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PERFORMING SATAN:
THE SATANIC QUEER IN CONTEMPORARY
BRITISH AND AMERICAN POPULAR CULTURE

by

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PERFORMOWANIE SZATANA: SATANIC QUEER WE WSPÓŁCZESNEJ KULTURZE
POPULARNEJ BRYTYJSKIEJ I AMERYKAŃSKIEJ

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Introduction

Becoming the Devil: Morphing Performance, Queer Theories, and Digital Culture

Open your phone: he is already there. A crimson-suited nightclub owner turned police consultant in *Lucifer* (2016–21); a caring father in *Hazbin Hotel* (pilot 2019; series 2024–); a sardonic diarist in Glen Duncan’s *I, Lucifer* (2002); and a provocateur in Doja Cat’s “Paint the Town Red” (2023), the Devil slips from clip to episode to paperback and back, shedding and acquiring traits while remaining legibly “Satanic.” That visibility in transit is my starting point. This dissertation names and analyses the Satanic Queer: not a stable identity or constituency but a morphing code that becomes legible when the Devil is staged under digital conditions. I treat the Devil as a figure of movement that routes desires, ethical tests, and institutional critiques through fan circuits, streaming infrastructures, and performance ecologies. My stakes are twofold: first, to show that his contemporary prominence is less a doctrinal revival than a function of media that privilege circulation, remix, and enactment; second, to argue that the Satanic Queer clarifies how non-essential identities are assumed in practice, through acts, affects, and platformed performances that keep form in motion rather than at rest.

As Vivian Sobchack asks, “What happens when our expressive technologies also become perceptive technologies (...) radically transforming not merely our comprehension of the world but also our apprehension of ourselves?” (“The Scene of the Screen” 88). The consequence, she notes elsewhere, is that “we are all part of a moving-image culture, and we live cinematic and electronic lives” (*Carnal Thoughts* 136). This dissertation reads the Devil inside that condition. It treats the Satanic Queer not as an essence or a constituency but as a practice that unfolds across

platforms and scenes, a morphing performance that tests how far stories and selves can travel without snapping.

The study enters where an old stain keeps resurfacing. For centuries Christian discourse gathered feminists, heretics, and sexual dissidents under Satanic names; those associations did not vanish when theology ceded ground to entertainment. In that sense, queer, if defined by deviation from normativity, has long been Satanic by position rather than by creed. The present work begins from that positional bleed, but it refuses the question of belief as its organising task. It asks instead what Satan *does* in contemporary popular culture and how that doing remakes both the Devil and the media that host him.

Scholarship on the Devil is rich and centuries deep, yet it typically runs on archival and theological rails. Jeffrey Burton Russell's four-volume history (1977–1988) famously traces Satan across periods and traditions; his genealogies are indispensable but end in an ambivalence more described than operationalised for contemporary media. Chapter 2 of this dissertation surveys the broader archive and shows a recurring pattern: strong accounts of origin, taxonomy, and religious polemic, followed by conclusions about ambiguity and endurance. Christopher Partridge's two-volume surveys of occulture, *The Re-Enchantment of the West* (vol. 1, 2004; vol. 2, 2005), map how esoteric repertoires become modern, but the emphasis remains genealogical. The plethora of works on Satanism (for example, Massimo Introvigne's *Satanism: A Social History* [2016]; Ruben van Luijk's *Children of Lucifer: The Origins of Modern Religious Satanism* [2016]; the edited collections *The Devil's Party: Satanism in Modernity* [edited by Per Faxneld and Jesper Aagaard Petersen, 2012] and *Contemporary Religious Satanism: A Critical Anthology* [edited by Jesper Aagaard Petersen, 2009]) document the institutional and ideological formations of modern Satanism. Although their analyses are helpful for understanding how transgression is aestheticised, their focus is movement-internal and often programmatic rather than intermedial. Joseph P. Laycock's study of The Satanic Temple, *Speak of the Devil: How the Satanic Temple Is Changing the Way We Talk about Religion* (2020), demonstrates how legal and civic performance unsettles the category of 'religion' itself. For my purposes, his account is invaluable precisely because it shows Satanic imagery operating through performative tactics in public life, though it stops short of modelling that operation as a general media logic. Sarah Bartels's *The Devil and the Victorians: Supernatural Evil in Nineteenth-Century English Culture* (2021) is a lucid anatomy of ambiguity and adaptability; it proves that variability long predates streaming platforms, but it frames that variability within nineteenth-century discourses, similarly to Per Faxneld's *Satanic Feminism* (2017). Scholarship on screen devils—William R. Telford

(2009), for instance, on the androgynous Satan of Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988) and Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004)—catalogues a vital visual repertoire, while Bryan P. Stone's *Christianity and Horror Cinema* (2025) presents an inventory of suave and shape-shifting screen Satans that diffracts embodiment across disguises; yet these studies rarely model how those figures travel across today's attention economy. In short, the field has mastered the Devil as archive and as doctrine, and it has described his ambivalence with care; what it has not done is to treat Satan with specificity of the digital medium.

Cultural texts in the twenty-first century circulate within a distinct ecology of platforms. Cinema and television scarcely fit their historical names when most 'TV' shows are streamed on services such as Netflix or Amazon Prime, which now operate as production studios that rival legacy Hollywood companies. Fan cultures have migrated from streets, shops, and malls into networked spaces. On platforms, texts collide; they go viral across platforms, and the collision amplifies reach and affective charge. Trends flare, fade and flicker again with pronounced ephemerality. Petter Törnberg and Justus Uitermark in *Seeing Like a Platform: An Inquiry into the Condition of Digital Modernity* (2025) write that the power relations that form on these platforms are novel as they operate "not on populations, but on clusters and flows" and "see its subjects through the lens of relational data analysis rather than survey statistics, representing a fundamental epistemological shift in scientific paradigm" (117). This dissertation focuses on how an archetype as discursively charged in Western culture as the Devil now functions within these digital ecosystems of flows. Where genealogies catalogue changes and theological frames delimit doctrine, I treat Satan as a digital code that materialises through enactments and circulations specific to our media ecology through a combined lens of morph theory, queer critique, performance, and digital culture.

The corpus on which I work is deliberately mixed in form and address, because the Satanic Queer declares itself most clearly when texts travel. On television and streaming platforms I track *Lucifer* (developed for Fox in 2016 and then for Netflix through 2021), a police-procedural romance; *Good Omens* (Amazon/BBC, 2019–), where a demon and an angel stage a partnership that keeps toppling the tidy hierarchy; *The Sandman* (Netflix, 2022–2025), which renders celestial power in reflective Gothic visuals; and *Hazbin Hotel* (A24/Amazon, 2024–), an adult animated musical that treats Hell as a redemption start-up. The novels include Glen Duncan's *I, Lucifer* (2002), a profane memoir of pain and performance; Peter Wilkes and Catherine Dickey Wilson's *Lucifer Eve and Adam: The Absolutely True and Completely Honest Story of Creation* (2017), a hybrid between a movie script and a novel that folds creation into

reparative wit; and Rafael Nicolás's *Angels Before Man* (2022), an indie epic that lingers on making, care, and the unmaking of bodies. In music videos and lyrics, Lil Nas X's "Montero (Call Me By Your Name)" (2021) stages a pole-dance descent and a self-coronation; King Woman's "Morning Star" and "Paradise Lost" (both 2021) voice a suffering Lucifer; and Doja Cat's "Paint the Town Red" (2023) turns accusation into authorial poise. All works in the corpus were selected because they feature a Satanic figure central to the narrative. All were released after 2000, with most appearing after 2015, making them the most recent materials available for analysis. Moreover, I analyse additional depictions of the Satanic figure across social media, with particular attention to Tumblr, a platform widely associated with fandom activity (Lamerichs 18). These materials demonstrate that the Satanic figure circulates across platforms as a digital media code rather than a fixed archetypal symbol. Throughout, I keep the pronoun policy: 'it' for the Satanic Queer as an analytic, 'he' for the Devil in general, 'she' when a particular diegesis names her so.

Gilles Deleuze reminds us that "it is a peculiarity of demons to operate in the intervals between the gods' fields of action (...) confounding the boundaries between properties" (Deleuze 37). I retain these passages because the works I study enact them: the Devil operates in gaps and toggles, as a portal between moral platforms, not as a settled node inside a pre-drawn diagram. Accordingly, my method is intermedial close reading with a performance-studies lens and a platform analysis of circulation. Practically, I read passages, scenes, episodes, lyrics, and sequences for gestures and for how those gestures are tuned by medium: the musical number as confession, the animation morph as instantaneous body, the trope that becomes a tag and then a fan practice. I track morphs across media, asking what happens to a sign when it crosses from novel to series to a social media post. Evidence includes diegetic features (dialogue, framing, song structure), paratexts (episode tags, marketing, platform categories), and audience operations where relevant (search tags, widely visible fan taxonomies). Inference follows enactment: if a sign travels, I treat the travel as meaning. Where traditional archiving seeks an origin to which versions can be referred, I attend to how versions compose a live archive of performance that is always in the middle.

The first chapter, "Form-in-Change: Building a Method for the Satanic Queer," establishes the conceptual engine for the rest of the dissertation. I assemble a method for analysing a figure that refuses consolidation, drawing on queer theories' accounts of positional identity and epistemology, on the methodology of performance as iterative enactment, and on digital storytelling's circulation logics. The chapter clarifies how "queer" functions here as a

tactical mode rather than a property; how camp and drag operate as engines and loops that dramatise non-essence; how a queer sense of time—in plateaus, reprises, and delays—organises narratives that resist closure; and how queer theological repertoires unsettle the distribution of sacred and profane. I then argue for performance beyond the stable archive, reframing archive not as a box of settled items but as a cloud of operations that recombine whenever the figure is staged. Finally, I develop morphing as practice: a way of naming form-in-flux that privileges becoming over arrival and locates meaning in motion. This method is both descriptive and normative for the project: it explains how the Devil travels now and gives me a vocabulary for following him without forcing an origin or a terminus. Queer, performance, and the digital are brought into dialogue here because, together, they describe how the Satanic Queer moves. Queer, in the sense operative here, critiques claims to stable essence and treats identity as a positional drift, assumed and relinquished through acts. Performance foregrounds enactment over ontology, the fact that meaning gains force by being done. Digital culture supplies the technology and the circuitry—circulation by tag and clip, platform affordances that reward repeatable units, transmedia prompts that invite iteration. In Sobchack's terms, our media are not merely expressive; they are perceptive, folding our sensing into their sensing ("The Scene of the Screen" 88; *Carnal Thoughts* 136).

The second chapter, "Archive in Drift," offers a compact synthesis of key trajectories in the Devil's Western career and names the points where my project departs from standard chronologies. Rather than attempting an exhaustive history, I foreground constitutive plurality and the long habit of recomposition. The chapter sketches the rise of the Satanic other inside the Judeo-Christian mythos; tracks carnivalisation, where the Devil's image becomes a public instrument for role-play and critique; follows the Romantic rehabilitation, in which rebellion and dignity are linked; notes the occult revival and the emergence of new religiosities, including civic and religious Satanisms; and finally turns to apparitions on screen, where visual regimes and narrative complexity amplify the figure's legibility. The purpose is situational: to show that the Devil has always functioned as a polycentric construct and that the apparent fragmentation of the digital is not a break but an intensified continuation. This orientation clears space for the morph-based analysis that follows.

The third chapter, "Morphing the Satanic Archive," shifts from overview to procedure. Here I track how contemporary texts perform scripture without a single source, how they stage creation as collaboration, how they re-narrate falling as inquiry rather than verdict, how they redraw Heaven and Hell as volatile systems, and how they install non-linear narrative methods—

reprises with a difference, structural deferrals, citational overdrive—that keep beginnings and ends open. The work is intermedial: I read images, cuts, hooks, and scene structures; I watch how “origin” becomes a scene of care and mess rather than fiat; I pay attention to how spaces and institutions act when bodies traverse them; I follow edits that refuse finality. The chapter’s claim is that the Devil’s modern recognisability depends less on doctrinal recall than on a set of gestures available to audiences who inhabit a culture of clips and scrolls. Under those conditions, the Devil reads as a technique: a way to test plans, press against inevitabilities, and rehearse refusals in forms designed to travel.

The fourth chapter, “Morphing Satanic Identity,” concentrates on figures and affects. I move among devils who are celestial and fallen in the same breath and I approach Satanic Queer desire as a practice that discovers its shape through action rather than prior essence. Projects of reclamation come under scrutiny, in which stigmatised emblems become usable tools. Readings of camped devils and devils in drag demonstrate how exaggeration and theatricality function as truth procedures. Attention then turns to the liquid celestial, where angelic codes soften and saturate. Finally, I consider the female Satanic Queer, for whom the pronoun *she* is diegetically correct, a figure that exposes how gendered scripts meet metaphysical ones. Across these materials, the Devil does not exist as a type to which texts conform; texts make the Devil legible by iterating postures and choices that refuse to settle. The chapter argues that the Satanic Queer retains pressure by remaining a non-identity: it is a practice of assuming and discarding forms in ways that keep power’s plans in view and interrupt their inevitability.

The fifth chapter, “Morphing Media,” turns to transtextuality, authorship, and fans. Here I map complicated intertextual and transmedial logics: comics that become series with divergent tonalities; novels that become videos whose paratexts carry as much freight as their ostensible content; soundtracks that function as narrators; credits and trailers that leak plot as strategy; platforms that sort publics and teach texts how to move. I examine fan and author entanglements, where winks, cameos, and posts rewrite authority as a feedback loop. I develop a vocabulary for multiplicity—how to make sense of several Lucifers in the same feed without choosing a canonical one—and treat fanfiction as an affective hermeneutics that fills gaps by turning love into method. Algorithmic systems appear here not as background but as co-authors: the Devil finds audiences by learning to be clipped, tagged, and re-captioned. The result is a media ecology in which the Satanic Queer is both content and transport: the kinetic principle behind the links, the rationale for why a name travels, the permission for daring edits and devotional jokes.

Two clarifications follow from this roadmap. First, the Satanic Queer is not a claim about hidden doctrines in these works. It is a model for reading how signs move. The category helps me name an operation that runs through jokes, kisses, lawsuits, riffs, and dances. When Crowley, a demon from *Good Omens* (2019–), asks for a “suggestion box,” he is not founding a church; he is shifting the interface between maker and plan. When the American singer Doja Cat sits enthroned with horns in one of her music videos, she is not catechising; she is bending a surveillance gaze back into performance. Second, the model is not exclusively Christian in its symbolics. As Chapter 2 shows, the Devil’s archive has always been a composite of theological, folkloric, and occult cues; contemporary texts simply exploit that composite at high speed.

I do not offer a total history of the Devil; excellent histories exist. I do not resolve his theological status; no single dissertation could. The Satanic Queer gives back to theory a way of conceiving identity as an event whose unit is the morph rather than the person—a unit scaled to platformed time. It takes from queer theory a suspicion of essence and a preference for positional practice; from performance studies, the insistence that doing is how signs gain force; from digital culture, a sensitivity to how circulation and recombination are the condition of legibility. It keeps Sobchack’s reminder that our lives are now lived in the moving image (*Carnal Thoughts* 136) and couples it with Deleuze’s demons-in-intervals (Deleuze 37) to argue that Satan’s most telling contemporary power is not to anchor “evil” but to keep properties from hardening into oppositions.

I end where I began, with movement. The Devil’s portability today is not a late distortion of a once-pure adversary; it is a continuation of a long habit of drifting across roles scaled to an ecology that rewards movement. The Satanic Queer is my name for that scene-changing practice. It is not a new identity to claim or a club to join. It is a way texts work now: through shift, drift, and morph, through performances that fold archives into acts, through images that keep becoming. If this dissertation persuades, it is because its chapters have done what the works themselves do—traced the circuits, tuned the gestures, and shown, in detail, how the Devil travels when everything else is moving too.

Chapter 1

Form-in-Change: Building a Method for the Satanic Queer

This opening chapter lays the theoretical and methodological groundwork for the dissertation. Here I build the apparatus that allows me to name, track, and evaluate the Satanic Queer as it appears across contemporary digital culture. My premise is simple: the figure called *Satan* operates less as a stable character than as a set of tactics—modes of doing—that circulate through networked media, popular performance, and platformed publics. To analyse this mobility I must first construct a method that is equally mobile. I therefore braid three strands—queer theory, performance, and digital studies—into a single, flexible framework designed to register forms-in-change. Throughout, I keep my focus on operativity: how meanings are produced, how identities are enacted, and how time and belief are reconfigured within the media environments that shape everyday life.

The chapter advances through three subchapters that together assemble this method. Section 1.1, “Tactics in Transit: Making ‘Queer’ Operative,” establishes the core of the framework. Here I clarify how I use queer theory’s destabilising power as a toolbox rather than a doctrine: a set of analytic moves—unsettling boundaries, staging disidentifications, and treating identity as an effect rather than a premise. The emphasis falls on operativity and travel. I outline how tactics move across archives and publics, and why the Satanic—long a name for deviation within Western moral grammars—becomes legible as a pressure point where norms declare

themselves and betray their limits. Within 1.1, three tightly linked subparts refine the toolkit from within the same section. In 1.1.2, “Camp Engines, Drag Loops,” I treat performativity as iterative technique and use camp and drag as laboratories where surface work exposes how identities are made and unmade. In 1.1.3, “Durations, Plateaus, Drifts,” I recalibrate time for platformed culture by naming sustained intensities, ongoing plateaus, and lateral drifts that refuse teleology. In 1.1.4, “Fluid Rites,” I propose a queer hermeneutic for theological repertoires, tracing how motifs and rituals pass between sacred and popular domains while remaining available for new attachments. These subparts belong to 1.1; they do not operate as independent master sections but as components that render “queer” operative for my purposes.

Section 1.2, “Performance Beyond the Stable Archive,” shifts from concepts to practice. If 1.1 furnishes the analytic, 1.2 asks what it means to work when the archive is unstable, iterative, and participatory. I argue for attending to what the archive is doing in the moment of performance rather than treating it only as residue consulted after the fact. The chapter therefore pivots from identity to action: I focus on liminal states that do not lead elsewhere but loop with themselves, and on how performance mobilises archival materials through enactment, circulation, and shift. I register the problems that digital culture sharpens—dispersed evidence across clips and comments, distributed agency among creators, algorithms, and audiences, and circulation that outpaces preservation—and I propose techniques adequate to those problems. These include tracking iteration chains, timing intensities rather than single events, and practising ‘live citation’ that documents change while maintaining analytic standards. The aim is not to deny archival traces but to specify methods for reading the performance of the archive as it happens.

Section 1.3, “Cloud Devilry: Morphing as Practice,” consolidates the framework under digital conditions. I situate the analytic and the procedures within a media ecology defined by hypertextuality, recommendation systems, and spreadable formats. The section argues that contemporary culture demands foregrounding the digital if we are to understand how figures travel and accrue force. I draw on accounts of hypertext and networked reading to describe how branching structure, nonlinearity, and lateral citation transform the relation between writer, reader, and text; I then show how these conditions make morphic form, not essence, the relevant unit of analysis. Under such conditions the Satanic Queer appears as a practice of morphing: a mode that treats barriers as scenes of transit and categories as provisional conduits, enacted across platforms and sustained by participatory publics.

These four subsections together compose a method for forms-in-change. Across the chapter, I demonstrate how the strands interdepend: performative techniques rely on queer critique to make their stakes clear; queer critique is more precise once it is timed; timing becomes legible as soon as we recognise how rites and myths travel; and repertoires themselves are best understood as enacted rather than merely invoked.

1.1. Tactics in Transit: Making “Queer” Operative

Queer theory has emerged from the in-between of research-based and activist knowledge, inaugurating a paradigm shift in analyses of sexuality, gender and identity. Michele Aaron calls it a “critical intervention, cultural product and political strategy” (6). Lorenzo Bernini identifies queer theory as critical political philosophies that “deploy the perspective of sexual minorities” and critique the very structures of power that consider them minorities (48). Although readily connected to social issues, queer theory as a whole does not aim to provide a creationist model for an egalitarian society. Rather, it is more focused on the interrogation of systems in which the dichotomous categories of socially constructed identities, such as heterosexual and homosexual, exist. According to Teresa de Lauretis, who claimed the coinage of the name *queer theory* in 1991, it is a way “to transgress and transcend (...) or at the very least problematise” the discourses and terms such as gay and lesbian that introduce strict distinctions between themselves (de Lauretis v). By questioning the legitimacy of identity boundaries queer theory reveals their arbitrariness or even contradictory nature.

Originally, the word *queer* was employed to signify the abnormal and strange, and used as a colloquial slur for homosexuality (McCann and Monaghan 2). The derogative connotations of the term were embraced and reclaimed in the 1990s by an activist group Queer Nation that arose from ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power). The term “was about being different, but unapologetically so” (McCann and Monaghan 2), but at the same time provided “a false impression of inclusiveness” that “has triumphed over the historical divisions between lesbians and gay men” among others (Halperin 64). David M. Halperin warns about the dangers of using the term ‘queer,’ as its inability to be defined may be used against lived experiences of the marginalised or differentiated groups and even lead to their erasure (Halperin 65). Still, he highlights its inherent potential to be acted out as a resistance to the norm (Halperin 66) and many researchers attribute queer’s discursive power to the earlier pathologization of the term (e.g. McCann and Monaghan 2, Bernini 26, Edelman 3).

However, queer theory is not a singular method. Throughout the years, more and more individual theories have been taken under the “queer” umbrella. Researchers have thus argued for the nomenclature “queer theories”, pointing to the fact that there is no uniform tradition of a queer theory (e.g. Jagose [1996] 1997, McCann and Monaghan 2020, Bernini 2021). Although queer theory eludes a clear definition, its radical potential has been identified precisely in its ambiguity and ability to “challenge, interrogate, destabilise and subvert” (McCann and Monaghan 1; cf. Jagose 1). Its critical, destabilising, and even disturbing character oftentimes pushes queer theory to a liminal position within academia (Bernini 13) and its complicated genealogy and variety of philosophies pose a great difficulty to define.

Barbara Braid, while queering cultural representations of madness, argues that “queer should be extended to all aspects of non-normativity, including also incoherent representations and self-identifications that are typical for representations of madness” (Braid 207). She is building upon Halperin’s definition of “queer”: “whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. There is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is identity without essence” (Halperin 62, qtd. in Braid 207). Yet, to be able to inform the understanding of queer in relation the Satanic figure, it is necessary to make way through queer theories—that is, through the activist-academic practices of disobedience and distancing oneself “from the power/knowledge regime that defines and governs (...) sexuality” (Bernini 112).

Bernini proposes to see a symbolic place of origin of the queer debate in theories of Freudo-Marxism (11). Although this strain of philosophies precedes queer theory as a concept, it also “problematizes the functioning of contemporary sexuality, challenges the naturalisation of the categories which form the sex-gender-sexual orientation system and denounces how, through them, sexual desires and behaviours are regulated, disciplined and subordinated to productive and reproductive requirements” (Bernini 103). Combining the revolutionary ideations of Marxism and liberation models provided by Freudian psychoanalysis (Bernini 84), this particular set of philosophies offered criticism of the capitalist society which assumed that whatever has been oppressed and repressed by power is possible to be brought out (Bernini 144).

Bernini contends that queer theories originate in concrete acts of insubordination that prise subjects away from the Christian-inflected power-knowledge system governing sexuality (112). These “exercises in an ontology of actuality” (Bernini 112) do not merely critique that system; by experimenting with disidentification and precarious forms of selfhood, they crack it open and make its operations visible. Because queer theory is born of such active disobedience, it offers a framework for analysing the performative force of Satanic rebellion, whose opposition

to divine authority has long structured Western Christian thought. Bernini's emphasis on practice before identity also distances queer theories from essentialist claims, allowing my argument to trace how the figure of the Devil functions less as a fixed essence than as an ongoing exercise in contravention.

In his 1977 book *Towards a Gay Communism* Mario Mieli, a theorist that can be categorised within the Freudo-Marxist strain of queer theories, identifies the Judeo-Christian tradition as the origin of the repression of homosexuality in the West, explicitly linking the two concepts. He notes that before male homosexuality was prosecuted, it was "something sacred among the Hebrews" (Mieli 64) and male prostitution was one of the sacred vocation practices in the Temple (Mieli 64). A similar approach to homosexual acts was taken by the Greeks, where it was seen not only as sacred but also as erotic and chivalrous (Mieli 64). However, he notices that during the Babylonian exile, around sixth century AD, the homosexual was repressed into the role of a Freudian taboo (Mieli 63), and thus the destruction of biblical Sodom and Gomorrah came to be understood as punishment for alien (including homosexual) practices which have been denounced as sinful and thus repressed by Christian society (Mieli 63). Mieli implies that there was a connection "between the preservation of Hebrew national tradition, particularly that of monotheism, and the rejection of homosexuality" (63), which was later passed down to Christian tradition (64), although he leaves the reason for this rejection as a subject for further study (64). Crucially, neither the scholarship cited nor my own research posits a theologically determined relation between demonology and homosexuality; in this discussion, the relation is treated as symbolic.

Mieli in his study refers to the Freudian taboo which has two sides: the 'sacred' and the 'uncanny' or, in other words, 'dangerous', 'forbidden', and 'unclean'. Mieli says that homoeroticism is "certainly" labelled with all these negative attributes in the society (64). Moreover, he sees them to be identified with the demonic:

Today, on the other hand, even when so many people no longer believe in the Devil, homosexuality still keeps its diabolical connotations, as 'vicious', 'perverted', 'dishonourable', 'unclean' and 'revolting'. It remains a 'sin against nature', and as far as the Church is concerned, any sin is inspired by the Devil. But the diabolical precisely serves as a medium between the sacred and the 'unclean'. 'It is precisely this neutral and intermediate meaning – 'demonic' or 'what may not be touched' – that is appropriately expressed by the word 'taboo', since it stresses a characteristic which remains common for all time both to what is sacred and to what is unclean: the dread of contact with it'. (Mieli 64-65)

In Mario Mieli's Freudo-Marxist framework the Devil thus assumes a pivotal role within the psycho-social dynamics of repression. Mieli posits that the conceptual crystallisation of 'the homosexual' emerges simultaneously with that of 'the diabolical,' a convergence he traces to

sixth-century denunciations of sodomy (68). By binding these two figures into a single genealogy, he presents homophobic oppression as a theological after-image of demonology. This repression-centred account, however, is far from uncontested. Michel Foucault, widely regarded as a progenitor of queer theory, dismisses the idea that sexuality is merely silenced by judicial and moral interdiction. In *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* (1976), Foucault maintains that power relations use repression as one of the mechanisms of upholding itself (12) but most importantly they produce sexual subjectivities, generating ever more elaborate discourses (33), apparatuses (34, 84), and modes of surveillance (37) through which individuals come to recognise themselves as sexual beings.

Foucault's theories of power has been subsequently taken up by many researchers, and significantly elaborated over the years, shedding light on even more intricate entanglements within power structures. David M. Halperin, building upon Foucault, understands power as not a terrorising, one-way influence of a master over the slave but a relation of an ongoing struggle, exercised and not possessed (17). Halperin likens it to what could be understood as liberal power (Halperin 18), while other names like disciplinary power have also been proposed (McCann and Monaghan 28). It constructs its objects as individual, autonomous subjects. Liberal power has established an ideal of a personal freedom while putting its subjects in other forms of constraint that they police themselves and has been colonising the civil society, scientific research, intellectual activity, and personal life (Halperin 19, cf. McCann and Monaghan 29).

Although Foucault dismisses Mieli's idea of repression, he, similarly to Mieli, sees Christianity, and more specifically, the confession, as one of the driving forces behind the creation of sexual identities (*History of Sexuality* 59). Before the formulation of the idea of a homo or heterosexual, a same-sex intercourse was considered a sin of sodomy. By confessing it to the priest, the desire is formulated and defined, and the sinner marked by it as an element of their identity (*History of Sexuality* 61). The practice of religious confession was transformed with the rise of psychiatry in the nineteenth century, from the sinner and priest to the patient and doctor. The new power relation has contributed to the formulation of the psychosocial identity of the homosexual, with the definition of a 'sodomite act' as an innate characteristic of a born individual by a German psychiatrist Karl Westphal in 1870 (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 43). Although Foucault's "confident dating" (Jagose 11) of the invention of homosexuality has been a subject of controversy, it seems that this issue remains out of scope of this research.

Foucault situates the "Victorian regime" within a broader nineteenth-century conjuncture that simultaneously proliferated and pathologised sexual discourses (*History of Sexuality* 18). Far

from suppressing erotic talk, this milieu generated an elaborate lexicon through which “abnormalities” such as prostitution and the medico-psychiatric category of homosexuality, could be named, classified, and governed. Proponents of the repression thesis, he observes, imagined a sovereign power that “operated as a sentence to disappear, but also as an injunction to silence, an affirmation of non-existence” (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 4). To segregate those who could or would not observe Victorian decorum, purpose-built institutions arose: the brothel and the asylum (*History of Sexuality* 4). Located at the social periphery, these spaces did not merely conceal non-normative subjects; they rendered them hyper-visible to medical, juridical, and police scrutiny. For Foucault, such dispositifs coincide with the ascent of industrial capitalism, embedding bourgeois norms of heterosexual, reproductive citizenship within the very architecture of modern power (*History of Sexuality* 36).

Gay and lesbian theorists of the Freudo-Marxist strain have argued that the repressed can free itself from the silenced position by speaking about itself—giving voice back to the community. However, Foucault argues that if the system can crumble under only a mere utterance, then it would have already crumbled (*History of Sexuality* 6). Moreover, he notices that the very frames into which the abnormal was differentiated, has allowed for speaking about it—in code, in medical or legal terms. Thus, Foucault proves the repression hypothesis does not account for the variety of ways the homosexual was approached discursively. Foucault poses a different understanding of the process of this marginalisation: it is not by silencing, but by differentiation and othering that the marginalised identities were deemed deviant and undesirable. He explains that nineteenth-century Western society has put into operation discourses of sexuality—“the wide dispersion of devices that were invented for speaking about it, for having it to be spoken about, for inducing it to speak of itself, for listening, recording, transcribing, and redistributing what is said about it” (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 34). As Halperin highlights, the discourses of homophobia are everywhere, as they cannot be reduced to a single concept of truth but rather are systemic strategies of delegitimisation by means of logical contradictions (Halperin 32-34).

