

Working-Class Aeon: The Films of Kenneth Anger, Class Imagery, and the Thelemic New Aeon

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Abstract

The independent cinema of American filmmaker Kenneth Anger (1927–2023) has long been scrutinized for its experimental cinematic techniques, links to the history of American counterculture, and influence from occult theory and practice, especially Anger’s own esoteric religion of Thelema—whose founder, English occultist Aleister Crowley (1875–1947), provided much of the philosophical and theological underpinnings. Indeed, a number of Anger’s films dramatize the ascendancy of the Thelemic New Aeon of Horus. Yet the trappings of youth culture, counterculture, and homoeroticism which abound in Anger’s films—bikers, car customizers, rock and roll soundtracks, psychedelia—also have a class component: these aesthetic and cultural trappings are not merely signifiers of social rebellion, but also historically coded as working-class, a status utilized by the counterculture in its reaction against repressive midcentury American values. Through the mediation of Anger’s films, then, class as a category, along with its signifiers in American culture, enters the dynamic of Crowley’s New Aeon, and the rise of the Crowned and Conquering Child takes on a rebellious class component.

Keywords: Anger, Kenneth; Cinema; Crowley, Aleister; Economic Class; Thelema; 1960s

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The independent cinema of American filmmaker Kenneth Anger (1927–2023) has long been scrutinized for its experimental cinematic techniques, links to the history of American counterculture, and influence from underground occult theory and practice, especially Anger’s own esoteric religion of Thelema—whose founder, English occultist Aleister Crowley (1875–1947), provided much of the philosophical and theological underpinnings.¹ Indeed, a number of Anger’s films explicitly dramatize the ascendancy of the Thelemic New Aeon of Horus. But the trappings of youth culture, counterculture, and homoeroticism which abound in Anger’s films also have a class component: these aesthetic and cultural trappings are not merely signifiers of social rebellion, but also historically coded as working-class, a status utilized by the counterculture in its reaction against repressive midcentury American values. Through the mediation of Anger’s films, then, class as a category, along with its signifiers in American culture, enters the dynamic of Crowley’s New Aeon, and the rise of the Crowned and Conquering Child takes on a rebellious class component. This paper will examine Anger’s countercultural imagery in terms of its relationship to class in the United States, and interpret how the matrix of that imagery allowed Anger to signify the Thelemic New Aeon—and how this usage complicates and enriches Crowley’s original esoteric philosophy.

Most commentators and critics of Kenneth Anger recognize the influence of Aleister Crowley and the occult, and the subcultural content of his imagery. For example, a recent article written upon Anger’s death in 2023 hit upon all of the usual suspects in its retrospective, mentioning his “obsession with all things Hollywood”; the “conflation of bikers, Nazis, biblical footage, and a jar of mustard” in *Scorpio Rising*; “psychedelic drugs,” Anaïs Nin, Marjorie

1. While they were once only accessible through art house screenings and the independent film circuit, Anger’s films are now widely available on the Internet and on DVD—see *The Complete Magick Lantern Cycle*.

Cameron (and her connection to Jack Parsons) in *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*; Crowley’s “polymorph perversity”; Anger’s attempt at a “pagan revival”; musicians and/or murderers Jimmy Page, Mick Jagger, Marianne Faithfull, Bobby Beausoleil, and the Manson Family.² Practically any account of Anger’s work mentions these same themes and influences.

However, critics’ engagement with Anger’s Thelemic context and subcultural imagery is often extremely perfunctory, when it is even accurate. Commentator interest in Crowley or Thelema usually remains on the level of shock value—Crowley as a “black magician,” the “wickedest man in the world,” or a worshipper of Satan. Tom Zito’s mention of Boleskine House, for example, explains accurately that Crowley used the Scottish manor to perform the *Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*, but also suggests that this operation was primarily about “summoning the 12 kings and dukes of hell.”³ Meanwhile, John Calendo’s 1976 profile of Anger mentions “the satanist Aleister Crowley,” whose ideology preached “that evil was a positive principle,” and Calendo is unable to avoid the notion that Anger is an “agent of Lucifer” whose “aesthetic of darkness may be sultry and velvet,” but is in reality “cold and belittling.”⁴ Not much has changed in the popular perception of Anger, Crowley, and the occult in the last forty-plus years.

On another level, the engagement with Anger’s subcultural influences usually ignores the class component to his imagery—not that this is unique to Kenneth Anger scholarship. In fact, the invisibility of economic class has been a feature of all but the most recent scholarship on American culture as a whole, following what Vivek Chibber has called the late twentieth-century “cultural turn” in social theory.⁵ The fact that Anger’s favored imagery—including homoerotic sailors, the rituals of Hell’s Angels, youthful rebellion, rock and roll music, psychedelia, car customizers, surfers, and more, not to mention the

2. Zito, “Look Back on Anger.”

3. Zito, “Look Back on Anger.”

4. Calendo, “Kenneth Anger Rising,” 60, 114.

5. See Chibber, *The Class Matrix*, 4–9.

Thelemic occultism already mentioned—is drawn from mid-century American counterculture is not a deep insight; numerous scholars of Anger’s work argue that he “both glamourise[s] and reinforce[s] countercultural membership.”⁶ But the class origins and matrix of such imagery have rarely been discussed, if only because late twentieth-century cultural studies scarcely addresses the topic of economic class to begin with. As Chibber argues, the “focus on ideas and meaning” in social theory after the cultural turn “has encouraged a turn away from structural analysis and toward the valuation of contingency of social phenomena, and further, an insistence upon the local and particular, as against the more universalizing claims of traditional class theory.”⁷ When it comes to Anger’s work, this means that the various social phenomena he relies upon for his imagery have been seen as individually chosen subcultural identifications for the purposes of personal expression against conformist American society—but not in a way that emerges from the material class position of his subjects or characters.

Ignoring the objective reality of class causes an overemphasis in Anger criticism on judging whether his work is “liberative” or “problematic” in terms of individual agency, rather than understanding the social structures from which the work’s imagery emerges, and thus its historical or, Thelemically speaking, *aeonic* context. This is a phenomenon that is very common in recent commentary on Anger’s films. For example, a recent piece by Sam Moore on Anger’s work as queer cinema laments that films like Anger’s are becoming rarer, with “less and less space for cinema that’s at once as experimental and excessive as Anger’s,” and with queer cinema today not willing to “venture into the kind of territory that gets called ‘toxic,’ or ‘problematic’—for something to be given that label in the 21st century is for it to be tarnished, to be considered a failure of representation.”⁸ What is lost in this “cultural turn” in analysis of works like Anger’s is the ways in which cultural productions emerge from the matrix of class.

