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The Baphomet

A discourse analysis of the symbol in three contexts

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Abstract

This essay examines how the Baphomet symbol is understood in three different contexts. Firstly, the understanding of the Baphomet is analysed in the book *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*, written by the French 19th century occultist Éliphas Lévi. Secondly, I analyse the symbol in *The Satanic Bible* by Anton Szandor LaVey, the person responsible for having introduced Satanism to modernity. Thirdly, the Baphomet as understood in contemporary metal music culture is analysed.

Ultimately, I find the Baphomet to be viewed as a symbol associated with Satan, but in very different ways. The reason to why these differences exist I find to be partially explained by the initial mystery surrounding the Baphomet. The understanding of the Baphomet depends also on the role of Satan in each context. Due to Satan representing different things in the three different contexts, so does the Baphomet.

Keywords: Baphomet, Western esotericism, Satanism, occulture, discourse theory, Éliphas Lévi, Anton Szandor LaVey, metal music, culture, religion

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introductory remarks and purpose statement

It would be fair to guess that most European adults have seen it at least once. They might not know what it is, what to call it or what to think about it, but it is there: in the tabloids, on television or on the cover of their favourite record. The symbol of a goat's head fitted inside a pentacle, or the image of an androgynous creature with a goat's head seated on a rock can appear almost anywhere nowadays. A majority of the people exposed to it are likely to apprehend it as yet another gruesome picture of the Devil, meant to shock, not devoting a second thought to it. To me, that option disappeared long ago.

Having actively taken part of rock 'n' roll and metal music culture for almost two thirds of my life, I notice certain aesthetics frequently tend to reappear in the artistic expressions. Religious or anti-religious messages and themes are repeated in lyrics and imagery surrounding metal music bands and artists. As with so many other things in life, it is the vivid and puzzling impressions that stick with you, and unto me, such an impression was made by the Baphomet.

Doubtlessly, the Baphomet is one of the most well know images connected to occultism in popular imagination. The Baphomet is depicted in various forms on numerous album covers, demo covers and T-shirts motives of Black, Death and other Heavy metal bands, either as Éliphas Lévi originally drew it and as it appeared in *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* [1856], or as Anton Szandor LaVey designed it in his book *The Satanic Bible* [1969]. On the front page of this essay is an image of the two Baphomet symbols combined featured. By conjoining the two symbols a new symbol is produced, exemplifying how the Baphomet is constantly developed and redone in contemporary popular culture. The original images are given in Appendix 1 for the reader to behold and recognise.

My intent with this essay is not, by any means, to pursue an essentialist agenda. The Baphomet is to me a symbol, which through its constant recurrence connecting to issues on both religion and art has fuelled my interest and curiosity. If comparable circumstances had surrounded for instance the beloved cartoon character Mickey Mouse, making him a symbol of relevance to the history of religion and culture in Europe spanning from the 14th century to the present, as the Baphomet potentially is, would that character be just as urgent to investigate in a similar fashion. Instead, it is a symbol of uttermost relevance to the iconography of Satanism and occultism that has caught my analytical gaze.

The aim with this essay is to better understand the Baphomet and add to the academically accumulated knowledge of the Baphomet symbol, to maybe rid it of some misconceptions and to

bestow it with a scholarly treatment. I will do so by investigating the Baphomet in the first two books presenting it in its two most widespread and (in-) famous representations, and in the metal music culture, where many people make acquaintance with it for the first time.

1.2 Research questions

- How is the Baphomet understood in the books *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* by Éliphas Lévi, in *The Satanic Bible* by Anton Szandor LaVey and in the modern metal music culture?
- Do the interpretations differ from each other, and if so, how do they differ, and why?

1.3 Theoretical background

In this part the three main theoretical aspects of this work are presented. Firstly, in order to place the researched material in a historically appropriate context there is a need for an overview of the term Western esotericism, and different ways to define it. Secondly, Satanism and the grounds on which esotericism and occultism are possible to connect to modernity and popular culture are dealt with. Thirdly, a brief introduction to discourse theory is given, which is the analytical method used in this essay.

1.3.1 The concept of Western esotericism

What is Western esotericism? This question has been a subject of scholarly debate for about two decades. “Western esotericism” is an academic construct, set up by scholars as a field to research certain elements in the history of culture and religion in the Western world, and especially in Europe. By briefly sketching the different theoretical approaches to esotericism given by scholars of the field, I hope to assist the reader with a relevant theoretical framework needed to place this investigation in an academic context and to elucidate some of the problems with the academic study of esotericism.

The dominating strategy to arrive at a satisfying answer to the question above posed, has up until recently been primarily historiographical. The historical take on Western esotericism was pioneered in the mid 1960s by the English historian Frances Amelia Yates (1899–1981) with the publication of the book *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* in 1964. Yates, who's work owes much to research on the Renaissance conducted by Italian historians in the 1930s,¹ constructed

¹ Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 2001, “Beyond the Yates Paradigm: The Study of Western Esotericism Between Counterculture and New Complexity”, *Aries*, vol. 1:1, 5–37, pp. 13–14.

the notion of a “Hermetic Tradition”. The idea of “the Hermetic Tradition” as a neglected counterculture, in opposition to both Christianity and modern rationalist and scientific world views, is as professor Wouter J. Hanegraaff has shown, a problematic stance indeed.² To regard hermeticism, or esotericism, as a tradition in itself strictly separated from religion and philosophy is to simplify its place in history. Though Yates did spark the academic interest in esotericism on a broader scale, and by that set the table for scholars to come, it was not until the early 1990s that the field began to be distinguished as we know it today.

The first to define esotericism, and to provide the study of Western esotericism with a theoretical foundation, was the French academic Antoine Faivre. In 1992, Faivre presented a typology formulated from a historiographical perspective, consisting of four intrinsic and two secondary characteristics of what should be recognised as esotericism.³ This defines esotericism as a “form of thought”⁴ sharing these characteristics:⁵ (1) The idea of correspondences, stipulating that visible or invisible correlations exist throughout the universe, symbolic, real or the two combined, which can be influenced by conventionally non-causal means. (2) The idea of a living nature, in which the created world is thought to be an ensouled living entity with an immanent divine force. (3) The idea of imagination and mediation, as central to acquiring spiritual knowledge. The imagination can provide knowledge which the rational mind cannot, and spiritual authorities can reveal and mediate such knowledge. (4) The idea of the experience of transmutation, which involves the inner spiritual progress of the practitioner as a sign of development. The last two characteristics are secondary, as they are not necessarily present in esotericism, but are likely to be: (5) The idea of concordance, in which there is thought to exist a common foundation of truth at the core of some or all religions and spiritual teachings, unifying them. (6) The practice of transmission, being the social element of passing on knowledge from master to apprentice following certain measures of conduct. Faivre's model has been very influential and highly important to the study of esotericism, but it has been criticised. Hanegraaff notes that it can be well worth to question how the initial selection of traditions and source materials was made. Hanegraaff finds that Faivre is most probable to have presupposed traditions already deemed as esoteric to suffice as sources to what esotericism should be, making explicit connections previously implicitly assumed.⁶ Professor Kocku von Stuckrad points out that Faivre sometimes is inconsistent when applying his own

2 Hanegraaff 2001, pp. 15–18.

3 Faivre, Antoine, 1992, “Introduction”, *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*, ed. by Antoine Faivre and Jacob Needleman, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, xi–xxii, pp. xv–xx.

4 Faivre 1992, p. xi.

5 This definition was first given in French by Faivre in the book *L'ésotérisme* in 1992, and later the same year published in English in the book *Modern Esoteric Spirituality*.

6 Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 1998, “On the Construction of ‘Esoteric Traditions’”, *Western Esotericism and the Science of Religion*, ed. by Antoine Faivre and Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 11–61, p. 44.

typology, and that it is mainly constructed to fit the sort of esotericism Faivre himself had been most keen on studying, namely “Christian esotericism in the early modern period”.⁷ The critique of Faivre's historiographical approach to defining esotericism has merit. Stretching from antiquity to present day, esotericism as a phenomenon should not be limited to the modern period and Christianity alone. The study of Western esotericism has since Faivre developed other, less inhibitory, theoretical approaches to study the field.

One of the most esteemed scholars of Western esotericism is professor Hanegraaff, who is currently the head of the centre of History of Hermetic Philosophy and related currents at the University of Amsterdam. He has presented an epistemological and analytical typology which distinguishes between three categories of knowledge: faith, reason and gnosis.⁸ Reason is possible to both communicate and to verify. I could for instance solve a mathematical equation and explain how I managed to do so, and you would then be able to check my answer yourself to see if I have made any mistakes. Faith is possible to communicate, but not to verify. I could exclaim that I had had an epiphany of a meeting with Jesus, which has turned me into a firm Christian, and you would be able to hear and comprehend my claims, but you would not be able to confirm their authenticity. Gnosis on the other hand is not possible to communicate, nor is it verifiable, making it the category of knowledge which mediate mystical and esoteric experiences. Gnosis should not be misunderstood as the same as esotericism, but as a term for the knowledge esotericism conveys in a theoretical sense. Hanegraaff affirms that all these three categories of knowledge are probable to be referred to by both esoteric and non-esoteric authors to a varying degree, and by using this typology as a methodological tool, elements of esotericism may be detected. Even though Hanegraaff has emphasised the complexity of the field in question,⁹ he has additionally remarked that “Western esotericism” is a construct resulting from a polemical discourse.¹⁰ Esotericism is accordingly: “more or less all currents and phenomena that have, at one time or another, come to be perceived as problematic (misguided, heretical, irrational, dangerous, evil, or simply ridiculous) from the perspectives of established religion, philosophy, science, and academic research”.¹¹

Apart from the historical and typological approaches of Faivre and Hanegraaff the discursive approach to esotericism developed by von Stuckrad, professor of Religious Studies at the

7 von Stuckrad, Kocku, 2005, “Western Esotericism: Towards an Integrative Model of Interpretation”, *Religion*, vol. 35:2, 78–97, p. 83.

8 Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 2008, “Reason, Faith, and Gnosis: Potentials and Problematics of a Typological Construct”, *Clashes of Knowledge: Orthodoxies and Heterodoxies in Science and Religion*, ed. by Peter Meusburger, Michael Welker and Edgar Wunder, Dordrecht: Springer Science & Business Media, 133–144, pp. 138–141.

9 Hanegraaff 2001, pp. 28, 30–31.

10 Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 2005a, “Forbidden Knowledge: Anti-Esoteric Polemics and Academic Research”, *Aries*, vol. 5:2, 225–254, p. 226.

11 Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 2005b, “Introduction”, *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. by Wouter J. Hanegraaff, in collaboration with A. Faivre, R. van den Broek, J.-P. Barch, Leiden: Brill, vii–xiii, p. xiii.

University of Groningen, has been the most influential during recent years. Von Stuckrad constructs esotericism as an analytical instrument designed to better understand Western culture, using a discursive model identifying (1) claims to higher knowledge and (2) ways of accessing such knowledge.¹² An esoteric discourse hence holds a dimension of secrecy, a “dialectic of concealment and revelation” as a structural element,¹³ concerning claims to hidden wisdom or spiritual knowledge. Von Stuckrad furthermore explains that an esoteric discourse controls how the higher knowledge can be attained.¹⁴ Access to higher knowledge is gained either through mediation, in the sense Faivre described it in his list of characteristics, or through individual experience. The mediator can be a god or another transcendent entity, and its impact can be separated or entwined with the individual experience of reaching new levels of knowledge. The emphasis on individuality and the claims to higher knowledge distinguishes an esoteric discourse from discourses of institutionalised religion and communal religiosity. Von Stuckrad notes that in addition to identifying the two above given aspects of esoteric discourses, it is also possible to spot esoteric discourses by considering what world views and beliefs they express and if these are (3) grounded on an ontological monism.¹⁵ Assistant professor Kennet Granholm at Stockholm University, a scholar of contemporary esotericism, has recently published work further developing the theories of von Stuckrad and taking the field into a more epistemologically social-constructionist direction.¹⁶ Discursive approaches to esotericism have come to prove themselves as perhaps the most progressive strategies to bring the academic study of esotericism forwards expanding the field of research into new directions.

A word commonly paired together with esotericism is occultism. However, in this essay these two words are not used synonymously. Occultism is by me generally used, in accordance with current scholarly usage,¹⁷ as a term referring to the 19th century developments within Western esotericism, and especially referring to the developments in France at that time. When applied by me as an etic term relevant not only to the 19th century, occultism is understood according to Hanegraaff's definition as comprising “all attempts by esotericists to come to terms with a disenchanted world or, alternatively, by people in general to make sense of esotericism from the perspective of a disenchanted secular world”.¹⁸ Occultism can thus be referred to as “secular

12 von Stuckrad 2005, pp. 88–91.

13 von Stuckrad 2005, p. 89.

14 von Stuckrad 2005, pp. 91–92.

15 von Stuckrad 2005, pp. 92–93.

16 Please see Granholm, Kennet, 2013, “Esoteric Currents as Discursive Complexes”, *Religion*, vol. 43:1, 46–69.

17 Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 2005c, “Occult/occultism”, *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. by Wouter J. Hanegraaff, in collaboration with A. Faivre, R. van den Broek, J.-P. Barch, Leiden: Brill, 884–889, p. 888.

18 Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 1996, *New Age Religion and Western Culture: Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought*, Leiden: Brill, p. 422.

esotericism”.¹⁹

The short theoretical background to Western esotericism that I have now given is meant to shed some light upon the problematic endeavour of defining the concept of esotericism, and to supply the reader with the basic understanding of what esotericism is, that is needed to follow the line of my investigation. The theoretical approaches of the herein discussed scholars have been significant in shaping the field, and are continuously subject to change and intellectual growth as the destiny of field is far from set in stone. Except for acknowledging the importance of Faivre's model to conceptualising esotericism to begin with, I would like to distance myself from that model due to its limiting consequences. I consciously refrain from definitely settling for any of the other theoretical approaches given, as I find the value of reflecting upon their independent and collective benefits and shortcomings sufficient in this investigation.

1.3.2 Satanism and “occulture”

Investigating the *The Satanic Bible*, the term “Satanism” is bound to attract attention and demands to be elaborated upon. Though the specific Satanism expressed in *The Satanic Bible* will be accounted for in part 2.2. the term will here be reviewed in a more general and encompassing sense. Per Faxneld is a research fellow at the department of the History of Religions at Stockholm University and a scholar focused on the study of Satanism. Faxneld has given the following definition: “Satanism is a system in which Satan is celebrated in a prominent position”²⁰ [my translation]. This definition is simple, helpfully clear and straightforward. Ruling out single outbursts of praise directed to Satan or the Devil in poems or similar artistic work, it does not make religious systems actualising Satan necessarily into Satanism. However, this definition has been questioned on terms of its heresiologically Christian angle on Satan as an entity by fellow Satanism scholar and associate professor Jesper Aa. Petersen at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology.²¹ Petersen proposes a concept less inclined to bring about associations to imaginative and mythical Devil-worshippers and witches. In order to understand what Satanism is, Petersen asserts studying how it is constructed. He makes a distinction between *discourse on the satanic* and *satanic discourse*, and describes it as ”an analytical dichotomy between broader demonological narratives on Satan and Satanism circulating in Western culture and the narrower satanic discourse of self-declared Satanists operating within a satanic milieu”.²² Satanism is thus understood as an inclusive category when constructed socially and culturally, and an exclusive category when

19 Hanegraaff 2001, p. 9.

20 Faxneld, Per, 2006, *Mörkrets Apostlar: Satanism i Äldre Tid*, Sundbyberg: Ouroboros, p. xiv.

21 Petersen, Jesper Aagaard, 2011, *Between Darwin and the Devil: Modern Satanism as Discourse, Milieu, and Self*, Trondheim: Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, p. 62

22 Petersen 2011, p. 63.

established on grounds of religious and philosophical convictions. Discourses on the satanic have frequented the history of the world for a long time, but it was not until the late 1960s that a satanic discourse was first invoked.

Petersen finds that the Satanism generating from a satanic discourse is primarily concerned with (1) the project of self-realization, through accepting carnal and/or esoteric truth. (2) Moral authority is given to the inner self in favour of external values. The project is (3) communicated in language by means of a satanic framework, actively embracing aspects found in history and culture understood to be satanic. In turn, a deeper (4) engagement in the “satanic world” is pursued for example by reading relevant literature, partaking in social activities and practising rituals.²³ Petersen's discursive approach to understanding contemporary Satanism is favourable to supposed models comparing today's satanists with mythological satanists made up by the Church throughout history.

