorical tool in order to garner votes.

Other regional studies have been conducted, a small sampling of which is listed here: Hermonen offers a review of counterculture groups and Satanism in Finland ([2001] in Petersen 2009); in Italy, Menegotto discusses the cases of two religious clerics (one murdered by Satanists and the other facing criminal charges related to Satanism), and the subsequent media fallout ([2003] in Petersen 2009); in Poland, Smodczynski examines Satanic collective identities online ([2003] in Petersen 2009); Norway’s Black Metal scene and its relationship to Satanism is reviewed by Mork (in Petersen 2009); Evans examines the membership numbers of Satanists in the United Kingdom (in Petersen 2009); in France, Mombelet distinguishes between practicing Satanists, media hyperbole, and (mostly criminal) acts deemed Satanic in nature

(2009); Hjelm et al. look at Satanism scares in Nordic countries (2009); on this side of the Atlantic, one study looks at teenage Satanism in the American south (Lowney [1995] in Lewis and Petersen 2008).

One particularly interesting study focusing on Scandinavia discusses the conscious construction of Scandinavian Satanism as opposed to the American model (Dyrendal and Soderlind in Petersen 2009). Some Scandinavian Satanists (namely Ole Wolf, an ex-CoS member, and his girlfriend, Amina Lap) posit that Satanism in its initial form is Americanism, and thus incompatible with the socialist cultures of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. American values are competitive and individualistic, while Scandinavian ones are based on collaboration and social democracy. The authors of this essay present the counter position of Peter H. Gilmore, who states:

> I wouldn't necessarily say that the competing individual, even in a popular sense, is necessarily an American concept. Even though it is popularized by the American mythology...Satanism is tied to wherever there is a sense of the individual, by himself, as opposed to being subsumed to a group consciousness. (Gilmore in Dyrendhal and Soderlind in Petersen 2009, 166)

Gilmore continues his response by commenting that many Church of Satan members are active in Europe and Asia, where adapting to local culture does not necessarily translate to a rejection of CoS Americanism; he mentions his own Norse inspired "Rite of Ragnarok" as evidence (167).

As apparent above, when Satanism moves beyond its initial time and place, it adjusts to new particulars. Diaspora Satanism now has multiple factions, a variety of self-understandings, and degrees of compatibility or hostility with the Church of Satan/LaVey. Schismatic groups are now reinterpreting Satanism to such an extent that

scholars are forced to consider that “Satanism” is now an inappropriate term when discussing groups or ideologies that have moved beyond Satanism.

Studies on Satanic groups entail some confusion regarding the definition of Satanism itself. The Church of Satan has a clear and relatively consistent definition of Satanic philosophy, and the early studies in the 1970s differ very little from contemporary work. Certainly, there are small changes and adjustments, but the core philosophy has not drastically shifted. Outside of the Church of Satan, however, a wide spectrum of definitions and self-understandings are present and evolving, and scholarship reflects these modifications. Embroiled in the use and application of terms is the notion of legitimacy, i.e. proclamations of “true” Satanism. Scholarly work in turn discusses the issues and concerns surrounding nomenclature within the Satanic milieu.

Multiple Princes and Princesses of Darkness

Kennet Granholm argues that the application of the term “Satanism” varies relative to the popular, familiar or academic approach (2009, 1). Most non-scholarly (and even some scholarly) reactions to the word “Satan” are extremely negative due to a twofold aspect: there exists little understanding of religious Satanism, and, because of this, the term itself is inseparable from the stereotypical connotations (2). He offers a breakdown of how academics have categorized these groups, and notes the arbitrariness of its application. For example, the *Encyclopedia of Esoterism in Scandinavia* lists the Temple of Set under the heading of Satanism, but places the Rune-Guild and Dragon Rouge under Occultist Groups (Granholm 2009, 3). The main problem with this categorization is that the Temple of Set is very similar to the Rune-Guild, and

that even though the ToS is an offshoot of the Church of Satan, they note that their prime "Satanic" figure is Set, and refer to themselves as Setians. When discussing the multiple representations of Satan in terms of its cultural counterparts (Ahriman, Odin, Set, Shiva, etc.) Granholm challenges a claim by Petersen that they are all viewed as the same type of symbol for antinomian self-religion (Petersen 2009, 8). Instead, Granholm posits that the other deities are not historically associated with the history of Christianity (like the term Satan), and thus are "post-Satanism," and require new terms for accurate categorization (2009, 5). Post-Satanism, according to Granholm, is a term applied to groups that have relinquished the symbol of Satan. He discusses three of these: the Temple of Set, the Rune-Guild, and Dragon Rouge.

