

Sympathy for the Devil A Review of Recent Publications in the Study of Satanism

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Dyrendal, Asbjørn, James R. Lewis, and Jesper Aa. Petersen. *The Invention of Satanism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. ISBN: 9780195181104.

Introvigne, Massimo. *Satanism: A Social History*. Leiden: Brill, 2016. ISBN: 9004288287.

van Luijk, Ruben. *Children of Lucifer: The Origins of Modern Religious Satanism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. ISBN: 9780190275105.

Within the realms of occultism and alternative religiosity, modern religious Satanism punches well above its weight. For a spiritual milieu that likely holds the allegiance of no more than 100,000 worldwide, it attracts considerable interest and occupies a prominent place in the public imagination. Although academic research into this sector of the cultic milieu has long been somewhat patchy, over the past decade things have begun to change as the subject has attracted the attention of a growing number of scholars and well-established academic publishers. Recently, three new books have appeared, written by some of the foremost figures in this burgeoning field, which help to both advance and take stock of what we know about Satanism.

As recognised by Asbjørn Dyrendal, James R. Lewis, and Jesper Aagaard Petersen, the authors of *The Invention of Satanism*, Satanism is far too diverse to

be regarded as a singular religion or even as a unified movement, and thus is best understood as a broad milieu within which various groups and currents operate.¹ Perhaps best known is the atheistic current of LaVeyan Satanism, developed by the American Anton Szandor LaVey (born Howard Stanton Levey; 1930–1997), the man who founded the Church of Satan in 1966 and published *The Satanic Bible* in 1969. LaVey's carnivalesque creation represents an intriguing blend of right-wing libertarianism, ceremonial magic, and kitsch shock-tactics, presenting Satan not as a real entity but as a personification of humanity's intrinsically animal nature. Other Satanic groups instead regard Satan as a literal deity worthy of veneration. The most prominent movement in this theistic sector of the milieu is the Temple of Set, established by the American Michael Aquino in 1975. Blending elements of religious Satanism with modern Paganism, Aquino's Setians venerate Satan in the form of Set, a deity drawn from the pantheon of ancient Egypt whom they believe has assisted humanity throughout its evolution. A similar crossover between the Pagan and the Satanic can be seen in the Order of Nine Angles, an occult movement originating in Britain which focuses not so much on the figure of Satan himself, but on the antinomian and transgressive status that being a "Satanist" accords. Moreover, not all manifestations of Satanism are explicitly religious; for example, many artists, particularly those active in the fields of literature and rock music, have been content to play with the imagery of Satan in a manner that glorifies or praises him without actively engaging in veneration or worship.

Individual studies of Satanism had appeared sporadically prior to the emergence of the study of Satanism as a distinct field. These included early studies of the Church of Satan, the Process Church of the Final Judgement, and the Temple of Set, and later a historical monograph on the history of Satanism and an encyclopaedia on the subject.² Much attention was also given to

¹ Asbjørn Dyrendal, James R. Lewis, and Jesper Aa. Petersen, *The Invention of Satanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 4. This framework has previously been applied in Jesper Aagard Petersen, "Introduction: Embracing Satan," in *Contemporary Religious Satanism*, ed. Jesper Aagard Petersen (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 5; Jesper Aagard Petersen and Asbjørn Dyrendal, "Satanism," in *The Cambridge Companion to New Religious Movements*, eds. Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 216.

² Randall H. Alfred, "The Church of Satan," in *The New Religious Consciousness*, eds. Charles Y. Glock and Robert N. Bellah (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 180–202; William S. Bainbridge, *Satan's Power: A Deviant Psychotherapy Cult* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Gini Graham Scott, *The Magicians: A Study of the Use of Power in a Black Magic Group* (New York: Irvington, 1983); Gareth J. Medway, *Lure of the Sinister: The Unnatural History of Satanism* (New York: New York University Press, 2001); James R. Lewis, ed. *Satanism Today: An Encyclopedia of Religion, Folklore, and Popular Culture* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2001).

the Satanic ritual abuse hysteria which spread across several Western countries during the 1980s and early 1990s.³ Other studies explored the place of Satanism in folklore and other manifestations of popular culture.⁴ Despite these earlier publications, the academic study of Satanism as a distinct field within the wider study of religion only got going in the late 2000s. For instance, the past decade has witnessed the publication of one sourcebook and two academic anthologies devoted to the subject, as well as at least two PhDs turned into monographs.⁵ Two conferences on the topic have also been held, one at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim (2009) and the other at Stockholm University (2011). These have been accompanied by special journal issues devoted to the subject,⁶ a range of scattered journal articles, and several articles in broader edited volumes. While we are not yet at the stage where a specific scholarly organisation or journal devoted to the subject would be warranted, it is conceivable that we are beginning to move in that direction.