Relating to the notion of discourses on the satanic is the idea of “occulture”. Christopher Partridge, professor of religious studies at Lancaster University, gave this term its academically applicable meaning. Building on sociologist Colin Campbell's concept of “the cultic milieu” as the cultural underground of society,²⁴ Partridge defines occulture as follows:

Occulture, as a sociological term, refers the environment within which, and the social processes by which particular meanings relating, typically, to spiritual, esoteric, paranormal and conspiratorial ideas emerge, are disseminated, and become influential in societies and in the lives of individuals. Central to these processes is popular culture, in that it disseminates and remixes occultural thought.²⁵

Occulture is thus a theoretical concept acknowledging the impact of esoteric and religious themes on popular culture and consumers of popular culture. There are two aspects of this theory particularly relevant to the material analysed in this essay, due to its striking diversity. Partridge points to the eclecticism of those actively dwelling in the occultic environment and the unwillingness to situate oneself within any single religious tradition.²⁶ This reluctance brings about an enormous plurality of possible combinations and unpredictable structures of beliefs forming as a result of the occultic climate, and brought to the public through various mediums of popular culture such as music, literature and television. Partridge further indicates a sense of continuity, with ancient sources and cultures, present within occulture.²⁷ The people of lost times are pictured as

23 Petersen 2011, pp. 64–65.

24 Campbell, Colin, [1972]/2002, “The Cult, the Cultic Milieu and Secularization”, *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization*, ed. by Jeffrey Kaplan and Heléne Löw, Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 13–25, p. 14.

25 Partridge, Christopher, 2013, “Occulture is Ordinary”, *Contemporary Esotericism*, ed. by Egil Asprem and Kennet Granholm, Sheffield: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 113–133, p. 116.

26 Partridge, Christopher, 2004, *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture and Occulture*, London: T & T Clark International, pp. 70–71.

27 Partridge 2004, pp. 77–78.

having been in touch with both the worldly and the sacred in ways no longer known to modern society. This sentimental attachment to the past is by no means salient to occulture and newer religiosity. It can be found in virtually any religion, but it is a characteristic connecting occulture to Western esotericism, which can make authoritative claims on similarly grounded reasoning.

Partridge notes that occulture undoubtedly has become an agent of contemporary re-enchantment in secularised society.²⁸ In the case of metal music, occult themes are dominant features in lyrics and imagery, making it a part of occulture. Bearing in mind the considerable amounts of people who enjoy listening to metal music and the influence many of these people allow the music to have on their lives, it is not very far-fetched to presume their interest in metal music to have a greater or lesser effect on their opinions and thoughts on supernatural topics or spirituality. This is hypothetically an explanation to why metal music is perceived as intriguing by a multitude of people all over the globe. In coming to terms with a disenchanted world, people are through a process of socialisation led to conceive popular culture as a substitute for the mystery of religion, making occulture an acute field of research to scholars of contemporary religion. My decision to investigate the place of a symbol with religious affiliations in metal music culture is to a large extent motivated by these concerns.

1.3.3 Discourse theory

Ernesto Laclau's and Chantal Mouffe's discourse theory provides a theoretical approach to language and the analytical tools needed in discourse analyses. According to discourse theory, social phenomena are never finalised constructions. Meaning is always a subject of change, leading to a constant social struggle between different definitions of, for example, identity, society and religion. The role of the discourse analyst is to study the battle for the fixation of meaning and unambiguousness on all social levels.²⁹ Laclau and Mouffe defines *discourse* as the structured totality of meaning deriving from an articulation. An *articulation* being a practice or domain, such as writing or speaking, in which the relationship between signs,³⁰ for example words, are given a modified identity due to the articulatory practice.³¹ Within a discourse, all signs are *moments* with their own meanings fixated by their differences to the meanings of other signs. Discourse is therefore a self-referring system in which the meaning of each sign is determined by its relation to

28 Partridge 2013, p. 117.

29 Winther Jørgensen, Marianne & Phillips, Louise, 2002, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*, London: Sage, p. 24.

30 The word "sign" is not a concept used by Laclau and Mouffe, but is here used as an umbrella term for moments, elements, nodal points and floating signifiers.

31 Laclau, Ernesto & Mouffe, Chantal, [1985]/2001, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London: Verso, p. 105.

other signs.³²

Some signs uphold a privileged position in the form of *nodal points*. It is in relation to the nodal points that other signs acquire their meaning within a discourse.³³ For example, in a Christian discourse, “God” would be a nodal point around which other signs, such as “faith” or “judgement”, have their meanings organized. But only partial fixation of meaning in the nodal points can be achieved. This is a consequence of *the field of discursivity*, which is a term for all other possible meanings a sign can have. A certain discourse is created through excluding all possible meanings of a sign, except the meanings created inside the discourse, in the relations between nodal points and moments. The field of discursivity is every other meaning a sign can have in other discourses.³⁴ This poses a threat towards all discourses, as the unity of meaning can be challenged and replaced by other meanings from another discourse. An *element* is a sign that holds several meanings within a discourse, with its meaning not yet fixed. The element is polysemic, in contrast to the moment which has a fixated meaning. A discourse then strives to make all elements into moments, by eliminating the plurality of possible meanings of a sign into one fixed meaning. By doing so, the discourse achieves *closure*. Yet, the closure can never be complete, as the transition of all the elements to the moments is never fulfilled.³⁵ The field of discursivity can always undermine the fixed meanings in a single discourse. For example, the music record industry discourse has had to change its understanding of downloadable music in order to fit the needs of today's customers.

The same signs can have different meanings in different discourses. A single sign, for example the word “literature”, does not say or mean anything in itself. It is given meaning through the practice of articulation, when signs are put in relation to other signs. “Biblical literature” has another meaning than “academic literature”, the first belonging to a religious discourse, whereas the second draws upon a scholarly discourse. “Literature” could then be a nodal point around which meaning is established in relation to other signs. However, without being put in a specific discourse, “literature” as a sign is empty and holds no meaning. When being placed in a discourse, it becomes an element, holding potential meaning. This makes this sign a *floating signifier*, which various discourses compete to fill with their meaning and interpretation. The term “nodal point” is therefore meant to address a sign within a separate discourse, and the term “floating signifier” is used to describe an important sign struggling between different discourses.³⁶

To summarise, a discourse is a structure which attempts to turn all elements into moments through closure. This mission is destined never to succeed because of the influence from the field of

32 Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002 p. 26.

33 Laclau & Mouffe [1985]/2001, p. 112.

34 Laclau & Mouffe [1985]/2001, p. 111.

35 Laclau & Mouffe [1985]/2001, p. 110.

36 Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, pp. 28–29.

discursivity, which endangers the fixation of meaning within every discourse. All moments can potentially become elements. An articulation can reproduce or challenge a discourse by fixating meaning in a specific manner.³⁷ Nodal points and floating signifiers are crucial for understanding the interactions between different discourses and for identifying the field of discursivity.

1.4 Method and material

To unravel and examine the Baphomet symbol in Lévi's book *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* and in LaVey's book *The Satanic Bible* and its re-use in later metal music contexts, discourse analysis will be used. The qualitative method, discourse analysis, deriving from Laclau's and Mouffe's discourse theory, is used to investigate selected segments from these books and lyrical extracts from metal music songs. The particular edition of *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* used is an English translation of the French original made by Arthur Edward Waite (1857–1942), and was first published in 1896. The parts of the texts chosen for analysis are the ones dealing with the Baphomet symbol. To research changes in the understanding and interpretation of the Baphomet during the course of modern history, *The Satanic Bible* will also be analysed. Lyrics from different metal music songs in which the Baphomet is the central theme, is the last object for this discourse analysis.

Using discourse theory as an analytical tool, I will work according to a simple model.³⁸

1. Identification of the different signs in the articulations, the parts of the texts where the Baphomet is featured, which form discourses.
2. Description of the formation of the discourse through finding nodal points and chains of articulations, to see how they connect to moments and elements.
3. Examination and comparison of what the different discourses include and what they exclude, and what consequence this has for the symbol's interpretation.

The secondary source material used in this essay has been carefully selected. In using the well-written textbook *The Western Esoteric Traditions* by Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke (1953–2012), previously professor of Western esotericism at the University of Exeter, as grounding material for my short recollection of the history of Western esotericism in part part 2.1, I remain outspokenly critical to his religionist leanings in considering esotericism as “an enduring tradition”.³⁹ Most biographical material on Lévi is written in French which I unfortunately do not master to the extent

37 Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 29.

38 Wreder, Malin, 2007, ”Ovanliga analyser av vanliga material”, *Diskursanalys i Praktiken*, ed. by Mats Börjesson and Eva Palmblad, Malmö: Liber, 29–51, p. 36.

39 Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas, 2008, *The Western Esoteric Traditions: A Historical Introduction*, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 13.

necessary to read it, but Dr. Christopher McIntosh's biography entitled *Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival* appears to be the best English-written academic match available. Faxneld's book on the early history of supposed Satanism, *Mörkrets apostlar: Satanism I äldre tid*, serves as a source to the early origins of the Baphomet. In choosing which metal songs to investigate I made my selection based on a will to showcase the vast diversity of the metal music genre, musically as well as lyrically.

1.4.1 Demarcations

The aim of this work is not to give a complete picture and history of the Baphomet, but to research the possible shift in the understanding of the symbol as presented by Lévi and LaVey and the interpretations of the symbol in the popular culture of our time. My research questions are concisely formulated in order to effectively limit my investigation to a manageable number of primary sources. The pentagram, also introduced by Lévi in *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* and later used by LaVey, is an example of a symbol of similar significance as the Baphomet. It could have been included in this analysis on the grounds of its major importance to a manifold of divergent religious practices, but due to the need for limitations, it is not. This study would naturally benefit from a reading of the French original of *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* and comparing it to Waite's well established translation, but due to my lack of French language skills such a venture is not possible.

1.5 Previous research

Judging from my efforts to gather suitable material to this essay, I conclude that no larger studies dealing with the Baphomet symbol has been conducted. The Baphomet symbol has gotten some attention by scholars in works on related topics, however. In McIntosh's book *Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival* the Baphomet is only briefly explained in the preface to the new edition.⁴⁰ Almost exactly reproducing the explanations to the symbolism of the Baphomet given by Waite in the introduction to his translation of *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*,⁴¹ McIntosh contributes little to analysing the symbol and seems to regard all later reinterpretations of the symbol as misinterpretations. Such a view of the symbol disregards important aspects of the Baphomet, as this investigation will show. Faxneld's section on Lévi, in his historiography of Satanism prior to Church of Satan, provides a more balanced account for the Baphomet symbol and gives it the

40 McIntosh, Christopher, [1972]/2011, *Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival*, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 8–9.

41 Lévi, Éliphas, [1856]/1999, *Transcendental Magic*, York Beach: Red Wheel/Weiser, pp. xiv–xv.

appropriate recognition.⁴²

1.6 Outline

Following the introduction, the investigation consists of four parts. In **2.1 Éliphas Lévi and the Baphomet in *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*** a background to Lévi and his ideas is given. In **2.1.1 Investigation of Lévi and the Baphomet** the discourse analysis is conducted. In **2.1.2 The Baphomet in the discourse of Lévi** I identify how meaning is given to the Baphomet symbol in the discourse of Lévi. In **2.2 Anton Szandor LaVey and the Baphomet in *The Satanic Bible*** an overview of LaVey, *The Satanic Bible* and Church of Satan is given. In **2.2.1 Investigation of LaVey and the Baphomet** the now familiar tools of discourse analysis are applied to the *Satanic Bible*. In **2.2.2 The Baphomet in the discourse of LaVey** the understanding Baphomet in the discourse of LaVey is account for. In **2.3 The Baphomet in metal music culture** I supply a background to metal music's connection to occult themes. In **2.3.1 Investigation of metal music culture and the Baphomet** three song lyrics, composed by three different metal music bands, dealing with the Baphomet are examined according to practical discourse theory. **2.3.2 The Baphomet in the metal music discourse** summarises how the Baphomet is viewed in metal music culture. In **2.4 The Baphomet in three discourses** I compare the three discourses to each other, to see whether, and if so how, meaning is constructed differently in them. Using discourse theory, I strive to recognise the differences in meaning given to the Baphomet and why these differences may have occurred.

The investigation is followed by a conclusion, in which the answers to my research questions are finally given in a structured form. A discussion on my findings and the method applied to the investigated material, how to develop research in this field further and reflections upon the nature of the results is also featured. Following the list of references are Appendix 1–3 enclosed, supplying pictures of the Baphomet in its various representations.

⁴² Faxneld 2006, pp. 101–107.

2 Investigation

2.1 Éliphas Lévi and the Baphomet in *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*

Emerging as one of the most prominent authors in occultism in the 19th century, Lévi had a rich inheritance of esoteric thought to draw inspiration from. With the Renaissance, beginning in Italy in the 14th century, a new interest in Platonic philosophy arose. Following in its wake, the text *Corpus Hermeticum*, also called the *Hermetica*, as translated from Greek into Latin by Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499) in 1463, came to spur the belief in an ancient eternal philosophy and wisdom.⁴³ The *Hermetica* originated from Alexandria and was a manuscript containing various writings on magic, astrology, alchemy and other related subjects. Most texts were ascribed to the legendary sage Hermes Trismegistus, who was regarded as an incarnation of Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom and magic. When Egyptian mythology came to fuse with Hellenistic culture, Thoth was identified as the Greek god Hermes, due to their similar qualities. Their conjunction resulted in a deity whose attributes appealed to Renaissance Europe and helped to boost esoteric notions in society.⁴⁴ Hermeticism, meaning the principal philosophical and religious ideas of the *Hermetica*, is as present in Lévi's work as in most Western esotericism and will be dealt with continuously when examining his texts. Additionally, among Lévi's most characteristic influences the Kabbalah is found. This originally Jewish religious system was primarily brought into the collective Renaissance conscience by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494) after he had studied Hebrew and Arabic taught by Jewish teachers in Italy. These Jews had fled from Spain and brought with them a Kabbalah heavily coloured by Neoplatonism. From this, Pico formulated a Christian Cabala,⁴⁵ which he harmonised with hermeticism to structure a magical system.⁴⁶ Goodrick-Clarke points out that the early Renaissance magic, as developed by Ficino and Pico, elaborated a form of “sacred science” in which the hierarchies and spiritual qualities of numbers, letters and other correspondents served as instruments to gain knowledge about this and other worlds. This indicates the methods of the natural sciences,⁴⁷ not much unlike the theories of Lévi.

Hermeticism and the Kabbalah constituted the beginnings of Western esotericism during the Renaissance and are fundamental to Lévi. However, in *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* a great quantity of other esoteric practices and notions are rendered as significant as well. Among these can be mentioned alchemy, the Tarot, animal magnetism, Christian theosophy and the works of Swedenborg, Saint-Martin and Böhme. Also, religious mythology, and what was then known about

43 Goodrick-Clarke 2008, pp. 35–37.

44 Goodrick-Clarke 2008, pp. 16–17.

45 I choose here to use the Latin term “Cabala”, common among the Christian Renaissance writers, instead of the Jewish “Kabbalah”. This is to distinguish clearly between the two.

46 Goodrick-Clarke 2008, pp. 41–44.

47 Goodrick-Clarke 2008, p. 46.

gnosticism contributed to Lévi's views on magic.

The decades preceding Lévi's birth, as Alphonse-Louis Constant in the year 1810, had seen both the French revolution and the advent of numerous religiously revolutionary cults. In the social and cultural climate in France, freemasonry had spread during the 18th century and its prime body of organisation, the Grand Orient, had by 1789 no less than 629 lodges. All members can hardly be regarded as ever having been mystics, but the masonic movement certainly attracted a remarkable number of people, and played an important part in the societal life of the day.⁴⁸ The French masons proclaimed the freedom of man, and its organisation even served as a source of inspiration to Voltaire.⁴⁹ Prior to the re-establishment of orthodox Catholicism by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1799, and as a link in the chain of evolution ensuing the masons, a few more or less non-religious revolutionary cults had arisen in France.⁵⁰ An example of one of these cults was the worship of Reason, functioning as substitute for traditional religion. It began in 1793 and died out as early as in 1794, but during its short life span many churches across France were re-named Temples of Reason. The cult had rituals in the shape of plays where an actress dressed in white, blue and red personalised Reason, and was the object of adoration. This shows how even the strife for a new philosophical order could not escape the patterns of religiosity.⁵¹ Apart from the revolution and the religious anarchy, these turbulent years in the history of France also saw the popularisation of esoteric thought in the forms that later influenced Lévi.