In order to remain in its dominant position, the power relation, upheld by the homophobic discourses, produces a hierarchical opposition of the homosexual and heterosexual, where the first is unmarked and the latter produced by a differentiation that does not determine a real group of people but puts them in negation to the unmarked term (Halperin 44). Halperin calls the homosexual “a conceptual and semiotic dumping ground for all sorts of mutually incompatible, logically contradictory notions” (45), simultaneously “(1) a social misfit, (2) an unnatural

monster or freak, (3) a moral failure, and (4) a sexual pervert” (46), while the heterosexual is upheld as “(1) a social norm, (2) a perfectly natural condition into which everyone is born and into which everyone grows up if no catastrophic accident interferes with normal, healthy development, (3) a highly laudable accomplishment that one is entitled to take pride in and for which one deserves no small amount of personal and social credit, and (4) a frighteningly unstable and a precarious state that can easily be overthrown” (46) and “therefore [it] needs to be militantly protected, defended, and safeguarded by a constant mobilisation of social forces” (47).

Additionally, Bernini stresses that the binary structures have historically not only been oversimplified sexual and gender identities, but have served to “establish a hierarchical order whereby only certain categories of people are acknowledged as belonging to a ‘healthy’, ‘normal’ and ‘full’ humanity, and thus as fully deserving of legal protection” (Bernini 65). Thus, the binary of the homosexual and heterosexual is oppositional, but at the same time these notions work in order to uphold each other’s position. The existence of one is dependant on the negative differentiation of another. Foucault’s ideas have established what has been identified as a radical constructivist typology of queer theory (Bernini 56) and has helped to shift the view of sexuality from an expression of an inherent truth into a social construct. Much contemporary research on culture and cultural production is dominated by Foucauldian approaches, partly because his theory is cast in universal terms. As Foucault observes, “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (*History of Sexuality* 70). Even if this framework is frequently overused, it remains illuminating: when we consider popular culture and its democratising claims, struggles over power cannot be ignored. To overlook them risks a naïve ‘anything goes’ view of the popular. Conversely, even the most trivial event in popular culture is caught up in yet another knot of power. In this light, the Satanic in popular culture is not a whim or an accident; it is entangled in the broader discourse of Christian power in the Western world.

Discourse analysis illuminates the positioning—and indeed the production—of the Devil by the systems of power that sustained Christianity, an argument I develop in the first subchapter of Chapter 2. As a methodology, however, it is fundamentally chronological, even archaeological, and thus best suited to historical reconstruction, as the many histories of the Devil demonstrate. For contemporary performances of the Satanic, its explanatory power is limited. The Satanic Queer bends chronology and resists the patient excavation of stable structures. While discursive analysis can retrace how the Devil was imagined and which ideas shaped that figure, it tells us little about how the Satanic currently operates. Accordingly, if

discourse analysis tends towards deconstruction, I turn to more active frameworks better able to capture the performance of the Satanic: post-Foucaultian queer theories, performance, and digital humanities.

Halperin argues that the category of the homosexual, or the non-normative, is defined by negation: it is marked as “other” and “different,” an “incoherent construction” and an “identity without essence” (61), which yields a subjectivity that is oppositional rather than substantive (62). Consequently, the most radical response to homophobic discourse is not a simple inversion (for example, countering ‘gay is bad’ with ‘gay is good’) nor the re-habilitation of a devalued identity (61), but the assumption and empowerment of a marginal positionality that takes advantage of “the purely oppositional location homosexuality has been made to occupy by the logic and the supplement and by the fantasmatic character of homophobic discourse” (Halperin 61). On this account, queer is best understood as a de-essentialised, positional modality constituted “not substantively but oppositionally, not by *what* it is but by *where* it is and *how* it operates” (Halperin 61–62, emphasis in the original). Extending this logic, Halperin identifies practices that unsettle dominant arrangements, such as creative appropriation and resignification, theatricalisation, and exposure and demystification, each oriented towards questioning, delegitimising, and dismantling prevailing power relations (Halperin 48–52). Together these strategies clarify that resistance is neither a mere reversal nor a bid to stabilise a redeemed identity; it is a situated practice that leverages its oppositional location.

Read through this lens, the Satanic Queer operates analogously. The Satanic figure, whether named ‘the Devil,’ ‘Satan,’ ‘Lucifer,’ or ‘a fallen angel,’ assumes a negatively differentiated identity that lacks any inherent essence and constitutes itself through acts that contest the norms upheld by traditional religious discourses. Although Halperin characterises queer as effecting a “radical reversal in the logic of homophobic discourses” (66), I suggest that “reversal” is misleading: it presupposes directional binarism and obscures the point that queer refuses any attempt at “re-habilitation” (61). The aim is not to reverse the governing logic but to set it adrift, foregrounding how that logic morphs rather than consolidating a new order. What is now required is an account of how such non-essential identities are assumed in practice. The next section therefore introduces Judith Butler’s account of performativity to explain the process by which positional identities are iteratively enacted, and then turns to drag and camp aesthetics as concrete techniques of creative appropriation, theatricalisation, and exposure that disturb the system’s organising binaries and authorising myths.

1.1.1. Camp Engines, Drag Loops: Performativity in Action

In 1990 Judith Butler developed the idea of identity production in their seminal book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. In this work, Butler critically assesses the achievements of feminist theory, and founding their idea on the Foucauldian power production, they criticise the preoccupation of the feminists with the subject of a woman. Pointing out the paradox of fighting for emancipation within the system that has constituted and dominated the very notion of the woman subject, they call for a rethinking of the ontology of identity. Based on the Hegelian dialectics and linguistic theory of speech acts developed by J.L. Austin, Butler expands the idea of speech act performativity into gender performativity.

Austin's linguistic study differentiates between two types of utterances: constative and performative, where the first are descriptive and indicative statements, while the latter ontologically influence reality, changing it by the sole fact of themselves being uttered (Austin 3). His examples of performatives include first person singular present indicative active sentences such as 'I promise', 'I sentence you', and 'I christen'. However, the most influential, in his opinion, is 'I do' in the course of the marriage ceremony (Austin 5). Performative speech act 'I do' changes the status of the subject in the view of religion and state, thus changing reality. This shows that yet again the linkage to Christian tradition is highlighted in queer genealogy.

Butler reasons their way to gender performativity through the concept of institutional and compulsory heterosexuality which, in their opinion, designs the binary through naturalisation of the unity of sex, gender, and desire, and differentiation of feminine and masculine subjects, juxtaposed by the practice of heterosexual desire (*Gender Trouble* 30). However, these categories are "called into question by the dissonant play of attributes that fail to conform to sequential or causal models of intelligibility" (*Gender Trouble* 32), or, in other words, any deviation from the established binary. By deregulation of the attributes of a 'a woman' or 'a man', the binary wavers, thus revealing it is made of arbitrarily decided categories. At this point, it is difficult not to compare Butler's attributes of 'a woman' and 'a man' to the theological opposition between 'God' and 'the Devil,' insofar as both pairs are sustained by regulatory norms that naturalise their difference. Gender, according to Butler, is thus neither a noun nor a floating signifier, but it is "performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be" (*Gender Trouble* 33). In such an understanding, "gender is always a doing" and not its "doer", a discursive production rather than essentialist innateness. Butler claims that "[t]here is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that

are said to be its results” (*Gender Trouble* 33). Thus, ‘a woman’ or ‘a man’ are unstable constructs that depend on regulation and rituals in order to exist (McCann and Monaghan 120-121), and all “expressions” of gender are, in fact, the performative acts of gender creation. In this light, the Satanic Queer, by citing and stylising the attributes of ‘the Devil,’ does not disclose a diabolic essence but performatively produces the position of ‘the Devil,’ thereby exposing the God/Devil opposition as a contingent effect of regulatory repetition rather than a stable identification (cf. *Gender Trouble* 33).

Butler’s theory of gender performativity has been misrepresented and misunderstood by many of Butler’s readers as a process that can be wilfully performed (Jagose 87). Although it is tempting to understand gender performativity as ability to ‘pick and choose’ on how to reconfigure one’s gender performance as a theatrical act, it is important to stress that Butler sees all gender as the effect of a hierarchised system of constraints (*Bodies That Matter* 81). Thus, all identity may come to be understood as performative. After all, gay and lesbian are also separately constructed categories that uphold their own regimes, for example that of homonormativity, defined by Lisa Duggan as “a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (50). Although stemming from feminist theory, Butler’s theory expresses the dissatisfaction with identity politics as playing the hegemonic structure’s game, one of the few reoccurring characteristics of queer theory.

Performativity in Butler’s understanding means that heterosexuality is naturalised as the effect of performative repetition of normative gender identities (*Gender Trouble* 27). They suggest that, in order to denaturalise it, it is necessary to fundamentally displace the repetition in a parodic act. Butler criticises the previous assumptions of feminist theory that gender parodic practises, such as drag, cross-dressing, and butch and femme identities, are either degrading to women or heterosexist repetitions of stereotypes (*Gender Trouble* 174). What Butler suggests is that an effective mode for the deconstruction of the idea of a true gender identity is drag performance, which embodies and impersonates exaggerated attributes of femininity or masculinity (*Gender Trouble* 174). Butler sees drag as a dissonance between the anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance of the performer. The stylised repetitions of gender of drag performers are inspired by an ideal which cannot possibly be embodied and does not exist outside of their performance. Thus, by performing out a unified idea of a “woman”, the performer makes the “falsely naturalised” set of attributes more visible (*Gender Trouble* 175). In

this way, drag is a practice that, by exercising its subversive power by the means of parody and performance, exposes the artifice of the gender binary.

Butler's initial theorisation of drag has been contested, not least because it can invite reductive accounts of drag as the simple "performing of the opposite sex" (Rodger 109), a view that risks erasing performers whose self-identification resonates with their stage practice (Stokoe 2). In *Bodies That Matter: The Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993), Butler cautions that "there is no necessary relation between drag and subversion, and that drag may well be used in the service of both the denaturalization and reidealization of hyperbolic heterosexual gender norms" (85). They further note that some drag is rooted in misogyny and homophobia, "providing a ritualistic release for a heterosexual economy that must constantly police its own boundaries against the invasion of queerness" (*Bodies That Matter* 86), thereby shoring up the very regime it appears to critique. To avoid definitions that pivot on assumptions about the performing subject rather than the work of performance, Kayte Stokoe proposes a transfeminist approach committed to analysing context, style, content, and technique (164). Developing this reorientation, Mark Edward and Stephen Farrier argue in their introduction to *Contemporary Drag Practices and Performers: Drag in a Changing Scene, Volume 1* (2020) that Butler's voice should be decentered within drag theory, insisting instead on drag's status as performance. As they put it, "[d]rag performance demonstrates the instability of all claimed identities on an intersectional basis: performers play with identity markers, including race, class, dis/ability and age. Therefore, to read drag solely or primarily as subversion of gender or sexuality is to miss, or ignore, its potency for intersectional critique grounded in live performance" (Edward and Farrier 10). Thus, drag emerges not only as a gender-critical practice, but as an identity-critical one. In Ron Vawter's terms, it produces "a distance to subjectification rather than a model of subjectification and thus the prerequisite for experimentation and the possibilities of going beyond norms and normalization" (Vawter 61).

The intersection of queer and performativity has been also problematised by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in 1993 in her essay "Queer Performativity: Henry James's *The Art of the Novel*". In this text, she notices the potential of performativity in interrogation of meaning, being, and doing, not only in drag but in coming out, self-identification, and activist work. Butler, in Sedgwick's opinion, sources from theatrical performance studies, speech-act theory, and deconstruction at the same time, but the performative means different things under each paradigm. Under speech-act theory, the performative is non-referential and ontologically dislinked, while in performance studies, the performative is theatrical (Sedgwick 2). A queer

performativity, in Sedgwick's opinion, does not start with the first person 'I do' which achieves its performative by its innate connection to the power of the state and refusal to those who do not wield such a power, but with a deflecting "shame on you" (Sedgwick 3-4). By putting all the Austinian characteristics of a performative, i.e. first person singular present indicative active, into a question, Sedgwick posits a queer element to the performative.

Theorising queerness, or "queer performativity", Sedgwick calls it "a strategy for the production of meaning and being, in relation to the affect shame and to the later and related fact of stigma" (11). The negative connotation of shame is not lost on Sedgwick. While shaming and stigmatisation are often traumatic elements of queer lived experiences, Sedgwick compares 'shame' to 'queer' whose potency in activism sources exactly from its previous derogatory meaning, where no amount of 'reclaiming' will ever be able to wash it from negative associations. Appointing both 'shame' and 'queer' as sources of "transformational energy" (4), Sedgwick opposes them to more strict labels such as gay, showing their bigger "experimental, creative, performative force" (4). In fact, according to Sedgwick, gay and queer, although not mutually exclusive, do not overlap completely: some queer people are gay, and some are not; some gay people are queer, and some are not (13). Yet, queer seems to gravitate towards gay spaces marked by shame-consciousness. Sedgwick lists a few: "butch abjection, femmitude, leather, SM, drag, musicality, fisting, attitude, zines, historionicism, asceticism, Snap! culture, diva worship, florid religiosity, in a word, *flaming*" (13, emphasis in the original). While yet again we find religious aspects of queer (or queer aspects of religion) in this genealogy, it is worth noticing that many of the spaces as delineated by Sedgwick also attract a "certain mode of aestheticism" (Sontag 54), that is camp.

While camp, not unlike the previous concepts brought up in this chapter, poses a significant difficulty to be critically defined, Fabio Cleto suggests that camp should be acknowledged as a multifaceted "systemic interpretative tool" (Cleto, "Introduction: Queering the Camp" 7) that remains in a complex relation to power and its devices (8) and sharing its critical stage with queer (12). Camp has no essence - it has been considered a sensibility, taste, style, aestheticism or (queer) discourse, a discursive resistance or semiotic excess, and "a site of *debate*, rather than of a consensus" (Cleto, "Introduction: Queering the Camp" 4, emphasis in the original). The first significant attempt at theorising camp was made by Susan Sontag in her 1964 essay "Notes on 'Camp'".

Sontag says that the essence of camp lies in "its love of the unnatural: of artifice and exaggeration" (Sontag 53) and functions as "a certain mode of aestheticism" (Sontag 54) that

understands life as theatre (Sontag 56). Camp, as it celebrates the dissonance between the appearance and reality, is often to be seen in decorative art and style, but also in film and literature, and thus Sontag proposes one of possible sources for camp's genealogy in the eighteenth century and "that period's extraordinary feeling for artifice, for surface, for symmetry; its taste for the picturesque and the thrilling, its elegant conventions for representing instant feeling and the total presence of character" (Sontag 57).

Sontag makes an interesting comparison calling camp a "modern dandyism" (Sontag 63). She invokes the image of a Victorian dandy, a hedonistic figure of an aristocratic affluence, valuing the aesthetic materiality and displaying a flamboyant behaviour, identifying it as an anticipatory condition for camp aesthetics. The detachment from seriousness and tragedy inherent to the hedonistic dandy is characteristic to camp sensibility. However, the difference between dandyism and camp lies in its relationship to mass culture. The dandy valued originality and unreplicability, while camp revels in replication and almost kitsch aesthetic of the popular culture. Thus, camp is "[d]andyism in the age of mass culture [that] makes no distinction between the unique object and the mass-produced object" (Sontag 63). This understanding has not proven unproblematic: Sontag has been accused of appropriating the unruly character of camp and putting it into more rigid theoretical approach, and displacing it into the mainstream popular culture (Krakowska 75). Moreover, Sontag initially stressed that camp should not be equalled with homosexual production and cannot be thought of as serious and political, and although she later revised her position, she was accused of "degayfing" camp (Cleto, "Introduction: Queering the Camp" 10). Her definitions might lead to understanding camp as simple indulgence of 'so-bad-it-is-good', but other researchers attribute a greater importance to its understanding as a particularly homosexual mode of self-performance (Cleto, "Introduction: Queering the Camp"; Krakowska 50). Aside from the controversies, her ideas helped to solidify camp as a mainly aesthetic art, free from a moralising tone (Krakowska 75).

According to Sontag, the transitional figure between dandyism and camp is Oscar Wilde. Indeed, he occupies a central position within Sontag's essay, as its entirety is inscribed to him, and short, aphoristic paragraphs oftentimes resembling Wilde's own writing, are weaved into quotations from his works. Not coincidentally, Wilde holds an emblematic place in queer discourse too. Cleto says that Wilde's highly publicised process helped to shift the meaning of *queer*:

[before] Queer was the ambiguous, the Satanic 'deuce', the fundamentally unmanageable semantic instability, a pure semiotic uncertainty, an hermeneutical wavering on surfaces doomed to failure - inauthenticity and vacuity, in fact, was all that interpretation led to. It was only after the turn of the

century that queer began signalling, along with its 'strangeness', the violence of stigma for 'homosexuality', and its first referent in this sense was the effeminate male upper middle-class model, the mode of existence based on Oscar Wilde's 'social body' - the effect, through his 1895 trials, of an exemplary punishment which turned Oscar Wilde into a public property, a common system of intelligibility, and his effeminate, aristocratic, 'aesthetic' posing into a sure sign of inner 'degeneracy'. ("Introduction: Queering the Camp" 13, emphasis mine)

During the late Victorian era, when the binary of homo- and heterosexuality was still crystallising, English law steadily shifted its attention from the policing of specific acts to the constitution of a recognisable sexual identity. The Buggery Act of 1533 had punished sodomy as "the detestable and abominable vice" with death (Bristow 5) until the Offences against the Person Act (1861) commuted the penalty to life imprisonment, provided anal intercourse could be proved (Bristow 22). The Labouchère Amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Act (1885) went further, criminalising "gross indecency" between men (Fize 2, Bristow 64) and thus targeting desire itself. Oscar Wilde's 1895 trials, triggered by the Marquess of Queensberry's accusation that he was a "posing Somdomite [sic]" exposed this juridical shift: courtroom testimony, forensic scrutiny of literary texts, and sensational press coverage re-cast Wilde from celebrated aesthete into the paradigm of the "homosexual" (Bristow xxvi). Wilde's fate therefore marks the moment when same-sex desire became a publicly intelligible and punishable subject position, confirming Cleto's claim that the homosexual body was simultaneously pathologised and textualised (Cleto, "Introduction: Queering the Camp" 13-14) and Sontag's insight that Wilde's self-performance anchored a new, camp inflection of identity (Sontag 63).

Sontag also notices an esoteric dimension of camp: "And Camp is esoteric - something of a private code, a badge of identity even (...) To talk about Camp is therefore to betray it" (53). Esotericism itself is a term coined in 1828 by the historian Jacques Matter in his work on early Christian Gnosticism, *Histoire critique du gnosticisme et de son influence*, and, as Christopher Partridge remarks, has remained an academic term signifying the study of the occult beyond the nineteenth century practices (Partridge, "Introduction" 3). Occultism, from the Latin *occultus*, refers to that which is 'hidden' or 'concealed', has carried shifting nuances: since its codification in the twelfth century's *Psautier d'Oxford* and the study of "spheres of knowledge beyond everyday understanding, such as the mysterious operations of God" (Partridge, "Introduction" 2), from the alchemists of the sixteenth century to the occultists of nineteenth century, when it came to denote "a coherent countercultural wisdom tradition, following a linear pattern, rather than a dynamic complex of rhizomatic currents" (Partridge, "Introduction" 2). It now circulates in the broader occultural milieu that is no longer conceptualised in such a linear way¹. Admittedly,

¹ For further discussion of occulture, see Chapter 2 (§2.5).

Sontag may have used the word ‘esoteric’ in its most literal sense of that which is ‘hidden,’ yet, the resonance between camp and the occult—which James Webb calls “rejected knowledge” (Webb 191), with its strong associations with the demonic—seems too strong to ignore.

Andrew Ross argues that camp hinges on a “historical incongruity of displacement” (Ross 311): when artefacts forged under an earlier regime lose the authority to “produce and dominate meanings” (Ross 312), they re-enter circulation as half-empty signs redeployed according to present-day codes of taste. In my account, the Devil exemplifies such a spent power. Although still embedded in living beliefs and practices, he circulates within an expansive occultural marketplace and, as Chapter 2 shows, holds less legislative force than ever, which makes him newly available for redefinition. Fabio Cleto names this repurposing a “perversion of nostalgia” (Cleto, “Introduction: Pop Camp” 304), whereby camp twists an object’s original intentions and turns it back against the very constituencies that once wielded it, generating “powerful signs of oppositional identities” (Cleto, “Introduction: Pop Camp” 304). A camp Devil does precisely this: his formerly fearsome iconography is redeployed to signal queer dissent, mocking the theological order that branded him and, by extension, sodomitical desire, as abominable.

Ross extends the point by insisting that camp “transforms, destabilizes, and subverts the existing balance of sexual identity and sexual roles” through a “bricolage of features pilfered from conditions of the past” (Ross 324). My thesis pushes this further. In digital culture, bricolage mutates into morph, an always-on remix that operates in what I call evertime, a temporality without secured past, present, or future. The camp Devil’s incessant shape-shifting, memetic citation, and platform-native recycling do not merely borrow from history; they produce ongoing presents in which icons are continuously shift their authorships and attachments. Chapter 4 analyses this camp Devil in detail, showing how his morphic operations update the mechanisms of queer resistance that Ross and Cleto describe for a networked media ecology.

However, I depart from Ross on one crucial emphasis. While camp certainly draws on symbols of the past, I focus less on what its elements are than on what camp does to them. The Devil’s signs belong to an archive, but one which is constantly in flux, thus making camp intervention not solely an archaeological endeavour. Camp invokes the archive in the present of performance and forges new webs of connection and meaning that orient future attachments. In this sense, the performative of camp is a convolution of past, present, and future, a queer temporality in which Satanic signs are made and remade as living techniques rather than as

relics. This temporal twist underwrites my larger claim about the Satanic Queer: identity here is not a recovered essence, but a practice of continual reconfiguration whose time is evertime.

1.1.2. Durations, Plateaus, Drifts: A Queer Sense of Time

The editors of *Sexual Disorientations: Queer Temporalities, Affects, Theologies* (2018) argue that even apparently self-evident categories like past, present, and future are culturally constructed and inseparable from the (il)logics of desire and power (Brintnall et al., 3). One influential outcome is the concept of queer time. As Jack Halberstam puts it, “queer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death” (*In a Queer Time and Place* 2). For the purposes of this study, I concentrate on two contrasting orientations: Lee Edelman’s (2004) antisocial thesis, which repudiates “reproductive futurism” in favour of a present-tense negativity linked to the death drive, and José Esteban Muñoz’s (2009) utopian account, which figures queerness as an anticipatory horizon felt in the present as a “not-yet” that calls us toward different futures.

Lee Edelman in 2004’s book *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* recognises a particular aspect of queerness—its disinterest in reproductive futurism. In his opinion, queerness “figures [...] the place of the social order’s death drive: a place [...] of abjection” (Edelman, *No Future* 3). Abjection, or the abject, has been first theorised by Julia Kristeva in her 1982 book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. The abject is a threat of blurring the boundaries between the self and the other. The most radical abjection, according to Kristeva, is a corpse as it is “death infecting life” (4), not only by “lack of cleanliness or health”, but by “disturb[ing] identity, system, order”, “not respect[ing] borders, positions, rules”, “the in-between, the ambiguous” (Kristeva 4). The abject is thus a threat to the self, something to be expelled in order to stay alive, something from ‘the other side’ or ‘beyond’ (Hogle 120). By recognising the political discursive strategy of putting the figure of a Child forward as an ideological limit, Edelman points to the potential of queerness for disengaging with this rhetorics. By embracing the “anti-Child” abject position, it effectively undermines the structure which engages with it. Curiously enough, Edelman notices that the ones that oppose the Child in political discourse are often considered under demonic influence (*No Future* 22). Queer, according to Edelman, not only opposes to the structure, but also opposes its own oppositionality. Since identity is always

constructed as the opposition, queer is not an identity, but a force “withdrawing allegiance” from the compulsory dominant structures (*No Future* 4). In words of Brandy Daniels, “queers should (...) accept, even embrace, the negativity and destructiveness that they already signify for and in society” (20). In *Bad Education* (2022), Edelman reaffirms his view and says of queer that it “implies a disturbance of order, a nonconformity to prevailing logic or law, a glitch in the function of meaning” (*Bad Education* xvi).

José Esteban Muñoz posits the temporal mode of queerness as “not yet here” and always on the horizon of the future (Muñoz 1). He argues that antisocial queer theories, as represented by Edelman, are “romances of the negative, wishful thinking, and investments in deferring various dreams of difference” (Muñoz 24). Muñoz directly challenges Lee Edelman's argument that the future belongs to “the Child” and is therefore not for queers. Muñoz insists that “the future is queerness’s domain” (1) and that it is crucial “not to hand over futurity to normative white reproductive futurity” (112). Queer time, in this sense, breaks with or diverts from the generational lines emphasised by reproductive futurism. Muñoz suggests that queerness is a utopian orientation towards the future, accessible through glimpses, performances, and collective imagination (1).

While focused on the future, Muñoz's approach also involves a “backward glance” to past moments or “ghosts” (like pre-Stonewall practices or public sex cultures) to find anticipatory illumination and engage the present while imagining the future (16). This is not mere nostalgia but a critical deployment of the past. His vision of queer time also emphasises queer collectivity as a site of potentiality and “concrete possibility for another world” (Muñoz 1). In essence, Muñoz theorises queer time as a dynamic, hopeful, and performative orientation towards a utopian future that actively resists the constraints of normative, linear time by creating moments and spaces where “the not yet” can be glimpsed and enacted in the present. In a way, queer utopia is a conception of hope that is known from many religious discourses (Brintnall et al. 13)

Although utopian, it would be a stretch to call Muñoz’s approach idealist. What he takes from the antirelational strain of queer theories is the concept of a radical negativity, which, he says, “offers us a mode of understanding negativity that is starkly different from the version of the negative proposed by the queer antirelationist. Here the negative becomes the resource for a certain mode of queer utopianism” (26). Although Muñoz’s and Edelman’s theories are often juxtaposed as two contrasting views of queer temporality, I posit that the Satanic Queer is a resultant of the clash of them—an exercise of a double negation in a rejection of categories of time.

The editors Juan Francisco Belmonte Ávila and Estíbaliz Encarnación-Pinedo in the introduction to *Unbound Queer Time in Literature, Cinema, and Video Games* (2025) point to the shortcomings of the queer temporality theorisation. Having surveyed the now-canonical roster on queer temporality, the authors concede their value but identify a critical blind spot: an attachment to the present that occludes bodies of work, eg. utopian/dystopian, speculative, and eschatological, whose very premise is the articulation of queerness unaccounted for by these theories:

there are entire genres and cultural expressions that often, and fertile, lay down the basis of worlds where—and when—queer individuals—as well as novel ways of being queer—can exist freed from the subjugating and normalizing forces of the present. Science fiction is a prime example of this. (Belmonte Ávila and Encarnación-Pinedo 11)

As they say, “queerly different temporal realities can be captured formally without being streamlined into temporal conformity and while retaining their singularities” (Belmonte Ávila and Encarnación-Pinedo 6), drawing attention to the fact that a lot of queer temporal theories are still limited by their entanglement with straight, normative time. In a quest for finding the new models of queer temporalities, they turn to works on posthumanism by authors such as Donna Haraway (2016) and Sarah Ahmed (2006), and they posit that it is exploring exactly the posthuman and the nonhuman in culture which can allow for better understanding the human identity:

This is because our identities are not just the product of the emotional, the political, the economic, or the corporeal; they also depend on objects, processes, systems, and beings that are profoundly non-human and that, in their non-humanness, define us weirdly, chaotically, and queerly. Glimpsing the weird and the different in us allows us to see ourselves and others more queerly. In this sense, depictions of the future are not just projections of what could happen but actually create contexts to exist more queerly. They also invite us to reflect on and question, queerly, our present by acting as valuable critical tools that merit further study. (Belmonte Ávila and Encarnación-Pinedo 12).

Similar arguments for queer investigation within speculative fiction was made by Alexis Lothian (2017), who notes that “[t]here is a powerful speculative element in the move from deconstructing existing binaries to visualizing—one might even say fictionalizing—how the world might be changed by those binaries’ subversion or destruction” (5), and by Michael DeAngelis:

Just as the demonstration of queer sexuality heightens our awareness of the unstable foundation upon which heteronormativity has established itself as a cultural default or a “given,” narratives that intentionally disrupt the seeming integrity of hetero-“normative” time elucidate the largely arbitrary nature of the time structures that undergird everyday life. Undermining our adherence to the temporal experience that is aligned with this heteronormative configuration, the project of critically dethroning such normative structures becomes a queer intervention, one that strives to expose, interrogate, and disrupt the ideological conditions that dictate how we structure our lives; which goals we should establish (and when); what constitutes success, qualifies as “home,” and counts as an acceptable notion of “family.” The journey ultimately foregrounds the ways that we are invited to conceptualize the past and present in relation to the future. (103)

This research is focused on one such a nonhuman queer cultural expression - that of the Satanic Queer.

1.1.3. Fluid Rites: Queer Theological Repertoires

Significantly, this research is not the first juncture of the religious and queer. Sam See's unfinished but posthumously published project, *Queer Mythologies: Community and Memory in Modern Literature* (2020), argues that modernist formal techniques, such as fracture, elision, recursion, and the refusal of teleological narrative, model a literary dwelling place for queer life, a space apart from normative temporal coercions and a paradoxical vehicle for telling a queer "tale of the tribe," a phrase See borrows from Ezra Pound (See 5). For See, twentieth-century queer writers and communities turn to mythology as a "foundational falsehood" in order to narrate the entanglements of sexuality, secularism, spirituality, and politics (See 6). By refashioning classical, biblical, and other traditional myths to their own ends, these writers create the preconditions for imagining a myth of queer community (See 197), which in turn enables queer politics (See 6). In doing so, they also "create the grounds for new forms of belief" (See 228). Alongside this practical work of world-making, their mythic refunctionings bring "into fictive being unanticipated sexual typologies" (Herring 275), underlining myth's capacity to be "a lie that tells the truth" (Love 297), a characteristic that was earlier used to describe camp by Phillip Core in his 1984 book *Camp: the Lie that Tells the Truth*, where he insists that

Camp depends on where as well as how you pitch it. In some senses it is in the eye of the beholder. While their motives may be clear to the camp, their resultant actions remain marked but mysterious to the observer. While camp is now often a joke or pose among gays, it is not without serious value because it originated as a Masonic gesture by which homosexuals could make themselves known to each other during periods when homosexuality was not allowable. Besides being a signal, camp was and remains the way in which homosexuals and other groups of people with double lives can find a lingua franca. (Core 82)

Queer mythologies, then, are created in order to provide a common ground for queer communities in the same way that camp can do.