The Invention of Satanism

The first of the three books to be discussed here is *The Invention of Satanism*, published by Oxford University Press. A collaborative effort, this volume is the product of three authors based in Norway: Asbjørn Dyrendal, James R. Lewis,

³ James T. Richardson, Joel Best, and David G. Bromley, ed. *The Satanism Scare* (Hawthorne: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991); J. S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend* (Chicago: Open Court, 1993); Gary Clapton, *The Satanic Ritual Abuse Controversy: Social Workers and the Social Work Press* (London: University of North London Press, 1993); Massimo Introvigne, “A Rumor of Devils: The Satanic Ritual Abuse Scare in the Mormon Church,” *Syzygy* 6, no. 1 (1997), 77–119; J. S. La Fontaine, *Speak of the Devil: Tales of Satanic Abuse in Contemporary England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁴ Bill Ellis, *Raising the Devil: Satanism, New Religions and the Media* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000); Bill Ellis, *Lucifer Ascending: The Occult in Folklore and Popular Culture* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003); Christopher Partridge and Eric Christianson, eds., *The Lure of the Dark Side: Satan and Western Demonology in Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2009).

⁵ James R. Lewis and Jesper Aagaard Petersen, eds., *The Encyclopedic Sourcebook of Satanism* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2008); Jesper Aagaard Petersen, ed., *Contemporary Religious Satanism: A Critical Anthology* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen, eds., *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Per Faxneld, *Satanic Feminism: Lucifer as the Liberator of Woman in Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Stockholm: Molin & Sorgenfrei, 2014); Kennet Granholm, *Dark Enlightenment: The Historical, Sociological, and Discursive Contexts of Contemporary Esoteric Magic* (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

⁶ Titus Hjelm edited the special issue of *Social Compass* 56, no. 4 (2009), while *International Journal for the Study of New Religions* 4, no. 2 (2013) was also devoted to Satanism.

and Jesper Aa. Petersen. This trio will be familiar to those already acquainted with the study of Satanism, as each has independently published quite a bit of material on this topic before. Indeed, much of the information that is included in *The Invention of Satanism* has been published previously, in various specialist anthologies and journal articles, but here it is both made more accessible and brought up to date with the information gleaned from Lewis' most recent sociological research.

As the authors state in the opening pages, the book is about “how Satanism was invented as a declared religious or philosophical position, and how it serves as a personal and collective identity.”⁷ In exploring these questions, it blends two main themes: one concentrates on the early development of LaVeyan Satanism, while the other focuses on a sociological analysis of the Satanic milieu's demographics. Both are worthwhile tasks, although it is a little unusual to see the two juxtaposed in such a manner; perhaps it would have been better to explore these separate themes in greater depth in the form of two separate publications.

While *The Invention of Satanism* is not specifically set up as a textbook and devotes little space to groups like the Temple of Set and the Order of Nine Angles (ONA), it nevertheless tries to cover quite a bit of ground in its exploration of the subject. It opens with a description of the different ways to define Satanism, adopting a tripartite system that divides the milieu into the “reactive, rationalist, and esoteric.” The term “reactive” is used as a “catch-all category of popular Satanism, inverted Christianity, and symbolic rebellion,” while “rationalist” Satanism is that which is paradigmatically “atheistic, sceptical, materialistic, and epicurean,” and “esoteric” Satanism is “more explicitly theistically oriented.”⁸

The book then embarks on a brief overview of the wider history of Satan and Satanism in Christian thought and the development of the early self-described Satanic groups. After this it turns more fully to the LaVeyan Satanic current, devoting both the third and fourth chapters to this topic. The former provides a rough historical and biographical overview of (what is known) of LaVey's life and the formation of his Church of Satan, while the latter focuses squarely on his best-known work, *The Satanic Bible*. Dyrendal, Lewis, and Petersen follow this with a discussion of the Satanic Panic of the 1980s and 1990s – although surprisingly do not cite the important work of Jean La Fontaine – before proceeding to a wider discussion of the demographics of the movement, here evidently relying to a large extent on Lewis' research. They discuss the ways in

⁷ Dyrendal, Lewis, and Petersen, *Invention of Satanism*, 2.