The Temple of Set views Set as teacher and guide, and is the "Ageless Intelligence of this Universe" (Aquino in Granholm in Petersen 2009, 94). The Rune-Gild focuses on the runes of the Germanic tradition, incorporating meditation, divination, and self-transformational rune-work (92). Various Rune-Gild authors consider gods/god in different forms: as "magical archetypes" that can have a "subjective existence" for individuals but also a "tripartite objective existence," or as Odin as a god-model for self-deification (94). The Dragon Rouge has an even broader incorporation of demonic deities. They include Apep, Anubis, Leviathan, Loki, Lucifer, Melek Taos, Odin, Pan, Quetzalcoatl, Samael, Set, Typhon and others (95). The Dragon Rouge also has an emphasis on Princesses of Darkness, and incorporates feminine deities such as Hecate, Hel, Kali, Kebechet, Lilith, Morana, Naamah, Ragana, Sekhmet, Skuld, Tiamat, Urd, and Verdandi. Despite the eclectic pantheon of gods/goddesses, the Dragon is the prime

symbol of the rhythm of nature, the ultimate source of power, and is manifested through individual magicians (95).

Granholm observes that these groups are engaged in a process of transformation in which they reach beyond the Satanic for symbols of their antinomian self-deification (in Petersen 2009, 89). Apart from the sectarian nature of the Temple of Set in regards to the Church of Satan, any reference to Satanism with the Rune-Gild or Dragon Rouge is an externally applied term (97). Granholm argues that, "Satanism should be avoided whenever possible, due to the vague definition of the term and the overly pejorative connotations it arouses" (97).

Granholm suggests instead the term Left Hand Path (LHP)[16] as a broader, more appropriate term to describe groups beyond Satanism, but that share certain characteristics. LHP has five characteristics, repeated here verbatim from Granholm's text:

> i) The ideology of individualism; where the individual is positioned at the absolute center of that person's existential universe.
> ii) The view of man as a psycho-physical totality; where a division of more bodily and more spiritual components becomes essentially meaningless, at least in view of the next characteristic.
> iii) A focus on life in the here-and-now; where the pursuit of a perfect after-life becomes if not meaningless, then assumes a secondary role to living-in-the-moment.
> iv) The goal of self-deification; interpreted in a wide variety of ways, but that always involves the individual becoming in as total as possible control of his/her own existence.
> v) An antinomian stance; in which the individual questions and breaks societal, cultural, and religious taboos in the quest for personal liberation. (Granholm 2009, 4)

[16] For a brief but thorough discussing of the history of the term Left Hand Path see Evans in Petersen 2009.

In essence, Left Hand Path religion is a category that includes both self-identified Satanists as well as those who follow the above criteria but have evolved beyond Satanic symbols (Granholm in Petersen 2009, 97).[17]

I agree with Granholm's conclusions with regards to taking into account the self-identifying nomenclature of groups while also considering the ever-evolving nature of their worldviews. My issue is that even among rationalist/atheist Satanists, a variety of mythologies and symbols are used in rituals (Holt 2011),[18] and therefore even self-identifying Satanists re-appropriate other symbols of antinomian self-deification. Further, a rejection of the term "Satanism" because of its overwhelming negative connotation is not the concern of scholars; Satanists themselves adopt the term exactly because of its implications, even while they reinterpret this negative stereotype into that of a rebel-hero. If Satanists themselves adopt the term, scholars are making a value judgment by rejecting it for its negative connotation; our primary concern is the accuracy and appropriateness of a term. These points do not directly refute Granholm – that is not my intent as I mostly concur – but I present them to highlight that even when trying to unpack the varied nuances of a term, we encounter problems.

Modern Satanism

Scholars on contemporary religious Satanism are examining a field that has split apart into a wide variety of areas. The stream started by the Church of Satan is now a

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[17] Neo-Pagan movements also identify as Left Hand Path. These groups mostly strongly reject any association with Satan or the Satanic, symbolically or otherwise.

