

FOR UNLAWFUL CARNAL KNOWLEDGE:
THE SATANIC PANIC IN THE UNITED STATES,
1968-2000

By

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Abstract: This thesis examines the use of new and emerging media by the religious right during the 1970s to spread the ideology and discourse of the Satanic Panic and the anti-rock movement. While other scholars have discussed such media as Satanism survivor narratives, anti-rock texts, and teen television shows produced by conservative Christians, this thesis offers a more in-depth analysis of these products. The goal of this project is to answer three important questions. First, how did the ideology of the Satanic Panic spread? Second, how did the Satanic Panic and anti-rock movement feed (and how was it fed by) anxieties related to integration, changing gender norms, and the War on Drugs? Finally, what role did the Satanic Panic play in the rise (or perhaps reemergence) of the religious right in the 1970s? In order to answer these questions, I analyzed how Satanism survivor testimonies like those of Mike Warnke and Michelle Smith, anti-rock manuscripts that were produced by multiple authors including Jacob Aranza and Bob Larson, and teen centered television shows like *Rock! Its Your Decision*, built a discourse and ideology that was then translated into the mainstream through day time talk shows, allegedly reputable supporters like politicians and psychiatrists, and news sources. I argue that the Satanic Panic played a minor yet important role in the rise of the religious right. Moreover, I conclude that the Satanic Panic has not yet ended and use the contemporary Qanon conspiracies and anxieties over current music such as Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion's "W.A.P." and Lil Nas X's "Montero."

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INTRODUCTION

“PERVERTED ACTIVITIES OF A DEADLY SERIOUS ORGANIZATION”

Fire by Nite was a straight-to-VHS religious clip show (an evangelical *Saturday Night Live*) created by Willie George, the founder of Church on the Move in Tulsa, Oklahoma.¹ In 1988 the show released a two-episode series titled, “Satanism Unmasked.” It began,

The following program is not intended to glamorize, sensationalize or encourage participation in Satanism. Our attempt is to alert the general public as well as the Christian community to its danger in order to put a stop to, or at least curtail the perverted activities of this deadly serious organization. God is pouring out his spirit in these last days, but so is the enemy. We need to be aware.

This disclaimer clarified the production’s ideas and apparent motivations regarding “Satanism.” The word “organization” suggested a large confederation of Satanists were on the attack. These Satanists had a power structure, a mission (maybe even by-laws!). The danger was apparent, Satanists encouraged “perverted activities” and they were colluding with the “enemy.”²

The episode opened with an energetic young pastor, Blaine Bartel, dressed in a fringed denim jacket mimicking teen fashion of the late 1980s. Reinforcing these claims, he insisted that “thousands of teenagers across North America [were] directly involved in Satanism,” he claimed,

¹ Eli Bosnick, Heath Enwright, and Noah Lugeons, “260: Fire by Nite Episode 3,” *God Awful Movies*, podcast audio, August 10, 2020, <https://www.stitcher.com/show/god-awful-movies/episode/260-fire-by-nite-episode-3-76870844>. “Leadership,” *Church on the Move*, Accessed March 30, 2021, <https://churchonthemove.com/about/leadership/>.

² *Fire by Nite*, season 1, episode 23, “Satanism Unmasked,” directed by Stephen Yake, written by Blaine Bartel, Chris Theis, Stephen Yake, John Witty, and Vicci Jo Witty, featuring Blaine Bartel and Mike Warnke, released July 1988, straight-to-vhs Willie George Ministries, 2016, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joQMugWjAfE>.

“whether you believe it or not, it’s true.” A manuscript titled “Pact” with the opening line “my lord and master Satan, I acknowledge you as my God and prince,” flashed on the screen. Bartel continued, “Their involvement [in Satanism] is being accompanied by hideous perverse acts, things like murder, suicide, [and] the ritualistic slaughter of animals and children.” As Bartel said this, a photograph of Richard Ramirez appeared on screen as the camera zoomed in on a pentagram drawn on the serial murderer’s hand, followed by the image of a bare chest with a pentagram carved into the skin, and a hand drawing of two long haired men one hanging from a noose and the other holding a chainsaw in one hand and the sign of the horns on the other. Bartel told the audience that the evidence of his claims could be seen “in our newspapers [and] on our nightly news programs.” Bartel continued to list the evidence of his claims, “you can see the graffiti in your own city, on your own streets.”¹

It is not hard to understand viewers being frightened by these images and Bartel’s assertion that there was an organized group of hedonistic teens roaming around North America spray painting pentagrams on public property and looking for children to kidnap and sacrifice to the devil. In the late 1970s, and throughout the 1980s, a moral panic swept through the United States; as a result, evangelicals who wished to maintain the social, religious, and political order of the United States believed and spread the fear that Satanists, or Devil worshipers, posed a threat to the moral order of the United States and needed to be stopped.² This anxiety penetrated the American psyche all the way up to the nation’s lawmakers. At the same time, the United States was undergoing several social and political changes. Shifting gender roles, changing attitudes surrounding sex, and the pervasive presence of drugs and alcohol in American culture led to conservative anxiety. Moreover, an undercurrent of racism and segregationist sentiment compounded with these anxieties with the fear of racial mixture and integration. The racial

¹ Ibid, 1:50-1:57.

² Ross Haenfler, *Goths, Gamers, & Grrrls: Deviance and Youth Subcultures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 62.

overtones of the Satanic Panic went largely unspoken. Reacting to the progressive movements of the sixties, conservative evangelical Christian anxiety over the degradation of familial patriarchy, sexual purity, and sobriety rose sharply in the 1970s helping facilitate the rise of the Christian Right as a powerful political group. Named the “Moral Majority” by Jerry Falwell, a popular televangelist and political figure, the Christian Right sought to legislate their Judeo-Christian values.³ These ideas compounded with anxieties surrounding integration and race mixing, a rising number of working mothers, the highest divorce rate in American history, the acceptance of abortion, rising teen pregnancy rates, and increasing rates of drug use.⁴ Conservative Christians began to exploit these anxieties by spreading Satanic cult conspiracy theories. In doing so they sought to reinforce what they saw as traditional Judeo-Christian values.

The most extreme Satanic Panic conspiracy theorists, such as Mike Warnke and Bob Larson, believed a worldwide Satanist cabal was hellbent on recruiting young Americans with subliminal messaging in popular music, illicit sex, and drug use. However marginal this belief was, the belief that music had a negative impact on young listeners was widespread and, by the mid-1980s, politically bipartisan. The War on Drugs was a similarly bipartisan issue, as politicians from both major United States parties played key roles in the escalation of anti-drug legislation and mass incarceration. This legislation and judicial overreach disproportionately affected black and brown people.⁵ Indeed, Democrats and Republicans alike participated in the construction of the Satanic Panic and the attempted censorship of rock music.

This thesis examines the anxiety revolving around sex and gender antinomianism, drug use, and supposed Satanism within rock music and the culture around it, which were key elements of the Satanic Panic that occurred in the later decades of the 20th century. I argue that

³ *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, edited by Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2008).

⁴ Jeffrey S. Victor, *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1993) 191.

⁵ See Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2020).

the Satanic Panic played a minor yet important role in a dramatic political and social rightward shift in American politics. While music had always been associated with hedonism, the association of “rock ‘n’ roll” with the New left, free love, hippy, and feminist movements in the 1970s and 1980s helped facilitate a “countersubversion ideology” in which anyone perceived to behave outside of societal norms was equivalent to absolute evil, a Satanist.⁶ Anxiety over race mixing, drug abuse, drug dealers, and changing gender roles and sex norms further increased the idea that a coordinated and global group of Satanists were targeting young people with hypnotic music and lyrics that encouraged drug use and sexual immorality. However, Satanic Panic proponents did not just target music that specifically referenced Satanism and the occult. Proponents of the Satanic Panic, ranging from Bob Larson to Rebecca Brown, had varying ideas of what Satanism was and who Satanists were. Indeed, the discourse of the Satanic Panic was so broad and ill-defined that someone like Lawrence Pazder was simultaneously a proponent of the Panic and a member of a supposedly Satanic Organization, the Catholic church, according to Protestant proponents like Mike Warnke and Rebecca Brown. It is apparent that anything had the potential to be Satanic. Satanic Panic proponent, Jacob Aranza, saw any reference to sex and sexuality, drug use, or the supposed secret messages in Beatles songs and cover art that Aranza claimed were references to the death of Paul McCartney, as Satanic.⁷ Moreover, another proponent, Bob Larson, saw Satanism in all “Eastern” religious practices. Racist and uneducated beliefs that generalized and flattened “African” and “Asian” religions played a prominent role in the Satanic Panic.⁸

⁶ David G. Bromley, “Satanism: The New Cult Scare,” *The Satanism Scare*, edited by James T. Richardson, Joel Best, and David G. Bromley (Hawthorne, NY: Aldine De Gruyter, 1991) 49-50.

⁷ Jacob Aranza, *Backwards Masking Unmasked: Backwards Satanic Messages of Rock and Roll Exposed* (Shreveport, LA: Huntington House, 1980) 5.

⁸ See Bob Larson, *Hippies, Hindus, and Rock & Roll* (McCook, NE: Self Published, 1969). The fear of “Eastern” religious thought is also prevalent in Aranza’s books especially in his criticism of The Beatles *Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) and of Willie Nelson’s belief in resurrection. Jacob Aranza, *More Rock Country and Backward Masking Unmasked* (Shrevepart, LA: Huntington House, 1981) 45.

Historiography

To date, there is no scholarly work that chronicles the Satanic Panic and contextualizes it within the United States' conservative turn and the War on Drugs, while looking specifically at evangelical media productions that spread fear of a Satanism and expressed opposition to popular music. What work has been produced came out of the disciplines of sociology and anthropology in the 1990s as a fear of Satanism and music continued to effect United States law enforcement, legislation, and culture. While sociology and anthropology were able to offer broad interpretations of the Satanic Panic as it happened, a multidisciplinary approach including history and media studies allows for a wider view of the Satanic Panic and how its proponent manipulated new and emerging mediums to spread fear and mobilize voters. As folklorist Bill Ellis argues, the Satanic Panic was dually created between various Occultists and neo-pagans, and mainstream and fringe Christian groups.⁹ This thesis argues more broadly that the Satanic Panic, much like the War on Drugs that it influenced, was, by the mid-1980s, a bipartisan and widespread moral panic that demonstrated a significant amount of flexibility in meaning. The Satanic Panic ranged from anxiety over mostly innocuous music to a full-fledged conspiracy theory that murderous Satanists controlled world governments and were actively corrupting children with sex, drugs, and rock n' roll. Jeffery S. Victor, a sociologist, points out that social anxiety over the rising number of working mothers, integration, the highest divorce rate in American history, the acceptance of abortion, the acceptance of homosexuality, rising teen pregnancy rates, and increasing rates of drug use added fuel to the growing fire that was the rise of the Evangelical Right.¹⁰ This thesis evaluates this claim and reads between the lines finding evidence that these anxieties were encoded into the propaganda produced by the religious right in survivor stories, informational texts decrying popular music, and films produced for teen audiences. These anxieties found their way into the mainstream thanks to the work of Tipper

⁹ Ibid,xix.

¹⁰ Ibid, 191.

Gore and the dissemination of these claims on television talk shows like Geraldo, Sally Jessy Raphael, and The Oprah Winfrey Show. David G. Bromley argues that the Satanism Scare was an example of “countersubversion ideology” which depicts anyone outside of a particular belief system as an absolute evil in an “extreme degree of moral imbalance.”¹¹ I appropriate Bromley’s construct here and apply it to anxiety over drug use and changing gender roles.

This thesis builds on the work of these scholars, whose work focused on the broad examination of the Satanic Panic. It is more focused on discursively analyzing a few materials produced by proponents of the Satanic Panic. This includes an array of materials that have previously only received marginal attention from scholars including: Satanism survivor narratives, informational texts about the dangers of popular music and Satanism, and television shows produced to warn teenagers about the supposed presence of Satanists and dangers of popular music. Proponents of the Satanic Panic used a range of new media forms to amplify and sensationalize their claims, eventually these proponents, and their outlandish claims, found their way onto daytime talk shows, church stages around the United States, and news programs including 20/20. Moreover, this thesis widens the scope of the panic by delving into the history of anxiety over the effects of music beginning in the 17th century and continuing into the 2010’s. I argue that the Satanic Panic that made headlines in the 1980s was part of a long history of anxiety over hedonistic themes in music that manifested into a more widespread and politically impactful moral panic in the 1980s thanks to sensationalized media, the political influence of the religious right, and specific anxieties revolving around sex, gender, race, and drugs coming out of the feminist and civil rights movements, and drug use associated with various groups within the 1960s “counter culture.” I also assert that the panic has yet to come to an end and identify modern anxiety over music and the QANON conspiracy as evidence of this. In many ways, this thesis could be considered an update of previous work, but it also offers specific, in depth, examinations

¹¹ David G. Bromley, “Satanism: The New Cult Scare,” *The Satanism Scare*, edited by James T. Richardson, Joel Best, and David G. Bromley (Hawthorne, NY: Aldine De Gruyter, 1991) 49-50.

of evangelical productions that created and spread the discourse of the Satanic Panic. Even as the evangelical Christians, a group I define broadly as Christians who wish to legislate Judeo-Christian values, worked to spread their message through television, radio, and literature, they also fought a rearguard battle against the what they saw as the degradation of morality and family, including things like integration, drug use, and changing gender and sex norms. This thesis deepens our understanding of this moment by looking at how fringe Christian groups captured the public attention through the use of media beginning with survivor narratives, anti-rock literature, and television shows targeted at teenagers, and transitioning into mainstream television talk shows, news programs, and newspapers.

Beyond the topic of Satanic Panic, this thesis also speaks to two additional fields of historical inquiry. The first concerns the rise of the religious right in the aftermath of the 1960s.¹² As Daniel Williams argues, the religious right did not emerge from nowhere in the 1970's but were active politically throughout the twentieth century. In fact, the religious right played key roles in the temperance movement of the progressive era, the red scare, and in the opposition to integration and Civil Rights.¹³ Although scholars like James L. Guth, Matthew Lassiter, and Seth Dowland argue that the religious right was “new,” or being “invented,” in the late 1960s and early 1970s, this would be more accurately portrayed as a reinvention, or renewal, of the religious

¹² For the rise of the Christian right see James L. Guth, “The New Christian Right,” *The New Christian Right: Mobilization and Legitimation*, ed. Robert Liebman, Robert Wuthnow, and James Guth (Hawthorne, NY: Aldine Pub. Co., 1983); Matthew Moen, *The Christian Right and Congress* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1989); Clyde Wilcox, *Gods Warriors* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1992) and *Onward Christian Soldiers?* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2006); Ruth Murray Brown, *For A “Christian America”* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002); Robert Freedman, “The Religious Right and the Carter Administration,” *The Historical Journal* 48-1 (March 2005); Preston Shires, *Hippies of the Religious Right* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007); Matthew Lassiter, “Inventing Family Values,” *Rightward Bound*, ed. Bruce Schulman and Julien Zelizer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), also in *Rightward Bound*, Joseph Crespino, “Civil Rights and the Religious Right,” Paul Boyer, “The Evangelical Resurgence in the 1970s American Protestantism,” Seth Dowland, “Family Values’ and the Formation of the Christian Right Agenda,” *Church History* 78-3 (Sept. 2009); Kevin Kruse, “Beyond the Southern Cross,” *The Myth of Southern Exceptionalism*, ed. Joseph Crespino and Matthew Lassiter (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Daniel Williams, *Gods Own Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹³ Williams, 2.

right, rather than as a wholly new development.¹⁴ As this thesis contends, their use of new and emerging media to spread their message, would indicate that the “rise” of the religious right in the 1970s was more of an evolution of a preexisting conservative Christianity rather than a new development. By the early 1970s, many white, Christian men and women would prove to be easy enough to mobilize as voters and advocates, as the declining economy, increasing racial integration, increasing number of women in the work force, increasing drug use and increasing acceptance of nonmarital sex, would have been a source of anxiety to white conservative Christians. This thesis offers an examination of some of the new media the religious right began to use to spread anxiety about supposed Satanism among young people and the dangers of popular music.

Further, this thesis engages one of the most important questions in the historiography of the religious right: who made up their ranks? For many the answer is simple: old white male church leaders and politicians like Jerry Falwell Sr., James Dobson, and Ronald Reagan, spearheaded the evangelical movement.¹⁵ However, scholars like Bethany Moreton and Ruth Murray Brown argue that southern white women played a critical role in the United States’ conservative revolution.¹⁶ Conservative white women like Phyllis Schlafly, Rebecca Brown, and Michelle Smith played a key role in both the rise of the religious right and the Satanic Panic as their rhetoric reinforced traditional femininity and worked to undermine the Equal Rights Amendment, the sexual revolution, and the acceptance of abortion, by portraying their feminist enemies as evil women who were against morality and family. From the opposite end of the political spectrum, Tipper Gore hoped to combine feminism with pro-family rhetoric by attacking popular music for its themes related to sex, drug use, misogyny, violence, and the Occult. Thanks

¹⁴ Guth, 12; Lassiter; Dowland.

¹⁵ See Sean Wilentz, *The Age of Reagan* (New York: Harper, 2008); Gil Troy, *Morning in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Guth; Moen; Wilcox; Freedman; Lassiter; Boyer; and Williams.

¹⁶ See Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Walmart* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009) and Brown.

to Tipper Gore and the PMRC, much of the rhetoric of the Satanic Panic that revolved around music influenced the mainstream and a bipartisan moral panic over dangerous themes in popular music became widespread in the mid 1980's.

It was not just old men and women advocating for the religious right and the Satanic Panic. Indeed, Preston Shires points to young former members of the counterculture movements who, by the end of the 1970s, had converted to evangelical Christianity; most prominently featured in his book was folk singer, turned rock star, turned evangelical, Bob Dylan.¹⁷ Many proponents of the Satanic Panic claimed to have this same origin story. Bob Larson claimed to be a rock n' roll guitar player prior to his conversion to evangelical Christianity.¹⁸ Mike Warnke described himself as an ex-hippy and continued to wear long hair and facial hair after his conversion.¹⁹ Jacob Aranza claimed to have become involved in rock music culture and Satanism at an extremely young age and had converted to evangelical Christianity all before his fifteenth birthday.²⁰ Although this thesis does not claim to offer a definitive group biography of the religious right, it shows how women, Tipper Gore, Phyllis Schlafly, Rebecca Brown, and Michelle Smith, and young men, Mike Warnke, Bob Larson, and Jacob Aranza (each of were in their twenties when their first books were published), who championed religious conservatism, spread the discourse of the Satanic Panic, and decried the harmful effects of rock music throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Since the mid-twentieth century, scholars in a variety of fields have examined the relationship between race, politics, and popular music. Much of this scholarship has focused on the ways in which popular music (especially rock and roll, blues, and jazz) fed into racist myths of black sensuality and danger.²¹ Scholars like Karl Hagstrom Miller and Eric Lott have offered interpretations of what

¹⁷ Shires, 8.

¹⁸ Larson, *Rock & Roll*, 3.

¹⁹ Mike Warnke, *The Satan-Seller* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1972).

²⁰ Aranza, back cover.

²¹ For more on how music was segregated, and the construction of the blues and Jazz as Black music see Connie Allen Tipton, "Who's Afraid of the Jazz Monster?: For Many Americans Jazz was the Music of Demons, Devils, and Things that go Bump in the Night," *History Today* 69, (October 2019),

rock n' roll appropriation of "black music" meant.²² Lott argues that white rock musicians who emulated "black music," marked a "detachment of culture from race and the almost full absorption of black tradition into white culture."²³ Miller challenges this argument, insisting that this emulation "illustrates the extent to which imitating black performance remained a constituent component of white identity."²⁴ But these arguments fail to take into account the backlash to rock music that helped spark a moral panic over Satanism. The fear over the corruption of western culture prevalent in the works of Bob Larson and Jacob Aranza highlights the fact that culture was in no way detached from race. Moreover, it is clear that the immersion of black tradition into white culture was being heavily contested by the religious right. Miller's argument perhaps more accurately assesses the phenomenon of rock n' roll, but each of these arguments suffers from singularity in their use of "white culture." The notion of a single "white culture" is inadequate in a study of music history. This thesis instead offers an examination of dueling white popular cultures, one which emulates black cultures, at least black cultures as they understood it, and another that expressed anxiety and hate at what they saw as the corruption of "white culture," through its supposed absorption of black traditions. I further add to this scholarship by showing how the religious right both fed (and was fed by) this fear, through the Satanic Panic and the anti-rock movement.

In addition to the engagements already outlined, chapters three and four also engage with scholarly conversations on gender in rock music and the War on Drugs. Scholars like Simon Reynold, Joy Press, and Marion Leonard have examined how rock music was gendered male and found that women played crucial, yet all too often ignored, roles in the contestation, negotiation,

<https://www.historytoday.com/history-matters/whos-afraid-jazz-onsters>; Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010) and Benjamin Filene, *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

²² Miller, 2-3; Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) 16.

²³ Lott, 16.