⁸ Dyrendal, Lewis, and Petersen, *Invention of Satanism*, 5–6. This is a framework previously employed, for instance, in Petersen, “Introduction,” 6.

which Satanists convert to the movement, drawing useful comparisons with conversion to another sector of the esoteric milieu, contemporary Paganism, which Lewis has studied for several decades. They then look more fully at the statistical evidence produced by surveys conducted by Lewis in 2000/2001, 2009, and 2011. In doing so they confirm the suspicion that modern religious Satanism is a largely youthful phenomenon, with involvement appearing to peak in an individual's early twenties and sharply dropping off in their thirties. At the same time, they demonstrate once again that, in clear contrast to most new religions, it is a largely male phenomenon, while also raising the interesting point that the ONA attracted a larger proportion of women than other forms of Satanism.⁹ *The Invention of Satanism* is a fairly short book at only 254 pages, and while its combination of the historical and the statistical can create a bit of a stark contrast, the end result is well worth a read, representing perhaps the best place for students to begin their exploration of this subject.

Satanism: A Social History

Massimo Introvigne, the author of the second volume to be discussed here, is a name that should be familiar to anyone interested in the academic study of new religions. As well as being a prolific author, Introvigne was responsible for the 1988 foundation of the Turin-based CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions). Satanism is one of the many subjects that have attracted his attention, and the volume discussed here is the fourth revision – and the first English-language version – of a work first published in his native Italian in 1994. In keeping with Introvigne's training as a sociologist, he defines his study as “a social history of Satanism, a conversation between history and sociology,”¹⁰ although it is the historical approach that predominates.

For the purposes of his book, Introvigne adopts a fairly narrow working definition of “Satanism” and “Luciferianism,” terms which he effectively uses as synonyms. Here, they are defined as “(1) the worship of the character identified with the name of Satan or Lucifer in the Bible, (2) by organized groups with at least a minimal organization and hierarchy, (3) through ritual or liturgical practices.”¹¹ This allows him to rein in his discussion to those groups that would more recognisably be classified as “religious,” excluding for instance the so-called “Literary Satanism” of romanticist poets like Byron and Shelley. This more

⁹ Dyrendal, Lewis, and Petersen, *Invention of Satanism*, 195.

¹⁰ Introvigne, *Satanism*, 3.

¹¹ Introvigne, *Satanism*, 3.

restricted approach has both advantages and disadvantages; on the one hand, it permits a more focused and in-depth study of religious Satanism itself, although on the other it cuts religious Satanism off from wider discourses about the Satanic in popular culture. Introvigne further subdivides religious Satanism into two forms, “rationalist” and “occult,”¹² which correspond largely to Dyrendal, Lewis, and Petersen’s categories of “rationalist” and “esoteric” Satanism.

“Part One: Proto-Satanism, 17th and 18th Centuries” is the shortest segment of the book, providing brief examinations of instances in France, Sweden, Italy, England, and Russia in which individuals living in this period may have engaged in the veneration of Satan. None of these cases are clear-cut and it remains difficult to ascertain what was actually going on in each of them. In many respects this is an area that requires fuller attention from specialists in the early modern period and its notorious witch trials. Perhaps the most important contribution here is Introvigne’s introduction of the term “folkloric Satanism” in reference to early modern practices where people in rural communities do appear to have engaged in some form of Satanic veneration.¹³

The book moves into “Part Two: Classical Satanism, 1821–1952” with a discussion of anti-Satanic discourses in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France, focusing on the paranoid conspiracy theories of writers like Alexis-Vincent-Charles Berbiguier and Joseph Bizouard. These and other individuals, most of whom were right-wing Catholics, regarded Freemasonry, Mesmerism, and Spiritualism as parts of a vast Satanic conspiracy that had been responsible for the French Revolution of 1789 and other attempts to undermine Christendom. Introvigne proceeds to a chapter-length discussion of the Taxil affair, in which two Frenchmen who declared themselves to be devout Catholics, Charles Hacks and Léo Taxil, promoted the claim that there was a vast Satanic conspiracy involving the Freemasons. Both Hacks and Taxil later maintained that the entire scenario had been a hoax to expose the gullibility of the Catholic establishment. Introvigne acknowledges that this material “tells us very little about Satanists” but highlights that it “tells us everything on anti-Satanists,” a group who are “no less important for our story than Satanists are.”¹⁴

In the following chapter, Introvigne explores what he refers to as the “Satanic Underground” which existed between 1897 and 1952. Here he outlines a variety of Satanic or quasi-Satanic groups and individuals active within the occult scene. These include the Danish Ben Kadosh, the Polish Stanisław

¹² Introvigne, *Satanism*, 9–11.

¹³ Introvigne, *Satanism*, 44.

¹⁴ Introvigne, *Satanism*, 226.

