

An Elusive Roebuck Luciferianism and Paganism in Robert Cochrane's Witchcraft

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Abstract

The English occultist Robert Cochrane (1931–1966) has remained an enigmatic figure ever since his death under mysterious circumstances almost fifty years ago. The Magister of a coven known as the Clan of Tubal Cain, Cochrane was a co-founder of Cochranean Witchcraft and a vocal critic of Gerald Gardner (1884–1964) and mainstream elements of the Wiccan movement. Cochrane's legacy is today evident in a variety of contemporary magico-religious groups, including the rejuvenated Clan, the 1734 tradition and the wider "Traditional Witchcraft" current of Western esotericism. Recent academic thought has maintained that Cochrane's tradition was a form of contemporary Paganism akin to that of Gardner, although this has not gone unchallenged; in recent years, Cochrane's successor Shani Oates (1959–) has argued that Cochraneanism is not a tradition of the Pagan Craft, but should instead be understood as a Luciferian and Gnostic spiritual path quite distinct from contemporary Paganism. In this article, the author endeavours to explore this complicated issue, using both historical textual sources and information obtained from oral histories.

Keywords

Traditional Witchcraft; Robert Cochrane; Luciferianism; Contemporary Paganism; Contemporary Witchcraft

Introduction

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Over the course of the twentieth century, a plethora of different individuals and groups sprung up throughout Britain and North America, all claiming that their particular brand of beliefs and practices should—or at least could—be considered to be “witchcraft.” This emotive word had brought untold misery to thousands in the Early Modern period, when across Europe and its North American colonies, those considered “witches” were persecuted as agents of the Devil bent on causing harm and bringing Christendom to its knees. In utilising such a term, these esotericists wished to draw a connection between their own Craft and the alleged practices of those individuals who had been vilified several centuries before. However, there was no theological unity among these twentieth-century spiritual seekers, who were adherents of new magico-religious movements with widely differing approaches on everything from magical ethics to cosmological conceptions. From the atheistic outlook of Anton LaVey’s Satanic Witches, to the monotheistic Goddess-venerating position of Zsuzsanna Budapest’s Dianic Witches, a great diversity was apparent among these groups, whose only unifying factors seemed to be the performance of rituals with magical intent and the use of the term “witch” itself.¹ In this article, I intend to delve into the theological ideas of just one of these modern-day Witches; an Englishman best known under his pseudonym of “Robert Cochrane” (1931–1966).

A working-class West Londoner by birth, Cochrane’s real name was Roy Bowers, although he liked to hide behind a series of magical *noms de plume* when dealing with outsiders to his Clan. Circa 1961, when he was living near Slough in Buckinghamshire, he was involved in the construction of the Thames Valley Coven of Witches, around which he built a wider occult family, the Clan of Tubal Cain. Although others had played a key role in the coven’s creation—among them his wife Jane Bowers, George Stannard (circa 1912–1983) and Ronald White (1928–1998)—Cochrane’s charisma saw him installed into a position of leadership as “Clan Magister.” Together, they formulated a unique tradition, inspired and influenced by the published tomes of Charles Godfrey Leland (1824–1903), Margaret Alice Murray (1863–1963) and, most importantly perhaps, the poet Robert Graves (1895–1985).² Telling new initiates that the Clan were actually practising a

¹ For an overview of many of these witchcraft groups, see Ronald Hutton, *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Chas S. Clifton, *Her Hidden Children: The Rise of Wicca and Paganism in America* (Lanham: AltaMira, 2006); Owen Davies, *America Bewitched: The Story of Witchcraft after Salem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

² The most thorough account of the coven’s early development is provided by John of Monmouth with Gillian Spraggs and Shani Oates, *Genuine Witchcraft is Explained: The Secret*

centuries-old tradition that had been handed down to him in a hereditary fashion, Cochrane began publicising his views regarding the “Old Craft” within a number of esoteric publications, namely *Pentagram*, the published arm of the Witchcraft Research Association, founded in 1964 to unite the self-professed “witches” of Britain.³ Cochrane’s relationship with many of these rivals was fractious, and in particular he was very vocal in his denunciation of the Gardnerian tradition of Pagan Witchcraft that had been founded in the late 1940s or early 1950s by Gerald Gardner, allegedly based on his experiences with an earlier New Forest coven. Such animosity did not, however, prevent Cochrane from corresponding with many Gardnerian initiates, welcoming the ex-Gardnerian Doreen Valiente (1922–1999) into his Clan, and probably receiving a secret Gardnerian initiation himself from a West London coven.⁴ In 1966, after experiencing a particularly rough patch in his private life, which resulted in the collapse of his marriage, he undertook a suicidal Midsummer ritual from which he never recovered.⁵

Despite his untimely passing, Cochrane left behind an ever-expanding legacy. Stannard and White went on to found a Pagan group known as The Regency, while the Clan member Evan John Jones (1936–2003), who inherited the mantle of Magister, went on to publish several books that displayed a clear influence from the Cochranian way of working.⁶ In the late 1980s, Jones also initiated two American occultists, Ann and Dave Finnin, into the Clan, and they proceeded to found their own branch back home in California. As problems arose in the relationship between Jones and the Finnins, in 1998 he handed over control of the Clan to an Englishwoman, Shani Oates, who with “Robin the Dart” has operated it from Derbyshire ever since. Cochrane’s legacy can furthermore be seen in the “1734” tradition of Witchcraft, founded by American Joseph Wilson (1942–2004) circa 1974, based in part upon the teachings that Cochrane had imparted to him by correspondence. As the “Traditional Witchcraft” current within

History of the Royal Windsor Coven and the Regency (Milverton, Somerset: Capall Bann, 2011); see older summary in Michael Howard, *Children of Cain: A Study of Modern Traditional Witches* (Richmond Vista: Three Hands Press, 2011), 43.

³ Cochrane’s claims regarding his hereditary tradition can be found in Doreen Valiente, *The Rebirth of Witchcraft* (London: Robert Hale, 1989), 117, 120–21.

⁴ Ethan Doyle White, “Robert Cochrane and the Gardnerian Craft: Feuds, Secrets, and Mysteries in Contemporary British Witchcraft,” *The Pomegranate* 13, no. 2 (2011): 33–52.

⁵ Cochrane’s final months and death are documented in Gavin Semple, *The Poisoned Chalice: The Death of Robert Cochrane* (London: Reineke Verlag, 2004).

⁶ Evan John Jones, *Witchcraft: A Tradition Renewed* (London: Robert Hale, 1990); Evan John Jones with Chas S. Clifton, *Sacred Mask, Sacred Dance* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn, 1997).

Western esotericism came to increasing prominence in the 1990s, in large part as a rejection of mainstream trends within Pagan Witchcraft, Cochrane became an almost tutelary figure, and I believe that he warrants the title of “Father of Traditional Witchcraft” more than any other. Certainly, no other “Traditional Witch” has been quite so influential across the past half century, with many of today’s covens and practitioners citing his writings as a significant influence over their particular praxes. Recent years have also seen increasing scholarly interest in Cochrane and his tradition, best known as “Cochrane’s Craft,” from both academic and independent perspectives.⁷

But what of the theistic underpinnings of Cochrane’s Craft? What “supernatural” entities did he believe that his Clan interacted with on their quest for magical efficacy and mystical gnosis? It is to this question—more perplexing than it might initially seem—that this article shall turn. From an examination of the available published literature, it is clear that within the academic fields of Pagan Studies and the study of Western esotericism the consensus has remained that Cochrane followed a tradition which was a variant of the Pagan Witchcraft religion, having many similarities in its basic structure to Gardnerianism, Cardellianism or Alexandrianism. Such a religion is often referred to as “Wicca,” a term that began to be applied to the Pagan Witchcraft faith in the 1960s.⁸ This is the picture of Cochrane’s Craft painted in the historical studies authored by Ronald Hutton, Leo Ruickbie and Chas S. Clifton, and is perfectly in keeping with the image of this tradition that can be found in the published writings of several figures who actually knew Cochrane and worked in his Clan, namely Doreen Valiente and Evan John Jones.⁹ This image depicts the Cochranian tradition, or as Hutton once called it, “Cochranian Wicca,”¹⁰ as a tradition venerating a Horned God and a Goddess, commemorating four seasonal sabbats and meeting in covens for magico-religious rites much as the many other burgeoning Wiccan traditions were doing at the time.