²⁴ Miller, 11.

and renegotiation of gender, femininity, and sexuality within rock music culture.²⁵ They also offered explanations for why female musicians, like Janis Joplin, Patti Smith, and Debbie Harry, were often, if acknowledged at all, looked at with more disdain than their male counter parts. As Reynolds and Press point out this is due to the construction of masculinity and Joplin, Smith, and Harry's, supposed subversion of dominant femininity. Men "could draw on a tradition of adventurism: from the myth of the Prodigal Son to the idea that 'boys will be boys,' bad behaviour is, if not exactly sanctioned, seen as a logical extension of masculinity."²⁶ This is a telling point, considering that anti-rock activists, especially Jacob Aranza, were especially offended by gender transgressions by female artists like Janis Joplin because of her drug use and sexual promiscuity, Patti Smith because of her androgynous persona. and Debbie Harry because of her open sexuality. Chapter three of this thesis makes a more explicit connection between the Satanic Panic and backlash to gender transgressions in rock music culture, than previous scholars studying gender in rock music. Female rock musicians did not only have the misogyny of rock culture to contend with, they also battled external voices from the religious right, and eventually the mainstream, who characterized them as immoral, hypersexual, and satanic.

Chapter four engages with scholarship on the anxiety and legal actions that manifested the War on Drugs, and examines how the religious right exploited growing fear of drug use, and drug users, to spread the message of the anti-rock movement and the ideology of the Satanic Panic. Several scholars, including Michelle Alexander, traced the development of an anti-drug discourse that demonized drug users and constructed them as dangerous disruptors of society and the status quo. Alexander argues that the War on Drugs was an evolution of Jim Crow laws in its effort to legislate and lock up black people and strip them of constitutional rights.²⁷ In so doing,

²⁵ Simon Reynold and Joy Press, *The Sex Revolts, Gender, Rebellion, and Rock 'n' Roll* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); Marion Leonard, *Gender in the Music Industry: Rock, Discourse and Girl Powe* (Aldershot, ENG: Ashgate Publishing, 2007).

²⁶ Reynold and Press, 272.

²⁷ Alexander, 1-2.

the media constructed an increasingly negative view of drug users that was racialized and politicized.²⁸ This construction included the white “hippies” of the anti-Vietnam war movement who were growingly associated with drug use and rock music.²⁹ I contend that a major part of this mediatization of the War on Drugs manifested in anti-rock propaganda and Satanic Panic conspiracy theory espoused by some members of the religious right.

Approach

Popular cultures are difficult constructs to define. I use the plural form here because it implies there may exist more than one popular culture, I would certainly define both rock music culture and the evangelical right as popular yet divergent cultures. Each defined themselves in opposition to the mainstream despite having a large base of followers and fans, and powerful allies and enemies. Seventies rock band, Led Zeppelin alone has sold over three-hundred million albums worldwide.³⁰ Metal band AC/DC has sold over two-hundred million.³¹ Moreover, pop star, and satanic sex symbol (according to Jacob Aranza), Olivia Newton-John, has sold over one-hundred million albums.³² As far as the religious right goes, the percentage of Americans who identified as protestant hovered around 60 percent in the 1970s and then dipped slightly in the 1980s to around 57%.³³ On the other hand, the percentage of Americans identifying as republicans increased slightly through the 1970s from around 25% in 1968 to 32% in 1985.³⁴ While Christianity as a whole remained a steady segment of society the subset of evangelical

²⁸ Ibid, 6; Also Dan Baum, *Smoke and Mirrors: the War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1996) 7.

²⁹ Baum, 7.

³⁰ Mark Beech, “Led Zeppelin Adds to 300 Million Sales with Live Album, 50th Anniversary Surprises,” *Forbes*, January 27, 2018, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/markbeech/2018/01/27/led-zeppelin-adds-to-300-million-sales-with-live-album-50th-anniversary-surprises/?sh=666570dcca59>.

³¹ Ben Sisario, “AC/DC Debuts at No. 1, Powered by CD sales,” *NYTimes*, November 23, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/23/arts/music/ac-dc-power-up-billboard-chart.html>.

³² Jem Aswad, “Olivia Newton-John Strikes Partnership with Primary Wave Publishing,” *Variety.com*, October 30, 2020, <https://variety.com/2020/music/news/olivia-newton-john-primary-wave-publishing-1234820181/>; Aranza, *Backwards Masking*, 30.

³³ This is according to a Gallup poll on American religion overtime. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1690/religion.aspx>.

³⁴ “Trends in Party Identification, 1939- 2014,” *Pew Research Center*, April 7, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/interactives/party-id-trend/>.

Christianity was increasing substantially. Between 1972 and 1992, the percentage of Americans who identified as evangelicals nearly doubled from 17% to 30%.³⁵ So both rock n' roll and Christianity were certainly popular in that both had large followings of fans and followers. Of course, not all Christians would consider themselves evangelicals, nor would all of them have been conservative. Popular culture, as it is used here, means a single, or group of, communal space[s] where social constructs are defined, contested, and redefined.³⁶ As these constructs are defined and contested, the culture in question will reach an equilibrium. From this equilibrium, these constructs are reinforced by "intellectual and moral leaders" who "seek to win the consent of the subordinate groups in society."³⁷

Evangelicals do not see popular culture as conflicted, however. They see it as an engine of "mass deception," designed to dupe people into sin and Satanism. In that sense, they seem to agree with leftists critics, like Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, who viewed mass culture as mass deception that, created a passive consumer populace and replicated dominant ideology to quell opposition.³⁸ It seems that the evangelical right inadvertently appropriated this idea to argue the opposite, that mass culture created challenges to the status quo and fundamentalist perceptions of traditional American and family values.

Can rock music be considered rebellion? To evangelicals it certainly was. It and other secular media were the cause of teenage rebellion and the subversion of the "order of Western societies."³⁹ According to the many anti-rock authors, politicians, and social critics, not only did

³⁵ Aaron Earls, "The Growth of Evangelicals and Decline of Mainline Protestants," *Lifeway Research*, May 19, 2015, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2015/05/19/the-growth-of-evangelicals-and-decline-of-mainline-protestants/>.

³⁶ Of course, there are other ways to define popular culture see John Storey, "What is Popular Culture?" in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (London: Pearson/ Prentice Hall, 2001) 5-14.

³⁷ Storey, 10; see also Antonio Gramsci, "Hegemony, Intellectuals, and the State," in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, 2nd edn, edited by John Storey (London: Prentice Hall, 1998) 221.

³⁸ Theodor Adorno, "Culture Industry Reconsidered," *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991).

³⁹ Bob Larson, *Hippies, Hindus, and Rock & Roll* (McCook, NE: Self Published, 1969), 9. See Also: *Rock & Roll: The Devil's Diversion* (McCook, NE: Self Published 1967); *Rock and The Church* (Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1971); *The Day Music Died* (Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1972); *Rock: Practical Help for Those Who Listen to the Words and Don't Like What They Hear*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House

rock musicians encode their songs with satanic messages with the intent to inspire listeners to commit atrocious acts of violence in the name of Satan, but they also asserted that young listeners were unable to dismiss these messages. Early cultural scholars ignored the audience or constructed them as passive readers of dominant discourse in the cultural products they consume. Of course, this is an overly simplistic view of how people consume cultural commodities.⁴⁰ Another interesting element of this history is the fact that both rock and roll culture and evangelical Christianity defined themselves in opposition to mass culture despite rock's giant fan base and the evangelical's inroads into the American government. As will also be seen rock musicians, like Jello Biafra, and anti-rock activists each accused the other side of attempting to corrupt American mainstream culture.

This thesis is largely focused on the examination of popular culture, for multiple reasons. First, popular culture was the primary source of the anxiety leading to the Satanic Panic; therefore, it only makes sense to give it the bulk of my attention. Second, my work is influenced by media studies scholars and cultural historians who argue that culture plays a key role in the process of nation building. More specifically, that citizens within a culturally defined nation, learn how to behave and interact with others within that culture through cultural productions and reproductions.⁴¹ One implication of this thesis is that cultures evolve over time, and, as they evolve, there occurs a marked period of generational conflict. While this thesis focuses on one period of conflict, that revolving around rock 'n' roll music and Satanism in the 1970s and 1980s,

Publishers, Inc., 1980); *Larson's Book of Rock* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1980); *Satanism: The Seduction of America's Youth* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989); Also Jacob Aranza, *Backwards Masking Unmasked* (Shreveport, LA: Huntington House, 1983) And; *More Rock, Country and Backward Making Unmasked* (Shreveport, LA: Huntington House, 1985); As well as a number of other books by Anti-Rock critics.

⁴⁰See Stuart Hall, "Encoding, decoding," *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (London: Routledge, 1993), 102- 104.

⁴¹ See Michel Foucault, "Method," *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*. edited by John Storey (New York: Routledge, 2019). 414-15. And David Halperin, "The Queer Politics of Michel Foucault," *Anarchist Without Content*, Accessed on March 1, 2020, <https://anarchistwithoutcontent.wordpress.com/2011/09/29/the-queer-politics-of-michel-foucault/>.

it also hints at the fact that American cultures are evolving constantly, and this evolution is a source of constant conflict.

Much of this project is focused on the analysis of music and the works of anti-rock activists and writers like Bob Larson, Jacob Aranza, and Frank Garlock. However, this thesis will stray into other territory as well, including discussions of Satanic Panic narratives, such as Mike Warnke's *The Satan Seller*. Warnke and his claims appear throughout this work. I chose to include these narratives because, in spite of their unbelievable claims, they spoke to the real anxieties held by the evangelical Right and became extremely popular "true" accounts of Satanism.

Ultimately, this approach does three things in particular. First, it shows that the Satanic Panic was the result of long held anxieties surrounding popular music that boiled over when combined with evangelical political power, anxiety over racial integration and feminism, and youth culture. Second, it contextualizes the Satanic Panic in the context of the War on Drugs and the pro-family movement; it argues that to many anti-rock activists, music was as dangerous as drug use and sexual promiscuity. Finally, it shows how the Satanic Panic helped strengthen the evangelical right through the exploitation of pre-existing anxieties by creating enemies out of anyone not associated with the church.

Troubling Terminology

It is important to define a few of the terms that will be used. First, when these authors, and any other proponent of the Satanic Panic, refer to Satanists, they are referring to a variety of groups other than what an outside observer might consider a Devil worshiper. To them Satanists included anyone associated with occult activity whether or not those people actually claimed to worship Satan. People who practiced witchcraft were included in this, as well as, wiccans and neopagans. Proponents of the Panic saw non-western religions as being satanic, especially what they referred to as "African" religions. They lumped in Catholics (especially Jesuits), Jews, Muslims, homosexuals, radical feminists, free masons, or other groups. Indeed, these proponents

constructed Satanism so vaguely and flexibly that anything could be considered satanic. Some believed these groups were not just individual fringe cults of Satanists either, proponents of this idea believed that Satanists, Occultists, Pagans, and, in some cases, Catholics, Jews, and homosexuals, among others, were working together in a hierarchical cult organization controlled by Satan himself.⁴²

The Satanic Panic was not exclusive to one group or denomination of Christians, often Satanic Panic proponents would accuse other denominations of Christianity for participating in Satanism, the most common accused denomination was Catholicism. Despite this even Catholics, such as Lawrence Pazder, participated in the spread of the Satanic Panic.⁴³ As a result of the wide scope of conservative religious voters and Satanic Panic proponents it is difficult to pin down a single definition for what and who constitutes the religious right. In this thesis the religious right refers generally to those who voted based on religious convictions rather than for economic or political ones (although these three are not mutually exclusive). Moreover, these voters hoped to legislate those religious values. Leaders of the religious right exploited the anxieties of these voters, those revolving around sex, gender norms, integration, and drug use, to encourage them to vote for conservative politicians whether they were religious or not.

To offer a full scope of the fears these proponents saw in popular music, I am using the broad, inconsistent, and ill-defined notion of “rock” music as defined by Satanic Panic proponents. What they refer to as rock music, would be more accurately described as “popular music.” Anti-rock activists would sometimes go as far as labeling bands like heavy metal’s AC/DC and Disco groups like Captain and Tennille within the same overarching category. While anti-rock activists did not limit their critiques to the rock genre and rock culture, it is important to note that rock ‘n’ roll was constructed as white and masculine by male rock musicians, critics,

⁴² Bromley, 50-51.

⁴³ Michelle Smith and Lawrence Pazder, *Michelle Remembers* (New York: Congdon & Lattes, Inc., 1980).

and fans. This construction was developed in the mid-to-late 1950s as artists like Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and the Beach Boys began to appropriate the sound of black blues and rock and roll musicians like Big Mama Thornton and Chuck Berry. Rock 'n' roll evolved out of the blues genre, which was associated with black musicians and danger. White rock musicians in the second half of the twentieth century appropriated both the sound of the blues and the danger that was associated with it. Chapter three also theorizes that rock 'n' roll was coded male because of how society coded white femininity. While women in the rock 'n' roll scene challenged patriarchy and dominant femininity, the femininity produced in rock cultures ultimately continued to rely on male dominance and a binary that was almost identical to the evangelical construction of femininity.

Just what the Satanic Panic was, or perhaps is, is a difficult thing to define. I am intentionally vague and broad in how I use the term. While many anti-rock activists, particularly Tipper Gore, never publicly expressed belief in a conspiracy of Satan worshiping global elite, they still advanced much of the same rhetoric used by Bob Larson, Jacob Aranza, and others who believed that rock music was a key tool of Satanists to recruit young people into their ranks.

Significance

The Satanic Panic played a key role in the United States' dramatic shift to the right during the 1970s and 1980s. Understanding how the Satanic Panic began to influence how Americans understood the world around them, is key to understanding the power and influence that the evangelical right gained in the final decades of the twentieth century. Studying the Satanic Panic in regards to its opposition to and production of media shows the complexity of cultural products. Cultural commodities do not always regurgitate ideology. Both evangelical and rock n' roll subcultures defined themselves in opposition to mainstream culture and attacked each other as the purveyors of dominant discourse. The rise of the religious right, and the conservative turn in general, cannot be fully understood without an examination of the cultural conditions that

resulted in the Satanic Panic. The reemergence of evangelicals as a political force in the 1970s was a direct result of the anxiety growing in response to the new left.

Conspiracy theories were not new in the United States during the late 20th century. Indeed, even in the late 18th century just as the United States began to grapple with running a new nation, conspiracy theorist began to fear that Free-Masons were actively seeking to undermine Christian values and United States sovereignty.⁴⁴ This conspiracy is older than the United States itself and it continues to be renewed even today in the form of the Q-Anon conspiracy which played a key role in the election and presidency of Donald Trump.

Warning: This thesis contains graphic examples of racism, sexism, sexual assault, child abuse, murder, and drug use. Chapter two is especially disturbing as the authors of the satanic cult narratives used violence and horror to shock readers and exploit their fears growing around the sexual revolution, integration, and changing gender roles.

⁴⁴ Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics," *Harper's Magazine*, November 1964, 2.

CHAPTER I

SEX & DRUGS & ROCK & ROLL

“I knew a girl named Nikki, guess you could say she was a sex fiend...” An anxious young mother sat silently listening to her prepubescent daughter’s new album. “I met her in a hotel lobby masturbating with a magazine.”¹ The embarrassed future Second Lady of the United States, Tipper Gore, made a beeline to turn off her eleven-year-old daughter’s stereo. Mrs. Gore had purchased one of the most successful albums of 1984, Prince’s *Purple Rain*, as a gift for her daughter. She later lamented the experience of listening to Prince’s “vulgar lyrics.” “I was stunned,” she said, “but then I got mad! Millions of Americans were buying *Purple Rain* with no idea what to expect.”² This experience ignited a crusade against sexual, violent, and rebellious themes and lyrics in music and led to the creation of the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) and the use of “parental advisory” labels on albums considered inappropriate or dangerous to young listeners. To Tipper Gore, and several anti-rock activists of the late twentieth century, music had played a key role in the moral decline of the United States of America. For many it seemed as if the noise pollution of contemporary music was more dangerous than ever before. They believed contemporary music had adverse effects on young listeners causing them to

¹ Prince and the Revolution, “Darling Nikki,” recorded in 1983, Warner Bros., track 5 on *Purple Rain*, released in 1984, Spotify.

² Ken Paulson, “Prince Gave us the ‘parental advisory’ label: Column,” *USA Today*, 25 April 2016, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2016/04/25/prince-purple-rain-darling-nikki-censorship-lyrics-tipper-gore-column/83466774/>.

behave irrationally, immorally, illegally, and disrespectfully. Music seemed to be the primary cause of generational conflict.

These concerns were especially erroneous when you consider that music has been associated with hedonism, and even the devil, for centuries. Even in the United States the precursors of rock and roll, jazz and the blues, were listened to with a suspicious ear. Jazz, and to a slightly lesser extent the blues, were disparaged as satanic and immoral music. Unlike rock and roll by the 1980s, Blues, Jazz, and even early rock music was coded as ‘black music.’ Much of the Jazz panic early in the 20th century revolved around the presence of young white listeners, especially females, in Jazz soaked speakeasies. In other words, the Satanic Panic and anxiety over the music young white people listened to was not new in the 1970s and 1980s, rather it was a continuation of centuries-long concerns.

This chapter examines the trends and the environment that contributed to the Satanic Panic. It looks first at the long history of music’s association with hedonism and debauchery including drug use and sex. It then delves into the rise of the new right from the election of Richard Nixon to the Reagan Revolution and how evangelicalism helped usher in an era of anxiety over the effects of youth culture. Music’s association with hedonism compounded with rock n’ roll’s origins in Jazz and the Blues to heighten anxiety over the spread of African-American culture into white America. This anxiety, the fear of homicidal Satanist cults and the growing influence of the evangelical right, combined helped create the Satanic Panic.

The Jazz Panic

Decades before AC/DC and Whitesnake released their celebrations of drugs and women the United States had a similar episode in which citizens questioned the morality of American youth, their lifestyles, and their choice in music. In the 1920s, during Prohibition, Jazz became a wildly popular form of music among America’s young people. Heard in the seedy underground speakeasies that worked to combat the United States’ liquor ban, Jazz became associated with

“insanity, drug addiction, chaos, the primitive and bestial, criminality, infectious disease, the infantile, the supernatural and the diabolical.”¹

These associations caused a great deal of anxiety that Jazz in turn would filter into the minds of young listeners and cause them to become insane, drug addicted, primitive, criminals, riddled with disease and evil intentions. For example, liberated women who participated in Jazz culture were seen as dangerous and were referred to as “Vampires,” or “Vamps.” Even more than the female participants in Jazz culture, the musicians were especially demonized, most often in racialized and primitivized terms linking the music and its creators to a state of regressive humanity originating in the “African Jungle” that was making listeners devolve “back to all fours.”²

To be sure, even before Jazz became a symbol of illegal alcohol consumption and underground racial mixture, black Americans, and especially musicians, were vilified as drug addicted dangers and challengers to the status quo. A 1911 *New York Times* article titled “Uncle Sam is the Worst Drug Fiend in the World,” decried the use of cocaine by southern black male laborers and suggested that the prevalence of the drug “corrupted” young white women and led to their involvement in prostitution and “the white slave traffic.”³ This association with blackness, drug abuse, and the corruption of young white women would be translated into widespread anxiety when prohibition led to a greater level of race mixing and the rise in Jazz music’s popularity among white youths. White Americans feared their children would be corrupted by black culture and worse that blackness and black culture would invade and influence white America culturally, politically, and socially.

¹ Connie Allen Tipton, “Who’s Afraid of the Jazz Monster?: For Many Americans Jazz was the Music of Demons, Devils, and Things that go Bump in the Night,” *History Today* 69 (October 2019) <https://www.historytoday.com/history-matters/whos-afraid-jazz-onsters>

² Ibid

³ Edward Marshall, “Uncle Sam is the Worst Drug Fiend in the World,” *New York Times*, 12 March 1911, 64.

One musician who was demonized for her use of drugs, and as part of backlash for her anti-lynching song “Strange Fruit,” was Billie Holiday. Following the release of “Strange Fruit” in 1939, a man named Harry Anslinger, the head of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, declared war on the singer whom he named “public enemy #1.” Anslinger was a vitriolic racist who helped construct a racialized understanding of the dangers of drug use, especially among jazz musicians. One journalist, Johann Hari, compared Anslinger’s understanding of jazz to “musical anarchy.” To Anslinger, jazz was “evidence of a recurrence of the primitive impulses that lurk in black people, waiting to emerge.” He feared that “indecent rites” were “resurrected” in “black man’s music.”⁴ He decried that the lifestyles of jazz musicians “reek[ed] of filth.” Especially concerning for Anslinger and the agents of the Bureau of Narcotics was the use of Marijuana among jazz musicians. From its onset efforts to impede the spread and use of drugs in the United States focused on racist depictions of African American’s as drug users and the imprisonment of black people.