[18] For example, if a member of the Church of Satan responds more viscerally to the symbol of Odin than Satan in ritual, it is not considered less Satanic; the prime importance is the emotive quality of the symbols used within the rite, and not the specific references to Satan. See Holt 2010, 2011.

delta of multiple groups, each fighting for legitimacy, practicing in dispersed geographical areas, and continually redefining Satanism itself. Scholarship also has its variety, as different approaches to research, the spectrum of questions posed and answered, and the influence of respective disciplines and standards all contribute to the ongoing scholarly discussion on religious Satanism. Modern Satanism is now a wealth of material from which the scholar draws their ideas. The scholar's task is to sift through this murky area of shifting ideas and approaches, in order to find effective ways of providing critical research on religious Satanism.

Chapter Four: Further Considerations

Contemporary scholarship on religious Satanism, being an amorphous field approached from a variety of methodologies and theories, prompts this chapter. Informed by all the previous chapters, in this chapter I present some further considerations and suggestions for the academic study of Satanism.

Nomenclature: On Defining One's Terms

Within religious groups that do self-identify as Satanic, there is tension with regards to terms used and applied across studies, and scholars must negotiate this minefield carefully. For example, the Church Satan's hegemonic stance on the term Satanism is well-known, and they insist that other groups are Devil Worshippers, but scholars should not adopt their terminology; it demonstrates a partisan, witnessing position, not an academic one. To distinguish between groups, most scholars have used the term LaVeyan Satanism to identify the Church of Satan. This, however, I also reject, as members of the CoS consider this insulting; I am careful not to antagonize a particular group with an externally applied term. Scholars reject the word "cult" for similar reasons. Scholars also discard the notion of "devil worship" for theistic Satanism, preferring to reframe it as honouring their deity. Other nomenclature given to various groups are Traditional Satanism, Rational Satanism, Orthodox Satanism, Modern Satanism, Luciferian Satanism, and Pagan Satanism. The labels are both internally and externally applied nomenclature. They are at times undefined, poorly defined, inaccurate, or in certain cases, an affront to the group they purport to be studying.

Beyond the term Satanism or Left Hand Path, other definitions are contested, some of which are:

i) *magic*, as psychodrama or mystical event;
ii) *community*, which is spurned for its overtly welcoming communal connotation;
iii) *religion* versus *philosophy*, and how these terms relate to Satanists' self-understanding and worldview;
iv) *non-conformity*, as a critical position or a rash rebellious stance;
v) *conversion*, as Satanists consider themselves "naturally" predisposed to Satanic ideas, and thus do not convert to a new religious life;[19]
vi) and even what is considered an *active member* within and across groups differs.[20]

What, then, do scholars call them? How do we apply a term with nuanced meanings? Which terms are most useful, helping scholars to produce sound critical research? Who gets to decide which terms are more accurate or appropriate to use?

Methodological Approaches

Before beginning to answer the above questions, I must first note that scholars are approaching the topic of religious Satanism from a variety of disciplines: sociology, history, psychology, religious studies, and anthropology. This is exciting and an issue at the same time; such diverse approaches lead to increased insight, as well as inconsistences across studies. To begin solidifying methodological approaches, I refer to a discussion by Max Marwick, which expresses concerns over the wide discrepancies in research on magic, witchcraft, and sorcery throughout Africa and Oceania. Marwick

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[19] For a discussion on conversion gleaned from surveys please see Lewis 2010.
[20] For example, a member of the Temple of Set is required to maintain contact and pay annual fees to remain a member, while the Church of Satan has a once in a lifetime membership fee, and requires no contact with other members in order to be considered active. The ToS defines active as mystical/magical pursuits, while the CoS defines active as living successfully in the material word using magic as a tool.

highlights five suggestions to improve studies within the context of his field. These criteria, however, are easily adapted to contemporary work on Satanism; indeed, Satanism studies have far less inconsistency overall, and therefore my suggestions are more fine-tuning than an unneeded overhaul.

Marwick's first suggestion is to clearly define one's terms (1970, 292). He underlines that certain acts labeled as magical in the African and Oceanic context can either be socially condemned or socially sanctioned, and that these distinctions are not always clear. Researchers, translating from local languages, apply nomenclature drawn from their native western tongues, that causes confusion across studies; one tribe may view "magic" as a necessary tool, while another views it as malevolent and criminal. For Satanism, Marwick's mandate still applies; the nuances of magic (psychodrama versus mystical communion), the notion of community (either shunned or embraced), definition of active member (mystical pursuit versus lived religion), Satanism itself (and the disagreement over the term), are all integral to the academic discussion on religious Satanism. Any word choice that the scholar makes is a delicate balance, guaranteed to disappoint, as no clear, inoffensive, value-free terms are currently evident. Scholars should instead explain their choices, outline the process of how they came to adopt and apply certain terms and phrases, and continue the discussion as the environment itself changes.