Love's claim that "myth is a lie that tells the truth, and tells it in the medium of blood" (297) presses Core's communicative code into flesh, and her warning that anti-essentialist critique often "fail[s] to reckon with the 'somatic nature of queerness'" ties truth-telling to embodied transmission (Love 297). Gil Anidjar radicalises the same intuition at the level of political theology:

All significant concepts of the history of the modern world are liquidated theological concepts. This is so not only because of their historical development—in which they circulated between theology and the operations of the modern world, whereby, for example, the blood of Christ became the flow of capital—but also because of their systematic fluidity, the recognition of which is necessary for a political consideration of these concepts. (Anidjar viii)

Read together, Core's lingua franca, Love's "medium of blood" (297) and Anidjar's "flow" and "systematic fluidity" (viii) sketch a single relay: camp makes recognition legible, myth makes it somatic, and political theology names its circulation through modern forms.

This liquid dynamic unsettles essentialist readings and clarifies what a queer approach to myth must do. See's counterexample is Freud's heteronormative construal of Oedipus as a master key to the psyche, a theory that can masquerade as a queer myth of unity even as it enshrines heterosexual normativity (See 208). A queer lens rejects that closure and reopens myth to experience that has been phenomenologically suppressed, rendering myth a "queer, unstable, fluid genre" that contradicts itself and remains open to change (See 136). Adaptation theory corroborates the point: "[archetype's] availability for rewriting means that they are texts constantly in flux, constantly metamorphosing in the process of adaptation and retelling" (Sanders 79). Sebastian Domsch shows the same mechanics in the superhero archive, where origins and essences are routinely revised intertextually across media and authors, and the first instantiation is not guaranteed canonical supremacy (Domsch 221). In this configuration, queer retellings work as fluid transmissions rather than fixed taxonomies, which is why the Devil's archive lends itself to ongoing metamorphoses.

This openness extends into theology through practices of queer hermeneutics. Marcella Althaus-Reid defines theological queering as the deliberate questioning of heterosexual experience and thought that have shaped theology, the theologian's role, and biblical hermeneutics. Seeking to "displace its heterosexual core in a deconstructionist fashion" (Althaus-Reid 3), she proposes a "libertine" hermeneutics that relocates reading to "bedrooms, dungeons and other unusual locations" in order to generate embodied perspectives (Althaus-Reid 3). As Andrew K. T. Yip argues, such a lens does not merely critique the structure of the norm; it centres the actors of critique and their counter-normative agency, probing social universes from within and unveiling the force of normativity (Yip 51). In this way, sexuality becomes a productive interpretive key for grasping individualised religious identities (Yip 60). Approaching religion queerly also means privileging "the authority of self" (Yip 56) over hetero-directed norms. Working with performativity and transgression, queer hermeneutics seeks to disrupt inscribed gender differences and heteronormative orders, not merely by reversal but by relocating interpretive authority to marginalised bodies and practices (Althaus-Reid 3).

The method of queer hermeneutics yields concrete re-readings. In Genesis, for instance, Althaus-Reid suggests that beyond the familiar drama of heterosexual control lies a deeper, divine dynamic of sexual exclusion (8). In one queer approach, the "particular loving friendship"

between Adam and God can be read as what precipitates expulsion, inaugurating a queer diaspora (Althaus-Reid 8). The emphasis here is squarely on reading: queering is not the invention of new scripture but a reorientation of the interpretive gaze that dislodges presumed universals and tracks how exclusion is produced in and through sacred narratives. Queer theology's broader orientation to doctrine follows from this hermeneutic. The Christian story of incarnation admits radically different possibilities of interpretation, depending on what readers deem vital. Queer theology searches for the nodes of power within those options, aligning itself with the exodus narrative of God leading an oppressed people out of bondage rather than with doctrinal imaginaries of an omnipotent sovereign detached in heaven. It looks for clues in "Jesus' own boundary-crossing recognitions of the exiled, the reviled, and the declared-dead, rather than in medieval constructions of feudal lordship and judgment that have licensed the oppression of sexual and racial minorities" (Schneider and Young 28). In this register, queer theology is attuned to Deleuzian lines of flight, that is, "movements of deterritorialization and destratification" (Deleuze and Guattari 3), allowing for alternative readings and perspectives.

Althaus-Reid radicalises this stance by foregrounding holiness's "concreteness" as dependent on embodied rebellions, specifically legal (sexual) rebellions (Althaus-Reid 134). Giorgio Agamben notes that, for Greek philosophers, the demonic and happiness are related (Agamben 138). He also reads Walter Benjamin's account of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Elective Affinities* (1809), where the 'demonic' names an inconceivable "solidarity of spirit and sex" (Agamben 149), governed by ambiguity. On this basis, Althaus-Reid sketches queer theology as demonology. She writes: "Theologies and hermeneutics located in the body are demonologies, contested sites of possession, ambivalence and struggle. They are also sites of exorcism" (Althaus-Reid 110). I read this insistence on "demonologies" as naming a Satanic element within theology's embodiment: queer hermeneutics does not simply brush against ambivalence and contestation; it works through them, and even hegemonic hermeneutics, as Chapter 2 shows, cannot fully evade that pull toward the demonic as a sign of struggle and unsettlement (Althaus-Reid 110). It is a theology that begins from the knowledge of rebellious spirits and exposes the "legal sacred order" (Althaus-Reid 134) as constructed rather than natural. From this perspective, "queer redemptions" lay bare the historic role of conversion in reproducing a decent or proper order (Althaus-Reid 134). The aim is deconstructive not as an end in itself but as a way to unmask how sanctity has been juridically policed. In other words, when interpretation is relocated to the body, it enters a field already marked by possession, resistance, and expulsion; this is the terrain on which the Satanic Queer becomes legible.

This reorientation demands that redemption and afterlife doctrines be reconsidered. Following Micaela di Leonardo and Roger Lancaster, political and queer theology must situate “metamorphoses in sexual and gender relations (...) linked to political, economic and cultural challenges” within shifting practices (di Leonardo and Lancaster 1). The relative neglect, in Western theology, of limbo, purgatory, heaven, and hell has, in Althaus-Reid’s view, deferred a colonial critique within systematic accounts of the afterlife (74). Afterlife theology functions as the result of imperial interventions in redeeming the Other; it serves as a colonial landmark that maps theological shifts in “loving possibilities” (Althaus-Reid 74), the scramble for “amatory continents” (Althaus-Reid 135) reclaimed by heterosexual Christianity. Against this, queer theology asserts “the right of demonologies” (Althaus-Reid 135), the right to listen to rebellious spirits that “have rejected the light for the darkness” (Althaus-Reid 135). The “transparency of light,” with its imperial logics and “white axis” of racial supremacy, universalises demons even as identities presumed fixed have never ceased to wander (Althaus-Reid 135).

Taken together, these threads tie See’s account of mythic refashioning to queer theological practice. Myth, understood as a ‘foundational falsehood’ that nonetheless organises political and spiritual imaginaries, becomes available for counter-normative habitation; theology, approached queerly, dislodges heteronormative authority by relocating interpretation to embodied, stigmatised sites. Both fields resist essentialism: queer mythopoesis by rendering myth a mutable, “fluid” genre (See 136), and queer hermeneutics by exposing how doctrinal universals have been secured through exclusions whose lineaments can be read and reversed within scripture and tradition. The comparative insight that myth is a ‘lie that tells the truth’ remains resonant with practices such as camp and drag (Herring 275). In each case, the work is not to abandon belief but to “create the grounds for new forms of belief” (See 228), where community, redemption, and holiness are reimagined through the very bodies and desires that heteronormative orders had rendered impossible.

I want to state the implication clearly for the Satanic Queer. Queer theology and queer hermeneutics show that a queer approach destabilises myth; that destabilisation is the crucial giveaway that allows Satanic figures to move. In contemporary digital culture, however, the Satanic Queer does not centre the re-reading of scripture or the interrogation of institutions that canonised its meanings. It performs appropriations of those meanings in the act of performance, evoking multiple, simultaneous readings and setting the archive in motion. This is not a repudiation of queer hermeneutics. On the contrary, the scholarship of re-reading and re-interpretation provides the enabling ground on which these performances stand; digital practice

then demonstrates how destabilised myths already function in culture whether or not a formal re-reading is supplied. From this vantage, the methodological shift is one of emphasis. Rather than treating reinterpretation as the primary lever for disturbing a hegemonic structure, the Satanic Queer appropriates the archive in use, making meaning through enactment, circulation, and shift. Performance becomes the site where doctrinal universals lose their fixity and where demonologies as embodied, contested, exorcistic spaces which Althaus-Reid names are made publicly legible (Althaus-Reid 110). In what follows, I trace how this performative mobilisation operates, showing how signs acquire force by being done, not only by being read.

1.2. Performance Beyond the Stable Archive

In order to say that the Satanic Queer performs anything, we must first interrogate how performance itself has the potential to tell the story. Although Butler's performativity rightly inspects the processes of the creation of identity, I want to turn away from the very concept of identity and attend instead to interrogations in performance theory that address states in which there is no identity recognised as liminal phases of a performance. I draw a comparison between the Satanic Queer performance and the liminal, insofar as the liminal here is not actually 'liminal' in the sense of an in-between stage that leads elsewhere. Rather, the 'liminal' loops with itself; the threshold becomes recursive, and in looping it is no longer 'liminal' but Satanic Queer.

One of the most important scholars in the field of performance studies is Richard Schechner. In his seminal, constantly updated book, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* he calls performance a field that is "open to new possibilities" (*Performance Studies* 1), and thus difficult to precisely delimitate, though not devoid of specific subjects under investigation. He lists these as "play, games, sports, popular entertainments, and rituals to the performing arts, professional roles, political personae, media, and the constructions of race, gender, and identity in everyday life" (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 1). All the categories, regardless whether the one performing is aware of it or not, can be looked on from the perspective of performance studies, as "performing is an ongoing, never-ending activity or set of activities" (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 3).

Schechner divides performing into 'is' performance and 'as' performance. The 'is' performance is whatever the culture ritualises within specific cultural context, whereas from the perspective of performance studies everything can be studied 'as' a performance—if only specific questions are posed to the material, such as "What happens? Where does it happen?

How does it look, how does it behave, how does it change over time? What effects does the event or thing have? (...)” (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 12). He explains it using the example of European tradition. In Ancient Greece, Schechner says, theatrical performances often accompanied other significant community life events, such as religious festivals, and their aesthetic understanding was only later codified by Aristotle. Schechner also draws on medieval (Christian) Europe, where, due to the Church’s ideal of chastity, drama could not be publicly staged. However, their culture was rich with performances: “a wide range of popular entertainments and religious ceremonies held people’s attention (...). There were a multitude of mimes, magicians, animal acts, acrobats, puppet shows, (...) *commedia dell’arte* (...) The Church offered a rich canopy of feasts, services, and rituals (...), [as well as] plays celebrating and enacting the history of the world from Creation through Crucifixion and Resurrection to the Last Judgement” (Schechner *Performance Studies* 13). As I show in the next part of this chapter, these practices still have not disappeared in the Christian context.

Performance studies as a discipline is a relatively new field, with its first department established at New York University only in 1981. It “draws on and synthesizes approaches from many disciplines including the performing arts, social sciences, feminist studies, gender studies, history, psychoanalysis, queer theory, semiotics, media studies, ethnology, cybernetics, area studies, popular culture studies, and cultural studies”, though does not limit itself to the pathways charted by these (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 26). Performance studies is interested in “embodiment, action, behavior, and agency” in an intercultural way, recognising the impact of collisions of various traditions (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 26).

Schechner explicitly reads Butler’s notion of performativity “as performance” (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 231) and maintains that it “points to a variety of topics, among them the construction of social reality including gender and race (...) and the complex relationship of performance practice to performance theory” (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 231). Tracing it back to post-structuralist thought using “binary oppositions to map the dialectical tensions of the systems” (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 251), influenced by Derrida’s and Foucault’s writings, Schechner arrives to Judith Butler’s theory of performativity. He criticises the poststructuralist influence on performance studies, saying that such theories “do not challenge so-called facts” (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 256) but only the processes of knowledge manufacturing and, worse still, do so by using “dense, complex, and arcane essays and books, cleaving a bigger and bigger space between the movement and the larger public” (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 257). Butler’s performativity in particular has disappointed

Schechner. At the same time exercising his influence over the field of performance studies (which he has helped to establish) and showing that the discipline is not controlled wholly by his authority, he says:

What all the changes boil down to is that from 1990 there's been an ongoing swing from theatre and dance-based performance studies toward "performative performance studies": queer studies, critical race theory, politics and performance, post-structuralism - a move that sets NYU's [New York University] performance studies more in line with cultural studies than with the social or biological sciences or with theatre and dance. I am not altogether happy with the alignment with cultural studies. I wish there were more "real performance" being studied. (...) I know my call for more "real performance" sounds weird coming from me because I am the champion of the "broad spectrum approach." I am not backing away from that. (*Performance Studies* 52)

Although Schechner's scepticism toward poststructuralism is not without force, as poststructuralism's iterative reconfiguration of pre-existing elements, coupled with its institutional ascendancy, can harden into a hegemonic mode that sustains the perception of academia as a "closed hermeneutical system" (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 257), there are countervailing calls to keep performance studies methodologically un-normalised. Beata Zawadka, for instance, calls for an un-normalised perception of performance studies as a research tool, seeking to "produce a chaotic multiplicity of representations (...) that displace, by the very process of proliferation, the authority of a conservative ideology of (...) hegemony (...) myths, and (...) practices" (Román, qtd. in Zawadka 26) and one that sees the performance as a playful, chaotic act, not an identity. The product that has been de- and re-constructed is too repetitive and thus seems redundant and unable to address contemporary issues such as terrorism, technological process, and globalisation (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 258-259; Zawadka 18). What must be foregrounded, then, is the act: performance should be conceived not as actors before an audience in the theatrical sense, but as the doing of performance itself, oriented toward producing a productive disarray of cultural logic.

Perhaps paradoxically, in *Performed Imaginaries* (2015) Schechner articulates a position consonant with this orientation: "We must reject ideological, economic, and religious rigidity in favor of flexibility and fluidity (...) To perform is to explore, to play (...) To perform is to cross borders" (Schechner, *Performed Imaginaries* 9). My reading of this passage is deliberately perverse given Schechner's unease with the prominence of queer studies within performance studies: I suggest that queer theory is precisely a means to refuse ideological naturalisation and to enact the flexibility and border-crossing he here endorses.

There is more to Schechner's dismissal, or at least his minimisation, of queer performance than the foregoing quotations indicate. As Joanna Krakowska notes in *Odmieńcza rewolucja. Performans na cudzej ziemi* (2020), Schechner, although present at the pre-AIDS

epidemic queer theatrical scene of New York, has not acknowledged queer performance as of importance to the field. As a demonstrative evidence, Krakowska gives the case of Charles Ludlam in connection to Schechner. In 1970 Charles Ludlam's drama *Bluebeard* premiered in an off-off-broadway theatre La MaMa in New York. Reportedly, Schechner particularly liked the drama and took Ludlam's The Ridiculous Theatrical Company under his wings to perform in theatre he led, Performing Garage. Writing in *The Village Voice*, Schechner lauded Ludlam as comparable to Moliere and praised him for "exemplary production" (Krakowska 124) and blazing a new trail in theatre. However, he has never acknowledged the homosexual critique *Bluebeard* provided, nor did he acknowledge queer performance as an integral part of the countercultural production in the middle of the sexual revolution (Krakowska 124–127). Moreover, Ludlam's *Bluebeard* can be considered a more "well-tailored" example of drama, in contrast to his and his peers' earlier 'badly made' camp queer performances (Krakowska 124, translation mine²), and thus it being appreciated by Schechner suggests that only a more polished version of queer can find its way into his canon.

"Queer on stage", according to Krakowska, is "not always a manifestation of queer desire, but might be a critical art, political protest, a mental condition - provocation towards what is considered normal, but also a ceaseless opposition to itself and its own community" (Krakowska 41, translation mine³). This notably queer anti-social approach is thus made apparent not only in Edelman's theory of death drive, but also finds itself here, in the intersection with performance theory.

Amelia Jones in her *In Between Subjects: A Critical Genealogy of Queer Performance* (2021) also criticises Butler's idea of performativity, similarly to Schechner's and Edelman's critique of performativity as a concept inextricably connected to the liberal power relation and not acting out against it (Jones 25). Jones says that it is necessary to perceive performativity as queer performativity (in her work often used as a synonym to queer performance) that "points to the contingency of any concept of self or meaning on later engagements, and this insistence on temporality is key to the term's mobilization of anti-essentialist notions of identity" (Jones 63), inspired rather by theories of Sedgwick. "An insistence on the temporality of queer performativity—especially as time relates to spatial relations (being out of place)", Jones says,

² In original: "Ludlam wraz ze swoim pomysłem na sztukę dobrze skrojoną dokonał wolty w stosunku do wcześniejszej praktyki "chaosu i gruzowiska"" (Krakowska 124).

³ In original: "Queer na scenie nie zawsze jest manifestacją odmiennych pragnień, bywa także sztuką krytyczną, politycznym protestem, stanem umysłu - prowokacją wobec tego, co uchodzi za normalne, ale i nieustającą konrą wobec siebie i własnej społeczności" (Krakowska 41)

“thus foregrounds its relationality (its dependence on others) as well as its function in refusing essence” (Jones 63).

The interest in performance understood not as an essence or identity production, but as performance, an act itself, seems to be intimately connected with Victor Turner’s theory of liminality, a central theory to performance studies (Schechner *Performance Studies* 35). Developing Arnold van Gennep’s theory of rites of passage, Turner divided each into three stages: the preliminal, liminal, and postliminal. The liminal, or the limen, is a passageway “neither here nor there” (Turner 95), a transitory no-place between two stages, though not unimportant: “during the liminal phase, actions and objects take on and radiate significances in excess of their ordinary use or value. These actions and objects not only symbolise the changes taking place, they accomplish the change. The “I do” (...), a handful of earth thrown on the coffin at a funeral” (Schechner, *Performance Studies* 145). The processes in the limen aim at accomplishing the transformation in the final stage of the ritual. The actor’s social role and their identity is reconfigured, a first hint of the Möbius strip Zawadka expects (Zawadka 26).

Performance’s liminality is crucial to the disruptive potential of the performance. As it constitutes a plane where only it exists, it disrupts the naturalised order and thus also bears queer characteristics. By a substitution of the “I do” into Sedgwick’s “Shame on you”, the rite of passage is disturbed. The limen is queered: although still “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial” (Turner 95), that is liminal in Turner’s understanding, it becomes a chaotic, disoriented process. The focus on an action rather than its outcome localises queer in a liminal position, neither here nor there, and thus amplifying its transgressive (though not necessarily subversive) potential. The performative does not produce a separate identity (e.g. that of a queer), but displaces the binary and introduces a chaotic, playful act without the actor.

I propose that contemporary popular culture stages a liminal queer position through the Satanic figure. Following Foucault, the Satanic has long been made legible within the binary, differentiated into the place of the abject other much like ‘the homosexual,’ yet it in fact functions as a chaotic, queer force. Canonical constructions pull in opposite directions: on the one hand, the Devil as fallen angel is still enlisted in divine governance (punishing sinners); on the other, he is the rebel who tempts in an ongoing war against heaven. The tension between these characterisations is emblematic of a sideways reading of the Satanic not as identity but as act: a performance that stands liminal to the power relation and refuses the rules of the play. Assuming the performative of ‘the Devil’ or ‘Satan’ poses a threat to the normalised good; and

when the Devil behaves non-normatively in contemporary popular culture, it enacts queer as Edelman's double opposition (Edelman, *No Future* 4), refusing both the norm and the redemptive scripts offered to deviance. 'Queering' Satan through performance thus enables a sideways theorising of the figure. Yet I do not treat the liminal as mere passage; there are no fixed identities and no stable states 'between' which one moves. The liminal is the encompassing condition. Under this condition, the Satanic Queer performs and renders the archive of the Satanic visible. If the liminal is not a corridor but the condition, if the 'threshold' loops with itself, then the Satanic Queer performs by reactivating and misusing Satanic signs so that the archive shows itself through its performance. The question that follows is how is this archive enacted—as a fixed deposit to be cited, as a repertoire to be embodied, as affect to be circulated, or as remains to be re-staged?

Schechner's overview of performance studies effectively equates the archive with material traces: "videotapes, films, digital and sound recordings, printed matter, props or other artifacts, interviews—anything from or concerning the performance" (*Performance Studies* 57). Even when he includes the digital, the orientation remains retrospective: the archive is what researchers consult to reconstruct "what happened" (*Performance Studies* 57). My interest lies elsewhere: what happens with the archive during performance, rather than after the fact. On this point, Schechner also claims that the archetypal actions of a culture are "burned into public memory" through rituals, reenactments, and iconic visual arts, such that "fact" is absorbed into "collective performed memory" (*Performance Studies* 59). That is helpful as a description of where cultural memory ends up, but it still stops short of showing how these rituals enact history in the moment. For my purposes, it is not enough; I need an account of what unfolds during the performance itself.

Peggy Phelan's argument puts this problem in stark relief. For her, "performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented" without becoming something else; its ontology "becomes itself through disappearance" (146). She goes further: performance "refuses" the circulatory economy of mass reproduction and treats that independence—technological, economic, linguistic—as its greatest strength (149). While compelling if we grant the primacy of in-person experience, this stance reads, to me, as classist: it risks reproducing a high/low division in which mediated, popular, or digitally disseminated forms are implicitly lesser. What we still lack, and what I am arguing for, is a framework for investigating the performance of the archive: what the archive is and does in the live moment, not only what survives it.

Diana Taylor's *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003) reorients performance studies around what it lets us do. She argues that if we take performance seriously as a system for learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge, then our sense of knowledge itself widens (Taylor 16). Within this frame, 'archival memory' names the material residue: documents, maps, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs; "items supposedly resistant to change" (Taylor 19). At the same time, on the brink of a digital revolution that both uses and threatens to displace writing, she calls for a revalorisation of expressive, embodied culture (Taylor 16). To mark that embodied dimension she turns to the "repertoire," which "enacts embodied memory" through performance, gesture, orality, movement, dance, and song (Taylor 20).

Taylor further contends that embodied acts are continually present in a state of "againness": they reconstitute themselves as they transmit communal memories, histories, and values across groups and generations (Taylor 21). These acts are organised by "scenarios," meaning-making paradigms that shape environments, behaviours, and possible outcomes (Taylor 28), and they circulate through multiple channels drawn from archive and/or repertoire, such as writing, telling, reenactment, mime, gestures, dance, singing (Taylor 31). For my purposes, the pressure point is precisely where the "scenario" is indeterminate, as with the Satanic figure. Taylor's model helps describe how embodied acts travel, but it still leaves open the question that drives my project: what the archive is doing in the moment of performance, not only what survives afterward.

Rebecca Schneider argues that the long-running debate about whether performance disappears or remains has been central to performance studies as the field widened beyond drama's textual primacy (96). For her, the archive's prized "pristine self-sameness" of an "original" is impossible and mythic (Schneider 100). She proposes that we approach performance not as that which vanishes but as an act of remaining: a mode of re-appearance and reparticipation whose "remains" cannot be confined to documents, objects, or a bone-versus-flesh divide (Schneider 101). In this account, performance becomes itself through messy, eruptive return; its performative trace unsettles any neat antinomy of appearance/disappearance or presence/absence, marking performance as indiscreet, non-original, relentlessly citational, and remaining. While warning against a metaphysics of presence, Schneider insists that performance "challenges loss" by playing the "sedimented acts" and spectral meanings that haunt material in ongoing constellations and transmutations (Schneider 102). This reframing loosens the primacy of a material historical archive and centres the messy interaction with it, precisely the stance that

aligns most closely with my understanding of Satanic Queer performance and its traffic with the digital archive.

Schneider's analysis, however, focuses on theatre and live actors (109), whose work enables "spectral sedimented acts" to "reappear across the surface of live encounter" (109). This is still not my point: even when actors play the Devil, audiences are rarely co-present with them in reality; nearly every engagement is mediated by the page in the novel and, above all, by the screen in the streaming series. Moreover, Schneider's analysis is still trapped by the linear perspective. How, then, does such an archive account for queer experiences of time? In *Time Slips: Queer Temporalities, Contemporary Performance, and the Hole of History* (2017), Jaclyn I. Pryor notes that the marginalised lives of queer and trans people "slip" from history because there were too few institutions devoted to collecting their material archive (68). For Pryor, an origin-seeking epistemology that attempts to impose a linear narrative with discrete beginning, middle, and end, is an illusory and impossible endeavour:

the archive is feverish, or sick, because it is used as an instrument of state power that reifies the facticity of certain historical events and actors while dismissing others. The archivist is equally sick: driven by a desire to locate truth and search for origins, the archivist feverishly combs through the archives in search of a story with a clear beginning, middle, and end (...) there is no real beginning (or middle, or end), only the feverish drive to locate and order it. (30)

If the archive is sick in this way, a method that presumes linear convalescence always misreads it.

Accordingly, I turn to Deleuze and Guattari's schizoanalysis as a method calibrated to this condition. Schizoanalysis "treats the unconscious as an acentered system, in other words, as a machinic network of finite automata (a rhizome), and thus arrives at an entirely different state of the unconscious" (Deleuze and Guattari 18). It "rejects any idea of pretraced destiny, whatever name is given to it—divine, anagogic, historical, economic, structural, hereditary, or syntagmatic" (Deleuze and Guattari 13). The procedural instruction is explicit: "Schizoanalysis (...) has no other meaning: Make a rhizome. But you don't know what you can make a rhizome with, you don't know which subterranean stem is effectively going to make a rhizome, or enter a becoming, people your desert. So experiment" (Deleuze and Guattari 251). In other words, rather than consulting a pre-drawn map, the analyst engages the territory, observes how it forms and transforms, and participates in producing what is still to come.

The rhizome provides the understanding for how a non-linear archive might behave: "A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, intermezzo" (Deleuze and Guattari 25). It is "an antigenealogy," a "short-term memory, or antimemory," that "operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots" (Deleuze and

Guattari 21). This solves the problem of a story that eludes linear structure by refusing to demand one. It also suits the Satanic archive I have been tracing, which does not concede a single line of descent but proliferates through drift. Deleuze and Guattari even supply, in passing, a Satanic metaphor for transmission: “The Devil is a transporter; he transports humors, affects, or even bodies (...). But these transports cross neither the barrier of essential forms nor that of substances or subjects” (Deleuze and Guattari 253). I read this as a précis of my method: follow transports of affect and practice rather than essences, and track movements across surfaces rather than appeals to invariant substance. In what follows, I apply this schizoanalytic, rhizomatic approach to the morphing Satanic archive, attending to how its lines propagate, couple, and fork without the false comfort of an origin or a terminus.

Moreover, because the Satanic archive is now performed on a digital stage, I argue that it discloses a Satanic Queer script premised on metamorphic motion rather than essence. In the terms just cited, the Devil “cross[es] neither the barrier of essential forms nor that of substances or subjects” (Deleuze and Guattari 253) precisely because those barriers are put into motion. The contemporary archive iterates, cites, and recombines signs in ways that keep forms unsettled and subjects porous; what looks fixed is seized as material for metamorphosis. In this milieu, Satanic emblems do not guarantee identity, they enable becomings that remain in the middle, which is to say, they sustain a queer temporality of ongoingness rather than arrival. The Satanic Queer thus appears as a practice of morphing that treats every barrier as a scene of transit and every category as a provisional conduit, a logic that the case studies to follow make concrete.

1.3. Cloud Devilry: Morphing as Practice

Vivian Sobchack in *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (2004) asks:

What happens when our expressive technologies also become perceptive technologies-expressing and extending us in ways we never thought possible, radically transforming not merely our comprehension of the world but also our apprehension of ourselves? (...) we are all part of a moving-image culture, and we live cinematic and electronic lives (...) It is also not an extravagance to suggest that, in the most profound, socially pervasive, and yet personal way, these objective encounters transform us as embodied subjects. (*Carnal Thoughts* 88-89)

Following Sobchack, I contend that any analysis of contemporary culture that does not foreground the digital is incomplete. I argue that the particular ways in which some cultural texts depict the Devil are rendered uniquely specific by the nature of contemporary media itself. The twenty-first century is a digital era: literature is no longer restricted to the printed novel, and cultural texts on a par with literary production include film, television series, and other audio-visual forms. Cultural inquiry that ignores digitality is therefore inadequate, because the future

people once imagined is now the present; digitality is the contemporary mode (Grusin 67). To assume that literature has remained unaffected by a transforming world is naïve, and these new representations must be taken seriously by academia (e.g., Strutt 136; Shaviro 130). Scholarship on digital storytelling supplies the tools necessary to situate the Satanic Queer performance within this reconfigured field.