However, in recent years sustained criticism of this interpretation has

⁷ Academic approaches include Doyle White, “Robert Cochrane,” and Hutton, *Triumph*, 309–318 while independent approaches include Howard, *Children* and John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*.

⁸ Ethan Doyle White, “The Meaning of ‘Wicca’: A Study in Etymology, History, and Pagan Politics,” *The Pomegranate* 12, no. 2 (2010): 185–207.

⁹ Hutton, *Triumph*, 309–318; Leo Ruickbie, *Witchcraft Out of the Shadows* (London: Robert Hale, 2004), 130–34; Clifton, *Hidden Children*, 19–22; Valiente, *Rebirth*, 117–136; Jones, *Witchcraft*.

¹⁰ Ronald Hutton, “Modern Pagan Witchcraft,” in Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark, eds., *The Athlone History of Magic and Witchcraft in Europe Volume Six: The Twentieth Century* (London: The Athlone Press, 1999), 57.

come from Shani Oates, the current Maid of the Derbyshire Clan of Tubal Cain, who has argued that Cochrane's Craft is not in any way a tradition of Pagan Witchcraft, but that it is instead a Luciferian-Gnostic path, thereby belonging to an entirely different magico-religious spiritual tradition. In this she has been supported by other figures involved in Cochranean and related forms of Witchcraft, such as Stuart Inman of the 1734 tradition, and with these new ideas on the table, it is certainly worth making a greater attempt to try and fathom the murky depths of Cochrane's Craft and truly establish the nature of the beast. I propose the possibility that from its early years, Cochrane's Craft may have drawn from both Luciferian ideas and from the rising Pagan Witchcraft movement, thereby fashioning a syncretic blend between Luciferianism and Paganism. Furthermore, I show that such a syncretic blend is not without precedent, and can be identified elsewhere in the contemporary Witchcraft movement.

There are four main sources that those wishing to study Cochrane and the development of his tradition can draw from, all of which have contributed to the production of this article. The first of these are the writings of Cochrane himself, all of which were produced between the period from 1963 to 1966. These are comprised of both his published articles, which appeared in such esoteric magazines as *Psychic News*, *New Dimensions* and *Pentagram*, and his personal letters, which were sent to three of his correspondents and which have become publicly available since his death.¹¹ The second is a group of papers containing letters and early drafts for the coven's rituals which have come to be known as the Stannard documents, having been possessed by that particular Clan member for many years; these date from between 1961 and 1966.¹² The next set of sources are the accounts of Cochrane and his coven written by those who knew him first hand, namely Doreen Valiente and Evan John Jones, both of whom were members of the Clan.¹³ The fourth and final source that I make use of are the beliefs and practices of those modern covens who continue in the initiatory line of Cochrane, several of which refer to themselves as the "Clan of Tubal Cain." One must accept here that this latter source is perhaps the most unreliable, because it relies on an oral transmission from Cochrane through Evan John Jones and then onto others, during which time there was

¹¹ Evan John Jones, Robert Cochrane and Mike Howard, *The Roebuck in the Thicket: An Anthology of the Robert Cochrane Witchcraft Tradition* (Milverton, Somerset: Capall Bann, 2001); Robert Cochrane with Evan John Jones and Michael Howard, *The Robert Cochrane Letters: An Insight into Modern Traditional Witchcraft* (Milverton, Somerset: Capall Bann, 2002).

¹² Published in John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*.

¹³ Valiente, *Rebirth*, 117–136; Jones, *Witchcraft*.

ample chance for these groups to adapt and evolve, leading to the situation where some of the contemporary Clans of Tubal Cain might be practising forms of the Craft that Cochrane himself would not entirely recognise. It must be born in mind that religious traditions are rarely static, and are constantly experiencing a process of renewal and human agency.

Accompanying these four sources, I can also look for guidance from a fifth area; the second-hand comments and evaluations of the Cochranean material that have been produced by historians and researchers in recent decades, most notably Ronald Hutton and the esotericists Gavin Semple, Michael Howard, and John of Monmouth.¹⁴ This material is interesting, although not being a primary source it must be treated with some scepticism and as this article shall show, I do take issue with some of their assumptions and assertions.

Paganism, Luciferianism and why it matters?

For those readers who may be unaccustomed to the varying different magico-religious movements whose members self-describe as “witches,” I will provide a brief overview of how Pagan Witchcraft and Luciferian Witchcraft are construed and why, in the context of this article, it matters into which of them the tradition of Cochranean Witchcraft—as originally practised by Cochrane and his coven—can be best categorised.¹⁵ Although there are areas of commonality and mutual influence, the two offer distinctly different theological and cosmological worldviews, venerating different deities and performing different ritual praxes. It must be stressed that such categories did not exist during the 1960s, when both would have been subsumed under the broad heading of “witchcraft,” but I nevertheless use them here as useful analytical groupings.

Pagan Witchcraft is a religious tradition within the wider contemporary Pagan (or “Neopagan”) movement, having developed between the 1930s and 1950s in Britain before spreading and evolving into a global phenomenon centred in the United States. Taking as its basis the erroneous theories of Egyptologist Margaret Murray about a historical pre-Christian

¹⁴ Hutton, *Triumph*; Howard, “Modern Pagan”; Semple, *Poisoned*; Howard, *Children*; John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*.

¹⁵ Here I use the capitalised “Witchcraft” to denote a particular magico-religious tradition, i.e. Pagan Witchcraft or Luciferian Witchcraft, just as the name of Islam or Christianity would be capitalised. In contrast, I use the lower case “witchcraft” when referring to the use of the term more generally.

Witch-Cult, the available evidence points to the Pagan Craft actually having several independent origins, as different occultists dotted around the country began to create their own versions of the religion using Murray's theories as a basis. Undoubtedly the most prominent was Gerald Gardner, the founder of the Gardnerian tradition, which was up and running in some form by 1953. Pagan Witchcraft, or "Wicca" as it came to be better known in the 1960s and 1970s, typically revolved around the duotheistic veneration of a Horned God and a Goddess, the commemoration of seasonal dates known as sabbats and the practice of magico-religious rites either in covens or solitarily. This was a structure gleaned in part from the works of Murray but also from the American folklorist Charles Leland's alleged account of Tuscan witchcraft, *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches* (1899).¹⁶

Luciferian Witchcraft, as it is understood amongst its proponents, differs in that it revolves primarily around a belief in Lucifer, whom its adherents view as a positive and significant figure in human history; they seek to venerate and cooperate with this entity in order to attain gnosis. The academic Fredrik Gregorius distinguished this Luciferian movement from the various varieties of Satanism—as propagated by occult groups like the Church of Satan or Order of Nine Angles—by highlighting that the former typically viewed Lucifer in a non-Christian mythological setting.¹⁷ Although the figure of Lucifer has had some influence on the Pagan Craft through the likes of *Aradia*, this esoteric current can be further distinguished from Pagan Witchcraft in that many contemporary Luciferian Witches consider their faith to be basically Gnostic, something absent from Pagan Witchcraft.¹⁸ Although the term "Luciferian" itself was first devised by the Inquisition in reference to Medieval heretics,¹⁹ the term "Luciferian Craft,"

¹⁶ For more on the history and development of Pagan Witchcraft see Hutton, *Triumph*; Clifton, *Hidden Children*; Doyle White, "Meaning of 'Wicca'." For more on the beliefs and practices typical of Pagan Witchcraft see Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers and Other Pagans in America* (London: Penguin, 2006 [1979]) and Graham Harvey, *Listening People, Speaking Earth: Contemporary Paganism* (second edition) (London: C. Hurst, 2007), 35–52.