6. Powell, “The Occult,” 121.

7. Chibber, “Rescuing Class.”

8. Moore, “Happy Birthday, Kenneth Anger.”

Kenneth Anger, of course, was not a Marxist theorist, nor did he identify as a socialist or communist. In interviews, though he suggested he rejected working in mainstream Hollywood in the 1950s at least in part due to the Red Scare, which he once called “the ridiculous witch-hunt of reds,” he also made it clear that he “wasn’t a communist, [he] just found it very unpleasant.” Anger’s films are ambiguous in terms of their stance toward capitalism—on the one hand, their countercultural transgression suggests an agreement with what Matthew Hughes calls “the Sixties countercultural paradigm,” which “saw the idealised forms of subjectivity produced by post-war US capitalism as serial, standardised, and crucially, ‘inauthentic’; as something to be overcome,” while on the other hand, Anger deeply enjoyed and eroticized the cultural commodities of that same post-war society, from Hollywood films to popular fashion to American car culture.¹⁰

In her piece on the commodity fetishism of *Scorpio Rising*, Rachel Moore describes “the eroticism that features” in the film as “a genuine come-on from the world of lively things,” including “leather jackets, studded belts, chains, toys, icons, motorcycles and bikers’ gear,” which Anger “filmed in adoring floods of light.”¹¹ Moore cites Walter Benjamin on the relationship between the working class and commodities: “If [the proletariat] wanted to achieve virtuosity in this kind of enjoyment, it could not spurn empathising with commodities. It had to enjoy this identification with all the pleasure and the uneasiness, which derived from a presentiment of its own destiny as a class.”¹² Moore is interested in Benjamin’s description of commodities in the Paris arcades as

9. Hattenstone, “Kenneth Anger.” In another interview, Anger states that he “never worked in Hollywood because [he] had a political conscience. The Red Scare—fear of communism—was just a bluff for people like McCarthy to gain power. At 20th Century Fox you had to take a loyalty oath and swear you wouldn’t do anything bad to the United States. I said: ‘Forget it.’” Needham, “Kenneth Anger.”

10. Hughes, “The Films of Kenneth Anger.”

11. Moore, “Cultural Bolshevism,” 73.

12. Benjamin quoted in Buck-Morss, “Walter Benjamin,” cited in Moore, “Cultural Bolshevism,” 76.

“dream-images of the collective,” suggesting that Kenneth Anger’s own displays of commodities in *Scorpio Rising* “become collective dream images,” specifically of the “gay collective,” rendering “society’s commodities the meta-narrative of gay culture.”¹³ However, Moore seems to miss the Marxian end of the Benjamin quote here: the working class could not “spurn” empathizing with commodities because, according to Marx, its own “destiny as a class” was to become the ultimate commodity; under capitalism, the proletariat’s labor-power is the commodity that is ultimately transformed into the fetishized commodities that feature in both the Paris arcades and *Scorpio Rising*.¹⁴ These commodities function as “dream-images of the collective” because the working class, as a class, is destined to become commodified; working-class people themselves are fetishized objects under capitalism.

Even if Anger wasn’t a Marxist himself, he did seem to intuitively understand this process of commodification. Anger’s very short film *Kustom Kar Kommandos* perhaps illustrates this the most concisely out of his oeuvre.¹⁵ In this film, as Tony Rayns explains, Anger “evokes the Dream Lover” by fetishizing a hot rod which is sensuously serviced by a young man (Sandy Trent, “the Maker”) wielding “a giant white powder puff.”¹⁶ The images in the film “are suffused with a pink glow from the background,” all set to The Paris Sisters’ pop song “Dream Lover.”¹⁷ At the end of the film, in “a hallucinatory shot of Sandy’s reflection on the inside of the passenger Kar door, there is a moment of fusion—the colour elements (pink, azure, red, and the dull amber of the Kar itself) fuse, and Maker and Kar are one.”¹⁸ This moment of erotic fusion between the “Maker,” a blue collar youth, and the commodity fetish of his hot rod, all under the

13. Moore, “Cultural Bolshevism,” 77.

14. See Marx’s *Capital*, Vol. 1’s sixth chapter, on the buying and selling of labor-power.

15. Thanks belong to the second anonymous reviewer of this paper for suggesting a similar interpretation of Anger’s *Kustom Kar Kommandos* as the one I give here.

16. Rayns, “Lucifer,” 15.

17. Rayns, “Lucifer,” 15.

18. Rayns, “Lucifer,” 16.

libidinal gaze of Anger’s camera, strongly implies that Anger understood how working-class men (“makers” or “producers”) are themselves transformed into fetishized commodities precisely because of the virile masculinity that Anger celebrates—their ability to labor.¹⁹ As in Benjamin’s formulation, these working-class men are led to enjoy their “identification with all the pleasure and the uneasiness” of the commodities they produce—in this case the hot rod of the American car customizer subculture—due to their “presentiment of [their] own destiny as a class,” their own commodification.

However much Anger shows an awareness of these Marxian concepts, though, it is clear that his primary interest is in the libidinal energy unleashed by such images of working-class masculinity, energy only made possible by the commodification system of post-war American capitalism. Ultimately, Anger’s use of class imagery in his films is a fetishization and eroticization of working-class men, not a discourse on class struggle or a commentary on Marxian analysis. But his use of such imagery is not merely for sexual or aesthetic enjoyment, either: his eroticization of the class elements in his work heralds the coming of an insurgent, rebellious New Aeon signified by the libidinal energies of those elements.