A convergence of the literary and the digital is most distinctly expressed by hypertextuality, which, at its simplest, is text organised through hyperlinks; more broadly, it names a mode of reading and composition that foregrounds branching structure, nonlinearity, and networked citation. Hypertext names the infrastructural logic that undergirds these circulations. It designates a textual system built from “nodes or blocks of text (or media, in the case of hypermedia) (...) the links between these blocks (...) and the buttons or tags that enact the link from one node to another,” so that as readers follow links they create paths and the very act of traversal “begins to blur the distinction between ‘writer’ and ‘reader’” (Miller 21). At the level of form it is “based on the rhizome metaphor (...) decentralized (...) [with] no core, or ‘trunk’, and no visible hierarchy,” which redistributes authority laterally rather than from a single centre (Ensslin 11). At the level of reading, it is a wounded body: “Hypertexts are dismembered sorts of texts, marked by wounds at each irreducible turn of the narrative” (Harpold qtd. in Ensslin 15), and reading them becomes a “ritual binding of the wounds,” since “the link as the central cohesive element” replaces usual devices of cohesion and obliges readers to construct meaning along the paths they take (Ensslin 15). That obligation intensifies a distinctive phenomenology in which “cognitive overhead,” “lost in hyperspace,” and “serendipity” are not bugs but features that writers mobilise, urging readers to develop linking strategies through continual “construction, deconstruction and reconstruction” to approximate an overall picture (Ensslin 36). In cybernetic terms, hypertext is not just a format but a communicative ethic where interactivity displaces one-way transmission and dialogue is computationally regulated, producing discourse that is addressed to us and addressable by us (Moulthrop 631). Its connective appetite is “promiscuous, pervasive, and polymorphously perverse,” well suited to mix elite and popular materials and to sustain irregular, transgressive affiliation across texts (Moulthrop 699). In words of *The Unknown*, a hypertext novel:

Hypertext, to put it clearly, is a mapping of a text onto a four-dimensional “space.” Normal grammars, then, do not apply, and become branching structures anew. Fragments, branches, links. The word is glowing and on a screen. It is electronic and cannot be touched. It has been copied over thousands of times and reverberates through virtual space. The text coils in on itself, it is a topographic map of the air currents in the upper atmosphere: those sudden winds that change direction inexplicably.

The reader becomes a sort of satellite taking photographs of a huge and varied terrain. The reader

can see the whole world or zoom in to see a particular ant on the banks of the Seine. The ant has six legs. The reader is staring at a video screen. How then, to turn the page? There is no paper. It is, as Borges might write, a “library of Babel” in which there are so many books all in one place that one is tempted not to read at all. (The Unknown - Hypertext <https://unknownhypertext.com/hypertext.htm>)

I argue that the Satanic figure in any given text functions as a hypertext. It is configured by elements, including features of visual recognition and character traits, that refer to materials accumulated across centuries, whether literary representations, theological doctrines, and other texts of culture and thought. These elements are not resultants of linear progression; they are hyperlinks embedded in the depiction. The Satanic Queer names the morphing movement of the Satanic text.

The Devil flourishes in this logic because the figure is not the property of a single genre or a single text. The Devil is a relay that connects scenes, memes, and moral arguments across a network that is always already in motion. The work of the Satanic Queer in this environment involves moving among links and versions and publics that negotiate the figure’s meaning in real time. To understand the Devil’s persistence across contemporary media, one needs to grasp how textuality itself has shifted under digital conditions. As Sobchack argues, “the electronic” radically alters our bodily sense of existential presence: our being with the world, with ourselves, and with others, by not only mediating those relations but also constituting them (*Carnal Thoughts* 90). Accordingly, the perspectives outlined above must be updated to register digital mediation. This recalibration has four implications: first, it breaks with the presumed primacy of already established notions of identity (which are themselves products of power); second, it answers the call of queer temporalities by opening imaginaries of non-linear time; third, it reframes how the archive is performed, rendering archival acts as digitally mediated operations; and fourth: it allows to include nonhuman iterations of the performance into the larger body of work on the matter. The digital facilitates literature that moves.

It is, however, necessary to differentiate what has been understood as cinematic, and well researched by the broad body of work in cinema studies, from what is specific to the digital. As Adrian Ivakhiv observes, photochemical film required a photographic, mechanical process, and film theory accordingly came to presume that “the live-action cinematographic ‘recording of reality’ was the essence, or at least the default option, of cinema” (725). By contrast, in the digital, the default option of cinematic media is animation or graphic manipulation of images (Ivakhiv 725). This is not a trivial technical shift but a conceptual rupture: it changes how digital realities are produced, perceived, archived, and contested. Ivakhiv therefore poses a set of material and political questions that bear directly on my project:

If digitality is about the generation of new forms from old, what happens with the old, and what are the material implications of the proliferation of new forms? As digital cinema adds to the growing archive of images and sounds, it contributes to the shift toward cloud technologies, with their reorganization—and mystification—of the materiality of information. What are the implications, for cinema, society, and ecology, of the digitality of the cloud? How might a new attentiveness to cinematic materiality contribute to the reclaiming of a digital commons? (725)

These questions are particularly resonant for the Satanic Queer. It is explicitly based on “the old”: the Devil’s ancient, late antique, and medieval genealogies; post-Reformation demonologies; romantic and modernist rewritings; occult revivals and countercultural appropriations. What are the implications of this entanglement of the ancient with the contemporary once Satanic materials circulate through cloud infrastructures that both store and mystify them? Ivakhiv’s vocabulary is telling: mystification (so close to the Satanic idiom) and reclaiming (central to queer method). What kind of materiality does the Satanic Queer implicate under conditions where ‘the archive’ is at once dispersed, versioned, and continuously reprocessed by platforms? And in what sense is ‘the Satanic’ reclaimed when its signs are morphing within an occultural, algorithmically sorted commons?

The shift of cultural conventions toward the digital poses a significant problem of language: if the electronic and the digital are so radically distinct from earlier media, how are we to speak about them? As Alan Kirby observes:

one sign of the novelty of the digimodernist text is that none of the traditional words describing the relations of individuals with texts is appropriate to it. The inherited terminology of textual creation and reception (author, reader, text, listener, viewer, etc.) is awkward here, inadequate, misleading in this newly restructured universe. So new is it that even words recently developed to step into the breach (interactive, nonlinear, etc.) are unsatisfactory. (Kirby 58)

In the introduction to *Meta-morphing: Visual Transformation and the Culture of Quick-Change* (2000) Sobchack proposes a specific framework for understanding of the digital acts—that of morphing. At this juncture, Vivian Sobchack’s framework of morphing provides a way to understand how digital practice activates older repertoires without reducing them to mere quotation. As she writes:

Morphing is grasped both as a digital practice that is historically and materially discrete and specific and as a cultural imaginary that links present digital practice to a much broader history and tropology of metamorphosis and its meanings (...) [D]igital morphing both turns us backward to classical and cross-cultural mythology and magic, to explorations of change over time as conceived and figured by premodern scientists, mathematicians, and artists, too the quick transformations performed in theatrical magic shows at the turn of the century, and to the early cinema of “attractions” and animated and “trick” films, and also turns us outward into the present cultural moment to consider its connection to much contemporary “body art” and to our current belief in the “artifice” of a body that can be transformed not only through digitization but also through “naturalized” cosmetic surgery. (Sobchack, “Introduction” xiv-xv)

This Sobchackian morph maps closely onto Satanic metamorphoses. “Classical and cross-cultural mythology and magic” (Sobchack, “Introduction” xv) can name the Judeo-Christian

formations of the Devil and the broader demonological imagination; “explorations of change over time” (Sobchack, “Introduction” xv) include both occultist treatises and secular refigurations from Milton to the Romantics; “quick transformations” (Sobchack, “Introduction” xv) recall medieval mystery plays and theatrical diableries; the cinema of “attractions” and “trick” (Sobchack, “Introduction” xv) films extends through early gothic and possession cinematic pictures; and the contemporary emphasis on the transformable body resonates with the digitally formed picture. The morph’s politics of reclamation follows suit: it reclaims by transforming the Devil’s inherited signs in the present, without denying the weight of their past lives.

Morph is closely connected to visual representation. According to Steen Ledet Christiansen, “[a]t its simplest, morphing is the seamless transition between two visual images” which functions “through a modulation of time” (10). As Sobchack argues, digital morphing provides a direct visualisation of the disturbance of subject/object categories: a “computerographic mode of figuration” that depends on rapid motion such that what appears on screen is form-in-change, with change as its very essence (“Introduction” xiii). Her touchstone example is the T-1000 in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991, dir. James Cameron), dubbed the “Liquid Metal Man” (LMM) by Doran Larson: a silver, flowable body that can transfigure and transmorph into any shape, rejoining severed limbs and recomposing itself mid-destruction (Larson 58). “As a vision of the body politic,” Larson writes, “the LMM is dissolution into anarchy, a nightmare image of continually overturned hierarchy,” an “icon of the popular fear of democracy itself in the electronic age (...) [A] body whose parts have lost rational priority, precisely as is bewailed of the political disorganization of the state” (Larson 63). Morphing, while originating as a picture-manipulation technique, carries with it immediate cultural and political implications.

Ivakhiv clarifies the kinetics that distinguish morph from ordinarily understood movement: “Movement (...) suggests that there is something that moves, that goes from point A to point B but remains unchanged in its essence. In contrast, ‘morphing,’ or form-taking, more clearly indicates the immanence of image as movement. It is not an image that moves (...) but an image that is itself movement. Something takes form and that form is what it is; its new form is what it has become” (731). This is the hinge of my claim: when I say the Satanic Queer operates non-linearly, I do not mean it merely reorders events; it is an event itself.

Ivakhiv also names the archival condition of the digital: “Inherent in the expanding archive of digital information, images, texts, audio and video recordings, is a slipperiness where

data objects cannot be pinned down (...) They are in-between, mobile, in the rush of semiosis” (739). I suggest that the “slipperiness” Ivakhiv names is a rhizomatic assemblage of the archive made visible and legible through digital imagery and its own metamorphoses.

Why Satan? In a quick-change culture that morphs at speed, nonlinearly and atemporally, older stories hold us fast. Under a digital remystification of the premodern, they return as common referents for collective imagination. Contemporary texts cite a web of references rather than any originary source imagined as a morphic, decentered centre; they expand the cast of concepts and characters and simultaneously interrogate the binaries embedded in those referents, generating new modes of understanding. Satan concentrates this dynamic as a portable figure that sutures premodern moral schemas to platform-native remix practices. The spectre of religion haunts popular culture; queer guilt and shame circulate within it; yet this pressure becomes a creative resource, as the popularity and sustained discourse among online creators attest.

Within Western culture, Satanic narratives operate as foundational mythology and thus provoke “perpetual acts of reinterpretation in new contexts” (Sanders 80). As the next chapter shows, biblical materials on Satan are ambiguous and sparse, enabling two millennia of adaptations, religious and secular alike, that emphasise divergent roles of the Devil. The result is a heterogeneous, often dissonant corpus that resists any single, comprehensive history and instead solicits further rewritings: narratives retold in ways simultaneously novel and rooted in prior depictions. In this unstable, multiplicity-ridden environment, definition is elusive but negotiation is constant. The occultural milieu has accelerated with the Internet: alongside books and films, chatrooms, blogs, video, games, and streams intensify access and recombination.

Sobchack, recalling Heidegger’s epigraph that “the essence of technology is nothing technological” (qtd. in Sobchack, “The Scene of the Screen” 217), insists that “technology never comes to its material specificity and function in a neutral context to neutral effect; rather it is historically informed not only by its materiality, but also by its political, economic, and social context; it co-constitutes and expresses not merely technological value but always also cultural values” (“The Scene of the Screen” 217). This point matters when reading Larson’s T2 polemic. He sees in the LMM “the morphology of the oppositional logic in the body politic (...) now Indian, now Communist (...) continually chang[ing] forms yet [needing to] survive if the body politic in democracy is to sustain its own morphology” (Larson 63). He also observes that across the franchise “the terminator units grow more advanced and incomprehensible” while “the means of their destruction grow more primitive,” so that such films reprise “fantasies of the patterns of the past vanquishing the possibilities of the future” (Larson 66). Larson argues that

T2 “demonstrates popular inheritance from the cosmology of early Christianity” even as it expropriates that heritage into late-capitalist corporate media, inviting audiences to imagine mastery by destroying “the Liquid Metal body we have ourselves become” (Larson 69). While his reading casts corporate media as democracy’s undoing, it risks dismissing the very infrastructures that now constitute our primary cultural archive; especially that since Larson’s 1997 publication, their centrality has only intensified.

A trace of morph runs through queer theory. Juan Antonio Suárez notes that “digital networks, with their vast storage and instant retrieval capabilities, make historical traces and images immediately accessible for rewriting and recycling, allowing for the scrambling of temporal lines and endless historical revision. This transforms the past into a process rather than a given, facilitating ‘queer backward glances’ and ‘compensatory utopias’” (Suárez 113). This is, in effect, the logic of morph: history as ongoing recomposition. Although first conceptualised as a visual technique, morphing is not only that. As Scott Bukatman writes, “morphing holds out the promise of endless transformation and the opportunity to freely make, unmake, and remake oneself” (226); with morphing “difference is erased—heterogeneity becomes continuity” (232); and “the morph occurs as a real-time performance” (233). These claims speak directly to queer theory’s anti-essentialism and also unsettle any assumption that memory or archive is tethered to in-person liveness: the morph performs continuously, across media.

Sobchack likewise foregrounds the temporalities of the digital, where “narrative, history, and a centred (and central) investment of the human lived body and its mortality become atomized and dispersed across a system that constitutes temporality not as a coherent flow (...) but as the eruption of ephemeral desire and the transmission of random, unevaluated, and endless information” (*Carnal Thoughts* 155). Long before print saturation, Domsch reminds us, visual effects were necessary to convey myth (Domsch 221); medieval art regularly mobilised Satan not as a specific story but as an emblematic condensation of associated meanings. Visual effects are necessary again under digital conditions.

Conceptually, then, morph names form under continuous transformation—not merely reinterpreted but recomposed materially and symbolically with each retelling. Morphing is not linear transformation (A→B) but a logic of form-in-motion: A-in-process-of-becoming. It is movement without destination, identity without centre. Metamorphosis here is not punishment or reward but the medium of myth itself; Lucifer’s shifting roles—rebel, creator, protector, destroyer—do not signal misunderstanding so much as myth in morph. In Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, “becoming” names a non-linear, non-teleological process: not imitation, not

correspondence, but difference without a model, “a deterritorialization” (Deleuze and Guattari 11). The Satanic figure is thus not like a God or like a rebel; it is always in becoming-Satan.

Morph theory, accordingly, offers a vocabulary for form-in-flux for narratives that resist resolution and identities that refuse singularity. It privileges movement over destination, transition over identity, proposing that meaning emerges through processes of becoming. Where deconstructive/poststructural approaches have mapped history as an endless unraveling, the morph reframes that instability as creative mutation. And with that, the loop closes—the rhizomatic becomes visible again.

Chapter 2

Archive in Drift

Jeffrey Burton Russell opens *The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from Antiquity to Primitive Christianity* (1977) by insisting that the Devil is “changing and developing” (43), a claim he immediately qualifies through a sharp methodological distinction: on the one hand stands the “Devil *sub specie aeternitatis*,” the timeless object of theology; on the other, “the Devil as perceived by the human mind” (43), the mutable construct his book traces. Rejecting a strictly doctrinal vantage, Russell adopts a history-of-concepts approach, reconstructing how successive Western cultures have imagined, refigured, and debated this figure. The Devil, in other words, is real not as an ontological being that can be verified, but because human communities continuously perceive and reinterpret it as a symbolic antagonist. By foregrounding perception as the locus of reality, Russell demonstrates that the Devil’s power lies in cultural cognition: he persists, mutates, and exerts influence because minds keep re-making him. This insight undergirds my argument that personifications of evil are best understood as active mental constructs, whose historical trajectories reveal more about human societies than about supernatural ontology.

Inspired by Jeffrey Burton Russell’s methodologically rigorous studies yet mindful of the already-vast historiography of the Devil, this chapter deliberately avoids a linear or exhaustive reconstruction. Rather, it foregrounds the constitutive plurality of Satanic narratives, contending

that ‘the Devil’ has always been a polycentric construct generated by intersecting theological, cultural, and political discourses. The Satanic archive, as I understand it, is not a progression of the texts and discourses on the demonic, but a network of them. I seek to demonstrate that this diabolical history was fragmented well before the epistemic atomisation attributed to the digital age. Accordingly, the chapter adopts a schizoanalytical approach, mapping the discontinuities, overlaps, and deterritorialisations through which the figure continually comes into being.

This chapter confines its inquiry to the Western Christian tradition, the cultural arena in which representations of the Devil have been articulated with the greatest density and continuity. The discussion is organised into six thematically ordered subchapters. The first traces how demonological motifs have served, from late antiquity to the present, as a mechanism by which Christianity differentiates itself from perceived heterodoxies and external religious Others. The second charts the carnivalisation of the Devil, mapping his passage from medieval rites of festive inversion to his commodified, often satirical, presence in contemporary popular culture. The third section turns to Romantic rehabilitations, reading Milton’s afterlife and the Faust tradition as engines for recasting Satan as a figure of dissent, while keeping in view the Promethean detour that carries similar political freight when the diabolical sign proves encumbered. The Chapter then, in sections four and five, investigates the modern re-appropriation of the diabolical persona by occultist currents and self-identified Satanist movements, analysing how these groups invert or instrumentalise theological vocabulary. The final section examines screen apparitions and the post-cinematic ecology, arguing that cinema’s and digital media’s morphic capacities make the Satanic archive a code rather than a fixed antagonist. By delimiting the study in this way, the chapter foregrounds the heterogeneity of Satanic discourse while avoiding the false coherence imposed by strictly chronological surveys.

Philip Almond distinguishes two interwoven yet divergent “stories” of the Devil (220). The first, anchored in Christian cosmology, tracks Satan from creation and fall through redemption to the Last Judgement and his eternal confinement in hell. The second offers a secular genealogy of the idea of the Devil: born in the centuries preceding Christianity, elaborated through medieval demonology’s magic, witchcraft, and possession, and declared dead by Enlightenment thinkers in the early eighteenth century (Almond 222). According to Almond, the Devil’s conceptual “birth” (15) mirrors his theological consignment to hell and, on the secular side, his philosophical “death” (196), underscoring a full arc of emergence and extinction. Crucially, Almond notes that only from a particular historical juncture, i.e. the early modern moment when ontological certainty cedes ground to cultural construction, do these two

narratives become tellable side by side (221). This dual framing is central to my argument, although I contend it is not actually dual at all. Contemporary digital culture likewise multiplies Satanic narratives, yet online discourses reveal them not as neatly separate categories but as Deleuzian assemblages: fluid, overlapping formations in which theological, historical, and popcultural threads recombine rather than remain politely apart.

Rita Voltmer and Liv Helene Willumsen argue that demonology itself is “a fluid and flexible field of knowledge, established in almost every genre of textual and visual representation” (3). As Rita Voltmer notes elsewhere, the term encompasses “all kinds of texts (including images)” (Voltmer 20) produced by authors of varied denominations who pondered the scope of Satan’s power and its corporeal or illusory status of demons and witches. She calls demonology an “umbrella” or “container” under which disparate ideas assemble in an effort to imagine and understand both divine macrocosm and human microcosm (Voltmer 19). This built-in fluidity is central to my thesis: just as early modern writers gathered shifting notions of the Devil under a single banner, contemporary digital culture also spins multiple Satanic stories that interweave rather than pull apart. Seen through a Deleuzian lens, demonology’s apparently separate strands are best read as an ever-moving assemblage whose metamorphic structure persists and mutates digitally today.

2.1. Judeo-Christian Mythos and the Rise of the Satanic other

Since the Devil is an inextricable part of the Judeo-Christian tradition, one might expect the Bible to provide a fundamental source. However, there is no definite characterisation, visual or otherwise, of Satan in the Bible. Throughout its books, there are two main words used that constitute the basis of the words ‘Satan’ and ‘Devil’: Hebrew noun שָׂטָן (*śtn*, *śātān*), coming from the root meaning ‘oppose,’ ‘obstruct’ or ‘accuse,’ and Greek διάβολος (*diabolos*), an adjective meaning ‘adversary’. As William R. Telford observes, “Nowhere in the Old Testament (...) is there a clear or unified notion of Satan as an independent being who is God’s adversary par excellence (...), nor is there any account of his origin” (Telford 91). Yet the figure we call the Devil does appear in scriptural narratives. Jeffrey Burton Russell notes that in Numbers 22.22–35 the term ‘Satan’ functions interchangeably with “the angel of Yahweh,” describing the heavenly messenger who obstructs Balaam because he has angered God (Russell, *The Devil* 190). The angel, sword in hand, stands ready to strike, but accepts confession, conveys divine

instructions, and ultimately permits Balaam to continue. Neither the King James Version⁴ nor the New International Version⁵ renders the term as “Satan,” both opting for “angel of the Lord” in this passage (KJV, Num. 22.22–35; NIV, Num. 22.22–35). Russell emphasises that this is the first instance in Scripture where a supernatural being is called ‘Satan’ in the sense of “adversary,” a common noun rather than a singular, personified character (Russell, *The Devil* 190). A comparable dynamic obtains in the Book of Job, where Satan appears as a member of the celestial court, further underscoring the fluidity of the term’s early usage. In Job 1:6-12 Satan comes to God with other angels and receives the order to test Job in his faith, which he promptly fulfils (KJV Job 1:6-12, NIV Job 1:6-12). Satan in the Old Testament does not oppose God—on the contrary, it is a word denoting any heavenly messenger executing God’s will. Even if this will is to punish people, it is not Satan’s wish to destroy God’s creation. It seems to be in accordance with the overall characterisation of Yahweh in the Old Testament, where God is the ruler of both ‘sides’—light and darkness, and prosperity and disaster, as highlighted by Isaiah 45:7: “I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things” (NIV Isa 45:7); “I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things” (KJV Isa 45:7).

According to Roland Villeneuve, Satan as one entity “was derived from the contact between Chaldean angeology and Zoroastrianism after the period of Jewish captivity in Babylon” (1008). There seems to be a consensus among the historians of religion that it was indeed the struggle of the Persian principle of light Ohrmazd or Ahura-Mazda and principle of darkness Ahriman (also referred to as Angra Mainyu) that has shaped the personification of Evil for the Christian theology to use (eg. Russell, *The Devil* 58; Neal 24; Wright 52). Russell draws a comparison between the Christian concept of the Second Coming or the Apocalypse to the act of limiting time by Ohrmazd in order to rise his odds in subduing Ahriman (*The Devil* 154). Russell stresses the fact that it is only in the dualistic theodicies of Mazdaism and other interconnected religions like Zoroastranism, which assume a completely separate origin for the entities of good and evil, that “a figure clearly recognizable as diabolical” can emerge (*The Devil* 101). Other than Mazdaist and Zoroastrainist sources have also played a significant role in shaping the later demonology of Christianity. Russell points to traditions of Apocalyptic and Rabbinic Judaism and Hellenistic thought, e.g. the identifications of Titans as demons in Christianity’s Hellenistic

⁴ Hereinafter referred to as “KJV”.

⁵ Hereinafter referred to as “NIV”.

period (*The Devil* 58). The Jewish Apocalyptic literature has been identified as a source of the many demonic names, such as Sammael, Asmodeus, Satanael, Belial, and Beelzebub, that could be traced to separate demonic subjects (Russell, *The Prince of Darkness* 112). The Intertestamental Period of the Babylonian exile thus appears as the differentiation of Satan as a separate entity or identity. As mentioned above, it is around the same time that, according to Mieli, sin is directly linked to the Devil, thus interpreting all sin, including sodomy, as demonic (64). It seems that the Intertestamental Period was a time of convergence of thoughts and ideas, and thus, the meaning of Satan was renegotiated—probably for the first, but surely not the last time.

In the New Testament the oppositional character of the Devil appears more unified: the Devil appears “in person” fifty-three times (Villeneuve 1008)—always in the context of his contrariety to the omnipotent and all-good God. Russell stresses Satan’s central role of the New Testament teachings which focus on the struggle of two Kingdoms: of God and of the Devil (*The Prince of Darkness* 55). In Ephesians 6:10-12, in a description of a spiritual war, the author (traditionally considered to be Paul the Apostle) bids its reader to “put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the Devil’s schemes” (NIV Eph 6:10–12). Moreover, all Synoptic Gospels mention Satan as a separate being too, most notably in the narrative of Christ’s temptation in the Judaeian Desert. What is interesting, if one is to assume the dominant perspective of the Marcan priority, meaning that the gospel of Mark was the first chronologically and thus common source for Luke’s and Matthew’s, then the first chronologically, Mark, only uses ‘Σατανᾶ’ (satana) (Interlinear, Mark 1:12), while Luke only uses the word ‘διαβόλου’ (diabolos) when describing the same event of Jesus’s temptation on the desert (Interlinear Luke 4:1). Matthew however, uses both these words, ‘διάβολος’ from Greek root and ‘Σατανᾶ’ from its Hebrew counterpart (Interlinear Matt 4:1–10), reflecting in the linguistic mix the cultural influence of both Hellenism and Judaism on this figure. While the specifics vary across the Gospels, each narrative identifies Satan as the tempter, a characterisation likely consolidated by the Gospel tradition that has been repeatedly restated in Christian doctrine and in numerous theological and artistic portrayals.

A further example of the ambiguity of the Satanic figure as depicted in the Bible is John 6:70-71. In this fragment, Jesus addresses his disciples and says that one of them is the Devil (NIV John 6:70-71). Obviously enough, he means Judas, the one who eventually betrays him, leading to Jesus’s crucifixion. Although Judas is given the Satanic characterisation in this particular passage, he is not depicted as possessed nor a direct apparition of the demonic angel:

Judas is still one of the disciples, albeit a disruption in Jesus's ranks. By attributing 'the Devil' to Judas, Jesus puts himself in the opposition, thus strengthening his position as God/Holy Trinity.

Possession narratives play a significant role in the New Testament writings. Designating Jesus as an exorcist who can cast demons away from a possessed body by the "spirit of God" (NIV Matt 12:28), these narratives establish a highly influential doctrine of Christian demonology and exorcism that proved particularly successful in the cinematic production. However, before being adapted to the silver screen, possession was one of "most important form[s] of Christian healing and the most important evangelistic weapon in a demon-infested world" (Twelftree 287). Darren Oldridge points out an interesting process of thought that contributed to the widespread belief in possessions within the pre-modern Europe and North America. Based on the argument of philosopher Charles Taylor, Oldridge argues that thinkers of that time understood the self to be "open and porous and vulnerable" to the spiritual, and thus there was no ontological objection for the possibility of demonic possession (Oldridge, *The Devil* 63). Oldridge argues that episodes of possession constitute "a kind of a social theatre" where all the roles—of the victim, the exorcist, and other members of the community are "acknowledged and enacted culturally sanctioned" (Oldridge, *The Devil* 63), thus contributing to understanding possession and exorcism having a theatrical aspect. Moreover, Oldridge delineates the binary of the power relation between the possessed and the exorcist. As "the roles performed by social actors can create cultural opportunities," he points out that "the drama of possession provides its victim with an attentive audience (...) as well as permission to speak words that might otherwise be forbidden" (Oldridge, *The Devil* 64). According to Oldridge, this accounts for the fact that the reported victims were predominantly women or children, who, as demoniacs, were often speaking of what in the understanding of their own community would be considered immoral or blasphemous (Oldridge, *The Devil* 64). On the other side of the binary stays the exorcist as the executioner of the highest power of Church's ministry, expelling the demons. In fact, the force of such an exercise of power has been abused even by early Christians (Oldridge, *The Devil* 64). The demonic possession has also undergone the processes of medicalisation, and later constituted the base for modelling the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century hysteria (Wenegrat 4) and multiple personality disorder, which Brant Wenegrat calls "a secularized possession" (Wenegrat 12). Nowadays exorcism is placed in the wider context of healing ministry (Oldridge, *The Devil* 67).

The Book of Revelation (also known as the Apocalypse of St. John) has also exerted a significant influence on the solidification of Satan in Christian mythology. Neil Forsyth calls it

“a kind of palimpsest” for its “Jewish-Christian and Johannine affiliations, and it shows thorough familiarity with the Jewish apocalyptic tradition” (Forsyth, *The Old Enemy* 251). Revelations has introduced other contextual connotations to the pre-established word group of ‘satan’ and ‘diabolos’—Greek ‘dracon’ and ‘ophis’—that is, ‘dragon’ and ‘serpent’ (Forsyth, *The Old Enemy* 252). Revelation 12:7-9 tells a story about the war in heaven, fought between the archangel Michael and his angels versus ‘the dragon’ and its angels. The draconian army lost the war, and “lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the Devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray” (NIV Rev 12:7-9). This passage has served the later theorisation of hell as an opposite to heaven, and upheld the identification of Satan as a fallen angel (Russell, *The Devil* 229).

Inclusion of Revelations and earlier Apocalyptic literature in the biblical canon influenced later interpretations of passages from the Old Testament. Narratives that were not initially understood as describing Satan could be reinterpreted as such (e.g. Faxneld, *Satanic Feminism* 12, 31; Russel, *The Devil* 232). For example, Isaiah 14:12-15 describes a fall of a morning son, הֵילֵל בֶּן-שָׁחַר, *hê-lêl ben-šā-ḥar*, where “*hê-lêl*” has been translated as both a star (in New International Version) and Lucifer (in King James’s Version) and thus bearing a twofold meaning: the fall of Babylon and angelic degradation (Faxneld, *Satanic Feminism* 31). The serpent that tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden can be interpreted as the Devil or Satan on the basis of Revelation’s identification of serpent as demonic (Faxneld, *Satanic Feminism* 36; Russell, *The Devil* 257), as well as on the basis of the Jewish Book of Adam, part of Enochic literature, where Satan explicitly asks a snake to be his vessel (Forsyth, *The Old Enemy* 232-233). This particular connotation has played an important role in the discourse of the Original Sin as an aspect of the demonic influence of temptation rather than God’s own design. This Satanic temptation will later become the Devil’s “favourite weapon”, placed in his hands by numerous authors who will include him in their works (Villeneuve 1023).

Even such a brief analysis of the Satanic figure in the Bible proves that there is no clear-cut characterisation of ‘Satan’ or ‘the Devil’ as a single entity there. Depending on the passage, ‘Satan’ is a noun signifying the function of one of Yahweh’s servants (e.g. Job 1:6-12), an accusation towards a human (e.g. John 6:70-71), or God’s opponent, ‘a fallen angel’, who tried to fight the archangel Michael (e.g. Rev 12:7-9). Even the significance of the Devil in New Testament does not provide the basis for a definite characterisation of Satan as an independent, singular subject. Thus, the Church Fathers of early middle ages have taken the matters of theology into their hands rather than relaying exclusively on the Holy Scripture.

Historians of religion point to early Christian theorists such as Tertullian and Augustine for developing demonology and further strengthening the role of the Devil in official theology of the Church. However, even their theorising was inconsistent and contributed to the problem of theodicies: “response[s] to the problem of evil that offers a complete story about why God in fact permits evil” (Flint and Rea 4). Theodicies are still being formulated and published, both by religious academics and academics of religion, highlighting the ongoing process of renegotiating the evil and existence of the Devil in Christianity.