¹⁷ Fredrik Gregorius, "Luciferian Witchcraft: At the Crossroads between Paganism and Satanism," in *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity*, ed. Per Faxneld and Jesper Petersen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 230–31.

¹⁸ For some Luciferian practitioner perspectives, see Nigel Jackson and Michael Howard, *The Pillars of Tubal Cain* (Milverton, Somerset: Capall Bann, 2000); Michael Howard, *The Book of Fallen Angels* (Milverton, Somerset: Capall Bann, 2004); Shani Oates, *Tubelo's Green Fire: Mythos, Ethos, Female, Male & Priestly Mysteries of the Clan of Tubal Cain*, (Oxford: Mandrake, 2010).

¹⁹ Gareth J. Medway, *Lure of the Sinister: The Unnatural History of Satanism* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 12.

from which “Luciferian Witchcraft” can be extrapolated, was invented and propagated by Michael Howard, a British Luciferian who achieved notability as the editor and publisher of *The Cauldron*, a British esoteric journal devoted primarily to Traditional Witchcraft, which has been running since 1976.²⁰ Other notable recent exponents of Luciferian Witchcraft include the Cultus Sabbati, a closed fellowship of initiates following a tradition known as the Sabbatic Craft, first propounded by English occultist Andrew D. Chumbley (1967–2004) in the early 1990s, as well as the American Michael D. Ford, who has authored a number of books on the subject and who leads the Order of Phosphorus.²¹ Looking further back in time, it seems apparent that Luciferian elements are also associated with earlier magical practices. In nineteenth-century France, Roman Catholic polemicists were accusing the Freemasons of venerating Lucifer, while there is evidence that one of the British esoteric orders influenced by Freemasonry, the Society of the Horseman’s Word, did indeed include Luciferian elements within their praxes.²² A fuller historical investigation is certainly required, but we might tentatively suggest that there were elements of the Luciferian mythos within nineteenth-century British folk magic.

If it can be shown that Cochrane’s Craft was indeed a Pagan Witchcraft group akin to that of Gardner or Charles Cardell, then it can be viewed as a part of the same burgeoning religious movement which here I term “Wicca.” On the other hand, if it can be shown that the original philosophy of Cochrane’s Craft was Luciferian in basis, then it makes comparisons with Gardner, Cardell, and other Wiccans much harder because it will have foundations that are fundamentally different from those of the Pagan Witchcraft movement. In such a scenario, it should perhaps not be viewed as a chapter in the development of the Wiccan religion, as it was in Ronald Hutton’s study, but as a chapter in an as-yet unwritten study of Luciferian history.

Alternatively, a third scenario could see Cochraneanism as a distinct religious movement in its own right that adopted both Pagan and Luciferian elements in a syncretic blend. Such a tradition would not be unprecedented, and can be seen as far back as 1899, with the publication of Charles Leland’s *Aradia*. An American folklorist, Leland had been collecting folk tales and

²⁰ Michael Howard, personal communication, 25 June 2012.

²¹ Gregorius, “Luciferian Witchcraft,” 241–47.

²² Medway, *Lure*, 11. More on the Society of the Horseman’s Word can be found in Hutton, *Triumph*, 61–64; Russell Lyon, *The Quest for the Original Horse Whisperers* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2003); Ben Fernee (ed.) *The Society of the Horseman’s Word* (Hinckley, Leicestershire: The Society of Esoteric Endeavour, 2009).

traditions in Tuscany for several years when his informant, Maddalena, allegedly brought him this text, the gospel of a secretive cult of witches, before promptly disappearing. Scholars have debated whether the text represents the genuine teachings of a religious group or a fictitious creation of either Magdalena or Leland; it seems most likely that it contains some genuinely folkloric components but is nonetheless a late nineteenth-century creation. Certainly, no other trace of this Tuscan witch religion has ever been found.²³ The theology contained within *Aradia* mixes the figure of Lucifer, here described as “the god of the Sun and the Moon, the god of Light, who was so proud of his beauty, and who for his pride was driven from Paradise,” with the Classical pagan deity of Diana, asserting that they had a child, the titular Aradia, who is sent to Earth to combat the Roman Catholic Church and aristocracy, teaching the peasants magic in order to do so.²⁴

Such a scenario can also be seen in the work of the Anglo-American occultist Paul Huson (1942–). Huson’s *Mastering Witchcraft: A Practical Guide for Witches, Warlocks & Covens* (1970), blends together elements of both magico-religious movements into a cohesive whole, fashioning a new theology in the process. In this influential tome, Huson outlined a theology heavily influenced by *Aradia*, in which Witches could venerate a Horned God and a lunar Goddess (just as most Wiccans would do), but also referring to Lucifer and Diana as primordial deities. These are all seen as figurative forms of “the Mighty Ones,” or “Watchers,” spiritual entities who in ancient mythologies came to Earth to breed with humanity, in doing so imparting their knowledge and wisdom—an inherently Luciferian and Gnostic concept.²⁵ The Craft propagated in Huson’s book had not been taught to him by any pre-existing covens or Witches, but he had instead developed it himself based upon what he read in the available literature about witchcraft and magic, most notably *Aradia*, Arthur Edward Waite’s

²³ Hutton, *Triumph*, 142–48; Robert Mathiesin, “Charles G. Leland and the Witches of Italy: The Origin of Aradia,” in *Aradia or the Gospel of the Witches: A New Translation*, ed. Mario Pazzaglini and Dina Pazzaglini (Blaine: Phoenix, 1998), 25–58; Sabina Magliocco, “Who Was Aradia? The History and Development of a Legend,” *The Pomegranate* 18 (2002): 5–22; Sabina Magliocco, “Aradia in Sardinia: The Archaeology of a Folk Character,” in *Ten Years of Triumph of the Moon: Academic Approaches to Studying Magic and the Occult: Examining Scholarship into Witchcraft and Paganism, Ten Years after Ronald Hutton’s The Triumph of the Moon*, ed. Dave Evans and Dave Green (n.p.: Hidden Publishing, 2009), 40–60.

²⁴ Charles Leland, *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches* (London: David Nutt, 1899), 1; the book’s theology is discussed in Gregorius, “Luciferian Witchcraft,” 231–34.

²⁵ Paul Huson, *Mastering Witchcraft: A Practicing Guide for Witches, Warlocks & Covens* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1970).

Holy Kabbalah, Robert Henry Charles's translation of *The Book of Enoch*, and Evan Wentz's *The Fairy Faith in Celtic Britain*.²⁶ As this illustrates, it is by no means impossible that Cochrane's original theological position blended Luciferian and Pagan elements together, just as Leland's *Aradia* had done, and in a similar manner to that which Huson would undertake during that same decade. This Pagan-Luciferian mix could potentially explain why both later Cochranians and those studying the tradition have come to radically different understandings of Cochrane's original theology.