Przybyszewski, and the Paris-based Russian Maria de Nagłowska. He also discusses Aleister Crowley, the British occultist who founded the religion of Thelema and who, although not easily labelled a Satanist himself, was a strong influence on the later emergence of explicitly religious Satanism. Introvigne also returns to the place of anti-Satanists, discussing the fantasies of a Satanic conspiracy that appear in the 1929 book *L'Élué du Dragon* or the attacks on the maleficent “counter-initiates” in the work of the Traditionalist René Guénon. He rounds off the chapter with a discussion of two other movements that have some areas of commonality with Satanism but which are generally distinct: Gerald Gardner’s Wicca and Jack Parsons’ variant of Thelema. There are a few unfortunate omissions here. For instance, when discussing the development of Wicca no mention is made of Robert Cochrane, an occultist who established a coven in England’s Thames Valley. Although there is no unequivocal evidence that Cochrane had Luciferian aspects to his theology, he has certainly been understood this way by some of the later groups that have embraced his legacy.¹⁵

The final part of the book, “Contemporary Satanism, 1952–2016,” is also the longest. Introvigne sees LaVey as being, “with few exceptions ... at the origins of all contemporary Satanism,”¹⁶ and thus begins his story with an account of the life and times of the self-declared Black Pope. Later in the chapter he delves into a number of other Satanic or quasi-Satanic groups that sprang up during the 1960s and 1970s. He discusses the Process Church of the Final Judgement, a group which incorporated Satan into its Jungian-influenced theology, before providing an overview of Charles Manson who – although not a Satanist – came to be associated with Satanism in the polemics of various anti-Satanic authors. Next is the Temple of Set, which broke from the Church of Satan in a 1975 schism. This is then followed by a discussion of the Order of Nine Angles, a more extreme manifestation of Satanic thought which emerged in Britain, initially combining Satanic ideas with explicitly Neo-Nazi material. The chapter also includes brief mentions of smaller groups such as the Society of the Dark Lily, the Order of the Left Hand Path, and the Joy of Satan.

Introvigne next turns the reader’s attention to the great Satanism Scare that spread across various Western nations in the 1980s and early 1990s. He outlines

¹⁵ Ethan Doyle White, “An Elusive Roebuck: Luciferianism and Paganism in Robert Cochrane’s Witchcraft,” *Correspondences* 1, no. 1 (2013), 75–101; Fredrik Gregorius, “Luciferian Witchcraft: At the Crossroads between Paganism and Luciferianism,” in *The Devil’s Party: Satanism in Modernity*, eds. Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 229–49.

¹⁶ Introvigne, *Satanism*, 299.

how the hysteria about ritualised sexual abuse of children being carried out by Satanic groups emerged and spread during these decades and also how it finally declined. Rightly perceiving opposition to Satanism as a core part of the Satanic phenomenon, he also details the actions of the Christian counter-Satanism movement in this period, examining the movement's criticism of rock music and role-playing games like *Dungeons and Dragons*. Although the hysteria about Satanism has long since died down in the United States and United Kingdom, Introvigne raises the pertinent (and often overlooked) point that it survives in other parts of Europe and Latin America. In particular he brings his own expertise regarding the Italian situation to wider attention, detailing the existence of a number of allegations and trials for Satanic ritual abuse that have taken place in that country over the last two decades.

In the penultimate chapter, Introvigne tackles the role of Satanism in black metal, a sub-genre of heavy metal that has proved particularly popular in Norway and other Scandinavian countries since its emergence in the 1980s. While a discussion of Satanic black metal is no doubt vital to fully appreciating the place of Satanism in modern Western culture, the inclusion of an entire chapter on the subject somewhat undermines the definition of religious Satanism that Introvigne has employed: many of the Black Metal groups discussed do not appear to be part of organised Satanic groups engaged in ritualised activities, making them in some sense nearer to the literary Satanists that Introvigne avoids discussing rather than to organised groups like the Church of Satan or Temple of Set. Introvigne also mentions the place of Satan in several earlier, pre-heavy metal rock bands, although it was a little surprising to see no mention of one of the most prominent rock songs of the era: "Sympathy for the Devil" by the Rolling Stones.

Introvigne ends the volume with a chapter detailing the place of religious Satanism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. He discusses LaVey's final years and the role of the Church of Satan and its various LaVeyan spin-offs that have formed posthumously. He then offers briefer overviews of a range of Satanic groups that have popped up in recent decades, including Michael Ford's Greater Church of Lucifer, Michael Bertiaux's Neo-Luciferian Church, and the Satanic Temple, a US-based group which has attracted much publicity in the past few years for its public stunts testing the boundaries of religious freedom. Although Introvigne has helped to dismiss many of the erroneous and hyperbolic charges made against Satanists (and alleged Satanists) over the last quarter of a century, in this chapter he does highlight the existence of certain small groups, such as Sweden's Temple of the Black Light and Italy's Beast of Satan, whose practices have culminated in murder.