This is because, for Anger, the structure that precedes culture and is causal to the subcultural and countercultural styles he highlights in his films is an esoteric historical structure, the concept of aeons—Crowley’s assertion of the advent of the New Aeon of Horus following the end of the Old Aeon of Osiris, upon his reception of the Thelemic holy text *The Book of the Law* in 1904. Anger’s aeonic “newness” comes on two levels: the very challenge of his form of underground cinema to mainstream cultural production in contemporary America, and the New Aeonic interpretation his films give to American

19. In Anger’s original prospectus for the full-length version of *Kustom Kar Kommandos*, Anger himself suggests that the “treatment of the teenager in relation to his hot-rod or custom car . . . will bring out what I see as a definite *eroticization* of the automobile,” in its “dual aspect of narcissistic identification as virile power symbol,” as well as its role as an “attention-grabbing” status symbol in American (especially Californian) youth culture. See Sitney, *Visionary Film*, 111.

subcultures and their countercultural productions. But this esoteric view of history does not necessarily undermine the reemergence of economic class as an analytic category—for Anger’s use of specific class imagery in his films alters Crowley’s aeonic theory to suggest that the emergence of certain working-class subcultures out of their material social relations, and the transgressive cultural practices and productions which follow, is actually *aligned* with the coincident emergence of the Aeon of Horus, itself a revolutionary and even apocalyptic historical reality. That Crowley considered esoteric aeonic shifts to be mirrored in social relations is clear in his writings, for example in his description of the structure of his fraternal society, Ordo Templi Orientis, when he writes: “in True Things, all are but images one of another; man is but a map of the universe, and Society is but the same on a larger scale.”²⁰ And Crowley even includes the necessity of revolutionary social change in his map of the organization, which is meant to mirror society and in turn to mirror the macrocosm and its succession of aeons; he suggests that the structure of O.T.O. itself “conceals even the seeds of revolution, by which alone progress can be effected.”²¹

Importantly, though, a Thelemite like Kenneth Anger, perhaps unlike a Marxist revolutionary, is not trying to *bring about* the revolutionary New Aeon; the New Aeon of Horus *is already here*, and in a violent manner full of “force and fire”—a saying from Crowley’s *Book of the Law*, and Anger’s “magical motto”—not in a fragile or halting way.²² Anger’s work documents the New Aeon’s reverberations in American popular culture, and these reverberations possess a rebellious class component because the esoteric shift in aeons mirrors historical societal shifts, emerging as they do from “the seeds of revolution.” As Anger said upon his return to America in the early 1960s about his new interest in youth

20. Crowley, “Liber CXCIV.”

21. Crowley, “Liber CXCIV.”

22. “Beauty and strength, leaping laughter and delicious languor, force and fire, are of us.” *Liber AL vel Legis* II:20; cited by Anger as his “magical motto” in his notes for the 1966 screenings of the *Magick Lantern Cycle* and reproduced in Powell, “The Occult,” 123n11.

subcultures, it was “in the teenage cults that magic emerges into the contemporary world.”²³ Anger’s films, working through light and symbolism as magical rituals aimed at “capturing people,” are intended to subconsciously unlock the potential of his viewers to realize their own True Wills, bringing them in line with the “inertia of the universe” itself in its shift into the Aeon of the Child.²⁴ This is the true goal of Thelemic magick, which Anger states is his “lifework.”²⁵ We will now turn to an examination of several of Anger’s major works to see how this framework alters the usual reading both of Anger’s films and the Thelemic doctrine of the New Aeon that Anger was dedicated to throughout his life.

Fireworks (1947)

Anger began to utilize class imagery within his universe of queer sexuality and symbolist drama from his earliest films. *Fireworks*, Anger’s “earliest distributed film” according to Anna Powell, uses the imagery of working-class sailors and assigns them with both inducing the sexual awakening, as well as committing the violent murder, of the protagonist—the dreamer—played by Anger himself.²⁶ The primary sailor, played by Gordon Gray, is simultaneously the dreamer’s murderer and his Virgin Mary figure, as seen in the repeated initial image of the broken body of the dreamer in the sailor’s arms as in the Christian pietà. By the end of the film, when the dreamer has returned to bed—but now sleeping next to a man whose head radiates light, an early Lucifer image in Anger’s oeuvre—it is clear that the events of the film, violent and sexual as they are, constitute an initiatory experience that has transformed the dreamer.

Fireworks is a groundbreaking and early work of queer cinema, but Anger is also clear in interviews that its meaning goes beyond sexual representation.

23. Calendo, “Kenneth Anger Rising,” 114.

24. Anger cited in Brottman, “Introduction,” 6; Crowley’s explanation of following one’s True Will as joining with the inertia of the universe is in the first chapter of Crowley, *Magick Without Tears*.

25. Powell, “The Occult,” 123n11.

26. Powell, “The Occult,” 73.

There is a major element of class and racial tension built into the film as well. When an interviewer in one piece states that the film is “intensely homoerotic,” Anger certainly doesn’t disagree, but he also states that the film is “about being attracted to something you’re afraid of. You’re attracted to something that’s particularly dangerous like a rough, tough man can be, like a working man can be...I knew not to do what the young man in the film does, which is to ask them for a light for their cigarette. Back in the 40’s, that was an old pick-up line.”²⁷ Anger describes the genesis of the film’s imagery in the Zoot Suit Riots in 1943 Los Angeles, in which American servicemen attacked and stripped young Mexican Americans and other people of color who were wearing zoot suits, ostensibly because they considered the clothing to be unpatriotic during World War II. Anger’s recurring dream about being chased by sailors after the riots inspired the film.²⁸

The association of white working-class men—sailors in this case, but also bikers, blue collar workers, and other archetypes—with queer sexuality is not unique to Anger’s film. Groundbreaking gay artists such as Tom of Finland, both earlier than and contemporaneously with Anger, “would often draw muscular gay men wearing chaps, sailor outfits, jeans and other garments historically associated with working-class male culture, typically with little else on.”²⁹ Tom of Finland suggested that it was his experience during World War II that began his fetishistic interest in uniformed men, especially sailors and Nazi officers.³⁰ Anger similarly claimed that he had “served in the United States Navy when [he] was a teenager in the closing days of World War II,” though he didn’t serve the whole term due to coming down with scarlet fever.³¹ He has also regularly suggested that the sailors (and their uniforms) in the film were

27. Hays, “Kenneth Anger, Director.”

28. Hays, “Kenneth Anger, Director.”

29. George, “The Queer and Dirty History of Chaps.”

30. Hooven, *Tom of Finland*, 30.

31. Rose, “A Conversation.” I have not been able to verify the claim that Anger served in the Navy elsewhere.

real U.S. Navy sailors, a claim which has been contested by Ed Earle, a friend of Anger's.³² In any case, Anger states that *Fireworks* contains all he has “to say about being seventeen, the United States Navy, American Christmas, and the Fourth of July”—encapsulating, I would suggest, Anger's early reflections on militaristic Christian America in general, especially its potential for race- and class-based violence, but also its homoerotic fascination.³³