After attempts to arrest major stars of the jazz scene failed due to solidarity amongst musicians and congressional impatience, Anslinger began to search for an easier target. He found that target in Billie Holiday. Angry over Holiday’s powerful rebuke of lynching and the racism that allowed those lynchings to persist, Anslinger assigned an agent to track and arrest her. Following an interview with Holiday’s abusive manager, boyfriend, and pimp, Louis McKay, Anslinger was able to arrest one of the best jazz singers of her era. After several more arrests, Holiday was hospitalized for alcohol related heart and liver failure. Despite the fact that she lay dying, narcotics agents hand cuffed the emaciated forty-four-year-old to her hospital bed.⁵

⁴ Johann Hari, “The Hunting of Billie Holiday: How Lady Day was in the middle of a Federal Bureau of Narcotics Fight for Survival,” *Politico Magazine*, 17 January 2015, Accessed 8 December 2020, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/01/drug-war-the-hunting-of-billie-holiday-114298>

⁵ Ibid

Holiday's status as a "low-class," black woman in the 1950s made her an easy target for Harry Anslinger and the Bureau of Narcotics.⁶ She was exploited by her own manager and did not receive the same sympathy and solidarity that male jazz performers received when they were targeted by Narcotics agents. The association of blackness with drug use that Anslinger helped proliferate would influence decades of drug law, propaganda, and mass incarceration. On the music side, the first rock and roll songs were beginning to emerge throughout the 1950s. Jazz, to a lesser extent relative to the Blues, undoubtedly had an effect on early rock records like Jackie Brenston's "Rocket 88." But the perception of Jazz as "black music" had an even more pronounced effect on the anxiety revolving around racial mixture, and rock 'n' roll became a symbol of that racial mixture. The origins of rock 'n' roll in "black music" were recounted in the lyrics of AC/DC's "Let there Be Rock,"

The white man had the schmaltz
The black man had the blues
No one knew what they was gonna do
But Tschaikovsky had the news⁷

AC/DC's celebration of rock 'n' roll as a medium for integration speaks to the fact that a large part of the anxiety that compelled the evangelical right to despise rock music in the 1970s and 1980s was its origins in the blues and the idea that the music itself represented racial and cultural integration. Even more telling is Bob Larson's emphasis on rock music's relationship to "Eastern religious thought" and his insistence that rock culture intended to "subvert the order of western societies."⁸

Forming the Devil's music

This anxiety over rock music's origins is even more clear in looking at Blues music, which was not only a direct predecessor to rock but also, carried its own associations with the

⁶ Ibid

⁷ AC/DC, "Let There Be Rock," by Angus Young, Bon Scott, and Malcolm Young, released March 21, 1977, track 3 on *Let There Be Rock*, Columbia, Spotify.

⁸ Bob Larson, "Larson's Book of Rock" and "Hippies, Hindus, and Rock & Roll," 9.

occult. Despite rock music's association with white masculinity, "rock 'n' roll was bred between the church and the nightclubs in the soul of a queer black woman in the 1940s named Sister Rosetta Tharpe."⁹ Tharpe invented rock and Roll's sound years before white artists like Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis popularized the genre among middle class white Americans. She was a heavy influence on rock guitar players like Bob Dylan, Slash, Neal Young, Jimmy Page, Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix, Keith Richards, Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and Eddie Van Halen. "All of these people acknowledge Sister Rosetta Tharpe as the godmother of rock 'n' roll."¹⁰ Call it theft, appropriation, reimagining, or reinterpreting, rock and roll was born from earlier blues and gospel records from artists like Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Muddy Waters, Lead Belly, and Robert Johnson.

Rock musicians did not just appropriate the sound of the blues. They also capitalized on the danger associated with blues musicians.¹¹ The blues and bluesmen were associated with danger as a result of its origins in southern prisons, the association between blues and vagrancy, and most importantly the association of blues with black men. The most notable example of the supposed danger that black bluesmen represented is the mythology of Robert Johnson. According to one popular myth about Johnson's life, he was once a failed musician and average guitar player. That all changed one day when, according to the myth, he met the devil at a dark crossroads one night and sold his soul for musical talent.¹² Some of his songs like "Crossroads Blues" and "Hellhound on My Trail," were seen as evidence of this dark transaction.¹³ Obviously,

⁹ Jessica Diaz-Hurtado, "Forebears: Sister Rosetta Tharpe, The Godmother of Rock 'N' Roll," *NPR Music*, 24 August 2017, Accessed 8 December 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2017/08/24/544226085/forebears-sister-rosetta-tharpe-the-godmother-of-rock-n-roll>.

¹⁰ Douglas Miller, "US History Through Popular and Unpopular Music" Lecture on the Birth of Rock 'n' Roll, 21 October 2020.

¹¹ For more on the association between blues music and danger see Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010) and Benjamin Filene, *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

¹² Joel Rose, "Robert Johnson at 100, Still Dispelling Myths," *NPR Music*, 6 May 2011, Accessed online, 9 December 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2011/05/07/136063911/robert-johnson-at-100-still-dispelling-myths>.

¹³ "The 27 Club: A Brief History from Robert Johnson to Anton Yelchin, 20 stars who died at 27," *Rollingstone*, 8 December 2019, Accessed online, 9 December 2020,

this is a racist construction of Robert Johnson and his talent. This myth assumes that black musicians like Robert Johnson were unable or unwilling to learn and understand music and had to literally sell their soul to become famous.

White musicians had the ability to white wash the danger associated with the blues and make it consumable to white youths. While this appropriation was present in the image of early rockers like Elvis Presley, rock 'n' roll and rock musicians would continue to push the boundaries of what was acceptable on stage. Influenced by Robert Johnson's story and the violence and unrest that defined the 1960's, white rock musicians would develop a more dangerous persona and more controversial themes, including drug use, sex, and violence. As rock 'n' roll grew in popularity through the 1960s it began to reflect and inspire the rising tide of left-leaning movements that sought to uproot the United States racial, sexual, and familial systems.

Wine, Woman, and Song

Sex and the use of mind-altering substances have been themes in Anglo-American music for centuries. The lyrics "*who loves not wine, woman, and song/ Remains a fool his whole life long*" were first recorded as part of a German folk song in 1602.¹⁴ Johann Strauss II, with his spectacular facial hair, composed a waltz titled *Wein, Weib, und Gesang* in 1869 creating a hendiatriis out of the popular German phrase.¹⁵ By 1884 the phrase had been translated into English. Poet John Addington Symonds used "Wine, Women, and Song" as the title of his anthology of songs by Medieval students.¹⁶ These examples of hedonism in western music are only a small part of a long history of the association of music with sexual promiscuity and intoxication.

https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-lists/the-27-club-a-brief-history-17853/robert-johnson-26971/?sub_action=logged_in

¹⁴ *The Yale Book of Quotations*, Ed. Fred R. Shapiro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 477-478.

¹⁵ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Johann Strauss II: Austrian Composer," Accessed 20 November 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Johann-Strauss-II>

¹⁶ John Addington Symonds, *Wine, Women, and Song: Medieval Latin Students' Songs* (London: Chatto and Windus, Piccadilly, 1884).

That relationship took on a whole new meaning in the 1910s. In 1909, the infamous occultist, Aleister Crowley, began publishing his beliefs in a periodical titled *The Equinox*. In one early article titled “Energizing Enthusiasm: A Note on Theurgy” Crowley insisted that according to “the Greeks” three methods could be used to “discharge the Leyden jar of genius.” These methods were associated with three gods “Dionysus, Apollo, [and] Aphrodite.” He claims that in English these three become “wine, women, and song.” He goes on to explain that:

Music has two parts; tone or pitch, and rhythm. The latter quality associates it with the dance, and that part of dancing which is not rhythm is sex. Now that part of sex which is not a form of the dance, animal movement, is intoxication of the soul, which connects it with wine.

Crowley is arguing here that music is a way for human beings to stimulate their animal instincts of sex and intoxication all at once. Crowley is not trying to criticize music and listeners; he is encouraging the celebration of human desires. In fact, Crowley is highly critical of “Protestants,” and others who feared the hedonistic tendencies in music, who believe that “all things sacred are profane.” More pointedly he bemoans Protestantism as the “excrement of human thought.” Finally, one of his most interesting assertions is that “in Protestant countries art, if it exists at all, only exists to revolt.”¹⁷ This is a stirring claim almost sixty years before the Satanic Panic in the United States. Especially considering that Aleister Crowley would become a powerful symbol referenced in the songs, album art, and lifestyles by bands like The Beatles, Black Sabbath, and Led Zeppelin. These references were in turn used as evidence of these bands nefarious intentions by anti-rock authors like Jacob Aranza.¹⁸ The point here is that for almost as long as hedonism has been associated with music, there has been fear, loathing, and censorship of that music. But this is not the end of the phrase “Wine, Women, and Song,” this association would make its way to the United States where it would influence how music developed, how it was received, and how it was perceived and censored.

¹⁷Aleister Crowley, “Energizing Enthusiasm: A Note on Theurgy,” *The Equinox* Vol. 1, No. IX (London: Weiland & Co., 1913) 22-23, <http://the-equinox.org/vol1/no9/eqi09005.html>.

¹⁸ Aranza, *Backwards Masking*, 10-16.

In 1976 a band that would become one of the greatest villains of the anti-rock Music campaign, AC/DC, released their first album *High Voltage*. The titular song is a loud repetitive answer to criticism of their music. Why do I dress this way? Why is my hair so long? Because of “high voltage rock ‘n’ roll,” the song answers.¹⁹ The song is a proud celebration of the band’s self-destructive lifestyle. One of the final lines of the outro is “wine women and song (high voltage).”²⁰ These belligerent lyrics were accompanied by repetitive guitar riffs and Bon Scott’s signature high pitched, raspy vocals. AC/DC made a career out of being contrarian and controversial. Leading to the group being admonished throughout the United States and even barred from performing in certain towns such as Springfield, Illinois.²¹ But AC/DC was far from the only rock band to co-opt the Wine, Women, and Song hendiatrix.

Another metal band, Whitesnake, released a song titled “Wine, Women, An’ Song” on their 1981 album *Come An’ Get It*. Whitesnake trades AC/DC’s audible belligerence for in your face lyrics and a more bluesy sound. However, the celebration of hedonistic behavior was similar:

I will raise my glass,
An' if you don't like it
Then, baby, you can kiss my ass!
You can tell me it's wrong,
But, I love wine, women an' song²²

Whitesnake’s confrontational celebration of hedonism can be seen as a continuation of a long history of music’s association with sex and alcohol. Moreover, the song’s confrontational nature speaks to the rising amount of criticism and suspicion that was being placed on rock musicians and fans.

¹⁹ AC/DC, “High Voltage,” by Angus Young, Bon Scott, and Malcolm Young, recorded June 23, 1975, track 9 on *High Voltage*, Columbia, Spotify.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Dennis Hunt, “Can’t People Take a Joke,” *LA Times*, October 13, 1985, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1985-10-13-ca-15549-story.html>

²² Whitesnake, “Wine, Women An’ Song,” by Bernard John Marsden, David Coverdale, Ian Anderson Paice, Jon Lord, Michael Joseph Moody, and Philip Neil Murray, released in 1981, track 5 on *Come An’ Get It*, Mirage Records, Spotify.

In fact, in 1969 the hendiatis was updated by *Time* magazine when they claimed that “the counter culture has its sacraments in sex, drugs, and rock.”²³ This condemnation of the counter culture’s hedonistic activities was later appropriated and popularized by the rock band Ian Dury and the Blockheads in “Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll.”²⁴ Not quite the celebration of hedonism seen in Whitesnake and AC/DC’s songs, “Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll” is a lyrically nonsensical satire of the rock and roll lifestyle. The refrain for example exclaims that:

Sex and drugs and rock and roll
Is all my brain and body need
Sex and drugs and rock and roll
Are very good indeed²⁵

Other verses satirize the rock and roll lifestyle in an unclear and mind-numbing way that perhaps mimics the whirlwind of participating in rock culture:

Keep your silly ways or throw them out the window
The wisdom of your ways, I've been there and I know
Lots of other ways, what a jolly bad show
If all you ever do is business you don't like²⁶

Dury’s satirical lyrics seem to suggest that the song is more than just the celebration of sex and drugs that it seems on the surface. Nevertheless the “Sex, Drugs, and Rock n’ Roll” hendiatis became a popular understanding of rock n’ roll Culture.

The rise of widespread anxiety over hedonism in rock and roll that defined its antagonism with United States religious and political cultures in the 1970s and 80s often asserted that rock music was a marked departure from American traditional values and music because of its

²³ Edward Kern, “Can it Happen Here?: The Answer is that a Form of Revolution is Already Upon us – But not the Kind the Everyone is Worried About,” *Time Magazine*, 17 October 1969, 77.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=JFAEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA80-IA3&lpg=PA80-IA3&dq=%22The+counter+culture+has+its+sacraments+in+sex,+drugs+and+rock.%22&source=bl&ots=jj iTuQOTWd&sig=XZsD785Lzxndxno5-2fRWWhQwJhc&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjTI7KH8-nLAhUNyWMKHQyUBLYQ6AEIHTAA#v=onepage&q=%22The%20counter%20culture%20has%20its%20sacraments%20in%20sex%20and%20rock.%22&f=false>

²⁴ George McKay, “‘Crippled with nerves’: popular music and polio, with particular reference to Ian Dury,” *Popular Music* 28, (2009): 351- 355,

file:///C:/Users/Josh/Downloads/Crippled_with_Nerves_Popular_Music_and_Polio_Wit.pdf

²⁵ Ian Dury, “Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll,” by Chaz Jankel and Ian Dury, released August 26, 1977, track 11 on *New boots and Panties!!*, BMG Rights Management, Spotify.

²⁶ Ibid

hedonistic themes. However, sex and drug use had been themes of popular music for centuries. Moreover, moral objection to those themes also had a long history. This tension can even be found in opposition and anxiety to the culture surrounding the music from which rock and roll gets its roots, Jazz and the Blues.

The Religious Right Strikes Back

Of course, Christian conservatives, who saw the unrest of the 1960s as an affront to their Judeo-Christian values, did not take such changes lying down. In fact, as early as the late 1960s, the United States began to undergo a dramatic rightward shift in national politics. This shift—sometimes dubbed the conservative revolution – can be tied to a number of factors, starting with Richard Nixon’s “Southern Strategy” to appeal to the social values of white male laborers, values that upheld patriarchy, racism, and sobriety, which helped spark a backlash against the Civil Rights movements.²⁷ Faced with a lost war, an economy in decline, and a loss of faith in the American government, the evangelical right turned to people like Jerry Falwell and, by the end of the 1970s, Ronald Reagan, who promised a “New Morning was dawning in America” through a return to traditional American values and the deregulation of the United States economy.²⁸

It is important to note however that the evangelical right did not emerge from nowhere in the 1970s. Rather the 1970s was marked by a renewal of evangelical political power. Indeed, the evangelical right exercised a great deal of political power throughout the 20th century, during the temperance and creationist movements of the 1920s and 1930s, the red scare paranoia during the 1940s and 1950s, and most notably during the 1960s as segregationist southern Baptists. The religious right of the 1970s was not marked by newness, but it was a continuation of similar political beliefs and strategies that for the first time coalesced to form religious political activist organizations and held major sway within the republican party, and in United States politics in

²⁷ Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive* (New York: The New Press, 2010).

²⁸ Troy; For views on the how economic condition shaped the turn to the right see Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ Alive* (New York: The New Press, 2010) and Moreton.

general.²⁹ This brings me to an important element of this Thesis's argument, that the Satanic Panic was not a product of some political, social, or cultural rupture. Instead, it was a continuation of long-standing tensions between evangelicals and mass culture that boiled over as a result of media coverage, the association of popular music with the political ideology of the counterculture and growing evangelical political power.

Moreover, focusing just on Jerry Falwell, Ronald Reagan, and other evangelical leaders would fail to provide a full picture of how the Christian right became such a powerful segment of American politics. Indeed, the Christian right formed in response to a perceived social attack on Christian institutions and values. But this backlash was not invented by televangelists and evangelical politicians. "Televangelists did not create a social movement where the conditions for one did not exist."³⁰ Thus, the evangelical President, Jimmy Carter, lost the support of evangelicals during the 1980 election after failing to push for legislation supporting Christian values and the pro-family movement.³¹ Women played a significant role in the dissemination and popularization of Christian right ideals. Women from the ubiquitous Phyllis Schlafly and Anita Bryant to working class mothers—women who Historian Bethany Moreton calls "Walmart moms"—began to rally around Christian conservatism. Women who protested the Equal Rights Amendment feared government intervention into their everyday lives of raising children and practicing their religion. These women laid "the foundation for what came to be called the Christian right."³² Phyllis Schlafly acting as a mouth piece for conservative women ridiculed the motives of the Women's Liberation Movement as "totally radical," saying that "they hate men, marriage, and children" and that they were "out to destroy morality and family."³³ Clearly, these

²⁹ Williams, 2.

³⁰ Moen, 30.

³¹ See Freedman, 236-241, Moreton, 48 (ebook), Zelizer, 265, and Dowland, 607-608 for more on Jimmy Carter and the Evangelical right

³² Brown, 16.

³³ Phyllis Schlafly, interview with John Callaway, *PBS*, WTTW- Chicago, 1977, <https://www.pbs.org/video/archive-phyllis-schlafly-gtpp7x/>.

women played a key role in the rise of the Christian right and helped exacerbate much of the anxiety that led to the Satanic Panic. In fact, Moreton refers to Christian mothers as the “foot soldiers” of the right-wing counterrevolution.³⁴ These women did not simply “absorb the family values agenda from their male pastors”; rather, they acted of their own accord in their response to the Equal Rights Amendment, women’s liberation, integration, “school prayer, gay liberation, and roe v. wade.” The family values agenda was constructed by these women. They articulated the major issues that were important to them and went door-to-door campaigning in support of evangelical legislation and politicians.³⁵ The point here is that the anxieties revolving around the sixties changing views on gender, sex, drug use, integration, and religion helped spawn the anti-rock movement. Also, the Satanic Panic did not trickle down from the minds of a few male politicians and social critics; rather, they were felt as clear and present dangers in the communities, neighborhoods, and homes of America’s white middle class.

Opposition to the Women’s Liberation movement was not the only cause for concern among Christian conservatives. The development of the evangelical right’s power in the 1970s cannot be decoupled from segregationist fear over integration and black Civil Rights. While the New Deal had built a liberal coalition out of the United States, white, male, working class, the events of the 1960s and the instability of the Democratic party, which was becoming increasingly divided over segregation, eventually led to their disillusionment with liberalism and democratic policies. Recognizing an opportunity in 1968, Republican Richard Nixon began to appeal to the social beliefs of these disillusioned voters.³⁶ Moreover, the Republican party developed a strategy targeting suburban voters in the Sunbelt South.³⁷ These voters resisted Civil Rights legislation that was passed with the purpose of integrating schools and neighborhoods. They believed that the integration of schools and the practice of busing were evidence of “the secular state

³⁴ Moreton, 48.

³⁵ Ibid, 55.

³⁶ Cowie, 18-19.

³⁷ Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 6.

deliberately savaging [Christian] institutions and values.”³⁸ Conservatives began to use “color-blind” rhetoric in which they ignored the issue of race and denied accusations of racism. In order to avoid integration many conservatives, especially in the South, moved to the suburbs.³⁹ Racism, coupled with economic challenges caused former democratic white voters across the nation to change their political leanings dramatically shifting the landscape of the presidential electorate.⁴⁰ As previously discussed, the association of rock ‘n’ roll with racial mixture would have been more than enough to cause anxiety to conservative white voters. In spite of their best efforts to defend their children against integration, in their eyes, American secular culture posed the threat of corrupting white evangelical children with racial integration, sexual promiscuity, female liberation, and the influence of “eastern religious thought.”⁴¹

According to data gathered by Pew Research Center, the number of voters who identified as democrats began to free fall in 1964 following the passage of the Civil Rights amendment. This hemorrhage would continue into the 1980s, by 1991 the same percentage of Americans identified the democrats as republicans for the first time since the beginning of the great depression.⁴² Around the same time the number of evangelicals was on the rise. The percent of Americans identifying as evangelical rose from 17% in 1972 to nearly 30% by 1992, and this is while mainline protestants and other denominations have been in decline down from 28% in 1972, to less than 20% in 1992.⁴³ Indeed, these statistics point to the growth of major religious and political power among evangelicals, this is not to say that all conservatives were evangelical nor, that all evangelicals were conservative, however, according to David Bebbington one primary characteristic of evangelicals is that they are activists. By activism, Bebbington means

³⁸ Moen, 30.

³⁹ Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*, 10.

⁴⁰ Thomas Byrne Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992) 4.

⁴¹ Larson, *Larson’s Book of Rock*.

⁴² “Trends in Party Identification, 1939- 2014”

⁴³ Aaron Earls, “The Growth of Evangelicals and Decline of Mainline Protestants,” *Lifeway Research*, May 19, 2015, <https://lifewayresearch.com/2015/05/19/the-growth-of-evangelicals-and-decline-of-mainline-protestants/>.

that evangelicals express and demonstrate “the gospel in missionary and social reform efforts.”⁴⁴ In other words evangelicals, in general, advocated for Christian social, political, and legal reforms and thus their politics were tied to religion more so than mainline protestant groups. This does not mean that all new republican voters in the 1970s and 1980s were evangelical, or even religious, it only serves to show that evangelicals were a growing social and political category that figures like Jimmy Carter, Jerry Falwell Sr., Ronald Reagan, and Tipper Gore hoped to appeal to, to win political favor.

