

## *The Age of Satan: Satanic Sex and the Black Mass, from Fantasy to Reality*

Hugh B. Urban

Our religion . . . is the only one, I think, in complete accordance with human nature. It is based on indulgence. Instead of commanding our members to repress their natural urges, we teach that they should follow them. This includes physical lusts, the desire for revenge, the drive for material possessions.

ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, interview with John Godwin, *Occult America*

In Anton's church all the Satanic fantasies became realities.

BLANCHE BARTON, *The Secret Life of a Satanist*

IF THE 1950S WITNESSED A NEW flowering of sensual spirituality with the rise of neo-paganism, witchcraft; and Goddess worship, the late 1960s would give birth to even more radical and transgressive forms of sexual magic. As its founder, Anton Szandor LaVey (1930–97), observed, it is no accident that the modern Church of Satan was created in 1966—at the height of the countercultural revolution, amid a generation eager to transgress the boundaries of American society through drugs, music, and sexual experience.<sup>1</sup> And if the neo-pagans and Wiccans had “rediscovered” ancient traditions by creatively reimagining and reinventing them, so too LaVey and his followers would reimagine Satan and the Black Mass for a new generation.

As we saw in the first chapter, one of the darkest undercurrents running through the Western religious imagination, from pre-Christian times down to Aleister Crowley, was the nightmare of sexual license and the perversion of sacred ritual. This was a nightmare that had been foreshadowed in the attacks on the Gnostics, the heresies of the Cathars and Free Spirits, and the Templars, but it achieved perhaps its final form in the early modern period in the fantasy of the Black Mass—a complete inversion of the Holy Eucharist, usually involving some form of sexual perversion. While the Black Mass was primarily a matter of fantasy throughout the last five hundred years, LaVey's Church of Satan was among the first groups to make this fantasy a reality. Just as Crowley took the old narrative of perverse Gnostic rituals and created a “Gnostic Mass,” and just as Gardner took the old narrative of witches' orgies and created a “Great Rite,” so too, the modern Church of Satan would take the old narrative of orgiastic Black Masses and create a new ritual that at once enacts and ridicules these persistent fantasies of sex and magic.

Dressed in his absurd devil costume, complete with pointy horns and cape, LaVey represents a kind of parodic turn within the history of sexual magic, which recognizes the contrived nature of its own ritual performance: “We step on modern sacred

cows. A modern-day form of the Black Mass might consist of such things as urinating on marijuana, crushing an LSD sugar cube underfoot, hanging a picture of Timothy Leary or a famous Indian guru upside down."<sup>2</sup> At the same time, however, LaVey would also be accused by many critics of selling out, commercializing the Church of Satan and transforming transgression itself into a kind of marketable commodity. Other disillusioned followers would also be deeply troubled by the powerful elements of misogyny, sexism, racism, and fascist tendencies within the church. But again, LaVey seemed at once aware and yet unbothered by this, and in fact he seemed quite happy to fleece any poor dupes who were stupid enough to take things too seriously: "P. T. Barnum said, 'A sucker is born every minute.' With the population explosion, by now there must be five."<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter, I will argue that the Church of Satan needs to be understood in the context of 1960s American culture amid the social trends variously called the countercultural revolution, the sexual revolution, and so forth. LaVey and his church, I will suggest, reflect many of the central tensions in American society in the late 1960s and 1970s. As Jeffrey Weeks observes, sexuality became a central source of tension, anxiety, and debate throughout the 1960s and 1970s, reflecting larger social fears about rapid social change and the increasing freedom of a new generation: "What was clearly taking place was a displacement of the anxieties aroused by the nature of the social changes, especially expressed in the growing autonomous styles of the various youth cultures, onto the terrain of sexuality, where hidden fears and social anxieties could most easily be stirred."<sup>4</sup> LaVey at once reflected and exploited these larger fears about sexuality, yet he did so in complex and contradictory ways. At the same time that he declared the dawn of a new Satanic age of sexual and personal freedom, LaVey also held some extremely conservative social and political views; at the same time that he proclaimed the autonomy of the individual ego

and its desires, he was also by his own admission a misogynist with attitudes toward women that many would find quite offensive. Like most of the figures we have examined so far, LaVey identified sexual liberation with an ideal of liberation on a much larger scale; however, in his case, this liberation was not a social and political revolution, but instead the liberation of the individual ego from all inhibition, guilt, or shame. As such, LaVey reflects much of the darker and less admirable side of the sexual revolution—a revolution that was still, in many ways, primarily "for men"<sup>5</sup> and less concerned with social justice than with individual gratification.

After a brief historical overview of the Black Mass in the Western imagination, I will examine LaVey's early life and his own version of the rite. I will then place LaVey's movement in the context of American culture of the late 1960s and 1970s, where it embodied some of the most intense anxieties and contradictions surrounding sexuality during these decades. Finally, I will discuss some of the criticisms brought against LaVey for his apparent sexism and reactionary politics, which would in turn give birth to a whole new series of Satanic offshoots. Although LaVey was often criticized for his offensive sexual and political views, he clearly helped revive the old nightmare of the Black Mass for a new generation of sexual magicians.

## THE BLACK MASS: FROM MEDIEVAL FANTASY TO MODERN REALITY

[T]he practitioners of the Black Art in modern times [are] almost exclusively people of great wealth.

DENNIS WHEATLEY, *The Devil Rides Out*

Any ceremony considered a black mass must effectively shock and outrage, as this seems to be the measure of its success.

ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, *The Satanic Bible*

The highly theatrical Black Mass performed by Anton LaVey and his followers drew upon a long, rich

history of Christian nightmares of ritual inversion and demonic perversion. Indeed, it is in many ways the culmination of the long history or “recurring nightmare” of religious heresy and sexual subversion that we briefly retraced in chapter 1. As Jeffrey Burton Russell observes, however, the actual performance of the Black Mass does not in fact have a very ancient history; on the contrary, it is “for the most part a literary invention of the nineteenth-century occultists.”<sup>6</sup> Despite its powerful role in the modern popular imagination, there is only scant evidence of any actual Black Mass being celebrated prior to the seventeenth century, and it achieves its now-famous form only in nineteenth-century novels.

Nonetheless, the modern Black Mass does draw on many older tropes in the Western religious imagination and is closely tied to the same fears of secret ritual, child sacrifice, and sexual perversion that surrounded both the early Christians and the early Christian heresies. Thus, one of the more infamous heresies of Middle Ages, the Brethren of the Free Spirit, was charged with performing such sacrilege as sexual intercourse on top of an altar during the act of consecration: “They . . . maintained that if a man and a woman had sexual intercourse on an altar at the same time as the consecration of the host, both acts would have the same worth.”<sup>7</sup> Likewise, we saw that the Knights Templar were accused of both desecrating the Mass and various sexual transgressions, and finally the classic prototype of the Black Mass were the fantasies of the witches’ Sabbath, with its invocation of the devil and free copulation with demons. As Stuart Clark observes, the witches’ Sabbath was often described by the church demonologists and inquisitors as a complete inversion of the Mass, now dedicated to Satan as the “ape of God”: “the devil [is] enthroned like God . . . together with altars, demons, ‘saints,’ music, hand-bells, crucifixes (with the arms lopped off), prelates, bishops, and priests . . . candles, aspersions (with the devil’s urine). . . . After elevating the black host . . . the priest threw it down and ground it into pieces. One of the most important witches

confided . . . that she believe witchcraft to be a better religion than the one it simulated because its masses were more splendid.”<sup>8</sup>

There is also evidence that the Eucharist itself had long been used for “magical” (and black magical) purposes, such as “to cause disease or to obtain love, or even to procure abortion or death.”<sup>9</sup> The Council of Toledo in 1694, for example, condemned priests who celebrated a Mass for the dead naming not a dead man but a living victim whom it was intended to kill.<sup>10</sup> Even Catherine de’ Medici (1519–1589), Queen of France, was alleged to have performed a Black Mass involving human sacrifice on behalf of her sick son, Philip.<sup>11</sup> Eventually, we find written texts with instructions for black magical uses of the Mass; probably the most notorious of these is the sixteenth-or seventeenth-century *Grimoire of Honorius*, attributed to Pope Honorius III, which contains various instructions for uses of the Mass (together with the sacrifice of a cock and other offerings), in order to summon spirits and make them do his bidding.<sup>12</sup>

The association of Satanism, the Mass, and sexual perversion was solidified in the popular imagination by several infamous figures of the late medieval and early modern period. The first was the French baron Gilles de Rais (1404–1440), a great military chief who fought at the side of Joan of Arc and became one of the wealthiest men in Europe. In 1440, however, de Rais was arrested and executed for a long series of horrifying crimes and would be remembered as one of the worst serial killers in history and a medieval predecessor of modern Satanic abuse narratives. Not only had he sexually abused and murdered dozens—perhaps hundreds—of children, but the baron was also alleged to have employed sorcerers and alchemists in the hopes of generating new wealth when his extravagant lifestyle threatened to bankrupt him.<sup>13</sup> According to some accounts, however, de Rais only once made use of the remains of a victim in a magical rite, and even then he was so seized by guilt that he gave the corpse a Christian burial.