Second, Marwick advocates a comparison between "the ideal with the real" (293). That is, general statements about how something is perceived must be contrasted with specific examples. Marwick states that, even within a cohesive group, "differences between what informants tell us and what, when we are fortunate enough to have the

opportunity, we actually see happening" (283). He provides the example of one cohesive group, in which virtually all informants claimed two things; that death was almost always the result of witchcraft, and that most witches were female (284). When he compared this perception to a case study of two hundred deaths, he found that only 55% were attributed to witchcraft and that only 42% of the alleged sorcerers were female (284). In this case, the anecdotal perceived reality diverged from the statistical data.

This can also apply to Satanism. For example, Satanists providing anecdotal evidence is insufficient on its own, and requires support from other sources. Since the Satanic milieu is rife with anecdotal data, and access to hard quantitative data is limited (although growing), application of this particular point can be difficult. It should, however, be kept in mind as scholarship advances within these groups in order to counterbalance the heavy reliance on anecdotal evidence from few informants. This is especially true when one group makes claims about another group in terms of their activities and membership numbers; as outsiders (or even insiders), their anecdotal evidence requires corroboration with case studies.

Third, the social setting must be taken into context. For Marwick, that is the social currency of alleged witchcraft/sorcery/magic accusations, and their implications. Marwick notes that societies enact a moralized drama with alleged witchcraft accusations. The accusations can relieve or exacerbate tensions, but are always an expression of the larger context of social dynamics. This is particularly relevant for Satanism studies as questions of legitimacy, attacks on other groups and leaders, debates surrounding authority, and the relationship between the popular

understanding of Satanism and the religious practice, are social concerns enacted in public forums. The Satanist is constantly negotiating a generalized suspicion of malevolence from the population at large, and the specific mudslinging from within the Satanic milieu. These tensions are negotiated through Internet blogs and videos, published literature, media portrayals, and the scholars themselves. The social setting, even for participants ostensibly unconcerned with popular acceptance, is important.

Marwick's fourth criterion advocates examining the relationship between the accused, the alleged sorcerer or witch, and the believed victim. Unveiling the rivalries and alliances between them reveals the social tensions. This particular consideration is more aptly applied to studies on the Satanic Panic, which, while related to Satanism, is not within the scope of this essay.[21] I would, however, change Marwick's criterion: instead of carefully examining the sources of alleged witchcraft accusations, I posit that scholars carefully examine the academic sources themselves, and be aware of unexamined biases and unacknowledged tensions within the Satanic milieu. For example, as already stated, Petersen notes that Alfred, Lyons, Moody, and Truzzi were known partisans of the Church of Satan, suggesting that their research was perhaps unbalanced in favour of the positive. I do agree that careful corroboration of claims is necessary, but would add that most scholars also reference ex-members of the CoS or its known antagonists (such as Ole Wolf or Michael Aquino), without offering the same consideration. An overtly positive portrayal is equal to an overtly negative portrayal; both are partisan, both require either substantiations or, at the very least, an emphasis on the objectivity of the work itself. To frame Alfred, Lyons, Moody, and Truzzi as

[21] For an excellent study on the Satanic Panic see Victor 1993; for a discussion on the notion of evil, see Frankfurter 2006.

partisan because they are on good terms with the CoS means that, by the same argument, Wolf and Aquino are also partisan because they are at odds with the CoS. In actuality, I reject the labeling of partisanship for all these sources (Alfred, Aquino, et al.). I am simply highlighting the flaw of partisanship accusation by applying the same argument to both sides. To be clear: I do not advocate rejecting an academic study simply because a particular scholar or source personally identifies as a Satanist. Many scholars looking at Satanism are members of a Satanic group or sole practitioners, and if considering oneself a Satanist meant their work is *automatically* considered partisan, they could never be objective or harsh enough to please critics. I do, however, advocate an equal consideration for both positive and negative portrayals, and everything in between; judge and evaluate the work itself in terms of its critical analysis, sound insight, and high standards, not the personal affiliation of its author.