Introvigne's *magnum opus* is a product of many decades of research, and accordingly reaches a total of 665 numbered-pages in length,¹⁷ making it the longest of the three books under review here. A number of prose errors notwithstanding, Introvigne's work is generally well written, and it is a shame that Brill's copy-editing did not match the standard of the book itself. Moreover, given the exorbitant cover price of €197.00 (£156.00; \$255.00) for a hardback, and no cheaper paperback option available, this is a book that is going to be restricted almost entirely to select university libraries and sadly will never reach the wider readership that it deserves.

Children of Lucifer: The Origins of Modern Religious Satanism

The last of the three books under review here is *Children of Lucifer: The Origins of Modern Religious Satanism*. A 613-page, extensively referenced tome, *Children of Lucifer* is based on van Luijk's PhD thesis, conducted at Tilburg University and then Radboud University Nijmegen. As with *The Invention of Satanism*, *Children of Lucifer* has been published by Oxford University Press, and is situated within their Oxford Studies in Western Esotericism series. At £25.99 (\$39.95), it is reasonably priced for a work of this nature and thus has the opportunity of reaching a (much deserved) wider audience. There is no questioning that this is a dense work, which has resulted in the adoption of a frustratingly small font size, although the prose is engaging and would pose little problem for those unfamiliar with the shibboleths of academia.

Van Luijk's "working definition" is considerably wider than that adopted by Introvigne: he refers to Satanism as "the intentional, religiously motivated veneration of Satan."¹⁸ This allows him to devote greater attention to artistic expressions of Satanism, in addition to the organised ritualism that served as the focus for Introvigne. While this broadens the amount of material, it also forces van Luijk to severely trim back in other areas. The space given to many of the twentieth and twenty-first century religious Satanist groups is far more limited than it is in Introvigne's work, focusing instead on the poetic and literary expressions of Satanism (and anti-Satanism) produced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For this reason, van Luijk's work could even be seen primarily as a history of literature.

¹⁷ A deliberate nod to the Satanic 666, perhaps?

¹⁸ van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer*, 2.

Van Luijk's working definition allows him to begin his historical narrative at an earlier point than Introvigne, delving into the development of the idea of Satan in ancient and medieval Europe before providing an overview of the witch trials that spread across early modern Christendom. In the ensuing chapter he explores "Romantic" or "Literary" Satanism, discussing the place of Satan in the work of romanticist figures like Shelley, Byron, Victor Hugo, and William Blake. In the next chapter, van Luijk turns his attention to Satanism in nineteenth-century counter-culture, devoting most of his discussion to the changing views of Satan in the work of the highly influential French occultist Éliphas Lévi. Van Luijk's analysis of Lévi is most welcome; however, it comes at the expense of several other groups that would have contributed significantly to his narrative. The place of Lucifer in the Blavatskian Theosophical movement is for instance accorded very little space, while other groups receive no mention at all. Perhaps the most significant omissions are two nineteenth-century British esoteric groups which incorporated Satanic and diabolist elements into their practices: the Society of Horsemen and the Society of Toadmen.¹⁹ Some of these elements – such as the reverence for Cain – were also allegedly present in forms of twentieth-century English folk magic, including that of groups which influenced Andrew Chumbley's Cultus Sabbati in the 1990s,²⁰ another Luciferian group that (unfortunately) makes no appearance in any of the three books reviewed here.

In a brief intermezzo, van Luijk discusses the work of the French poet Charles Baudelaire, arguing that he can be seen as a transitional figure bridging the gap between the Romantic Satanists and the attitudes that emerged in the fin de siècle. The next chapter delves more fully into the late nineteenth-century French milieu, dealing in particular with Joris-Karl Huysmans' 1891 novel *La-bas*. Discussing a secretive Satanic organization, the book was officially presented as fiction, but many interpreted it as a thinly veiled autobiography. Unsurprisingly, van Luijk concludes that Huysman's Satanism was "an exclusively literary creation,"²¹ with no basis in fact; however, he also emphasises the wider

¹⁹ The Society of Horsemen featured Satanic elements in their initiation ceremony, for instance by making a blindfolded initiate shake a goat's hoof and by claiming that the society had been inherited from Cain; see Russell Lyon, *The Quest for the Original Horse Whisperers* (Edinburgh: Luath Press, 2003), 34–5. The Devil also appears as a feature in the toad-bone rite recorded in East Anglia; see George Ewart Evans, *The Pattern Under the Plow: Aspects of the Folk-Life of East Anglia* (London: Faber and Faber, 1971 [1966]), 218–21.

