

Satanism, by Joseph P. Laycock, Cambridge University Press, 2024. 84pp., Hb. £17 ISBN-13: 978100947937.

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The Cambridge Elements series on New Religious Movements (NRMs) are brief, to the point, and up to date. Laycock's excellent *Satanism* is no exception. From Chapter 1, "What is Satanism?" which opens with the FBI response to the Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) scare of the early 1990, the pace never slackens, with discussions about how to identify Satanism, the invention of Satanism as a NRM by Anton LaVey in the 1960s, and ways to classify different Satanist movements being delivered in clear, lively prose. The second chapter is focused on the Black Mass, historically a fantasy of medieval and early modern Christians, that is now a staple of popular cultural representations of Satanism. France was particularly prominent in the development of legal precedent for witchcraft and the Black Mass, for example the 1679 trial and 1680 burning of Catherine Deshayes Monvoisin, the first woman accused of being used as an altar in a Satanic Mass. This chapter includes: a discussion of Joris-Karl Huysman's novel *Lá-Bas* (1891); Léo Taxil's *The Devil in the Nineteenth Century* (1892-), a literary hoax that posited the existence of a Satanic sect called the Palladists; and the emergence of the Black Mass as a trope in film.

Chapter 3, "Satanic Sympathizers," opens with the literary contribution of Romanticism to the image of Satan as a revolutionary and attractive person and moves to the Hellfire Clubs patronised by "elite men" (p. 15), who lampooned religion and profaned sacred things. Laycock cautions that the Hellfire Clubs were not Satanism as now understood, but part of an antinomian impulse that was fostered by the rise of secularism and free thinking in the eighteenth century. Esoteric currents also fostered interest in Satan: here brief accounts of Alphonse-Louis Constant (1810-1875), Stanisław Przybyszewski (1868-1927), Carl William Hansen (1872-1936), Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), Eugen Grosche (1888- 1964), and Maria de Nagłowska (1883-1936) are provided, then the focus shifts to Anton LaVey (1930-1997), who founded of the Church of Satan (CoS) in 1966. Two near-contemporary groups, Herbert A. Sloane's (1905-75)

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Ophite Cultus Satanas or Our Lady of Endor Coven dating from around 1968, and the Process Church of the Final Judgment, founded by Robert de Grimston (b. 1935) and Mary Ann MacLean (1931-2005) in 1965 are introduced as participants in a common 1960s milieu.

Chapter 4, “The Church of Satan,” focuses on LaVey as charismatic leader, storyteller, and consummate entrepreneur, who crafted a personal mythology weaving circuses, Hollywood, “occult and macabre topics” (p. 23), art events and ritual creations, into something that resembled an intentional community or a performance art collective. His authoring of *The Satanic Bible* (1969) gave Satanism a manifesto, which was united with the rituals he crafted to form the basis of the grotto system of expansion of CoS. Michael Aquino, an important collaborator, formed the Temple of Set (ToS) in 1975. This important organization is the subject of Chapter 5; members seek to become like Set, their sole deity, through a process called “*xeper* (pronounced ‘coffer’), an Egyptian word meaning ‘to come into being’” (p. 36). Complex issues such as the relationship of sundry Satanic organizations to Nazism, evident in the Misanthropic Luciferian Order (founded in Sweden 1995) and the Order of the Nine Angles (founded in the United Kingdom in the 1970s) led by the mysterious Anton Long (likely born David Myatt). Laycock is very perceptive on the ONA, noting that it “often resembles an internet meme more than an actual group” (p. 43). It has long been opined that the ONA has tiny actual membership numbers, but of late it has been distributed through the Nazi Iron March web forum, from which the terrorist organisation Atomwaffen Division was formed in 2015. This chapter delves into intelligence and counter-intelligence work, conspiracy theories, and a bewildering number of small, Satanist, ultra-right groups.

Chapter 6, “Satanic Panic,” covers the strange, hysterical movement that alleged that Satanists were abusing children, mutilating animals, and infiltrating organisations such as pre-schools, government departments, and medical bodies. Key practices including recovered memory and key texts like *Michelle Remembers* (1980) are examined, with Laycock emphasizing the cultural context, which ranged from Charles Manson and the notorious murders committed by his followers, the Family, and popular psychological ideas about so-called multiple personality disorder, and began to abate in the 1990s. Links are suggested between this historically specific phenomenon and conspiratorial claims about Pizzagate (in which Hillary Clinton and other Democrats were accused of

child sexual abuse) and the alleged Satanisation of the United States by Vladimir Putin during the invasion of Ukraine. Chapter 7, “Contemporary Developments in Satanism,” focuses on the Satanic Temple, “a left-wing satanic organization founded in 2013 that has taken a stance on such issues as the separation of church and state, reproductive rights, and transgender rights” (p. 59). This very public Satanism is a game-changer, and has led to a worldwide revival of Satanism as an instrumental tactic in the defence of secularism. This short book is a thrilling read, is highly relevant, and merits a large readership.