The events in the life of Constant leading up to becoming Lévi, and the publication of *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* in 1856, were of a varying nature.⁵² He was brought up in Paris by his two parents living a simple life. His Catholic upbringing led him to attend the seminar destined for priesthood.⁵³ Early on in his studies, he became ridden with inner religious struggles, which would stay with him for the remainder of his life. His mixed feelings towards the church generated much upheaval over the years. The first great controversy was his self-imposed decision to leave the seminar at the age of 26, only a short time before his ordination as priest.⁵⁴ Soon thereafter, his mother committed suicide. Having dismissed the first thought to enter a monastery, Constant earned his livelihood in the subsequent years first as a teacher at a children's boarding school, then as a travelling actor.⁵⁵ He associated himself within left-wing and feminist circles, but regretting ever having left the seminar, he decided to enter a Benedictine abbey at Solesmes in

48 McIntosh [1972]/2011, pp. 40–41.

49 McIntosh [1972]/2011, p. 39.

50 McIntosh [1972]/2011, p. 48.

51 McIntosh [1972]/2011, p. 45.

52 McIntosh [1972]/2011, p. 229.

53 McIntosh [1972]/2011, pp. 73–74.

54 McIntosh [1972]/2011, pp. 76–82.

55 McIntosh [1972]/2011, pp. 83–84.

1839. During his stay there, which only lasted a year due to his grave disappointment with the abbot and the other inhabitants of the abbey, his first book was published. It was an anthology of hymns entitled *Le Rosier de Mai*. Constant then returned to teaching in Paris and wrote his second book *La Bible de la liberté*. Its politically controversial content led to Constant's imprisonment for eight months after the book had been published in 1841. Having served his time, Constant took on his mother's name, and with the help of the gracious bishop of Evreux he was made auxiliary priest with the right to give sermons. Unfortunately, his scandalous past was revealed to the public and he had to leave the seminar once again.⁵⁶ Apart from a short prison sentence served, as result of writing more provocative socialist propaganda, Constant now managed to occupy himself with writing. He married happily and formed a family.⁵⁷ In 1852⁵⁸ he acquainted a man named Hoene Wronski who stimulated Constant to devote himself to the study of occultism, an interest that had been laying latent in his mind.⁵⁹ The following year Constant's wife left him and he became completely absorbed by writing his first book on magic⁶⁰: *Dogme de la haute magie*, published in 1855. He then abandoned his previous names and took on Éliphas Lévi, the Hebrew version of his former first names, and in 1856 his second book *Rituel de la haute magie* was published as well as the famous volume combining them to one book: *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*.⁶¹

2.1.1 Investigation of Lévi and the Baphomet

Here follows my investigation of the textual passages in *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* in which the Baphomet is mentioned. I aim to make clear, by using discourse theory, how Lévi fixates the meaning of the sign Baphomet. I will do this by identifying moments and elements, and how they form chains of articulations. This will be done by examining each paragraph in the book mentioning the Baphomet in its order of appearance. Originally published as two books, *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* is divided into two parts. The first will be referred to as *Dogme* and the second as *Rituel*. Early on in the introduction to *Dogme*, the symbol is addressed by Lévi for the first time:

Would you care, as a change, to behold something less fantastic, more real and also more truly terrible? You shall assist at the execution of Jacques de Molay and his accomplices or his brethren in martyrdom . . . Be not misled, however; confuse not the guilty and the innocent! Did the Templars really adore Baphomet? Did they offer a shameful salutation to the buttocks of the goat of Mendes? What was actually this secret and potent association which imperilled Church and State, and was thus destroyed unheard? Judge nothing lightly; they are guilty of a great crime; they have exposed to

56 McIntosh [1972]/2011, pp. 87–89.

57 McIntosh [1972]/2011, pp. 92–95.

58 Or in 1853. McIntosh mentions both years.

59 McIntosh [1972]/2011, pp. 96–98.

60 McIntosh [1972]/2011, p. 100.

61 Goodrick-Clarke 2008, p. 193.

profane eyes the sanctuary of antique initiation. They have gathered again and have shared the fruits of the tree of knowledge, so that they might become masters of the world. The judgement pronounced against them is higher and far older than the tribunal of pope or king: “On the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,” said God Himself, as we read in the Book of Genesis.⁶²

Lévi's views on the qualities of the Baphomet are evidently not the centre of attention in this paragraph, but instead Lévi poses a question regarding its historical background. The question if the Baphomet was adored by the Templars tells the reader that in this context, in the discourse of Lévi, a notion of a relationship exists between the two. The paragraph urges the reader to question the grounds on which the last grandmaster of the Order of the Knights Templar, Jacques de Molay, was convicted of heresy in 1314 by the French King Philip IV (1268–1314).⁶³ Lévi exclaims that “they”, the Templars, have gathered again, some 500 years after their disbandment as an organisation, to make themselves guilty of the same crime, against the Christian or Jewish God, as did Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis. The group contemporary to Lévi, which he refers to, was in reality the Freemasons, who adopted a self-made history in which they traced their heritage back to the medieval Knights Templars.⁶⁴

This paragraph makes evident that God is a superior power holding a special position in Lévi's system of thought. Even though he brings forth the idea of the Templars having worshipped the Baphomet as a false accusation, the Templars still have to answer to God for having taken part of a forbidden knowledge. Remaining a Catholic, Lévi's faith determines the framework inside which his occult philosophy is formed and given meaning. This does not contradict the understanding of occultism as “secular esotericism”. Even though Lévi is a full-fledged Christian, his usage of esoteric ideas is relatively more secular and rationalist than that of early renaissance esotericists.

The second time the Baphomet is mentioned, again in the introduction to *Dogme*, it is put in the context of describing the occult philosophy according to Lévi, and fitting it with science and history:

The Philosophical Stone, the Universal Medicine, the transmutation of metals, the quadrature of the circle and the secret of perpetual motion are neither mystifications of science nor dreams of delusion. They are terms which must be understood in their proper sense; they formulate the varied applications of one and the same secret, the several aspects of a single operation, which is defined in a more comprehensive manner under the name of the Great Work. Furthermore, there exists in Nature a force which is immeasurably more powerful than steam, and a single man, who is able to adapt and direct it, might change thereby the face of the whole world. This force was known to the ancients; it consists in a Universal Agent having equilibrium for its supreme law, while its direction is concerned immediately with the Great Arcanum of Transcendental Magic. By the direction of this agent it is possible to modify the very order of the seasons; to produce at night the phenomena of

62 Lévi [1856]/1999, pp. 7–8.

63 Faxneld 2006, p. 220.

64 Faxneld 2006, p. 27.

day; to correspond instantaneously between one extremity of the earth and the other; to see, like Apollonius, what is taking place on the other side of the world; to heal or injure at a distance; to give speech a universal success and reverberation. This agent, which barely manifests under the uncertain methods of Mesmer's followers, is precisely that which the adepts of the Middle Ages denominated the First Matter of the Great Work. The Gnostics represented it as the fiery body of the Holy Spirit; it was the object of adoration in the Secret Rites of the Sabbath and the Temple, under the hieroglyphic figure of Baphomet or the Androgyne of Mendes.⁶⁵

In this articulation of the Baphomet, some of the major elements are the alchemical Great Work, the Great Arcanum of Transcendental Magic and the First Matter. Yet, there is one idea, a moment, especially connected to Lévi's understanding of the Baphomet, namely the Universal Agent. The Universal Agent is by Lévi also called the Astral Light,⁶⁶ and sometimes the Great Magical Agent.⁶⁷ It is a theory which can be ascribed to Lévi and constitutes a cornerstone in Lévi's own occult system.⁶⁸ The Astral Light is to Lévi a subtle fluid or force which all of the universe is permeated by. Notably, Lévi makes clear that apart from the attributes given to the Astral Light in the passage above, the reader is also led to understand that the Universal Agent, a latent form of the Astral Light, manifested itself much more efficiently under the Baphomet symbol, than it does to those devoted to Mesmerism. This is an indication revealing Lévi's debt to Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815) when formulating this theory. Mesmer held that an invisible “fluid” runs throughout the whole universe connecting all living organisms and objects together. Whenever this fluid is not flowing as it should in the human body, the person becomes ill or hurt. By exposing such a person to a magnetizer, the circulation of the fluid can be improved and its balance restored, subsequently healing the person and ridding her or him of disease or pain.⁶⁹ Some mesmerists claimed that it was the will of the magnetizer that affected the patient's imagination and caused the healing process. To Lévi, “will” is an important element in the articulatory chain of signs giving meaning to the notion of the Astral Light and fixating the meaning of the Baphomet. By means of the imagination the will of the magician can be used to control the Astral Light,⁷⁰ in order to make contact with other realities.⁷¹ Further developments on the issue of the Astral Light in relation to the Baphomet will proceed continuously, and especially when investigating chapter 15 of *Rituel*.

Moving on, the Baphomet appears in an alchemical context at the very end of chapter 19 in

Dogme:

65 Lévi [1856]/1999, pp. 11–12.

66 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 86.

67 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 104.

68 McIntosh [1972]/2011, p. 149.

69 Meheust, Bertrand, 2005, “Animal Magnetism/Mesmerism”, *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. by Wouter J. Hanegraaff, in collaboration with A. Faivre, R. van den Broek, J.-P. Barch, Leiden: Brill, 75–82, p. 76.

70 Lévi [1856]/1999, pp. 33–34.

71 van den Doel, Marieke & Hanegraaff, Wouter J. 2005, “Imagination”, *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. by Wouter J. Hanegraaff, in collaboration with A. Faivre, R. van den Broek, J.-P. Barch, Leiden: Brill, 606–616, p. 614.

At the beginning of the French translation of a book by the Sieur de Nuisement on the Philosophical Salt, the spirit of the earth is represented standing on a cube over which tongues of flame are passing; the phallus is replaced by a caduceus; the sun and moon figure on the right and left breast; the figure is bearded, crowned and holds a sceptre in his hand. This is the AZOTH of the sages on its pedestal of Salt and Sulphur. The symbolic head of the goat of Mendes is occasionally given to this figure, and it is then the Baphomet of the Templars and the Word of the Gnostics, bizarre images which became scarecrows for the vulgar after affording food for reflection to sages – innocent hieroglyphs of thought and faith which have been a pretext for the rage of persecutions. How pitiable are men in their ignorance, but how they would despise themselves if only they came to know!⁷²

Here is a description of a pictorial representation of the figure Azoth, which prove to hold many of the same characteristics as the Baphomet. To Lévi, the Azoth is one of the four magical elements in alchemy together with Salt, Sulphur and Mercury.⁷³ Since the definite separation between alchemy and chemistry in the early 18th century,⁷⁴ the occultist view of alchemy as primarily a theoretical and spiritually esoteric enterprise, rather than a religiously oriented natural science, had become the dominant interpretation.⁷⁵ This is evident also in Lévi's usage of alchemy and its terminology. The much sought after Philosophers' Stone seems to be a number of things to Lévi: the foundation of philosophy, the secret to successfully making gold and a component of Azoth. In order to obtain the Stone one simply needs to use the appropriate sort of reasoning.⁷⁶ Lévi explains that Azoth actually is the Astral Light, in one of its many manifestations.⁷⁷ That makes this particular alchemical discourse an instrument to gain access to Lévi's own occult system, through the articulatory chain of Azoth. Azoth is therefore a sign fixating the meaning of both the Astral Light and the Baphomet, these three signs being in close relation with their meanings thoroughly entangled.

The concluding two sentences of the last cited paragraph establishes, as previously indicated, the Baphomet as a misunderstood symbol, one which Lévi seeks to fill with his own interpretation of its meaning. Following the same line of thought, the next paragraph is an extract from the third chapter of *Rituel*, in which the Baphomet is not explicitly mentioned. Still, its characteristics are there, in the “symbolic goat” described. This articulation is formulated as a pre-view of a matter more thoroughly dealt with further on in the text, still some details are given which seem to continue along the path of redeeming the Baphomet of its dark history:

The triad, being the foundation of magical doctrine must be necessarily observed in evocations; for it is the symbolical number of realization and effect. The letter ψ is commonly traced upon kabalistic pantacles which have the fulfilment of a desire for their object. It is also the sign of the scapegoat in mystic Kabalah, and Saint-Martin observes that inserted in the Incommunicable Tetragram it forms the Name of the Redeemer, יהוה. It is this which the mystagogues of the Middle Ages represented in

72 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 168.

73 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 60.

74 Principe, Lawrence M. 2005, “Alchemy I: Introduction”, *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. by Wouter J. Hanegraaff, in collaboration with A. Faivre, R. van den Broek, J.-P. Barch, Leiden: Brill, 12–16, p. 15.

75 Principe 2005, pp. 13–14.

76 Lévi [1856]/1999, pp. 164–165, 175.

77 Lévi [1856]/1999, pp. 54–55, 358.

their nocturnal assemblies by the exhibition of a symbolical goat, carrying a lighted torch between its two horns. In the fifteenth chapter of this “Ritual” we shall describe the allegorical forms and strange cultus of this monstrous animal, which represented Nature doomed to anathema but ransomed by the sign of light. The Gnostic Agapae and pagan priapic orgies which followed in its honour sufficiently revealed the moral consequence which the adepts drew from the exhibition. All this will be explained, together with the Rites, decried and now regarded as fabulous, of the Great Sabbath and of Black Magic.⁷⁸

Apart from being a pre-view to the 15th chapter of *Rituel*, the above cited paragraph brings Lévi's interest in the Kabbalah to the reader's attention. The four Hebrew letters יהוה, usually transcribed as YHVH or JHVH, constitute one of the names of God in the Old Testament and is by Lévi referred to as the Tetragram.⁷⁹ Lévi acknowledges the Tetragram as yet another name for the Astral Light, equating it with for example the alchemical principle Azoth.⁸⁰ Adding the letter ׁ forming the word יהשוה, YHSVH or JHSVH, Lévi interprets it as the name of the Christian Jesus which, according to the above given paragraph, has at some point in history been represented by the “symbolic goat” at nocturnal gatherings. This religiously doctrinal paradox is again connecting to Lévi redefining the Baphomet with new meaning. A kabbalistic discourse, forming an articulatory chain of elements around the Tetragram, is fixating the meaning of the Astral Light, and as an extension the meaning of the Baphomet as well.

The next passage forms the opening lines to chapter six in *Rituel*, entitled “The medium and the mediator”. Lévi's main concern in this chapter is to propagate how crucial the will is when practising magic. The will is the mediator and the Astral Light the medium, which the magician acts upon.

TWO things, as we have shown, are necessary for the acquisition of magical power – the emancipation of will from servitude and its instruction in the art of domination. The sovereign will is represented in our symbols by the Woman who crushes the serpent's head and by the radiant angel who restrains and constrains the dragon with lance and heel. In this place let us affirm without evasion that the Great Magical Agent – the double current of light, the living and astral fire of the earth – was represented by the serpent with the head of an ox, goat or dog, in ancient theogonies. It is the dual serpent of the caduceus, the old serpent of Genesis, but it is also the brazen serpent of Moses, twined about the Tau, that is, the generating lingam. It is, moreover, the Goat of the Sabbath and the Baphomet of the Templars; it is the Hyle of the Gnostics; it is the double tail of the serpent which forms the legs of the solar cock of Abraxas.⁸¹

Yet again Lévi urges the close connection between the Astral Light and the Baphomet, basically equalizing them as one and the same magical force. The reader is informed that the Great Magical Agent, also known as the Astral Light, is a double current of light corresponding with several other dual symbols. The duality of the Astral Light in relation to the Baphomet symbol is a subject for

78 Lévi [1856]/1999, pp. 222–223.

79 Coogan, Michael David, 2006, *The Old Testament: A Historical and Literary Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures*, New York: Oxford University Press, p. 13.

80 Lévi [1856]/1999, pp. 54–55.

81 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 242.

further elaboration in the coming cited passages.

Up until this point, the passages where Lévi is mentioning the Baphomet have been somewhat sporadic and not very rich in detail concerning its exact qualities. However, in chapter 15, “The Sabbath of the Sorcerers”, several pages are devoted only to the Baphomet. The Baphomet is here the centre of attention for the author, and this part is therefore central to this investigation.

WE recur once more to that terrible number fifteen, symbolized in the Tarot by a monster throned upon an altar, mitred and horned, having a woman's breasts and the generative organs of a man – a chimera, a malformed sphinx, a synthesis of deformities. Below this figure we read a frank and simple inscription – THE DEVIL. Yes, we confront here that phantom of all terrors, the dragon of all theogonies, the Ahriman of the Persians, the Typhon of the Egyptians, the Python of the Greeks, the old serpent of the Hebrews, the fantastic monster, the nightmare, the Croquemitaine, the gargoyle, the great beast of the Middle Ages, and – worse than all these – the Baphomet of the Templars, the bearded idol of the alchemist, the obscene deity of Mendes, the goat of the Sabbath. The frontispiece to this “Ritual” reproduces the exact figure of the terrible emperor of night, with all his attributes and all his characters.⁸²

Lévi is here strikingly clear about the identity of the Baphomet of the Templars: The Baphomet is the Devil. However, to interpret this segment rightfully in this context one must know what Lévi regards the Devil to be. In the 15th chapter of *Dogme* Lévi gives the following answer to the question “What is the devil?”:

IN BLACK MAGIC, THE DEVIL IS THE GREAT MAGICAL AGENT EMPLOYED FOR EVIL PURPOSES BY A PERVERSE WILL.⁸³

Evidently, the Devil is the Astral Light used to serve someone's evil intentions. Such a practice is labelled black magic. According to Lévi black magic naturally produces the Devil and makes it visible,⁸⁴ but the Devil is not a person.⁸⁵ Lévi explains it further as:

In a word, the devil, for us, is force placed temporarily at the disposal of evil, even as mortal sin is, to our thinking, the persistence of the will in what is absurd.⁸⁶

Lévi thus states that the Devil is brought forth by a perverse and absurd will, intentions which he apparently distances himself from. He also points out that the Devil can only be evoked through ritual magic if the person calling upon it believes that the Devil is evil, consequently admitting the existence of a good God and belonging to such a religion.⁸⁷ The Astral Light is a blind medium, capable of good or evil depending on the will of the magician.⁸⁸ The Baphomet can represent the Devil, as the Astral Light can be employed for evil causes, fixating its meaning from a point of view relying on a discourse of black magic and evil wills.