Indeed, throughout the 1970s, Christian conservatives began to wage a culture war against what they saw as the moral decline of modern America manifesting as feminism, racial integration, and rock ‘n’ roll. This combined with Nixon’s War on Drugs, the changing roles of women, rising crime rates, and the embrace of non-Western spirituality during the 1970’s convinced the evangelical right that the nation was under siege from forces seeking to undermine the American way of life. Against this backdrop, the Satanic Panic took hold. Fueled by decades of myth, racism, and religious paranoia, a small but influential group of Americans became convinced that Satan, and his rock ‘n’ roll henchmen comprised of feminists and integrationists, posed an immediate threat to American youth.

The Satanic Panic did not arise from nothingness. Indeed, there is a long history of music being associated with hedonism and debauchery. Originating in 17th century Germany, the history of the “Wine, Women, and Song” hendiatriis shows the long history of this association. In fact, from this term developed the popular phrase Sex, Drugs, and Rock & Roll which has become synonymous with the culture and attitude revolving around rock music. In the origins of rock music, we find a racialized history in which white Americans fretted over the effects of “black music” on young white listeners. The association of Jazz with drug use and immoral sexuality and

⁴⁴ David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from 1730s to the 1930s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989) via <https://www.nae.net/what-is-an-evangelical/>

the association of the blues with danger and the occult were direct precursors to both the whitewashed danger and the occultism associated with rock 'n' roll. Moreover, rock 'n' roll began to be perceived as a racially mixed genre of music further contributing to this supposed danger. This fear of racial mixture, the occult, and the liberation of women led to a conservative backlash as they saw the counterculture of the 1960s as a threat to traditional American values. This backlash helped spark the reemergence of the religious right as a political power and led to the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. Out of this backlash and return to political prominence grew we now know as the Satanic Panic.

CHAPTER II

SELLING SATAN

“When I first started preaching I used my testimony a lot,” Mike Warnke explained to Blaine Bartel on *Fire By Nite* in 1988, “... and my testimony was so gross that I started to throw a few jokes in to lighten things up and lo and behold, everyone liked my jokes better than they liked my testimony and all of the sudden I’m a Christian comedian.” The self-described “ex-Satanist, ex-hippy,” Mike Warnke, used comedy as an evangelical tool to talk to people that “would not normally listen to the gospel,” because Warnke explained, “everyone likes to laugh.” After setting up the audience with several jokes, Warnke reached a climax. Bartel asked Warnke if the teenagers watching should be afraid of Satan, speaking directly to the camera Warnke offered his “gross” testimony.¹

“I have a scar on my wrist where my friends used to cut me and drain my blood into a cup and mix it with wine and urine to drink in communion to Satan,” Warnke explained nonchalantly. He continued, saying that he was involved in Satanism “as deeply as you could get,” including drug trafficking and mafia connections. “There is no reason that I should be sitting in this chair today talking to you except for the fact that ‘he who was within me was stronger than he who was in the world,’” Warnke told his teenage audience. He announced that he was not afraid of Satan anymore, only that he is “angry with him” on account of the “kids that are listening to this program.” He addressed the teen audience directly: “I am angry at Satan on

¹ *Fire by Nite*.

account of you, because you are being lied to, you are being tricked, you are being cheated, and there is no reason for it.”¹ Warnke used his involvement in Satanism as the knock-out punch when confronting his audience. He disarmed them with his jokes and then left them stunned with his first-hand account of Satanism.

Warnke’s book was one of the first of a pattern of testimonials that were released during the final decades of the twentieth century. These testimonials attracted hundreds of thousands of readers and lucrative paychecks for the authors.² By the end of the 1980s “survivors” received airtime on nationally televised talk shows like *Geraldo*, *Sally Jesse Raphael*, and *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. Thanks to these stories being disseminated widely on television and the fact that many psychiatrists accepted the claims made in these “survivor” stories, the “survivors” and their unlikely claims gained a large audience and increased credibility.³ In this chapter, I will examine three books that were marketed as “true stories.” These books are *The Satan-Seller* by Mike Warnke, *Michelle Remembers* by Michelle Smith and Lawrence Pazder, and *He Came to Set the Captives Free* by Rebecca Brown. Mike Warnke’s book is the earliest released account of satanic cult activity and has been credited as the book that helped start the Satanic Panic.⁴ Similarly, Michelle Smith’s account of her molestation and torture at the hands of a satanic cult led to anxiety over Satanic Ritual Abuse and the idea that Satanists were targeting children.⁵ Finally, Rebecca Brown, who wrote *He Came to Set the Captives Free* much later than the other two accounts, depicts a much more sensational story than the previous two. It shows that the rhetoric that led to the Satanic Panic persisted and even adapted into the late 1980s and early 1990s.⁶

¹ Ibid.

² Victor, 82 and 258. In addition to appearances on television and in magazines to tell their stories Lawrence Pazder and Michelle Smith earned over \$300,000 dollars in advance of publishing *Michelle Remembers*, Mike Warnke not only spread his “testimony” in his book and on television he also toured around the country speaking, and performing, to over 500,000 each year.

³ Victory, 83.

⁴ Victor, 230.

⁵ Ibid, 81-82.

⁶ Gareth Medway, *Lure of the Sinister: The Unnatural History of Satanism* (New York: New York University Press, 2001) 195.

I argue that *The Satan-Seller*, *Michelle Remembers*, and *He Came to Set the Captives Free* were used as tools to exploit the anxieties of parents, Christians, and community leaders. More importantly these “survivor” stories played a key role in constructing and disseminating the discursive elements of the Satanic Panic. The two early examples, *The Satan-Seller* and *Michelle Remembers*, became models for the entire genre of Satanism “survivor” stories. They exploited the fear surrounding the rapid social change taking place in the 1970s and 1980s, specifically targeting anxieties related to a rising number of working mothers and increasing divorce rates, sexual promiscuity, and drug use. While these anxieties existed before Mike Warnke and Michelle Smith published their books, the claims made by these and other “survivors” throughout the 1970s and 1980s, created a template for the Satanic Panic that began to dominate discussions over familial dysfunction, teen sex, drug use, and the anti-rock discourse.

While the majority of this thesis revolves around anxiety concerning rock music, this chapter offers an examination of Satanism survivor narratives because these books and authors offer valuable insight into the nature of the most extreme versions of this anxiety. These authors, specifically Warnke, Smith, and Pazder, experienced near mainstream notoriety as they appeared on talk shows and their careers were documented in newspapers around the country. While these books were unconcerned with rock music and its effects on listeners, these authors undoubtedly helped create and reinforce the association of sex, drugs, and teenage rebellion with Satanism and, as we have already seen, rock n’ roll was synonymous with sex, drugs, and teenage rebellion. More importantly, these texts, though often unbelievable, were manifestations of real and powerful conservative anxieties revolving around 1960s youth culture.

Testimonies and Biographies

To fully explore the anxieties these narratives invoked, it is important to provide a few brief details about each author and the overall claims they make in each book. Mike Warnke was born on the November 19, 1946 in Evansville, Indiana. In 1972 Warnke published his autobiography *The Satan-Seller*. It opened just after the death of Warnke’s father, whose name

was changed to “Whitey” in the book, and recounted Warnke’s recruitment into a satanic cult, rise to high priest, overdose on heroin, and conversion to Christianity. High school was when Warnke honed his skills as a story-teller and earned a reputation for being a gifted performer.⁷ Soon after, he started college at San Bernardino Valley College.⁸ According to his book, Warnke, progressively became addicted to harder and harder drugs, eventually failing out of college and having to sell drugs because he could not afford his habit.⁹ Seeking higher highs he claimed he started attending sex parties that quickly led to his involvement with a satanic cult.¹⁰ After his overdosing on heroin, Warnke entered the Navy and eventually converted back to Christianity.¹¹ The book ends with Mikes marriage and the development of his anti-occult ministry Alpha and Omega Outreach in June of 1972.¹²

After the publication of *The Satan-Seller*, Mike Warnke quickly rose in fame and prominence. Warnke’s book became a best seller, and he began touring around the United States speaking at churches. Soon he was considered as an expert on the occult by the evangelical community.¹³ Warnke’s popularity only grew as anxieties surrounding satanic cults rose in the early and mid- 1980s. Throughout the 1980s Warnke appeared on several television shows spreading his farfetched story. Most importantly in on May 16, 1985 he, along with Lawrence Pazder, served as an expert on an episode of “20/20.” Jeffery S. Victory claims that the historical significance of this episode is that it “lent credibility to what had previously been just local rumors.”¹⁴ This episode of “20/20” unleashed a tidal wave of national coverage of supposed satanic crime. *Geraldo* aired three episodes on Satanism in 1988 and 1989. *Sally Jesse Raphael* aired two episodes on Satanism in 1989 and 1991. And, *The Oprah Winfrey Show* featured three

⁷ Trott, 2.

⁸ Ibid, 3.

⁹ Warnke, 24.

¹⁰ Ibid, 26-31.

¹¹ Ibid, 130.

¹² Ibid, 202.

¹³ Trott, 10.

¹⁴ Victor, 19.

different Satanism “survivors” as guests between 1986 and 1989. In 1992, Mike Warnke was back in the public spotlight when journalists, Jon Trott and Mike Hertenstein, an article debunking his story in *Cornerstone Magazine* in 1992.¹⁵

Eight years after Warnke’s narrative was published, another, even more impactful, testimony was published, *Michelle Remembers*. Michelle Smith’s first important visit with psychiatrist Lawrence Pazder occurred in the summer of 1976. She continued to visit Dr. Pazder over the next several months. Eventually she and Pazder claimed she would go into hypnotic trances during her visits.¹⁶ According to their book, during these trances she would speak in a childlike voice and recall horrific memories of her being ritualistically abused by a satanic Cult during her childhood in the mid-1950s. These memories involved graphic imagery of animal sacrifices, sexual orgies, forced cannibalism, and a vision in which Smith was tortured by the Devil, witnessed Hell, and was rescued by the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ.¹⁷

After Michelle Smith became a regular patient of Dr. Pazder, they, supposedly, spent fourteen months recovering Smiths memories of being brutally tortured by a satanic cult. The story soon went public and they eventually published *Michelle Remembers* in 1980. The story was first released in *People Weekly* magazine, in which it was reported that Smith and Pazder received over \$300,000 dollars in advance of publishing the book.¹⁸ They began to go on tour around North America, relaying Smith’s story and claiming to be experts on Satanic Ritual Abuse. At the height of the Satanic Panic, Smith and Pazder appeared in several television shows. Over time, the story in *Michelle Remembers* “became a model imitated by other self-proclaimed survivors.”¹⁹

¹⁵ Trott, 10.

¹⁶ Victor, 81-82.

¹⁷ Ibid, 81-82.

¹⁸ Ibid, 82.

¹⁹ Ibid, 81-82.

Finally, *He Came to Set the Captives Free* is probably the most sensational narrative of the three mentioned here. Ruth Irene Bailey (she changed her name to Rebecca Brown later) was born in Shelbyville, Indiana on the May 21, 1948. In 1976, Bailey decided to attend medical school and became a physician in April of 1979. She entered her residency in Muncie, Indiana, at Ball Memorial Hospital (this is the hospital referenced in *He Came to Set the Captives Free*). At some point early in her career she became extremely religious and believed demons were the cause of her patients' ailments. "Dr. Bailey provided very good care for a couple years after joining the hospital's residency staff in 1979," Ball Memorial Hospital spokesperson, Dr. John Cullison, said to an Indianapolis news organization, "but, then I began getting reports [that] she was exorcising demons in the intensive care unit." Dr. Bailey soon began telling patients that she had been "chosen by God" and had been given the power to diagnose certain conditions that her colleagues could not. She even claimed that many of the doctors at Ball Memorial Hospital were, in fact, possessed by demons.²⁰ As Dr. Bailey became more and more obsessed with demons, she met a patient named Edna Elaine Moses. This meeting would change the course of Dr. Bailey's life.

Edna Elaine Moses was born with a cleft palate, and surgery was required to correct the issue. According to her family, Moses was prone to lying and fabricating stories. They claimed that Moses would "do anything for attention." Even claiming that she had a habit of pretending to have seizures in public. At some point Moses was diagnosed with "mixed personality disorder." She stayed in her parents' home until the late 1970s, throughout this time Moses was in and out of the hospital undergoing various surgeries. Dr. Bailey and Moses met for the first time when Moses was a patient at Ball Memorial Hospital in the early 1980s.²¹

²⁰ G. Richard Fisher, Paul R. Blizard, and M. Kurt Goedelman, "Drugs, Demons, and Delusions: The 'Amazing' Saga of Rebecca Brown M.D. and Elaine," OoCities.org, Accessed April 1, 2021, 1, <https://www.oocities.org/paulblizard/brown.html>.

²¹ Ibid, 1.

He Came to Set the Captives Free was published by ardent anti-Catholic cartoonist, Jack T. Chick, in 1992. The book depicted Rebecca Brown as a heroic evangelical doctor on a one-woman crusade against evil Satanists who maintained control over the hospital where she worked, as well as, the Catholic church, and the several world governments.²² The book claims that Moses, who is not given a last name in the book and is simply named Elaine, had been sold to the Devil when she was a baby and since then was on track to become “one of the most powerful witches in America.”²³ After rising up in a satanic cult called The Brotherhood, there is a passage in the book in which Elaine claims she, literally, married Satan.²⁴ Elaine was then a powerful High Priestess, and “regional bride of Satan,” who she claims to have taken orders from directly. One of those orders was to kill a young doctor that was evangelizing patients and formerly satanic hospital employees.²⁵ The supposed victim, Dr. Brown was able to help Elaine convert to Christianity.²⁶ They would go on to become roommates and travel around the United States making television appearances and claiming to be experts on the occult.²⁷

Family in Focus

One theme that loomed large in each of these narratives was that of family dysfunction. Each of these books placed a large amount of the blame for the author’s involvement in Satanism on their parents, especially mothers and step-mothers. Indeed, widespread anxiety over the disintegration of the American family rose sharply in the 1970s. In 1977, Dr. James Dobson founded “Focus on the Family,” a right-wing fundamentalist advocacy group. Throughout the 1980s, 1990s, and into the twenty-first century “Focus” advocated for anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and encouraged adherents to maintain the “traditional family structure.”²⁸

²² Ibid, 2.

²³ Rebecca Brown, *He Came to Set the Captives Free* (Springdale, PA: Whitaker House, 1992) 25.

²⁴ Ibid, 43; The book asserts that The Brotherhood, is the same Cult that Warnke had been a part of in the mid-1960s on page 30.

²⁵ Ibid, 23.

²⁶ Ibid, 83

²⁷ Medway, 198.

²⁸ “Historical Timeline,” *Focus on the Family*, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/about/historical-timeline/>.

Dobson, hosted a weekly radio show that often discussed the “dangers of Satanism on youth” and invited Mike Warnke on to these episodes as a Satanism “expert.”²⁹ “Focus on the Family” used different types of media to spread their message, their magazine *Citizen* reached over 300,000 subscribers and the aforementioned *Focus on the Family* radio show aired on over six hundred Christian radio stations across the country.³⁰

The creation of groups like “Focus,” the rise of the Christian Right political movement, and the development of the Satanic Panic grew out of the anxiety that American society was going through a “moral decline.” In the 1980s, as many as “75 percent of Americans felt that ethical standards had gotten worse” over the decades that followed the Second World War, according to sociologist Jeffery S. Victor.³¹ Despite the fact that the landscape of American families and gender roles changed rapidly in the 1960s and 1970s, the cultural ideal of the traditional American family did not change quite as quickly. This gap between the ideal American family life and the real state of the American family caused a great deal of stress to some Americans leading to what the Christian Right saw as a moral decline. To proponents of the Satanic Panic children who were the product of non-Christian, divorced, non-biological, or step-parents were believed to be on the fast track to Devil Worship, teen sex, drug abuse, and murder.³² More importantly, framing these activities as “satanic” is meant to exploit the existing anxieties over integration, the sexual revolution, changing gender roles, and rising drug use. Moreover, by framing drug users and feminists as satanic it encourages adherents to fear the New Left coalition of feminists, Civil Rights activists, and anti-war activists who were associated with these anxieties. Through these unbelievable narratives, which gained credibility through the support of psychiatrists and their presence on mainstream television shows, the evangelical right was exercising a political agenda to undermine the power and influence of the New Left.

²⁹ Victor, 231.

³⁰ Ibid, 231.

³¹ Ibid, 187.

³² Ibid, 182-184.

The Satan-Seller served as an example to adherents of evangelical Christianity of what could happen if they did not raise their children in a proper Christian household. According to Mike Warnke's book, his father was a domineering, "shady," and unfaithful patriarch. When he was not neglecting his son, Whitey Warnke, as he is named in the book, sold drugs in front of young Warnke. From Mike Warnke's point of view, that is not even the worst thing his father did. The worst thing Whitey Warnke ever did to his son, according to *The Satan-Seller*, was marry a woman named Millie shortly after Warnke's biological mother passed away in a car accident. Mike Warnke blamed his step-mother, who was twenty-three at the time, for his father's death at fifty-five because "trying to keep up with her had run his heart down." Going a bit farther Mike Warnke blamed his father's alcoholism on his step-mother. Allegedly, Millie Warnke was abusive to her step-son and would use a dog-leash to "lay it to him" for no reason.³³ After his father's death, Warnke spent a few months with his Fundamentalist aunts before he moved from his home in Manchester, Tennessee to Crestline, California with the Schrader's.

Polls in 1986 and 1987 showed 90% of Americans believed that having a functional and happy family was a key indicator of success and that family was an extremely important element of life.³⁴ However, the divorce rate for first marriages was as much as 66% and 40% of all children lived in homes with step-parents.³⁵ Indeed, *The Satan-Seller* would have readers believe that Mike Warnke was doomed from the beginning. Other than, perhaps, in the short time he spent with his evangelical aunts who were resolved to "put some good Christian thoughts" in him, he did not have a healthy home life by evangelical standards.³⁶ During his childhood Mike Warnke suffered the loss of both parents, abuse, being moved around several times, and religious instability, as he was exposed to both anti-Catholic Fundamentalism and then Catholicism. The book laid out the slippery slope argument that poor parenting led to underage sex, underage sex

³³ Warnke, 2.

³⁴ Victor, 184.

³⁵ Ibid, 182.

³⁶ Warnke, 1.

led to alcoholism and drug addiction, and drug addiction led to Worshiping Satan, became a core argument for proponents of the Satanic Panic. Moreover, the disintegration of the American family was a growing source of anxiety and stress in the United States.

Michelle Remembers, also highlighted the indiscretions of parents in causing childhood suffering. Moreover, it added the idea that unwanted children would be subject to horrific torture at the hands of unloving mothers. During one of Michelle Smith's early visits with Dr. Pazder, she, supposedly, uncovered a memory of her mother participating in her abuse alongside the Satanist Cult that would torture Smith for the next several months.³⁷ Indeed, *Michelle Remembers* was critical of Michelle Smith's mother to no end and advanced an argument for how important mothers are to their children. This became evident when Dr. Pazder told Smith that "Children always feel responsible for the wrongdoings of adults, especially mothers."³⁸ Michelle Smith's mother allegedly, does much worse than participating in the sexual assault of her daughter. The cult, supposedly, attempted to cover up a murder by putting Smith in a car with a corpse and driving the car into a ravine. According to Smith she remembered the car crash into large rocks and burst into flames, somehow the five-year-old Smith was able to survive the wreckage and was hospitalized. At some point during her stay at the hospital, Smith claimed her mother came to visit and attempted to murder her daughter by tampering with the machines that were keeping her alive.³⁹ After failing to murder her, Smith's mother allegedly abandoned her five-year-old daughter, leaving her in the hands of the cult.⁴⁰ When the story was debunked in an article in *McClean's* magazine in October of 1980, most evidence pointed to the fact that Michelle Smith had actually had a relatively normal, stable childhood with a loving mother.⁴¹

³⁷ Smith, 31- 35.

³⁸ Ibid, 49.

³⁹ Ibid, 70-71.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 80-81

⁴¹ Paul Grescoe, "Things that go Bump in Victoria," *McClean's*, October 27, 1980, <https://archive.macleans.ca/article/1980/10/27/things-that-go-bump-in-victoria>.

Michelle Smith's story is clearly much different than Mike Warnke's. Smith's mother was not simply abusive or neglectful. She allegedly played a major role in Smith's ritual abuse. Just over a decade before *Michelle Remembers* was published Canada changed their laws to allow abortion as long as a committee of doctors agreed that a patient would be in danger of losing her life as a result of the pregnancy or in giving birth.⁴² In the United States *Roe v. Wade* had legalized abortion just seven years before Michelle Smith and Dr. Pazder published their book.⁴³ It is not a big stretch to say that the second wave feminist movement and acceptance of abortion had an effect on how *Michelle Remembers* depicted mothers. Drawing a parallel between the cult that tortured Michelle Smith and feminists becomes easier when you consider that most of the cult members were women, and those women seemed to have power over most of the men in the cult. Moreover, Bob Larson, an evangelist radio host and Satanic Panic proponent, claimed that radical feminists were Devil worshipping witches.⁴⁴ Indeed, *Michelle Remembers* has a clear message for its readers regarding motherhood and feminism: women in power were not just dangerous, unfit mothers; they were satanic abusers of children.