²⁰ Andrew D. Chumbley, *The Leaper Between: An Historical Study of the Toad-Bone Amulet* (Richmond Vista: Three Hands Press, 2012), 52.

²¹ van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer*, 193.

influence that it had in French culture, particularly in stoking conspiracy theories about a pervasive Satanist movement. Like Introvigne, van Luijk devotes a whole chapter to the Taxil affair and the role that this hoax played in the wider context of anti-Freemasonry in Catholic Europe. The ensuing chapter delves deeper into the context surrounding Taxil's publications, examining such issues as the Roman Catholic Church's attempts to influence the democratic sphere, the adoption of Romantic Satanism within elements of Freemasonry, and the place of Satanism in the wider anti-Masonic and anti-Semitic currents of nineteenth-century Europe. In an additional intermezzo, van Luijk raises the question of whether there really were any religious Satanists in the nineteenth century. He concludes that despite the existence of some isolated individuals like Przybyszewski and Kadosh, there is no good evidence of any substantial movement of religious Satanists in that period.

Moving into more recent times, van Luijk examines LaVey's formation of the Church of Satan before jumping back and forward in time to look at Naglowska's Temple de Satan, the Fraternitas Saturni, the Process Church, and then Crowley. The following chapter kicks off with a discussion of the schism in the Church of Satan that spawned the Temple of Set, before moving on to a discussion of the Satanism scare of the 1980s and 1990s, the Order of Nine Angles, and LaVey's final years. A final intermezzo then briefly covers adolescent Satanism, Satanism in the metal subculture, and the impact of the internet on the Satanic community. This discussion is somewhat unsatisfactory, as it is given only a few pages.

Whither goes the study of Satanism? Terminology, categorization, and discipline formation

The three volumes that have been examined here each try to accomplish something a little different. *The Invention of Satanism* is a multi-disciplinary work which juggles its sociological approach with a briefer historical analysis. *Children of Lucifer* and *Satanism: A Social History* are more explicitly historical, even though the latter positions itself as "social history." These latter two works may therefore be seen as competing with each other, although they cover distinct material due to the different working definitions of Satanism that they employ: for van Luijk, all that is required is "the intentional, religious motivated veneration of Satan," while Introvigne also expects a level of organisation and ritualised activity. Both Introvigne's and van Luijk's works are lengthy tomes weighing in at over 600 pages; by contrast, Dyrendal, Lewis, and Petersen's work is just over 250 pages. The length and price of *The Invention of Satanism* means that it is most likely to appeal

to a wider, non-specialist audience than the other two volumes reviewed here, although the terminology employed throughout many of the chapters may prove challenging to non-scholarly audiences. By contrast, van Luijk's and Introvigne's works are more heavy going but provide a level of historical depth absent from Dyrendal, Lewis, and Petersen's. *Children of Lucifer* is best at exploring the wider field of Satanic discourse, namely the interplay between literature about Satanism and more explicitly religious manifestations of Satanic practice. Conversely, *Satanism: A Social History* stands out with its discussions of a range of religious Satanic groups, in which it is unparalleled. Thus, *Children of Lucifer* is stronger when dealing with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while *Satanism: A Social History* is the more robust volume when discussing the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The three books further expose the problems of definition and terminology that plague scholars of Satanism. As has been made apparent, different scholars are defining "Satanism" in distinctly different ways. Given that these are all working definitions, we need not be too concerned about these differences, but it unfortunately brings us no closer to the establishment of a common understanding and terminology surrounding Satanism to which all (or at least most) scholars can subscribe. It is nevertheless significant that all three books reviewed here adopt "Satanism" as an umbrella term for a wide range of movements and currents. An alternative might have been to follow the lead of Kennet Granholm, who has suggested that we reserve "Satanism" solely for those groups which expressly call themselves "Satanic" and abandon it when discussing the broader "dark spirituality milieu," which he instead prefers to call the "Left-Hand Path" (a piece of emic terminology repurposed for etic usages).²² Van Luijk does perceive utility in this approach, and although he discusses the Temple of Set he concurs with Granholm that this group is not easily identified as a form of Satanism; instead, he sees it as a form of modern Paganism.²³

Another problem lies in categorising the different groups that operate within the Satanic milieu. While the term "rationalist" Satanism appears to have gained widespread usage for those groups, like the Church of Satan, which profess atheism, there is greater disagreement on how to label the groups that regard Satan as an entity with a genuine existence.²⁴ Dyrendal, Lewis, and Petersen

²² Kennet Granholm, "Embracing Others than Satan: The Multiple Princes of Darkness in the Left-Hand Path Milieu," in *Contemporary Religious Satanism*, ed. Jesper Aagaard Petersen (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 83–101; Kennet Granholm, "The Left-Hand Path and Post-Satanism: The Temple of Set and the Evolution of Satanism," in *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity*, eds. Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 212.