82 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 307.

83 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 135.

84 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 136.

85 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 234.

86 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 136.

87 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 317.

88 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 75.

Lévi continues:

Let us state now for the edification of the vulgar, for the satisfaction of M. le Comte de Mirville, for the justification of the demonologist Bodin, for the greater glory of the Church, which persecuted Templars, burnt magicians, excommunicated Freemasons, etc. – let us state boldly and precisely that all inferior initiates of the occult science and profaners of the Great Arcanum, not only did in the past but do now, and will ever, adore what is signified by this alarming symbol. Yes, in our profound conviction, the Grand Masters of the Order of the Templars worshipped the Baphomet, and caused it to be worshipped by their initiates; yes, there existed in the past, and there may be still in the present, assemblies which are presided over by this figure, seated on a throne and having a flaming torch between the horns. But the adorers of this sign do not consider, as do we, that it is a representation of the devil: on the contrary, for them it is that of the god Pan, the god of our modern schools of philosophy, the god of the Alexandrian theurgic school and of our own mystical Neo-platonists, the god of Lamartine and Victor Cousin, the god of Spinoza and Plato, the god of the primitive Gnostic schools; the Christ also of the dissident priesthood. This last qualification, ascribed to the goat of Black Magic, will not astonish students of religious antiquities who are acquainted with the phases of symbolism and doctrine in their various transformations, whether in India, Egypt or Judea.⁸⁹

The Baphomet can thus be a symbol even of Christ, just as the Astral Light can take the form of the body of the Holy Ghost, depending on the interpreter's intentions.⁹⁰ Lévi summarises this by concluding:

The dread Baphomet henceforth, like all monstrous idols, enigmas of antique science and its dreams, is only an innocent and even pious hieroglyph.⁹¹

The meaning of the Baphomet, regarding being an evil or good symbol in itself, is an element of change to Lévi, as it has the potential to be both.

In the following paragraph, also found in chapter 15 of *Rituel*, Lévi grants the reader a detailed description of the symbolical qualities of the Baphomet:

The goat which is represented in our frontispiece bears upon its forehead the Sign of the Pentagram with one point in the ascendant, which is sufficient to distinguish it as a symbol of the light. Moreover, the sign of occultism is made with both hands, pointing upward to the white moon of Chesed, and downward to the black moon of Geburah. This sign expresses the perfect concord between mercy and justice. One of the arms is feminine and the other masculine, as in the androgyne of Khunrath, those attributes we have combined with those of our goat, since they are one and the same symbol. The torch of intelligence burning between the horns is the magical light of universal equilibrium; it is also the type of the soul, exalted above matter, even while cleaving to matter, as the flame cleaves to the torch. The monstrous head of the animal expresses horror of sin, for which the material agent, alone responsible, must alone and for ever bear the penalty, because the soul is impassible in its nature and can suffer only by materializing. The caduceus, which, replaces the generative organ, represents eternal life; the scale-covered belly typifies water; the circle above it is the atmosphere, the feathers still higher up signify the volatile; lastly, humanity is depicted by the two breasts and the androgyne arms of this sphinx of the occult sciences. Behold the shadows of the infernal sanctuary dissipated! Behold the sphinx of mediaeval terrors unveiled and cast from his throne! *Quomodo cecidisti, Lucifer!*⁹²

The first sign dealt with in the above given description of the Baphomet is the Pentagram on its

89 Lévi [1856]/1999, pp. 307–308.

90 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 85.

91 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 310.

92 Lévi [1856]/1999, pp. 308–309.

forehead. Having one end pointing upwards it is a benevolent symbol, representing the human microcosm,⁹³ and the domination of man's will over the elements and nature.⁹⁴ If the Pentagram would have had two of its points facing upwards, it would have been the malevolent sign of Satan and black magic.⁹⁵ Notably, it is a positive Pentagram that Lévi appoints to the Baphomet adding to the dual potential of the symbol.

A great deal of the symbols combined in the pictorial representation of the Baphomet is explained in the paragraph above, yet a few of them may need some additional commentary. What Lévi here dubs “the sign of occultism”, made by the Baphomet with both hands, is not described elsewhere in *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*. The lunar crescents to which the hands point symbolises kabbalistic principles derived from the Sephiroth, also called the Tree of Life in Jewish tradition. The white upper moon is an emblem of mercy and forgiveness, and the black lower moon is an emblem of justice and strictness. With the Baphomet situated in between these poles it represents equilibrium. The arms also represent the two sexes. Much of the symbolism present in Lévi's Baphomet sketch an image representing a dual reality in which there are two sides to everything.

Along this twofold line of meaning Lévi declares, also in chapter 15, that the name Baphomet means something radically different than the nature of the image implies:

The name of the Templar Baphomet, which should be spelt kabalistically backwards, is composed of three abbreviations: Tem. ohp. AB., *Templi omnium pacts abbas*, “the father of the temple of peace of all men”. According to some, the Baphomet was a monstrous head, but according to others, a demon in the form of a goat.⁹⁶

Despite being regarded both a monstrous head worshipped by the Templars, and a demon, the name itself, according to Lévi, declares it a symbol of peace.

In the 19th chapter of *Rituel*, “The Mastery of the Sun”, the practise of alchemy in pursuit for gold is dealt with. The Baphomet here proves to having been a useful tool in the secretive work of hiding the Philosophers' Stone:

The wise man more readily conserves it in the natural envelopes, knowing that he can extract it by a single effort of his will and by a single application of the Universal Agent to the envelopes, which Kabalists term shells. To express hieroglyphically this law of prudence, the sages ascribed to their Mercury, personified in Egypt as Hermanubis, a dog's head, and to their Sulphur, represented by the Baphomet of the Temple or Prince of the Sabbath, that goat's head which brought such odium upon the occult associations of the middle ages.⁹⁷

The dreadful imagery of the Baphomet was by the sages applied to Sulphur as a prohibitive

93 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 237.

94 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 63.

95 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 237.

96 Lévi [1856]/1999, pp. 315–316.

97 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 359.

sign. Lévi fixates the Baphomet's meaning as a symbol not evil in itself, but as a symbol believed to be evil by those not aware of its hidden qualities, echoing his reasoning throughout the book.

The last time the Baphomet is mentioned in *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* is in its final chapter called “The Book of Hermes”. In this 22nd chapter a list of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet with their correspondences in the Tarot is featured. One of the entries reads as follows:

♁ *The heaven of Mercury, occult science, Magic, commerce, eloquence, mystery, moral force.*
Hieroglyph, THE DEVIL, the Goat of Mendes, or the Baphomet of the Temple, with all his pantheistic attributes.⁹⁸

Here many of the issues I have already dealt with in this investigation are summed up. The Baphomet is the terrible force it appears to be, as well as an empty hieroglyph upon which benevolent or malevolent will can be impregnated.

2.1.2 The Baphomet in the discourse of Lévi

In this investigation of *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* the discourse of Lévi has made itself manifest through articulations and signs in relation to the Baphomet. I have identified elements from different contexts, present within the discourse of Lévi, constituting certain articulatory chains establishing specific signs as moments. The Azoth is a sign deriving from an alchemical context, which is a moment in the discourse of Lévi. The Azoth fixates the meaning of the Baphomet as a representation of the Astral Light. In exactly the same manner does the Tetragram originating from a kabbalistic context, the Devil originating from a context of black magic and the body of the Holy Ghost originating from a Christian context, serve to fixate the meaning of the Baphomet as a representation of the Astral Light. I find that the Baphomet is also a moment in the discourse of Lévi, deriving from a context of the Order of the Knights Templars as conceived in the public eye. Lévi imbues the Baphomet with the meaning of being a representation of the dual character of the Astral Light, having the capacity to be good or evil depending on the elements of will and imagination. The Baphomet is a symbol for the Astral Light, which is a nodal point in the discourse of Lévi. Around the Astral Light is the meaning of the Azoth in alchemy, the Tetragram in the Kabbalah, the Devil in black magic and the body of the Holy Ghost in Christianity constructed through chains of articulations. They are to Lévi one and the same, but in different contexts, as is the Baphomet. Conclusively, I deduce that Lévi understands the Baphomet as neither good nor evil in itself, but both as a symbol for the Astral Light and its dual nature, and as a mediator of the actual force in the universe that Lévi calls the Astral Light.

98 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 391.

2.2 Anton Szandor LaVey and the Baphomet in *The Satanic Bible*

The leap forward in history from Lévi to Anton Szandor LaVey (1930–1997) covers about 110 years, relocates the course of events from France to the United States of America and places the Baphomet in a new ideological and social setting. The Church of Satan (CoS) was founded as an organisation by LaVey in 1966 on April 30, in San Francisco.⁹⁹ At first glance, the CoS may be regarded a product of the counterculture of the 1960s and its spiritual experimentation with Western esotericism. Though it undoubtedly was situated in that environment, the Church of Satan's relationship to its time and climate of origin is complex. To simply categorise it a new religious movement of the New Age-era, with an occult parlance, is problematic. The teachings presented in LaVey's first book, *The Satanic Bible* published in 1969, differ on several accounts from those commonly associated with New Age-thought, but concur on others.

To be properly affiliated with the ideas introduced in *The Satanic Bible*, LaVey's own person and the rich biographical data available can be of interest. His early life can either be accounted for in accordance with the CoS legend,¹⁰⁰ or based on information which can be verified. The former is the most widely spread, and it tells the story of Howard Anton Szandor LaVey's birth in Chicago, from where the family soon moved to San Francisco. He had a Transylvanian gypsy grandmother who sparked his interest in the occult at an early age. In his teens he read extensively on occult topics and managed to see some top-secret filming of an occult Nazi ritual. It was from these films that the ritualistic imagery of his own satanic rituals would be inspired. LaVey also developed his musical talent during these years. Aged seventeen he decided to quit high school and instead join a circus where he played the calliope, trained the big cat animals and did some stage magic. After the circus season had ended, LaVey began working at a burlesque theatre as an organist. There he met a young Marilyn Monroe with whom he had an affair. He then took on working as a police photographer after having married in 1950. In 1955 he returned to earning his livelihood as a professional organist, and he both divorced and re-married in 1960. He bought a house which he painted black, after having realised that it formerly had been a brothel. It was in that house that he began to host the midnight meetings that led to the formation of the CoS in 1966.¹⁰¹ However, research made by the journalist Lawrence Wright and evidence provided by LaVey's estranged daughter Zeena LaVey Schreck, has shown that the official life story of LaVey only is truthful to a certain extent. Born Howard Stanton Levey in Chicago the family did move to San Francisco,

99 Petersen, Aagard Jesper, 2005, "Modern Satanism: Dark Doctrines and Black Flames", *Controversial New Religions*, ed. by James R. Lewis and Jesper Aagard Petersen, New York: Oxford University Press, 423–458, p. 428.

100 See his biographies for more details: *The Secret Life of a Satanist: The Authorized Biography of Anton LaVey* [1992] by Blanche Barton, and *The Devil's Avenger: A Biography of Anton Szandor LaVey* [1974] by Burton H. Wolfe.

101 Lewis, James R. 2003, *Legitimizing New Religions*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, p. 108.

where he later occupied himself as a professional musician and founded the CoS in 1966. Everything else is to some degree a re-construction of reality or completely fraudulent.¹⁰² It is therefore safe to say that the legends of LaVey far exceeds his factual history, but adds to the image of the charismatic satanist leader who had lived life to its full, keeping to the creeds of his religion even prior to having formulated them.

The Satanism proclaimed by LaVey in *The Satanic Bible* manifests a philosophy grounded upon rationality, with a few core ideas promoted. “The nine satanic statements” is a list found at the beginning of *The Satanic Bible*, which summarises many of the issues dealt with in the book. The first statement declares that “Satan represents indulgence, instead of abstinence!” and connects quite clearly to LaVey's view of Christianity, human nature and the physical existence.¹⁰³ God is regarded as an imaginary creation of the human mind.¹⁰⁴ Rationally, to worship a god of any religion is actually to worship the man or woman who first invented that god to serve his or her needs. It is therefore desirable to celebrate the adversary – call it Satan, the Devil or any name these forces are given – as it represents life and the carnal human, ridden of spiritual delusions.¹⁰⁵ A satanist is by LaVey encouraged to commit all the seven deadly sins of Christianity as they “all lead to physical, mental, or emotional gratification”.¹⁰⁶ The moral standards dictated by the Church are instruments to control society and suppress natural feelings and desires. Hate and love are both healthy feelings, but to turn the other cheek at someone who does not deserve such love is to act unnaturally.¹⁰⁷ For a satanist to first see to his or her own needs, and to the people he or she personally loves, in order to satisfy his or her ego is admirable because only when the personal ego is in harmony the person can tend honestly to other peoples' needs.¹⁰⁸ LaVeyan Satanism is a religion of the flesh that encourages its devotees to actively seek earthly success,¹⁰⁹ instead of wasting time on useless prayers.¹¹⁰ To conclude, the Satanism advocated in *The Satanic Bible* is philosophically a sort of hedonistic humanistic egoism, that uses Satan as a symbol of opposition towards religious doctrines and norms in society that does not benefit the individual.

LaVey states that Satanism is not merely a philosophy, but a religion with dogma, ceremonies and rituals to which his notion of magic relates.¹¹¹ LaVey defines magic as “The change in situations or events in accordance with one's will, which would, using normally accepted

102 Lewis 2003, p. 109.

103 LaVey, Anton Szandor, [1969]/1992, *The Satanic Bible*, New York: Avon Books, p. 25.

104 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 40.

105 LaVey [1969]/1992, pp. 44–45, 62–63.

106 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 46.

107 LaVey [1969]/1992, pp. 64–65.

108 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 94.

109 LaVey [1969]/1992, pp. 52, 104.

110 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 41.

111 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 50.

methods, be unchangeable” and seem to admit that much of what magic is can be explained with science and psychology, though some things remain unexplainable.¹¹² There exists no difference between “white” or “black” magic, to LaVey all magic is meant to serve the purpose of its initiator. The difference lies in what LaVey terms “lesser” and “greater” magic. Lesser magic is meant to manipulate others, this is often magic for example worked by women to charm men. Greater magic is the magic performed during ritual.¹¹³ Ritual is by LaVey also called the “intellectual decompression chamber”,¹¹⁴ which serves as a tool for the outlet of thoughts and feelings that would otherwise consume the satanist.¹¹⁵ At the beginning and the end of the ritual, certain dogmatic patterns are followed. These are meant to have an “anti-intellectual” effect on the participants and free them from their normal rational thinking. LaVey acknowledges the ritual as a place in time and space where self-imposed ignorance is practised. This sort of self-deceit is in LaVey's opinion the case of all religious services. The difference is that the satanist is aware of his or her folly, though other religionists are not.¹¹⁶ LaVey finds that man needs ceremony and ritual as necessary instruments in dealing with his or her emotions. That need is an aspect of human nature that psychology cannot sufficiently replace, and must therefore be stimulated also in a satanic context.¹¹⁷

The place of LaVeyan Satanism in the cultural climate of its time is not easy to arrive at. Scholars of religion and Satanism has recently come to term LaVey's Satanism an expression of “self-spirituality”, similar to New Age, but even more so to the Human Potential Movement, which can be regarded a less spiritually inclined cousin of New Age.¹¹⁸ All in all, the Satanism in *The Satanic Bible* appears to be a non-spiritual, hedonistic and humanistic, religion that comes closer to self-help psychology guides, than to religious scripture.

2.2.1 Investigation of LaVey and the Baphomet

Here follows my investigation of the textual passages in *The Satanic Bible* in which the Baphomet is mentioned. The aim is to make clear, by using discourse theory, how LaVey fixates the meaning of the sign Baphomet. I will do this by identifying moments and elements, and how they form chains of articulations. This will be done by examining each paragraph in the book mentioning the Baphomet in its order of appearance. The Baphomet makes its first appearance in a nearly three

112 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 110.

113 LaVey [1969]/1992, pp. 110–111.

114 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 119.

115 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 126.

116 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 120.

117 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 53.