He Came to Set the Captives Free told a slightly different story about how family life could affect the life of children. Specifically, the dangers of poverty played a central role in Elaine's participation in a satanic cult. Brown's book highlights a different anxiety regarding motherhood and family, that the family was under constant assault from external forces. The second chapter of *He Came to Set the Captives Free* begins with Elaine, allegedly "one of the top witches in the U.S.,"⁴⁵ describing her childhood:

My mother and father's marriage was a very shaky one. My father was a drunkard who believed that he was God's gift to women. He mistreated my mother very badly. When I was born, he stood at the foot of her bed and told her that he wished I was dead over and over, until she finally threw a vase at him... I had no nose, no upper lip, no roof in my mouth. This is what is called a severe hair-lip with a cleft palate. My mother wanted to

⁴² "What is Abortion?" *Cambridge Right to Life*, <http://cambridgerighttolife.ca/life-issues/abortion/>.

⁴³ "Roe v. Wade," 410 U.S. 113 (1973).

⁴⁴ Bob Larson, *Satanism: The Seduction of America's Youth*, 166-167

⁴⁵ Brown, back cover.

see me right away as soon as I was born, and to her I was a beautiful baby, even with the deformities. Her first question was, ‘Can she be fixed?’

Elaine went on to describe how her mother was extremely poor and could not afford the surgery to correct Elaine’s deformities. A nurse at the hospital, explained, to Elaine’s mother, that her “friends” would pay for Elaine’s surgery if they were allowed to take a small amount of Elaine’s blood. Inadvertently, her mother had just given Grace, the high priestess of a satanic cult called “The Brotherhood,” and Satan himself “possession” of Elaine.⁴⁶

He Came to Set the Captives Free was much more forgiving of mothers than the aforementioned narratives. In fact, Elaine’s mother is loving and affectionate. However, she was ignorant and allowed people outside of the familial unit to care for her daughter. This would serve as a warning to evangelical mothers who read this book; as it manipulated the rising anxiety surrounding working mothers leaving their children with strangers.⁴⁷ Moreover, we learn that Elaine’s mother is severely impoverished bringing in another element, this book associated poverty with potential immorality. The unstable economy was another source of mass anxiety in the 1970’s and 1980’s. Therefore, Brown is also warning readers against the dangers of being poor and encouraged economic conservatism to go along with its socially conservative message against Satanism.⁴⁸ *He Came to Set The Captives Free* capitalized on the framework created by Smith and Warnke and highlights another development, the anxiety over poverty and people outside of the family unit presenting an inherent danger to children even no matter how caring their mothers were.

Evangelical Christians often blamed the disintegration of the ideal American family for the problems they believed plagued America (the rise of drug abuse, occult practices, “free-love,”

⁴⁶ Brown, 24-25.

⁴⁷ Bromley, 66-67.

⁴⁸ Victor, 186 Talks about the rising issue of Economic Dislocation, families facing economic hardship, and why it was perceived as so damaging.

feminism, homosexuality, race mixing, and the acceptance of non-protestant religion).⁴⁹ Moreover, as the economic boom following the Second World War subsided, Americans in the 1970s began to endure a major economic crisis. As a result of the stagnant economy, many lower middle-class families were forced to find another source of income leading to an increase in the number of working wives and mothers. More mothers in the workforce led parents to grow increasingly anxious about leaving their children in the care of strangers.⁵⁰ Proponents of the Satanic Panic, exploited this anxiety in “survivor stories” like *The Satan-Seller*, *Michelle Remembers*, and *He Came to Set the Captives Free*. The Christian Right was motivated to exploit these social anxieties in order to sway voters, influence politicians, encourage the proliferation of fundamentalist Judeo-Christian ideology, and reinforce traditional gender roles and sexual norms.

Teen Sex and Satanic Ritual Abuse

Another overarching theme of these books is the dangers of premarital sex and sexual abuse. Reacting to the free-love movement of the 1960s, conservatives in the 1970s and 1980s grew anxious over sexual images and sexual assault, especially when it came to teen sex and child abuse. Moreover, people like James Dobson added a fear of LGBTQ+ people by describing a “homosexual epidemic,” blaming domineering mothers and unaffectionate fathers for failing “to teach clear gender roles in early childhood.”⁵¹ Sex was also linked to Satanism as early as 1969 when Brad Steiger published *Sex and Satanism*. Steiger allegedly uncovered “several [...] eyewitness accounts of occult sex rings in middle America.”⁵² After *Michelle Remembers* was published ritual sex abuse became another source of sexual anxiety across the United States. This fear subsequently led to several allegations, heightened advocacy, and rising fear.⁵³

⁴⁹ Debbie Nathan, “Satanism and Child Molestation: Constructing the Ritual Abuse Scare,” *The Satanism Scare*, edited by James T. Richardson, Joel Best, and David G. Bromley (Hawthorne, NY: Aldine De Gruyter, 1991) 78.

⁵⁰ Bromley, 66-67.

⁵¹ *Rightward Bound*, 21.

⁵² Ellis, 170.

⁵³ Victor, 319-320. For More on Anxieties about Sexuality in the 1970s and 1980s see John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, “The Sexualized Society” and “Polarization and Conflict,” in *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012) 326-361; Barbara

Soon after Mike Warnke's first sexual experience with an unnamed peer at his high school, he claimed to have descended into a life defined by sexual gratification, alcoholism, and drug abuse. According to *The Satan-Seller*, Sex served as something of a catalyst that desensitized Warnke to more intense experiences. Although, Warnke claimed his grades were slipping due to his late nights of sex and drunkenness, when he began college in the fall of 1965. As Warnke made the transition to the freedom of college he claims he began to change his appearance. He explained that the purpose of his new look was to attract women.⁵⁴ Sex, first, encouraged Warnke to drink more, then increased his drug addiction, then sex played a large role in his involvement in a satanic cult. Dean, Mike's drug dealer that had encouraged him to start smoking Marijuana, invited Mike to what turned out to be an orgy. He supposedly, took Mike to a large mansion. Mike described the women at the party as "cool-looking, sexy girls. And everyone was liberal. I mean *liberal!* These chicks were free-lovers."⁵⁵

These narratives portrayed sex as an evil and disgusting act. Warnke's supposed drug fueled sex bender is telling of his life's apparent descent into madness. The scene in which he becomes involved in an orgy is meant to shock and appall the reader with a vivid description of loose women casually engaging in sex with multiple partners as the group discussed religion and Satanism. Indeed, the description of the women as "liberal... free lovers" feels pointed and political. The discourse that was already associated with the New Left coalition was beginning to be associated with Satanism by the evangelical right. It is clear, in the book, that the cult uses sex as one part of their strategy to seduce Warnke, and presumably others, into their ranks. In fact, this party was the first stage of Warnke's recruitment into the Satanist cult. A few weeks after Warnke attended his first "secondary" meeting which he compared to a church service "with

Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess, and Gloria Jacobs, "Beatlemania: A Sexually Defiant Consumer Subculture?" in *The Subcultures Reader*, edited by Ken Gelder and Sarah Thornton (New York: Routledge, 1997) 523-536.

⁵⁴ Warnke, 17.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 25- 28.

calculated blasphemy.” Before long, Warnke was invited to witness a black mass. Seemingly enthralled by the Satanists, he claimed he became a full-fledged member of the cult soon after.⁵⁶ The idea that Satanists were using sex to lure young adults into cults would have been a frightening prospect for readers, many of whom were evangelical, conservative, voters and parents. This book would have, likely, increased parental anxiety over children and teenagers being exposed to sex.

In addition to the anxieties revolving around premarital sex that were starting to be linked to Satanism in *The Satan-Seller, Michelle Remembers* added anxiety over child sex abuse and homosexuality. Michelle Smith, claims she was subjected to a ritual as a child during which a female Satanist kisses Michelle and forces her tongue in Michelle’s mouth before prodding Michelle with “sticks.” “They stuck those sticks not just in my mouth. They stuck them everywhere I had an opening!”⁵⁷ In the subsequent chapter, Michelle walked in on the Satanists having a violent orgy. “Men and women were participating in some sort of struggle, thrashing against each other as if they were animals. The men had ‘knives’ protruding from their bodies and seemed to be using them on the others. Some wore pained expressions on their faces and were groaning.”⁵⁸

Michelle’s memory was more obviously supposed to exploit the readers’ sensibilities. Not only is there a satanic orgy going on, but a child is there to witness the event. Moreover, no one in the group, even the girl’s mother, is fazed by her presence until Michelle accidentally kills a member of the cult.⁵⁹ Moreover, there is a blatant description of ritualistic sexual assault just prior to the orgy. The nightmarish scene laid out in *Michelle Remembers* gets at the bigger fear of the Satanism Scare, the anxiety of mysterious groups of Satanists, or someone else, committing unspeakable crimes against children. Moreover, Michelle’s claims helped create the panic that

⁵⁶ Ibid, 31- 35.

⁵⁷ Smith, 23.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 30.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 35.

lead to the longest court case in American history the McMartin Preschool trial. Police and prosecutors in the early 1980s used *Michelle Remembers* in preparing cases against alleged satanic abusers of children. According to the 1983 lawsuit against Peggy McMartin Buckey and, her son, Raymond Buckey, were alleged to have victimized “360 children in extremely bizarre sexual acts carried out over a period of five years.”⁶⁰ This was just the first of many cases that alleged ritual abuse of children and it gave rise to organizations like “Believe the Children,” that “were committed to alerting the general public to the hidden dangers of a newly identified kind of child abuse.”⁶¹ By 1990, both Buckey’s were found innocent, but the damage had already been done and several allegations of ritual sexual abuse were raised throughout the United States.⁶²

He Came to Set the Captives Free, applied the same frames in its book and also exploited fears of female sexuality in the process as Elaine began to join “The Brotherhood” as a young woman:

I was then put upon the altar of stone; my clothes were all taken off and Satan had sex with me to prove that I was his high priestess. (The high priest and many others had sex with me also.) The congregation went wild. Many of them were high on drugs and alcohol and the meeting turned into a sex orgy.⁶³

It is important to remember that *He Came to Set the Captives Free* was billed as a non-fiction, “honest in-depth account of Satan’s activities.”⁶⁴ Moreover, it validated other personal accounts of Satanism. In fact, Elaine was supposedly a member of “the same cult written about in Hal Lindsey’s book, *Satan Is Alive and Well on Planet Earth*, and in Mike Warnke’s book, *The Satan-Seller*.”⁶⁵ The reader is meant to believe that Elaine literally had sexual intercourse with the devil. This, obviously, would be shocking to readers believing this book to be based in the factual experiences of Elaine and Dr. Brown. Whether or not readers believed that Elaine had sexual

⁶⁰ Victor, 15.

⁶¹ Ibid, 15.

⁶² Ibid, 15.

⁶³ Brown, 51.

⁶⁴ Ibid, back cover.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 30.

contact with the physical manifestation of Satan is beside the point here. What is important is that Elaine's testimony reflected a broader worldview that female sexual promiscuity was a result of evil influences and would result in the further decline of American society. As will be seen in Chapter 3, female sexuality in rock 'n' roll culture was a source of great anxiety for anti-rock activists.

Sex, and often times sexual abuse and rape, played huge roles in the Satanism survivor narratives. Sex, in the eyes of many evangelical Christians, was a dangerous activity, especially when performed outside of marriage. Sex could be used to seduce new members of a Cult like Mike Warnke, to abuse the cults victims such as in Michelle Smith's narrative, and to exert power over other cult members such as the way sex is used in *He Came to Set the Captives Free*. Furthermore, no one would deny that the assault of Michelle, and the many other children that were allegedly sexually abused by Satanists, was absolutely disgusting, if true. However, the 1970s and 1980s saw a large number of sexual assault allegations being made across the country with most of them never being substantiated with concrete evidence.⁶⁶ The rapidly changing gender roles, the "free-love" movement of the 1960s, and the supreme court's decision in *Roe v. Wade* contributed to a national hysteria around sex, sexual purity, the sanctity of marriage, and the protection of children.⁶⁷

Drugs

Sex was not the only thing Mike Warnke developed an appetite for during his time in high school and college. In fact, Drugs became just as important to Warnke's involvement in Satanism creating another element of the Satanic Panic that would persist throughout the course of the moral panic. By the time Warnke graduated High School he was an alcoholic.⁶⁸ According to Satanic Panic proponent and anti-rock activist Bob Larson, "Drugs and Satanism have been

⁶⁶ Joel Best, "Endangered Children and Antisatanist Rhetoric," *The Satanism Scare*, edited by James T. Richardson, Joel Best, and David G. Bromley (Hawthorne, NY: Aldine De Gruyter, 1991) 98-99.

⁶⁷ Bromley, 69-70.

⁶⁸ Warnke, 13.

uniquely linked for centuries.”⁶⁹ Just as marijuana has so often been classified a “gateway drug,” drugs as a whole were portrayed as a “gateway” to worshipping the Devil by proponents of the Satanic Panic.⁷⁰ Indeed, people believed that the “lure of drugs was an enticement” that would attract them, or their children, to Satanism. Moreover, the use of drugs and “hypnotic suggestion” helped satanic cults brainwash new members.⁷¹ Larson even argued that, “drugs render the Devil’s devotees addictively dependent and less likely to abandon their allegiance to Satan.”⁷² Larson cited several links between drug use and Satanism in his book, whether these links existed or not. Demonizing drugs, and drug users became popular in the 1970s and 1980s. Ronald Reagan’s “crusade against drugs” helped his administration move forward with efforts to “repudiate the sixties and ‘restore’ America.” Indeed, the fear of drugs and drug users was alive and present in the 1980s, as evidenced by the huge amount of money the United States spent in its “War on Drugs.”⁷³

Upon entering college Warnke was supposedly drinking daily, skipping classes, and the alcohol was slowly making him sick. Eventually, he claimed he was encouraged to try marijuana to reduce his alcohol use. According to his book, Warnke instantly became addicted to marijuana, and would soon begin trying harder drugs including Peyote, Benzedrine, and LSD. Warnke’s addiction to amphetamines would lead to his involvement in a satanic cult as he grew more and more desperate for money and drugs, the Cult offered him a stable source of drugs, sex, and money.⁷⁴

This is a clear example of Mike Warnke using the “marijuana is a ‘gateway drug’” thought process. Not only did Warnke’s marijuana addiction led to him taking more damaging

⁶⁹ Larson, *Satanism: The Seduction of America’s Youth*, 87.

⁷⁰ Robert L. Dupont, “Marijuana has Proven to be a Gateway Drug,” *The New York Times*, April 26, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/04/26/is-marijuana-a-gateway-drug/marijuana-has-proven-to-be-a-gateway-drug>.

⁷¹ Larson, 87-88.

⁷² *Ibid*, 88.

⁷³ Gil Troy, *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005) 286-287.

⁷⁴ Warnke, 17- 25.

substances; it also became a 'gateway' to a satanic cult. To readers in the 1980's this may not have been too much of a stretch. They were already hearing about the dangers of drugs from President Reagan and his supporters. They heard that drug use created a "climate of lawlessness." Reagan's campaign against drug use "mobilized traditional American values," in the same way that proponents of the Satanic Panic tried to mobilize and reinforce them.⁷⁵ The 'climate of lawlessness' that the President mentioned sounded eerily similar to the satanic cult conspiracy. Readers of *The Satan-Seller* were meant to conclude that lawlessness was caused by Satanists and Satanism was caused by drug use.

Michelle Smith's claims added another element of the Satanic Panic conspiracy theories, that Satanists were participating in cannibalism and forcing their victims to do so as well. During Michelle Smith's fourteen months of uncovering her past abuse by a satanic cult. She recalled being forced to consume unknown substances for a ritual:

"poor Michelle," said the nurse sweetly. "You must be very hungry. We have something for you." Malachi handed her a bowl, and the nurse held it for Michelle to eat from. Michelle wrenched her head away. The contents of the bowl smelled putrid. They said there were ashes in it.⁷⁶

Eventually, the cult members were able to force the "ashes" down Smith's mouth, according to *Michelle Remembers*. Presumably, these ashes were human remains and this suspicion is confirmed in the next chapter.⁷⁷ This would not be the last time the cult would try to force Smith to consume human remains. In chapter seventeen, Smith was locked in a satanic effigy with one of the cults sacrifice victims. The cult told her to eat the victim.⁷⁸

The cannibalism forced on Smith is directly referenced in the Idaho state statute alongside the prohibition on forcing children to consume drugs as part of a ritual. The law explicitly prohibits the forced ingestion, injection or other application of any narcotic, drug,

⁷⁵ Troy, 287

⁷⁶ Smith, 76.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 83.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 129.

hallucinogen or anesthetic for the purpose of dulling sensitivity, cognition, recollection of, or resistance to any criminal activity.” Immediately followed by the prohibition on forcing the “ingestion, or external application, of human or animal urine, feces, flesh, blood, bones, body secretions, nonprescribed drugs or chemical compounds.”⁷⁹ Moreover, laws like the one in Idaho were heavily influenced by *Michelle Remembers* and its graphic descriptions of abuse.⁸⁰

By the time *He Came to Set the Captives Free* was published in 1992 the War on Drugs and the anxiety over drug use and drug users was in full swing, drugs had already been associated with the Satanic Panic for two decades and in Brown’s book they refer vaguely to “drugs,” never actually naming any specific drug Elaine supposedly ingests.⁸¹ Elaine described one of her early initiation ceremonies saying that “Incense was burning, filling the room with its odor. I think it had some sort of drug in it because it quickly made me quite dizzy.”⁸² After Elaine’s wedding ceremony, when she claimed to have married Satan, she was given a strange liquid to “drink from a golden goblet.” She did not know what was in the drink, but she “supposed there were some drugs in it, as [she] felt rather light-headed after drinking it.” She claimed that it “certainly destroyed the clarity of [her] mind.”⁸³

He Came to Set the Captives Free referenced drug use multiple times. Unlike Warnke, Elaine never knowingly ingested drugs; moreover, she did not name which drugs are being given to her. Despite her position as the most powerful bride of Satan, Elaine did not know what drugs “The Brotherhood” used on people, apparently.⁸⁴ In this book, Brown depicts the cult using drugs to gain control over cult members. Just as Bob Larson had suggested, it seemed that this cult wanted to make Elaine, and her fellow Satanists, “Addictively Dependent.”⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Idaho Statute 18-1506 A.

⁸⁰ Stanley H. Hodges, “An Examination of Ritual Abuse Laws: An Integrative Conflict Model Adaptation for a Contemporary Analysis of Law Formation” (Ph.D. dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 2006) 150-151.

⁸¹ Brown, 51.

⁸² *Ibid*, 37.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 60.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 62.

⁸⁵ Larson, 87.

The Satan-Seller and *He Came to Set the Captives Free* both used drugs in similar ways, to strike fear over the use of drugs by making them a “gateway” to Satanism. In *Michelle Remembers*, Smith was a victim of the cult so there was no need for a “gateway.” Nonetheless, the descriptions of Smith being forced to consume human remains, as well as the many other horrific things that she claimed happened to her, had a big influence on the anti-ritual abuse laws that would be passed in the decades following the books release. In any case, these books used drugs and forced cannibalism to exploit fears of drug use and further drive home the dangers of Satanism.

In 1992, a pair of Christian journalists published an article about Mike Warnke in *Cornerstone Magazine*, a religious oriented magazine. This article contained drastically different information about Warnke’s life than what he described in *The Satan-Seller*. For starters, Warnke’s alcoholism was heavily exaggerated.⁸⁶ Moreover, his college girlfriend claimed that they were both virgins and that she was with him constantly.⁸⁷ Finally, not only was Warnke not a Satanist; he was known for preaching Christian doctrine at people.⁸⁸ As for Michelle Smith, her father was interviewed shortly after the story went public and refuted the claims the book had made about Smith’s mother. Moreover, Michelle Smith had siblings that are not mentioned at all in the book, and no explanation as to why. Moreover, many of the rituals described in the book were similar to rituals depicted in the horror film *Rosemary’s Baby* (1968).⁸⁹ Since the publication of *Michelle Remembers* there has been an ongoing and evolving debate amongst psychiatrists over whether or not repressed memories were real and the process of recovering them a process that actually caused victims to forget traumatic events. While this debate has

⁸⁶ Trott, 2.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 5.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 7.

⁸⁹ Sean Munger, “*Michelle Remembers*: The Story of the Literary Hoax that Started a Tragic Moral Panic,” November 6, 2014, <https://seanmunger.com/2014/11/06/michelle-remembers-the-story-of-the-literary-hoax-that-started-a-tragic-moral-panic/>.

continued to this day in multiple forms, the consensus is that people's memories are faulty and typically informed by their surroundings and beliefs at the time they remember them and should not be taken at face value.⁹⁰ Thus, Michelle Smith's memories should not have been blindly accepted as fact. Finally, I mentioned the several issues with the story in *He Came to Set the Captives Free* in the introduction including: Edna Elaine Moses's mental illness, Rebecca Brown's obsession with demons, and the undercurrent of anti-Catholicism that ran throughout the book, possibly as a result of Jack Chicks' involvement.⁹¹

Satanism survivor stories like *The Satan-Seller*, *Michelle Remembers*, and *He Came to Set the Captives Free* used horrific images of broken families, sexual abuse, orgies, drug use and forced cannibalism to exploit societal anxieties surrounding changing gender roles, the sexual revolution of the sixties, and sixties drug use. Each of these books have been proven false. Nevertheless, the testimonies of these authors tapped into an undercurrent of conservative anxiety about sex, drugs, the disintegration of the nuclear family, and the perceived rise in immorality throughout American society, as a result, these books were effective at horrifying a large number of readers who were anxious over Americas changing values. In doing so they created a discourse that was used against the New Left coalition by associating feminists, drug users, and "free-lovers," with Satanism.