Marwick's fifth element is for the ethnographer to establish a canon of fieldwork; not rely on one particular informant, but instead examine their claims in relations to the central characters. This is certainly relevant to Satanism, although the full spectrum of the field has not yet been studied. As the field grows, hopefully more and more researchers will gain access to these reclusive persons and groups, and then be able to place their comments into the wider area from which they emerge.

Thoughts on Studies in New Religious Movements

The great majority of research on New Religious Movements involves a discussion on the public perception of the NRM studied. Academic authors commonly begin with a statement about how the group is generally perceived, and either accept,

reject, or alter that perception through their arguments and claims. NRM scholars are in dialog with a pre-existing framework, either explicitly or implicitly, in popular and academic forums alike. There is an apprehension that must be addressed, a social tension in which scholars become unwilling factors, as a triangle is created between NRM, the NRM scholar, and popular perception.

There is a tension between NRMs and the population at large, as NRMs are often perceived as evil, destructive, and subversive. I include these thoughts on NRM studies to highlight that a discussion on religious Satanism is not complete without a discussion on the popular perception that NRMs themselves are evil. David Chidester, in his book, *Salvation and Suicide: Jim Jones, the Peoples Temple, and Jonestown* (2003) discusses how officials dealing with the remains of the nine hundred and thirteen bodies in Dover, Delaware, went through a lengthy process to make decisions for disposal. Chidester states that ten times the normal amount of chemical treatments was used to disinfect the remains. The danger of bodies contaminating the ground – the physical symbol for the more visceral fear of contaminating the mind, of being susceptible to the kind of "cultish" thought that could potentially lead to such acts as those at Jonestown – draws a parallel that, "The deceased immediately came to represent a more fundamental, and dangerous, defilement of American territory" (16).

This reflects the broader issue of the "Culture War" itself. Anti-cult groups provide journalists and editors polarizing and damaging sound bites regarding NRMs fueling the idea that there is a war on the frontiers of society. The language and rhetoric used regarding this contentious topic is almost always the same; cults are evil and destroying morality/society. Satanists, perhaps, are especially regarded this way,

although most NRMs experience similar tensions. These groups and ideas are held up against a polished and idealized version of a perfect society, and consequently demonized.

James R. Lewis and Susan J. Palmer both also address these particular concerns. In Lewis' introductory note to his edited anthology on Scientology, he writes, "This volume will…likely end up pleasing no one engaged in the Scientology/anti-Scientology conflict" (2009b, 5). This becomes more relevant throughout his text, as well as reading reactions to his anthology, post-publication. Lewis' volume received criticism from popular and academic sources alike for being an apologetic volume, prompting Lewis to write, "An Open Letter to: Scientologists, Ex-Scientologists, and Critics of the Church of Scientology." It was reprinted on various Internet blogs. In it, he addresses the so-called "cult controversy," and makes a somewhat clear statement about his personal views on the Church of Scientology. Lewis states in the "Open Letter" that, "Neither I nor the great majority of new religions specialists view ourselves as defenders of groups like Scientology. Rather, we are interested in understanding social-psychological processes and the dynamics of social conflict." He continues to affirm that if NRM scholars are defending anything it is good science versus bad science. This is a provocative claim not in its content, but because it is apparently necessary to address publicly. Scholars in other areas are not as often forced into clarifying their personal position with such regularity or firmness. It is perhaps relegated to areas of controversial study; queer, race, feminist, and Islamic research all fall under popular and academic scrutiny because they involve contentious issues.

Palmer describes an event wherein a journalist that signed-up for a Sensual Meditation Camp held by the International Raelien Movement recorded the sound of couples making love in their tents (2004, 70). This tape was played on a radio broadcast and described as "an unbridled sex orgy where brainwashing was perpetuated and sexual perversions encouraged" (70). She further recounts that many members lost jobs and custody of their children as a result of these types of ambush journalism. Instead of journalists approaching an NRM with the position of curiosity and professional courtesy, they disingenuously portray NRMs negatively. She claims these depictions are the direct result of anti-cult movements, which encourages and promotes the notion of NRMs as threats. She writes, "The media is generally unsympathetic towards 'cults' and churns out stigmatizing news reports and hostile deviance labeling, using words like 'cult,' 'sect,' 'brainwashed,' and 'mind-control' – terms that indicate the journalists' heavy reliance on the anti-cult movement" (2004, 79).