118 Olander Lap, Amina, 2012, ”Categorizing Modern Satanism: An Analysis of LaVey's Early Writings”, *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity*, ed. by Per Faxneld and Jesper Aa. Petersen, New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 100–101.

pages long list of deities that LaVey understands as having been interpreted as evil devils in their respective religious contexts:

Baphomet - worshipped by the Templars as symbolic of Satan¹¹⁹

LaVey recognises the historically presumed connection between the Baphomet and Order of the Knights Templars. The historical evidence found supporting such questionable claims is problematic. In its time, the order had acquired a considerable fortune from having been given large amounts of land in Europe, as well as having profited from successful banking activity. It was awarded autonomy by Pope Alexander the III in 1163, and had after that developed its elitist features further and had become more closed to the outside world. When strong and detailed accusations of heresy within the order were presented to King Philip IV of France, the King decided to arrest the Templars and bring them to trials in 1307.¹²⁰ During the subsequent hearing procedures the Templars were exposed to torture and cruel conditions. Told that their brothers had admitted to the accusations, and given promises of release if they did likewise, many Templars confessed. The confessions given were remarkably divergent in their descriptions of the initiation rites and the object of adoration, which by some Templars was called the Baphomet. As the level of torture increased the stories grew even more eerie and some confessed to having worshipped the Devil.¹²¹ As time progressed, a great number of Templars withdrew their confessions, and grandmaster Jacques de Molay was burnt at the stake pledging the order's complete innocence in 1314. Scholars have argued that the harsh interrogation methods used produced the statements given by the Templars, and that King Philip's prime reason for prosecuting was financial interest in obtaining the order's enormous treasures.¹²² Why the Baphomet had been mentioned by a few Templars can be explained by regarding it as an old-fashioned French version of the name of the Islamic prophet Mohammed. Some records from the trials even show that the idol having been worshipped sometimes even was called Mahomet, rather than Baphomet.¹²³ Having battled Muslims during the Crusades, the Templars were likely to identify the prophet Mohammed as the Devil and as the uttermost evil imaginable.

Though the historical accounts refute the image of the Order of the Knights Templars as real satanists, LaVey adheres to such a notion. LaVey clearly states that the Baphomet was idolized as a symbol of Satan. The Baphomet can seemingly be identified with Satan, which to LaVey is not an anthropomorphic being, but represents a “force of nature” equivalent to the human characteristics

119 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 58.

120 Faxneld 2006, pp. 21–23.

121 Faxneld 2006, p. 24.

122 Faxneld 2006, pp. 25–27.

123 Faxneld 2006, p. 28.

that the people who formulated the religions saw as threatening to their cause and therefore termed as evil.¹²⁴ The Baphomet is here a sign given meaning through its relation to what LaVey understands as Satan, and symbolising that phenomenon in a historical and cultural context.

Leaving the historical and theoretical aspects on the Baphomet behind, LaVey again mentions it in the very first paragraph describing the measures of precaution that should be taken prior to performing a ritual:

Person performing ritual stands facing the altar and symbol of Baphomet throughout ritual, except when other positions are specifically indicated.¹²⁵

The imagery used when performing a satanic ritual is of major importance to its outcome. In the “intellectual decompression chamber” LaVey explains that: “Anything which serves to intensify the emotions during a ritual will contribute to its success”. The Baphomet placed in line of sight will function as an indisputable symbol of Satan during the ceremony. As such, it will work as a constant reminder of the purpose of the ritual and make sure that the satanist does not give in to any intellectual thinking, but maintains focused on his or her emotions and the carnal simplicity found in the symbol.¹²⁶ By situating the Baphomet in a ritualistic context, LaVey stresses its symbolic value even more, fixating its meaning to ritual performances and satanic iconography.

The Baphomet repeatedly recurs as a symbol, rather than being regarded as anything else. As of here, in a description given of the proper line of clothing when conducting a ritual:

Black robes are worn by the male participants. The robes may be cowled or hooded, and if desired may cover the face. The purpose in covering the face is to allow the participant freedom to express emotion in the face, without concern. It also lessens distraction on the part of one participant towards another. Female participants wear garments which are sexually suggestive; or all black clothing for older women. Amulets bearing the sigil of Baphomet or the traditional pentagram of Satan are worn by all participants.¹²⁷

The purpose of this sinister dress code is evidently to set the suitable mood for the event, and put the participants in the desirable mindset. The Baphomet is here paired together with the pentagram, the five point star, which will be investigated further in an upcoming passage.

The next two paragraphs constitute a segment with the header “Symbol of Baphomet”, and is the part of *The Satanic Bible* in which the Baphomet is most thoroughly dealt with:

The symbol of Baphomet was used by the Knights Templar to represent Satan. Through the ages this symbol has been called by many different names. Among these are: The Goat of Mendes, The Goat of a Thousand Young, The Black Goat, The Judas Goat, and perhaps most appropriately, The Scapegoat.¹²⁸

124 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 62.

125 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 130.

126 LaVey [1969]/1992, pp. 124–125.

127 LaVey [1969]/1992, pp. 134–135.

128 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 136.

The most significant trait of the Baphomet is in this paragraph recognized as its appearance as a goat. According to LaVey, the goat is an animal associated with the Devil in the Christian Bible. LaVey explains that it was on the Day of Atonement customary to send out two goats into the desert, one as an offering to the Lord, and one as an offering to the demon Azazel. The goat sacrificed to Azazel carried all the sins of the people, making it the “scapegoat”. LaVey concludes this retelling of Jewish customs by adding: “This is the origin of the goat which is still used in lodge ceremonies today as it was also used in Egypt, where once a year it was sacrificed to a God”.¹²⁹ The goat referred to as used in the ceremonies today is the Baphomet, which is identified with the scapegoat as a symbol of sin, and what Christian and other religious authorities consider as sinful. The meaning of the Baphomet as a sign symbolizing evil, and the deeds associated with what is religiously wrong by Christian standards, is here thoughtfully fixated in the discourse of LaVey.

Continuing his account of the Baphomet, LaVey elaborates:

Baphomet represents the Powers of Darkness combined with the generative fertility of the goat. In its "pure" form the pentagram is shown encompassing the figure of a man in the five points of the star - three points up, two pointing down - symbolizing man's spiritual nature. In Satanism the pentagram is also used, but since Satanism represents the carnal instincts of man, or the opposite of spiritual nature, the pentagram is inverted to perfectly accommodate the head of the goat - its horns, representing duality, thrust upwards in defiance; the other three points inverted, or the trinity denied. The Hebraic figures around the outer circle of the symbol which stem from the magical teachings of the Kabala, spell out "Leviathan", the serpent of the watery abyss, and identified with Satan. These figures correspond to the five points of the inverted star. The symbol of Baphomet is placed on the wall above the altar.¹³⁰

In this paragraph, LaVey gives a description of the Baphomet symbol. Moreover, he connects the symbol to esoteric themes and ideas. The goat's head is placed inside an inverted pentagram, meaning that one of its points is in the downward direction, and encircled twice with five Hebrew letters in between. The symbol is rather simple and uncomplicated in its structure, yet it holds references to the Jewish Kabbalah which makes it more mystical. This reveals LaVey's ambiguousness in regard to esotericism. LaVey states the following in the very first sentence of the preface to *The Satanic Bible*: “This book was written because, with very few exceptions, every tract and paper, every "secret" grimoire, all the "great works" on the subject of magic, are nothing more than sanctimonious fraud - guilt-ridden ramblings and esoteric gibberish by chroniclers of magical lore unable or unwilling to present an objective view of the subject”.¹³¹ In likeness to LaVey's condemnation of spirituality and traditional religious beliefs, esotericism is also frowned upon. However, LaVey chooses to lend esoteric and occult imagery to make use of its powerful and desirable impact on the human psyche. Additionally, LaVey does ascribe a degree of

129 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 56.

130 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 136.

131 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 21.

unaccountability to the practice of will power, termed as magic,¹³² and he sometimes even expresses an underlying theism to Satanism.¹³³ The Baphomet is with the incorporation of some esoteric depth, in LaVey writings, made a sign with its meaning determined by the supposed malevolence of forbidden and secretive knowledge.

At the end of the last cited paragraph, it was declared that the Baphomet is awarded the importance of centrepiece during ritual. In the final segment of the *The Satanic Bible* in which the Baphomet figures, it again does so in a ritualistic context:

The sword is held by the priest and is used to point towards the symbol of Baphomet during the Invocation to Satan. It is also used, as indicated in *Steps of Ritual*, when calling forth the four Princes of Hell. The priest thrusts the point of the sword through the parchment containing the message or request after it has been read aloud; it is then used to hold the parchment while introduced into the candle flame. While hearing the requests of other participants, and while repeating same, the priest places the sword atop their heads (in traditional "knighting" fashion).¹³⁴

Not much information given herein contributes to the picture already formed of LaVey's understanding of the Baphomet. The Baphomet symbol holds a privileged position in the ritual procedure, and is thus fixated as a sign developing its meaning in relation to the physical practise of LaVeyan Satanism.

2.2.2 The Baphomet in the discourse of LaVey

When investigating the articulations forming constructions of meaning in relation to the Baphomet in the discourse of LaVey, I found four articulatory chains of elements fixating the Baphomet's position in the discourse. Most notable is that the sign Baphomet is not a spiritual entity or god, but first and foremost a symbol representing what LaVey considers to be Satanism. Firstly, it is legitimised as a satanic symbol through its appearance in the historical records of the Order of the Knights Templars, presumably having been worshipped as a symbol of Satan. LaVey regards such an act of defiance towards the church as an expression of rationality, by the order not letting itself be controlled by the narrow-mindedness of religion. Secondly, the goat is to LaVey symbolic for sin, making the Baphomet with its goat head a symbol for actions and qualities believed to be sinful by Christian norms. Thirdly, being a symbol distinctively connected to what is conceived as evil by religious standards, the Baphomet is made an excellent device used when performing a ritual. This is because of its ability to free the mind of the satanist from the constraints of moral and rational thinking, and instead give room for the carnal and animalistic side to the satanist. Fourthly, though esoteric workings are looked down upon by LaVey, the use of supposedly kabbalistic imagery in

132 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 110.

133 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 40.

134 LaVey [1969]/1992, p. 138.

relation to the Baphomet is applied, in order to fixate it as a sign connecting to evil and the unknown. The four articulatory chains of moments I have here accounted for are tied tightly together by LaVey's own interpretation of the function of religion and of Satanism. Satanism is to LaVey the only rational religion to confess to, and the Baphomet is its symbol. As the prime symbol of LaVeyan Satanism, it is as much a nodal point in the discourse of LaVey as is the sign "Satan", around which the meaning of Satanism is constructed and fixated. To conclude, my analysis shows that LaVey understands the Baphomet to be a symbol of Satan, representing everything which is conceptualised as evil by traditional religion in general, and by Christianity in particular.

2.3 The Baphomet in metal music culture

The use of occult imagery and dark lyrical themes has been a part of metal music and hard rock history ever since its early beginnings originating from the blues music of the 1930s. African slaves working hard in the cotton fields for white American landlords developed singing as a way to cope with the frustration of their oppression, and to secretly criticize their oppressors.¹³⁵ As this new form of musical expression grew in popularity it moved from the sun drenched fields into the murky taverns, called "juke joints", hosted by African American people. The melancholic blues was born. With lyrics influenced by African Yoruba culture and vodou traditions, in combination with the music mainly being played where alcohol was served and dancing encouraged, it is not difficult to imagine how the blues came to be labelled as the "Devil's music" by the church and the traditionalists.¹³⁶ The legend of how the first semi-talented blues musician Robert Johnson sold his soul to the Devil at the crossroads in return for musical virtuosity is well known and serves to strengthen the connection between the blues and the fallen angel. Johnson's guitar playing technique, as well as the particular style of other prominent blues musicians, later came to influence a considerable number of rock music guitarists, such as Muddy Waters, Eric Clapton and Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page.¹³⁷ Page's musicianship drew heavily on blues-oriented guitar picking, and he was most likely to have been inspired by the eerie lyrical themes of the blues when he began to take interest in the works of the British esotericist Aleister Crowley (1875–1947). Page developed a deep fascination for Crowley and his teachings, which gave resonance in the popular image of Led Zeppelin and in their music.¹³⁸

Also hailing from England in the late 1960s was Black Sabbath. This band

135 Farley, Helen, 2009, "Demons, Devils and Witches: The Occult in Heavy Metal Music", *Heavy Metal Music in Britain*, ed. by Gerd Bayer, Abingdon: Ashgate Publishing Group, 73–88, p. 74.

136 Farley 2009, p. 75.

137 Farley 2009, p. 76.

138 Farley 2009, pp. 78–79.

adopted a much heavier and darker sound than Led Zeppelin had done, and are often regarded as the first Heavy metal band. Though their lyrics contained elements commonly understood as evil, the songs gave the impression that the members of Black Sabbath were themselves afraid of the darkness they addressed. Ultimately, Black Sabbath viewed the occult topics from a traditional Christian perspective rather than anything else. Far more wicked were then some of their contemporaries, the British band Black Widow and the American band Coven. Both these bands were much more straightforward with their sympathies for black magic and witchcraft. Yet, their music was less innovative than Black Sabbath's, resulting in both bands soon fading into obscurity.¹³⁹ With the rise of Heavy metal culture in Great Britain a large quantity of bands began playing in the late 1970s and early 1980s, forming the New Wave of British Heavy Metal-movement. Among these bands was the Newcastle trio Venom, who fully embraced a satanic imagery in a way no one had done before them. Proclaiming to be "In League with Satan" already on their first single in 1981, Venom laid the foundation of the metal music sub-genre Black metal. Venom pioneered the first wave of Black metal, soon accompanied by the Swedish band Bathory, Switzerland's Hellhammer, Sodom from Germany and Denmark's Mercyful Fate. All of these bands wrote songs glorifying Satan and the occult, but if they did this solely to provoke or because they were as evil as they professed to be is a question of debate. The metal music movement grew immensely during the 1980s and continued to do so during the first years of the 1990s. It reached a hiatus at the end of the same decade due to decline in popularity, but regained its vitality in the new millennium and has been on the rise ever since. Within all of metal's different sub-genres and throughout its more than 40 years of existence, bands using occult symbols and imagery can be found.

2.3.1 Investigation of metal music culture and the Baphomet

Here follows my investigation of how the Baphomet is understood in metal music. As was done when analysing the books of Lévi and LaVey, discourse theory is employed to find out how meaning is given to the sign Baphomet. I have chosen to investigate three song lyrics, all including the word "Baphomet" in the title of the song. I have strived to choose lyrics composed by bands of relatively great distinction to their respective metal sub-genres, representative of the diversity within the metal music culture. The lyrics I analyse were officially released during a period of ten years spanning from 1991 to 2001.

Approaching the songs in chronological order, the first to be analysed is the song

¹³⁹ Moynihan, Michael & Söderlind, Didrik, 2003, *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground*, Venice, Calif.: Feral House, pp. 5–7.

“Baphomet” by the Italian Heavy metal band Death SS. The name of the band is an abbreviation of “In death of Steve Sylvester”, which is also the name of the band's first album.¹⁴⁰ Steve Sylvester is the band's singer frontman and songwriter. The song was released in December 1991 on their third full length album entitled “Heavy Demons”. Having released seven full length albums, several live albums and about twenty singles since its formation in 1977, Death SS has achieved cult status in the more obscure domains of the metal scene. They have come to appeal to a broad spectrum of metal enthusiasts through combining their “horror-themed” Heavy metal with Doom metal influences and a strong aura of mysticism surrounding the band. I will go about analysing the song “Baphomet” part by part from its beginning:

Veni, domine liberator / Dona nobis potestatem / Te adoramus, veneramus / Dona nobis Scientiam¹⁴¹

The song starts with a spoken recitation in Latin. It is a calling upon a liberator, who is worshipped and whose knowledge is desired. This part of the song holds much resemblance to a prayer, and given the title of the song we can suspect that it is the Baphomet that is addressed. The words indicate that the Baphomet is thought to be an agent of some kind, with the ability to intervene in the worshipper's life, and that it has the power to enlighten.

Following the introduction of the song the first verse comes:

You're the Horned God of the Witches / You're the adored Templar's Idol / You're the father Mithra of all of us! / You've got different faces and powers / We'll awake you with sex and prayers / To help us make gold, oh Lord Moon's Dyer!¹⁴²

Quite a few qualities and characteristics are here ascribed to the Baphomet. It is firstly given the status of god to witches, a position traditionally bestowed upon the Christian Devil. In a modern context, the Baphomet can be of some relevance to contemporary pagans and witches, regarded as a deity.¹⁴³ The Baphomet is then central to a possession rite in which the participating pagans are thought to become possessed by the Baphomet, representing natural human urges condemned by the Christian church. Sexual activity, dancing and other fleshly pleasures are celebrated. Pagans are under ritual circumstances led to confront their sexuality and their repressed desires and fears in order to reach a higher level of self acceptance. This is clearly a modern variant of the imagined witches' Sabbath, which women in Europe and North America were accused of attending during the witch hunt period, spanning from the late 15th century to the middle of the 18th century.¹⁴⁴ Both the aforementioned self-declared witches of today and the invented witches of yesterday can therefore

140 <http://www.deathss.com/>, accessed January 26, 2013.