The second, no less infamous story of sexual magic and the black arts is said to have occurred in the late seventeenth century at the court of Louis XIV. In a scandal of epic proportions, which involved allegations of abortions, child sacrifice, and poisoning among members of Louis' court, black magic and political intrigue became deeply entangled. Louis' mistress, Madame de Montespan, was apparently worried that the king's interest in her was waning and therefore turned to supernatural means. According to the charges leveled against her, she had first used various "powders" given to her by a fortune-teller called La Voison in order to inspire the king's affections. When this failed, she was said to have turned to still more extreme measures; in 1673, she was alleged to have participated in a Black Mass performed with the naked body of a woman as the altar, upon which communion was celebrated from a chalice containing wine mixed with the blood of an infant (three or four babies had been sacrificed, according to her accuser). During the ceremony, de Montespan recited the following incantation:

Astaroth, Asmody, Prince of Friendship, I conjure you to accept the sacrifice of this infant I present to you for the things which I ask, which are that the friendship of the King . . . should continue towards me, that I should be honored by the princes and princesses of the court, that nothing I demand from the King should be denied me.<sup>14</sup>

The priest believed to be most deeply involved in the celebration of these Masses was Abbé Guiborg, who was described in particularly sinister terms by his interrogator, Nicolas de la Reynie: "He has cut the throats and sacrificed uncounted numbers of children on his infernal altar. . . . It is no ordinary man who thinks it a natural thing to sacrifice infants by slitting their throats and to say the Mass upon the bodies of naked women."<sup>15</sup>

Finally, de Montespan would also be implicated in an alleged attempt to poison the king himself, undertaken by one of her maid's, Mlle des Oeillettes (the courier of the love powders). Des Oeillettes had

briefly received the sexual attention of the king and had borne a child by him, but she was soon cast aside and forgotten. Out of brokenhearted revenge, she was said to have enlisted the services of Guiborg in order to create a poison. According to Guiborg's confession,

Clad in alb and stole I officiated at a conjuration . . . in the presence of La des Oeillettes who wanted to put a death charm upon the king and was accompanied by a man who supplied the rubric of the conjuration. For the rite it was required to have the sperm of both sexes, but since des Oeillettes was having her monthly period menstrual blood was used instead; the man with her went to the space between bed rail and the wall . . . and masturbated himself. I directed this semen into the Chalice.<sup>16</sup>

The combined wine, semen, and menstrual blood was then mixed with powdered bat blood and flour and taken away to be used as a deadly poison on the king. Although de Montespan was never proved guilty of involvement in this affair, these scandalous events did serve to destroy any remains of the king's love for her and permanently damaged her reputation.

Perhaps the most explicit connection between the Mass and sexual perversion, however, appears in the writings of the infamous pornographic novelist Marquis de Sade (1740–1814). Although he did not associate them with magic or Satanism, de Sade wrote several accounts of the Catholic Mass performed in explicit sexual settings. The most elaborate descriptions appear in his novels *Justine* and *Juliette*. The latter describes a Mass celebrated by Pope Pius himself in St. Peter's Cathedral, during which the sacred Host is defiled in all manner of sexual and scatological ways by His Holiness and Juliette: "The Host once consecrated, the acolyte brought it up to the stage and respectfully deposited it upon the tip of the papal prick, the very next moment the bugger claps it into my bum. . . . Sodomized by the Pope, the body of Jesus Christ nested in one's ass . . . what a rare delight."<sup>17</sup> As the

Marquis wrote in his *Lusts of the Libertines*, the Mass provides one of the best occasions for a variety of deliciously shocking transgressions:

[The libertine] fucks a whore throughout a Mass being held in his private chapel, and ejaculates furiously at the moment the host is raised aloft. . . .

He fucks whores on the holy altar while Mass is proclaimed, their naked arses spread apart on the sacred stone. . . .

He farts and has a whore fart into the holy chalice, they both piss into it, they both shit in it, and finally he splurts his spunk into the mess.

He makes a small boy shit onto the plate of the Eucharist, then devours the turd while the boy sucks his cock. . . .

He takes holy communion then, while the wafer is still in his mouth, has four whores shit upon it. . . .

He rubs the whore's clitoris with the Host until she drenches it with cunt-cream, then shoves it up her cunt and fucks her, ejaculating over it in turn.<sup>18</sup>

By the nineteenth century, these narratives of Black Masses and sexual perversion had entered fully into the European popular imagination. Arguably the most famous literary rendition of the Black Mass is J. K. Huysmans's classic decadent novel *Là bas* ("Down There"). Increasingly interested in the occult arts, witchcraft, and Satanism, Huysmans allegedly sought out a series of guides to lead him to the Black Mass. There is a great deal of controversy as to whether Huysmans ever did in fact witness a Black Mass or whether he simply fabricated the event and embellished the already long history of Western fantasies of satanic ritual. There are some firsthand reports that he was taken in person to performances of the Black Mass, but there are others, such as French occultist Joséphin Péladan, who charged that the book revealed an "absolute and definitive ignorance of the laws of satanism," and Papus (Gérard Encausse), who suggested that the author pilfered the whole thing from Larousse's *Encyclopedia*.<sup>19</sup>

According to Huysmans's account, however, he had in fact witnessed a Black Mass, at which he had seen a man later identified as Abbé Van Haecke. In Van Haecke, Huysmans believed he had discovered the "greatest satanist of all time, the Gilles de Rais of the nineteenth century."<sup>20</sup> In 1889, Huysmans encountered yet another controversial figure associated with illicit sex and black magic: the defrocked priest Abbé Boullan. Together with his companion, Sister Adèle Chevalier, Boullan had founded a religious community at Bellevue near Paris called the Society of the Reparation of Souls. Many have suspected that this may have been less a genuine religious order than a cloak for darker sexual and violent activities, ranging from fornication to ritual murder and sacrilege: "whenever a nun fell sick or complained of being tormented by the devil, Boullan would apply remedies compounded of consecrated hosts and faecal matter; and on 8 December 1860, at the end of his Mass, he sacrificed upon the altar a child which Adèle Chevalier had born him at the moment of Consecration."<sup>21</sup> In any case, Boullan was considered by many to be a truly evil character. As Stanislas de Guaita described him in his *Temple de Satan*, Boullan was a "pontiff of infamy, a base idol of the mystical Sodom, a magician of the worst type, a wretched criminal, an evil sorcerer, and the founder of an infamous sect."<sup>22</sup> Huysmans heard about Boullan in 1889 and sought him out in order to learn more of the occult. While Boullan denied being a Satanist, he did claim to be an authority on incubi and succubi and gave Huysmans more than enough information to write his novel.<sup>23</sup>

Boullan and van Haecke both appear as fictionalized characters in *Là bas*. The former appears in the character of the intelligent and learned priest, Dr. Johannes, while the latter appears as the sinister, fallen priest, Canon Docre, who officiates over the Black Mass that is at the center of the novel. The hero of the story and Huysmans's alter ego is Durtal, who happens to be researching the life of Gilles de Rais, and as part of his probing into the darkest side

of human nature, seeks out a real performance of the Black Mass. Huysmans's account of the Mass is truly fantastic, weaving together all the old fantasies of blasphemy, sexual license, and transgression that run throughout the Western religious imagination. The Mass takes place in the remains of an old Ursuline convent, where the crucifix has been replaced with a grotesque image of Christ, whose grieving face has been transformed into "a bestial one twisted into a mean laugh. He was naked, and where the loincloth should have been, there was virile member projecting from a bush of horse-hair."<sup>24</sup> Instead of a pure young child, the choir boy assisting in the Mass is a "fairy," while the priest, Canon Docre, wears a scarlet bonnet with two buffalo horns. In the course of his Mass, Docre derides Jesus as the "Artisan of Hoaxes, Bandit of Homage," who has caused the "Chicanery of thy . . . commercial representatives, thy Popes, to answer by dilatory excuses and evasive promises." Meanwhile, he praises Satan as the "King of the Disinherited, Son who art to overthrow the inexorable father," and celebrates his various sins:

Master of slanders, Dispenser of the benefits of crime, Administrator of sumptuous sins and great vices, Satan, thee we adore, reasonable God, just God! Superadmirable legate of false trances . . . thou savest the honour of families by aborting wombs impregnated in the forgetfulness of the good orgasm . . . and thine obstetric spares the still-born children the anguish of maturity, the contamination of original sin. . . .