The reference to the racially-motivated Zoot Suit Riots, the fetishization of American military officers, and the suggestion and threat of class-based violence (and the contribution of these things to early gay subculture) all contribute to *Fireworks*' imagery. But the simple notion of a young man propositioning a sailor for “a light” also takes on religious significance, both in terms of the film's internal logic and Anger's commitment to Thelema, and because Lucifer the Lightbearer is Anger's primary image for the Thelemic Horus. Anger summarizes the plot of *Fireworks* as follows: “A dissatisfied dreamer awakes, goes out in the night seeking a ‘light’ and is drawn through the needle's eye. A dream of a dream, he returns to bed less empty than before.”³⁴ “Less empty” both due to the violent sexual encounter the film portrays, perhaps, but also due to the contact he has made with the angelic figure who now occupies his bed—an appropriate image for the Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel which, in Thelema, is “the central and essential work” of the magician.³⁵ Combined with the class and sexual imagery, it interpolates the Americana of the film—the United States Navy, “American Christmas,” the Fourth of July, etc.—with the initiatory system that Anger learned from studying the works of Aleister Crowley. It also suggests that Anger's personal homoerotic interest in “rough, tough” working-class men has a direct relationship with the Thelemic

32. Rose, “A Conversation.” Earle is quoted as contesting this claim in Landis, *Anger: The Unauthorized Biography*, 44–5.

33. Brown, “The Extraordinary Life.”

34. Smith, “Kustom Film Kommando.”

35. Crowley, *Magick Without Tears*, 502.

magician's goal of (mystically erotic) union with his Holy Guardian Angel—not in spite of, but because of, the possibility of insurgent class violence, which here takes on an initiatory value.³⁶

Anna Powell (drawing on a suggestion by Robert Haller) argues that the film mirrors Crowley's *Liber Pyramidos*, a self-initiatory ritual written for the occultist's A.:A.: magical order and influenced by Crowley's early initiatory experiences with the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (indeed, the *Pyramidos* ritual is Crowley's version of the Golden Dawn's Neophyte ceremony, which Crowley underwent in 1898).³⁷ According to Powell:

On the mundane level, we witness a sadomasochistic, homophobic attack in the Gents lavatory. The underlying theme, however, is Crowleyan in inspiration: an initiate's symbolic death, rebirth and self-realisation. It has been linked by Robert Haller to the ritual of The Building of the Pyramid (*Liber Pyramidos*) in which the candidate undergoes a rigorous self-initiation. The Dreamer (played by Anger himself) seeks Lucifer as well as a light for his cigarette.³⁸

However, I think it would be more helpful to remember that all similar initiatory sequences, in esoteric contexts derived from Freemasonry (as the Golden Dawn's ceremony was, and as Crowley's later rituals were indirectly), constitute a death and rebirth sequence that occultists like Crowley saw as containing the hidden inner meaning of both the Christ story—which is implicitly present in Anger's film through the references to the pietà and to Christmas—and the Osiris myth. After all, the quest—specifically, the *request*—for “light” is the classic encapsulation of the Masonic initiatory journey, and a repeated motif in Masonic initiation rituals, mirroring the dreamer's request for “a light” in the film.³⁹ For Crowley, this death and rebirth sequence is important both for the individual initiate (the microcosm)

36. Though the film was initially inspired by the racially motivated Zoot Suit Riots, I would argue that Anger's casting of himself in the role of the dreamer (and his comments on the film) shifts the valence of the violence in the film to be primarily sexual and class-based.

37. Powell, “The Occult,” 73.

38. Powell, “The Occult,” 73.

39. See, for example, Béresniak, *Symbols of Freemasonry*, 40.

and for cosmic history as a whole (the macrocosm), linked as it is in the former case to the realization of the initiate’s True Will, and in the latter case to the ending of the Old Aeon of Osiris and the inauguration of the New Aeon of Horus.

Crowley’s clearest interpretation of the Christ/Osiris myth in its relationship to Masonic initiation ritual and to the advent of the New Aeon is contained within his retelling “in dramatic form” of “the central mystery of Freemasonry,” his 1913 play *The Ship*.⁴⁰ *The Ship* tells the story of a “high priest of the Sun” named John, whose primary purpose is to celebrate a Eucharistic feast of corn and wine and tend to a vesica-shaped shrine.⁴¹ During the course of the play John is murdered in ritualistic, Christ-like fashion by three assassins seeking “the secret of the shrine.” After the assassins are dealt with and the corpse of the high priest is sent across the sea, John returns to life in a resurrection scene: “The wrappings fall from the corpse, and the youth John is seen beardless and smiling. He is dressed in the crown and robes of his father.” The Young John, now the high priest, speaks a monologue that clearly identifies himself with Christ or the Logos, the Incarnation of God—“I am that I am,” “creating Word,” “very God of very God,” etc.—and suggests that this process of death and resurrection is a constant one: “I am he that daily dieth, / And is daily born again.”⁴²

Finally, the Young John celebrates the Eucharistic ritual of corn and wine, and then closes the play by beginning a choral antiphon that Crowley believed to be one of his most significant works, a poem he called the “Quia Patris.”⁴³ Described by Richard Kaczynski as “a sublime poem to the Higher Self,” it invokes the individual’s higher self or Holy Guardian Angel and suggests that this secret self is in fact the secret or god of the shrine for which the assassins

40. Crowley, *Confessions*, 714. Cited in Van Kleeck, “The Art of the Law.”

41. Crowley, *The Ship*, “Persons of the Mystery.”

42. Crowley, *The Ship*, scene II.

43. Kaczynski, *Perdurabo*, 264. Kaczynski later states that *The Ship*—specifically the “Quia Patris” portion from the conclusion—“had always been a poem of great import to Crowley, and he worked it into many rituals, including the Gnostic Mass,” the central ritual of Ordo Templi Orientis. Kaczynski, *Perdurabo*, 392.

had been searching.⁴⁴ Taken as a whole, *The Ship* suggests that the High Priest John's sequence of death and rebirth is also the cosmic aeonic cycle—the old god or Father/Osiris must die so that the Child or son, the Young John/Horus, can rise in his place—and that this sequence, which constantly recurs, is also the secret of the individual initiate's higher self—the death of the old self must constantly take place so that the “centre and secret of the Sun,” of which our mundane self is just the “vehicle,” can shine forth, just as a “rosy light streams thence and fills the holy place” in the final stage direction of the play.⁴⁵