141 Death SS, 1991, *Heavy Demons*, Contempo Records/Rosemary's.

142 Death SS, 1991.

143 Ezzy, Douglas, 2011, “The Ontology of Good and Evil: Spirit Possession in Contemporary Witchcraft and Paganism”, *Summoning the Spirits: Possession and Invocation in Contemporary Religion*, ed. by Andrew Dawson, London: I.B. Tauris, pp. 186–188.

144 Faxneld 2006, p. 53.

fit into the context of this song and function as elements, relevant to putting the Baphomet in relation to witches and eroticism. The Baphomet is secondly referred to as an adored idol of the Order of the Knight's Templars, a notion which has already been dealt with in this essay.¹⁴⁵ Thirdly, the Baphomet is identified with the ancient Iranian deity Mithra,¹⁴⁶ the name first occurring on inscriptions originating from the 14th century BCE.¹⁴⁷ Being first and foremost a deity of light with solar characteristics, Mithra is complementarily a warrior god and in Zoroastrianism a guardian of truth, law and order.¹⁴⁸ Even though the lyrics mention Mithra, it must be considered a possibility that what is actually meant is Mithras, the supreme god of a popular mystery religion in the Roman Empire. Worshipped from the 2nd to the end of the 5th century CE, Mithras bears so little resemblance to Mithra that scholars have questioned whether the two share any other similarities than the name.¹⁴⁹ Mithras is depicted as a man slaughtering a bull, an image found in all his underground temples called mithraeas.¹⁵⁰ The doctrines of the Mithras believers are shrouded in much mystery, due to the written source material found being strictly limited.¹⁵¹ However, the archaeological excavations of the mithraeas, and texts written by the Church Fathers, have provided knowledge of the initiatory system applied within the religion. There were seven grades of initiation, of which the one presumed to be highest was called Father. The Father was viewed as the representative of Mithras, a teacher and a priest.¹⁵² If this is the Father mentioned by Death SS, the Baphomet is again linked to the unknown and mysterious, and to secretive practices performed under circumstance separated from Christianity. The line also suggests that the Baphomet can be found in unexpected contexts, stressing the universality ancient origin of the symbol. Lastly, a reference to gold making is made, implying that the Baphomet holds a degree of alchemical potential. Hence is the meaning of the Baphomet already in the first verse effectively articulated in relation to elements originating from the Christian notion of witches, new religious movements, Antiquity and Western esotericism.

Next is the chorus. It is of course repeatedly reoccurring in the song, but this will be the one time it is analysed:

Calling you I ride the lightning / Praying you to set me free / When I invoke you I reach the power / In your light my mind is free¹⁵³

145 Please see parts 2.1.1 and 2.2.1.

146 Gnoli, Gherardo, [1987]/2005, "Mithra", *Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 9, ed. by Lindsay Jones, Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 6087–6088, p. 6087.

147 Gilhus, Ingrid S. & Thomassen, Einar, 2011, *Antikens Religioner: Mellanösterns och Medelhavsområdet religioner*; Stockholm: Norstedts, p. 242.

148 Gnoli [1987]/2005, p. 6087.

149 Gilhus & Thomassen 2011, p. 242.

150 Gilhus & Thomassen 2011, pp. 244–245.

151 Gilhus & Thomassen 2011, p. 243.

152 Gilhus & Thomassen 2011, p. 246.

153 Death SS, 1991.

It is somewhat problematic to interpret what is here actually said about the Baphomet. The expression to “ride the lightning” is not a generic term, nor is it specified what power that is reached when the Baphomet is invoked. Yet, the Baphomet is again viewed as a saviour with the capacity to free its adorer, and especially his or her mind. The emphasis on the mind indicates that the Baphomet is connected with the ability to think freely without restraints. In addition, the Baphomet produces a light, either factual or emblematic. This could be a subtle recognition of the Baphomet's relation to the Astral Light as presented by Lévi, but the reference is too vague to determine with certainty. It is crucial to keep in mind when analysing the text at hand that these are song lyrics, presumably not written with the sole intention to be informative, but to suit its artistic purpose and entertain an audience. The lyrics can therefore come across as incoherent at times, which does not mean that they are poorly written, only challenging when approached with an analytical eye. Despite such literary obstacles, it is fairly safe to say that these lyrics primarily propagate the Baphomet as an invokable entity with freedom of thought as an objective.

In the next verse the Baphomet is put in an alchemical context once more:

Only you can give the solution / Helping us to accomplish the great work / You will open the Arcane Doors of the Sacred Reign / And through the baptism of fire / Mete will make all things blossom / I abjure my faith for yours, for all your pleasures!¹⁵⁴

In alchemy, the “Great Work” is the process of producing the Philosophers' Stone, and ultimately gold, through a number of patterned workings.¹⁵⁵ Apparently, the Baphomet can be of practical aid in performing the Great Work. The “baptism of fire” is a reference to Matthew 3:11, where John the Baptist exclaims that his successor will baptise with the Holy ghost and with fire. The Baphomet is here further fixated as a deliverer, and a bringer of radical change and esoteric knowledge to he or she who do confess to be a follower of the Baphomet.

The concluding third verse reads:

You bring the sign of the Holy Star / Your bosom feeds the Eternal Light / You show the moon of Chased and Geburah / Solve et Coagula, Oh Baphomet!¹⁵⁶

This segment includes several references to the Baphomet as it was depicted and described by Lévi. The “Holy Star” is the benevolent pentagram positioned by Lévi on the Baphomet's forehead. The mentioning of the “Eternal Light” suggests that the song writer acknowledges a connection between the Baphomet and the Astral Light. However, the nature of this connection is not made evident, and this verse rather suggests that the Baphomet nourishes the Astral Light in a way not intended by

154 Death SS, 1991.

155 Haage, Bernard D. 2005, ”Alchemy II: Antiquity-12th Century”, *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, ed. by Wouter J. Hanegraaff, in collaboration with A. Faivre, R. van den Broek, J.-P. Barch, Leiden: Brill, 16–34, p. 17.

156 Death SS, 1991.

Lévi. Two explicit references are made to Lévi's famous Baphomet drawing. In that drawing the Baphomet points to the two moons representing the kabbalistic principles called Chased and Geburah,¹⁵⁷ and on its two forearms are the words "Solve" and "Coagula" written. "Solve et Coagula" is the sixth step in the alchemical Great Work, being the coagulation and solidification of the purified matter.¹⁵⁸ It is also the principal of spiritual purification of the alchemist corresponding to the advancement in performing the Great Work.¹⁵⁹ The Baphomet is in the context of this song quite clearly glorified as a revelator of hidden esoteric knowledge, at odds with Christianity and its norms and a possible object of worship.

The second song to be investigated is "Baphomet's Throne" by the Swiss band Samael, first time appearing on their "Ceremony of Opposites" album, released in February 1994. Musically, this song can be considered as Death metal in contrast to the song by Death SS, which is a Heavy metal song, and representative of the metal music climate during the first years of the 1990s. Samael is by far the most commercially successful of the three bands whose song lyrics are herein analysed. The band has toured extensively in Europe and the USA during its 25 years long career and is still active.¹⁶⁰ I have divided the song into three parts, beginning with the first lyrical segment:

Each blasphemy is another stone to the edifice of your glory / Am I the rock on which you'll build your church...?¹⁶¹

The lyrics are written as if directed to the Baphomet and are immediately fixating the meaning of the Baphomet in relation to Christianity. The segment paraphrases Matthew 16:18, in which Jesus tells Peter that he is the rock on which his church shall be built. The biblical passage itself has been subject of much debate and speculation, but in the context of this song each stone in the construction of the building is a symbol for every blasphemous act ever committed. The church is hardly to the honour of Christ, but to desecrate the same. The Baphomet is evidently polemical to Christianity.

The next part of the song takes the form of a monologue posing questions of existential nature. It is for obvious reasons difficult to analyse this part searching for how meaning is given solely to the Baphomet:

Am I the son you've been waiting for? / Am I the chosen one? / To be your messiah on earth / And to sit at your left in hell / I've always ignored the doubt / Answers are in the questions / Show me the way to the Baphomet's throne...¹⁶²

157 Please see my explanation of this symbolism on page 22.

158 Haage 2005, p. 17.

159 Haage 2005, p. 23.

160 <http://www.samael.info/Above/index.html>, accessed on January 27, 2013

161 Samael, 1994, *Ceremony of Opposites*, Century Media Records.

162 Samael, 1994.

The most valid information herein contributing to revealing the understanding of the Baphomet in this song is that the Baphomet is metaphorically or physically placed in hell. Locating the Baphomet to hell further renders it as an adversary of the Christian God. Still, this says very little about what characteristics and qualities the Baphomet is imbued with, which are essential to get the whole picture of how it is here understood.

Continuing with the last part, the view of the Baphomet becomes more articulated:

Guide my hand, light my path / My mouth will speak with your words / I'll make statements with your orders / I'll be the supreme insult / Which will forevermore soil the image of god / I'll be your revenge, I'll be your victory / Guide my hand, light my path / Show me the way / To reach one day the Baphomet's throne...¹⁶³

The Baphomet takes the shape of the Christian Devil, put in a position inferior to God but having the potential to overcome his counterpart. This song gives an almost romantic account for the Baphomet as equivalent to the Devil, fixating the meaning of the Baphomet as a rebelling Antichrist.

Last, I will make an attempt to analyse the lyrics to the song “Command of the Iron Baphomet” by the American Black metal band Black Witchery. The song was first released on the album “Desecration of the Holy Kingdom”, which came out in September 2001. Black Witchery's music is a less refined form of metal than the sorts produced by the other two researched subjects. However, Black Witchery is within its barbaric niche a well respected and well recognised Black metal band known for its faithfulness to the scene and its ideals. Due to its compactness, it seems most effective to present the whole lyric and then investigate it. However, the chorus is only given once:

Death Head Legion Infernal Brigade / Vengeance Destruction Conquest Supreme Iron Warlords Dominate / Wolfpacks unleashed embers of Hate / Gloat at the Battle's glowing hell / Antichrist Command / Hail Victory Slaughter the Nazarene herd

Decimate Annihilate Desecrate Raping the deceiver's lies / Command of the Iron Baphomet / Antichrist Elitists Rise / Black Nuclear Hellstorm cloud Nightmare Death / Holocaust Hellish Night Command of the Iron Baphomet / Antichrist Elitist Pride...

Blasphemous Hails, burning the chapels of Divinity / Antichrist Command - siege demoniacs' Reign Withered weak flesh tremble charge and blast away / Firestorms raging furious lightning and War – Apocalypse / Blasphemous glory and death / Graves give rise from the ashes Culture Pure / Proud Flame infused into Mortal men / Black Flames of Doom invoking eternal Demonic Triumph

Death head Legion Infernal Brigade / Vengeance Destruction Conquest Supreme Iron Warlords Dominate / They who burst through the Dawn Burning the Chapels of Divinity / Upholding the crush of Destiny's Embrace / Black Witching Saints of Blasphemy¹⁶⁴

163 Samael, 1994.

164 Black Witchery, 2001, *Desecration of the Holy Kingdom*, Full Moon Productions.

This song paints the picture of a battlefield where the final war between good and evil, God and the Devil, is fought. The Baphomet is either identified with the Devil as the commander of Hell's armies, or the symbol under which the forces of evil fight. Regardless of the exact orientation of the Baphomet in the militaristic hierarchy, it is here without a doubt fixated as a force, mark or entity very much connected to the Devil and the opposition of Christianity.

2.3.2 The Baphomet in the metal music discourse

I have investigated three different lyrics composed by three different metal music bands in which the Baphomet is in some way articulated. The metal music discourse on the Baphomet is not simply determined by these three bands, but they here serve as representative of the general interpretation of the Baphomet as a sign within the context of a culture well familiarised with a strong occult imagery since its formation, and which is still appealing to youths of today. The Baphomet is first and foremost understood as equivalent to the Christian Devil, as a symbol of evil or an actual demon or entity that can be summoned by its worshipper. Yet, the Death SS song "Baphomet" indicates that there is an understanding of the Baphomet as more than simply evil. Its meaning is also fixated as a freer of the mind by means of esoteric practices, connecting to its historic interpretations. Indeed it is true that this one case hardly can serve as a legitimate validation of the Baphomet being generally seen as an esoteric symbol, but I would like to stress that such interpretations are present within a metal music discourse and should not be overlooked simply because they are not normative. I will return to this issue in the discussion of the results of my investigation. The Baphomet is in the metal music discourse an element with a contested meaning as either representative of the Devil, or as an entity in its own right, which is understood as a reality capable of appearing in physical form, as a symbol of evil as oppositional to Christian norms and moral, or as an esoteric symbol or principle.

2.4 The Baphomet in three discourses

My investigation has so far sought to deal with each discourse separately in order to be clear about their separate understandings of the Baphomet. Up to this point the investigation has primarily served to give answer to the first of my two research questions. In this, the fourth and last part of my investigation, the three discourses are brought together to see if, how and why they differ from each other with the aim to give answers to the second research question.

As described in the theoretical background, a discourse is established in relation to all that it excludes, called the field of discursivity. This makes the field of discursivity a rather loose term which could imply an unstructured multitude of all possibly thinkable constructions of meaning. In

this study I have chosen to investigate three competing discourses. This sort of limited range of discourses, interfering with each other in the same terrain, can be described with an analytical term as an “order of discourse”, which is a concept introduced to discourse theory by Norman Fairclough.¹⁶⁵ In this particular order of discourse the Baphomet sign is a floating signifier, an important sign which the three discourses struggle to fill with meaning. The attempt to fixate the meaning of the Baphomet in a discourse striving for closure is always threatened by the field of discursivity, and in the case at hand primarily by the other discourses in this order of discourse.

Beginning the comparison of the Baphomet in this order of discourse I turn to the different positions I have found it to hold. In the discourse of Lévi the Baphomet is a moment with a firmly fixated meaning in the chain of articulations forming around the nodal point the Astral Light. Though it could possibly be regarded an element, as it to Lévi is both a symbol of the Astral Light, and an intermediary of the Astral Light to the world at the same time. However, Lévi does not contradict himself when appointing the Baphomet as both these things, and its meaning is relatively coherently fixated through the articulations. Therefore I find it legitimate to regard the Baphomet as a moment within the discourse of Lévi, with an uncontested positioning. To LaVey, the Baphomet is clearly a symbol for the entire religion of Satanism and as such a symbol for Satan and a nodal point in his discourse. In the metal music discourses however, the Baphomet is immensely more difficult to pin down. Though it in several ways reproduces similar meanings given to the Baphomet in this order of discourse, it does not achieve to truly combine these meanings, making it theoretically into an element assigned shifting meanings. This is not very surprising at all as the metal music culture is an ambiguous phenomenon lacking unity. In this order of discourse the Baphomet is apparently understood to have varying importance and function within the three separate discourses.

Comparing first Lévi's Baphomet to that of LaVey, a multitude of differences and a few similarities are revealed. Most notable is maybe how the Baphomet is by both these interpreters viewed as Satan or the Devil, but that their conceptions of it deviate heavily. To LaVey, Satan is an absolute positive sign. It is a symbol representing the freedom of man. To Lévi, being a Catholic Christian, the Devil is a negative force which the Baphomet can represent if imbued with evil will, but it is for the most part a completely neutral sign which shows the duality of the crucial concept of the Astral Light. The Baphomet is in both these discourses articulated as symbol of something else than itself, but with different meanings. Lévi incorporates the symbol in his magical and esoteric system, whilst LaVey denies esoteric assumptions any validity. Still, it is to LaVey a tool used in ritual magic with the purpose to subconsciously remind the participants of the satanic nature of their

165 Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 27.

religious gathering. In the articulations examined by me both authors have given descriptions of how the Baphomet should be depicted and what its parts represent. These descriptions are not very much alike, though they hold some resemblance to each other, such as the use of a goat head in combination with a pentagram. Lévi's version of the Baphomet precedes LaVey's in time, and at first glance the latter may appear to be innovative to disregard of Lévi. Consider, however, this segment from Lévi's *Rituel* dealing with the pentagram: "By placing it [the pentagram] in such a manner that two of its points are in the ascendant and one is below, we may see the horns, ears and beard of the hierarchic Goat of Mendes, when it becomes the sign of infernal evocations".¹⁶⁶ LaVey does not credit Lévi in *The Satanic Bible* as having anything to do with the Baphomet or as having been an inspiration at all, though this passage indicates that he certainly has.