Russell points to the fact that Augustine and Aquinas adopted Plato’s idea that ontological evil does not exist, as it is “only a lack or a defect” (*The Devil* 146). This theory posed a problematic argument that the Devil cannot exist; later philosophers, as Russell says, tried to explain that “the Devil did exist but was not truly the principle of evil: rather, he was a powerful angel whose evil lay not in his angelic being but rather in his lack of perfection, a lack magnified precisely by his great power” (*The Devil* 146). This theological explanation purported the idea that moral evil exists as a lack of good.

The gnostic movement is particularly relevant to an understanding of the broader discursive position of the Devil. Gnosticism developed alongside early Christianity on the basis of Judaic texts, and reached its prominence between second and fourth century AD (Šípová 193). Interestingly, although many analyses of Gnosticism recognise its complex mythology and its impact on the philosophical and spiritual Western thought up to this day, few of those analyses actually call it a ‘religion’. It is a curious aspect to consider within the context of the Satanic Temple’s efforts to question the legitimacy of what can and what cannot be officially called a ‘religion,’ on which more can be found later in this chapter.

It remains true, however, that Gnosticism has never developed any formal organisation nor a unification of its thought, which remained mostly to the believer’s individual interpretation. Quite significantly, Gnosticism has been a continuing tradition for millennia, giving way to other philosophical strands, such as Hermeticism, alchemy, and, eventually, Western Esotericism.

The gnostic belief assumes the existence of the Divine Principle beyond such earthly divisions such as good or evil. Benjamin Walker characterises it as “formless, boundless, indivisible, incorporeal, beyond measure, quality, quantity, and not subject to classification” (B. Walker 29), surpassing all these categories as products of a corrupt entity born from God’s Wisdom, Sophia. According to Gnostic-Hermeneutic texts found in the Nag Hammadi library, Sophia tried to reproduce without a male counterpart, which led to the birth of Ialdabaoth (Forsyth, *The Old Enemy* 323). This entity is ignorant of the Divine Totality’s existence, and thus

is also called Sammael meaning “the blind god” (Forsyth, *The Old Enemy* 323), and appoints himself the sole God of the Old Testament (Forsyth, *The Old Enemy* 324). As the Demiurge, it has created the realm outside of the Divine Perfection: our perceivable universe (Šípová 194). Gnostic thought thus sees the material world as “produced and maintained through an illusion, projected onto humans, and realised in man’s ignorance, fears, delusion, and violence” (Šípová 194), and thus displaying its pessimism and conflict with materiality.

The Demiurge’s creation is upheld by the Archons, demonic creatures, who are responsible for “our material nature, planetary, and cosmic movements, spatial and temporal laws, and human bodies and demeanours—such as pride, envy, lust, sloth, greed and falsehood” (Šípová 194). Although their function seems similar to what is recognised as the Satanic influence, researchers stress that the Archons do not represent the duality between good and evil as they are part of the Demiurge’s illusion.

The Demiurge is then the creator of the material world, and its false, self-anointed god. The Demiurge and its Archons are links between the Divine and the corporeal; and although they are oblivious to the Divine Principle, they can be used as a way over the ontological division between the material and Divine. Freedom from the fake god’s creation, gnosis, can be achieved by the realisation of the difference between the Demiurge and the Divine. The Demiurge and Archons, when demystified as products of the Absolute, provide “access to spheres outside of the physical plane, where the inherent ambivalence of the cosmos transcends into unity” (Šípová 194). Gnosticism presents thus an ontological, absolute transcendence of the opposites, rejection of the antagonism between good and evil, and poses only one border, one between ignorance, represented by the belief in the materiality, and spiritual insight, a salvation attainable by the union of mind and spirit, achievable by knowledge of their nature, and self-liberation from the concepts of the false god.

The Gnostic epistemology stands out from the Western spiritual patterns. However, there are noticeable similarities between Gnostic thought and Eastern spiritualities, especially Buddhist concepts of transgressing suffering into the nirvana, and Hindu Maya, the earthly illusion also recognised by Schechner as the element in tension with the playful Lila (Schechner, *Future of Ritual* 29). Šípová reports that even in the nineteenth century researchers recognised Gnosticism as a current linking Western and Eastern thought, and the Gnostic vision of the material plane poses a challenge to the Judeo-Christian creation mythos (196). Šípová draws attention to the fact that Western religiosity has historically been hostile to any system of

alternative experience of the world, and the concept of “a false god” (196) has deemed Gnosticism heretic, therefore condemning it to relative obscurity.

Nevertheless, Gnosticism persisted and continued to influence other currents, such as Hermeticism—an esoteric science attributed to writings of Egyptian god Thoth, called Hermes Trismegistus by the Gnostics (B. Walker 13). It is in a Hermetic text, *Hypostasis of the Archons*, found in The Nag Hammadi Library, where the Genesis’s serpent is depicted as an embodiment of God’s Wisdom, Sophia (Šípová 196; B. Walker 41). Archons, according to Benjamin Walker, are part of Gnostic cosmology, representing evil celestial beings (B. Walker 12), and it is also a word used by Jesus in John 12:31 when he speaks of the ‘prince of this world’—Satan (B. Walker 38). In *Hypostasis of the Archons*, Eve and Adam represent the consciousness of the Divine and the human soul, and serpent’s gift of knowledge exposes their spiritual nakedness and allows them to see through archonic illusions for which they are cast away from Eden by the Demiurge (Forsyth, *The Old Enemy* 331). Such an exegesis of the biblical text directly opposes its Judeo-Christian reading—what the majoritarian perspective sees as the Devil, in Gnosticism recognises as knowledge and self-liberation. What the Judeo-Christian tradition identifies as divine, the gnostic thought interprets as a malevolent entity imprisoning souls on the material plane. Šípová rightly notices that Gnostic-Hermetic interpretation of reality challenge all major tenets of Western religious and philosophical current (194), while at the same time constituting an intrinsic basis of Western esotericism (198). It seems that it is precisely the extreme antithesis of the majoritarian perspective that Gnosticism represents, together with its relatively rare and obscure source texts, which has granted the Gnostic-Hermetic tradition recognition and provided inspiration to mystics and philosophers alike, finding its way to writings of postmodernists like Foucault.

Foucault’s meta-analysis of Pierre Klossowski’s *The Baphomet*, titled “The Prose of Actaeon,” was written in 1964 and reprinted in 1988 as an introduction to the first English translation to the novel. Foucault attributes the beginning of the binary of “God and Satan, Light and Darkness, Good and Heaviness, the great battle, and a certain radical, obstinate spitefulness” (“Prose of Actaeon” xxi) precisely to Gnostic dualism. Although, as he says, Western Christianity condemned Gnosticism as heresy, it has retained an appropriated version of the dual structure of the universe. While Gnosticism would see the material world as the opposition to the Divine Principle, Christianity has schismatized the material plane into good and evil. Foucault wonders about gnosis:

(...) [they] are saying that the Demon is not the Other, the opposite pole of God, the Antithesis without recourse (or almost), evil matter, but rather something strange and unsettling that leaves one baffled and motionless: the Same, the perfect Likeness. (...) what if (...) the Other were the Same? And the Temptation were not one episode of the great antagonism, but the meager insinuation of the Double? What if the duel took place inside a mirror's space? What if eternal History (...) were not simply the same, but the identity of this Same - at once the imperceptible displacement and the grip of the nondissociable? (Foucault, "Prose of Actaeon" xxii)

Foucault says that demonology's investigation into the Satanic essence tries to answer the issue of the endless discussion—what exactly does the division into good and evil mean. Foucault theorises about the latter that if God is in fact performing as Satan, then by condemning both "sides" (such as the witch and her persecutor) to Hell, he remakes Hell as a "true simulacrum of God's simulation of the Devil" (Foucault, "Prose of Actaeon" xxii). In Foucault's opinion, Klossowski in his novel talks about such a world that "is neither Heaven nor Hell, nor limbo; it is, quite simply, our own world. That is, a world that would be the same as ours except for the fact that, indeed, it is the same. In this imperceptible divergence of the Same, an endless movement finds its place of birth (...) outside of dialectics" (Foucault, "Prose of Actaeon" xxv). Foucault says that Klossowski sketches all his characters (ghosts of Knight Templars, an order dissolved for their alleged cult of Baphomet in 1302) as simulacra: unreal images, representations of representations of concepts (xxvi). Foucault praises Klossowski's style of writing that creates a space where "the existence of literature concerns neither humans nor signs, but this space of the double, this hollow of the simulacrum where Christianity has fallen under the spell of Demon, and where the Greeks once feared the gleaming presence of the gods with their arrows. It is the distance and proximity of the Same where the rest of us, now, encounter our only language" (Foucault, "Prose of Actaeon" xxxviii).

I do not suggest that Foucault is a Gnostic; rather, as Jeremy R. Carrette notes, Foucault's reading mobilises Gnosis to challenge the very binaries of Christian theology, such that "we would be richer if we abandoned the divisions of Christian theology" (Carrette 31), and it is striking that the figure of Baphomet becomes the means of that transgression (Carrette 38). For my purposes, this frames a decisive inference. If the Demon is "the Same" rather than the Other (Foucault, "Prose of Actaeon" xxii), and if Klossowski's world is generated by an "endless movement (...) outside of dialectics" (Foucault, "Prose of Actaeon" xxv), then the Satanic is not a polar antagonist but a technology of doubling that collapses the binary at its seam. Baphomet, as Foucault stages him, does not refute Christianity from without; he exposes its mirror-space within, where resemblance undoes the security of opposition and where meaning is produced as simulacral drift. This is the hinge on which my argument turns: the Satanic Queer inhabits the

space of the double, not to reverse the poles but to render them indistinct in practice, and thereby to install not essence but movement as the principle of the archive.

Gnostic cosmology bears a striking resemblance to the central assumptions of queer theory and digital morphing. The transgression of physical boundaries and the challenge to socially constructed doctrines and moralities operate as means of gnōsis, but they also animate queer liberation and the morph's complication of perceivable reality. Each of these frameworks unsettles recognisable patterns of evil and the received characterisation of the Devil in the Western imaginary. The serpent's gift of knowledge to Eve, the codification of same-sex intimacy as sin, the problem of possessing a material body, and computer-enabled transmutation all trouble the majoritarian narrative. Contemporary popular culture crystallises these tensions in its Satanic figures, which increasingly epitomise such transgressions and thereby highlight the figure's divorce from its supposedly original roots in the Judeo-Christian tradition.

To clarify how the Satanic Queer might function here, I adapt a theological pragmatism to literary method: "So perhaps we have simply pragmatically to acknowledge that if we accept the existence of Satan as a working hypothesis, it makes practical sense? We find ourselves the better able to serve God if we act as though we had a personal adversary whom it is our constant task to outwit" (Perry 111). Michael Perry writes as a theologian and therefore positions himself, and his readers, in principled opposition to Satan so as to serve God (Perry 111). For the purposes of literary study, I retain the heuristic while reversing its telos. I suggest taking the existence of the Satanic Queer as a working hypothesis, not as a stock character or an archetype of evil, but as a performance whose task is to outwit the very structure that theology would assign it. On this account, the Satanic Queer is a method of making: it acts in the register of practice, pitches itself against fixed binaries, and exploits the morphic capacities of contemporary media to set inherited signs in motion. In what follows, I use this hypothesis to track how Satanic signs in digital culture do their work, not by confirming an essence, but by outmanoeuvring the frames that were built to contain them.

2.2. Carnivalisation of the Devil

Folkloric and theological materials have long converged to shape the Devil as a figure whose meanings are made in practice rather than fixed in doctrine, and this malleability is central to the way he has been carnivalised and featured in popular culture for centuries. Localised ethnological versions are combined with Christian ideas so that the Satanic could appear at once

intimate and other: folklore puts Satan “in drag” as Old Nick (also Old Horny, Old Hairy, Black Bogey, the Good Fellow, Terrytop, even Rumpelstiltskin, among others) well before the first drag queen put on Devilish horns. Folklore also helped determine a demonic look and repertoire of transformations: “he was frequently identified or associated with animals, partly because animals had been sacred to the pagan gods, whom the Christians identified with demons” (Russell, *The Prince of Darkness* 112). Consequently, Satan could be pictured as serpent, goat, or dog; but he just as easily appeared as a human of any class and of any sex: “an old man or woman, an attractive youth or girl, a servant, pauper, fisherman, merchant, student, shoe-maker, or peasant (...) a priest, a monk, pilgrim (...) a theologian, mathematician, physician, or grammarian (...) skilled in persuasion and debate (...) he even dared masquerade as Christ or the Blessed Mother of God” (Russell, *The Prince of Darkness* 112). From the outset, then, the Devil’s identity is staged across disguises and roles, its mobility inviting comic inversions as readily as it authorises fear.

As delineated in the previous subchapter, during the medieval period, the Devil’s role as cultural and theological figure intensified as religious authorities wielded the Satanic to consolidate influence and control. The medieval Church portrayed the Devil as a cunning, malevolent force who actively sought to corrupt humanity and undermine the divine order, and this portrayal was widely publicised through a rich visual and literary iconography: from grotesque figures carved on capitals and portals to vividly detailed accounts in hagiographies and theological texts. The medieval imagination framed the Devil as both physical and spiritual threat, a being whose rebellion against God prefigured the moral deviance and heresy that the Church sought to contain. By associating the Devil with witchcraft, heresy, and surviving pagan practices, ecclesiastical discourse reinforced the binaries of good and evil, sacred and profane, using the Satanic to police moral boundaries and to stabilise social conformity (Dendle 66). Russell notes that monastic domination of theology and education heightened the Devil’s importance in the early Middle Ages (Russell, *The Prince of Darkness* 111). At the same time, the very insistence on a demonising rhetoric ensured that the Devil remained dramatically present and available to imagination, story, and spectacle.

The very inconsistencies and ambiguities that accrued to the figure made the Devil highly adaptable. As the spread of Christianity shows, “cultural changes do not necessarily attest to linear ‘development,’ but rather to a much more complex model of flux, change, and continuity” (Aronson-Lehavi 5). The Christian apparatus could liken him to personifications or deities of evil in various mythologies and folklores, while spirits that were morally neutral or merely associated

with the dead in local practice could be reclassified as demonic presences. Over time, the Devil grew to signify a symbolic representation of sin and temptation, “a tool for patrolling social borders” (Faxneld, *Satanic Feminism* 2). By contrast with monastic exaggerations of Satanic potency, folklore and legend repeatedly diminished him, a tension that Russell renders with particular clarity:

The monastic tendency to emphasize the Devil’s power was balanced by the opposite tendency of folklore and legend to make Satan seem ridiculous and impotent. This was a natural psychological reaction against the terrors of the monastic view. The more threatening Satan’s power, the more comedy was needed to tame him and relieve the threat. In the tension between these contradictory tendencies, popular opinion oscillated between perceiving Satan as a lord of dark and terrible power and perceiving him as a fool. (Russell, *The Prince of Darkness* 111)

Consequently, the double movement of terror at potency and laughter at embarrassment sets up the later vocabulary of carnivalisation.

Carnival, discussed in this chapter, designates a periodically sanctioned public frame that permits provisional re-orderings of hierarchy and licensed parody. The generalisation I retain is Robert Stam’s: carnival “operates a perpetual decanonization” (Stam 110). Within such a frame the Devil functions less as a doctrine than as a role available for recoding. Across its century-long development, itself “prepared by thousands of years of ancient comic ritual, including the primitive Saturnalias,” the medieval carnival evolved into “an extremely rich idiom that expressed the unique yet complex carnival experience of the people” (Bakhtin 10). This experience, “opposed to all that was ready-made and completed, to all pretense at immutability,” sought a dynamic mode of expression: “ever changing, playful, undefined forms” (Bakhtin 11). In this register “all the symbols of the carnival idiom are filled with this pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities,” and “folk humor denies, but it revives and renews at the same time” (Bakhtin 11).

Such a framework helps to situate the presence of the Satanic figure within carnivalesque performance. If carnival resists immutability and ready-made dogma, then Satanic performance within it is not merely oppositional or negating; it participates in a mutable idiom oriented toward renewal (Bakhtin 11). The vocabulary Mikhail Bakhtin deploys, such as “ever changing,” “dynamic expression,” and “undefined forms,” foregrounds metamorphosis, aligning with the morphic operations central to this study (Bakhtin 11). Although the wording is mediated by translation, the conceptual emphasis on transformation is consistent. Moreover, because Bakhtin traces the carnivalesque back to ancient practices such as the Saturnalia, the archive from which the Satanic draws is not simple or linear: pre-Christian festive forms flow into later

representations of the Devil, complicating any narrative that posits a discrete, post-biblical origin (Bakhtin 10).

The first form in Bakhtin's carnivalesque inventory, the *festa stultorum* or feast of fools, was a "comic side show of Corpus Christi celebrations" (Bakhtin 36). It operated as a licensed "vent for laughter" (Bakhtin 75) presided over by "lords of misrule" (Stam 86). Crucially, its laughter is not "an abstract and purely negative mockery of the Christian ritual and the Church's hierarchy" (Bakhtin 75); rather, "the negative derisive element was deeply immersed in the triumphant theme of bodily regeneration and renewal" (Bakhtin 75). Carnival is not reducible to pure mockery; and crucially for the Satanic figure, the emphasis falls not on the celebration's morality but on metamorphosis. Bakhtin characterises the feast as "the entire system of degradation, turnovers, and travesties" (Bakhtin 81), including the renewal of clothing and social image and a conspicuous "reversal of the hierarchic levels": jesters proclaimed kings, clownish abbots or bishops elected, a mock pontiff chosen, and kings and queens appointed for a day, sometimes even celebrating solemn mass (Bakhtin 81). I would not call this a reversal at all, but a performative: the roles do not change in substance so much as they are staged to render the spectacle of power visible and made unsubstantial. Because the festivities occur under ecclesiastical permission, their mockery is not classed as blasphemy (Bakhtin 75); yet within the limen of performance this authorisation is beside the point. What matters is what the performance does: where a Satanic persona appears, the performer-becoming-Satan liquefies the boundary between sacrum and profanum, religious and secular play, enacting the metamorphic practice that this study identifies as part of the historical archive of the Satanic Queer.

Another carnivalesque practice that Bakhtin enumerates is the *coena Cypriani* (Cyprian's Supper), which "offers a peculiar festive and carnivalesque travesty of the entire Scriptures" (Bakhtin 13). He describes it as "a selection of all the degrading, earthy details taken from the Bible, the Gospels, and other sacred texts" (Bakhtin 20). Within this, what he calls "grotesque realism" (20), the governing principle is "degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract," and "a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body" (Bakhtin 19). According to Bakhtin, the textual history of *coena Cypriani* is itself "problematical" (286): although it was often included in the works of St. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (died in A.D. 258) (Bakhtin 286), a substantial body of scholarship affirms close relation of the *coena* to the Saturnalia (Bakhtin 287).

Narratively, the *coena Cypriani* stages an encyclopaedic banquet in which "all the figures from the Old and New Testaments, from Adam and Eve to Christ, are assembled at the great

banquet” (Bakhtin 287). They are seated and provisioned according to scriptural roles, while the action unfolds as a comic pageant; after the feast “the king discovers that many gifts have been stolen” (Bakhtin 288), and “all the guests are treated as thieves” (Bakhtin 288). I read this as a precise demonstration of how scriptural characters can be enacted across textual boundaries: figures who never meet in the canon are made to cohabit one scene, and even figures from different textual traditions can be made to interact. Whether the Bible is understood as one book, a serial plot, or a set of unrelated stories is less important here than the fact that its characters can be put together to generate new narratives; the practice anticipates techniques recognisable from mashups, remixes, and, in narratological terms, fan fiction crossovers. The theft plot even prefigures the police procedural structure of ‘everyone is a suspect’ that now organises much contemporary television, from *Criminal Minds* (created by Jeff Davis, 2005–ongoing) to *Bones* (created by Hart Hanson 2005–2017) or even one that is of focus to this dissertation, *Lucifer* (created by Tom Kapinos, 2016–2021). I set aside the provocation that the *coena* treats Jesus as a thief, and to how that motif resonates in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667) and Satan’s resentment of the Son and the imagined displacement of angelic standing, although it presents an intriguing line of inquiry.

Bakhtin also notes a carnivalesque practice enacted within church walls: the *risus paschalis* (“Easter laughter”), when even priests told jokes and amusing stories from the pulpit (Bakhtin 78). The *risus paschalis* foregrounds a “joyous regeneration” (Bakhtin 78) after Lenten austerity. On the one hand, it provided a reactive mechanism to intensified pressures; on the other, it offers a commentary on the condemnation of laughter by early Christian theologians such as John Chrysostom, who attributed laughter and jests to the Devil (Bakhtin 73). It is tempting to claim that periods of strictness and repression (as in early Christianity) simply give way to periods of transgression (as in medieval carnival practices), but the dynamic is not so clear-cut. As Stam observes, in these festive medieval rituals the Church, one of the era’s most powerful institutions, was at once “mocked and symbolically relativized” (Stam 86), suggesting that these processes flow together rather than succeed one another.

The last carnivalesque practice I address, and the one most vital to my Satanic Queer theory, is the diablerie: performances of the Satanic itself, often embedded in medieval mysteries, parodic legends, and fabliaux, where the Devil appears as a “gay ambivalent figure expressing the unofficial point of view (...). There is nothing terrifying or alien in him” (Bakhtin 41). Bakhtin situates diableries as the “popular-festive part” of mysteries (Bakhtin 265), and notes that “it was customary to permit the Devils to run loose around the streets wearing their

costumes; sometimes they were free to do so for several days before the performance” (Bakhtin 265). I read this mobility as demonstrating the impossibility of confining the Satanic to the stage: the Devil could move wherever it pleased, with no fourth wall and no inviolate convention of theatre left unbroken. In practical terms, diableries spill into civic space, saturating everyday life with carnivalesque presence.

This spillover also recalibrates identity and law. We hear that actors “felt that they were somehow out of bondage” (Bakhtin 266), “considered themselves exempt from the law” (Bakhtin 266), and, recruited largely from the poor—hence the expression “poor Devil” (Bakhtin 266)—“often took advantage of their role to rob the peasants and mend their financial affairs” (Bakhtin 266). The effect is not merely theatrical license; it is a lived, extrajudicial latitude that exposes how religious and civic jurisdictions interpenetrated. Tellingly, “regulations were often issued to restrict the Devils’ behavior off stage” (Bakhtin 266), a historical anxiety about costumed transgression that rhymes with later anti-queer controls, such as twentieth century Los Angeles’s Rule No. 9: “No entertainment shall be conducted in which any performer impersonates by means of costume or dress a person of the opposite sex, unless by special permit” (qtd. in Villagra n.pag.). Even language retains the trace of this practice: the French expression *faire le diable à quatre* derives from a “grand diablerie” of four or more Devils permitted to make “a great deal of noise on stage” (Bakhtin 266).

Bakhtin adds that “even when these actors remained within the limits of the parts assigned to them, they still preserved their extra-official character,” and, at the same time, that “the mystery Devil is not only an extra-official figure” (Bakhtin 266). He calls the Devil “ambivalent” (Bakhtin 266), a quality to which he attributes the Devil’s “transformation into a popular comic figure” (Bakhtin 267). Crucially, the diablerie “crossed the footlights to merge with the life of the marketplace and enjoyed similar privileges of freedom” (Bakhtin 267). I read this both literally and metaphysically: “crossing the footlights” names movement across spaces, but I also contend that the diablerie was already a transgressive condition rather than a discrete stage event subsequently exported into civic life. In other words, the boundary that footlights are supposed to demarcate is itself unstable; it does not neatly separate the “real” from the “pretend,” and thus “crossing” is not the right emphasis. I would not frame this as boundary transgression so much as free movement, a performative inhabitation that makes the line porous in advance; that is the metamorph at work.

Domsch’s account of the mystery plays foregrounds them as intrinsically liminal forms: events that suspend ordinary structures of time, space, media, and authority in order to make

doctrine sensuously present. Staged annually around major feast days, they were civic–theological undertakings, guild-produced spectacles that interrupted the workaday calendar with a ritualised holiday of making and looking (Domsch 218). This calendrical exception already marks a temporal threshold; the productions also reconfigured space. Performed in streets and squares without fixed seating, they unfolded as “living images” (Domsch 220) rather than as closed, proscenium-bound drama, with porous boundaries between actors and onlookers and with audibility and visibility distributed unevenly across a moving crowd (Domsch 221). The plays thus occupied a spatial in-between: not quite church liturgy, not quite marketplace diversion, but a civic rite pitched at the hinge of sacred and profane.

Their semiotic economy is liminal as well. Before the Reformation’s textual turn and its emphasis on Scripture in the vernacular, the laity’s access to biblical “source texts” was limited (Domsch 219). Domsch therefore posits the source of the mystery plays not as a “concrete text” but as narrativisation and mental projection of worlds in which events take place and subjects and objects exist—an entity he calls a “storyworld” to which “we relate all medial representations of existents” (Domsch 219). The plays operate less by straightforward adaptation than by invocation of interwoven projections based on, but not limited to, narrative. Domsch even compares this mode to modern cosplay (Domsch 219). In a simplified definition, cosplay is the practice of dressing as a fictional character, yet its aim is fuller: “for an individual fan subject [is] to embody and identify with an adored character whose persona is real for the fan, actor, and/or creator of the cosplay costume” (Lunning 34). The parallel clarifies that medieval performance exceeds mere masquerade and, at the same time, that medieval practices resurface within forms central to contemporary popular culture.

The popular familiarity with the biblical storyworld was deep in the medieval period (Domsch 220–221). As Domsch puts it, “both mystery plays and cosplay have their origin in narrative because they establish concrete references to characters from narrative worlds that pre-exist the performance. The main purpose of the representational aspect of their performance is therefore recognizability: You have to ‘get’ the performance for it to really work: That must be Jesus and that must be Megaman” (Domsch 219). To achieve this recognisability, “as soon as characters reoccur in several stories, or when the same story is being told in different ways, maybe even through several different media (often without a concrete single source text), the reoccurring elements need distinctive attributes to make them recognizable” (Domsch 220). Accordingly, meaning did not flow from reading a fixed text but from recognising emblematic forms that traversed media, like haloes, colours, attributes, masks, iconic costumes, compressing

character and episode into instantly legible cues that enabled spectators to complete the narrative in imagination even when words were missed or unheard (Domsch 220–221).

Finally, the social organisation of the plays, with towns and guilds mounting logistically complex pageants, underscored their role as a civic passage rite (Domsch 218). Labour, craft, piety, and festivity were braided together to enact theological truths through material making. The result is a medium that continually crosses thresholds: from text to image to body; from belief to sight; from everyday time to festival time; from private devotion to public pedagogy. In this sense, the medieval mystery play is not merely didactic but a technology of liminality, an art of staging transitions through which a community experiences doctrine at the border where representation tips into presence (Domsch 218–21).

Similarly, in Tudor and Stuart England, entertainments make the point vivid by presenting the Devil in fleshly guise, poised for humiliation (Oldridge, *The Supernatural* 79). The tension between official and popular ideas about the Devil appeared especially clearly when the fiend stepped onstage in fictional entertainments. Rather than operate as an invisible tempter, he materialised and thus could be physically fought. Ballads of the seventeenth century showed him beaten, castrated, and farted at (Oldridge, *The Supernatural* 79). By Oldridge's account, in one comic tale, a man promised to show the Devil a creature he could not name in exchange for seven years' prosperity; he then dressed his wife in feathers and lime and led her backwards, confounding the fiend (*The Supernatural* 79–80). In such stories, the Devil could be threatening but incompetent; elsewhere he was almost benign (Oldridge, *The Supernatural* 54). The pendulum between terror and comedy, authority and mockery, sustained carnival's grammar across social strata. The availability of the Devilish for satire, allegory, and play expanded, bringing him more deeply into the orbit of carnivalised performance.

Alongside the carnivalised practices, a literary practice was unfolding. During the Middle Ages the Devil was not merely a doctrinal premise but a pre-eminent cultural presence widely believed to impinge upon the secular world. That presence is nowhere more decisively imaged than in Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* (1321), which fixes Lucifer at the frozen centre of Hell as a gigantic, three-faced brute whose own wing-beats perpetuate the ice that imprisons him. Critics have long noted how *Inferno* refuses Euclidean stability: as Virgil and Dante reach the nadir, they begin to climb down Satan only to discover that they are, paradoxically, moving up—"I raised my eyes, believing I should see / the half of Lucifer that I had left; instead I saw him with his / legs turned up" (*Inferno* 34.88–90). As Elana Gomel observes, this "impossible" spatial turn is integral to the poem's theological design and resembles a twisting topology of a

Möbius strip or a Klein bottle, staging an ontological passage from damnation to redemption and rendering Lucifer at once the antithesis of life and the most punished of all (Gomel 2). Even in a fourteenth-century text, then, the Devil is figured through paradox.

Moreover, *Inferno* offers an imagining of the structures of Heaven and Hell not delineated in the Bible, yet its narrative architecture has profoundly shaped religious imaginaries. Across medieval textuality more broadly, as scholastic discipline and monastic theology spread, Satan “took on in the course of time ever greater proportions, due to the fact that writers found a totally irresistible variety of themes and shades of meaning in describing his deadly qualities” (Villeneuve 1008). The Devil was thus anchored in liturgy and law, yet increasingly mobilised by narrative in a chaotic movement of continuous indetermination, while new fragments were constantly added to the shifting archive. The conclusion follows: the myth of Satan is highly mutable, and it is continuously appropriated.