²³ van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer*, 356–57.

²⁴ Manon Hedenborg-White has raised the valid point that the term "rationalist Satanism" can

adopt “esoteric” Satanism, while Introvigne favours “occult” Satanism. I would argue that neither of these terms are particularly appropriate. This is because all forms of modern religious Satanism evidently belong under the category of “(Western) esotericism,” including LaVey’s Church of Satan, which practices forms of ceremonial magic and continues to inhabit the blurry space between accepted science and traditional Judeo-Christian religion. Moreover, if “occultism” is defined in accordance with Wouter Hanegraaff’s conception – that it constitutes forms of esotericism seeking to “come to terms with a disenchanted world” or to “make sense of esotericism from the perspective of a disenchanted world”²⁵ – then the Church of Satan is also most certainly an occultist group. Thus, using the terms “esoteric” or “occult” for only a subset of Satanic groups, when virtually all forms of Satanism could be regarded as forms of esotericism or occultism, is intrinsically misleading. As an alternative, I would proffer “literalist” Satanism as a more apposite term for these groups, for it escapes the problems posed by the “esoteric/occult” terminology while emphasising that these groups believe in the *literal* existence of Satan. Other options might be “realist” Satanism,²⁶ or perhaps “theistic” Satanism, a term that – as Introvigne highlights²⁷ – is already in use in the Satanic milieu. While this term also has its advantages, confusion can easily ensue when scholars adopt a piece of emic terminology and try to repurpose it for etic scholarly uses.²⁸

Additional problems are posed by the category of “reactive” Satanism, which Dyrendal, Lewis, and Petersen use in reference to “popular Satanism, inverted Christianity, and symbolic rebellion.”²⁹ “Reactive” Satanism is a

be misleading given that many forms of Satanism other than LaVeyanism also appeal to rationality and science as a source of legitimacy; see Manon Hedenborg-White, review of Asbjørn Dyrendal, James R. Lewis, and Jesper Aa. Petersen, *The Invention of Satanism, Aries*: 17:1 (2017), 143.

²⁵ Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998 [1996]), 422.

²⁶ This would have parallels with the manner in which Egil Asprem used the term “realism” when discussing occultists who believe in the literal existence of spirits; see *Arguing with Angels: Enochian Magic and Modern Occulture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 74.

²⁷ Introvigne, *Satanism*, 525–27.

²⁸ This has for instance been the case when scholars of modern Paganism have adopted “Paganism”; see Ethan Doyle White, “Theoretical, Terminological, and Taxonomic Trouble in the Academic Study of Contemporary Paganism: A Case for Reform,” *The Pomegranate* 18, no. 1 (2016), 31–59.

²⁹ Dyrendal, Lewis, and Petersen, *Invention of Satanism*, 5. They have adopted it from Joachim Schmidt, *Satanismus: Mythos und Wirklichkeit* (Marburg: Diagonal Verlag, 2003 [1992]). It should be noted that this trio fully recognise that these are “fuzzy” categories, with no clear and unproblematic demarcation between them.

primarily sociological definition, encompassing all those individuals and groups who are using Satanic imagery for the transgressive purpose of expressing their opposition to mainstream society. Conversely, terms like “rationalist” and “esoteric/occult/literalist” Satanism categorise groups according to their theology. These are two different types of categorisation and they do not provide for clear-cut demarcation. One who holds “rationalist” or “literalist” views can still be a “reactive” Satanist. Where Dyrendal, Lewis, and Petersen suggest that the tripartite division could be best understood “as points in a triangle,”³⁰ perhaps we should instead seek to understand where individuals are positioned within the Satanic milieu on two axes: one sociological and the other theological. For instance, the sociological axis could plot whether an individual is a “reactive” solitary Satanist or whether they are part of an established, organised group. It could also take into account the fact that there are those who sit between both positions; members of the Order of Nine Angles are for instance broadly affiliated with one another as part of the “kollektive” but are not members of any structured organisation. They are also “reactive,” seeking to play upon society’s ideas of evil by drawing on symbolism from the Neo-Nazi and Salafi movements. The theological beliefs of the group can then be understood along an axis between “rationalists” who view Satan as a symbol without any real existence, and the “literalists” who regard Satan as a genuine entity.