Moving on with comparing how the Baphomet is articulated in a metal music discourse in relation to the other two discourses bring about complications. It is clear that the metal music discourse reproduces the meanings given to the Baphomet as a symbol of Satan or the Devil, but how this supernatural force is valued is difficult to say. Bands using the Baphomet as a synonym for Satan do not necessarily state if it is viewed as a positive, neutral or negative sign. When ascribed with esoteric depth, as in the Death SS song, it becomes a positive spiritual symbol, but it can simultaneously hold the meaning of intellectual saviour from Christian norms, as LaVey understands it to do. There is no conflict in seeing it as much as a liberator of the spirit as a liberator of the mind, and by doing so the metal music discourse fixates its own meaning of the Baphomet, through exclusion of a major part of both Lévi's and LaVey's teachings and reasoning. A manner in which the Baphomet is made a possibly negative principle is in Black metal lyrics, as in the Black Witchery song investigated. It could be negative because Black metal sometimes deliberately honour the physical destruction of the world as an effect of the triumph of evil over good. This is done purely to be the antithesis of Christianity, and consequently fitting to the idea of traditional Devil-worshippers as portrayed by the Church throughout history, a role for the Baphomet which Lévi opposed. This is what has been termed adolescent Satanism by academics,¹⁶⁷ and naturally the Baphomet can be viewed in such a light as well.

The key to the question of *why* the interpretations of the Baphomet differ from each other in the three discourses is likely to be found in the vagueness of its aspects, combined with the one characteristic they share: the Baphomet can be a symbol of Satan or the Devil. Elaborating on this firm assumption, the additional meaning of the Baphomet has been determined by the context in which it is placed and what functions it is sought to fill. All three discourses are set in very different

166 Lévi [1856]/1999, p. 239.

167 Dyrendal, Asbjørn, 2008, "Devilish Consumption: Popular Culture in Satanic Socialization", *Numen*, vol. 55:1, 68–98.

environments: the occult climate of 19th century France, the counterculture of the 1960s America and the occultural metal music scene of today. Satan is relevant to each of these contexts in different ways, and the Baphomet has consequently been linked to Satan in different ways proper to suit each context's needs. Ultimately, the answer to why each of the three discourses articulates different interpretations of the Baphomet is that each discourse is situated in different social and cultural contexts, all understanding Satan and evil differently.

3 Conclusion

3.1 Findings

The first of my research questions was:

- How is the Baphomet understood in the books *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* by Éliphas Lévi, in *The Satanic Bible* by Anton Szandor LaVey and in the modern metal music culture?

I have come to reach the following conclusions answering this question:

- The Baphomet is in the book *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* by Éliphas Lévi understood as two things. One, as a symbol of the dual nature of the Astral Light and of the equilibrium of the universe. Two, as a mediator of the actual force that permeates the whole universe, by Lévi called the Astral Light.
- The Baphomet is in the book *The Satanic Bible* by Anton Szandor LaVey understood as a symbol of Satan, representing everything which is conceptualised as evil by traditional religion in general, and by Christianity in particular.
- The Baphomet is in modern metal music culture understood as having a contested meaning as either representative of the Devil, or as an entity in its own right called the Baphomet, which is understood as a reality capable of taking physical form, as a symbol of evil as oppositional to Christian norms and moral, or as an esoteric symbol or principle.

The second of my research questions was:

- Do the interpretations differ from each other, and if so, how do they differ, and why?

I have come to reach the following conclusions answering this question:

- Yes, the interpretations do differ from each other.
- The interpretations differ from each other in several ways. Firstly, the Baphomet is understood to be of varying importance and function to each of its interpreters. Secondly, the Baphomet is to Lévi a negative symbol if representing the Devil, but is in itself a neutral symbol. To LaVey, the Baphomet can only be a positive symbol. The Baphomet can in metal music culture be valued as either positive, negative or neutral. Thirdly, the Baphomet is to Lévi an esoteric symbol, to LaVey it is not. In metal music culture, it can be understood as either esoteric or not esoteric.
- The interpretations differ from each other mainly because of two things. Firstly, there is an initial and mythical vagueness to the Baphomet, allowing it to be imbued with different meanings. Secondly, the one quality the Baphomet share in each of its three interpretations is that it can represent Satan. Because Satan represents different things in the different contexts

each interpretation is set, so does the Baphomet.

3.2 Concluding discussion

My investigation of how the Baphomet has been understood in three separate contexts has led to results of relevance to Western esotericism, Satanism studies and the study of religion and popular culture. The method used to achieve this in depth understanding of the Baphomet, namely discourse theory, has proven efficient in systematising the concerned discourses and pinpointing the position of the Baphomet in each discourse.

In respect to my findings, the theory of occulture provides some noteworthy insights. Metal music culture did accordingly prove to be eclectic in its understanding of the Baphomet as a symbol of both spiritual and intellectual liberation, combining selected parts of Lévi's and LaVey's independent systems of thought. As was made evident in the investigation, the Baphomet is also used in contemporary witchcraft as well as it is constantly connected to its mythological past as an idol adored by the Templars, portraying how its individual interpreters are unwilling to settle for, or agree on, a definite understanding of the symbol. This could be regarded as in line with the plurality of occulture. Notably, the one thing the three contexts herein analysed share is the notion of the Baphomet as a possible symbol of Satan. To understand the Baphomet as such is to act in agreement with what is thought of as an ancient fact, something evidently not only occurring in present time occulture, but in all three contexts. Could this open up for the possibility that each of these contexts is an expression of occulture in their own time? Eclectic in their own ways, forming from their own contemporary occultic milieus, and drawing on the inherited notion of the Baphomet as Satan, each context came to frame the Baphomet differently. This is a possible aspect of the theory of occulture worthy of consideration.

The investigation of the Baphomet in metal music culture did not, for obvious reasons, deliver as unambiguous results as did the investigations of the Baphomet in the other two discourses. This can be related to Petersen's theory of discourses on the satanic and satanic discourses, as metal music culture can reproduce both. It is impossible to know in which of these two discourses the Baphomet is placed only by reading lyrics. As was explained in part 1.3.2. one must know a great deal more about the person or group to deem it articulating a satanic discourse, instead of merely a discourse on the satanic. However, the more exclusive cases of satanic discourses can occur in metal music culture, and when so happens the interpretations can mirror either a rational or an esoteric Satanism, making the Baphomet esoteric or non-esoteric.

It would be reckless of me not to discuss the image of the Baphomet, for it is surely the drawing made by Lévi portraying the cross-legged goat and the circular symbol on the cover of

LaVey's *The Satanic Bible* that has etched themselves into the minds of people and into the core of popular culture, rather than the texts presenting them. In Appendix 1 the two original images as produced by Lévi and LaVey are given. As has already been established in the investigation, the two symbols bear little resemblance to one another, except for the five point star and the goat's head. Appendix 2 and 3, show examples of how the Baphomet is used in metal music imagery. Appendix 2 provides a few examples of how the Baphomet has come to appear quite unaltered, whereas Appendix 3 relates the diversity of variations on the symbol that flourish in metal music culture. Careful image analysis, comparing the shifting representations of the Baphomet in contemporary popular culture to the original pictures as presented by Lévi and LaVey would have been of benefit to see which aspects are today emphasised and which are not. This could have added further dimensions to understanding how the perception of the Baphomet has changed over time.

This essay, in a revised version, could be a part of a larger study striving to encapsulate the accumulated understanding of the Baphomet symbol in Western esotericism. An issue not thoroughly dealt with herein, which would be needed if a larger study is to be conducted, is for example the use of the Baphomet within esoteric orders and esoteric literature, both contemporary and historical. Qualitative interviews with practitioners of magic involving the Baphomet would complement qualitative textual analyses of complete bibliographies, internet forums and magazines. Similar efforts could be conducted with regard to understanding the Baphomet in various other forms of Satanism and in a far wider range of popular culture.

This study has hopefully led to a more in depth understanding of the Baphomet symbol. In a broader sense, I imagine similar studies relating symbols found in both Western esotericism and popular culture to each other to be of interest to people growing up curious about religion and spirituality. These topics are not to be shunned away by academics based on superficial conceptions of the subjects dealt with. Popular culture is immensely important in today's process of socialisation in society, and within it notions of religion, esotericism and occultism thrive. These matters deserve to be taken seriously, in order to better understand the world we live in.

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Appendix 1: The original images



Fig. 1: The Baphomet as depicted by Lévi in Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie.

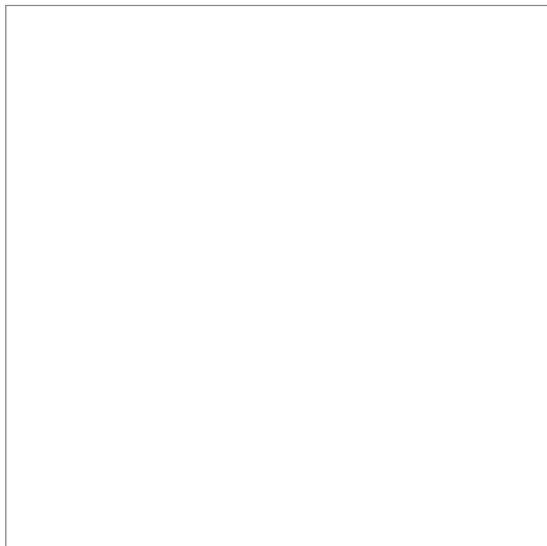


Fig. 2: The Baphomet as depicted by LaVey in The Satanic Bible.

Fig. 1: <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/a4/Baphomet.png>, accessed on February 20, 2013.

Fig. 2: <http://0.tqn.com/d/altreligion/1/0/F/1/-/-/Baphomet-pentagram.jpg>, accessed on February 20, 2013.

Appendix 2: The Baphomet unaltered

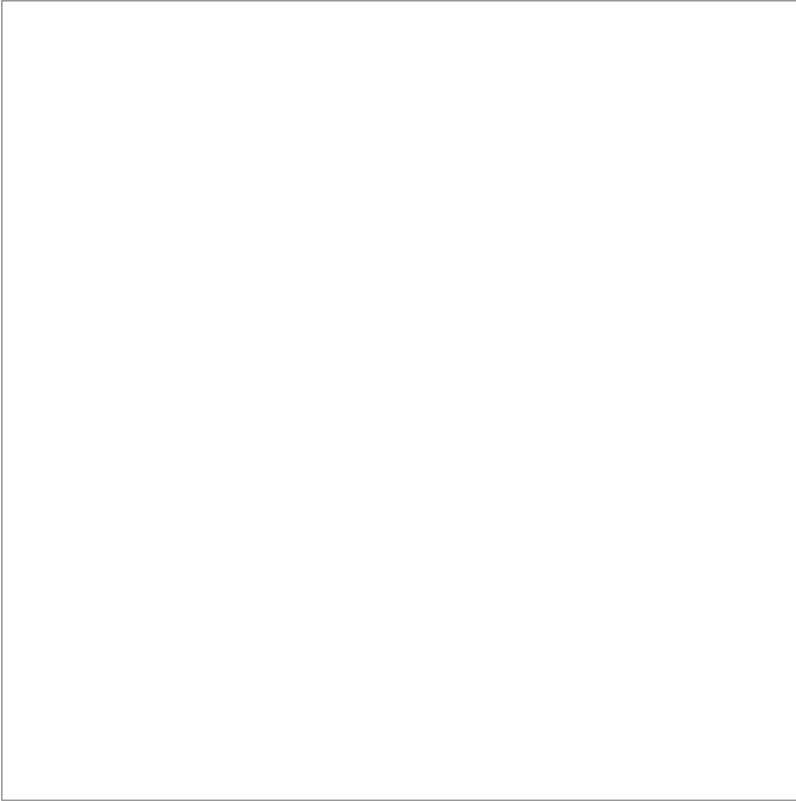


Fig. 1: Angel Witch "s/t", cover of the band's first single from 1980, released on Bronze Records.

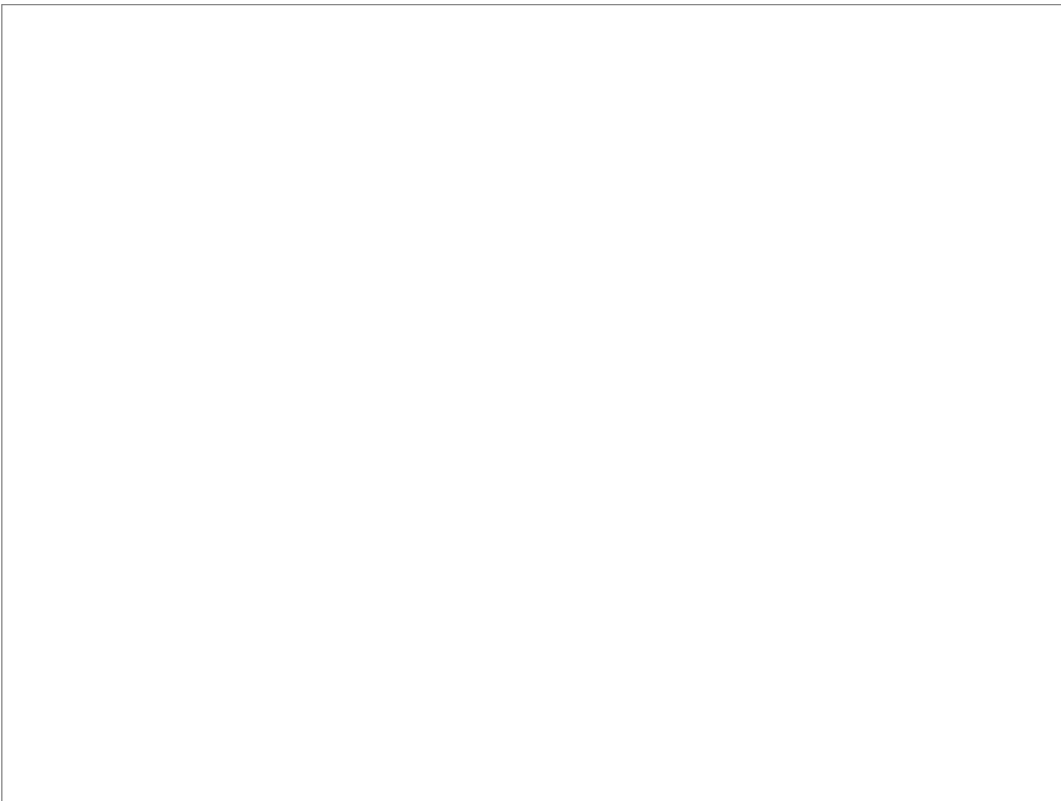


Fig. 2: Official Darkthrone shirt from 1992 released by Peaceville Records.

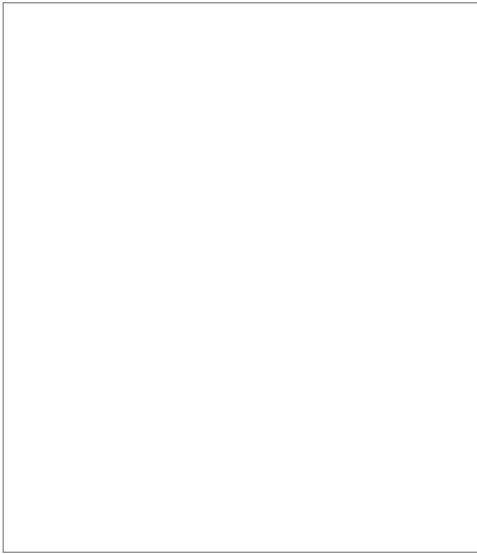


Fig. 3: Unofficial Sarcofago shirt.

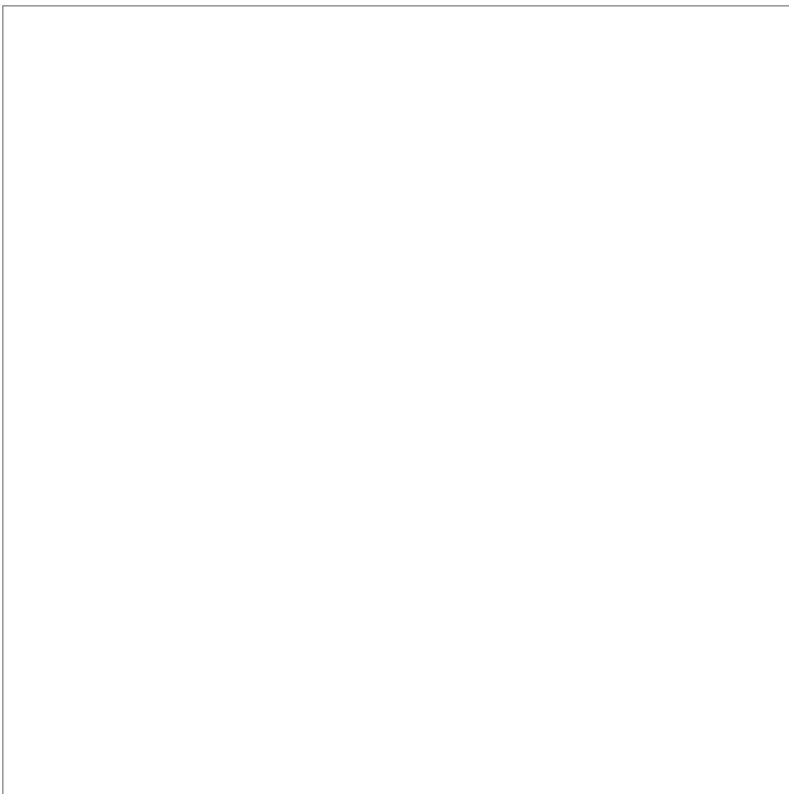


Fig. 4: Iphone 4 case.