⁹⁰ Henry Otgaar, Mark L. Howe, Lawrence Patihis, Harald Merckelbach, Steven J. Lynn, Scott O. Lilienfeld, and Elizabeth F. Loftus, "The Return of the Repressed: The Persistent and Problematic Claims of Long-Forgotten Trauma," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 14-6, October 4, 2019, 1072-1095, doi:10.1177/1745691619862306.

⁹¹ Fisher.

CHAPTER III

FEMINISTS, ROCKERS, WITCHES, AND OTHER WICKED WOMEN

The grainy fifty-year-old video began with a disorienting display of beaming lights. As the lights faded a pale, blonde Jinx Dawson dressed in all black lounged comfortably in a high-backed, art deco, throne. A man seated behind her on her left played a loud repetitive guitar riff while another on her right pounded a drum set violently. Lifting her head Dawson screamed, “She cuts a man’s heart, making deep gashes.” The camera zooms in on her face revealing her dark eye shadow and the image of something burning is superimposed onto the film. As Dawson reaches the chorus of the song, “Wicked Woman, he knows what you’re doin’,” she begins to violently nod her head back and forth, performing an early version of what would later be dubbed “head banging.”¹ A year before British rock band Black Sabbath heralded in a “new musical era” with the release of what many point to as the first heavy metal album,² *Paranoid* (1970), Jinx Dawson and Coven performed similarly “heavy” songs with occult themed lyrics and style.²

When asked in 1986 whether or not he had ever heard of Coven or their album, *Witchcraft Destroys Minds & Reaps Souls*, Black Sabbath guitarist Tony Iommi certainly lied when he said “No.” The fact that one coven member was called Oz Osbourne, an extremely similar name to Black Sabbath’s lead vocalist Ozzy Osbourne, could perhaps be a coincidence.

¹ Brigid Sundaughter, “Coven- Wicked woman rare “live” performance, 1969,” *YouTube* video, 2:44, March 17, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0B5qNxOXNsk>.

² Ian Christie, *The Complete Headbanging History of Heavy Metal* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2004) 9-10.

A less likely coincidence is the fact that the opening track on Coven's album was "Black Sabbath." Further disproof of Iommi's denial is the fact that Black Sabbath and Coven played a show together early in their career and were each working with Vertigo/Fontana and Mercury record labels which were affiliated.¹ Why is it that Coven and Jinx Dawson has been largely forgotten in the history of rock 'n' roll, and why did Iommi insist that he had never heard of Coven in 1986 when he clearly had? Jinx Dawson's answer was that "back in the day, [rock 'n' roll] was very male-oriented." She described how she used to bring tapes to record labels, and they would refuse to listen to them not believing that she was a serious musician. They told her that she looked "too Vegas for rock 'n' roll" and that she did not look enough like Janis Joplin. Regardless of these obstacles Dawson believed that she had a large influence on metal and doom music. She insisted that Ronnie James Dio and Black Sabbath got a lot of their style and behavior on stage from her.² Rock 'n' roll has long been considered a masculine musical style. However, the story of Jinx Dawson makes clear that women played an influential role in the shaping of rock music and the stage personas of rock musicians. In fact, a strong case could be made that Black Sabbath was not the first metal band; instead, they were, as Lester Bangs put it, "England's answer" to the band that may have just as strong a case to be the first metal band, Coven.³

Building upon the previous chapter, this chapter transitions to an examination of the Satanic Panic within the context of the evangelical anti-rock movement. Specifically, this chapter looks at anxiety surrounding the construction of femininity and the sexual liberation of women. Rock 'n' roll music was dominated by male figures and is often associated with white, teen, male fans. While anxiety over changing masculinity, male sexuality, and masculine dress undoubtedly

¹ Jamie Ludwig, "Shocking Omissions: Coven's 'Witchcraft Destroys Minds & Reaps Souls,'" *NPR*, October 25, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/10/25/559501959/shocking-omissions-coven-s-witchcraft-destroy-minds-reaps-souls>

² Addison Herron-Wheeler, "Coven's Jinx Dawson on 50 Years of Witchcraft Destroys Minds & Reaps Souls," *Kerrang!*, June 15, 2019, <https://www.kerrang.com/features/covens-jinx-dawson-on-50-years-of-witchcraft-destroys-minds-reaps-souls/>

³ Ludwig.

occurred throughout the anti-rock movement, this chapter focuses on femininity for two important reasons. First, women played a crucial role in the reemergence of the religious right and much of their anxiety revolved around feminism and the disintegration of the American family. As rock musicians, women like Jinx Dawson, Debbie Harry, and Janis Joplin, personified the anxieties of the religious right over how feminism would change femininity and female sexuality. Second, within the Satanic Panic women were often depicted as leaders of satanic cults or as victims of cults. Indeed, many saw Satanism as an assault on traditional femininity. I argue that The Satanic Panic was, in part, a gendered conflict over shifting understandings of white femininity and female sexuality. Along the way, I analyze the different ways femininity was constructed and contested between two different dominant forces: evangelicalism and popular music.

My analysis is guided, in part, by the theories of Raewyn Connell. Connell was the first scholar to theoretically conceptualize the existence of multiple masculinities. According to Connell, aside from the dominant masculinity, there may exist multiple marginal, subaltern, and subversive constructions within one society. The dominant femininity is constructed in contrast to both dominant and marginalized masculinities. “Hegemonic masculinity means the pattern of masculinity which is most honoured, which occupies the position of centrality in a structure of gender relations, and whose privileged position helps to stabilize the gender order as a whole, especially the social subordination of women.”⁴ Connell’s theoretical approach is useful to a study of the tension between the rock n’ roll subcultures and anti-rock activists because much of the resulting tension had to do with changing gender roles and conflict over a major shift in the dominant gender constructions. I argue that the tension over femininity during the Satanic Panic shows that Connell’s framework can be applied to femininity.

⁴ Raewyn Connell, “The Study of Masculinities,” *Qualitative Research Journal* 14, no. 1 (2014): 5-15, <http://argo.library.okstate.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/study-masculinities/docview/1625563552/se-2?accountid=4117>.

As mentioned, rock ‘n’ roll was dominated by male musicians and fans. As a result, misogyny was prevalent within rock music and its fan base, as well as in evangelical culture and mass culture.⁵ On the whole, rock ‘n’ roll culture did not necessarily constitute a widespread rebellion against patriarchy and dominant femininity. Still, rock ‘n’ roll included some elements of subversive constructions of femininity – enough to frighten people like Tipper Gore and many like her.

Contesting Femininities

The femininities this chapter is interested in are constructed along the binary opposites of good and evil. In the United States white women have for centuries been constructed as either a virtuous moral compass for society, or as a wicked corruptor of American morals. Obviously, this binary existed within the discourse espoused by the evangelical right. On the other hand, this binary discourse also influenced popular music in such a way that it was simultaneously affirmed, contested, and subverted. Thus, popular music, including rock ‘n’ roll and metal, was not the challenge to dominant femininity that anti-rock activists feared it was, though there were female fans and musicians who found and exploited spaces to subvert this binary.

In literature and films produced by Satanic Panic proponents and anti-rock advocates there are two “positive” constructions of femininity. One is innocent victim and the other is powerful and virtuous. The best example of the former is the central character, Michelle Smith, in the book that ignited the Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) scare and the repressed memory movement in Psychology in the early 1980’s, *Michelle Remembers*. Smith, even as an adult, remained in a state of perpetual victimization and submission. She was anxious, reserved, and depressed

⁵ Steve Waksman, *This Ain’t the Summer of Love: Conflict and Crossover in Heavy Metal and Punk* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009) 5-6. For more on gender in rock n’ roll see Lisa L. Rhodes, *Electric Ladyland: Women and Rock Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Helen Reddington, *The Lost Women of Rock Music: Female Musicians of the Punk Era* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2007); Gillian G. Gaar, *She’s a Rebel: The History of Women in Rock & Roll* (Seattle: Seal Press, 1992); Marion Lenoard, *Gender in the Music Industry: Rock, Discourse and Girl Power* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2007); Mina Carson, Tisa Lewis, and Susan M. Shaw, *Girls Rock! Fifty Years of Women Making Music* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004); and Gerri Hirshey, *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: The True, Tough Story of Women in Rock* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2001).

throughout the book, and was heavily reliant on Pazder's leadership and support, so much so that the two develop a romantic relationship. Michelle is coded as a victim. Young white women and girls, portrayed as victims played a huge role in the construction of the Satanic Panic. Fear that rock music, drugs, and open sexuality would corrupt and exploit vulnerable femininity was a powerful notion in the minds of many proponents of the Satanic Panic and anti-rock movement.

In defense of these victims emerged the other model of femininity, what I call moral compass femininity. There are many examples of women being promoted, or promoting themselves, as a moral compass for society amid the perceived moral bankruptcy of the late twentieth century. Two that are of interest in this work are Tipper Gore and Phyllis Schlafly. Tipper Gore, a founding member of the PMRC (Parents Music Resource Center) and the wife of democratic leader Al Gore, asserted that music with violent and sexual lyrics "set the tone for the generation," and exacerbated child delinquency and desensitized young people to violence and sex.⁶ Gore claimed that her efforts to censor rock music were meant to combat a "degrading attitude towards women."⁷ She constructed herself as a protector of the rights of "consumers and caring parents."⁸ Jello Biafra, lead singer of punk band, The Dead Kennedys, accused Gore of "operating as a crutch for people like Jesse Helms and Phillis Schlafly, in order to drive an arch-conservative wedge into the mainstream."⁹

Comparing Tipper Gore to Phyllis Schlafly is interesting. Gore, a self-described liberal democrat, would definitely oppose this comparison to the anti-ERA conservative activist Schlafly. Schlafly and her supporters waged war on what they believed were radical feminists. They advocated for traditional gender roles and the pro-family movement. They saw efforts like

⁶ Jared Mackler, "Jello Biafra on Oprah with Tipper Gore," *YouTube* video, 10:17, August 6, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q_7NSXnlQ64.

⁷ Martin Schneider, "Jello Biafra and 'Uptight Prude' Tipper Gore Fight it Out in the Pages of *Creem*, 1986," *Dangerous Minds*, 21 July 2015, https://dangerousminds.net/comments/jello_biafra_and_uptight_prude_tipper_gore.

⁸ Tipper Gore, "Kudos to Mendelssohn and Excellent Magazine Featuring Brilliant Column," *Creem*, November 1986, 11.

⁹ "Jello Biafra on Oprah with Tipper Gore"

the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) as an effort to undermine the validity and stability of the family unit.¹⁰ Schlafly and the evangelical right pointed to the efforts of feminists as responsible for the familial instability and moral decline that they believed plagued United States society in the 1970s and 1980s.¹¹

From opposite ends of the political spectrum, Tipper Gore and Phyllis Schlafly represented women as moral leaders of United States society. They objected to social, political, and, most importantly, cultural trends and movements on moral grounds and became popular and influential leaders as a result. This does not mean that these women did not face backlash and sexism, it just means that they were able to influence mainstream society through their efforts. Schlafly saw to it that the ERA never passed and Gore successfully rallied for the inclusion of parental advisory labels on records.

In contrast to the victim and moral leader femininities, female rock ‘n’ roll musicians began to exemplify nondominant feminine constructions that existed in contrast and in conflict with dominant gender constructions. One of the first bands to incorporate occult themes into their entire album was Coven with their 1969 album *Witchcraft Destroys Minds & Reaps Souls*. The band was led by “the original wicked woman of heavy metal,” Jinx Dawson.¹² Jinx Dawson personified everything that Phyllis Schlafly and the religious right hated and all the fears of Tipper Gore and the PMRC. The best way to characterize the tension over femininity that defined the Satanic Panic is David G. Bromley’s “countersubversive ideology” model. Under this model, women who acted outside of traditional gender roles, or in sexually immoral ways, were the root cause of society’s ills, especially if those women were mothers. Viewed from the perspective of evangelical activists like Phyllis Schlafly and Jacob Aranza, Women’s Rights activists who

¹⁰ Eagle Forum, “Phyllis Schlafly discusses the Equal Rights Amendment on the Mike Douglas Show,” *YouTube* video, 8:35, March 14, 2019 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxKJh7M-DSA>.

¹¹ Victor, 231.

¹² Keith Chachkes, “Feature: Coven’s Jinx Dawson: The Original Wicked Woman of Heavy Metal,” *Ghost Cult Magazine*, 12 December 2019, <https://www.ghostcultmag.com/feature-coven-jinx-dawson-the-original-wicked-woman-of-heavy-metal/>

advocated for radically shifting the power structure were the same as immoral corrupters of the American family, or even, evil Devil Worshipers and Occult witches.

Several supposed accounts of satanic cults include descriptions of powerful female leaders and intermediaries who seduce people into joining the cult and/or participating in violence against young children, sometimes even their own. For example, multiple women throughout Mike Warnke's autobiographical book, *The Satan Seller*, acted as facilitators for his behavior (nothing was ever fully Warnke's fault). First with Warnke's stepmother Millie. Then with the female classmates he blamed for his alcohol abuse in high school after they turned him down. Other than drugs, sex was the primary motivator for Warnke's eventual participation in a satanic cult. Especially considering his first exposure to the cult occurred at the orgy with "liberal women." Moreover, Warnke blamed a woman for introducing him to the drug that he would grow addicted to and led to his increasing reliance on his drug dealer and the Cult.¹³

The most important female figure in Warnke's life as a satanic high priest was a "fourth stager," an advanced member of the cult, named Charlotte. Right off the bat Char, as Warnke referred to her, intimidated him. She seemed to exude power. He described her as "a golden-haired goddess in a lacy black dress, with a hazel branch wand and scary violet eyes that blazed out at" him. After Warnke's conversion to Christianity Charlotte would send intimidating letters and show up unannounced to threaten Warnke's family.¹⁴ The women in Warnke's life, at least according to *The Satan-Seller*, were key to his descent into madness and drug abuse. Powerful women, like Charlotte, were dangerous and seductive. In the minds of anti-rock and evangelical activists, in general, women could be victims, virtuous moral compasses, or evil seductresses and wicked witches.

Few women embodied the fears of anti-rock activists more than Jinx Dawson who capitalized on the "wicked witch" construct and subverted heavy metal's emergent patriarchal

¹³ Warnke, 11- 22.

¹⁴ Ibid, 86- 138.

power structure. She used the “devil horns” hand gesture years before it was popularized by Ronnie James Dio. Her black clothing and dark eye make-up, contrasted her pale skin and long blonde hair. Dawson would even “bang” her head in a similar way to the millions of “headbanging” metal fans in the following decades. Following Coven’s 1969 album they continued to record off and on, but they never reached the household name status of their Occult metal successors such as Black Sabbath and Blue Oyster Cult, nor any of the numerous Metal bands that Coven influenced directly, or indirectly. Lester Bangs, who apparently hated Coven, labeled Black Sabbath as “England’s answer” to Coven’s occult themes and powerful sound.¹⁵

Coven’s first Album, *Witchcraft Destroys Minds and Reaps Souls* includes such songs as “White Witch of Rose Hall,” “For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge,” and “Wicked Woman.” In each song Dawson subverts the gender hierarchy. “White Witch of Rose Hall” recounts the legend of Annie Palmer. Living in Jamaica on a large sugar plantation on Montego Bay, the legend says, Palmer practiced witchcraft, murdered three husbands, and tortured and killed countless male slaves.¹⁶ While the legend has been debunked, it left an indelible impact on music history and the Jamaican tourist industry.

“For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge,” is about a powerful, seductive witch from the point of view of her unsuspecting lover, or victim. The lyrics “you look into her magic eyes” is reminiscent of, or perhaps became a model for, Mike Warnke’s description of Charlotte (and Jinx Dawson certainly seems to resemble the “golden-haired goddess” in Warnke’s book).¹⁷ The witch in the song also exhibits an extraordinary amount of power. “Then you know she’s the one that had you hypnotized and everything she touches dies.”¹⁸ The phrase “For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge,” was wrongfully understood as an acronym for “F.U.C.K.” and would become the

¹⁵ Ludwig.

¹⁶ Coven, “White Witch of Rose Hall,” released 1969, track 2 on *Witchcraft Destroys Minds & Reaps Souls*, Nevoc Musick Company, Spotify.

¹⁷ Coven, “For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge,” released 1969, track 4 on *Witchcraft Destroys Minds & Reaps Souls*, Nevoc Musick Company, Spotify.

¹⁸ Ibid

title of Van Halen's ninth album. Sammy Hagar, wishing to name the album "Fuck" in response to the growing censorship movement led by Tipper Gore, was convinced to use the phrase instead.¹⁹ However, "Wicked Woman" is the song on the album that most apparently highlights Dawson's subversion.

A theme in rock 'n' rolls predecessor, the Blues, and the rock music that appropriated its sound and profited off the danger associated with it, often portrayed female heartbreakers, voodoo queens, and wicked two-timing women (and men for that matter) within its lyrics. Coven's song is a bit different, however. The wicked woman portrayed in Dawson's lyrics is not simply a two-timing seductress; she is a murderous sorcerer who "cuts a man's heart."²⁰ Her male victim is "weeping and crying."²¹ A striking theme of each of these songs in the victimization of men. As already discussed, the typical victims that the evangelical right associated with satanic cults were young white females. Jinx Dawson subverted both the construct of feminine as victim and celebrated her role as a subversive "witch."

Other bands capitalized on the wicked, evil, or witchy woman trope including female led bands Siouxsie and the Banshees, Jefferson Starship, and Fleetwood Mac. But decades before Jinx Dawson and Coven released *Witchcraft Destroys Minds and Reaps Souls* (1969), female Blues singers were challenging male domination in their lyrics and sometimes even using the Wicked Woman trope in the process. Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues" (1920) recounts the murder of a woman's abusive husband. "Hound Dog" (1952) by Big Mama Thornton lamented her two-timing lover trying to sneak back into her life. Ma Rainey's "Louisiana Hoodoo Blues" (1925) chronicles a woman's journey to find a "hoodoo" to stop "women from taking" her man.²² Male

¹⁹ Dave Basner, "14 Things You Might Not Know About For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge," *IHeartRadio*, 16 June 2017, <https://www.iheart.com/content/2017-06-14-14-things-you-might-not-know-about-for-unlawful-carnal-knowledge/>.

²⁰ Coven, "Wicked Woman," released 1969, track 6 on *Witchcraft Destroys Minds and Reaps Souls*, Nevo Music Company, Spotify.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Mamie Smith, "Crazy Blues," *Crazy Blues*, Single, 1920, Spotify; Big Mama Thornton, "Hound Dog," *Hound Dog*, Peacock, Single, 1953, Spotify; Ma Rainey, "Louisiana Hoodoo Blues," *Louisiana Hoodoo Blues*, Single, 1925.

led rock groups also capitalized on the trope of evil women though not often in the subversive way of Mamie Smith, Ma Rainey, Big Mama Thornton, Jinx Dawson, Stevie Nicks, Grace Slick, and Siouxsie Sioux.

Sex, Sass, Stir: Female Sexuality and the Fearmonger Jacob Aranza

The conspiracy over backwards messages in rock music was popularized among evangelical Christians through the work of a young man from Houston, Texas named Jacob Aranza. Aranza was hailed as “one of the outstanding young ministers of America,” and he claimed to have been involved with “drug/rock culture” before his ninth birthday. By fifteen, Aranza had converted to Christianity and he vowed to raise awareness about the dangers of rock music.²³ One would think that a book titled *Backward Masking Unmasked: Backward Satanic Messages of Rock and Roll Exposed*, would be predominantly about the supposed messages that are heard when you play Led Zeppelin and Beatles albums in reverse. This subject takes up five of the eighteen chapters in Jacob Aranza’s book. The rest of the book highlights the disturbing lifestyles of rock musicians, defined by sex, drugs, the occult, and, of course, rock ‘n’ roll. A few of Aranza’s most despised figures are Debbie Harry, Janis Joplin, and Patti Smith. He also dedicates an entire chapter to one of the vilest songs to come out in 1982, Olivia Newton-John’s “Physical” (Aranza’s extremely loose definition of rock and Roll is head scratching to say the least).²⁴

Olivia Newton-John was one of the most popular pop singers of the 1970s and 1980s, but it was not until the “clean pop singer,” sold-out and “set pornography to music” in 1982 with “Physical” that the singer became despised by right-wing evangelicals. Aranza lamented that lyrics like “There’s nothing left to talk about unless its horizontal” and “you gotta know you’re bringin’ out the animal in me” were responsible for the sexual activity of “one out of three 13-to-15-year-olds and six out of ten 16-to-18-year-olds” and “over 275 thousand abortions among

²³ Jacob Aranza, *Backwards Masking Unmasked*, back cover.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 25.

teenagers.”²⁵ Aranza was also concerned about the sexually suggestive album cover featuring Newton-John working out. It’s telling that Aranza chose Olivia Newton-John as an avenue to talk about the association between rock n’ roll and sex. He could have easily used any number of songs with raunchier lyrics and images to make his point, but he chose a popular female artist who had chosen to express herself sexually. She defied traditional gender norms that Aranza and his peers of the evangelical right found all the more inappropriate because of her gender and status.

