

INTRODUCTION: HARPING BIZARRE

Peanuts: (kneeling at bedside) I think I've made a new theological discovery.
Lucy: What is it?
Peanuts: If you hold your hands upside down, you get the opposite of what you pray for.

Charles Schulz

I began this book as an unbeliever in the occult. I leave it, if not believing, then not disbelieving. What is here is not everything you need to know about witchcraft, nor everything you need to know about the selling of God, Man, and the Age of Aquarius. What is here is not the sociology or anthropology of witchcraft, nor a taxitive compendium of horror movies, sex cults, pornography, and American law. What is here, simply, is the popular culture of American sorcery.

The first manuscript pages of this book appeared only a few days after a British vicar's widow confirmed an I Ching reading that predicted for me a long occult adventure. "Do it," she said. "Write about the counter-culture of witchcraft." Months later, interviewing witches, observing Black Masses, declining an offer to be crucified, I asked myself, "Is this anyway for an ordained exorcist to behave?" But then my exorcising days like my Catholicism were some years behind me and fetching knees bewitched mine beneath the ouija board. Now from this side of the research, astrology, magic, tarot, yang-yin macrobiotics, as well as the whole of occult psychedelia seem no more foreign to my mindset than the philosophisms of Aquinas or the theologisms of Calvin.

In the sweepstakes of American spirituality, witchcraft--if anything--seems currently to have over traditional religion both popular and polemical edge. Always a sturdy underground, witchcraft has boldly passed its hard Salem

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two words

times and now labels American Christianity as much cult as witchery. Conversely, the U.S. Supreme Court constitutionally guarantees witchcraft is as much a religion as Christianity. This far from Salem, witchcraft has, ironically enough, perfected its gains against orthodox absolutism by tempting on the old cant grounds. No longer do the Christian churches monopolize American spirituality. The occult seems to answer man's spiritual needs with understanding that the repressively defensive churches have more or less denied.

I mean this book to sound no more anti-Christian than I intend it to sound pro-occult. Recalling playwright Arthur Miller's title for his Salem witch play, I mean merely that the popular exchange of crucifix for crucible seems a telling exchange. America at best is, after all, more of an experimental society than a repository of European absolutes. More adventuresome than religious answers spooned out to security-seekers, the open-ended occult dares pose questions, tentative to our evolving society. In times of swift change, necromancy seems better suited to match the continued questing of the American character, colonial to astronautical. For in the evolution of the world, obviously enough, old maps ill serve a new Columbus. Old totems fall, and we no longer look for men to match the mountains; we look in the last generation of this century for a spirituality wide enough to match the frontiers of outer and inner space. We resensitize. We reconceptualize.

Technology demythologizes the moon. Etymological scholarship like The Mushroom and the Cross demythologizes Jesus into an acid hallucination; Erich von Daniken's Chariot of the Gods philologically makes the Bible a documentation of UFO's with Christ as an extraterrestrial cosmonaut. American astronauts, unsure of who's got the providential action, carry both scriptural passages and occult amulets to the lunar surface. Time magazine announces on its cover God Is Dead; but The National Enquirer believes God is alive and well and living in Argentina with King Arthur, El Cid, and Judge Crater. And if God is dead,

Anton Szandor LaVey, High Priest and Founder of The Church of Satan; San Francisco, California:

I don't feel that raising the devil in an anthropomorphic sense is quite as feasible as theologians or metaphysicians would like to think. I have felt His presence but only as an exteriorized extension of my own potential, as an alter-ego or evolved concept that I have been able to exteriorize. With a full awareness, I can communicate with this semblance, this creature, this demon, this personification that I see in the eyes of the symbol ^{of} Satan — the goat of Mendes — as I commune with it before the altar. None of these is anything more than a mirror image of that potential I perceive in myself.

I have this awareness that the objectification is in accord with my own ego. I'm not deluding myself that I'm calling something that is disassociated or exteriorized from myself the godhead. This Force is not a controlling factor that I have no control over. The Satanic principle is that man willfully controls his destiny; if he doesn't, some other man -- a lot smarter than he is -- will. Satan is, therefore, an extension of one's psyche or volitional essence, so that that extension can sometimes converse and give directives through the self in a way that mere thinking of the self as a single unit cannot. In this way it does help to depict in an externalized way the Devil per se. The purpose is to have something of an idolatrous, objective nature to commune with. However, man has connection, contact, control. This notion of an exteriorized God-Satan is not new.

My opinion of succubi and incubi is that these are dream