The Evidence of Robert Cochrane's Writings

Though he never published any books in his short life, Cochrane was nevertheless a fairly prolific writer, and today historical researchers can turn to a number of his surviving writings in order to get a better insight into his own particular understandings of the Craft. Heuristically, we can divide these sources into two categories. First, the published work which appeared in both magazines like *Psychic News*, *New Dimensions* and *Pentagram*, and in a book authored by the journalist Justine Glass, *Witchcraft, the Sixth Sense – and Us* (1965), and second, the un-published material, contained largely in the surviving letters written to correspondents such as Norman Gills, Joseph Wilson and William G. Gray (1913–1995). Cochrane's writings provide us with what is perhaps the best insight into his mind, but at the same time it must be recognised that they reveal only what he was willing to reveal to others who were outside of his coven, and furthermore might not reflect the wider beliefs of his coven members.

Cochrane claimed to be descended from a family of practising Witches who had passed down their secretive tradition from at least the Early Modern witch hunt. Problematically, all such "Hereditary Witchcraft" stories must be treated with scepticism; following his death his widow admitted to Doreen Valiente that the entire story had been a fiction.²⁷ However, of

²⁶ Paul Kane, "Mastering Witchcraft," *The Cauldron* 135 (2010): 29–31; Paul Huson, personal communication, 15 November 2010.

²⁷ Cochrane had made such claims in a letter to Joseph Wilson, 6 January 1966, reproduced in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 21; letter to William Gray, undated, reproduced in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 126; in letter to Norman Gills, undated, reproduced in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 151; in "Genuine Witchcraft is Defended," *Psychic News* (9 November, 1963) and to Valiente, *Rebirth*, 117. Jane Bowers's admission appears in Doreen Valiente, unpublished notebooks, 11 December 1966. For the unreliability of "hereditary witchcraft" claims see Adler, *Drawing*, 608–609 and Hutton, *Triumph*, 305.

particular interest here is his claim that his father had been one of “The Horsemen,” i.e. a member of the Society of the Horseman’s Word, who might have adhered to Luciferian ideas.²⁸ The accuracy of this claim remains debatable, and although there is certainly nothing implausible in the idea that Cochrane grew up in an “esoteric family,” Michael Lloyd, the son of Cochrane’s sister, has denied the existence of any esoteric practices within the family. Instead, Lloyd notes that Cochrane only became interested in the occult after attending a Society for Physical Research lecture while studying at an art academy in Kensington.²⁹

Cochrane included a number of references to his theological and cosmological beliefs in his writings. Repeatedly, he makes it clear that he believed in a singular divine force, a Godhead, which he varyingly called “Supreme Deity,” “Old Fate,” “Force,” and “Truth,” and which he proclaimed to be that which all true Witches sought to glimpse.³⁰ Accompanying this Godhead, his writings indicate that he believed in the existence of other entities as well, terming them “the Gods.”³¹ In a piece written for the reporter Justine Glass, in which he interpreted the explicitly Christian carvings of the St. Duzec menhir in France as “a complete recapitulation of Craft theology”—one of many pseudohistorical and pseudoarchaeological interpretations he would advocate—he claimed that two of the petroglyphic figures carved there represented “the God of the witches” in his guise as a blacksmith and the Goddess, while a third was interpreted as “the Horn Child” who is “the child born of the union of the masculine and feminine mysteries.”³² In his letters, he makes reference to a

²⁸ Robert Cochrane, letter to Joseph Wilson, 20 December 1965, reproduced in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 17.

²⁹ The term “esoteric family” was first propounded by Robert Mathiesen and Theitic, *The Rede of the Wiccae: Adriana Porter, Gwen Thompson and the Birth of a Tradition of Witchcraft* (Providence, RI: Olympian Press, 2005), 90–91. Martin Lloyd’s statements on the issue can be found in Howard, *Children*, 43, 46 and Strimstrum, 5 February 2012 (07:39), comment on Nicholaj de Mattos Frisvold, “Seven Flaws in Mike Howards’ Children of Cain,” *The Starry Cave*, 27 January 2012, <http://www.starrycave.com/2012/01/seven-flaws-in-mike-howards-children-of.html> (archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6DFw74Vzx>).

³⁰ Robert Cochrane, Response to “A Reader’s Knotty Problem,” *Pentagram* 3 (March 1965), 10, reproduced as “Cord Magic” in Jones et al., *Roebuck*, 52–53; Robert Cochrane, “The Faith of the Wise,” *Pentagram* 4 (August 1965), 13, reproduced in Jones et al., *Roebuck*, 56; Robert Cochrane, letter to William Gray, 27 May 1964, reproduced in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 89.

³¹ Robert Cochrane, “Witches’ Esbat,” *New Dimensions* (November 1964), reproduced in Jones et al, *Roebuck*, 47; Cochrane, “Faith of the Wise,” 13–14, reproduced in Jones et al, *Roebuck*, 56.

³² Justine Glass, *Witchcraft, the Sixth Sense – and Us* (London: Neville Spearman, 1965), 142–46.

wide variety of different mythological figures, from goddess figures like the “Three Elemental Mothers” and the “Earth Mother” to pre-Christian gods like Pan, Osiris and Baldur, and even figures from established world religions like Jesus and the Buddha.³³ He was sufficiently well read to feel capable of pulling together examples from a variety of different contexts to illustrate the points that he wanted to make regarding mysticism and magic. Despite the influence he had taken from pre-Christian mythologies, he did not like to categorise Witchcraft as a form of paganism, seeing them as being related but distinct; for him, Witchcraft “retained the memory of ancient faiths” but unlike paganism was an “occult science.”³⁴ Accompanying these beliefs, his writings also make it clear that he believed in fairies, considering them to be elementals, and claiming that one had accompanied his family for generations.³⁵

As far as I can identify, there are only two references to Lucifer or Luciferianism within the corpus of Cochrane’s writings, both of which are contained within his communication with Norman Gills, a Witch who allegedly ran his own coven from his Oxfordshire home. One comes from an undated letter in which he made reference to Lucifer as “the Angel of Light” who appears as a “tall golden man, moving rapidly” and who is sometimes seen with “wings of fire.” However, he warned, “few can face that vision without aid from an even Higher Source.”³⁶ The other appears in an undated document entitled “the basic structure of the Craft” which he also supposedly sent to Gills. Here, he refers to “Lucet” as one of the seven children of the Gods, stating that:

Lucet is the King of Light, Fire, Love and Intellect, of Birth and Joy... the Child. He is visualised as a bright golden light moving quickly with wings. Thieving and mischievous. Sometimes he comes as a tall golden man, moving rapidly, other times the wings of Fire surround him, but few can face the vision without aid

³³ Cochrane, letter to Wilson, 6 January 1966, reproduced in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 23; Cochrane, letter to Wilson, 16 February 1966, reproduced in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 32 and 37; Cochrane, letter to William Gray, undated, reproduced in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 60.

³⁴ Cochrane, “Genuine Witchcraft”; Cochrane, letter to William Gray, undated, reproduced in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 82. Cochrane’s views on this issue are clarified and expanded by Evan John Jones, “Will of the Gods,” *Comhairle* 5 (Summer 1999), reproduced in Jones et al, *Roebuck*, 152–58.

³⁵ Robert Cochrane, letter to William Gray, undated, reproduced in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 62; Robert Cochrane, letter to William Gray, undated, reproduced in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 120.