Palmer recounts a humourous incident in "Caught Up in the Cult Wars: Confessions of a Canadian Researcher" wherein she faced accusations of being a "cultlover" by a judge (2001). Social scientists on new religions learn to negotiate charges of being cult apologists and, more even more offensive, poor scholars. I am hard pressed to imagine scholars on areas of study involving peoples and cultures long extinct facing the same type of skepticism of their work. In this sense, scholars are viewed as defending those subversively evil cults that are destroying society. We may or may not be considered evil ourselves, but we are certainly not helping.

Despite my comments in this section, they are not meant as a lament, nor as a call for pity of the NRM scholar. Instead, I posit that perhaps this triangle between NRM

scholar, the NRMs themselves, and the popular perception be more closely examined. As Lewis states, scholars are not particularly well adept at the sound bite; our training necessitates a reasoned, well supported, and logical presentation of our points of view. My claim, however, is that since results of our research can directly influence public perception, and even perhaps can directly influence the ever-developing groups themselves, means that NMR scholars are social actors reluctantly involved in the creation of these groups. We are embroiled in their history-making.

Satanism, as a sub-group of New Religious Movements, is even more at odds with its popular perception, and the scholar on Satanism automatically becomes a player in the social setting. I encourage future research related to the role of the NRM scholar enmeshed in the NRM struggle for legitimacy in order to gain further insight and discussion into this delicate balance.

One final consideration for Satanism studies requires addressing. As much as scholars are trained to isolate, define, categorize, and convert data into handy statistics, this becomes a daunting task when the milieu itself is constantly shifting. As scholarship is conducted in segments – papers converted into chapters converted into books referenced in encyclopedias – it is too large a task to always incorporate every methodological and theoretical standard into every work, even if there existed one widely agreed-upon approach, which would itself entail a stagnation of critical thought. My position is that researchers within the Satanic milieu remain cognizant of the issues and concerns enveloping their studies, be aware that their adoptions of nomenclature,

methodology, and theory reflect the tensions within the milieu, and because of this, explain the process by which they makes their choices.

Conclusion

In the past forty odd years scholars have been looking at religious Satanism. It many ways, the research produced not only reveals the history of Satanism, but also a commentary on American counterculture movements in the latter half of the twentieth century, and, at the same time, presents an overview of scholarship on new religious movements themselves. Early studies portrayed a wide variety of depictions of the Church of Satan: theatrical, deviant, esoteric, and diabolical. This variety of depictions corresponds to the authors producing research, as sociologist, theologian, or popular writers attempt to understand Satanism and its larger implications. In the early years, the academic field of "cults" was a relatively new area, not always considered a legitimate academic pursuit. Much like Satanism itself, it was treated as somewhat suspect, undeveloped, and not the study of "real" religion. The early studies on the Church of Satan were not only an examination of a new religious movement, but also an exercise in a new field of academic study. They were both infants, so to speak, with Satanism and its scholarship developing in their respective spheres.

In the second phase of the progress of religious Satanism, it experienced its own growing pains: schisms and claims to authority and legitimacy. As the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set applied various methods of legitimization, scholarship, in turn, adjusts and shifts. New theories and methodologies emerge from the perspective of an increasingly growing field of scholarship on new religious movements. The adolescent phase of Satanism was turbulent and polemical. The academic study of Satanism at the time virtually disappeared, but the retroactive studies examine this turbulence with modern theories on new religious movements.

Taking my analogy of growth further, modern Satanism has matured and proliferated; there are now multiple divergent interpretations of Satanic worldviews, and just as many approaches to their study. Like Satanism itself, the scholarship on religious Satanism has ripened to produce nuanced and critical insight.

It does end not here. The ongoing dialog of scholarship on religious Satanism has its own growing pains, as it were. Scholars are in the process of sifting through their own ideas, applying methods and theories to data in order to evaluate the acumen and soundness of various approaches. We must keep in mind the issues and concerns of the field, and continually improve as scholars on new religious movements.

This methodological thesis connects to my future research on Satanism. It was written in order to better understand the foundational scholarship, and learn from its successes and failures. As a critique of a new field (new religious movements), containing a newer field (Satanism studies), produced by a novice academic (I enter the PhD program after defence of this document), this thesis is an attempt to elucidate the scholarly work of my predecessors, and engage in their discussion. It hopefully encourages responses and critiques itself, of the field and of this thesis. After all, that is the point of scholarship.

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