Fig. 5: Legion, previous singer of the Black metal band Marduk, with Baphomet tattoo.

Fig. 6: Singer of Black metal band Bestial Mockery with Baphomet shield onstage.

Fig. 1: http://25.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_lz5dbpgIzH1qmidcmo1_cover.jpg, accessed on February 20, 2013.

Fig. 2: [http://i255.photobucket.com/albums/hh135/Rokospokos/Favourite Shirts/PICT0067.jpg](http://i255.photobucket.com/albums/hh135/Rokospokos/Favourite%20Shirts/PICT0067.jpg), accessed on February 20, 2013.

Fig. 3: [http://files.myopera.com/blackcrow666/albums/10456792/sarcofago baphomet.jpg](http://files.myopera.com/blackcrow666/albums/10456792/sarcofago%20baphomet.jpg), accessed on February 20, 2013.

Fig. 4: http://rlv.zcache.com/iphone_4_case_baphomet_old_style_speckcase-p176902292701238709env68_400.jpg, accessed on February 20, 2013.

Fig. 5: <http://img.fotocommunity.com/photos/5888430.jpg>, accessed on February 20, 2013.

Fig. 6: Photo by the band and given to me.

Appendix 3: Variations of the Baphomet in metal music culture

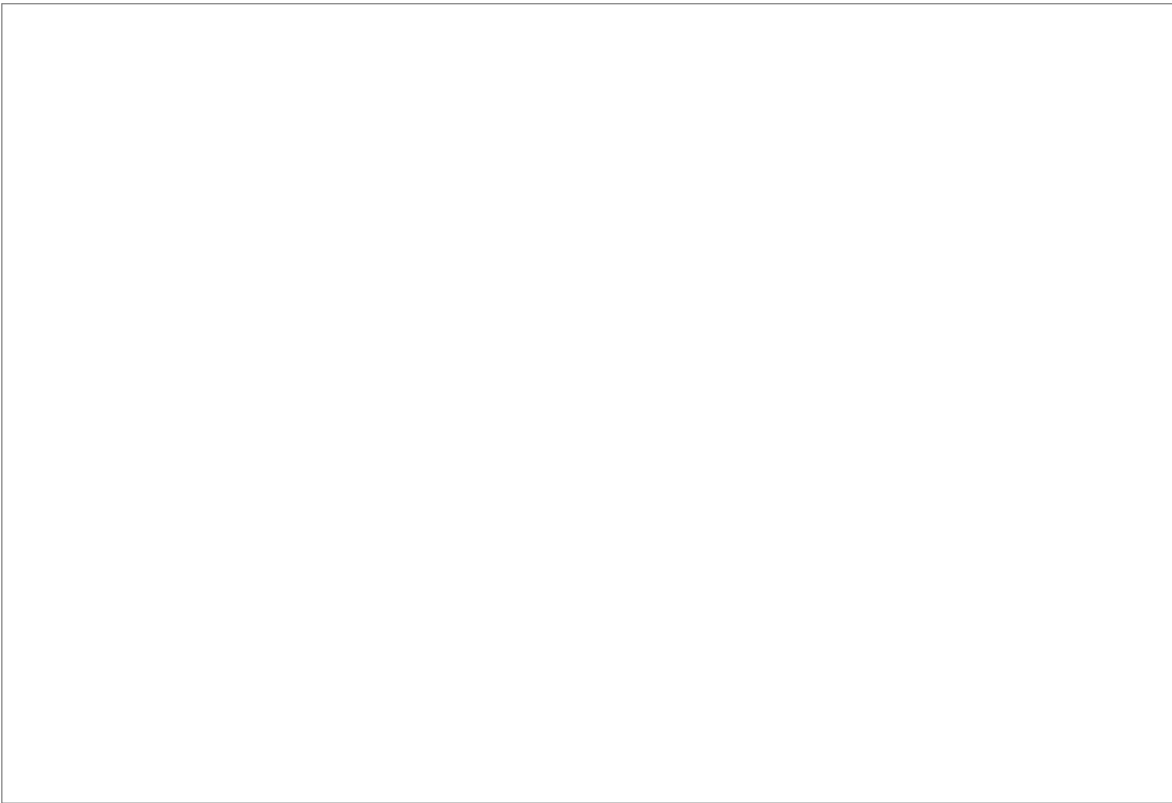


Fig. 1: Beherit "The Dawn of Satan's Millenium" 7" picture disc, released on Turbo Records in 1990.

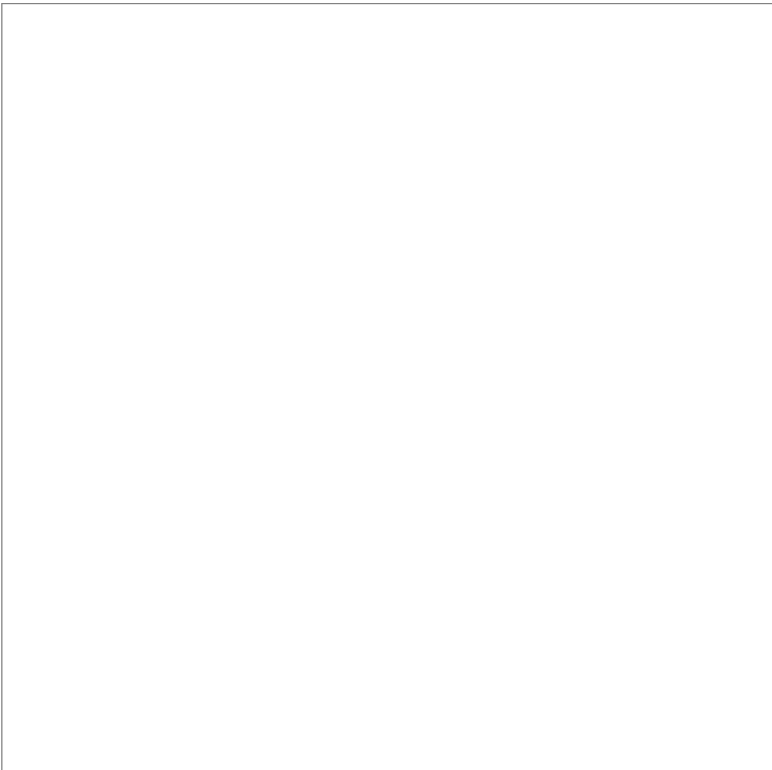


Fig. 2: Venom "Welcome to Hell" 12" LP, released on Neat Records in 1981.



Fig. 3: Nifelheim "s/t" 12" LP, released on Necropolis Records in 1995.

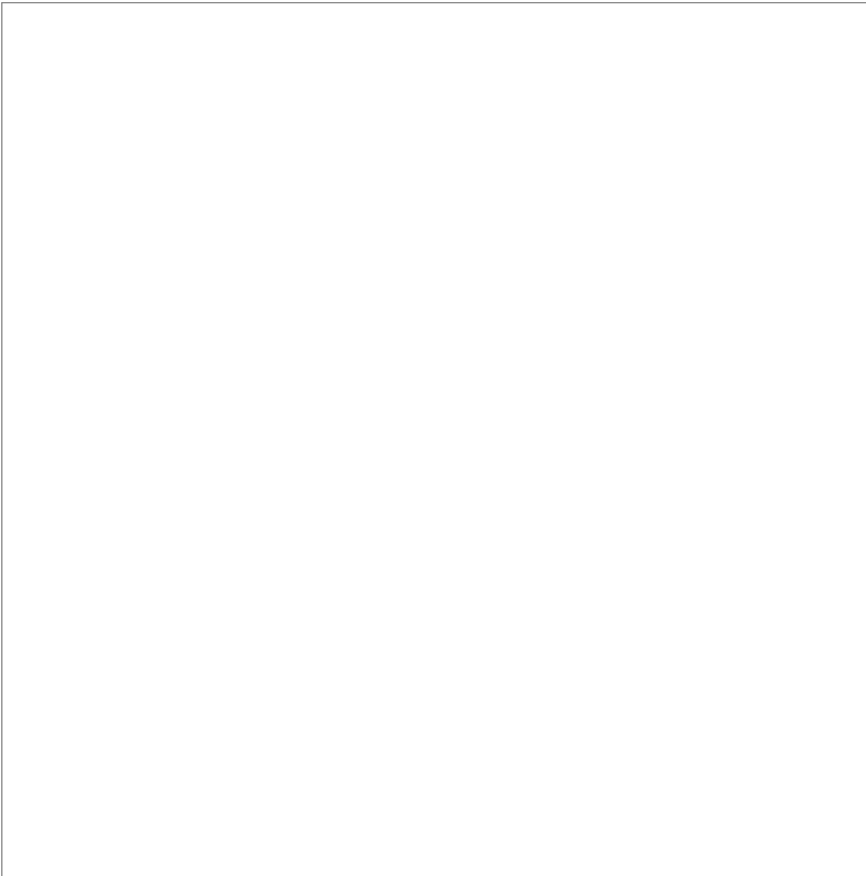


Fig. 4: Impiety promotional picture.

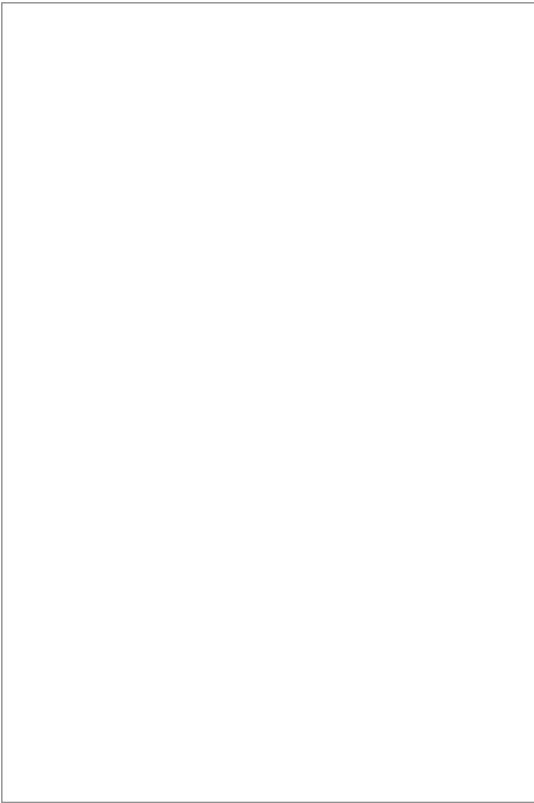


Fig. 5: In Solitude gig poster.

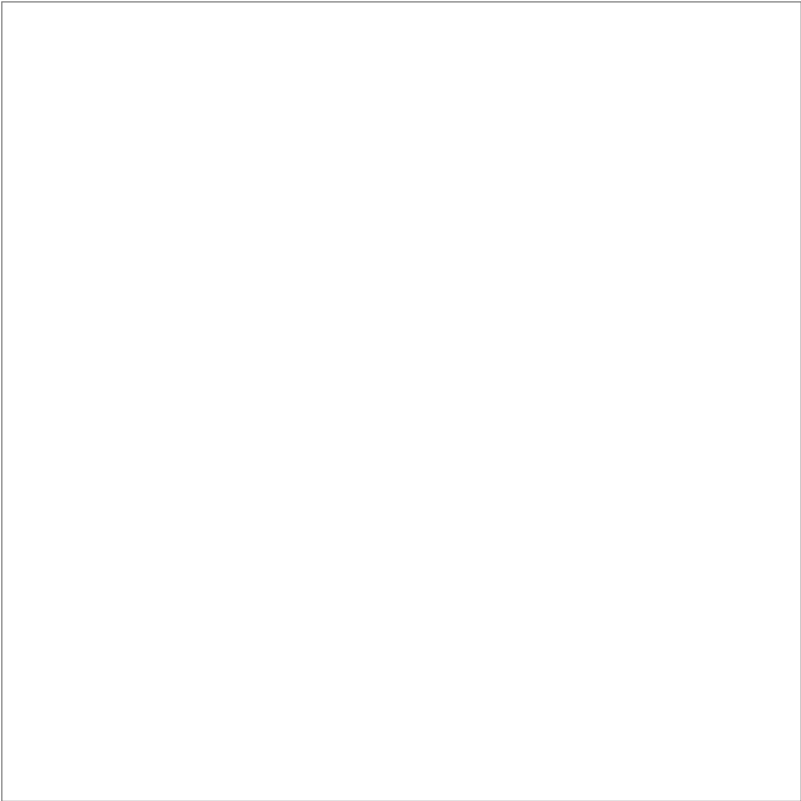


Fig. 6: Bestial Mockery "Hail Occult Masters" 7"split /w Karnarium, released on Hellsheadbangers in 2008.



Fig. 7: Pentagram "Relentless" CD, released by Pentagram Records in 2005.

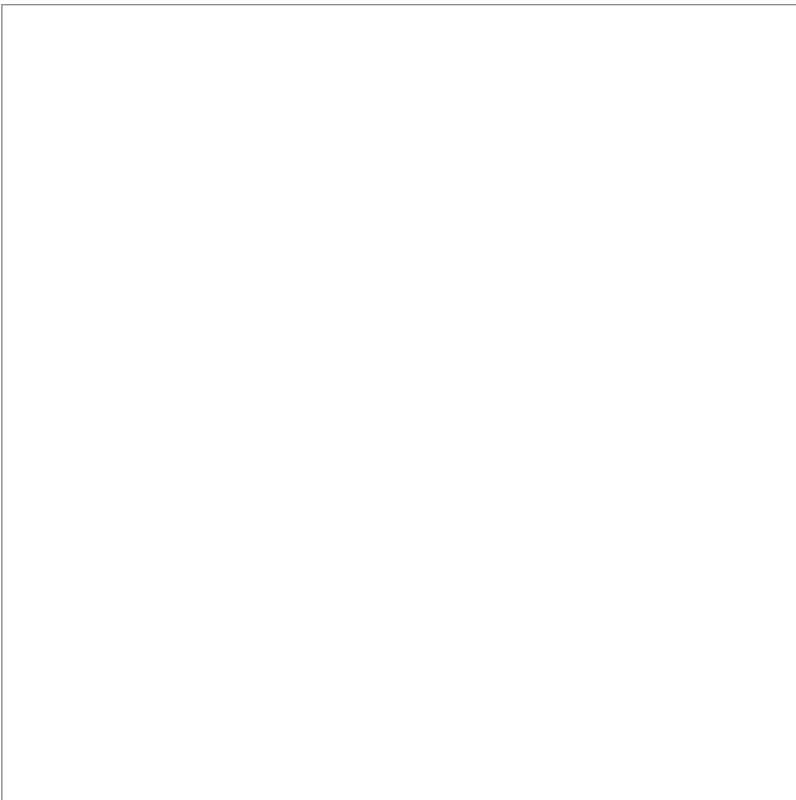


Fig. 8: Death SS "... in Death of Steve Sylvester" 12" LP, released by Metal Masster Records in 1988.

Fig. 1: <http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-9OToD0hSiyM/T6W5lutVGnI/AAAAAAAAAHQ/TrbHKrpeoX0/s1600/Beherit+Kopie.jpg>, accessed on February 20, 2013.

Fig. 2: http://images.coveralia.com/audio/v/Venom-Welcome_To_Hell-Frontal.jpg, accessed on February 20, 2013.

Fig. 3: <http://metalship.org/archives/albums/album6992.jpg>, accessed on February 20, 2013.

Fig. 4: http://www.hailsandhorns.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/1302924484_Impiety-fbk111.jpg, accessed on February 20, 2013.

Fig. 5: <http://www.thesleepingshaman.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Roadburn2011-InSolitude.jpg>, accessed on February 20, 2013.

Fig. 6: http://www.kvlt.fi/img_upload/records/3405r.jpg, accessed on February 20, 2013.

Fig. 7: <http://www.nuclearblast.de/static/articles/129/129189.jpg/1000x1000.jpg>, accessed on February 20, 2013.

Fig. 8: <http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-X11af0Hs6rI/TvuO9XEYmqI/AAAAAAAAHr4/e43L7Nz1rVs/s1600/Front.jpg>, accessed on February 20, 2013.