³⁶ Robert Cochrane, letter to Norman Gills, undated, reproduced in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 157.

from an even Higher Source. At time he is winged at the foot; at others upon the head, behind the glorious hair.³⁷

Upon discovering the existence of this document in the late 1990s, Evan John Jones expressed his opinion that it was a fake, and had not been written by Cochrane at all. Jones passed this belief on to Shani Oates, who has in turn maintained it, despite the fact that it provides the most convincing piece of historical evidence connecting Cochrane to Luciferianism.³⁸ Michael Howard, who discovered it alongside Jones, has noted that Jones expressed surprise that the Luciferian elements existed within the Cochrane letters, as if he were unfamiliar with them.³⁹ It is possible that he simply did not wish the Luciferian elements of the Clan's mythos to be revealed to an outsider, although Howard was himself a proponent of Luciferian Witchcraft, and therefore would not have been shocked or offended by such a revelation. Clearly, a deeper textual evaluation of this document is required to either authenticate it or show it to have been produced by someone other than Cochrane.

I can identify only two other potentially Luciferian elements within Cochrane's letters. In another missive to Gills, he mentions a "Serpent" whom he associates with the element of Earth, which Howard considered to be a representation of Lucifer.⁴⁰ In a letter to Joseph Wilson, Cochrane also refers to "the star crossed serpent" as being the owner of "[a]ll things that are of this world."⁴¹ Howard identified this entity as Azazel, who appears as a demonic entity within traditional demonology but who was previously one of the Watchers in the apocryphal *Book of Enoch*, a core influence on Luciferian mythology.⁴² Whether these identifications are accurate or not is open to debate.

Although dismissing the legitimacy of the one piece of explicit Luciferianism within Cochrane's corpus, Oates has argued that the Luciferian elements are instead "implicit" in his writings, a claim supported

³⁷ Robert Cochrane, letter to Norman Gills, undated, reproduced in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 164.

³⁸ Shani Oates, personal communication, 6 October 2010.

³⁹ Michael Howard, "Traditional Witchcraft and: Historicity and Perpetuity: An Interview with Michael Howard," Three Hands Press, 2011, http://www.threehandspress.com/children_of_cain_interview.php (archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6EPSVusuv>).

⁴⁰ Robert Cochrane, letter to Norman Gills, undated, reproduced in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 176–77.

⁴¹ Robert Cochrane, letter to Joseph Wilson, undated, reproduced in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 26.

⁴² Michael Howard in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 29.

by Stuart Inman.⁴³ Personally, I cannot see any of these implicit references, but am an outsider who is neither a member of the Clan nor a practising occultist. Perhaps such implicit elements would be visible only to those who have had practical experience within the tradition, and who are trained in deciphering Cochrane’s “poetic mysticism.” Cochrane himself maintained: “the nature of proof can only be shown by inference and by participation, not by intellectual reasoning.”⁴⁴ Problematically, what one individual considers implicit within a given text might be very different to what another might see within those very same words; deciphering implicit meanings remains firmly within the realm of subjectivity. The fact that such elements cannot be explicitly highlighted forces me to conclude that such evidence is inadmissible for the purposes of historical enquiry.

The Evidence of the Stannard Documents

Up until his death, one of the coven’s founding members, George Stannard, kept many documents pertaining to its organisation and development in his possession. Following his death, these were examined and published by John of Monmouth in his important volume, *Genuine Witchcraft is Explained*, which I have positively reviewed elsewhere.⁴⁵ These documents include drafts for rituals, letters sent among coven members, and signed oaths, written primarily by Cochrane but with contributions from a variety of group members. It is certainly worth examining these sources for theological references, although it must be born in mind that such documents rarely have a singular authorship, and are often draft documents, works in progress representing ideas expressed by the Clan but which might not have represented their beliefs in practice.

One of the most important of these documents is also one of the earliest: “The Writ and Constitution of a Coven to Diana.” Existing in three separate forms, each dating from 1962, it represents attempts by the early coven to agree on a set of principles satisfactory to all six of its then members. Within the main text of the first draft of the document are various references to “the Goddess,” ultimately removed by the final revision. In another passage,

⁴³ Shani Oates, personal communication, 6 October 2010; Stuart Inman, “Traditional Witchcraft” talk, Treadwell’s Bookstore, 23 September 2010; personal communication, 07 November 2012.

⁴⁴ Robert Cochrane, “Faith of the Wise,” 13, reproduced in Jones et al, *Roebuck*, 57.

⁴⁵ John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*; Ethan Doyle White, review of John of Monmouth’s *Genuine Witchcraft is Explained*, *The Pomegranate* 3, no. 2 (2011): 280–82.

also removed from the final revision, it refers to the coven's Maiden, High Priestess and eldest female member each embodying one of three aspects of the Triple Goddess: "the Virgin," "the Mother" and "the Destroyer," forming a "Moon triad."⁴⁶ The choice of Diana as the group's goddess figure is quite possibly adopted from Leland's *Aradia*, a book that had a clear influence on the Clan's early rites; certainly, three of their invocations directly quoted Leland's gospel.⁴⁷ In two documents devoted to magical dances and purposes, both the Godhead and the Goddess are referenced, as is "the Goddess Dance" to be performed on May Day.⁴⁸ The Goddess once more reappears in the written instructions for a fertility rite known as "Drawing Down the Moon," in which the goddess is invoked "to manifest through Her devotees,"⁴⁹ and she appears yet again within the "Rite of Initiation."⁵⁰ "The Theory of Witch Practice" speaks of both the Goddess and the God, also noting that "the names of the Gods are found in Arthurian Legends," with a written message to Ronald White noting that Cochrane believed these names were "Gwen and Arthur."⁵¹ This god is described as "Old Pan, Earth God" in the document discussing Midsummer rituals, alongside a Goddess who is "Mother of all Creation, Womb of the world, Nature, Divine Goddess."⁵²

As these examples should make clear, the Goddess, who is in at least one example referred to as Diana, played a key role in the coven's early theology. She was accompanied by a god, who was on at least one occasion referred to as Pan, the horned-goat deity of Arcadia, and both were seen in context of a wider Godhead. The overall picture presented by these documents is one of

⁴⁶ "The Writ and Constitution of a Coven to Diana," three revisions, 1962, reproduced in John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*, 371–73, 381–82, 390. For further commentary, see John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*, 12–13.

⁴⁷ "Aradia Conjurations," not dated, reproduced in John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*, 741–73. For further commentary, see John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*, 30.

⁴⁸ "Dance Forms and their Meaning" and "Magical Purposes and Dances," 1961–62, reproduced in John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*, 395–405. For further commentary, see John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*, 24–35, 475.

⁴⁹ "Drawing Down the Moon," 1961–62, reproduced in John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*, 406–07. For further commentary, see John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*, 33–34, 475.

⁵⁰ "Rite of Initiation," 9 March 1962, reproduced in John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*, 412–16. For further commentary, see John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*, 42–43, 475.

⁵¹ "Theory of Witch Practice," 1961–62, reproduced in John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*, 418–20. For further commentary, see John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*, 43–46, 476.

⁵² "Midsummer Ritual," late 1962–63, reproduced in John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*, 425–30. For further commentary, see John of Monmouth, *Genuine Witchcraft*, 476.

a Clan theology that is Pagan, and indeed fertility-based, in structure, much in keeping with the theology of Wiccan traditions operating in Britain at the time, influenced to a clear extent by Robert Graves's *The White Goddess* (1948). There is nothing here that explicitly suggests any Luciferian or Gnostic elements, even though there is an influence from *Aradia*.