Hope of Virility, Anguish of the Empty Womb, thou dost not demand the bootless offering of chaste loins . . . thou alone receivest the carnal supplications and petitions of poor and avaricious families. Thou determinest the mother to sell her daughter, to give her son; thou aidest sterile and reprobate loves; Guardian of strident Neuroses, Leaden Tower of Hysteria, bloody Vase of Rape!<sup>25</sup>

The whole scene culminates in a bizarre chaos of blasphemy and disgust, as the

congregation—mostly prostitutes and degenerate old women—writhe madly on the floor while Docre chews up and spits out the host to be further desecrated:

In a solemn but jerky voice he said "Hoc est enim corpus meum," then instead of kneeling . . . before the precious Body, he faced the congregation and appeared tumified, haggard, dripping with sweat. He staggered between the two choir boys who, raising the chausable, displayed his naked belly. Docre made a few passes and the host sailed, tainted and soiled, over the steps. . . . A whirlwind of hysteria shook the room. . . . Women rushed upon the Eucharist and, groveling in front of the altar, clawed from the bread humid particles and divine ordure. . . . Docre . . . frothing with rage, was chewing up sacramental wafers, taking them out of his mouth, wiping himself with them and distributing them to the women, who ground them underfoot, howling, or fell over each other struggling to get hold of them and violate them.

The place was simply a madhouse, a monstrous pandemonium of prostitutes and maniacs.<sup>26</sup>

Although this account is probably the product of Huysmans's own vivid imagination and the long history of dark fantasies of the Christian world turned upside down, it would become one of the most widely read accounts of the Black Mass and a major influence on most later attempts to recreate it. Moreover, Huysmans was apparently so disturbed by his own research into the dark world of the occult that he became convinced of the existence of supernatural evil and eventually returned to the church; as he put it, "the devil drew me toward God."<sup>27</sup>

In the twentieth century, these fantasies of the inverted Mass would be still further elaborated in the wake of the Great Beast, Aleister Crowley. As we saw above, Crowley seemed to delight in his own reputation as the wickedest man in the world, notorious for his sexual transgressions and ritual performances. But his image became all the more infamous

through various popular accounts of his activities in the media and in fiction, such as the works of the popular British author Dennis Wheatley (1897–1977). A caricature of Crowley appears in several of his novels, where circles of wealthy, intelligent, devil worshippers permeate British society (often in league with Nazis or Communists) and meet to hold occult rituals. His 1953 novel, *To the Devil—a Daughter*, uses Crowley as the model for its main villain, Ipsissimus Mocata, the head of a group of British Satanists. And his 1934 novel, *The Devil Rides Out*, provides a detailed account of a “sabbat” held in the English countryside by a group of wealthy, upper-class Satanists who arrive in a fleet of expensive automobiles; for, as Wheatley observes, “the practitioners of the Black Art in modern times were almost exclusively people of great wealth.”<sup>28</sup> The ceremony is conducted by the devil himself, appearing as goat-headed creature who leads his worshippers in a ritual that enacts many of the old tropes: desecration of the crucifix, cannibalism, and so forth.

Just a few decades later, Anton Szandor LaVey would borrow from and exaggerate this trope of the Black Mass. His Satanic rites would be at once the culmination of this long history of fantasy surrounding the Black Mass and a kind of satirical play upon their frightening power in the modern imagination.

## THE DAWN OF THE SATANIC AGE: ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY AND THE CHURCH OF SATAN

The devil does not exist. It is a false name invented by the Black Brothers to imply a unity in their ignorant muddle of dispersions. A devil who had unity would be a God.

ALEISTER CROWLEY, *Magic in Theory and Practice*

The Satanic Age started in 1966. That’s when God was proclaimed dead, the Sexual Freedom League

came into prominence and the hippies developed the free sex culture.

ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, quoted in Arthur Lyons,  
*The Second Coming*

Portrayed as a former circus performer, lion trainer, police photographer, and the man who starred as the devil in Roman Polanski’s film *Rosemary’s Baby*, Anton Szandor LaVey would seem to be a character almost as colorful as the Great Beast, Aleister Crowley himself. Indeed, he seems in many ways a kind of American version of Crowley for a new age of sex and violence. As Blanche Barton described him, he was a figure of truly “Luciferian” pride and contradictions: “As a reflection of the three-dimensional villain [Satan], Anton LaVey is a complex and in many ways frighteningly deceptive man. Supremely ego-driven, he integrates characteristics most of us would think irreconcilable. Upon first meeting LaVey, many are disarmed by his wit, talent and an almost self-deprecating manner. Those who have the opportunity to be around him for any length of time eventually see a seething, brutal side to LaVey.”<sup>29</sup> Barton’s biography of LaVey, *The Secret Life of a Satanist*, is today the best-known account of LaVey’s enigmatic life. It has, however, been seriously challenged by Lawrence Wright<sup>30</sup> and other critics who have found little evidence for many of the claims made in Barton’s lively account (which was denounced as “a catalogue of lies” and “self-serving bullshit” by LaVey’s own daughter Zeena).<sup>31</sup>

The now legendary narrative of LaVey’s life as told by Barton goes briefly as follows: LaVey was born in Chicago in 1930, of French, Alsatian Russian, and Romanian descent, though he also claimed to possess gypsy blood and to have learned about vampires from his grandmother Luba Kolton. Brought up in San Francisco, LaVey was the proverbial boy who ran off to join the circus, leaving his family and school at age sixteen to play calliope at an amusement park; later he would join the Clyde Beatty Circus as a cage boy and later as an assistant lion tamer. LaVey also worked for some time as a

calliope player and organist, performing for both the carnival dancers and for the Christian tent revivals—an experience which, he claims, proved to him the hypocrisy of Christianity and the deeper reality of carnal desire:

On Saturday night I would see men lusting after half-naked girls dancing at the carnival and on Sunday morning when I was playing the organ for tent-show evangelists at the other end of the carnival lot I would see these same men sitting in the pews with their wives and children, asking God to forgive them and purge them of their carnal desires. . . . I knew then that the Christian Church thrives on hypocrisy and that man's carnal nature will out!<sup>32</sup>

Another formative experience for LaVey was his time working as a criminal photographer for the San Francisco Police Department, where he regularly saw examples of horrible cruelty and bloodshed. If his organist days proved to him the reality of carnal desire and the hypocrisy of religion, his time as a police photographer proved to him the violence of human nature and the nonexistence of God: "There is nobody up there who gives a shit. Man is the only god. Man must be taught to answer to himself and other men for his actions."<sup>33</sup>

During the 1950s, LaVey also developed an interest in the occult and parapsychology. After studying the works of Crowley (which he ordered from Jack Parsons himself), he began to investigate reports of ghosts, UFOs, and other bizarre phenomena for the police department. Eventually, he would begin holding classes on esoteric subjects at his notorious Black House, a sprawling old Victorian manor which he had painted entirely black. In addition to his popular Friday night lectures on the occult, he began to hold "witches' workshops," where he would impart formulas to women willing to use them for their own self-glorification and power.<sup>34</sup> This gradually evolved into a more ritual sort of gathering, involving a parodic performance of the Black Mass, complete with

desecrated hosts, inverted crosses, prayers recited backwards, and the like. Finally, choosing the dramatic occasion of *Walpurgisnacht*, 1966, LaVey shaved his head and proclaimed the formation of the Church of Satan. Thus 1966 was declared Year One, Anno Satanus: the first year of age of Satan.<sup>35</sup> LaVey's newly crafted image as the high priest of Satan was also clearly a parodic one, almost absurdly so. In addition to his Halloween-costume outfit with horns and cape, LaVey sported a pointed goatee that, as many have observed, made him look strikingly like the villain Ming the Merciless from the old Flash Gordon comic books.