Anger's *Fireworks*, like Crowley's *The Ship*, dramatizes an initiatory sequence on two levels. On the microcosmic level, it is the journey of the initiate into violent death and mystical rebirth, and the gaining of “more light,” or union with one's higher self, in the process; on the macrocosmic level, it is the initiation of the cosmos into the New Aeon, following the death or eclipse of Osiris, who ruled the previous aeon, and the birth of the Child Horus—also known in Thelemic terms as Ra-Hoor-Khuit. The latter movement, which Crowley (and Thelemites following him, like Kenneth Anger) believed dawned in 1904 with his reception of *The Book of the Law* from his own Holy Guardian Angel, is also known in his

44. See Crowley, *The Ship*, scene II:

“Thou, who art I, beyond all I am,
Who hast no nature and no name,
Who art, when all but thou are gone,
Thou, centre and secret of the Sun,
Thou, hidden spring of all things known
And unknown, Thou aloof, alone,
Thou, the true fire within the reed
Brooding and breeding, source and seed
Of life, love, liberty, and light,
Thou beyond speech and beyond sight,
Thee I invoke, abiding one,
Thee, centre and secret of the Sun,
And that most holy mystery
Of which the vehicle am I!”

45. Crowley, *The Ship*, scene II.

writings as the Equinox of the Gods (after a Golden Dawn ritual), the changing of the aeon taking place macrocosmically like the changing of the seasons. As *The Book of the Law* says, “Abrogate are all rituals, all ordeals, all words and signs. Ra-Hoor-Khuit hath taken his seat in the East at the Equinox of the Gods.”⁴⁶

However, Anger’s portrayal of this mythic cycle in *Fireworks* is quite different in flavor from Crowley’s in *The Ship*, the latter being a hieratic mystery play that reads more like a liturgy or, indeed, like a Masonic ritual. In *The Ship*, “the secret of the shrine” is just that, a divine power contained in a venerated shrine; *Fireworks*, meanwhile, symbolizes this “centre and secret of the Sun” which the dreamer seeks as a light for his cigarette. The ruffians who kill the central figure in *The Ship* are exoticized, allegorical foreigners; in *Fireworks* they are working-class American sailors, eroticized tough guys. The process of rebirth in *The Ship* is a ritualized funeral, the corpse of the high priest being sent into the abyss of the sea; in *Fireworks* it is a suspicious white liquid pouring down upon the dreamer’s lifeless body. And the actual rebirth at the end of *The Ship* is quite literal, followed by a Eucharistic ritual; in *Fireworks* it is signified by a Fourth of July firework emerging out of a sailor’s crotch, by the Christmas tree on the head of the dreamer, by the burning of the pietà photographs. Finally, the “ritual” of *Fireworks* is concluded in post-coital bliss, the dreamer sharing his bed with a man whose head shines with light (Lucifer, Horus, the Holy Guardian Angel). *Fireworks* uses humor, eroticism and contemporary imagery, where *The Ship* is not very different from Crowley’s more “official” religious instructions, like the Gnostic Mass (which indeed includes the final portion of *The Ship* in its text). It could only have been written by Kenneth Anger in twentieth-century America—and it suggests that Crowley’s Aeon of the Child is not marked by the portentousness of old ritual forms, old “words and signs,” but in fact by the rebelliousness, queer eroticism, and danger of American working-class subcultures, especially youth subcultures, whose rise and visibility signals the coming of an apocalyptic new age.

46. *Liber AL vel Legis* I:49.

Anger would continue to dramatize the Thelemic aeonic sequence, illustrating on both the microcosmic and macrocosmic levels the death of the old God and the coming of the Child in almost all of the major films which would follow *Fireworks*. For example, Powell has noted that Anger's 1954 symbolist film, *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*, signifies through its intense, apocalyptic imagery of fire, its "lavish costumes, elaborate sets and gorgeously jeweled colors" tending toward "stasis and a decadence turned in upon itself and drained of energy," that "the declining Piscean Age had to be destroyed before the New Aeon of Horus could be born."⁴⁷ *Scorpio Rising* and *Lucifer Rising* continue this dramatization of Crowley's aeonic cycle in even more explicit ways, and combine this esoteric symbolism with a continued interest in the imagery of working-class subcultures and counterculture rebelliousness.

Scorpio Rising (1963)

Anger's important short film *Scorpio Rising*, perhaps the film most responsible for putting him on the map in mid-twentieth-century counterculture, follows a similar trajectory to *Fireworks* and to Crowley's *The Ship*, and its references to working-class subcultures and youthful rebellion are heavily woven into the plot.⁴⁸ *Scorpio Rising* follows a young biker played by Bruce Byron in the title role, and is ultimately about the death drive and occultural violence of the young working-class biker subculture in America at the time: "Thanatos in chrome and black leather and bursting jeans."⁴⁹ As we have seen, Anger decided upon his return to the United States in the early 1960s that it was "in the teenage cults that magic emerges into the contemporary world."⁵⁰ In this assessment, he was

47. Powell, "The Occult," 73.

48. As Hutchison summarizes, "The reception of *Scorpio Rising* was widespread and international: from the art world, to music, to film, to fashion (*The New York Times* reported an overnight motorcycle chic)." Hutchison, *Kenneth Anger*, 139.

49. Anger cited in Powell, "The Occult," 89.

50. Calendo, "Kenneth Anger Rising," 114.

following Crowley's belief in the character of the New Aeon of the Child. Crowley describes the immaturity, fluid sexuality, and propensity for violence of the Aeon of Horus, as he saw it in the early twentieth century, in his introduction to *The Book of the Lam*,⁵¹ concluding the introduction by emphasizing, "We are children." Besides the air of distaste which the patrician Crowley seems to have here (he admits that the characteristics of the New Aeon "may be very repugnant to many people born before" 1904, which of course includes himself), many of the things described in this section could describe Kenneth Anger's preoccupations in his major films—the "popularity of the cinema," of course, but also queer sexuality, subcultural "enthusiasms," "innocence and irresponsibility," the saturation of violence and war in the media. For Anger in *Scorpio Rising*, concentrating on these themes was his attempt at "cluing in to popular American culture after having been away for eight years"; it thus also represents Anger's observations about how contemporary American working-class youth culture illustrates the dawn of the New Aeon, accomplishing in the filmic medium what Crowley did in the introduction to *The Book of the Lam*.⁵²

Anger first discovered the subject of the biker subculture by hanging out and photographing a group of bikers in Coney Island in the summer of 1962; according to Anger, "on the beach under the boardwalk" was also where he

51. "Observe for yourselves the decay of the sense of sin, the growth of innocence and irresponsibility, the strange modifications of the reproductive instinct with a tendency to become bisexual or epicene, the childlike confidence in progress combined with nightmare fear of catastrophe, against which we are yet half unwilling to take precautions.