Perhaps the musician Jacob Aranza finds most troubling was Blondie front woman Debbie Harry. As problematic as Harry’s rock career was for Aranza, what makes her even more dangerous is her previous career as a Playboy bunny. Moreover, she was extremely open about her sexuality and how she felt about sex and its relationship to rock music.

Debbie openly declares, “rock and roll is all sex, 100 percent. Sometimes music can make you ----, which makes me ----. Most depends on the person. I don’t know if people ---- (masturbate) to my music. I hope so. I just dance around and shake ... I wear tight clothes. I wear sexy clothes. I wear short skirts – try to look hot. If someone’s undressing me with their eyes, that’s not an offense to me. If someone’s a pig, then that’s horrible... but I don’t think someone looking at me and envisioning me without my clothes is going to hurt me.”²⁶

Harry’s open sexuality is a direct affront to Aranza’s world view and the construct of subversive femininity and female sexuality to which he ascribes. He repeats her quotes as a method to shock readers he supposes hold similar opinions. After sharing more of Harry’s offensive quotes, including one about “sex and sass” being the “main ingredients of rock,” he questions the reader frantically “Shocked? It’s about time! This has been going on for almost 20 years.”²⁷ Aside from the fact that Aranza’s assertion that sex had been a theme of music “for almost 20 years” is completely inaccurate (hedonism and sex have been themes of music for centuries), it is also indicative of the message the evangelical right was trying to send. That message being that the

²⁵ Ibid, 25.

²⁶ Ibid, 75.

²⁷ Ibid, 27.

movements of the 1960s, especially the feminist movement and other women's rights movements, along with the rise of rock music had corrupted American youths and encouraged them to act outside of supposedly traditional gender and sex norms.

Aranza finds Janis Joplin as dangerous for her attitude towards sex as he does for her use of drugs and the eventual overdose that killed her. "All of my life I wanted to be a beatnik," Aranza quoted her, "meeting all the heavies, get stoned, get laid, have a good time." Aranza also seems to make up the fact that "A coroner's report said her body was eaten up with syphilis."²⁸ However, this does not seem to be true and is reminiscent of the false claims that black bluesman, Robert Johnson, died of Syphilis. In the south during Jim Crow the cause of death for many black men was often wrongfully listed as a sexually transmitted disease, reflecting the racist assumptions held by southerners at the time that black men were sexually immoral and carried sexually transmitted diseases as a result.²⁹ Female rock 'n' rollers were constructed as simultaneously wicked and sexually immoral. In Janis Joplin, the evangelical right found a nongender conforming, sexually open, and drug using enemy that represented the opposite of the Christian feminine ideal.

Another problematic star mentioned in *Backwards Masking Unmasked* was Patti Smith. Aranza claims that Smith's goal is "to write rock and roll pornography." Aranza's more specific gripe with Patti Smith was that her music included themes of Lesbianism. He points to the lyrics, "Oh, she looks so fine I've got this crazy feeling I'm gonna maker her mine." Of the lyrics Aranza bemoans that "this is clearly and simply one girl singing about another girl."³⁰

Aranza also worries over Smith's portrayal of her song "Redondo Beach" as a song about lesbianism. "Redondo Beach" recounts the story the suicide of a young woman's lover following

²⁸ Ibid, 89-91. The coroner's report published here <https://www.janisjoplin.net/life/autopsy/> contains no such information.

²⁹ Douglas Miller, "US History Through Popular and Unpopular Music," Blues lecture, October 2, 2020.

³⁰ Aranza, *Backwards Masking Unmasked*, 103.

a fight between the couple.³¹ More interesting about the song and, her debut album, *Horses*, are Patti Smith's own assessments of gender and sexuality. Years later reflecting on her first album Smith asserted that her songs did not reflect her "sexual preferences."³² Patti Smith asserted her "total freedom as an artist" and considered the songs on her *Horses* album to be "beyond gender."³³ Smith argued that, despite the fact that she did not identify as a lesbian, or transgender, she had the right to "take any position, any voice, that [she] wanted."³⁴ Furthermore, the song "Redondo Beach" was not actually about a woman mourning the loss of her female lover, it originated in a fight that Smith had with her sister Linda.³⁵ Regardless, the sexual and possible LGBTQ themes of Smith's songs served as a source of major discomfort to evangelical listeners.

While Olivia Newton-John, Debbie Harry, Janis Joplin, and Patti Smith each performed in completely different styles, it was their sexual themes and challenge to gender and sex norms that connected them in the mind of Jacob Aranza and his fellow evangelicals. Whether or not the work and lifestyles of these musicians constituted rebellion and subversive gender and sex constructs is beside the point. Jacob Aranza found these women's sexual expressions to be dangerous to the lives of young listeners, the gender hierarchy of the United States society, and to the evangelical construction of the American family.

Women played a major role in both the reemergence of the evangelical right and in the history of rock 'n' roll. The story of Jinx Dawson shows both the influence that women had in the rock industry and how they were systemically erased from the history of rock 'n' roll. Despite misogyny from the rock industry and the retaliation of the evangelical right, women found ways to subvert the gender hierarchy and dominant construction of femininity in their music and

³¹ Patti Smith, "Redondo Beach," released 1975, track 2 on *Horses*, Arista, Spotify.

³² Patti Smith, "'Even as A Child, I Felt Like an Alien,'" interview by Simon Reynolds, *The Guardian*, May 22, 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2005/may/22/popandrock1>.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

persona on and off the stage. Women from bipartisan backgrounds ranging from the Liberal democrat, Tipper Gore, to the evangelical mouthpiece of the female Christian right, Phyllis Schlafly, spread anxiety over the spread of feminism, overt female sexuality, and the way women were portrayed in rock music. A notable amount of conflict arose over the contestation of femininity that took place between rock musicians and anti-rock activism. Female sexuality was also a source of tension between the evangelical right and rock music, the music and lifestyles of Olivia Newton-John, Debbie Harry, Janis Joplin, and Patti Smith were a source of extreme anxiety for anti-rock activists like Jacob Aranza.

CHAPTER IV

“EVERYBODY MUST GET STONED”

Jeff Simms was a normal, middle-class, teenager from the United States in the early 1980s. He spent his time attending youth services at the local evangelical church and socializing with his friends Melissa and Marty. Most would describe Jeff as a well behaved, smart, and sociable young man, however Jeff’s parents, Jane and Arthur, were growing concerned with Jeff’s disobedience and attitude. The source of this tension was Jeff’s choice of music. Referred to as “junk” and “garbage” by Jane, rock ‘n’ roll was Jeff’s favorite music. Fed up with Jeff’s behavior after a “blow up” over the music, Jane sought advice from his youth pastor, Jim Owen, who had “influence” over Jeff. Pastor Owen agreed to have a talk with Jeff, not about his disobedience or attitude, but about “one of the most difficult things a young Christian person must deal with:” rock ‘n’ roll. After this conversation, Jeff agreed to do some research on rock music and to not listen to the genre for two weeks. Over the course of those two weeks, Jeff is convinced that rock music was an instrument of Satan that inspired listeners to use drugs, seduced them into committing deviant sexual acts, and controlled them through subliminal messages and hypnotic sounds.¹

Jeff Simms is not a traditional historical actor; he was not a real person. Instead, he was a character in the 1982 evangelical teen drama *Rock: It’s Your Decision*. This film was an

¹ *Rock: It’s Your Decision*, directed by John Taylor (1982; Olive Film Productions) Amazon Video.

evangelical production that was just one of several books, films, pamphlets, and other productions that were distributed to invoke fear of rock music, performers, fans, and its effects on young listeners. While evangelical leaders had several objections to the performance, distribution, and consumption of rock music, one of the most widely held fears that influenced the United States culturally, politically, and judicially, was the association of rock and roll music, musicians, and fans with drug abuse. By the early 1970s many Americans, especially evangelicals, began to associate drug use with violence, deviance, and abnormal religious belief (especially devil worship). As discussed in chapter one, popular music has been associated with hedonism in European and United States cultures since the 17th century, an association that became more pronounced in the mid-to-late 1960s with the rise of the hippy movement and psychedelic rock. Ultimately a decades long moral panic that was, in many ways, a reaction to the 1960s counterculture began to advocate for conservative social reform, censorship of popular media, and legislation to limit drug use.

This chapter argues that evangelical leaders saw more than an association between drug use and rock music, to many the music itself acted as a drug that controlled its listeners thoughts through raunchy lyrics and hypnotic sound. Simultaneously, the religious right helped construct increasingly negative images of drug use such that, in the early 1970s drug use became a gateway to Devil worship which included immoral sexuality and gender equality, heresy and blasphemy, and even violence and murder. This negative construction of drug use and drug users undoubtedly had an effect on the anti-drug legislation and propaganda, that grew pervasive in the last three decades of the twentieth century in the United States' War on Drugs.¹

¹ For More on the history of anxiety over Drug Abuse see Holly M. Karibo, *Sin City North: Sex Drugs, and Citizenship in the Detroit-Windsor Borderland* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (La Vergne: The New Press, 2020); Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair, *Whiteout: The CIA, Drugs, and the Press* (New York: Verso, 1999); Dan Baum, *Smoke and Mirrors: The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1996); Radley Balko, *Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America's Police Forces* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2014); and Richard J. Bonnie and Charles H. Whitebread II, "The Forbidden Fruit and the Tree of Knowledge: An Inquiry into the Legal History of American Marijuana Prohibition," *Virginia Law Review* 56, no. 6 (1970): 971- 1203.

Waging the Drug War, 1906-1968

The fear of drug use and drug abuse rose sharply in the 20th century. Early legislation aimed to reduce the consumption of drugs targeted opiates and sought to raise awareness about the presence of certain substances in household medicines. In 1906 the Pure Food and Drug Act mandated that items containing drugs like marijuana, cocaine, and opiates be labeled and a proposed 1908 amendment to the Act aimed to eliminate the presence of “habit-forming” narcotics without a prescription.² In 1914, under Woodrow Wilson, the Harrison Narcotics Act established a “special tax” on the production, importation, manufacture, or distribution of opiates.³ The Marihuana Tax act of 1937 implemented a one dollar tax on the production, distribution, and consumption of cannabis, failure to pay this tax would result in the hefty penalty of five years in prison and/or a fine of up to 2,000 dollars.⁴ In November 1951, the Boggs Act amended the Narcotic Drugs Import and Export Act and established mandatory minimum sentences for “fraudulently or knowingly” bringing a “narcotic drug” into the United States.”⁵ These mandatory minimum sentences would be increased dramatically five years later.⁶ Drug policy in the first half of the 20th century rose dramatically in the 1950s. By the end of the 1930s, the rising drug policy began to highlight the growing fear over the use of drugs in the United States.

The late 1960s and early 1970s were marked by a conservative cultural turn in response to the 1960s counterculture. While legislation to control drugs had a long history in the twentieth century, the election of Richard Nixon in 1968 would redefine how the United States addressed

² “Pure Food and Drugs Act, 1906,” *Drug Library*, approved, June 30, 1906, accessed April 1, 2021, <http://www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/History/e1900/pfda.htm>.

³ “Harrison Narcotics Tax Act, 1914,” *Drug Library*, approved December 17, 1914, accessed April 1, 2021, <http://www.druglibrary.org/SCHAFFER/history/e1910/harrisonact.htm>.

⁴ “The Marihuana Tax Act of 1937,” *Drug Library*, accessed April 1, 2021, <http://www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/hemp/taxact/mjtaxact.htm>.

⁵ The Boggs Act, Pub. L. No. 255-666, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-65/pdf/STATUTE-65-Pg767.pdf>.

⁶ Charles Whitebread, “The History of the Non-Medical Use of Drugs in the United States,” 1995, to the California Judges Association annual conference, *Schaffer Library of Drug Policy*, <http://www.druglibrary.org/schaffer/history/whiteb9.htm>

its growing drug problem. At the same time musicians like the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and Jefferson Airplane were being influenced by the counterculture movement and whitewashed understandings of eastern cultures. They began playing music that celebrated drug use and often used sounds to simulate the effects of drugs. This directly influenced the development of the anti-rock movement and the Satanic Panic.

Drug use, addiction, and law took on a new meaning with the election of Richard Nixon in 1968. While legal action and social stigma regarding drug use had begun earlier in the century Nixon heralded in new era of legal action taken against users and distributors of illegal drugs. Indeed, Nixon coined the term that became synonymous with anti-drug legislation. His “war on drugs” would become a defining feature of American conservatism well into the twentieth century as he declared drug use, “public enemy number one.”⁷ In October of 1970, the Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act was passed which reduced penalties for the possession of Marijuana and created “no-knock” searches. This act also established the Controlled Substances Act which categorized drugs based on their medicinal value and potential to cause addiction.⁸ In 1974 the Senate Internal Security Committee invited a group of scientists to testify about the harmful effects of marijuana. Senator James O. Eastland praised the hearings as “the most significant ever held” by the subcommittee and believed that it could “play a role” in preventing “national disaster.”⁹ While Nixon invented the War on Drugs, the Reagan era took drug legislation to new heights of incarceration and penalty as the United States continued to fight a war over the use and distribution of drugs.

⁷ “Thirty Years of America’s Drug War: a Chronology,” *Frontline*, accessed April 1, 2021, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/drugs/cron/>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ *Marihuana-Hashish Epidemic and Its Impact on United States Security, Hearings before the subcommittee to investigate the administration of the Internal Security Act and other internal security laws of the committee on the judiciary United States Senate, Ninety-third Congress, V, (1974) (James O. Eastland, Senator, Mississippi)*, <https://archive.org/details/marihuanahashish00unit/page/n7/mode/2up>.

Psychedelic Sixties and Sacrilegious Seventies

Only a few years later the moral panic around Satanism was beginning to pick up steam. *The Satan Seller* was published by Mike Warnke in 1972. As you will recall, by the time Warnke enrolled in San Bernardino Valley College he was an alcoholic who rarely attended class. At some point in his first few months in college Warnke was offered marijuana. At first, he claimed to have refused the offer, but overtime and under constant peer pressure, the young man decided to try the offered drug. Warnke was immediately hooked and his addiction would facilitate his involvement with a satanic cult.¹⁰ Warnke described rituals and sex parties where drugs were used to lower inhibition and create a hallucinogenic effect. However, Warnke's fast living, drug abusing, Satanist lifestyle ended abruptly when he overdosed and nearly died. His fellow cultist dumped him outside of the hospital caring little for their leader's wellbeing.¹¹

Mike Warnke's story highlights the idea that proponents of the Satanic Panic stressed for the next two decades. Not only were the use of alcohol and marijuana dangerous gateways to harder drug use and criminal activity, but they were also gatewaying to devil worship and occult practice. To many, Warnke's story was a factual firsthand example of the potential dangers of drug use.

Although Warnke never explicitly mentioned rock 'n' roll as an influence on his participation in Satanism, other proponents of the panic were already making the connection between rock 'n' roll, drug use, and Satanism. One of the first was Frank Garlock, "one of America's best-known authorities on the dangers of rock music." Garlock toured United States high schools, summer camps, and youth groups to decry rock music and the culture surrounding it. He was supposedly "in tune with young people and their needs."¹² In his 1971 anti-rock pamphlet Garlock argued that rock music was a cause of the problems plaguing young people in

¹⁰ Warnke, 17-22.

¹¹ Ibid, 113.

¹² Frank Garlock, *The Big Beat: A Rock Blast* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 1971) back cover.

the early 1970's. He pointed to Bob Dylan's Forest Hills Stadium concert emphasizing the fact that the music "caused" fans to act in an "erratic, irrational, [and] unnatural" ways.¹³ Garlock, perhaps purposefully, misinterpreted the concert as if it was Dylan's goal to cause listeners to react violently to his music, this could not be further from the truth. This concert took place during Dylan's electric turn, his fans were incredibly angry at Dylan in this moment as a result of their belief that he was a "sell out."

Beyond Dylan, Garlock constructed an understanding of rock 'n' roll that demonized it in a similar way that popular culture demonized drug users. To him rock music at best exacerbated, at worst was the cause of, "juvenile delinquency, juvenile crime, illegitimate births, and the suicide rate." Garlock suggested, through the story of Art Linkletter whose daughter died of a drug overdose in 1969, that rock music contained "secret messages" that encouraged "young people to take part in the growing problem of drug abuse." Garlock asserted that "the hippies and those who indulged in drugs were the ones who are the strongest proponents of rock 'n' roll music." But Garlock does not simply blame the musicians and the fans of rock music for the spread of the harmful effects of drugs. "[I] have seen [teen rock listeners] at the first few sounds from a rock 'n' roll tune hallucinate, go into ecstatic gyrations, get a far-away stare in their eyes and act as if someone had just given them a dose of LSD."¹⁴ To anti-rock activists like Frank Garlock, rock listeners did not need physical drugs to induce a drug like state, for them the music itself was a drug that rock fans were addicted to. As anti-rock and anti-drug ideology began to transfer to the 1980's and Ronald Reagan's presidency, the idea that rock music was a drug became more pronounced in the literature of the anti-rock movement. Meanwhile, Ronald Reagan was enhancing the war on drugs and moving more to punitive measures to attack the drug problem rather than rehabilitation that marked the early years of the drug war.

¹³ Ibid, 11.

¹⁴ Ibid, 11-12.

“They’re Killing Our Children”: The Evil Eighties

The 1980’s were a time of renewed confidence in United States patriotism. The time was marked for many by a cognitive dissonance that ignored the mounting problems of income disparity, mass incarceration, and cultural imperialism. Dominant forces were committed to scapegoating those who acted outside of the “traditional family values” they espoused. Among their many enemies were black activists, drug users, homosexuals (especially AIDS victims), as well as working mothers and feminists. Rock music and rock musicians continued to be associated with drug use and sexual immorality, including homosexuality. Proponents of the Satanic Panic believed that rock music used subliminal messages and other tactics to induce listeners to participate in drug use and other immoral acts.¹⁵ Political leaders were hyper focused on the drug issue domestically and by the mid-1980’s also began to place blame on musicians for encouraging drug use.

In a 1986 address from the West Hall of the White House president Ronald Reagan declared that “drugs are menacing our society. They’re threatening our values and undercutting our institutions. They’re killing our children.”¹⁶ The president went on to praise his administration’s efforts to lower the rate of drug use. He cited that the spending for drug law enforcement had tripled since 1981, moreover, ten thousand “drug criminals” were arrested in 1980 alone, and that the DEA had seized 250 million dollars’ worth of assets the same year.¹⁷ Within the next month Congress passed the Anti-drug Abuse Act of 1986. This act increased the use of mandatory minimum sentences and expanded the number of drugs that received mandatory

¹⁵ See also: John Brackett, “Satan, Subliminal, and Suicide: The Formation and Development of an antirock Discourse in the United States during the 1980s,” *American Music*, 36- 3 (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, Fall 2018) 271-302

¹⁶ Ronald Reagan, “September 14, 1986: Speech to the Nation on the Campaign Against Drug Abuse,” *University of Virginia Miller Center*, accessed December 9, 2020, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/september-14-1986-speech-nation-campaign-against-drug-abuse>.

¹⁷ Ibid

sentences.¹⁸ The Reagan era of anti-drug enforcement was defined by heavy punishment for drug users and distributors. This strategy would carry on into the 1990s and the Bush and Clinton administrations.

Early on in the 1980s anti-rock activists began spreading a conspiracy theory about the music young people were listening to. The back cover of Jacob Aranza's book, *Backwards Masking Unmasked*, makes no secret of the book's subject, or motivation:

Rock music is laced with lyrics exalting drugs, the occult, immorality, homosexuality, violence and rebellion. But there is a more sinister danger. It's called Backward Masking. Numerous rock groups employ this mind-influencing technique in their recordings [...] Many of the messages placed on records through backward masking are tied in closely with witchcraft and Satan worship and encourage abnormal sexual behavior and the use of drugs.¹⁹

Before even opening Aranza's book the reader got a clear sense of what is so dangerous about rock music. Rock music was not just associated with drugs and immorality, nor does it simply encourage drug use and immoral behavior; to Aranza and thousands of his readers the music literally has a hypnotic effect on listeners that could potentially influence them to behave in immoral ways and/or use drugs. It seems that the music itself was as mind-altering as any "drug," and a gateway to other drug use and illegal activity according to Satanic Panic proponents.

Louisiana State Senator Bill Keith legitimized Aranza's work by writing a brief introduction. In it he states that "some reputable psychiatrists and psychologists" believe that "satanic or drug-related messages" in music when played backwards, "can transcend the conscious and go directly to the subconscious part of a teenager." Keith laments that the average teenager in the United States "listens to about six hours of music every day. Thus rock music certainly is one of the great vehicles for molding the morals of the youth of America."²⁰ Despite the fact that Senator Keith failed to name just one "reputable psychiatrist, or psychologist" to

¹⁸ Fredric Reamer, *Heinous crime: cases, causes, and consequences* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) 134.

¹⁹ Aranza, "About the Author," *Backwards Masking Unmasked*, back cover.

²⁰ *Ibid*, vii- viii.

legitimize his own claim, the power of an elected official would certainly lend credence to Aranza's claims. Keith even encouraged readers to be "shocked" and "frightened" by Aranza's book.