Regardless of the truth of Barton's biography, LaVey's reputation as the high priest of Satan and the black pope for a new age of sensual religion spread rapidly. In 1967, a year after the founding of the church, Ira Levin published his popular Satanic horror novel, *Rosemary's Baby*; when Roman Polanski decided to turn it into a film, LaVey seemed a natural choice to serve as a technical advisor and even to appear as the Devil in the surreal impregnation scene. Here we find the ultimate act of sexual magic, and one that Crowley and Parsons had also hoped to realize: the incarnation of Satan himself, who enters this world through sexual union. In any case, Satan had now burst into the American popular imagination in full force and would soon appear throughout a whole new flood of popular literature on black magic and the occult.

Like Crowley before him, LaVey proudly declared all existing religious and moral systems deceased, bankrupt, hypocritical, and irrelevant. His own new creed is based on the fundamental acceptance that all religions are human creations, that all moral codes are relative and arbitrary, and that we may as well create a religion and morality that we can enjoy:

I question all things. As I stand before the festering and varnished faces of your haughtiest moral dogmas, I write thereon in letters of blazing scorn: Lo and behold! All this fraud. . . .

No creed must be accepted upon authority of a "divine" nature. . . . No moral dogma must be taken for granted—no standard of measure deified. There is nothing inherently sacred about moral codes. Like the wooden idols of long ago, they are the work of human hands, and what man has made, man can destroy.<sup>36</sup>

The basic philosophy behind LaVey's new church is neither particularly original nor particularly complicated. It is perhaps best described as a kind of radical materialism and hedonistic individualism, which celebrates the human body, ego, and sensual pleasure—or in Barton's world, "a system based on rational self-interest, sensual indulgence, and the constructive use of alienation."<sup>37</sup> Much of LaVey's writing—such as *The Satanic Bible* and *The Satanic Witch*—bear strong resemblance to the works of Crowley, Friedrich Nietzsche's ideal of the will to power, and existentialism, with a dash of Ayn Rand thrown in for good measure. But LaVey also marketed his philosophy for a new generation of sexual freedom and individualism in the America of the 1960s and 1970s. The main point for LaVey is that Satanism does *not* mean worship of some actual anti-deity named Satan who is the opposite of some imagined God; rather, it is the rejection of all gods altogether and the worship of one's own individual self. Here Satan—meaning literally "the adversary"—is merely the symbol of the individual human ego. For "Religions and ideologies will come and go . . . but man's basic nature will remain the same. Yet only through understanding himself will he be able to embrace and cherish the demon within him."<sup>38</sup> What he created was, in effect, a response to the "turn on, tune in, drop out" idealism of the 1960s counterculture, a religion in which a person can "turn on" to the pleasures around him without "dropping out" of society.<sup>39</sup>

Like Crowley and Nietzsche, LaVey felt a particular disgust for Christianity, which he saw as a religion of weakness, repression, guilt, and hatred of the body: "The contemptible Judaeo-Christian

religion is the root of our present misery, for it has taught us to repress our true, selfish feelings."<sup>40</sup> Yet LaVey was no less harsh in his criticism of the various forms of neo-paganism and witchcraft that had become so popular in the wake of Gardner's Wiccan revival; all of that nature worship and dancing around in naked circles is merely so much "namby-pamby ethicalism" mingled with "sanctimonious fraud" and "esoteric gibberish."<sup>41</sup>

LaVey's new religion was intended—much like Crowley's Abbey of Thelema—to shock conservative mainstream society out of its complacency and moral double standards.<sup>42</sup> What mankind needs now, he suggests, is a religion that worships the individual human being as a carnal beast with desires that need to be fulfilled.

1. Satan represents indulgence instead of abstinence!
2. Satan represents vital existence instead of spiritual pipe dreams! . . .
5. Satan represents vengeance instead of turning the other cheek! . . .
7. Satan represents man as just another animal, sometimes better, more often worse than those that walk on all-fours, who, because of his "divine spiritual and intellectual development," has become the most vicious animal of all!
8. Satan represents all of the so-called sins, as they all lead to physical, mental, or emotional gratification!
9. Satan has been the best friend the Church has ever had, as He has kept it in business all these years!<sup>43</sup>

As such, LaVey claims, Satanism is the most honest and the most powerful religion in the world, for it is simply "a religion of the self," the reverence and worship of the individual ego, which openly acknowledges that it is, like all religions, not a divine revelation but a human invention: "Satanism is the only religion which serves to encourage and enhance one's individual preferences, so long as

there is admission of those needs. . . . It's a celebration of individuality without hypocrisy."<sup>44</sup> Here LaVey seems to have created the ideal religion for the "Me-Generation," which follows shortly after the founding of his church in the 1970s.

At the same time, LaVey was also clearly marketing his church to a much larger, much less elite or esoteric audience than his occult predecessors like Crowley or Theodor Reuss. Thus his popular paperbacks are all sold widely in major bookstores, while the Church of Satan Web site advertises the movement with slogans like "Satan Wants You." As filmmaker Kenneth Anger observed, LaVey's Satanic philosophy was far less disciplined than even Crowley's sexual magic and was instead meant to be accessible to a wider public:

Crowley would have been too much hard work for Anton. Anton may have been a little jealous of Crowley, he may have been a lot jealous. . . . There are aspects of Crowley that require a great deal of self-discipline. Anton's take on Satanism was to make it accessible for everyone—it's not a difficult esoteric philosophy.<sup>45</sup>

We might even say that LaVey represents the far more liberal American and Californian laid-back attitude toward magic and sexuality, which rejects once and for all even the lingering remnants of Victorian prudery still left in Crowley's magic.

### The New Black Mass: Satanism and Sexual Liberation in the 1960s

The reason there has always been such a fascination for witchcraft and sorcery is because it has been consistently considered taboo . . . nothing is so fascinating as that which is not meant to be seen.

ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, quoted in Barton,  
*The Secret Life of a Satanist*

O Infernal Majesty, condemn him to the Pit, evermore to suffer in perpetual anguish. Bring Thy wrath upon him, O Prince of Darkness, and rend

him that may know the extent of Thy anger, Call forth Thy legions that they may witness what we do in Thy name. Send forth thy messengers to proclaim this deed, and send the Christian minions staggering to their doom.

ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, "Le Messe Noir," in  
*The Satanic Rituals*

Despite his rejection of most forms of neo-paganism, LaVey would also incorporate elaborate ritual and ceremony into his church. For LaVey, however, the power of ritual lies in its combination of "psychodrama and psychic direction." On the one hand, ritual creates a profound aesthetic or psychological effect. After all, "man needs ceremony, and ritual, fantasy and enchantment [the] wonder and fantasy which religion, in the past, has provided."<sup>46</sup> Or, as Gavin Baddeley nicely puts it, "Drama and melodrama are very meaningful. Bombast has its place in Satanism—in some ways, Satanism takes up where Catholicism leaves off."<sup>47</sup> Yet LaVey also acknowledges that this aesthetic and psychological drama generates a powerful energy that can be shaped and directed for magical ends.<sup>48</sup> And the most notorious of LaVey's ritual performances was his parodic re-creation of the Black Mass.