Consider the outcrop of dictatorships, only possible when moral growth is in its earliest stages, and the prevalence of infantile cults like Communism, Fascism, Pacifism, Health Craze, Occultism in nearly all its forms, religions sentimentalised to the point of practical extinction.

Consider the popularity of the cinema, the wireless, the football pools and guessing competitions, all devices for soothing fractious infants, no seed of purpose in them. Consider sport, the babyish enthusiasms and rages which it excites, whole nations disturbed by disputes between boys.

Consider war, the atrocities which occur daily and leave us unmoved and hardly worried." Crowley, "Introduction."

52. Anger cited in Hutchison, *Kenneth Anger*, 125.

conceived of the groundbreaking pop music soundtrack to the film, what he calls “a magical happening”: the “kids had their little transistors, and had them on . . . every single song that I used in *Scorpio* came out at the time that I made the film.”⁵³ Anger’s suggestion, then, is that he was merely documenting a series of magical synchronicities in *Scorpio Rising*; the film reflects the youth subculture of the day and what this means in an esoteric sense for America in general. Bruce Byron himself provided more of the motifs for the film; Byron’s home was already decorated with pictures of his idols, James Dean and Marlon Brando, and Anger suggests that Brando’s appearance as a rebel biker in *The Wild One* synchronously appeared on the television by chance while they were filming.⁵⁴ Critics have widely commented on the intercutting of images of Jesus (from a Christian missionary film), Adolf Hitler, Brando from *The Wild One*, and Byron’s *Scorpio* in the film; as Hutchison suggests, this juxtaposition of images implies “the potential fascist posturing implicated in hero-worship.”⁵⁵ She goes on to argue that “Anger took as many taboo emblems and hurled them together; but their juxtaposition with quintessential American icons and the local authorities raised the question of the American government’s (and consequentially, Hollywood’s and the media’s) culpability in the formation of youth cults”—suggesting, as Anger saw it, a parallel between “mass culture” and “blind religious following.”⁵⁶

But “ironically binding together incongruous rebel leaders,” set to pop tunes like “The Leader of the Pack” and “He’s a Rebel,” suggests more than just social commentary for Anger. The Thelemic religious overtones of the film imply, as Crowley suggests, that the rise of the New Aeon can be seen most clearly in the “youth cults,” the new religious fads, the hero-worship and fascistic posturing of rebel leaders. Perhaps the American government, Hollywood, and the media encouraged such dangers, but ultimately, as a Thelemite, Anger saw

53. Hutchison, *Kenneth Anger*, 125.

54. See Anger’s commentary for *The Complete Magick Lantern Cycle*.

55. Hutchison, *Kenneth Anger*, 129.

56. Hutchison, *Kenneth Anger*, 129.

the source of this new violence in contemporary culture as preordained by the changing of the aeons, not merely as a social failing on behalf of one institution or another. Hutchison suggests as much herself when she describes the film's year of production, 1962, as astrologically "the end of the 2000 year-long Piscean Age and the beginning of the Aquarian Age," for "occultists (including Anger) . . . the end of a period of Christian domination and the beginning of a period of pagan domination. The film invokes the breaking away from and purging of the old 'sin-sickened' age of violence, destruction, and death, leading to resurrection in the new age. Teen culture (pop songs, drug use, motorcycle cultists and adoption of cult icons and symbols) become manifestations of fomenting demonic forces."⁵⁷

Hutchison is right about the film's depiction of the changing aeons and the "Crowleyan iconography" in the film, but somewhat misleading about the character of the ages being depicted, and the role of the Christian mythos in the film.⁵⁸ Many critics mistakenly suggest that the use of the image of Jesus alongside Brando, James Dean, Hitler, and the bikers is merely blasphemous or anti-Christian; in fact, as we have seen in the analysis of Crowley's *The Ship*, the violent death of the old god through the Aeon of Osiris' sacrifice is necessary for the rise of the Child and the advent of the New Aeon. Like Jesus Christ, the High Priest John must be crucified in order to rise as immanently present as his son/resurrection, the Young John. This is the necessary cosmic cycle, and also a necessary experience for the initiate to pass through, with Scorpio in this film now taking the place of the dreamer from *Fireworks*. Scorpio must die for the New Aeon to begin, and all the attendant violence, sexuality, and rebelliousness to authority surrounding this initiation are the birth-pangs of Horus.

It is too simplistic, then, to interpret the use of the Brando/Hollywood myth and the Christian myth in the montage alongside Scorpio's biker subculture as mere contradiction, as Carel Rowe also does by stating that the juxtaposition of

57. Hutchison, *Kenneth Anger*, 128.

58. Hutchison, *Kenneth Anger*, 130.

images in the film constitute “extreme opposites.”⁵⁹ Rowe suggests that even “as the associations are made, one is aware of the artificiality, the invalidity of the Christian and Hollywood myths in contrast to Scorpio and his ritual.”⁶⁰ The quote from Anger which follows Rowe’s interpretation itself contradicts her take on this aspect of the film: “I also regard the inception of new concepts and viewpoints in the conflict between customary conception and particular representation as dynamic—as a dynamization of the ‘traditional view’ into a new one.”⁶¹ The “dynamization” of the traditional view in the montages of *Scorpio Rising* is how Scorpio and his subculture represents, rather than invalidates, the Christian savior mythos of Christ’s willing sacrifice, reinforced through the linkage between the Hollywood messiah of Brando and Scorpio, both being bikers. As in Crowley’s interpretation of the Christic Aeon of Osiris being succeeded by the Thelemic Aeon of Horus—which in a too simplistic interpretation is usually conceived as the latter destroying or merely contradicting the former—the Osirian Scorpio/Brando/Christ must die to inaugurate the New Aeon: Christ, Osiris, the High Priest John (in *The Ship*), the dreamer (in *Fireworks*), or Scorpio must be sacrificed so an apocalyptic new age can begin. The “traditional” view would see the Christian myth and Anger’s myth of the biker Scorpio as contradictory, as Rowe does; the “dynamized” new viewpoint—the Thelemic viewpoint—sees how Scorpio’s death drive, his leather-clad worship of the chromed Thanatos, is really the death drive of the Old Aeon, and a requirement for the New Aeon to begin—just as *Scorpio Rising* precedes *Lucifer Rising* in Anger’s oeuvre. It is the cosmos’ (and the initiate’s) erotic longing for the Aeon of the Child, a preordained cosmic cycle, playing out here uniquely in American culture. As Carolee Schneemann suggests in her review of the film for *Film Culture* magazine, “That old god submitted to his cross, and these willful ones struggle to intensify their destruction by his own—bearing his cross against their sex.”⁶²