It is notable that the study of Satanism remains a largely male-dominated phenomenon; the four authors discussed here are men, as are seventeen of the twenty-one scholars to have contributed to the two edited volumes on Satanism produced in the past decade (81%).³¹ This mirrors the male-dominated environment of the Satanic milieu itself.³² Interestingly, this is a clear difference from the academic study of modern Paganism, where a slight majority of scholars are women.³³ This in turn suggests that there is ample scope for scholars of gender and religion to delve deeper into this issue: what is it about

³⁰ Dyrendal, Lewis, and Petersen, *Invention of Satanism*, 5.

³¹ In calculating this, I omitted the authors of the entries in the “Primary Documents” of *Contemporary Religious Satanism*.

³² Dyrendal, Lewis, and Petersen, *Invention of Satanism*, 138.

³³ For instance, an examination of 52 monographs and edited volumes devoted to the academic study of modern Paganism reveals 29 female authors (58%) to 21 male ones (42%) – this takes into account books with multiple authors and authors who have produced more than one book; for edited volumes only the editors were counted. Meanwhile, an examination of the contributors – excluding book reviewers – for *The Pomegranate* volumes 6, no. 1 (2004) to 18, no. 2 (2016) reveals a slight predominance of female scholars, with 62 women (53.4%) to 54 men (46.6%).

Satanism, and the study of Satanism, that appeals more to men than to women?

It is also noteworthy that the authors of this material have (almost) all been based in continental Europe and Scandinavia.³⁴ This is despite the fact that organised religious Satanism has remained a largely, although not exclusively, Anglo-American phenomenon, with the Church of Satan and Temple of Set both being established in the United States and the Order of Nine Angles originating in England. It is also again in contrast to the study of modern Paganism, which has long been dominated by Anglo-American scholars. This is an interesting turn of events, although the precise reasons for why it should be so remain unclear. One explanation may be that the academic environments that have been cultivated in many European nations are more accepting of research into a controversial religious milieu like Satanism than those in Britain or the US.³⁵ In many parts of the US, certain Christian denominations wield considerable influence on campuses and within religious studies departments; in such an environment, there may be impediments that make it difficult for scholars of religion to conduct research into Satanism.³⁶ A second, somewhat related explanation, is that Europe provides a better institutional set-up for the study of new religious movements (NRMs). This has been noted by Lewis, who has lamented that the US is experiencing a shortage of young scholars coming through to study NRMs because of a lack of employment opportunities in that field.³⁷

The absence of American scholarship on Satanism is unfortunate for various reasons. As noted by Dyrendal, Lewis, and Petersen, there may still be important oral history to collect from those who were involved in the early

³⁴ I previously noted this in Ethan Doyle White, review of Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen, eds., *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity*, *Correspondences* 2, no. 2 (2014), 225–26.

³⁵ This might also explain why continental Western Europe has a better set-up for the study of esotericism than the US, particularly through the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE) and the History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents department at the University of Amsterdam.

³⁶ I am reminded of the psychologist Nancy Campbell's observation that evangelical Christian groups operating at her United Methodist-affiliated campus actively protested against her research into a Wiccan coven, accusing her of promoting Satanism. See Allen Scarborough, Nancy Campbell, and Shirley Stave, *Living Witchcraft: A Contemporary American Coven* (Westport and London: Praeger, 1994), 196–201. The events described took place in 1991, a quarter of a century ago, but similar social forces remain active in the US.

³⁷ James R. Lewis, "James R. Lewis on Who joins New Religious Movements?," The Religious Studies Project, 10 December 2012, <http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/who-joins-new-religious-movements-james-r-lewis-on-the-need-of-new-quantitative-data-on-nrms/>.

days of the Church of Satan,³⁸ and the same is true of the Temple of Set. Equally, many of the primary documents from the establishment of these groups are likely still based in that country. These would be particularly useful in the production of a full-length scholarly biography of LaVey or other senior figures in the Satanic milieu. Examining this material is a task that will likely be easier for scholars already based in the US. At the same time, it will also be important for scholars to devote greater attention to the wealth of Satanic and anti-Satanic activities that are taking place in other, non-Anglophone regions. Introvigne has already highlighted the presence of such phenomena in parts of continental Europe and Latin America, and it would be interesting to see scholars of Satanism examine discourses of the Satanic as they exist in the former Soviet bloc and in the Islamic world. There is also room for greater exploration of how forms of Satanism intersect with other religious milieus, such as modern Paganism (as with the Order of Nine Angles and Temple of Set) and UFO religions (like the Joy of Satan). At the same time as scholars deepen and widen the study of this subject, it is also important to ensure that the topic is made accessible to a wider audience; there is certainly scope for a shorter textbook on the subject aimed at undergraduates and lay readers. In the meantime, the three books discussed here all provide a good basis from which further studies into Satanism can be made and each advance scholarly understandings of this fascinating yet much misunderstood phenomenon.

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