The Evidence of Doreen Valiente and Evan John Jones

Our third line of enquiry involves an examination of the published writings provided by two prominent British esotericists who had been Clan members during the 1960s: Doreen Valiente and Evan John Jones. Having come to be venerated by Pagans and occultists across the world as the “Mother of Modern Witchcraft,” Valiente had first entered the world of the Craft in 1952, when she began a correspondence with Gerald Gardner, who subsequently initiated her into his tradition the following year. Rising to become High Priestess of his Bricket Wood coven, she made a significant contribution to the Gardnerian liturgy before splitting unamicably from Gardner in 1957. Maintaining her belief in the Murrayite Witch-Cult, she set about contacting other supposed survivals of this religion, meeting Charles Cardell, enrolling in Raymond Howard's Coven of Atho mail-order course and eventually encountering Cochrane through mutual friends. Fascinated by his tradition, Valiente asked him so many questions that he later felt that he had to initiate her so that “she will understand.”⁵³ She worked within his Clan until *circa* 1965, when she developed misgivings over his antagonistic attitudes towards traditions other than his own, and when it reached the point that he called for a “Night of the Long Knives” against the Gardnerians, she “rose up and challenged him in the presence of the rest of the coven,” proclaiming that she was “fed up with listening to all this senseless malice” and promptly left.⁵⁴ Upon Cochrane's death she remained in contact with various other members of the Clan, including his widow and Evan John Jones, although went on to focus her practices elsewhere.

In one chapter of her autobiography-cum-history of Pagan Witchcraft, *The Rebirth of Witchcraft* (1989), Valiente provides us with what is our best surviving eyewitness account of the Clan's practices. In this she documents not only her own personal impressions of Cochrane and his Craft, but also some of their rituals and beliefs, something that is of great help in assessing

⁵³ Robert Cochrane, letter to William Gray, undated, reproduced in Cochrane and Jones, *Robert Cochrane Letters*, 102.

⁵⁴ Valiente, *Rebirth*, 129.

them. She states that the Clan “observed the Sabbats and the Esbats on the same dates” as the Gardnerians, and that they “worshipped the Goddess and the God as the ancient powers of primordial nature.” Several pages on she comments on Cochrane’s “devotion to the goddess of the witches” and remarks that the forked top of the “ritual stang”⁵⁵ represented “the horns of the Horned God.”⁵⁶ She then proceeded to relate that:

As in Gerald Gardner’s version of the Craft, the Old One, the Horned God was the ruler of death and what lies beyond, as well as the power of male fertility, whereas the Goddess was the giver of life... But in Cochrane’s rituals the emphasis on the Old One as the Lord of Death seems to me, on re-reading them, to be much more obsessive than it was in Gerald Gardner’s.⁵⁷

As should be apparent, the picture of Cochrane’s Clan painted by Valiente is one that is very much in keeping with the wider Wiccan movement, appearing theologically similar to the Gardnerian Craft. She explicitly states that Cochrane’s Clan adhered to a Horned God-Goddess duotheism, and makes no suggestion that Cochranian Witchcraft was Luciferian, or even contained Luciferian elements. Oates has suggested that this was because Valiente wished to comment on her experiences with Cochrane in terms that would have been understood more generally in the esoteric community, a point of view with which I respectfully disagree; Valiente’s descriptions of the Clan theology are particularly explicit, and I see no indication that she was using them as a veil to explain Luciferianism.⁵⁸

Then living in London, Evan John Jones had been introduced to Cochrane and the Clan through Jane, with whom he worked at the same company. Following Cochrane’s suicide, he settled down to a life away from the occult limelight in Brighton with his wife and three children, running a coven as Clan Magister.⁵⁹ Jones released his first book, *Witchcraft: A Tradition Renewed*, in 1990, and an introduction was provided by Valiente, in which she remarked that the book was about “an older witchcraft” than Gardnerianism, one that was rooted in the practices of the Witch-Cult—practices which she believed would disturb a great many contemporary

⁵⁵ Within the Traditional Craft movement, a “stang” is a two-pronged ritual implement, typically a forked stick or a pitchfork

⁵⁶ Valiente, *Rebirth*, 117–18, 121, 123.

⁵⁷ Valiente, *Rebirth*, 123–24.

⁵⁸ Shani Oates, personal communication, 6 October 2010.

⁵⁹ Jones, Cochrane, Howard, *Roebuck in the Thicket*, 9; Jones, *Witchcraft*, 17; Jones, “Interview with Evan John Jones,” *The Cauldron* 107 (February 2003); Michael Howard, personal communication, 25 October 2010.

Pagans, also stating that Witchcraft as a faith revolved around “the primeval Mother Goddess and the Horned God.”⁶⁰ Jones noted that the book was not a text containing the practices of “an old tradition that has been handed down to me through my family,” as several recently published books had dubiously claimed. Instead, Jones asserted, it offered a combination of “old and new,” a mix of his own personal ideas and those taught to him by “one who was of the old witch tradition” (i.e. Cochrane) accompanied with those learned “from a very knowledgeable and scholarly author and witch” (i.e. Valiente).⁶¹ As his explanation makes clear, the book was not designed to accurately expound on the original beliefs and practices of Cochrane’s coven, but instead used them as bedrock upon which much else had been built. Its utility as a source for learning about early Cochraneanism is therefore limited, but it is nonetheless worthy of examination.

The one thing that is notable about the book is that the theology that it propagates is inherently Pagan in nature, and there is no mention of Lucifer or overt exposition of Luciferian theology. It discusses the “Old Gods and the Goddess,” referring to the “Mother Goddess” and the “Horned God,” as well as the “Four Great Sabbats” of Candlemas, May Eve, Lammas, and Hallowe'en.⁶² Oates has related that in one of her conversations with Jones, which would have taken place in the late 1990s or early 2000s, he informed her that when he had originally approached the publisher with the manuscript, it included a great deal of Luciferian material. According to this account, the publishers disapproved, and only agreed to publish the work if these elements were expunged.⁶³ Unfortunately, I was unable to corroborate this with the Robert Hale Company, who have no surviving correspondence from that period.⁶⁴ It remains an intriguing idea, but is unprovable unless earlier drafts of the text come to light.

Jones’s next book appeared six years later in the form of a collaboration with the Colorado-based Pagan and professional academic Chas S. Clifton (1951–), who had just finished production of the four-volume *Witchcraft Today* anthology series for the Llewellyn company. Jones contributed to the third of these volumes with a piece titled “Sacred Mask and Sacred Trance,” in which he commented that “unlike the [San] Bushman, we do not see the Godhead in animal form; instead we have the old Horned God and

⁶⁰ Doreen Valiente, “Preface,” in Jones, *Witchcraft*, 7–13.

⁶¹ Jones, *Witchcraft*, 15.

⁶² Jones, *Witchcraft*, 19, 23, 158–59.

⁶³ Shani Oates, personal communication, 10 October 2010.

⁶⁴ Gill Jackson, Managing Director of Robert Hale, personal communication, 27 October 2011.

Goddess.”⁶⁵ This piece led to correspondence with Clifton, who had gained an interest in Cochrane from his involvement in the 1734 Craft. In the resulting book, *Sacred Mask, Sacred Dance*, also published by Llewellyn, the duo discussed the use of masks as ritual props to induce shamanistic experiences, a technique Jones had been experimenting with. The final chapter of the work was devoted to a brief exposition on Cochrane and his Clan, in which Jones referred to a belief in “the God of vegetation” and “the Goddess,” proceeding to reference “the Old Horned God” and “Triple Goddess,” and stating that Cochrane stressed the existence of a Godhead behind all these deities. He furthermore commented that “we believe that the Godhead manifests itself in the aspect of the Goddess, the Horned God, and the Young Horned King—the mother, the father, and the child,” however here he appears to be referring to his then-current praxes, rather than the beliefs of Cochrane back in the 1960s.⁶⁶ Michael Howard has informed me that this book contained ideas that Jones had adopted from an Oxfordshire group separate to the Clan whom he believed had been founded in the 1940s, operating within a Northern European mythos. Elsewhere, Jones commented that this group were “Horned God orientated.”⁶⁷ Clifton and Jones would only meet in person in 1999, when the former was attending an archaeology conference at the University of Southampton. Clifton took time out to visit Jones and his wife Val in Brighton for a few days, where they spent their time discussing esotericism and military history. When I asked Clifton if Jones had referred to any Luciferian elements within Cochranianism, he informed me that he could not recall any mention of Lucifer or Luciferianism, either within their correspondence or in person.⁶⁸