59. Rowe, *Baudelairean Cinema*, 82.

60. Rowe, *Baudelairean Cinema*, 83.

61. Rowe, *Baudelairean Cinema*, 83.

62. Schneemann, “*Scorpio Rising*,” 279.

What is also missed in these typical accounts of *Scorpio Rising*, as alluded to above in the description of how Anger came up with the bikers as subject matter, is the working-class character of these aeonic role models. *Scorpio* depicts not merely the rise of a violent new youth culture in America to mark the death of the Old Aeon, but the rise of a *working-class* subculture rebellious to traditional authority, a subculture containing “the seeds of revolution, by which alone progress can be effected,” as Crowley put it, though perhaps not progress in a straightforward or morally acceptable way, and certainly not easily aligned with one or another political ideology (after all, for all its supposedly problematic fascist imagery, the American Nazi Party protested the film and—Anger claimed—sued him for the use of their flag).⁶³ The references to Marlon Brando and James Dean in *Scorpio Rising* are not just class-neutral Hollywood references, but in fact an aesthetic of working-class revolt. The clothing and aesthetic styles utilized by the bikers—all denim and leather—referencing Hollywood wild ones and rebels like Brando and Dean (not to mention Elvis, the apotheosized American hillbilly who appears on the film’s soundtrack singing “You’re the Devil in Disguise”), were originally “working men’s garments worn by miners, manual laborers and cowboys,” as a *New York Times* review on the history of denim puts it.⁶⁴ Denim, used widely in the military uniforms fetishized by Tom of Finland, Anger, and others, became seen as a “great equalizer” after World War II. But it wasn’t until Hollywood idols like Brando donned denim (and leather) in movies like *On the Waterfront* and *The Wild One* that such aesthetic choices became seen as the clothing of “the downtrodden good guys.”⁶⁵ In 1955’s *Rebel Without a Cause*, James Dean added youth revolt to the rebellious new meaning of such clothes; according to fashion archivist Tonya Blazio-Licorish, “seeing Dean clad in denim reinforced [youth’s] rejections of ‘the stuffiness and buttoned-

63. Landis, 128.

64. Kakutani, “Call It Jeanitics.” For Elvis’ working-class roots and their political meanings, see Campbell, “Elvis Presley as Redneck,” 93–102.

65. Nishimura, “Denim.”

up nature’ of their parents’ generation.”⁶⁶ Eventually, these fashion motifs would be donned by the anti-war and Civil Rights protestors of the 1960s, a style choice among young protestors that has continued up until the present day.⁶⁷ However, these styles “can’t be totally divorced from their working-class, grassroots history,” according to fashion scholar Mark-Evan Blackman.⁶⁸

Anger’s occultural rebels in *Scorpio Rising* are working-class heroes of a sort, too, marked both by their attire and by the roots of the biker subculture. Before they became “American popular heroes” precisely due to an explosion of films like Anger’s, bikers were a real working-class subculture that Anger saw replacing the cowboys as a symbol of American freedom and anti-authoritarianism.⁶⁹ In a 1966 interview, he states that the real-life bikers in *Scorpio Rising* all had working-class roots in Brooklyn:

My group doesn’t have a name. They just hang around together. Most of them are married, have a couple of kids already, are in their early twenties. They got married just after high school. Most of them have jobs, either as truck drivers, mechanics, or unloading fish down at Fulton’s Fish Market. Most of them have an Italian background. I see the bike boys as the last romantics of this particular culture. They’re the last equivalents of the riders of the range, the cowboys.⁷⁰

Anger then suggests that the power of this subculture, even through their mere aesthetic style, is enough to bring the authorities down on them, referencing hanging out with three members of the Hell’s Angels, who, just for wearing “little sleeveless Levi jackets with ‘Hell’s Angels’ on them,” suddenly brought the attention of two police patrol wagons with riot dogs. “It’s like the fuzz were going to put down an insurrection,” he concludes.⁷¹ Hunter S. Thompson, after living with the Hell’s Angels while writing a book on them in the mid-1960s, similarly concludes

66. Cited in Nishimura, “Denim.”

67. Cited in Nishimura, “Denim.”

68. Cited in Nishimura, “Denim.”

69. Hutchison, *Kenneth Anger*, 127.

70. Hutchison, *Kenneth Anger*, 127–28.

71. Hutchison, *Kenneth Anger*, 127–28.

that they had roots among working-class American outcasts, the descendants of hillbillies, “Okies” and “Arkies” who migrated west to California during the Great Migration but could not find a place in middle-class suburban America after World War II.⁷² Thompson ultimately had a much less positive (or at least, enamored) view of the bikers than Anger did: “In terms of our Great Society the Hell’s Angels and their ilk are losers—dropouts, failures and malcontents. They are rejects looking for a way to get even with a world in which they are only a problem.”⁷³ Rather than a moral vanguard, Thompson suggested that the only thing the bikers had in common with college protestors and anti-war demonstrators is “their disdain for the present, or the status quo”—essentially a remarkably prescient forerunner of today’s Trumpenproletariat “basket of deplorables,” rhetoric that almost sounds word for word like Thompson’s conclusion about the Hell’s Angels.

Regardless of their specific political potential, the insurrectionary character of the biker subculture (and its aesthetic style) becomes representative of the death drive of the Old Aeon and the violent advent of the New Aeon in Anger’s hands—simultaneously working-class, youthful, anti-authoritarian, specifically American, and inexorably linked to the force and fire of the Thelemic Horus, Anger’s Lucifer. This brings us to Anger’s final statement on the New Aeon, the deeply Thelemic film and experimental milestone *Lucifer Rising*, which we will now turn to by way of concluding this account of the working-class character of Anger’s New Aeon.