According to Aranza, backwards masking began with The Beatles, he claimed that several songs and album art contain subliminal messages that indicate that Paul McCartney had died. According to Aranza, several other artists also used the backward masking technique, "whether knowingly or unknowingly." He suggested that Queen's "Another One Bites the Dust" contains the backwards message to "decide to smoke marijuana."²¹

Backwards masking only takes up a small portion of Aranza's book. However, the message is clear, backwards masking was a technique that rock musicians purposefully used to influence young minds. Much like marijuana served as a gateway to harder drug use and Satanism for Mike Warnke, anti-rock activists like Jacob Aranza insisted that rock music itself was a mind-numbing gateway to drug use and Satanism, rock music was a drug itself.

While Aranza's work was targeted at adult readers, especially parents of teenagers, during the early 1980's evangelical anti-rock Christians began to produce anti-rock propaganda that was targeted directly at who they saw as the victims of rock music, teenagers. This chapter opened with a description of a 1982 film called *Rock, It's your Decision*. While Jeff becomes more and more of a "fanatic," according to his friends throughout the film, we do not learn the details of his research until the final scene of the film. In it, Pastor Owen has invited Jeff to speak before his youth group about what he learned. "How many of you plan to leave church tonight to go out and get drunk?" Jeff inquires, "How many of you are going to go out and shoot up with some heroine or smoke a joint?" Jeff chastised the youth group, and says if these questions are shocking "maybe you should take a closer look at the music you've been listening to." Jeff decries the pervasiveness of rock music in the lives of his peers and asserts that their repeated

²¹ Ibid, 6- 7.

listening and dancing to rock music was evidence that they were “being controlled” by the music.²² While the film never explicitly claims that rock music would influence listeners to become involved in drugs or the occult, it is clearly implied. The assertion that music exercises control over its listeners, may not necessarily amount to it being a drug itself. However, it is clearly a mind-altering experience to listen to rock music according to the film’s makers, which makes it similar to a drug. Even beyond this assertion in Jeff’s final monologue, his behavior throughout the film is heavily affected by him listening to rock music. After listening to the music, Jeff becomes belligerent, depressed, and unable to control his temper. In a similar way to drugs, an anti-rock activist would suggest that rock music was a mind-altering experience that mimicked drug use.

Proponents of the Satanism Scare in the late 20th century like Mike Warnke, Frank Garlock, Bob Larson, and Jacob Aranza believed that the use of Drugs, whether they be cannabinoid, opiates, or amphetamines, was a potential gateway into Satanism. This idea was directly linked to the widespread belief that drug use created violent and criminal drug users. Larson pointed his finger directly at rock music claiming that Satanists used “hypnotic” messages to entice adults and children to use drugs and brainwash innocent people into worshiping the devil. Moreover, drug addicted Satanists were “addictively dependent” to their satanic “allegiance.”²³ Memoirs from supposed Satanists, informational texts like Jacob Aranza’s *Backward Masking Unmasked* and Bob Larson’s *Satanism*, and afterschool specials like “Rock, It’s your decision,” highlight the rising concern of drug use and its believed connection to Satanism. This connection then provided a short walk to the belief that rock and roll music was destructively promoting satanic belief and drug use in their songs and lifestyles.

²² *Rock, It’s Your Decision*.

²³ Larson, *Satanism*, 87- 88.

On September 5, 1989, George H.W. Bush offered a similar speech to Reagan's 1986 address. In it, he insisted that the "gravest domestic threat facing the nation ...[was] drugs."²⁴ He bemoans that "drugs have strained our faith in our system of justice."²⁵ The president urged Americans to "turn on the evening news, or pick up the morning paper" insisting that they will see what "some Americans know just by stepping out their front door."²⁶ Much like Reagan, Bush invoked the fear that crack cocaine was "turning our cities into battle zones" and "murdering our children."²⁷ Bush expressed heart break at the idea that "four year old's play in playgrounds strewn with discarded hypodermic needles and crack vials."²⁸

President Bush was responsible for a "profound escalation of the War on Drugs."²⁹ While in office he more than doubled the federal budget for drug control. If Reagan transformed the War on Drugs from rehabilitative to punitive, Bush "locked the country into a strategy of punishment, deterrence, and intolerance."³⁰ Bush's escalation of the war on drugs continued beyond his presidency even as a different political party took office. The ramp up of drug incarceration in the 1990s created a society that today has the highest incarceration rate in the world.³¹ The late decades of the 20th century United States were defined politically by the War on Drugs. As the war dragged on it grew more punitive and continued to target low-income communities, especially African American ones. Meanwhile, evangelical Christians were waging a related war against rock music which they believed influenced young listeners to behave in immoral, irrational, and rebellious ways.

²⁴ George H.W. Bush, "President George H.W. Bush 1989 Address on the War on Drugs," *C-Span*, accessed December 9, 2020, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4815128/president-george-hw-bush-1989-address-war-drugs>.

²⁵ *ibid*

²⁶ *ibid*

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ *ibid*

²⁹ Matthew R. Pembleton, "George H.W. Bush's Biggest Failure? The War on Drugs: How Noble Motives Spawned Destructive Policies," *The Washington Post*, 6 December 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2018/12/06/george-hw-bushs-biggest-failure-war-drugs/>

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ *ibid*

Conclusion: The Nihilistic Nineties

The election of Democrat Bill Clinton only served to exacerbate the War on Drugs which by that point had become a widely supported bipartisan effort. However, in the late 1980's and early 1990's anti-rock activism began to be replaced with anti-gangsta-rap as many viewed the genre, as it slowly developed a following among suburban white youths, as even more dangerous. In many ways hip-hop was a rebellion against both a society that unfairly targeted black people with its drug enforcement policies and systematically and socioeconomically continued to resist integration, as well as, a rebellion against the theft of black music that was rock 'n' roll. The campaign against drugs in the 20th century was a bipartisan issue. In fact, Bill Clinton continued President Bush's anti-drug enforcement policies and continued to enact new policies aimed to reduce drug use and punish drug users.³² The 1994 Crime Act helped increase the number of drug courts by over 3,000 percent in a six year span.³³ The Clinton administration spent \$195 million on the National Youth Anti-drug Media Campaign in 1997.³⁴ The 1994 Crime Act and the continuance of the War on Drugs facilitated the continuation of mass incarceration and harsh drug penalties well into the 21st century. However, mass incarceration is only half of the damage caused by the seven-decade long War on Drugs. While the United States grew content with imprisoning drug users and distributors, the stigmatization of drug addiction helped demonize drug users as violent criminals enslaved by the harmful and addictive effects of drugs. This stigmatization also added to the long history of racial discrimination in the United States by associating otherness with drug use and vice-versa.

Perhaps even more than changing gender roles the escalating War on Drugs caused a great deal of anxiety to many across the political spectrum. The rhetoric and actions of United

³² *ibid*

³³ "Crime and Drug Accomplishments: The Clinton-Gore Administration A Record of Progress," *The White House*, Accessed December 9, 2020, <https://clintonwhitehouse4.archives.gov/WH/Accomplishments/crime.html>

³⁴ *ibid*

States political leaders did much more to exacerbate this anxiety than calm it. The continued association between music and hedonist drug and alcohol abuse did a great deal to help reinforce the Satanic Panic. Moreover, the theory that Satanists were using drugs and alcohol to make victims and members “addictively dependent” on their cult caused even more paranoia among believers in the satanic cult conspiracy. Indeed, proponents like Mike Warnke, Frank Garlock, Bob Larson, and Jacob Aranza saw drugs as a potentially dangerous gateway to Satanism. Furthermore, these proponents, especially Garlock, Larson, Aranza, and the makers of *Rock: Its Your Decision*, saw listening popular secular music, especially rock ‘n’ roll, as a mind-altering experience that had the power to control listeners through subliminal messages and repetitive beats. In other words, the music itself was a drug that had the potential to inspire young listeners to rebel, take drugs, have sex, and even join a Satanist cult.

CONCLUSION

“NIGHT OF THE LIVING BASEHEADS”

In 1988, Long Island hip hop group Public Enemy released a music video for their song “Night of the Living Baseheads.” The track begins with the controversial Nation of Islam spokesman, Khalid Abdul Muhammad, reciting the opening lines, “Have you forgotten that once we got here, we were robbed of our name, robbed of our language? We lost our religion, our culture, our god, and many of us by the way we act, we even lost our minds.” The video parodies a news broadcast anchored by Flavor Flav and Sherelle Winters. Winters explains that the topic for the broadcast is “to explore the devastating effects drugs are having on our society, in what is now termed, the Basehead Syndrome.” The majority of the video is interspersed with Chuck D’s lyrics deriding the use of drugs (specifically “base” which is a derivative of cocaine), drug dealers selling “base” to the black community, and most importantly the criminal justice system. Over the course of the video it is revealed that the source of all this “base” is Wall Street, and yet the police are more focused on a young black man with a beeper. Public Enemy’s message is clear, that drugs were destroying the black community and that it was the fault of white Wall Street businessmen injecting drugs into the community and the criminal justice system that ignored the real problems to harass young men with beepers.¹ Public Enemy could have stopped there and made a powerful point about the way drugs, the criminal justice system, and other external forces were plaguing the black community.

¹ Channel Zero, “Public Enemy- Night of the Living Baseheads (Dope Version) (Official Music Video),” *Youtube* video, October 22, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyR09SP9qdA>.

However, the video has a subplot about how social critics choose to attack hip hop music, rather than the issue of drug abuse. Winters explains that, “an ultra- hyper faction, known as the Brown Bags, lodged a protest today against rap music.” The camera cuts to an in the field reporter interviewing the leader of a group of protestors wearing brown bags over their faces with holes cut out for their eyes and mouth (perhaps in mimicry of the Ku Klux Klan). The leader of the Brown Bags explains that “all the rap noise, and the violence associated with it, is bringing our country to its knees, and we’re not gonna stand for it anymore. We, the Brown Bags, have a plan to put an end to it all.” As it turns out the Brown Bags’ plan was to kidnap Chuck D and execute him. He is later rescued by a group of men in fatigues.¹ By the end of the 1980s, anti-rock activism began to be replaced by anxiety over rap music that was rapidly gaining popularity among young Americans. Rap, or hip hop, adopted a more direct type of lyrical rebellion than rock ‘n’ roll had in the 1970s and 80s. Moreover, as rap was coded as “black music,” it became perhaps even more of a source of anxiety than rock ‘n’ roll had been.² In fact, TV personality Geraldo Rivera, who in 1988 famously aired a two-hour television special investigating “allegations of a widespread satanic underground in the United States,” claimed in 2015 that “Hip-hop has done more damage to black and brown people than racism in the last ten years.”³ In the “Night of the Living Baseheads” video, Public Enemy is challenging the idea that hip-hop

¹ Ibid.

² There are several explanations for the difference between the terms rap and hip hop, the primary explanation is that hip hop is a culture that includes rap, deejaying, MCing, graffiti, breakdancing, and other dancing styles. While rap is the specific style of vocals associated with hip hop. On the other hand some separate rap from hip hop and assert that rap is the superficial and commercial version of hip hop. See “Rap V.S. Hip Hop,” *Next Level*, August 2, 2018, <https://www.nextlevel-usa.org/blog/rap-vs-hip-hop/>; Dylan Smith, “This is the Real Difference Between Rap and Hip Hop,” *Digital Music News*, September 25, 2020, <https://www.digitalmusicnews.com/2020/09/25/difference-between-rap-and-hip-hop/>; or Shaka Shaw “The Difference Between Rap & Hip-Hop,” *Ebony*, September 19, 2013, <https://www.ebony.com/entertainment/the-difference-between-rap-hip-hop-798/>.

³ “Geraldo Rivera: Hip-Hop has Done More Damage to Black People than Racism,” *YouTube*, posted by HuffPost Live, February 19, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SqES8vQE-ZA>; “*The Geraldo Rivera Show: ‘Devil Worship: Exposing Satan’s Underground,’*” *IMDb*, Accessed March 26, 2021, <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1136645/>.

should be the real source of concern. Indeed, the video suggests that energy wasted decrying the dangers of music were ignoring the real problems that plagued American society.

Of course, their appeal fell on unhearing, uncompassionate, ears. Listeners from across the political spectrum have viewed rap music and hip-hop culture with a skeptical eye, blaming hip hop for “fomenting crime, violence, and negative perceptions of African- Americans.” In addition, “rap music has been blamed for youth violence, the rise of gangs and gang related crime, drug use, and violence against women.”⁴ Moreover, artists like Beyoncé have also been accused of being involved in secret world organizations like the Illuminati and even participating in Satanism. In fact, even some politicians, like Florida’s KW Miller, have promoted this conspiracy on social media. On July 4, 2020, Miller, who was running for congress at the time, celebrated Independence Day by claiming that Beyoncé “is not even African American,” and that she was “faking this for exposure.” He claimed that the popstar “is Italian,” and that “this is all part of the Soros Deep State agenda for the Black Lives Matter movement.” He continued his assault the following day in a tweet that claimed Beyoncé’s song “Formation,” was “a secret coded message to the globalists.” He claimed that “The song clearly admitted that she was demonic and that she worshipped in the Satanist churches located in Alabama & Louisiana. She keeps Satanist symbols in her bag.”⁵ It would seem that the same anxieties that created the Satanic Panic in the 1970s and 1980s have survived into the first three decades of the twenty-first century.

The anxiety has not always been so directly associated with Satanism, either. In fact, female rappers Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion were also the source of controversy in 2020 when they released their AMA winning song WAP. One of the most outspoken critics of the song

⁴ Christine Reyna, Mark Brandt, and G. Tendayi Viki, “Blame it on Hip-Hop: Anti-Rap Attitudes as a Proxy for Prejudice,” *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 12-3 April 17, 2009, 361-380 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1368430209102848>.

⁵ Shawn Cooke, “This Florida congressional candidate has some wild conspiracies about Beyoncé and BTS,” *Mic*, July 8, 2020, Accessed March, 29, 2021. <https://www.mic.com/p/this-florida-congressional-candidate-has-some-wild-conspiracies-about-beyonce-bts-29080390>.

was conservative commentator and podcast host Ben Shapiro. In an episode of his radio show, *The Ben Shapiro Show*, he aired a segment titled “deconstructing the culture.” Shapiro highlights Cardi B’s “checkered past” before reciting the “really, really, really, really vulgar” lyrics; he joked that “this is empowering stuff guys, this is like Susan B. Anthony, this is like women fighting for the right to vote, this right here is women fighting for the right to work, what we are watching is women fighting for the equal right to talk about their ‘wet-ass p-word.’” After reciting his censored version of the lyrics, Shapiro claims not so jokingly that, “this is what feminists fought for, this is what the feminist movement was all about.” Shapiro goes on to “diagnose” that Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion with Trichomoniasis, a sexually transmitted disease. Shapiro ended his sarcastic rant by implying that “WAP” was reductive to female sexuality and jokes that he is a misogynist for “believing that women are more than their “Wet-ass p-word.”⁶ The overt female sexuality portrayed by many female musicians continues to be a source of extreme anxiety to anti-popular music critics like Ben Shapiro. Just as Jacob Aranza derided the open sexuality of Debbie Harry, Janis Joplin, Patti Smith, and Olivia Newton-John, female artists today, from Beyoncé to Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion, face the constant criticism of conservative commentators for sexual lyrics and supposed references to Satanism.

While the anxiety over music and the effects it may have on young people has continued throughout the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the fear that a widespread conspiracy of Satanists is controlling world governments and plotting to destroy the livelihood of American families has also persisted and become even more pronounced in the years following the 2016 election. Indeed, the “Q-anon” conspiracy theory has not only spread quickly through the internet and at political rallies, it has also begun to have a significant effect on national elections. What was once a “fringe phenomenon” has quickly become mainstream and has convinced as many as seventeen percent of Americans that “a group of Satan-worshipping elites who run a child sex ring

⁶ “Escape from Chicago – The Ben Shapiro Show Ep. 1070,” *YouTube*, uploaded by The Daily Wire, August 10, 2020, 50:00-59:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWI9JYVuYkk>.

are trying to control our politics and media.” These conspiracy theorists believe that this cannibalistic and pedophilic cult is led by Democratic leaders like President Biden, Hillary Clinton, President Obama, as well as such figures as George Soros, Tom Hanks, and the Dalai Lama. Many believe that the conspiracy will culminate with former President Trump “unmask[ing] the cabal, and punish[ing] its members for their crimes and restor[ing] America to greatness.”⁷ It is impossible to tell in the midst of the still raging QAnon conspiracy, but it seems to have had a much greater impact of the psyche of United States society than the predecessor conspiracy theories that led to the Satanic Panic. Or, the QAnon conspiracy is proof that the Satanic Panic never really ended.

If the QAnon conspiracy is a continuation of the Satanic Panic, then I would argue that conspiracy theorist Alex Jones is the most obvious “bridge” between these two widespread moral panics. Jones became famous in 1995 when he claimed that Timothy McVeigh was a scapegoat for the bombing of the Murrah Building in Oklahoma City and that the federal government was actually responsible for the explosion that killed 168 people. In 2001, after he had begun broadcasting his independent show via InfoWars.com, Jones also claimed that the government was responsible for the 9/11 terrorist attacks.⁸ Jones made headlines again in 2013 claiming that the mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary school was a government sponsored hoax that was meant to gain support for gun control.⁹ Most notable, however, is Jones’ promotion of the pre-QAnon, “Pizzagate” conspiracy, that claimed that the Comet Ping Pong pizzeria in Washington, D.C. was a front for a child sex-abuse ring led by top democratic politicians like President Obama and Hillary Clinton. In 2017, Jones was forced to apologize for advancing this theory after Edgar

⁷ Kevin Roose, “What is QAnon, The Viral Pro-Trump Conspiracy Theory?,” *The New York Times*, March 4, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/what-is-qanon.html>.

⁸ “Alex Jones,” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, accessed April 18, 2021, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/alex-jones>.

⁹ Nicholas Rondinone, “Lawyer says Infowars host Alex Jones no Longer Believes Sandy Hook Massacre was a Hoax,” *Hartford Courant*, October 13, 2020, <https://www.courant.com/breaking-news/hc-br-alex-jones-sandy-hook-not-hoax-20201013-ktxyqzn27vdg5all6vnwepokjq-story.html>.

Maddison Welch entered the pizzeria with an AR-15 rifle looking to investigate the conspiracy.¹⁰ There can be little doubt that this theory would later morph into the QAnon conspiracy that burst onto the internet later in 2017. Alex Jones played a critical role in the development of the QAnon conspiracy capitalizing on the same rhetoric and anxieties that caused the Satanic Panic five decades earlier.

The Satanic Panic and the conspiracy theories that followed have made a significant impact on United States culture and politics. Artists even today invoke the fears of the religious right to create controversy and make headlines. Much like Sammy Hagar attempted to subvert the growing censorship movement in the 1980s by naming Van Halen's album, "FUCK," rapper Lil Nas X released a controversial video for his song "MONTERO (Call Me by Your Name)" that ends with him dancing in the lap of Satan and breaking his neck.¹¹ Almost immediately conservatives were panning the video on social media. A twitter user, @goodblackdude, claimed that "the gay hip-hop 'artist' is brainwashing our youth with satanic imagery [...] they laughed at us when we said this is a spiritual war and now they've confirmed it."¹² Continuing the spiritual war rhetoric, Governor Kristi Noem complained that the so-called "Satan Shoes," which were marketed in along with the video, told "our kids... that this kind of product is, not only okay, it's 'exclusive.'" She continued, "We are in a fight for the soul of our nation."¹³ Lil Nas X has not shied away from this criticism and has responded to many of the critics via social media including criticizing Noem for being angry over the shoes instead of "doing her job."¹⁴ Indeed, the anxiety over the effects of music on young people, and the tension between the religious right and musicians continues to rage on in the United States.

¹⁰ James Doubek, "Conspiracy Theorist Alex Jones Apologizes for Promoting 'Pizzagate,'" *NPR*, March 26, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/03/26/521545788/conspiracy-theorist-alex-jones-apologizes-for-promoting-pizzagate>

¹¹ Lil Nas X, "Lil Nas X- Montero (Call Me By Your Name) (Official Video)," *YouTube* video, 3:09, March 25, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6swmTBVI83k>

¹² @goodblackdude, Twitter post, March 26, 2021, 6:13 p.m.

¹³ Kristi Noem, Twitter post, March 28, 2021, 1:26 p.m.

¹⁴ @LilNasX, Twitter post, March 28, 2021, 1:52 p.m.

Indeed, this is an ongoing struggle that started even before “wine, women, and song” became a popular hendiatriis in 17th century eastern Europe. The stories of Mike Warnke, Michelle Smith, and Rebecca Brown were representative of a single moment of time but, allegations made by supposed victims of Satanist Cults continue to spread online. Moreover, the same issues of the disintegration of the American family, immoral sexuality, and drug use continue to cause a great deal of anxiety to lawmakers and parents. While femininity has continued to evolved and take on new meanings, female sexuality continues to be a concern and much of the criticism of modern music is gendered. Finally, the fear that music has some ability to “brainwash” listeners, especially young listeners, continues to exist as evidenced by the criticism of Lil Nas X’s Montero music video.

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