Jones and Clifton had planned a second collaboration, *The Castle and the Cave: Further Steps in Traditional Witchcraft*, and a manuscript had been produced, although personal issues meant that it never saw completion. Parts of the original manuscript ended up in *The Roebuck in the Thicket*, co-edited with Howard, while Oates would later edit the manuscript, publishing it as *The Star Crossed Serpent: Volume I* in 2012. Again, it contains references to “the Goddess, the Old Horned God, and the Young Horn King,” but no explicit reference to Lucifer.⁶⁹ As such, we have no textual, historical

⁶⁵ Evan John Jones, “Sacred Mask and Sacred Trance,” in Chas S. Clifton, ed. *Witchcraft Today III: Witchcraft and Shamanism* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Llewellyn, 1994), 175; Chas S. Clifton, personal communication, 05 April 2012.

⁶⁶ Jones with Clifton, *Sacred Mask*, 157–59.

⁶⁷ Michael Howard, personal communication, 26 October 2010; Jones, “Interview,” 8.

⁶⁸ Chas S. Clifton, personal communication, 05 April 2012.

⁶⁹ Chas S. Clifton, “Living Between Two Worlds: TWPT Talks to Chas Clifton,” *The*

evidence that Jones ever saw Cochrane's Craft as a Luciferian spiritual path, and instead it seems he devoted much time to espousing a tradition that was based in contemporary Paganism. That is not to say that there were no Luciferian aspects to early Cochranianism, for it might have been that Jones was either unaware of them at this point or intentionally wished to keep them a secret. Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence, but equally absence of evidence is not in itself evidence of intentional secrecy.

The evidence of the contemporary Clans

In 1982, a married American couple named Ann and Dave Finnin travelled to England in search of information about Cochrane. First becoming involved in the Craft in 1974 through the Gardnerian Ed Fitch, they had befriended Joseph Wilson and joined his 1734 tradition before founding their own Californian coven, The Roebuck, in 1976. In England they visited the ceremonial magician William "Bill" Gray, a friend of Cochrane's who gave them the deceased Magister's own ritual cord and put them in contact with Evan John Jones. Jones proceeded to show them several of the places where the Clan once worked, teaching them a number of the coven's ritual techniques, and kept in contact when they returned home, guiding them in their praxes by correspondence. In 1983, Jones suggested that they be initiated into the Clan, undertaking an apprenticeship, again by correspondence, until they could return to England in May 1986 where, on a Brighton hill, he adopted Ann into the Clan through a laying on of hands, after which she was allowed to initiate Dave. Returning to California, they set up their own Clan of Tubal Cain as Maid and Magister, working as a closed inner adjunct to The Roebuck.⁷⁰ The Finnins have maintained that the Cochranian tradition as they received it was neither Luciferian nor Gnostic in content, suspecting that these must have been later additions made during the 1990s. In their eyes, it was a Pagan tradition, not dissimilar in certain respects to Gardnerianism, but with definite distinctions in its ethos and many of its practices.⁷¹ They noted the reference to Lucet in

Wiccan/Pagan Times, July 1999, <http://www.twpt.com/clifton.htm> (archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6DqJy9w2D>); Evan John Jones and Shani Oates, *The Star Crossed Serpent: Volume I* (Oxford: Mandrake, 2012), 9, 64.

⁷⁰ Ann Finnin, *The Forge of Tubal Cain*, (Sunland, CA.: Pendraig, 2008), 12, 23–36, 53–60, 74–75; Ann and Dave Finnin, "The Clan of Tubal Cain," *Ancient Keltic Church*, September 1997, <http://ancientkelticchurch.org/CTubalCain/index.html> (archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6DEXjORRB>).

⁷¹ Ann and Dave Finnin, personal communication, 13 September 2009.

Cochrane's letters but decided to interpret this not as Lucifer but as a mythological figure from the mediaeval mythologies of the British Isles: the Irish Lugh Samildanach, and the Welsh Lleu, whom they saw as interchangeable figures.⁷²

During the mid-1990s, Jones contacted Michael Howard, editor of *The Cauldron*, in which Jones would publish a series of articles. Although an initiated Gardnerian well acquainted with the Pagan movement, Howard was also a Luciferian, having been introduced to the tradition in the 1960s by the ceremonial magician Madeline Montalban (1910–1982), founder of the Order of the Morning Star.⁷³ By the time of their meeting, Jones was operating the Clan through a coven in Sussex, occasionally being joined by Cochrane's widow Jane for magical workings.⁷⁴ The duo decided to collaborate on the production of an anthology assembling several of Jones's articles from *The Cauldron* along with the majority of Cochrane's own published articles. The anthology gained the blessing of Jane Bowers, and was published by Capall Bann as *The Roebuck in the Thicket*. They followed this work with a sequel, *The Robert Cochrane Letters*, which gathered together the late Magister's correspondence with Gills, Gray and Wilson.⁷⁵

It would be through Howard that Jones was introduced to Shani Oates. Oates was an initiated Gardnerian, but after reading one of Jones's articles in *The Cauldron* felt sufficiently awed that she wrote to Howard in order to pass on her appreciation to its author. Thus, a correspondence began in 1996, and in 1998 Jones invited her to his Brighton home, where he announced his intention to appoint her Clan Maid. A month later, in September, she returned in order to undergo the necessary rites, and after appointing a Clan Magister, "Robin the Dart," the following year, Jones handed over the reigns of the Clan, giving the couple the group's regalia.⁷⁶ In ensuing years, Oates emerged as a well known figure in the British Craft community, giving public talks, writing for a variety of magazines, and publishing a series

⁷² Finnin, *Forge*, 43.

⁷³ Michael Howard, "A Seeker's Journey," *The Cauldron* 135 (2010): 3–11. For more on Montalban see Julia Philips, *Madeline Montalban: The Magus of St Giles* (London: Neptune Press, 2012).

⁷⁴ Michael Howard, personal communication, 25 October 2010. Although referred to as "Jean" in Valiente, *Rebirth*, the identity of Jane Bowers was first publicly revealed in Semple, *Poisoned Chalice*.

⁷⁵ Michael Howard, personal communication, 26 October 2010.

⁷⁶ Jones and Oates, *Star Crossed Serpent: Vol I*, 9; Shani Oates, "Shani Oates: Maid of the Clan of Tubal Cain," *Patheos*, 25 January 2011, <http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/Shani-Oates-Maid-of-the-Clan-of-Tubal-Cain-Part-1-Le-Corbeau-1-25-2011.html> (archived at <http://www.webcitation.org/6DEXtMQOz>).

of well-received books on the subject.⁷⁷ It was she who first brought the claim that Cochraneanism was Luciferian and Gnostic to public attention, asserting that the Clan “bears little resemblance to Paganism” (here echoing Cochrane’s own comments), but involves the belief in a “Great Higher Council of Seven,” a group of non-corporeal “angelic beings” who had tutored mankind during prehistory, teaching them such secrets as the use of fire, agriculture and metallurgy. She believed that echoes of these benefactors can be found in various mythologies across the world, but primarily those of Mesopotamia, and that it was “this (spiritual) ancestral legacy that we celebrate, honour and revere within our rites and ceremonies.”⁷⁸ She emphatically rejected ideas of a Wiccan Horned God-Goddess duality within the Clan mythos, informing sociologist David V. Barrett that the deities were actually

the horn god, as in the horns of Moses... and the female Creatrix is a Triune deity, most closely expressed as the embodiment of Truth, Love and Beauty – the Gnostic Triple Mothers, not in any sense even remotely connected to the Goddess of popular neo-paganism.⁷⁹