Lucifer Rising (1972)

As the most explicit depiction in Anger’s work of the birth of the Aeon of Horus, *Lucifer Rising* summarizes what came before in Anger’s cycle of films while presenting a more positive portrayal of the revolutionary spiritual renewal represented by the New Aeon. According to Bobby Beausoleil, originally cast as Lucifer in the film before his 1970 conviction for a Manson Family-related

72. Thompson, *Hell’s Angels*, 153–54.

73. Thompson, *Hell’s Angels*, 256.

murder (Beausoleil would go on to produce the film's second soundtrack, and footage of him would appear in Anger's 1969 *Invocation of My Demon Brother*), *Lucifer Rising* was meant to be the antithesis of *Scorpio*:

The idea for *Lucifer* was to be the antithesis of *Scorpio*, which was kind of a death-image type of thing... The concept was that I would be representing the coming of the new age... In a mythological sense, we have come through matriarchy, we have come through the mother goddess. We have come to patriarchy where the goddess is male. And the Aquarian Age is supposed to represent the age of the child. This was the character I was supposed to play.⁷⁴

Lucifer Rising, then, is essentially a literal depiction of the Thelemic aeonic cycle, the ritual invocation of Horus/Lucifer by the Magi and the explosive, apocalyptic passing of the old aeons in the ruins of Egypt featuring Myriam Gibril as Isis and Donald Cammell (whose father had known Crowley and written a positive biography on him) as Osiris. Following the eclipse of the old aeons and the advent of the Aeon of Horus, Lucifer appears in physical form toward the end of the film, and he turns to look directly at the camera, and at us.

Anger's original conception of the film, which went through many changes and years of turmoil, was to make it more of a companion piece to *Scorpio Rising*—"my answer to *Scorpio Rising*," according to Anger, "which was a death mirror held up to American Culture."⁷⁵ Hutchison suggests that the original version of the film would have been about the "'holy' war between the two ages, Piscean and Aquarian, as represented by the rebellious youth of the 1960s and the repressive and conservative older generation."⁷⁶ Prior to its completion, Anger suggested that there is a "dialectical relationship between the two films," *Scorpio* and *Lucifer*, and states that *Lucifer* was to be a film about "the love generation," and genuinely intended to be a ritual leading to the physical manifestation of

74. Landis, *Anger: The Unauthorized Biography*, 145. Beausoleil's comment is obviously influenced by Crowley's aeonic theory.

75. Anger, cited in Hutchison, *Kenneth Anger*, 178.

76. Hutchison, *Kenneth Anger*, 178.

Horus/Lucifer, a “birthday party for the Aquarian Age” or the New Aeon.⁷⁷ Anger reiterates his Thelemic philosophy in this statement, asserting that most of his films leading up to *Lucifer Rising* have contained “a figure or a moment . . . which is my ‘Lucifer’ moment”; the new film would be the culmination of this work, the appearance in physical form of Anger’s longtime deity.⁷⁸ However, it is also clear from this statement that his film was not itself intended to be the start of the Luciferian New Aeon, but a celebration of it—a birthday party, not the birth—as for Thelemites the start of the Aeon of Horus had already taken place, a reality that Anger, following in the footsteps of Crowley, had documented throughout his earlier films. Essentially, *Lucifer Rising* is Anger’s “religious” statement about this reality: “Lucifer is the Rebel Angel behind what’s happening in the world today. His message is that the ‘Key of Joy is Disobedience.’”⁷⁹

This quotation from Crowley’s neo-Gnostic poem “Hymn to Lucifer”—in which Lucifer’s assistance in releasing the first humans from the “imbecile perimeter” of the Garden of Eden through “Love and Knowledge” is considered a salvific act—is very suggestive of Anger’s use of Lucifer as a figure of Horus, erotically linked with youthful, working-class revolt.⁸⁰ Staid, authoritarian American middle-class culture is like the “sterile universe” of Eden; the force and fire of the rebels—homoerotic sailors, Thanatos-worshipping bikers, anti-war hippies, dropouts, misfits, queers, drug addicts, cultists, and all of the lumpen elements that Anger celebrates with libidinal verve throughout his films—physically manifests the Luciferian energy of the Aeon of Horus, shattering the Old Aeon through joyful disobedience. While not aligned with any one particular political ideology or project, Anger’s consistent reliance on eroticized working-class imagery and countercultural aesthetics does imply an intrinsic connection in his films between the New Aeon and political and

77. Hutchison, *Kenneth Anger*, 178–79.

78. Hutchison, *Kenneth Anger*, 179.

79. Hutchison, *Kenneth Anger*, 179.

80. For more on Crowley’s poem “Hymn to Lucifer,” see Nilsson, “Hymn to Lucifer,” 153–73.

social rebellion, a societal mirror of the metaphysical changes occurring on the cosmic, divine level. Again, as Crowley states, “man is but a map of the universe, and Society is but the same on a larger scale.”⁸¹

All of these elements of Anger’s work culminate in the climax of *Lucifer Rising*, in really the only subcultural image in a film that is otherwise more classically mythological: that of the beautiful, youthful rebel angel, the god Horus now in physical form, turning to gaze at the audience near the conclusion of the film—wearing, in the vein of Anger’s previous misfits, youthful rebels, and working-class heroes, a very contemporary satin baseball jacket (which could easily have been worn by Marlon Brando or James Dean in a classic Hollywood picture), the god’s name emblazoned on the back in rainbow lettering: *L-U-C-I-F-E-R*.⁸²

Conclusion

Why is it important to scrutinize Kenneth Anger’s imagery for its class origins? Ignoring the class matrix from which specific cultural formations and symbolism emerge, and the ways in which Anger eroticizes and fetishizes that symbolism, causes critics of Anger’s work to miss the historical, and thus the *aeonic*, context of his films. What is lost in a “cultural turn” analysis of a body of work like Anger’s is the ways in which an emerging class insurgency esoterically relates, for Anger, to the coming of Crowley’s revolutionary New Aeon: libidinal symptoms of the force and fire of the Aeon of Horus, the Crowned and Conquering Child.

81. Crowley, “Liber CXCIV.”

82. Thanks to the first anonymous reviewer of this paper for pointing out that Leslie Huggins, who was ultimately chosen by Anger for the role of Lucifer in *Lucifer Rising*, was in fact a working-class steel worker from Middlesbrough, an industrial town in the northeast of England, who had never acted before. Anger was apparently very smitten with the young man, reinforcing his erotic interest in young blue-collar men and his belief that their libidinal energy best represented the Aeon of Horus. See John Gwatney’s interview with artist Jann Haworth, who created the jacket.

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