One of the fragments, or icons that compose the Satanic recognisability, is the myth of a demonic pact. The pact’s genealogy begins not in early modern sensationalism but in late antique legend “A Miracle of the Virgin Mary Concerning Theophilus the Penitent” translated from Greek to Latin in the ninth century and by the year 1500 into “virtually all” European languages (Almond 131). The story of Theophilus, an ambitious cleric who signs himself to the Devil and is ultimately redeemed by the Virgin, proved formative to both Mariology and demonology: on one trajectory it feeds the developing theme of a compact between a witch and the Devil; on another, it contributes to the history of magic, where—combined with the scriptural figure of Simon Magus—it “becomes the legend of Dr Faust, the master magician and learned necromancer who had sold his soul to the Devil,” the historical Faustus already inseparable from myth “even in his own lifetime” (Almond 133). The exemplary literary crystallisation is the *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* published by Johann Spies (1587), translated into English in 1592 as *The Historie of the Damnable Life, and Deserved Death of Doctor Iohn Faustus* (Almond 133). That translation seeded the English stage with Christopher Marlowe’s *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus* (premiered in 1592), which in turn boomeranged back through German culture to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s tragic play *Faust* (1808). From the outset, then, Faustian narrative evolves by transnational relay, its authority deriving less from theology than from print culture and performance.

Marlowe’s intervention is decisive because it assigns the Devil’s agency to a voice with psychological contour. His Mephistopheles is no mere bureaucrat of Hell but a self-describing sufferer who confides that he is “depriv’d of everlasting bliss” (1.3.84). The tragedy hinges not

simply on spectacular conjurations or moral exempla but on interior states: temptation as desire and dread, damnation as knowledge misapplied. The familiar legalities of the compact, the signature, temporal service, fixed term: all remain in place, yet the play reimagines their meaning by making the demon a participant in human affect rather than merely its external provocateur. This is consonant with a broader early modern saturation of the Satanic across genres, from polemic to pamphlet to drama; the Devil is still doctrinally real, but in Marlowe's play he acquires the dramatic complexity of a character who can reflect on his own loss and thus refract the anxieties of a culture enthralled by forbidden arts and sceptical of old certainties.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries shift the frame again. As Sarah Bartels argues, the demise of traditional witch beliefs and the rise of rationalist science and philosophy increasingly rendered the Devil unnecessary to natural explanation, relocating him "from 'a viable intellectual space' to 'the domain of credulity and superstition'" (8) and marginalising him in "respectable theology" (8). This contraction of metaphysical role coincided with an expansion of literary role: the first part of Goethe's *Faust* appears in 1790, inaugurating the Romantic "sympathetic" Devil. For Jeffrey Burton Russell, this literary efflorescence means a significant shift: Satan sliding from a "theological person" (*Mephistopheles* 158), taken with deadly seriousness, to an unthreatening and implausible "literary personage" (*Mephistopheles* 159). Daniel Defoe's *History of the Devil* (1726), which confidently denies diabolical agency in witchcraft, conjuration, or astrology, registers the same repositioning. Yet to call it decline is to miss the structural transformation Goethe's *Faust* makes visible: once removed from the explanatory grid of nature, the Devil becomes a figure for negotiating epistemic and ethical limits, a catalyst whose value lies in what narratives can do with him.

It is Goethe who completes that transformation by turning the pact from a morality calculus into a metaphysical experiment in negativity. Russell's summary remains apt: "Mephisto is too complex, diverse, and ambiguous to be equated with the Christian Devil. Goethe gladly used and developed the traditional myth while denying the Devil's real existence. Mephisto is amorphous, lacking more definition, a nature spirit representing the undifferentiated world as it presents itself to the human experience" (Russell, *The Prince of Darkness* 216). Mephisto's own formula, he is "Part of the Power that would / Always wish Evil, and always works the Good," condenses the poem's economy of unintended consequence: temptation becomes the motor of striving, and striving, however compromised, is gathered into an ultimately affirmative teleology (Goethe 1336–1337). Goethe does not sanitise the demon; he remains "a liar and cheater, a master of illusion who repeatedly shifts his shape, sowing doubt

and distrust, disrupting justice, delighting in cruelty and suffering, promoting coarseness and brutal sexuality” (Russell, *The Prince of Darkness* 217). Yet that malign repertoire cannot secure victory. At the end, having lost his wagers, Mephisto is expelled into darkness, his pique comically distilled as grace evacuates his claim (Russell, *The Prince of Darkness* 219). The legend therefore preserves the pact’s procedural bones while reversing its teleology, so that what was once a cautionary exemplum becomes an inquiry into how evil acts as catalytic reagent within the world.

Russell elsewhere insists that Mephistopheles’s nature is constitutively indeterminate: “his nature is left unclear,” and he appears at times “to be Satan or Satan’s equivalent and at other times only a minor demon”; Goethe “kept the ambiguity pronounced,” so that Mephisto can be both “opponent of God” and “instrument of the divine will,” both “principle of matter” and “God’s subject,” an agent of “evil” and a worker of “good,” “chaos” and “order,” and ultimately “a nature spirit representing the undifferentiated world as it presents itself to human experience” (Russell, *Mephistopheles* 158). That inventory of contradiction matters for my argument. Precisely because Mephisto performs incompatible roles, he models a Satanic practice grounded not in essence but in motion. The continuous shape-shifting that Russell names is a literary analogue of the morph central to this study; it unsettles categorical boundaries, redistributes agency across scenes and media, and converts demonology from taxonomy into technique. In this light, it does not matter that Mephisto is not definitively Satan; once categories are set in motion, the Satanic performance becomes a Satanic Queer performance, a mode of doing that keeps identity open while it compels effects.

2.3. Romantic Rebellions

One the most formative literary depiction of the Satanic mythos is John Milton’s *Paradise Lost* (1667). As Jeffrey Burton Russell notes, Milton composed his epic “when Satan was already passing out of fashion,” at a moment when witch hunts were ebbing and public culture was moving toward scepticism about demonology (*Prince of Darkness* 186). Yet the poem did not consign Satan to an element of faded folklore. Milton shapes the Devil as a reflective, tormented spirit of striking beauty and heroic bearing, scarcely repellent at all. By giving the figure psychological depth rather than treating him as a mere monster, the poem humanised the Devil, and its influence on cultural production has been profound and enduring since its publication (*Prince of Darkness* 189).

The cultural circulation of Milton's epic in the decades around the French Revolution mattered as much as the poem's intrinsic features (Russell, *Prince of Darkness* 205). As Villeneuve notes, the popularity of Gothic novels and a wave of French Anglomania at the beginning of the nineteenth century contributed to a widespread rereading and reinterpretation of *Paradise Lost* (Villeneuve 1013). The Miltonian Satan, still angelically beautiful after banishment and unbowed in defeat, could now be taken up as a revolutionary ideal and a vehicle for thinking political resistance. Russell, mapping the poem's afterlife, remarks that this archetype of the tragic rebel inspired not only the English Romantics but also continental figures, among them George Gordon Byron and Charles Baudelaire, as well as George Sand and Gabriel Bounin (Russell, *Prince of Darkness* 205). From these rereadings there emerged what Ruben van Luijk, with careful qualification, calls Romantic Satanism (*Children of Lucifer* 73), a literary school of Romantic writers who display a positive identification with Satan in their works ("Sex" 42). It is important to stress that van Luijk cautions against imagining a movement with formal coherence; "Romantic Satanism" is a post facto grouping, useful because it localises and renders visible a shift in attitudes toward Satan across authors who otherwise diverge in style, politics, and metaphysics (*Children of Lucifer* 108). The utility of the category lies precisely in its diagnostic value: it allows us to track how a set of writers, by aligning themselves with a figure traditionally consigned to abjection, dramatise a new ethic of freedom.

Van Luijk points to a group of radical artists and writers associated with the publisher Joseph Johnson, such as Swiss painter Henry Fuseli, Mary Wollstonecraft, and William Godwin (*Children of Lucifer* 70). For them, according to van Luijk, Satan stood to represent the ideal hero of a rebellion against an authoritarian figure. Taking their cue from Milton's epic, these writers and artists undertook what van Luijk terms a "radical rereading of Satan," in which the epic's defiance acquired a pointedly political valence (van Luijk, "Sex" 42). In their hands, Satan's refusal of what he perceived as unjust exaltation operates as a parable of emancipation: a figurative script for opposing inherited hierarchies, questioning "divinely ordained" (van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer* 77) claims to rule, and asserting the dignity of the subject against sacralised power. The lines that in Milton had already raised the problem of authority and obedience could, in a revolutionary age, be harnessed as slogans of dissent. The upshot is not a theology but a hermeneutic: the Devil is taken as a code through which to speak about liberty and rebellion.

This political uptake came with a decisive shift in the status of the symbol. Van Luijk emphasises that the Romantic Satanists "never really acknowledged Satan's existence in the formal sense of the word," and in this respect they were "true children of the Enlightenment"

("Sex" 49). The Devil's function is metaphorical rather than ontological: he serves as a "thinly veiled" image of humanity on the road to emancipation, or of that portion of humanity actively struggling toward a better world: often, quite explicitly, the Romantic poet himself (van Luijk, "Sex" 49). There is a spirituality at stake here, but it is one practiced through literature (van Luijk, "Sex" 44). Poetry and fiction become the sites in which alternative mythologies are proposed and lived, and it is precisely in those ambitious imaginative constructions that Satan repeatedly appears. In this light, van Luijk's double thesis clarifies not only the what but the how of rehabilitation: the Devil is rehabilitated in art and resurrected from rationalist dismissal by being reinstalled as a symbolic technology for ethical and political thought (van Luijk, "Sex" 49).

William Blake offers an early, influential instance of this rehabilitative logic. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (c. 1790), he inverts customary valuations to expose the deadening effects of a merely rational Heaven, and to affirm the energy he associates with Hell. The "Proverbs from Hell," the diabolical re-readings of theology and history, and the 'infernal' method of reading Scripture dramatise one claim: liberation requires the reintegration of forces sundered by orthodoxy. Blake does not simply celebrate transgression. He stages a philosophical provocation against the opposition of reason and desire, recommends another economy of powers, and treats the "Devil" as a name for creative life. The position aligns with the broader Romantic impulse to dissolve rigid dualisms and to relocate moral judgement in vitality and imagination. Unbound from literalism, the Devil becomes a figure for the energies that drive poetic and political renewal (van Luijk, "Sex" 45).

Percy Bysshe Shelley sharpens this stance in his *Defence of Poetry* (1840), praising the "energy and magnificence" of Milton's Satan (Shelley 60). He rejects a reading of the figure as a mere personification of evil, and he treats the fallen angel's perseverance as morally superior to the deity's sterile triumph. The contrast does not endorse theological rebellion; it affirms the worth of steadfast pursuit of conceived excellence under adversity. In van Luijk's terms, the Devil becomes a figure of human dignity in resistance (van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer* 392). *Defence* thus advances rehabilitation by centring Milton's antagonist in a modern ethic of character, detached from literal demonology.

A further nuance concerns the instability of the Devil's exemplary status, especially in relation to Prometheus. As Russell notes, some Romantics preferred the Titan not because they renounced rebellion, but because the classical analogue lacked the "baggage" that the Christian Devil inevitably carried for readers habituated to equate him with evil (Russell, *Prince of*

Darkness 221–223). Percy Bysshe Shelley makes this point overt in the preface to *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), where he praises the Titan's courage and patience and suggests that, unlike Milton's Satan, Prometheus can be depicted without the taints of ambition, envy, or revenge. Russell's analysis helps to situate this preference: the Promethean shift preserves the ethical kernel—opposition to unjust omnipotence—while avoiding the risk of scandal inherent in appropriating a figure associated, for many, with absolute wrongdoing (Russell, *Prince of Darkness* 221–223). Far from undoing the rehabilitation, the Promethean option reveals its adaptability. Where Satan's sign was too encumbered, writers could reach for a classical equivalent to carry forward the same political and moral argument.

Ruben van Luijk also tempers a common misconception about the rehabilitation's relation to the body and to carnality (*Children of Lucifer* 115). He cautions against projecting contemporary sensibilities onto early nineteenth-century authors: for William Blake, Victor Hugo, and even P. B. Shelley, the material and the corporal remained relatively subordinate to the realm of ideals, in a strongly neo-Platonic register (van Luijk, "Sex" 47). Goethe's association of Satan with nature and sexuality, in a repressed scene from *Faust*, marks the Devil as ambivalent rather than as an unambiguous emblem of liberation; Byron's Lucifer in *Cain* (1821), for his part, expresses open disdain for the merely corporeal, emphasising instead the human capacity for the ideal (van Luijk, "Sex" 47). These examples indicate that Romantic rehabilitation does not amount to a celebration of appetite. Its centre of gravity lies in an ethics of freedom and a metaphysics of aspiration. The Devil's symbolic work runs primarily along the axis of resistance and vision, not sensual transgression.

The social semantics of the figure are further complicated by the fact, again emphasised by Russell, that during the period of the French Revolution Satan played a double symbolic role (Russell, *Prince of Darkness* 220). On one axis, he could be wielded as a tool for demonising the lower classes and popular unrest, the embodiment of disorder that conservative critics feared. On the other axis, he could serve revolutionaries as an image of steadfast resistance against monarchy and its sacralised claims. Russell assesses that the latter, subversive inversion of symbols—God recast as the oppressor, the Devil as the revolutionary hero (*Prince of Darkness* 221)—was not culturally triumphant, in part because the diabolical emblem carried a baggage of isolation, unhappiness, and ugliness that risked impeding the wider progress of humanity (*Prince of Darkness* 223). This judgment dovetails with the Promethean turn: where the diabolical sign proved too scandalous for persuasion, classical imagery could carry forward the same critique with less risk of alienating an audience (Russell, *Prince of Darkness* 221–223). The double role

thus illuminates both the force and the fragility of the rehabilitation. It could galvanise a radical minority while remaining unacceptable to a broader public.

Seen from another angle, the Romantic rehabilitation thematises the power of literature to refashion myth. Van Luijk's insistence that poetry was the arena in which Romantic writers practiced a kind of spirituality matters because it frames the Devil's return as a cultural rather than a confessional event (van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer* 109). The figure's ontological status is metaphorical, but the commitments it encodes are real: antipathy to dogma, allegiance to intellectual and political freedom, and faith in the capacity of imagination to open new horizons. This is why the rehabilitation can be described as a "resurrection" from Enlightenment burial (van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer* 69). The philosophies' ridicule of demonology made literal Satan an obsolete relic of superstition; the Romantics therefore could not simply restore him to belief. What they could do—and did—was to seize the poetic surplus that the myth still offered and to make it perform new labour in a changed world (van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer* 393). The Devil's image thus becomes a technology for thought, a device for focusing questions about authority, conscience, and revolt.

Because the rehabilitation is discursive rather than doctrinal, it could proceed even in the absence of literal belief. This is the point of van Luijk's observation that Romantic Satanists are "true children of the Enlightenment" (van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer* 87). The very critique that had disenchanted the world of its demons made possible a symbolic redeployment of myth. Satan becomes, in van Luijk's apt phrase, a "free-floating" sign, detachable from orthodox cosmology and attachable to modern projects of critique (van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer* 87). *Paradise Lost*, traveling through translation, commentary, and illustration, supplies the repertoire; revolutionary politics supplies the urgency; Romantic poetics supplies the sensibility in which such redeployments make sense. The rehabilitation thus marks less a break with Enlightenment than a remix of it: skeptical about superstition, hostile to dogma, yet willing to appropriate inherited stories to express convictions about liberty (van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer* 88-89).

In literary terms, the rehabilitation also reshaped narrative expectations. The Byronic hero: proud, isolated, alienated, yet possessing a broken grandeur, can be read as a secular descendant of Milton's Satan. Russell's account of the epic's magnetism helps to explain this generic drift (Russell, *Prince of Darkness* 205). The pathos of a figure who will not submit, even when wrong, proved irresistible to readers keen to measure virtue by integrity rather than by obedience. The reimagined Devil becomes a kind of negative template for modern

characterology: one need not endorse his aims to recognise the dignity of his persistence. This transfer of qualities from a theologically framed antagonist to a secular repertoire of types constitutes another facet of rehabilitation. It identifies which traits can be rescued from a compromised figure and put to work in a culture that prizes authenticity and autonomy.

None of this implies that Romantic writers forgot the scriptural and theological background of the myth they used. On the contrary, their engagements are acute precisely because they understand what they are reversing. The attraction to Milton is inseparable from a consciousness of biblical epic and of the doctrinal architecture that the poem both dramatises and, in the eyes of Romantic readers, subverts. Russell's reminder that the poem's imaginative apparatus remained influential despite the decline of literal demonology helps to explain how such reversals could be persuasive without being pious (Russell, *Prince of Darkness* 186, 189). The rehabilitation is not a naïve celebration of evil; it is an exercise in strategic re-reading that presses an inherited text into modern service.

If one asks what survives of the Romantic rehabilitation in later modernity, one answer follows directly from van Luijk's double thesis. By turning Satan into a metaphor for emancipation and by reviving him from Enlightenment's dismissal, Romantic writers prepared conditions for later appropriations in which the Devil might serve as a countercultural or anti-authoritarian icon (van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer* 393). Without reaching beyond the nineteenth century, one can register the logical continuity: once Satan has been detached from ontological commitment and reinstalled as a symbol of freedom, he is available for reappearance wherever authority comes under suspicion. The rehabilitation thus functions as a hinge between theological myth and modern political imagination, a hinge forged in the Romantic period and still capable of bearing weight (van Luijk, "Sex" 44, 49).

Returning, finally, to the moment of emergence, the upheavals of the French Revolution provide the context within which the rehabilitation becomes intelligible, which, according to van Luijk, "came to signify the advent of a new spirit in European man that affirmed his right to shape his own political, cultural, and religious destiny, if necessary in opposition to the "divinely ordained" structures of tradition" (van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer* 77). Russell remarks that during this period the Devil could be read "double"—either as the demonised image of popular unrest or as the emblem of revolt against sacralised power—and that the latter reading, though powerful for radicals, did not secure broad cultural legitimacy (Russell, *Prince of Darkness* 220–223). Villeneuve's notice of Gothic fashion and Anglomania gives the social texture of this scene, showing to see how genres, tastes, and translation ecosystems shaped what could be read

and how (Villeneuve 1013). In this context, the Romantic rehabilitation appears not as an eccentricity, but as a structurally legible response to a crisis of authority. The Devil's figure becomes a means to think politically when the inherited languages of legitimacy are collapsing and when new ones have yet to stabilise.

In sum, the Romantic rehabilitation of Satan names a shift in which a figure once defined by theological abjection is repurposed as a modern emblem of dissent. The writers involved do not deny the myth's power; they redirect it. Their project is neither a doctrinal Satanism nor a mere aesthetic flirtation with evil, but a sustained effort to think freedom through inherited stories. Van Luijk's double definition, rehabilitation in art, resurrection from Enlightenment's oblivion, captures this with economy and precision (van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer* 65). Russell's historical placement of Milton at a hinge moment further clarifies the possibility conditions for the shift: an epic that made the Devil dramatically compelling even as belief in literal demonology waned (Russell, *Prince of Darkness* 186, 189). Villeneuve's account of Gothic fashion and Anglomania shows how this rereading moved across borders and into different publics (Villeneuve 1013). And the Promethean alternative that Russell and Shelley bring into view demonstrates the rehabilitation's plasticity: where the diabolical sign was too scandalous, a classical analogue could carry the same moral and political freight (Russell, *Prince of Darkness* 221–223). What results is not a simple inversion by which evil is called good, but an altered grammar for thinking about authority, conscience, and revolt.

The coherence of this picture depends on respecting the methodological modesty that van Luijk recommends. Romantic Satanism is not a church nor a social movement; it is a diagnostic category that allows us to track how a set of authors align themselves with a once-object figure in order to dramatise a modern ethic (van Luijk, "Sex" 42). That alignment can be explicit, as in Blake's programmatic inversions; rhetorical, as in Shelley's *Defence*; or strategic, as in the turn to Prometheus when the diabolical sign proved too scandalous for persuasion (Russell, *Prince of Darkness* 221–223). Across these variations, the constant is the use of mythic inheritance to think with. By making Satan a metaphor for the dignity of refusal, by detaching him from literalist frames and redeploying him against the prototype of misrule, the Romantics established a durable pattern for critical imagination (van Luijk, "Sex" 45). In that sense, the rehabilitation is less an episode in the history of superstition than a chapter in the history of freedom, written in the language of an epic whose antagonist, even "when (...) passing out of fashion," proved strong enough to carry the weight of modern hopes and fears (Russell, *Prince of Darkness* 186).

2.4. Occult Revivals in the Long Nineteenth Century

If the Romantics fashioned Satan as a figure of rebellion, the nineteenth-century occult revival asked what to do with the knowledge that Satan represents. The period did not discard the diabolical; it translated it into idioms of gnosis, experience, and ‘ancient wisdom,’ so that defiance became inquiry into hidden causes and powers. In both Romantic Satanism and the occult turn to esoteric sources, transgression becomes a language for knowledge, and the occult understood as what is concealed becomes the arena in which that knowledge is sought (Partridge, “Introduction” 3).

Christopher Partridge begins from first principles, defining the occult as that which is hidden or concealed, a term that circulated long before its esoteric specialisation, as in astronomy’s “stellar occultation” and the Shī‘a doctrine of the twelfth Imam’s occultation, before acquiring in European languages a reference to gnosis and the “secrets of antiquity” (Partridge, “Introduction” 2). From Latin *occultus*, from *celare*, “to hide,” the word appears in French in 1120 and by the sixteenth century names “spheres of knowledge beyond everyday understanding,” then “the hidden properties of the natural world” (Partridge, “Introduction” 2). Its Renaissance itinerary runs through Henry Cornelius Agrippa’s *De occulta philosophia* and Giordano Bruno’s use of *occulto*, after which Gabriel Harvey can speak of “the greatest empirics, spagyrics, cabbalists, alchemists, magicians, and occult philosophers” (Partridge, “Introduction” 2).

The modern turn comes with “occultism.” Coined in 1842 by A. de LeStrange and popularized by Éliphas Lévi in 1856, the term reconfigures dispersed practices into “a particular construction of a coherent countercultural wisdom tradition, following a linear pattern” (Partridge, “Introduction” 3). Protestant and Enlightenment polemic first articulated this construction by treating “superstitio” as the Other of rational religion and science; occultists then took it up to claim respectable ancestry and doctrinal coherence (Partridge, “Introduction” 3). Some scholars therefore restrict occultism to nineteenth-century developments and their sequels, so that “occultism in this sense (...) has its pioneers in 18th-century authors such as, notably, Emanuel Swedenborg and Franz Anton Mesmer, and covers the great majority of esoteric currents from at least the mid-nineteenth century on” (Hanegraaff 888, qtd. in Partridge, “Introduction” 3). By contrast, “esotericism,” a term coined by Jacques Matter in 1828 in a study of early Christian Gnosticism and later consolidated as “Western esotericism,” became the

academic umbrella, which is why a survey beginning in late antiquity can seem controversial to those who reserve occultism for the nineteenth century (Partridge, “Introduction” 3).

Running beneath this taxonomy is a persistent perception of risk. The occult was “edgework,” inquiry at the boundary of the sacred and the profane (Partridge, “Introduction” 3). Christian cultures warned that “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light” and that he is “the father of lies,” and enjoined seekers to “test the spirits” (NIV 2 Cor. 11:14; NIV John 8:44; NIV 1 John 4:1). James VI’s *Daemonologie*, written amid the North Berwick witch trials, cautions against spirits “farre cunninger then man in the knowledge of all the occult properties of nature” (James VI 44 qtd. in Partridge, “Introduction” 4). To step into hidden knowledge was to expose oneself to deception and to require technique and discernment.

On this basis, the question of modernity’s Devil can be reframed. Stefanie Bartels argues that the Victorian Devil’s “ambiguity allowed him to adapt to and even thrive” in modern conditions and that his “complexity and variability” made him “relevant in a wide variety of contexts,” where the frivolous and the serious, the theological and the secular, mingle in nineteenth-century guises (Bartels 230). He exhibits “a significant degree of internal disunity” yet retains coherence through theology, so that his cultural appearances remain anchored in biblical and doctrinal traits (Bartels 230). The mixture “illuminates the resilience of folklore, the dynamism of spiritualism and occultism, the ongoing importance of traditional Christian concepts, and the prominent role of the supernatural in nineteenth-century popular culture, literature, and theatre,” keeping him “consistently relevant enough to be worth contesting” and “always undeniably present” (Bartels 230).

Romantic Satanism supplied the esoteric revival with images and tropes. Poets and thinkers figure Satan and Lucifer as symbols “of transgression, refusal of morality, reason, irreligion, feminism, and socialism,” a literature that belongs to Romantic Satanism rather than Satanism *stricto sensu* yet furnishes occult circles with a vocabulary for rebellion and emancipation (Introvigne 241). The Devil’s ambiguity, established in Romantic art and letters, becomes material for experimentation. The fin-de-siècle sharpened these threads. Joris-Karl Huysmans’s novel *Là-Bas* (1891) climaxes with a black mass described in intimate detail; the bestseller status of the novel made it a touchstone for imagining underground Satanic practice and a sourcebook that “seeded a ‘Satanic reality’” later taken up by Anton LaVey’s Church of Satan (Urban, *Secrecy* 96; Partridge, “Introduction” 10; Bell 430). Fiction did not simply mirror occultism; it organized perception of it and blurred the line between religious discourse and literature about religion (Urban, *Secrecy* 97; Partridge, *Introduction* 10; Bell 430).

Éliphas Lévi stands at the centre of the revival. Born Alphonse-Louis Constant, a former Catholic seminarian and a socialist and feminist sympathiser, he became one of modern occultism's most influential popularisers (Faxneld, *Satanic Feminism* 53; Introvigne 105). In 1856 the second volume of his treatise on ritual magic, *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*, titled *Rituel*, was published. On its frontispiece, it showcased Lévi's drawing of Baphomet, which significantly influenced future depictions of the demon in later esoteric and popular culture (Introvigne 105): winged, with goat's head and a pentagram on its forehead, and with female breasts. Responding to disillusionment with normative science, Lévi promised that magic "reunites into one and the same science that, which can be more certain in philosophy and that, which is infallible and eternal in religion" (Lévi 2, qtd. in Bogdan and Djurdjevic 3). He coupled a romanticised occultism with an abiding appreciation for Roman Catholicism, an ambivalence visible in opening of his *Histoire de la Magie* (1860) with the Book of Enoch's fallen angels who transmit magic to mortal women, a mytheme that sacralises and problematises the origin of occult knowledge. Lévi's portrayal of magic as the summit of human knowledge catalyzed "the French occult revival" (Bogdan and Djurdjevic 3).

Lévi's itinerary mirrors the period's shifts. In his radical youth he wrote of Lucifer in a Romantic register aligned with "religious humanism, communism, feminism, pantheism, anticlericalism, sexual liberation, and religious universalism" (van Luijk 150). Later he reframed Lucifer as a "morally neutral 'blind agency' (...) indispensable for the preservation of a heterogeneous reality," an aspect of the Absolute that he often called "astral light," whose subservience to the magician's will drives magical practice; he denied "Satan" as absolute evil while keeping "Lucifer" as neutral or enlightening (van Luijk 135). The distinction proved influential. The early Theosophical Society likewise elevated a semi-gnostic Lucifer as Promethean awakener while declining to adopt Satan in a positive key (Versluis 123).

Transnational circuits consolidated these currents. Edward Bulwer-Lytton, author of *Zanoni* (1842), *A Strange Story* (1862), and *The Coming Race* (1871), knew Lévi and became a patron of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, which furnished leadership for the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in 1888 (Bogdan and Djurdjevic 4). The Golden Dawn organised itself along the kabbalistic Tree of Life, combining initiations, "Knowledge Lectures," and practical work in tarot, astrology, astral travel, invocation, and talismanic magic. Its pantheon drew on Egyptology refracted through an occultist imaginary, an Ægypt more imagined than historical, which signals that occultism "implies and requires a distinct and self-consistent episteme" (Bogdan and Djurdjevic 4).

In this overlap between artistic experiment, Decadent transgression, and esoteric revival, the modern “invention of Satanism” took shape. Stanisław Przybyszewski’s Satan was claimed philosophically; others used Satan rhetorically or artistically; a subset pursued psychological or spiritual engagements in unorthodox movements (Dyrendal et al. 36). Jeffrey Burton Russell distills the attitudes that lodged in the artistic imagination by mid-century, including “the moral ambiguity of both Devil and God; their possible integration; psychological empathy for Satan as representing the human mind lost in ignorance and selfishness yet yearning for the good; the use of Satan as an ironically distant voice with which to satirize the human condition” (Russell, *Mephistopheles* 202). Because the occult milieu was small and intertwined with the arts, these attitudes bled into new religious innovations, granting the “esoteric Satan a brief lease on the role of primeval rebel in the early revival” (Dyrendal et al. 37). By the time occultism took on modern contours under Lévi’s popular books, the Devil’s ambiguity was settled in the cultural field.

Theosophy turned that ambiguity into comparative critique. Helena P. Blavatsky’s alternative spirituality blends Western Gnosticism and Eastern mysticism and protests rising materialism and the spiritual costs of modernisation. In *Isis Unveiled* (1877) she traces the Devil’s connections across religions and cultures and questions the Catholic reliance on a personalised Devil as the fundamental stone on which Christianity, with its dogma of redemption, is built (Blavatsky, *Isis... Vol. 1* 36). In *Isis Unveiled vol. 2: Theology*’s Chapter X titled “The Devil-myth” (1878) she contends, after surveying Satan in the Bible, that “in all these scenes there is manifested no such malignant diabolism as is supposed to characterize ‘the adversary of souls’” (Blavatsky, *Isis... Vol. 2* 486). Because the Bible was sparse, “The English-speaking Protestants, not finding the Bible explicit enough, have adopted the Diabology of Milton’s celebrated poem, *Paradise Lost*, embellishing it somewhat from Goethe’s celebrated drama of *Faust*” (Blavatsky, *Isis... Vol. 2* 501). Echoing Romantic recastings, she presents the Satanic force as granter of free will and knowledge, “the being who made humans what they are,” as opposed to “blissfully unthinking puppets” (Bell 430). She goes so far as to call orthodox notions of a personal Satan “absurd” (Blavatsky, *Isis... Vol. 2* 478, 506). The occult revival’s return to antiquity thus includes a polemical reevaluation of Christian demonology (Bartels 2021).