Jones died in 2003, but in his final years corresponded with Caroline Tully, an Australian involved in both Wicca and Thelema. At a time in her life when she was taking a practical interest in Traditional Witchcraft, Tully contacted Jones, and received two letters back during the course of 2002, in which he discussed the possibility of her opening a branch of the Clan in Australia. The letters contained no mention of Luciferianism or Gnosticism, but they contained no explicit discussions of Paganism either.⁸⁰

Conclusions

Now that I have explored the available evidence, what can be said regarding the nature of Cochrane and the early Clan’s theology? In his writings,

⁷⁷ See Shani Oates, *Tubelo’s Green Fire*; Shani Oates, *The Arcane Veil: Ten Discourses on the Craft and the History of Magic*, (Oxford: Mandrake, 2011); Jones and Oates, *Star Crossed Serpent Vol I*; Shani Oates, *The Star Crossed Serpent: Volume II* (Oxford: Mandrake, 2012); Shani Oates, *A Paean for Hekate* (n.d.: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012); Shani Oates, *The People of Goda* (n.d.: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012).

⁷⁸ Oates, *Tubelo’s Green Fire*, 10, 15–17.

⁷⁹ Oates, quoted in David V. Barrett, *A Brief Guide to Secret Religions: A Complete Guide to Hermetic, Pagan and Esoteric Beliefs* (London: Constable & Robinson, 2011), 303.

⁸⁰ Evan John Jones, letters to Caroline Tully, 30 April and 6 June 2002.

Cochrane made it clear that he believed in a Godhead, an entity apparently pantheistic or panentheistic in basis, and sought to glimpse this divine Truth through a path of mysticism. He also believed in “Gods,” entities that his coven sought to interact with, publicly referring to a Witches’ triad between the God, Goddess and Horn Child. His private writings speak of many different gods and mythological figures, only one of whom is Lucifer, who is given no special prominence. Problematically, the authenticity of this piece of evidence is in doubt, with some believing that it was a later addition to the corpus; further, careful specialist analysis of the document in question is required. The Stannard documents, which go beyond Cochrane’s personal theological beliefs to cover those of the entire early coven, once again refer to a Godhead, but place a great emphasis on the Goddess, identified as Diana, and a lesser one on the God, at least once identified as Pan. This general theological structure is not dissimilar from that being practised by Gardner and other Pagan Witches at the same time, and an argument could be made, based upon this evidence alone, that early Cochraneanism was a tradition within the Wiccan movement.

When discussing Cochrane’s Clan in her published work, Doreen Valiente considered it comparable in several respects to Gardnerian Wicca, stating that it revolved around two deities, a Horned God and a Goddess. A very similar portrait was painted by Evan John Jones, who also claimed that Cochrane’s Clan had held to a belief in a God, Goddess and Horn Child, each an aspect of a higher Godhead, within his published writings. This too accords with the image of Cochrane’s Craft as a contemporary Pagan tradition. Jones furthermore made no mention of Luciferianism in his extensive communications with Ann and Dave Finnin, or in his lengthy discussions with Chas S. Clifton or Michael Howard. In fact, there is no textual or oral evidence that he believed there to be Luciferian elements within Cochrane’s Craft from 1966 through to 1998, and instead he repeatedly portrayed it as a Pagan tradition with theological beliefs akin to those of various Wiccan traditions of the same era. Here we have two possibilities; that either he had been hiding the Luciferian elements from outsiders during those decades, or that he only began to see Cochraneanism as a Luciferian tradition himself in the late 1990s, perhaps as a result of a spiritual experience or a new understanding of Cochrane’s writings. I have not been able to find the evidence to prove either case.

From the historian’s perspective, the Luciferian elements within Cochranean Witchcraft can only be securely dated to the early twenty-first century, when they were propagated as a part of the Clan praxes of the group led by Shani Oates. One possibility is that Oates herself inserted these

Luciferian elements, but she maintains that they were passed to her from Jones. For Oates and her Clan, Cochrane's Craft, as a living, evolving tradition, is Luciferian-Gnostic in structure, and from a religious studies perspective, these beliefs are entirely valid on their own, without the need for a clear historical precedent. However, at the same time there is the Clan of Tubal Cain being run by Ann and Dave Finnin in California as an explicitly Pagan tradition, one that could be categorised as Wiccan. Ann Finnin has commented that she has "serious doctrinal issues with [Oates's] interpretation" of Cochranean Witchcraft, and that "the two interpretations are very different."⁸¹ This is certainly true, and Cochrane's Craft is now a magico-religious tradition divided along theological lines starker than the Catholic-Protestant divide within Western Christianity.

So, faced with the fact that most evidence strongly suggests that Cochrane's Craft of the 1960s was broadly contemporary Pagan in nature, what of Oates's claim that Cochrane was following a Gnostic and Luciferian spiritual path? Although it would not be possible to describe it as *likely* given the evidence at hand, it is certainly *possible* that Cochrane personally adhered to a Luciferian theology, even if this was not made explicit within the wider Clan's theology. He might have felt that this was a personal matter, and not something that should be shared with his coven comrades, fearing that they might have been put off by any diabolical undertones in the use of Lucifer as a deity. It is clear that the early coven was influenced by *Aradia*, a book that blended Pagan and Luciferian elements into a singular theology, so Cochrane would have been aware of the possibility of venerating Lucifer as a Witches' deity. It *could* be that Luciferian and Pagan elements co-existed in the coven, the former being held to by Cochrane while other members favoured explicitly Pagan theological structures. Certainly, Stannard and White seemed to favour Paganism, forming the explicitly Pagan Regency in 1966, while in his later years Cochrane was beginning to feel that he wanted to move away from coven work and undertake his Craft solitarily or with Jane. In such a scenario, we might suggest that figures like Valiente and the Finnins, having a familiarity with Gardnerian-based Wicca, naturally emphasised those Wiccan elements of Cochraneanism that appealed to them, negating the more implicit Luciferian aspects. Equally, Evan John Jones could have come to embrace these Luciferian elements towards the end of his life, passing the tradition on to Shani Oates with this new understanding of it. Although highly conjectural and lacking in supporting evidence, this scenario remains within the realms of possibility.

Despite a rich string of contenders ranging from Aleister Crowley to

⁸¹ Finnin, quoted in Barrett, *Brief Guide*, 307.

Andrew Chumbley, Robert Cochrane remains perhaps the most enigmatic occultist of twentieth-century Britain. Here was a man who could found a tradition, heavily influence several others, become an inspirational figurehead for the wider Traditional Witchcraft movement and yet still leave a veil of enigma around his core beliefs. Was he, like Gerald Gardner, Charles Cardell and Sybil Leek, trying to establish a tradition in the vein of the Murrayite Witch-Cult that would be devoted to a Horned God and a Goddess and commemorate Sabbats? The evidence could certainly support this conclusion. Or was he instead purporting a tradition of Luciferianism with underpinning Gnostic philosophies that he connected with earlier witches and magical practitioners? From the evidence at hand, I'm forced to the conclusion that this seems unlikely. Perhaps, as I have suggested, his true beliefs were somewhat of a syncretic mixture of both, having drawn from both Luciferian ideas and the literary sources behind the blossoming of Pagan Witchcraft. Hopefully further evidence will come to light—just as the Stannard documents have done in recent years—which will help to either confirm, or successfully refute, my hypothesis and shine further light on this fascinating historical figure.

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