Although he would later downplay the performance of the Black Mass as outdated and ineffective, LaVey did celebrate several Masses in the early church, which helped in no small part to spread his reputation as the new Black Pope. "The rituals for the first year were largely intended as cathartic blasphemes against Christianity. The elements were consistent with the reports of Satanic worship from the famous writings of diabolists, such as the description in . . . *Là Bas*."<sup>49</sup> One of these Masses was recorded in 1968 and soon became the standard format for performances of the Black Mass throughout America and Europe. Performed upon the body of a naked woman as the altar, and involving the use of urine and explicit desecrations of the sacred Host, LaVey's Black Mass (*Le Messe Noir*) was at once an extreme performance and a

ridiculous parody of the long nightmare of sexo-Eucharistic perversions that have so long haunted the Christian imagination. It is not entirely clear what LaVey's precise sources for *Le Messe Noir* were; he alludes to a nineteenth-century group in France called *Société des Luciferiens*, along with the works of other nineteenth-century French authors like Huysmans and Baudelaire and a certain Legué (probably Gabriel Legué, rather than Georges as he cites him):<sup>50</sup>

The *Black Mass* which follows is the version performed by the *Société des Luciferiens* in late nineteenth and early twentieth century France. Obviously taken from prior *Messes Noir*, it also derives from the texts of the *Holy Bible*, the *Missale Romanum*, the work of Charles Baudelaire and Charles Marie-George Huysmans, and the records of Georges Legué. It is the most consistently Satanic version this author has encountered.<sup>51</sup>

In the early days of the Church of Satan, LaVey held performances of the Black Mass and other rites each Friday night at his Black House, which attracted not just the lunatic fringe of the Bay Area but a number of affluent individuals and celebrities (including, as we'll see below, Jayne Mansfield). The ritual was performed with almost absurdly demonic drama. Opening with booming chords from an organ, LaVey appeared wearing a horned cap and a long cape surrounded by black-robed worshippers; on the wall was the Sigil of Baphomet allegedly used by the Knights Templar in their perverse rites, and beneath it was the naked female body draped across the stone mantle over the fireplace. Extending a sword to the four directions, LaVey invoked Satan, Lucifer, Belial, and Leviathan and then passed around a chalice filled not with wine or blood but with some other beverage of choice (e.g., bourbon).

The text of LaVey's *Le Messe Noir* is a mixture of a Latin parody of the Catholic Mass and French and English prayers to Satan. Several paragraphs of the text are lifted word for word from Huysmans's Black

Mass in *Là bas*, including the following Satanic rants:

Thou, thou whom, in my quality of Priest, I force, whether thou wilt or no, to descend into this host, to incarnate thyself into this bread, Jesus, artisan of hoaxes, bandit of homages, robber of affection, hear! Since the day when thou didst issue from the complaisant bowels of a virgin, thou hast failed all thy engagements, belied all thy promises. Centuries have wept, awaiting thee, fugitive god, mute god! Thou wast to redeem man, and thou has not. Thou wast to appear in thy glory, and thou sleepest. Go, lie, say to the wretch who appeals to thee,

"Hope, be patient, suffer; the hospital of souls will receive thee; the angels will assist thee; Heaven opens to thee." Imposter! Thou knowest well that the angels, disgusted at thy inertia, abandon thee!<sup>52</sup>

LaVey's ritual also contains various instructions for the desecration of the ritual and the sacred Host by means of bodily fluids and sacrilegious acts involving urine, genitalia, and desecration. For example, the nun "lifts her habit and urinates into the font," after which an aspergeant is dipped into the urine and shaken in four directions. The wafer, which is to be made of turnip or coarse black bread, is placed "between the exposed breasts of the altar," then touched to the "vaginal area," and finally trampled by the priest, deacon, and subdeacon.<sup>53</sup>

Clearly, much of this ritual is aimed at a kind of explicit, exaggerated, even ridiculous form of transgression that goes even further in the direction of parodic inversion than Crowley's own extreme ritual transgressions. LaVey himself would more or less acknowledge as much, suggesting that the early Church of Satan had in a sense to use such extreme displays of Christian inversion in order to awaken the American public and make itself known to the world: "Any ceremony considered a black mass must effectively shock and outrage, as this seems to be the measure of its success."<sup>54</sup> Once the original

shock had been made, however, these theatrical performances of the Black Mass were no longer really necessary:

After that original blast, there was no need for the ongoing public spectacle and outrage of an inverted Catholic Mass anymore. Christianity was becoming weaker every day. That was just beating a dead horse. There were plenty of other sacred cows to attack, and that's what keeps Satanism vital and thriving.<sup>55</sup>

Nonetheless, despite the church's statements to the contrary, the La-Veyian style Black Mass, with the naked female altar has continued to be a thriving and theatrical aspect of Satanic worship throughout the world to this day. It seems to have been taken in some interesting new directions as well. Thus, one Satanic witch describes a New Year celebration in which she served not just as the altar but the dinner table for an elaborate Satanic smorgasbord:

In the last Satanic New Year we had a huge party and it was really great. I was there at the private party in the evening on the table. We had dinner on me! . . . They put me on the table naked, they put all sorts of salads all over my body, and they ate off me with a spoon. It was absolutely fantastic.<sup>56</sup>

Yet to what degree such rituals are "fantastically" liberating and to what degree they only continue a deeper form of exploitation and misogyny remains open to question.

While LaVey's Black Mass involves primarily symbolic references to sexuality (the naked altar, touching the breasts and genitals, etc.), he does also recommend various other rites of a more explicitly sexual nature. *The Satanic Rituals* outlines three main types of ritual: sex rituals for the conjuration of lust, destructive rituals for the expression of anger or hatred, and compassionate rituals for helping oneself or others. The first of these might be considered the Satanic version of sex magic. Here the practitioner is to pray to the "great spawn of the abyss" to "send forth that messenger of voluptuous

delights and let these obscene vistas of my dark desires take form in future deeds and doings." Then, in the case of a male, he should recite a prayer in rather Crowleyian prose that exalts his throbbing "rod" and its "venom" in the name of Pan:

My rod is athrust! The penetrating force of my venom shall shatter the sanctity of that mind which is barren of lust; and as the seed falleth, so shall its vapours spread within that reeling brain benumbing it to helplessness according to my will! In the name of the great god Pan, may my secret thoughts be marshaled into the movements of the flesh of that which I desire!

The female, conversely, is to pray in the name of the whore of Babylon, celebrating her nectar-dripping loins and their "pollen":

My loins are aflame! The dripping of the nectar from my eager cleft shall act as pollen to the slumbering brain, and the mind that feels not lust shall on a sudden reel with crazed impulse. . . . In the names of the great harlot of Babylon, and of Lilith and of Hecate, may my lust be fulfilled!<sup>57</sup>

Here the sexuality and gender of both male and female are exaggerated in ways that go even further than the "woman is from the moon, man is from the sun" of the Wiccans. Now both male and female become hypereroticized lust-dripping creatures, the thrusting rod and the flaming loins aching for sexual satisfaction.

## THE DARK SIDE OF THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION: SEXUAL LIBERATION, SATAN-STYLE

Freud's "pleasure principle" should be known to be the highest motivator for any religion. . . .

Never underestimate the sexual corollaries to fetishism/religion.

ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, "The World's Most Powerful Religion"

Unless we free ourselves from the ridiculous sexual standards of our present society, including the so-called sexual revolution, the neuroses caused by those stifling regulations will still persist.

ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, *The Satanic Bible*

LaVey's new church was in many ways a simultaneous expression of and reaction against many of the changing attitudes toward sex and gender in the 1960s. Many of his works, such as *The Satanic Witch*, are at once classic expressions of the rhetoric of sexual liberation and also quite blatant statements of male chauvinism. Above all, his performance of the Black Mass—performed upon the living altar of a naked female body—is a kind of weird parodic experiment in both sexual revolution and ritual misogyny. In fact, LaVey himself acknowledges that the very symbolism and magical power of the Black Mass rests upon a fundamental male-female/dominant-receptive gender polarity that is directly opposed to modern forms of feminism:

Feminism negates and inverts the natural male/female interchange. There's a magnetic interaction between men and women that can be exploited for magical results. . . . It's been described as yin/yang, active/passive. . . . In Satanic ceremonies, it's the interplay between the dominant Priest and the receptive female altar. But feminists in their supposed quest for equality have tossed the baby out with the bathwater.<sup>58</sup>

As Steven Seidman suggests, the years between 1960 and 1980 in the United States witnessed a profound new "legitimation of the erotic aspects of sex" and a new valuation of sexual pleasure as a good in and of itself, even apart from love and marriage: "by the 1960s the pleasurable and expressive qualities of sex were appealed to as a sufficient justification of sex. Discourses . . . appeared that constructed sex as a domain of pleasure and self-expression requiring no higher purpose. . . . Eros was released from the culture of romance that gave birth to it."<sup>59</sup> Yet this new drive toward liberation was not limited to sexual

freedom; rather, it was part of a larger countercultural phenomenon that also involved freedom in music, dress, hairstyle, drug use, and political resistance: "the 1960s saw the birth of a counter-culture, less apolitical than the working class culture, more challenging . . . of bourgeois hegemony. Music, clothes, style became the hallmark, the crack in the painwork of the traditional society that seemed to be vanishing forever. . . . [V]iolence, drugs and sex, three major preoccupations of the 1960s and 70s blended symbolically in the image of youth in revolt."<sup>60</sup> At the same time, this period witnessed a new expansion of sexuality into popular culture as a whole, particularly through advertising, the media, and the increasing commodification of sex through pornography:

By the 1960s there was undoubtedly an increasing eroticization of many aspects of social life, from the increasing sexual explicitness of advertising, where sex became an obvious inducement to ever-extending and often useless consumption, to the growing squalor and exploitativeness of pornography in major cities.<sup>61</sup>

Yet, as other, more critical authors have observed, this revolutionary call for the unleashing of eros was often largely in the service of male interests. As Sheila Jeffreys argues, it was typically men rather than women who benefited from this new sexual freedom, which allowed them to enjoy a wide array of libidinal pleasures often without accountability, all in the name of "sexual liberation." "The sexual revolution completed the sexualisation of women. Both married and unmarried women were expected to become experts in sexually servicing men, and to get over their own tastes and interests."<sup>62</sup> In sum, "the sex-rev failed because, Freudian or not, it failed to ask what women want."<sup>63</sup> Instead of genuine liberation or equality, what we find today is a remarkable proliferation of commodified forms of sexuality, pornography, and prostitution, which, as Dennis Altman observes, are largely "means of satisfying male 'desire' through the services, in both the corporeal and fantasy realms, of women."<sup>64</sup>

## The Law of the Forbidden: Sexual Fetishism and Fantasy

[P]sychiatry had no room for the encouragement of fantasy or personal fetish. If anything it was about negating or subverting them. That's where I found my grey area—keeping and treasuring your fetishes, dreams and fantasies rather than subverting or expelling them.

ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, interview with  
Gavin Baddeley, *Lucifer Rising*

LaVey's new church was in many ways the epitome of this contradictory fusion of sexual liberation and male domination that ran throughout the "sexual revolution" as a whole. His writings repeatedly emphasize the need for full indulgence of one's sexual appetites, as well as a proud recognition of all one's most peculiar sexual proclivities. "Satanism *does* advocate free love, but only in the true sense of the word. Free love, in the Satanic concept, means exactly that— . . . freedom to indulge your sexual desires with as many others as you feel is necessary to satisfy your particular needs."<sup>65</sup> Thus, for example, pornography is by no means rejected but openly embraced as a celebration of our carnal nature: "Porn is inherently Satanic as an art form: it has no other role beside self-indulgence in its most basic form; it glorifies man's carnal nature, blending the most beautiful aspects of the human animal with the most debased."<sup>66</sup> Like Crowley before him, LaVey warned that sexual desires that are *not* indulged will simply turn into dangerous obsessions, neuroses, or worse: "If a person has no proper release for his desires, they rapidly build up and become compulsions."<sup>67</sup> And like Crowley, P. B. Randolph, Reuss, and others, LaVey taught methods of sex magic, or the release and channeling of sexual energy for magical aims; but his was, as he put it, "Sex magic without sanctimony."<sup>68</sup>

In certain respects, LaVey's concern with the liberation of sexuality went much further than most of the countercultural discourse of the 1960s. LaVey was not simply interested in liberating healthy,

happy, pleasurable sex for a more open society; rather, he was particularly interested in exploring sexual areas that were considered most taboo: sexual fetishes and deviant desires of all varieties. We are all, in his opinion, "fetishists," with some form of deep, dark, deviant desire or other: "EVERY MAN IS A FETISHIST, YOU SIMPLY HAVE TO *DISCOVER* HIS FETISH."<sup>69</sup> Indeed, LaVey suggests that the sexual liberations of the 1960s had very quickly become boring and routine, simply because of the endless, easy access to free love. Exploring one's most idiosyncratic fetishes, conversely, makes sex dangerous, defiant, exciting again:

Fetishism is . . . an effort to make sex exciting again. The experiments in "free love" of the 1960s and 1970s may have made promiscuity fashionable, . . . but they also demonstrated that . . . anything in endless, monotonous supply could become dull. . . . Christianity preaches that sex is merely a procreative act, devoid of pleasure. . . . Sexual activity wherein procreation is avoided . . . is therefore one of the most pleasurable blasphemies, Truly Satanic sex is where the individual indulges their own true personal proclivities.<sup>70</sup>

Like Crowley and Georges Bataille, LaVey was fascinated by the principle of transgression, the explicit violation of social and sexual taboos, or what he liked to call "the law of the forbidden." As De Sade and Bataille had also observed, the prohibition only tends to make the forbidden act all the more tantalizing, the act of violating the taboo all the more exhilarating. When asked by interviewer Gavin Baddeley "How much of the appeal of the occult, and Satanism in particular, derives from its secret, hidden character?" he replied:

There's a big link with the "law of the forbidden," a concept pioneered by the photographer William Mortensen concerning the primal appeal of sex, sentiment and wonder. These are the basic human interests from which our compulsions and fetishes are derived. Like the fairground where people will pay to go into the freak tent to avert their eyes.<sup>71</sup>

Thus the law of the forbidden applies equally to our fascination with Satanism and the occult as well as to our fascination with sexual transgression and deviant desires. Just as “The reason there has always been a fascination for witchcraft and sorcery is because it has consistently been considered taboo,” so too “sheer nudity in itself is usually not nearly as stimulating as a glimpse of the forbidden,” for in both cases “NOTHING IS SO FASCINATING AS THAT WHICH IS NOT MEANT TO BE SEEN!”<sup>72</sup> In LaVey’s opinion, we are all deviant and “nasty” at heart; indeed, our sexual fetishes and our fascination with the forbidden are what make us mature human animals: “all men are nasty little boys at heart. When the first sexual feelings and subsequent experimentation occurred in a man’s life, he was acting in the capacity of a nasty little boy in ninety-nine percent of all cases . . . when a boy becomes a man, it is accompanied by lewd thoughts!”<sup>73</sup> In sum, whereas Randolph, Reuss, and other sexual magicians had identified sex as the innermost essence of the human being and the greatest source of magic, LaVey identifies *sexual fetishism and deviance* as the innermost core of human animality.

Thus, when performing sexual rituals, LaVey advises that the Satanist be constantly mindful of the transgressive, deviant, subversive nature of the act: “While performing your ritual, remain as aware as possible that you are doing something naughty, forbidden, possibly even nasty. . . . This is the time to turn unfounded guilts and inhibitions into an *advantage!*”<sup>74</sup> For it is in large part this sense of the forbidden or transgressive that gives the act its magical power.

### The Satanic Witch: An Anti-Feminist Religion?

I’m a confirmed misogynist, but only because I’m such a pushover for feminine women.

ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, quoted in Barton, *The Secret Life of a Satanist*

Women can exploit their differences to gain more power. . . . Advanced, Satanically-oriented women

can choose their own lifestyle rather than have it thrust upon them. They can participate in all kinds of exercises, rituals if you will, to break down the brainwashing feminism has done on contemporary young women. Sadomasochistic revelries, shape-changing deviltry, discipline games—women are looking for more of that sort of thing in their private lives because it’s the ideal therapy.

ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, *The Satanic Witch*

Perhaps the most complex—and, to many, disturbing—aspect of LaVey’s Satanic philosophy is his attitude toward women. As in most other aspects of his views, LaVey is proudly offensive and politically incorrect in his views on women. He does in fact argue for a certain kind of sexual liberation and empowerment of women, a recognition of the real power that women wield over men and can use to their advantage. As he puts it, “The witch has always been a rebel,” who, with her subtle violations of taboos, “defies sacred cows the other women kneel before.”<sup>75</sup> LaVey himself had a powerful attraction to and respect for particular kinds of women—most often the curvaceous, voluptuous, “truly female” types, such as Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield, both of whom had brief relationships with the Black Pope. After Mansfield’s death in a car crash, LaVey praised her for her “hedonism and pure, selfish pursuits” in her “dedication to the ideals of Satan.”<sup>76</sup> In Satanism, Mansfield “had found a philosophy through which she could be a businesswoman, an intellectual, a mother and a sexpot all at once.”<sup>77</sup>

But at the same time, LaVey was also a staunch opponent of feminism, women’s rights movements, and anything that weakened the distinctions between the sexes. As his daughter Zeena, observes, LaVey released his *Satanic Witch* in the same time period—and in many ways in response to—the Equal Rights Amendment and feminist activists like Gloria Steinem. Satanism was, in effect, a rejection of this “emasculatation” of men and “de-feminizing” of women:

It was in this period of gender confusion and bra-burning bravado that the *Satanic Witch* was first published . . . . A diabolical textbook reinforcing traditional sex roles and “sexist” attitudes was viciously attacked in that shrilly militant, androgynous atmosphere.<sup>78</sup>

In LaVey’s opinion, this whole period of time was “completely ass-backwards. Men were becoming emasculated, women were getting uglier, and adults in general were turning into one indeterminate sex in the name of liberation,” which blurred the fundamental distinction between man and woman, creating a synthetic composite that represented the worst of both genders.<sup>79</sup>

In contrast to the “defeminizing” and “androgynizing” trends in modern women’s movements, LaVey advocates what he calls a “true liberation for women brave enough to risk jealous ridicule from their ‘sisters.’ ” Rather than an androgynous, desexualized being, the “truly liberated female” is the one who knows how to accentuate and make full use of her femininity, with all its curves and caprices; she “knows both how to use and enjoy men” and can “profit by her womanliness by manipulating the men she holds in contempt, while enjoying them.” This would, LaVey suggests, herald a new and more authentic kind of feminism based on the recognition of the true nature of the female body as an object of carnal desire: “The woman who grasps and fully understands the mastery of the world inherent in this book’s Satanic teachings will usher in a true feminism: the liberation of the demonic in every woman.”<sup>80</sup> In contrast to the “flaccid, lackluster attitude” of the Wiccan and neo-pagan witches, the Satanic witches embody true “pride, identity and power” by accepting and affirming their distinctly feminine sexuality.<sup>81</sup>

Probably the best known artist for the Church of Satan was “Coop,” much of whose work featured extremely voluptuous demon vixens sporting little apart from horns and pitchforks to adorn their large bottoms and bursting bosoms. As Coop argued in

an interview with Gavin Baddeley, this is really what men want, and have always wanted from the dawn of time, in keeping with our own uniquely “male” and “female” animal natures:

Women should look like women, and men should look like men. There’s a reason that we have evolved into this state, and I can’t see why we should throw that out of the window after it’s worked for so many thousands of years. I think the image of the voluptuous woman is firmly planted in the darkest, least evolved parts of our brains. If you look at stone-age fetish figurines—like the famous Venus of Willendorf—they were just basically little statues of fat chicks that cavemen jerked off to.<sup>82</sup>

The ability to manipulate feminine sexuality in order to dominate men is the heart of sexual magic for the true Satanic witch. The wise witch can arouse and then draw upon the sexual energy in the men whom she captivates in order to use that energy for her own devices:

Because their sexual energy is potential magical energy and nature intended that they be attracted to you, *men* are your best source of witch power . . . by your own sexual self-consciousness, you can draw this power from the men who need only to be placed within your magnetic field—produce an accelerated charge of sexual self-consciousness.<sup>83</sup>

Thus LaVey gives detailed instructions to the Satanic witch for her sexual-magical rituals designed to allure and seduce men. She might, for example, go out in public, highly made-up and wearing nothing but a coat over her naked body; she should then flaunt herself before every man she meets, imagining that she is totally naked. She should then go home, remove the coat, and stare at herself naked in the mirror, imagining herself from a man’s perspective, feeling “completely exposed” as she “shamelessly flaunted” herself, imagine handsome men grabbing her, aroused and excited at the outrageous display of the sensual naked body:

Allow yourself to build as high a peak of sexual excitement as possible, masturbating yourself to a climax, attempting to feel as the man would as he watched the girl (you) perform such an act in public. As you are overcome by your sensual responses, close your eyes, fall to the floor, thrash about in wild abandon—or do whatever will contribute to the most intense orgasm. . . . As you are coming down from your climax, say to yourself, “I am a witch; I have power over men! I am a witch; I have power over men!”<sup>84</sup>

In short, the witch is not only to *become* a sexual object and focus of the male gaze; she is even to *internalize* that male gaze, subject herself to it in her imagination, and thereby use it to her own magical advantage.

Although LaVey claims that rituals like these are liberating and empowering for his female followers, there is little doubt that most feminists and anyone sympathetic to women’s rights today would find his teachings deeply disturbing. He had no qualms about saying things that would make anyone with politically correct conscience cringe, such as: “all women are exhibitionists to a certain extent. The thrill that any healthy woman obtains when she knows she is exciting a desirable man is the most natural thing in the world.”<sup>85</sup> But LaVey himself would most likely admit as much. He was an avowed “misogynist” who loathed the defeminization of women that he saw occurring during the 1960s, and he wanted nothing more than to “smash the current androgyny,” to return to a world where “men look like men” (hard, cold, intellectual) and “women look like women” (soft, warm, emotional). As he put it in his usual uncompromising way,

I’m a confirmed misogynist, but only because I’m such a pushover for feminine women. A misogynist’s disdain is based on jealousy. Seeing the power that aggressively passive women wield through their feminine wiles, he wishes he had a bit of it himself, secretly admires it, and seeks to capture it before it captures him. . . . We misogynists need

wanton, sleazy, yielding, soft women to augment our masculinity. I consider a well-adjusted heterosexual misogynist a bulwark against the most devastating form of defeminization.<sup>86</sup>

Not surprisingly, the publication of LaVey’s *Satanic Witch* was met with mixed results. While some praised it as a visionary “breakthrough in understanding human motivation,” many feminists responded with livid outrage, “public book burnings, pickets at stores.”<sup>87</sup> LaVey, however, rather seemed to enjoy the controversy he’d created.

## HEDONISM, INDIVIDUALISM, AND GREED: THE ULTIMATE “MODERN” RELIGION?

[T]his is a very selfish religion. We believe in greed, we believe in selfishness. We believe in all of the lustful thoughts that motivate men because that is man’s natural feeling.

ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, interview in the film,  
“Satanis: The Devil’s Mass”

The philosophy of Satanism I follow is a modern invention, relevant to the modern age. We look at it from a fairly scientific, balanced point of view.

DAVID AUSTEN, High Priest of the Temple of Set,  
quoted in Baddeley, *Lucifer Rising*

As a religion that affirms the basic principles of egotism, sexual pleasure, and greed, a religion that values the principles of elitism and hierarchy, I LaVey’s church could be said to be in many ways an ideal religion for American capitalist society in the late twentieth century. If Crowley represents, in a sense, the “exhaustion of modernity” in Europe and England in the mid-twentieth century, then LaVey might be said to represent the *celebration of a new form of modernity* in America at the close of the twentieth century. After all, the basic ideals of modernism may have led to war, holocaust, and

disaster in Europe, but the United States emerged from the war as the most powerful, arrogant, and rapidly growing force in global politics. LaVey's philosophy would seem in many ways to reflect a new confidence in the Crowleyian principles of individualism, radical freedom, amorality, and hedonism, which fit rather well with the basic principles of American capitalism. And LaVey's church would itself become quite successful commercially, rapidly growing into one of the most successful new religions on the American occult scene of the 1960s and 1970s.

Not all of LaVey's followers would agree with the direction his church was taking, however. Increasingly in the 1970s and 1980s, LaVey would face not just outrage from mainstream Christians and irate feminists, but also dissent from various church members who were increasingly disturbed by the seemingly fascistic and capitalistic tendencies within the movement.

### Blessed Are the Strong

Smash the crumbling cross, for Might is right.

ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, "Battle Hymn of the Apocalypse," from *The Satanic Bible*

As with his outspoken misogyny and sexism, LaVey had no qualms about voicing an explicitly politically incorrect social vision based on hierarchy and the dominance of the strong over the weak. A highly elitist philosophy, taking a kind of Nietzschean will to power, the cult of the individual, and Darwinian survival of the fittest ideal to their furthest extremes, Satanism is based first and foremost on the power of the strong, willful individual over the dull conformity of the cowardly masses: "LaVey's world is self-indulgent, hedonistic, elitist . . . yet also brutal, opinionated, extreme. He needs no other humans to populate it, so any who come into his immediate circle enter understanding LaVey's emotional/psychological inaccessibility and distance."<sup>88</sup> Thus LaVey has his own Satanic inversion of the Sermon on the Mount, which

celebrates not the weak and poor but the strong and greedy:

Blessed are the strong, for they shall possess the earth—Cursed are the weak, for they shall inherit the yoke!

Blessed are the powerful, for they shall be revered among men—Cursed are the feeble, for they shall be blotted out! . . .

Blessed are the iron-handed, for the unfit shall flee before them—Cursed are the poor in spirit, for they shall be spat upon.<sup>89</sup>

As LaVey's daughter Zeena comments, Satanic sexual practices can also be used as a form of eugenics: by learning to select the strong and dominant, while avoiding the weak and feeble, the Satanist can help to create a new breed of powerful individuals who rise above the dull herd: "*The Satanic Witch* . . . is a guide to selective breeding, a manual for eugenics—the lost science of preserving the able-bodied and able-minded while controlling the surplus population of the weak and incompetent."<sup>90</sup>

These elements of elitism, intolerance, and even eugenics did not always sit well with LaVey's followers. One of the most outspoken critics of the church has been Isaac Bonewits, who was a regular at LaVey's rituals as a teenager. He would later become shocked and horrified by the apparent racism, chauvinism, and elitism within the movement, describing Satanists as largely a bunch of "fascists, jerks and psychopaths."<sup>91</sup> He was particularly disturbed when he began to see elements of white supremacy and Nazism creep into the church:

Some were bringing authentic Ku Klux Klan robes and Nazi uniforms for the ceremonies. I was assured that the clothes were merely for "Satanic shock value" to jar people from their usual pattern of thinking. Then I would talk to the men wearing these clothes and realize they were not pretending anything. I noticed that there were no black members of the Church . . . and began to ask why.<sup>92</sup>

LaVey himself espoused no particular political views. Yet his highly elitist and hierarchical Satanic philosophy is clearly in many ways compatible with certain aspects of fascism, racism, and, as I would suggest, consumer capitalism.

### **ChurchofSatan.com: Marketing Satan, Sex, and Liberation**

Satanism as mass culture is great. . . . There's a great advantage in mainstreaming, and I'd be a hypocrite to dislike it.

ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, interview with Gavin Baddeley, quoted in *Lucifer Rising*

LaVey's emphasis on the central values of egotism, hedonism, and personal satisfaction does seem to fit well with the larger economics patterns of consumer capitalism in late-twentieth-century America. Greed and acquisitiveness are, like all other vices, basic aspects of the human being and should therefore be affirmed and celebrated. Just as he rejects the idea of abstention in sexual matters, so too he rejects any pretence of poverty in the name of religion: "LaVey had no illusions about vows of poverty as a means of gaining spiritual redemption. For him magic was essentially about power—and wealth was a type of power. LaVey reserved the right to channel funds accruing to the church of Satan in any way, for any purpose he saw fit."<sup>93</sup> Eventually, in 1975, LaVey even began marketing the degrees of initiation within the church. Higher degrees could now be obtained by contributions in cash, real estate, or valuable objects of art: "priesthoods in the Church of Satan were available to those who demonstrated their success in the wider world—such demonstrations to include gifts of cash or valuable objects."<sup>94</sup>

Again, however, not all of LaVey's followers were happy with what they saw as blatant commercialism creeping into the church. One of the most notable critics of the church was Michael Aquino, a former high-ranking officer in the U.S. military

intelligence, with service in Vietnam and a doctorate in political science to his name, who joined the church in 1969. Like Bonewits, Aquino began to feel that the church was beginning to attract the wrong sort of crowd—"a carnival of freaks," "sexually inadequate, social misfits, intellectual poseurs." The leadership had meanwhile fragmented into "petty squabbles over title, ranks and privileges" amid an ironic fraternity of individualists.<sup>95</sup> However, Aquino was even more disturbed by LaVey's policy of selling degrees, which he saw as the same sort of hypocrisy that Satanists had attacked in the mainstream Christian church: "If there had been a single unifying factor that had brought us to Satanism, it was the church's stand against hypocrisy. So when we learned of this policy, our reaction to it was that LaVey was betraying his office, betraying everything that he had worked for for so many years."<sup>96</sup> In 1975, Aquino broke from the church and founded his own new order, the Temple of Set. Indeed, he claimed that Satan had revealed himself in his true and original form, the ancient Egyptian god Set, and had named Aquino as LaVey's replacement (as well as the successor to Aleister Crowley). In sum, "Just like the Pope in the sixteenth century, the Black Pope faced the challenge of attempted reform."<sup>97</sup>

The Church of Satan, I would suggest, is thus a striking illustration of the larger "cultural contradictions" surrounding sexuality, transgression, and liberation in the America of the 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, it shows very clearly the ways in which the very promise of sexual transgression and sociopolitical liberation themselves can become co-opted, commodified, and transformed into yet another profitable supermarket of American culture. As Altman suggests, this is a recurring theme throughout American society during these decades, as the "attempt to link sexuality with the political" gave way to a culture "where sexuality is more commonly linked with contemporary capitalism, and we increasingly think of ourselves as consumers rather than citizens."<sup>98</sup> As we will see in the

following chapter, both the hope for liberation and the tendency toward commodification would become even more obvious in the closing decades of the twentieth century amid the strange new logic of late capitalism.

## CONCLUSION: THE DEVIL IS WINNING

Satan has been the best friend the Church has ever had, as He has kept it in business all these years!

ANTON SZANDOR LAVEY, *The Satanic Bible*

From a Satanic perspective, there's room for optimism. The Devil is winning.

GAVIN BADDELEY, *Lucifer Rising*

If Crowley represented the darker side of the late Victorian era, with his love of transgression and violation of sexual taboos, then LaVey and his church show us the dark side of the 1960s and the sexual revolution. At the same time that he embodied many of the counterculture's ideals of sexual freedom and revolt against mainstream values, he also represented a striking reaction against the cultural revolution, a rejection of many "liberatory" phenomena such as feminism, equal rights, and anything smacking of socialism. As Bonewits and others observed, LaVey's church would often appear more politically conservative, even fascistic, than liberating. As LaVey himself argued, Satanism and the Black Mass have always been about the inversion or transgression of mainstream cultural values; thus, a modern Black Mass would have to reject or invert popular values such as the 1960s counterculture and liberalism itself:

A black mass today would consist of blaspheming of such "sacred" topics as Eastern mysticism, psychiatry, the psychedelic movement, ultra-liberalism, etc. Patriotism-would be championed, drugs and their gurus defiled, acultural militants would be deified.<sup>99</sup>

In spite of, or perhaps *because of*, his politically incorrect philosophy, LaVey's church has continued

to flourish even after his death, attracting a variety of high-profile members, such as shock-rock artist Marilyn Manson among others. As Gavin Baddeley suggests, the devil has not gone out of favor with the end of the sexual revolution, but in many ways he seems stronger than ever in a new era of individualism, sexual freedom, and the relentless search for sensual pleasure:

Satanists will continue to play with "spiritual nitroglycerine." . . . In embracing perennial Christian taboos . . . we intend to prevent present-day idiocies from dragging the next millennium into another miserable Dark Age. If a New Satanic Age is born, it will be born from the ideas of curiosity, independence and pleasure. From a Satanic perspective, there's room for optimism. The Devil is winning.<sup>100</sup>

At least in contemporary American consumer and corporate culture, it would seem that the principles of elitism, egotism, and greed and the logic of consumer capitalism are winning as well.

## NOTES

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