Aleister Crowley (born Edward Alexander Crowley) carried nineteenth-century occult experimentation into the new century, turning dispersed rites and philosophies into a single, provocative project of self-making (Bartels 147, Introvigne 239). Initiated in an esoteric order of

Golden Dawn and reshaped by travel and intensive study of breathwork, tantric yoga, and ceremonial trance, among others, he staged a breakthrough in Egypt in the early 1900s, presenting a revealed law that centred human will as sacred ordinance: “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law” (Asprey, “Psychic” 88, Hedenborg White 2). Later writings of Crowley expanded that law, which he treated not as allegory but as instructions for practice (Bogdan, “Deus” 30). In public he crafted a scandalous persona: a drug-taking libertine, breaker of taboos, and a publisher of guarded teachings, who drew expulsions, censure, and lurid headlines even as poetry and ritual writings circulated through respectable venues (Freeman 102). By making himself a living emblem of the revival, he turned its images, rites, and rhetoric into mass-market currency, and in fiction and gossip alike he became a mythic figure (Mathews 37).

By strict definitions he was not a Satanist, yet the pathways later called modern Satanism pass through his work (Granholt, “Embracing” 90). He formulated philosophies that enthroned deliberate will, rejected inherited moral constraints, and used erotic ritual for initiation supplied a portable grammar others could adopt (Mathews 105, Bogdan and Djurdjevic 4). Through lodges, students, and easily replicated texts and ceremonies, his influence travelled into witchcraft revivals, strands of Satanism, and even technique-driven new religions (Bogdan, “Deus” 2, Lewis 56). As Massimo Introvigne notes, he “was not a Satanist,” yet “without [him], a good part of the Satanism of the 20th and 21st centuries would not exist” (Introvigne 246). By reframing Lucifer as sovereignty and illumination and pairing ceremonial masses with sexual magic, he offered a durable synthesis that later movements could recast in darker keys (Introvigne 246).

Across these developments the Devil remains a structural absence and presence. Victorian spiritualists and occultists could neither accommodate nor dispense with him (Bartels 147); decadent literature sensationalised and seeded images of Satanic practice (Faxneld, *Satanic Feminism* 252; Dyrendal et.al 35), Theosophy displaced the personified Satan into comparative myth and principle (Faxneld, *Satanic Feminism* 119); Lévi distinguished a neutral Lucifer from a rejected Satan (Introvigne 107); and Crowley’s public persona returned a secular demon whose notoriety advertised the occult to modern publics (Bogdan, “Branding” 14). What begins as a philological clarification of “occult,” “occultism,” and “esotericism” opens onto a history of how knowledge is legitimated and circulated. The move from rhizome to lineage, from dispersed practices to a “coherent countercultural wisdom tradition,” made it easier to narrate the nineteenth century as a revival and provided labels that stabilised fluid exchange (Partridge,

“Introduction” 3). In each node the same dynamic recurs. Older materials are reframed for new publics, and the Devil’s ambiguity becomes the condition of his endurance. He does not disappear; his role changes and, in changing, furnishes the occult revival with both its adversary and its alibi.

2.5. New Religiosities: Counterculture, Occulture, and Satanism

The counterculture of the long 1960s is a necessary point for understanding how the Satanic figure migrated from a narrowly theological antagonist into a versatile emblem within popular and alternative culture. In Douglas Sylvan’s concise formulation, the counterculture “explored the values of peace and love, communality, creative expression, and Eastern forms of spirituality such as yoga and Buddhism” (84). That outward turn toward Asian traditions converged with renewed interest in Western esotericism and occultism, a pairing already present in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century occult circles that had linked demonology with the East in the popular religious imaginary. I argue that the 1960s iteration normalised religious experimentation as cultural practice and lifted symbols like Satan out of doctrinal frames so they could be redeployed as resources for identity, style, and critique.

The counterculture’s religious experimentation interpenetrated with mass-mediated music scenes that made esoteric and diabolical motifs legible to wide audiences. As early as 1968, The Rolling Stones’ song “Sympathy for the Devil” voiced Satan as a “man of wealth and taste” (Introvigne 462). Critics note the two-way traffic: occult and Satanic themes revitalised rock, even as popular music “revitalized Satanism” by giving it amplified channels of circulation (Introvigne 462). What matters in these exhibits is not theological correctness but the demonstration that the Devil functioned as a flexible sign in pop discourse, a charged shorthand for rebellion, satire, and stylistic edge.

Scholars of occulture map the wider landscape in which these uses became ordinary. Christopher Partridge argues that the period witnessed increased popularity of astrology, witchcraft, I Ching, Tarot, chakras, reincarnation, and Theosophical lore among other currents (*Re-enchantment Vol. 2* 2). Erik Davis dubs the intensification an “explosion of esoteric novelty” (Davis 636). These ideas circulated centrally through music and other popular media, “feeding” into and out of an “occultural reservoir” (Partridge, *Re-enchantment Vol. 2* 2). The result was a sprawling milieu that routinely linked Eastern and Western esotericisms, paranormal speculation, and conspiratorial imagination to everyday life through popular culture. Early representations

found their place in music, in creations of bands like Black Sabbath, Coven, Magick, and especially Black Widow with their 1970s album *Sacrifice*; such themes later persisted in music genres from progressive dance like Death in Vegas's *Scorpio Rising* (2002) to heavy metal and the cultivated scandal of artists like Marilyn Manson, who in 1994 received an honorary Church of Satan priesthood from Anton LaVey and wrote the foreword to LaVey's posthumous essays, *Satan Speaks*, in 1998 (Partridge, *Re-enchantment Vol. 1* 150). Genesis P-Orridge, an English artist, exemplifies the traffic between avant-garde art and occult referentiality and is credited by Partridge with coining the word "occulture" (Partridge, *Re-enchantment Vol. 1* 68).

The era's canonical rock imagery made such crossings visible as part of the aesthetic. The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967) album cover set Crowley's photograph alongside Jung, Huxley, and Burroughs, a collage Partridge reads as emblematic of "the truly eclectic nature of occulture" (Partridge, *Re-enchantment Vol. 1* 155). Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page amplified this endorsement, dealing in "Crowleyania" through his occult bookstore and residing for a time in Crowley's former house, so that an Edwardian ceremonial magician became, by the mid-1970s, a pop-occultural celebrity continually rediscovered by new audiences (Davis 644). The diagnostic point follows: popular culture made the occult popular not as conversion but as a circulating set of images, gestures, and narratives ready to be picked up for meaning-making elsewhere.

Observers at the time recognised an "occult boom." In 1972 Marcello Truzzi catalogued it as a development of "great cultural significance" (Truzzi 16). He pointed to Time's "Is God Dead?" cover from 1966, rising sales of mystical literature, and the dramatic rise of Ouija board purchases (Truzzi 16). He emphasised a primarily youth phenomenon focused on astrology, parapsychology and extra-sensory perception, Eastern religious thought, and "witchcraft-satanism" (Truzzi 18). His typology ranged from theistic devotion to Satan, to sex groups using Satanic rites with little belief, to an acid-culture outgrowth that attracted drug seekers indifferent to occultism, and finally to LaVey's Church of Satan, which he deemed most successful yet least mystical and pragmatically oriented (Truzzi 23, 26, 28). Truzzi's framing is useful less for precision than for registering how the Satanic label indexed heterogeneous behaviors within a youth-driven cultural economy.

Petersen notes that late-1960s and early-1970s currents tended to view "witchcraft and the occult through a diluted Christian context" ("Bracketing Beelzebub" 164). This inversion of Christian frames paradoxically reinforced the Devil as an "extreme endpoint of anti-social evil" while simultaneously normalising occult motifs as pop repertoire ("Bracketing Beelzebub" 164).

In other words, moral polarities survived even as Satanic signs became ordinary cultural materials.

The conceptual vocabulary for this shift intersects with debates about secularisation, disenchantment, and re-enchantment. The Enlightenment project, understood with Adorno and Horkheimer as a will to control matter without recourse to immanent powers, has often been glossed as disenchantment, a rationalisation that displaces magic and renders symbols ethically weightless (Josephson-Storm 4, 272, 299–300). Within this narrative, authority migrates from tradition and revelation to reason; nature becomes a “casual play of forces” (Josephson-Storm 309). Yet enchanted practices persist in modern societies and are amplified by media, which leads many scholars to treat disenchantment less as description than as regulative ideal or myth, a “regime of truth” that is paradoxically self-refuting because it generates the phenomena it aims to suppress (Josephson 304, 309). Occulture, construed as the environment and social processes through which spiritual, esoteric, paranormal, and conspiratorial ideas emerge and gain influence, counters grand narratives of disenchantment (Asprem, “Psychic” 332–334; Partridge, “The Occultural” 114). Rather than rupture, we see an “exchange of enchantments” in Josephson’s phrase, where competing supernatural and counter-supernatural claims destabilise one another and circulate through popular culture (Josephson-Storm 29). The rise of occulture within mass media challenges “official” definitions of reality that presume a straightforwardly disenchanted worldview (Granholt, “The Secular” 332–333).

This change in the cultural economy of symbols tracks larger shifts in power between religious institutions and the public. Roland Boer, glossing Michel de Certeau and Jean-Marie Domenach, describes how Christian discourse dissipated into society and how religious materials were appropriated by secular institutions for a civil religion. The Bible is exemplary. Once controlled interpretively by the Church to the point that footnotes and marginal glosses eclipsed the text, it was, with the advent of capitalism, subjected to new modes of individual and scientific interpretation (Boer 3–4; de Certeau and Domenach 19–20). The methodological lesson is that modern interpretive practices disperse religious functions outside ecclesiastical spaces. In this environment, Christian symbols, no longer monopolised by clerical authority, circulate within popular culture as motifs and signs that can be invested with new meanings, adopted to diverse ends, and attached to identities beyond doctrinal boundaries. Partridge uses the term “detraditionalization” to capture this detachment, re-ordering, and re-contextualization; producers intend messages, yet audiences generate their own religious and metaphysical constructions from the materials at hand (Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment Vol. 1* 132).

Against this background, the Satanic figure is reactive and remystified at once. Scholars of religion agree that part of Satanism's appeal is its edge, a reactive posture that leverages inversion as a strategy against mainstream moralities (Petersen, "Contemporary Satanism" 6; "Bracketing Beelzebub" 168). Yet this is only one pole of a longer process in which secularization, demystification, cross-cultural mixing, and subsequent remystification produce a scene where the Devil, as a representation of evil or as a condensed sign for antinomian values, can be negotiated repeatedly. Popular culture's democratising distribution enables exposure to alternative religions and esoteric practices while also making visible ecclesial scandals and hypocrisies. The result is a freer exchange between systems, where individuals compose idiosyncratic constellations of belief and style. Occulture names the resource pool from which such compositions draw. It can serve as religious motivation, function as aesthetic provocation, and, crucially for the present argument, operate in continuous relay with popular culture that both feeds it symbols and is in turn fed by its imagery and narratives.

Within this field, Satan becomes a "superstar," to borrow Villeneuve's retrospective framing, across the 1960s media landscape. Villeneuve recalls Robert Kanter's prophetic 1950 remark that "whereas the reality of a personal God seems to be disappearing, the reality of a personification of evil is becoming more strongly established" (1024-1025), such that "in the literary sky, the sun of Satan shines brighter than the sun of truth" (1025). The period's staging bears this out. The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Alice Cooper, AC/DC, and David Bowie all trafficked in occult and demonic references; Crowley appears on *Sgt. Pepper's* cover; heavy metal band Kiss's Gene Simmons's playful "Satanic" hand salute, he said, simply freed a hand to hold a guitar pick even as it branded an image (Case 21). Truzzi concurred from another angle: the efflorescence he mapped was not fringe but macroscopic, symptomatic of broader cultural strains (Truzzi 16). The cumulative effect is straightforward: a widened permission structure for the Satanic as pop sign.

The late-modern Devil, as Villeneuve and Oldridge remind us, is neither singular nor stable. Villeneuve argues that Satan "takes shape as soon as creative thought and discourse get under way, conferring life on him and according him power," and calls the Devil "a myth," an effect of discourse's active element (Villeneuve 1009). Oldridge emphasizes the ambiguity by calling Satan "essentially a metaphor" (Oldridge, *The Devil* 2). For some believers, Villeneuve adds, Satan persists as "a living being who deliberately caused suffering and death" (Villeneuve 1020). In contemporary popular culture, Satanic images source selectively and nonlinearly from earlier depictions, mix with other repertoires, and function within a remix logic. This study

suggests that the emergence of the occultural milieu has been crucial to the queering of Satan. The destabilisation of boundaries between belief systems has allowed the binary of God and Satan to be questioned or rejected; as pop culture intermixes with occulture, the Devil is caught up with camp and other stylistic codes that further queer and unsettle the concept.

If the counterculture and occulture supply the conditions, modern Satanism crystallizes institutional and discursive forms. Although sympathetic Devil talk predates the twentieth century, the term “Satanism” acquires its now familiar meaning as “intentional and explicit worship of Satan” only toward the end of the nineteenth century (van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer* 2). Van Luijk stresses that the concept is a Christian invention (van Luijk, *Children of Lucifer* 16). For long stretches, “Satanism” served polemically to categorise or vilify rivals by imputing demon veneration to them. Early Christian views of paganism as the worship of demons and medieval rumours of heterodox blasphemies merged into the stereotype of a counter-religion that later helped elicit actually practiced Satanisms (Asprem, “Intermediary” 653). Durable, public, organised forms date from 1966, when Anton Szandor LaVey founded the Church of Satan. From that point, Petersen speak of a “Satanic milieu,” a small core of stable groups and a larger turnover of loosely affiliated individuals who argue over ‘true’ Satanism as the environment grows and differentiates (Petersen, “Introduction” 5, 6; Holt and Petersen 441). This milieu spans atheists for whom Satan is metaphor, theists for whom Satan is a spiritual entity, esotericists focused on magical practice, and polytheists for whom Satan is one deity among many. Across these variants, Satanic imagery represents late-modern ideals of antinomian individualism (Holt and Petersen 441). The upshot is not a homogenous religion but a contested field. Satanism becomes “less an inverted or reinterpreted Christianity (...) and more of an autonomous tradition and identity, making it decidedly post-Christian” (Petersen, “Bracketing Beelzebub” 166).

LaVey’s publication strategy shows how modern Satanism consolidated amid the very countercultural moment that had normalised its imagery. The Satanic Bible from 1969 was pivotal “for cementing a modern Satanic identity” (Asprem, *Arguing with Angels* 113). Much of its core derived from earlier Church of Satan tracts, supplemented to fill a volume by pasted materials. His *The Satanic Bible* (1969) adapted the Social Darwinist tract *Might Is Right*, while the concluding Enochian Keys were borrowed from Crowley’s *Equinox* and edited to replace “holy” cadences with diabolical references (Asprem, *Arguing with Angels* 114). LaVey’s pairing does two kinds of signaling at once. Choosing *Might Is Right* broadcasts a stark social and moral posture of hard individualism and conflict as principle, while adopting Enochian material signals insider credibility to occult practitioners. By stitching these otherwise unrelated pieces back into

his system, he builds a deliberate collage: a mix of brute ethos and arcane pedigree that reads unmistakably as LaVey's own. The inclusion of Enochian verses made them, in effect, part of Satanic liturgy, later elaborated in *The Satanic Rituals* from 1972. *The Satanic Bible* is a remix that stitches LaVey's polemics to prior esoteric and Social Darwinist sources to produce a usable scripture for a new public Satanism.

A sociological synthesis clarifies how these strands bind. Petersen proposes three "modes" of Satanic discourse rather than rigid types. Rationalist Satanism, exemplified by the Church of Satan, treats Satan as a symbol of nonconformity and material wisdom in a quest for indulgence and vitality. Esoteric Satanism sees Satan as a metaphysical force or personified being. Reactive Satanism "celebrates the Christian Devil found in demonology and folklore in an antitoxin drive against the established order," appropriating cultural stereotypes of Satanism as inversion strategy and leaning into alterity, shock, or nihilism (Petersen, "Bracketing Beelzebub" 168). In practice, Satanic discourses are cohesive but not homogeneous. Actors move among modes to construct identities that are viable, distinctive, mainstream, or shocking as needed; adversarial and antinomian rhetoric becomes a resource both against mainstream values and as boundary-work within the milieu (Petersen, "'Smite Him'" 62–74; "Bracketing Beelzebub" 169).

Two dynamics shaped modern Satanism's public image. First, the Satanic Panic of the 1980s and early 1990s staged an unprecedented moral scare in the United States and beyond, later exported to the United Kingdom, Australia, and elsewhere (Introvigne 372–373). Beginning around 1980, cresting through the McMartin preschool case that ended without convictions in 1990, and declining with official reports in 1994 that denied the existence of ritual Satanic crime, the panic fused church-based anxieties, urban legends, rumour panics, animal mutilation cases, heavy-metal imagery, homicide stories, and allegations of ritual abuse into a conspiratorial narrative about a secret, hierarchical, international cult network of Satanists (Introvigne 372). The overwhelming scholarly consensus has been that no such cult network existed (eg. Dyrendal et al. 2016; Doherty 2024). Second, even sympathetic theologians could be dismissive of Satanism's self-descriptions. Russell, writing *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World* (1986) amid the occulture wave, noted Satan's mass-cultural relevance yet rooted the popularity of possession films in repressed senses of radical evil, Cold War fears, social violence, cultural despair, and the desire to fill the void left by declining traditional religion with something "resembling religion." He dismissed LaVey's Satanic Bible as a "melange of hedonistic maxims

and misinformed occultism” (Russell, *Mephistopheles* 253). Whatever one makes of such judgments, they document the contested reception of a self-consciously public Satanism.

Even where theology is bracketed, the intersection of popular culture and the Satanic remains central (e.g. Petersen, “Contemporary Satanism” 396; Dyrendal 69). The Church of Satan codified the first public Satanic religion at the peak of the U.S. counterculture. Although draped in occult imagery and ritual, its official doctrine theorised the Devil as symbolic, an embodiment of power and indulgence for an atheistic religion (Petersen, “Introduction” 7). This manoeuvre recognised the symbolic potency of the Satanic and routed religious authority toward countercultural consumption. It also supplied a clear metaphor for identification. As Petersen observes, reinterpreting the marginal and the misunderstood as Satanic redefines Satan positively and sanitises the figure by disassociating it from stereotyped criminalities, at the same time ‘satanising’ the marginalised (Petersen, “Contemporary Satanism” 401). The Church of Satan’s stance, he notes, is a “‘law-and-order’ position, combining an adversarial stance of antinomianism, elitism, and social Darwinism with a distinctively conservative respect for the body politic” (Petersen, “The Carnival” 184). This sanitisation participates in an aestheticisation. Extremism and obscene violence associated with the Satanic become style or symbolic transgression. Violence becomes theatrical, only acting or looking as such, or appears violent only from binary norms; metaphysically, it is wholly other, deploying antinomian gestures toward a-nomian ends (Petersen, “The Carnival” 184). The effect loosens the grip of a good and evil binary productive in Christian theologies and opens space for pop culture to iterate the figure in multiple registers, including camp and irony.

Recent actors such as The Satanic Temple have extended this logic into legal and political arenas, further complicating the boundary between religion and performance. As Joseph P. Laycock argues, The Satanic Temple’s activities “problematize our assumptions about religion and religious freedom,” relying on the performance of religion to expose the normalised Christian agenda within U.S. lawmaking and to foreground the struggles of other non-Christians (Laycock ix). By demanding equal treatment for invocations, monuments, and exemptions, the Satanic Temple mirrors majority practices while questioning their legitimacy, which expands the contemporary toolkit associated with the Devil.

The argument threads from counterculture through occulture to modern Satanism with a consistent emphasis. Shifts in cultural authority, media circulation, and interpretive practice make the Devil available as a flexible sign. The counterculture normalised experimentation, Easternised spirituality, and an aesthetic of provocation. Occulture named and amplified the

everyday availability of esoteric ideas, with music as a central relay. Modern Satanism codified options within that field, offering both atheistic and theistic routes and institutional platforms for public action. Along the way, Satanic imagery became a tool for inhabiting a stigmatised position and reclaiming it, sometimes queerly, as a badge of difference. Occulture is not the sole agent of change in the Satanic's social life. In the convergence zone of religious, media, and pop-cultural processes, it is the context in which the figure now most often appears, a context in which Christian symbols circulate as detachable signs and remain available for redefinition, remix, and reassemblage.

This reading also explains why the figure's meanings multiply rather than converge. Detraditionalization detaches ideas from anchor points so that audiences "develop their own religious and metaphysical ideas" from the themes explored (Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment Vol. 1* 132). Disenchantment never closes the door; it sets up a myth that produces counter-effects, and the result is oscillation as enchantments replace or destabilise one another rather than disappear (Josephson-Storm 29, 309). In that oscillation, Satan functions as a condensed sign for rebellion, style, critique, and sometimes metaphysics. Villeneuve's "sun of Satan," shining brightly in the literary and visual sky, names not a doctrinal triumph but a discursive one. Wherever creative thought goes to work, the figure can be reanimated (Villeneuve 1009).

2.6. Screen Apparitions

Cinema matters because the Satanic Queer becomes legible through the post-cinematic, a media ecology emerging from cinema's technological dominance that reorganises how images circulate and act in the world (Christiansen 2). Post-cinema names a post-photographic mode in which audiovisual sounds and images "participate in, produce, and organize everyday life, rather than simply reflect or represent it" (Christiansen 2). It consolidates with cinema's "shift to digital processes and workflows" (Christiansen 3), a shift that renders the camera secondary as digital post-production assumes primacy in image making and circulation (Christiansen 3).

Rather than severing ties with cinema, the post-cinematic keeps the Satanic Queer in view through sustained proximity to its predecessor. The cinematic persists as part of a Satanic archive that now moves through digital expressions with near transparency for viewers. Themes cultivated by analogue cinema, including possession horror, continue within digital forms. I do not police a boundary between analogue and digital; I track how the Satanic Queer operates across the audiovisual field that the post-cinematic makes newly actionable.

Cinema's devil is a figure of movement and change rather than a fixed opposite to the good. I define the Satanic archive as a mutable reservoir of signs, rituals, and performance cues that circulate among bodies, rooms, and media. The dispute that matters is not whether horror simply mirrors a given zeitgeist but how it shifts inherited images through a medium built for metamorphosis. Matthew Solomon emphasises that film's basic illusion is to "project the illusion of movement across a sequence of still images" and that it stands as a necessary predecessor of the digital and a continuity with nineteenth-century stage quick-change (Solomon 3). Vivian Sobchack adds that "digital morphing both turns us backward to classical and cross-cultural mythology and magic, to explorations of change over time as conceived and figured by premodern scientists, mathematicians, and artists, to the quick transformations performed in theatrical magic shows at the turn of the century, and to the early cinema of 'attractions' and animated and 'trick' films" (Sobchack, "Introduction" xv). I argue that post-1960s horror cinema does not simply stage the Devil as an oppositional absolute but morphs the Satanic archive whose unstable signs are expressed in Satanic Queer performance. The digital ecology furnishes the vocabulary and logic that render this performance legible today, yet the mode has been operative all along in the cinema's body.

The long history of cinematic illusion prepared Satan as a legible screen presence. Matthew Solomon connects early film to the mechanics of stage deception through "shadowgraphy, chapeaugraphy, and quick-change" that migrated directly into trick cinematography and editing (Solomon 5). When horror discovered this toolbox, it recruited the Devil as technician and emblem. As Scott Stone writes, "From the outset, the Devil was shown on film as a trickster who preys on human weakness or as the antagonist in Faustian bargains" (Stone 87). For pioneers such as Georges Méliès that presence condensed into a moral signal. Regina M. Hansen and Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock note that in cinema's nascent period Satan served as an "instantly recognizable symbol of evil, a clear and unambiguous visual, narrative, and moral reference point" (Hansen and Weinstock 17). Stone's example of *The Student of Prague* (1913, dir. S. Rye) shows the sorcerer who steals a man's mirror image and thus his soul in exchange for gold, an explicitly Faustian trade articulated through an act of duplication rather than horns and pitchforks (Stone 87). The exhibit is the mirror. The argument is that duplication was never neutral. It coded moral conflict into formal tricks.

Doubling quickly became the method by which the screen dramatised evil and loosened its boundaries. Bryan P. Stone underscores "the appearance of a sinister or ghostly doppelgänger, or 'double'" because it "has often been linked to portrayals of Satan in the movies because of the

way it blurs the line between good” (Stone 87). Gothic scholarship names the pattern with precision. In this tradition the double or fetch resembles the protagonist yet departs starkly in moral conduct (Hughes 60), and the resulting plots often force a “tidy (if unconvincing) moral resolution” that sutures the split without quite healing it (Halberstam, *Skin Shows* 54). Xavier Aldana Reyes cautions against taking the double as a master symptom of the Gothic since polarities and dualities travel across many film forms that are not strictly Gothic at all (Aldana Reyes, *Gothic Cinema* 5). Queer analysis reveals what the tidy ending refuses. Doppelgänger economies in German Expressionist films such as *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (1922, dir. Friedrich Willhelm Murnau) and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920, dir. Robert Wiene) draw lines between normative heterosexuality and non-normative homosexuality and then teach viewers to moralise that divide through mise-en-scène and performance (Wegner 90). Stone captures the simplicity of a binary representation: “If Satan represents a dark side to the human spirit or the cosmos, then one can readily see how the cinematic double provides a fascinating and creative path for portraying that dark side” (Stone 88). Stone also hints at its collapse as he concedes continuity with possession, where “the possessed individual is both herself and someone else—alternately or at the same time” (Stone 88). This simultaneity is the archival logic of Satanic Queer. The body becomes a morph rather than a container.

A historical frame clarifies how this morphic archive engages Christianity without being subsumed by it. Stone describes horror’s tendency to move in cycles that mirror theological, political, and social anxieties. The pattern holds, yet treating a capacious genre as a single instrument flattens internal difference. To resist that flattening, Stone insists first on the genre’s plurality with the claim that “[h]orror cinema is not one thing, and it never has been” (Stone 11), and then couples the claim with Christian heterogeneity. He notes that long-standing teachings about human nature, sin, the body, guilt, redemption, and the afterlife coexist with persistent variation, so “when we ask about Christianity and horror cinema, we must also ask, which Christianity?” (Stone 11). He underscores the scriptural reservoir that horror draws on when he reminds us that “The Bible itself, it is worth remembering, is full of horror stories and frightening tales of supernatural killings, demon possessions, Satan, rape, incest, torture, witches, re-animated corpses, plagues, genocide, and apocalyptic nightmares” (Stone 9). Different denominational aesthetics guide cinematic form. Catholic liturgy saturates *The Exorcist* (1973, dir. William Friedkin), *Stigmata* (1999, dir. Rupert Wainwright), and *The Conjuring* (2013, dir. James Wan), while Protestant apocalypticism governs *The Omen* (1976, dir. Richard Donner), and Puritan legacies shape *The Lords of Salem* (2012, dir. Rob Zombie), and *The Witch* (2015,

dir. Robert Eggers) (Stone 11). These denominational forms refract shifting American concerns across exhibition circuits and reception contexts, from early twentieth-century fundamentalism to the Christian right, so production and reception keep reshaping the archive in ways no creator can fully control (Stone 11–12). Stone jokes that “it is nearly impossible to count the number of horror films that have treated Christianity triumphalistically as possessing the power to conquer evil in just under two hours” (Stone 12), then adds that these films “also expose the cracks in that triumphalism” by staging anxieties rooted in Christian metaphysical and moral instabilities (Stone 12). The recurrent exorcism still arrives on cue to conquer evil, yet its victory leaks as films register residual taint, cyclical repossession, and equivocal endings that refuse stable closure.

The late sixties and seventies intensified those leaks through domestic invasion plots keyed to the family. As Sorchá Ní Fhlainn puts it, “[i]nvasions into the familial space by demonic forces were thematically twinned in US and UK culture at the time. In the US, the prevailing and concurrent moral panic was the Satanic Panic crisis” (Ní Fhlainn 147). *Rosemary’s Baby*, released in 1968 and directed by Roman Polański, provides a paradigmatic instantiation of this domestic invasion logic by securing the commercial pathway for late-century Satan and staging a rival cult that values progeny and ritual spectacle, and as Stone explains, “[i]n films such as these, Satan is proposed as something of a rival deity to God, commanding worship, obedience, and a cult following into which persons are initiated, often through elaborate, colorful, and camera-friendly rituals, perhaps even involving human sacrifice” (Stone 91). Stone names *Rosemary’s Baby* “the forerunner of a raft of Satan-themed horror movies to come where it is Satan’s desire for progeny that is the engine driving the plot, sometimes related to end-time prophecies and the birth of an anti-Christ who will restore Satan to power and defeat God and the good once and for all” (Stone 90). This antichrist futurity furnishes one axis of Satanic time. Possession supplies another by shifting focus from Satanic offspring to Satanic occupancy, and Stone tracks the turn when he notes that in the 1970s, “[t]he earlier theme of Satan as trickster, tempter, and bargainer for souls had, for the most part, already given way to depictions of Satan as a rival deity, object of worship, and supernatural source of terror and power. But now, Satan would be transformed into a being singularly preoccupied with possessing bodies—and in most instances, the bodies of young women” (Stone 91). Stone concludes that “[t]his last shift from the Satanism of the 1960s and early 1970s to ‘possession’ films has continued unabated for half a century” (Stone 92). In the period’s most durable template the

household itself becomes the site of siege and occupation, and Satanic temporality tilts away from prophecy toward a porous present that registers in open endings and unsealed thresholds.

Darren Oldridge sharpens the point that the 1970s Devil often appears “exclusively indirectly” through child vessels, a pattern that crystallises the occult politics of futurity staged across possession films from *The Exorcist* to *The Omen* (Oldridge, *The Devil* 86). Lee Edelman identifies the Child as a culture’s emblem of the collective to come and shows how endangerment of that emblem mobilises moral panic (Edelman, *No Future* 2). Read together, these claims clarify why possession plots fixate on endangered children. The child becomes conduit and battleground, where conflicts over sex, belief, and secularisation are adjudicated in the name of a threatened future. Domestic spaces convert into tribunals, bodies become sites of jurisdiction, and the family stands in for the nation’s projected tomorrow. The exorcism ritual then doubles as a referendum on who may author that future and on what terms. Identity in this scene functions as relay rather than essence, and the horror derives from the fear that transmission will be captured by the wrong hands.

