

Ruben van Luijk

Children of Lucifer: The Origins of Modern Religious Satanism, New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. 632 pp. \$ 39.95 Hardcover. ISBN 9780190275105.

I should start by stating that, if not in a situation of conflict of interest, I find myself in a peculiar position in reviewing Ruben van Luijk's monumental (632 pages) contribution to the growing field of Satanism studies. Van Luijk starts his book by stating that, without my 1997 French book *Enquête sur le satanisme* (Paris: Dervy), "I could not have written this study, or at least would have faced an immensely more daunting task" and that "Introvigne can be considered the sole conversation partner in this venture (...) the scholarly discussion in this book virtually amounts to a dialogue with *Enquête sur le satanisme*" (p. 11). I find this dialogue extremely productive and enriching, but at the same time paradoxical. Van Luijk lists several issues where he disagrees with my 1997 conclusions. He had already listed them in the privately published 2013 version of his thesis, *Satan Rehabilitated? A Study into Satanism During the Nineteenth Century*, which he kindly shared with me, and we debated these issues during a seminar held in June 2013 at the University of Nijmegen.

Unbeknownst to van Luijk, when his *Children of Lucifer* was published, my own book *Satanism: A Social History* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) was at the printing stage, and would be released a few weeks later. It is a study of a similar size: 665 pages, although one distinguished reviewer, British sociologist Eileen Barker, insisted in her review in *Religion and Society in Central and Eastern Europe* (vol. 9, no. 1, 2016, pp. 82–84) that the pages are in fact 666. My book is not a translation of *Enquête sur le satanisme*. Although the project started as such, during the years I completely rewrote the volume, added new material and, inter alia, discussed the criticism by van Luijk. On more than one issue, I did accept his objections as valid and changed, or at least nuanced, my conclusions. On others, I explained why I chose to maintain my previous point of view. As a result, had *Children of Lucifer* been published a few months later, some paragraphs would probably have been different. If I really am the "sole conversation partner" of his book, van Luijk would have been able to notice how, thanks precisely to his intelligent, challenging, and stimulating objections, I had refined some of my theses in *Satanism: A Social History*. This, however, was not to be, and as a result the reader still finds in *Children of Lucifer* a discussion of positions I expressed twenty years ago in *Enquête sur le satanisme* that I have modified in *Satanism: A Social History*.

Although, as van Luijk states, the conversation with my early book is not unimportant for his project, most readers would be less interested in the details of this dialogue than in the general tale the author tells in a masterful and

entertaining way. Van Luijk discusses both the ritual practice of Satanists and the romantic, literary Satanism. He argues that “literature *was* a matter of religion for the Romantic Satanists” and “we might be justified to describe these utterances as forms of bona fide religious Satanism” (p. 109). This is an area of disagreement we maintain, as I consider as Satanism *stricto sensu* only the activity of groups organized in a form similar to religious *movements*, but it also offers van Luijk the opportunity to present a gallery of colorful literary characters, whose influence on modern Satanism cannot be denied.

Van Luijk also insists on the role, or the responsibility, of the Catholic Church in creating a threatening image of Satan and, as a consequence, Satanism. He does not believe that a clear-cut distinction can be made between medieval or late modern accusations of Satan worship and modern phenomena such as those emerging around the court of the French king Louis XIV in the Affair of the Poisons. About the latter incident, which many describe as the first instance of Black Masses and Satanism, and others attribute to the wild fantasy of Louis XIV’s policemen and judges, van Luijk’s natural inclination would be towards skepticism. But he is aware of the new documents discussed by Lynn Wood Mollenauer in her 2006 book *Strange Revelations: Magic, Poison and Sacrilege in Louis XIV’s France* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), and cautiously concludes that “there is simply too much we do not know, and with the evidence available, we may never be able to resolve this matter with absolute certainty” (p. 56). He admits that *something* might really have happened, but what exactly it was we do not know. I am more inclined to trust the French 17th-century policemen, but this is precisely one of the instances where, while both I and van Luijk continue to research the issue, our positions grew closer.

This is not the case, however, for another famous instance of Satanism, the one described by French novelist Joris-Karl Huysmans in his extremely successful 1891 novel *Là-bas*. Here, van Luijk believes that Huysmans and his main informant (or accomplice), French journalist Jules Bois, invented everything and there were no real Satanists in France or Belgium in their time. Perhaps van Luijk is right, and in my 2016 book I do nuance my 1997 statements and agree with him that there is no solid evidence for Black Masses in late 19th-century Paris. On the other hand, I believe that the French occult milieu of the Belle Époque was immensely complicated and we cannot exclude that, among hundreds of movements and sub-movements, there were some who worshiped Satan.

At any rate, these Satan worshipers were not to be found among Freemasons. I and van Luijk agree that the idea that Continental European Freemasons worshiped Satan in their lodges at the end of the 19th century was a pure