Possession’s internal mechanics align with horror’s work on the abject and with cinema’s appetite for transgression. As Carlos Ptillas and Ismael Martinez-Biurrun note, horror “challenges our well-established notion that our self is the seat of essentially acceptable tendencies and emotions” (Ptillas and Martinez-Biurrun 14). In possession plots the surface struggle between Good and Evil gives way as these narratives “question those very boundaries that place goodness on the inside in order to relegate evil to the outside” (Ptillas and Martinez-Biurrun 14). Under this pressure “subjectivity ceases to be clearly delimited” and “the dark (...) can also be part of oneself” (Ptillas and Martinez-Biurrun 14). The result is that “the terror of the demonic deconstructs traditional assumptions of the moral cleansing of the self,” while even a monster staged as “an absolute Other” finally “reveal[s] itself symbolically as a mirror image” (Ptillas and Martinez-Biurrun 14). Reyes tracks an adjacent arc in which invasion is reframed as possession and the body becomes both danger and detector. “Flesh transplants the gothic science fiction of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, an über-text acknowledged by the novel, into splatterpunk territory by putting the emphasis on the horror of possession” (Aldana Reyes, *Body Gothic* 38). In that register, “losing control of one’s own body is posited as both an external danger, noticed by characters who have not yet been converted or abducted, and an internal one, as the characters turn upon themselves in search of tell-tale signs” (Aldana Reyes, *Body Gothic* 38). The body is left unsure whether it speaks in its own voice. Possession reprograms epistemology, while viewers learn to spot what a demon looks and sounds like.

Religious studies names this circulation. Joseph P. Laycock and Erik Harrelson describe “The Exorcist Effect,” a feedback loop in which “actual events become the basis of films; those films shape the way audiences interpret the world (...) these beliefs and experiences lead to new events that become the basis of new horror films, and the cycle begins again” (Laycock and Harrelson 11). They note that “[h]orror movies play an important role in imagining what those [demonic] forces might look like” (Laycock and Harrelson 4) and that the line between ecclesiastical and popular expressions of religion “has always been an ideal rather than a reality” (Laycock and Harrelson 3). They conclude that “[s]upernatural horror is really about epistemology—determining what is real and questioning what we thought was real” (Laycock and Harrelson 14). In practice, audiences borrow and refine cinematic scripts, translating screen gestures into ritual performance and returning them to circulation. The Satanic archive thus functions as a feedback system whose ordinary operations are imitation, inversion, and mutation. Beyond the screen, the social prominence and reportedly the number of exorcist priests rose alongside popular belief in demonic forces, a pattern that tracked spectacular events and influential texts that amplified Satanic Panic from the Tate–LaBianca murders to Michelle Remembers and later allegations of ritual abuse that saturated the eighties and nineties (Levack 242). Ritual responses and cinematic representations co-produce one another in a loop that stabilises recognisable gestures while keeping meanings unstable.

Gender transgression is one of possession’s tactics. Carol J. Clover argues that a rigid focus on the female victim obscures a second track in which possession narrates masculine crisis and male sexuality. She links the slasher’s Final Girl to the occupation of masculine-coded space by the feminine (Clover 40) and defines possession as the entry of the masculine into realms coded feminine (Clover 107). Her decisive formulation names the performative of transgression: “The peak of the female story is not masculinity per se and not hyperfemininity or sexual aggressiveness per se; it is gender transgression, crossing over” (Clover 104). Clover adds that the male story parallels the female story yet depends on the visibility of her bodily transgressions to become legible at all, which means that male openness to invasion must be mediated by feminized spectacle to count as a story (Clover 101). Irena Jurković, in *Beyond Binaries: The Position of the Transgender Victim in Horror Narratives* (2024), shows how a contemporary digital film can key this crossing to transmasculine experience by arguing that *Hereditary* (2018, dir. Ari Aster) “adopts the metaphor of demon possession to address specifically the transmasculine experience in the current social and political climate that has seen a resurgence of the feminist movement and debates over transgender rights” (Jurković 72–73). She interprets the

film's demonic figure, Paimon, and his path to embodiment as "a traumatic experience related to the failure of the entire Graham family [the protagonists of the film] to provide him with a proper body or, considering metaphorical language, related to a family's misunderstanding of his gender dysphoria and transition. The brutal killings and decapitations of women testify to Paimon's rage as he is unable to find the body that would match his gender" (Jurković 76). Although this dissertation does not center the horror genre, Jurković's queer analysis of *Hereditary* demonstrates that the Satanic Queer also animates digital possession horror. Possession's most consequential scenes crystallise as gendered crossings, and Satanic Queer names the archive's operative logic rather than a late add-on.

Adjacent category of Christ films, focusing on the figure of Jesus Christ and his crucifixion, confirm that the Devil's image morphs across genres while retaining its charge. Oldridge notes a parallel path in which Satan appears within Gospel narratives (Oldridge, *The Devil* 86), and William R. Telford observes recurrent androgyny in these representations (Telford 100). Telford characterises Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988) as offering "a Satan for a post-sexual revolution generation that is not afraid to have its Saviour experience sexual desire" (Telford 99–100) while Bruce Babington and Peter William Evans bluntly note that "Scorsese's Devil (...) is a woman" (Babington and Evans 165–66). Adele Reinhartz reads the temptation sequence of Scorsese's picture as "a vehicle for exploring Jesus's psyche," especially tensions among sexual, emotional, and familial desire (Reinhartz 188). Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) renders androgyny explicit for a different audience. Casting Rosalinda Celentano as Satan "speaks for a generation for which evil cannot be seen to be gender-specific" (Telford 100) and the styling of "shaved eyebrows, unblinking stare" (Telford 100), "painted eyes, lips and (long-nailed) fingers" (Telford 100–101) produces an image "strangely beautiful or oddly alluring" (Powell 73) consistent with Mel Gibson's statement that "evil is alluring, attractive" (qtd. in Powell 73). The allure is sutured to the abject since "Satan (death) has a live maggot in his/her nose, a snake emerges from his/her black cloak," imagery that "calls to mind" Beelzebub and ties the figure to "the horrific, the putrid, the obscene" (Telford 101). Telford concludes by emphasising the Devil's variability: "he, or more recently '(s)he'" (Telford 103) has accrued a wide range of cultural expressions, a legacy that "has provided much grist for the Satanic mill" (Telford 103), particularly for film-makers. Read together, these films stage an androgynous, alluring, and grotesque Devil on a biblical platform, a mutable figure whose morphing recurs across adjacent genres. That mutability aligns with possession cinema's off-screen demon, which likewise shifts shape while conserving force.

Bryan P. Stone's inventory of recent screen devils clarifies how embodiment becomes optional: "Because Satan often appears in disguise (...) he can take on a variety of appearances (...) some of the most memorable portrayals of Satan depict him as a relatively attractive, well-dressed, and suave gentleman" (Stone 86). As examples, he names Robert De Niro in *Angel Heart* (1987, dir. Alan Parker); Al Pacino in *The Devil's Advocate* (1997, dir. Taylor Hackford); Gabriel Byrne in *End of Days* (1999, dir. Peter Hyams); Viggo Mortensen in *The Prophecy*, (1995, dir. Gregory Widen); and Peter Stormare in *Constantine*, (2005, dir. Francis Lawrence) (Stone 86). Stone also notes a striking absence of women: "one would be hard-pressed to find a memorable female version of Satan in the cinema of horror apart from Roman Polanski's *The Ninth Gate*, where Emmanuelle Seigner (...) plays 'the girl,' a character whose devilish identity remains obscure to the end" (Stone 87). That account omits the gender nonconforming Satans of Passion films discussed above. He then turns to nonhuman and disembodied forms, stressing the frequent disappearance of Satan into a force that distorts and disfigures human faculties, with *The Exorcist* providing "subliminal flashes of the demon Pazuzu that work on the viewer's subconscious" (Stone 87). Read across these examples, the Devil either dons the tuxedo of suave masculinity or recedes into a disembodied force. Disguise and disappearance operate as techniques of queer plasticity that let the Satanic circulate across and beyond bodies. The cinematic medium reinforces this strategy since its photorealistic ideal often withholds explicit Satanic imagery, relocating menace within zones of moral uncertainty and the occultly hidden.

This plasticity is not limited to Christian content. Ronald Hutton tracks a parallel mechanism in which popular narratives fold paganism into demonology and script rural survivals or revivals as malign. He notes that these stories oppose Christianity to "the two belief systems against which [it] had traditionally defined itself: Satanism and paganism" (Hutton 32). One recurrent thread imagines "concealed groups of Satanists operating secretly within modern society, doing atrocious and disgusting things and thriving on the ignorance and disbelief of most people" (Hutton 32). "Paganism was made to play a similar role," and its classic plotline "always took (...) two alternative forms" (Hutton 32): either "an outsider," arriving in a rural community, discovers that "its inhabitants are secretly pagans" who have persisted or revived, or "somebody (...) discovers an ancient pagan shrine or ritual and decides to reactivate it," sometimes because "it takes them over and possesses them" (Hutton 32). In both cases "things almost always end in tears" and "paganism usually turns out to be a malign force that makes the people who embrace it do dreadful things, or destroys them, or both" (Hutton 32). Hutton's genealogy anchors this pattern in a long arc that begins with the aforementioned processes of Christian colonisation of

pagan religions. Read through this lens, rural paganism in cinema becomes a convertible sign that Christian storytelling recodes as Satanic, and the archive's morphing proceeds by this recoding as it casts survivals and revivals as occult threats that demand exposure.

The archive's morphs also cut through racialised time and networked media. As Catherine Zimmer notes, recent Black horror mobilises haunting and possession—"the tangles of embodiment, inheritance, and intertextuality" (Zimmer 207)—to open "a narrative space that shows time, history, violence, and art to be layered and circular" (Zimmer 207). This circularity rhymes with the infrastructural uncanny of late-twentieth-century media horror: as Hantke puts it, the emblematic image of our digital-menace cycle is "the female ghost in *Ringu* (1998, dir. Hideo Nakata) emerging from the television set and stepping, in all her dripping, gruesome glory, into the living room of whoever had the bad fortune of watching TV" (Hantke 17), the instant "when technology comes alive, when the infrastructural networks of mass communication reveal that they are possessed, haunted, eerily and uncannily animate" (Hantke 17). Sobchack and Solomon have already prepared the frame in which such images register as returns rather than ruptures, since digital morphing repeats trick cinema at new-media scales. In this environment Satanic Queer becomes newly nameable because the ecology of circulation is newly visible: morphs log and loop within the assemblage.

Stone argues that the ascendance of possession narratives resurrects ancient demonology while subtracting the charismatic devil and relocating evil inward. He calls this "a return to one of the more prominent ways Satan and demons were understood and portrayed historically (...) as malevolent supernatural beings who want to inhabit individuals, thereby requiring exorcism" (Stone 92). At the same time he laments "the loss of Satan as the interesting and complex character we find in earlier films, where he is presented as a sophisticated individual who trades in witty dialogue, wily deceits, and clever banter," replaced by "an invisible, indecent, and malevolent force that overwhelms humans, controls minds, and ravages bodies through his emissary demons" (Stone 92). He reads the turn as a relocation that "locate[s] evil 'in here' rather than 'out there'," consistent with late twentieth-century psychological and body horror (Stone 92). This periodisation identifies a real formal reorientation, yet the claim of loss risks a declension narrative that underestimates possession cinema's sustained inquiry into bodily and metaphysical autonomy. Continuities complicate the break. Stone notes near-millennial films that leverage apocalyptic imagery and ecclesial conspiracy (Stone 94) and he acknowledges the ongoing presence of the witty, suave devil in films such as *Angel Heart* and *The Devil's Advocate* (Stone 86). According to Stone, possession horror remained ascendant in diabolical cinema into

the twenty-first century (96). While I do not posit the ascendancy of any alternative narrative, I contend that possession is not the default form of Satanic story in the twenty-first century. In the era's default medium, the digital, Satanic narratives extend beyond possession, as the subsequent chapters demonstrate.

The history of representations of the Devil can be narrated chronologically, yet the figure's movement is more complex, marked by crossings, accretions, and glitch-like oppositions. The Romantic ideal of Satanic rebellion and the fascination with demonological supernaturalism persist into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, supporting the claim that the Satanic Queer is not solely contemporary but partly an effect of the West's morphing of Romanticism within the occultural milieu. While the democratisation of the media amplifies marginal perspectives on the Devil, the result is a figure renegotiated to the point of forfeiting stable meaning. In contemporary texts, Romantic interpretations intermingle with divergent philosophies of the Devil, however oppositional they appear. The Satanic figure thus resists determinism through its continually shifting image and unsettles any frame that attempts to fix it, enacting a queer epistemology that treats instability, opacity, and nonlinearity not as deficits but as modes of knowing that expose and undo the normativity of taxonomic frames. The next chapter offers close readings of selected contemporary cultural texts in order to follow the flows of narratives about the Devil: it tracks how adaptation, remediation, and intermedia circulation change the Satanic stories; maps the crossings, accretions, and glitch-like oppositions that constitute this morphic archive.

Chapter 3

Morphing the Satanic Archive

Within the last fifteen years, a conspicuous cluster of popular texts has depicted the Satanic figure, whether named Lucifer, the Devil, or some cognate demonic proxy. These works do not claim religious authority, nor are they affiliated with Satanic churches. Just as crucially, they operate outside possession horror, refusing the ready-made grammar of exorcism and, often, the presumption that the Satanic must be malevolent. Narratively, they often link to stories culturally tethered to the Devil: the Fall from Heaven, Edenic temptation, the testing of Job. Yet, these links not only transgress the issues of morality, but they also expose how the genealogy of Satan is riddled with contradictions, paradoxes, and flows. When even an apparently straightforward pericope such as the Job story leaves it uncertain whether “the Devil” tests against God or at God’s behest, what exactly is being retold? What does it mean, in popular culture, to tell “the Satanic story”?

The answer begins with the recognition that there is no single, stable source to replicate. The Satanic story is a distributed archive of fragments accumulated across centuries of exegesis, polemic, art, and spectacle. As soon as a text inserts ‘the Devil’ into its narrative, the insertion hyperlinks to its archive. The Devil arrives already overdetermined, bearing contradictory legacies that both enable and distort the tale in which it appears, dissolving the myth’s immutability, exposing it as a shifting, historically contingent construct rather than a fixed truth.

Recent theory helps clarify why this divergence is neither incidental nor remediable. As George Aichele argues, a “logocentric belief in a coherent ‘biblical theology’ (...) can no longer

be maintained,” since the canon no longer “controls the meaning of its constituent texts,” and even the four gospels may be read “not as four versions of a single story but rather as four stories of four distinct Jesuses” (145). In Deleuze and Guattari’s vocabulary, scripture becomes schizophrenic. Due to that, any attempt to excavate a singular Satan underneath the palimpsest is futile. But futility here is productive, and the paradox here is purposeful. As Bakhtinian folk humour which “denies but (...) revives and renews at the same time” (Bakhtin 11), the Satanic Queer, which is also part of that folk culture (and like popular culture is twenty-first century’s folk culture due to globalisation and online communities) is ruled by the same paradox. As a result, what emerges from the inspection of popcultural depictions is not a ‘truer’ Devil but a metamorphic archive of the Satanic Queer, a simultaneous movement of the concept through culture.

This is the mode of the contemporary retelling. These works are not simply adaptations; they are performances that make the morph visible. The result is not a consolidated character or a faithful adaptation, but a chaos of operations: interrogation of divine fiat, pressure on eschatological inevitability, and embodiment of transgression. *Good Omens* turns Armageddon into a deferrable option; *Lucifer* reframes damnation through personal attachment and ethical agency; *Hazbin Hotel* installs redemption as a contested administrative process. Across them, the Devil is less an antagonist than a method: the figure through which the text tests institutional certainty, disturb causality, and invites spectators to inhabit unstable temporalities.

The media ecology of these retellings intensifies the effect. In what Vivian Sobchack calls “electronic temporality,” narrative becomes “eruptions of ephemeral desire and the transmission of random, unevaluated, and endless information” (*Carnal Thoughts* 155). The Satanic Queer reads accordingly: atomised rather than bound by continuous diegesis. Far from diluting myth, this atomisation supplies its current form. The Devil persists not by guaranteeing coherence but by licensing fluidity; the figure’s recognisability depends not solely on iconography as proposed by Domsch, but on its queer performance of disruption that shows how the stories travel across platforms, genres, and ideological frames while remaining legible as “Satanic.”

Given the absence of an authoritative Satanic history, these texts compose one performatively. Each Satanic depiction builds a provisional genealogy by juxtaposing fragments without subordinating them to a master code. They are placed “in playful juxtaposition” to biblical texts, thereby taking on “fluid meanings” (Aichele 145). The picture that emerges is necessarily plural. From this plural archive, I proceed along five lines. First, I examine how pre-

Reformation performance and iconography model scripture as something enacted rather than cited, sketching a schizophrenia of morphing scriptures that contemporary works shift. Second, I turn to creation scenes to show Satanic agency at the origin as collaborative and ongoing, not a single fiat, and to track how making becomes a practice of care as well as disruption. Third, I follow retellings of the Fall to recast it as process and inquiry rather than verdict, where questioning produces the descent's rhythm and not merely its trigger. Fourth, I map Heaven and Hell as volatile systems rather than fixed destinations, attending to how spaces, institutions, and bodies shift in practice. Fifth, I trace non-linear narrative methods that install morphic temporality: reprises with a difference, structural deferrals, and citational overdrive that keep origin and end productively open.

3.1. Performing Scripture without a Source

Returning to the pre-Reformation Middle Ages, before vernacular Bibles gained wide circulation, helps clarify how Satanic narration can operate without a single textual anchor. As Domsch argues, medieval mystery plays often worked as liminal narratives: performances generated without any specific reference, staging the Satanic in relation to a decentred idea of a biblical text (219). Pre-Reformation iconography likewise relied on a shared visual lexicon to transmit stories; Satan appears less as the bearer of one determinate tale than an emblematic condensation of associations. I read the contemporary Satanic figure as an inheritor of this practice. Popular culture today, with its carnivalesque tendencies and its saturation by visual and digital media, activates a similar performative logic: it performs Satan rather than citing him.

This raises a set of questions. If there is no authoritative source, what informs the performance? What decides what gets included, and how does performance convey “the Satanic” at all? Rafael Nicolás’s *Angels Before Man* (2022) announces itself on its blurb and the author’s website as “A Queer Retelling of Satan’s Fall,” following Lucifer from creation to exile (“The Angels Trilogy”). But what exactly is being “retold”? Scripture offers only the barest trace—“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (NIV Luke 10:18)—while, as Almond and other researchers show, there is no single, original myth of this fall to return to (Almond 221; cf. Forsyth, *Satanic Epic* 38-39; Neal 22). The claim to retell thus names a practice of appropriation more than repetition. Sanders calls this myth’s capacity for “perpetual acts of reinterpretation in new contexts” a defining feature of myth itself (80). Seth Walker says:

When one adapts a novel into a film or television series (...) not only is that creator appropriating a certain cultural artifact (or artifacts in a given tradition), but the artifact is also effectively

appropriating those developers in its own, overall legacy and development; precession and succession dynamically establish and exist within a unique dialogic tradition, with subsequent works intimately connected to those that preceded them and original items within such traditions being constantly updated in terms of their conditional reception and experience based on future and recurring iterations. (115)

Walker's formulation recasts adaptation as reciprocal agency: cultural artefacts do not passively submit to reworking. Although the adaptor enjoys artistic latitude, they never fully control the material they rework. Cultural artefacts bear forward discursive formations but are not reducible to inheritance or imitation of their precursors. Most importantly for the present discussion, such artefacts, including the Satanic figure, actively shape their own myth. For my purposes, this means that the Satanic figure is not merely inherited; it acts, folds new creators and media into its archive, and helps determine what will count as Satanic next. The Satanic Queer is the resulting multiplicity: not noise around an essence, but the condition of Satanic narration: dissonant, non-unifiable, yet insistently generative.

The 'original' collapses under its paradoxes (Old/New Testament tensions; divine sovereignty versus angelic agency), and the Satanic figure becomes a rhizome through which creators and audiences access foundational Judeo-Christian myths and morph them. These works do not simply rearrange pieces; they melt them, but without arriving at a new essence. The morph ceaselessly recomposes. In this sense, the contemporary corpus does more than reinterpret religion; it dissolves the presumption of immutability, exposing doctrine as historically contingent. *Paradise Lost* already intensified this trajectory by adding tragic depth to Satan without altering the biblical scaffolding; newer retellings go further by projecting indeterminacy, or rather non-determination, as the very condition of the figure. They challenge teleology, unsettle divine determinism, and queer time, space, and identity. The Satanic figure, in flux, traverses retellings as a morphing force rather than a stable adversary or liberator.

These dynamics are frequently thematised within the texts themselves, especially in digital-era narratives that acknowledge their own remediations. In episode 4 of the first series of *Lucifer*, Lucifer looks back and corrects the record: "They always get it wrong" ("Manly Whatnots") or, in *I, Lucifer*, presses the problem of temporality to the surface: "You see what happens when an angelic intelligence starts telling the stories of human beings? One needs parenthesis of virtually infinite regress (...) before you get to the last, the first, the point of origin or expire" (Duncan 110). The remark recognises that any claim to a single "point of origin" is illusory; the performance of history requires frames within frames. The novel also foregrounds Lucifer's reflexive control over his own story. "Amazing how I can make you see all the time I've lived and you haven't" (Duncan 125), Lucifer boasts, turning narrative time into an

instrument of address. The line functions as a method statement: the speaker curates temporal perspective, recruits the audience into his memory-work, and shows how myth is produced through acts of telling rather than preserved in a static past. Read across my corpus, these moments stage myth as ongoing performance, not fixed truth: digital, participatory, and reflexive.

Electronic temporality underwrites this performative field. Sobchack describes how the discrete “instant present” can be “selected, combined, and instantly replayed and rerun,” so that the “irreversible direction” of time is recast as a “recursive temporal network” (*Carnal Thoughts* 155). In such conditions, “the temporal cohesion of history and narrative gives way to the temporal discretion of chronicle and episode,” while identity finds “resolution (...) not in the intelligibility of narrative coherence (...) but in a literal network of instants and instances that literally ‘call’ it into being” (Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts* 155–56). Novel—and radical—is Sobchack’s claim that objective time has been reconstituted into a nonlinear, discontinuous structure “homologous” with subjective time, so that temporality is lived as a homogeneous experience of discontinuity (*Carnal Thoughts* 157). Gothic narrative poetics long anticipated these “impossible topologies,” rejecting the unities of time and space to voice the culturally “unsayable” (Jackson 1, 26); the digital simply generalises that poetics as everyday form. Within Christian teleology, by contrast, time must be linear and finite: the Second Coming and the subsequent Apocalypse require it (Russell, *The Devil* 108). *Good Omens* playfully undoes that mandate as Crowley and Aziraphale collaborate to avert the eschaton. The Satanic Queer, with its non-linear, liminal, disruptive disposition, operates here as Edelman’s double negation: it refuses both the norm and the redemption of deviance.

These retellings are therefore not just ‘religious narratives’ rewritten; they are interventions in how religious storytelling performs authority. Where much queer theology has centred on rereading scripture, many contemporary works no longer seek permission from hegemonic interpretation. Drawing on occulture and popular culture as reservoirs, they morph stories; they map them onto the Satanic figure, which functions as the morphing force itself: the symbol of dissent that enables queer retelling. Episode 7 of season 4 of *Lucifer* is titled: “Devil Is as Devil Does”: meaning is renegotiated through action, not recovered from origin. Because the Satanic has been made to be always present in public discourse, it supplies a powerful, already legible symbol that texts can redeploy across media. In that deployment, the figure destabilises and reshapes the host text. The aim is not a definitive reinterpretation, but the creation of different possibilities.

3.2. Satanic Creation

Creation in these contemporary Satan-narratives refuses to sit still as a single fiat, a one-and-done burst of logos that seals the cosmos and our place in it. It is instead a contested, collaborative, and ongoing practice that exposes who gets to make, who gets to name, and who gets written out.

I, Lucifer stages a fundamental split between linear, logocentric time and a Satanic temporality of motion. “Time is a property of creation, therefore before creation there was no before creation” (Duncan 8); and then renders the divine pre-world as the loneliest joke: “the Old Chap peering in a state of perpetual nowness up His own almighty sphincter trying to find out who the Devil He was” (Duncan 8). The problem is indistinction: “If you’re Everything you might as well be Nothing” (Duncan 8). *I, Lucifer* names the first cut as a cosmic bifurcation: “We’ve got AntiTime and GodVoid. We’ve got GodVoid distinguishing Itself into God and Void in an act of spontaneous creation – the creation of angels, whose purpose is (...) to respond to God rather than Void, and to respond (...) positively” (Duncan 9). Old Time, we are told, “measured the motion of spirits,” while “New Time,” the human kind with its centuries and nanoseconds, “made its first appearance when you prattling gargoyles arrived,” grinding everyone to exhaustion (Duncan 8). My contention follows: God’s logocentric creation inaugurates linear progression whereas the Devil, as celestial remainder, perceives time as movement rather than measure. In Vivian Sobchack’s concise formulation, the morph is the allegory of “fluid movements” (Sobchack, “Introduction” xiii), and Duncan’s Devil effectively avows that alignment, supplying textual backing for my claim that the Satanic Queer is morphic rather than essential.

This contrast sharpens when set against scriptural and screen temporalities. In Genesis, creation is enumerated day by day, a template for linear succession (Gen. 1:1–31). By comparison, contemporary Satanic media figure time as malleable, dispersed, and re-routed. *Good Omens* makes the economy explicit: the creation of humankind begins a grand countdown to annihilation, a futurity oriented to time remaining rather than time elapsed; Season 1 repeatedly punctuates the narrative with on-screen panels that count down to the end of the world, interrupting the flow of the audio-visual medium to insist on temporal imminence. The device perversely rewrites Genesis’s numbered days, as if linear time were a frame built to outlast and overrule the story it ostensibly contains. Indeed, the finale treats the apocalyptic clock like a New Year’s Eve countdown: as Aziraphale and Crowley collaborate to render the

apocalypse futile, the tally expires and time moves past it, not in a straight line but as a rerouted motion (“The Very Last Day of the Rest of Their Lives”). In what follows, I develop this morphic temporality of time as movement through Sobchack’s account of the morph and its Satanic Queer inflection.

I argue that my case-study texts repeatedly evoke the Satanic archive within creation narratives by staging Satanic participation at the scene of origin, whether as witness, interlocutor, or catalyst. In *I, Lucifer*, the Devil’s testimony frames creation as spectacle and recognition rather than mere production: “He [God] loved an audience. The creation of the Angels and the first crank of Old Time had shown him Who and What He was: God, Creator, alpha and omega. He was Everything, in fact, apart from that which He had created. You could feel His relief: I’m God. Phew. Cool. Fucking knew it” (Duncan 10). There is a sting tucked into the gag: if God requires an audience to know Himself, then creation is a performance, and the Devil’s presence is constitutive of that recognition, not merely ancillary. Put differently, Lucifer functions as a device of divine self-disclosure: the differentiated term that allows the hegemonic to identify itself, a gesture that pointedly echoes a Foucauldian logic of differentiation. This emphasis on witnessing matters for my larger claim about the Satanic Queer. The Devil at creation does not simply observe; his witnessing names the audience, frames the event, and activates the archive by giving creation a public, relational form. Such staging aligns with the dissertation’s broader argument that Satanic figures are not passive inheritances but active operators within cultural myth-making.

Creation becomes a process in which the Satanic figure actively participates. Where *I, Lucifer* turns the origin scene into metaphysical stand-up, *Good Omens* takes us into the workshop with a young engineer-angel who refuses a merely decorative universe. The season-two prologue stages Crowley,⁶ bright-winged and still an angel, floating in the void with a nebula manual, creating matter, gravity, “and everything from pages 11 to 3,000,602, inclusive,” until nothing happens—nothing, that is, until he speaks the weighty words: “Let there be light” (“Chapter 1: The Arrival”). On one hand the line links to God’s Genesis fiat; on the other, voiced by a future demon, it also evokes the Promethean “Lightbringer” tradition. The scene’s force depends on what the audience already knows from the previous season: that Crowley is a demon and thus a Satanic figure, so that the cosmos detonating on a borrowed line presses a precise question: does efficacy lie in divine fiat, or in the artisan audacious enough to utter it?

⁶ Technically, in the scene, because he is still an angel, he is not-yet-Crowley. However, as of the time of writing this dissertation his angelic name is unknown, I will refer to him as Crowley for convenience.

When Aziraphale asks, “You made it all yourself?” Crowley hesitates but still claims authorship: “more or less... I wasn’t the original concept designer, but I worked very closely with upstairs on it” (“Chapter 1: The Arrival”). The exchange relocates creative agency from unilateral command to collaborative making, and does so through the demonic voice. That collaboration carries ethical weight. When Aziraphale warns, “we’ll be shutting this all down again in about 6000 years,” Crowley’s protest names the moral core of his character: “What’s the point in creating an infinite universe with trillions of star systems if you’re only gonna let it run for a few thousand years?” (“Chapter 1: The Arrival”). The creator’s attachment to the created here is not pride but care; the Satanic figure is also a maker, and his refusal to end the world is paternal: a deliberate perversion of God’s patriarchal ownership.

The same scene also writes Crowley as the only honest project manager in a cosmos allergic to feedback. His first critique is practical: the stars are not “some fancy wallpaper,” but “Millions of galaxies, trillions of stars, oodles of everything! It’s not just put here to twinkle! Most of it won’t even be visible from Earth” (“Chapter 1: The Arrival”). When told by Aziraphale “it’s not our job to advise The Almighty,” he suggests a “suggestion box” (“Chapter 1: The Arrival”). The rejoinder: The Almighty has created no feedback mechanism, and it is not their place to suggest creating one, turns workplace comedy into theological exercise. Creation, in the orthodox register, is a one-way street. Crowley answers with the ethic of a genuine maker: “If I was the one running it all, I’d like it if someone asked questions. Fresh point of view. You can’t just create a universe, run it for a few thousand years, and then stop” (“Chapter 1: The Arrival”). Creation’s opposite is not unmaking but managerial indifference.

Hazbin Hotel opens by reframing creation as a scene where Satanic creativity is named, feared, and excluded even before the Fall. Episode 1 begins with its own Genesis:

Once upon a time, there was a glowing city protected by golden gates known as Heaven. It was ruled by beings of pure light, angels that worshipped good and shielded all from evil. Lucifer was one of these angels. He was a dreamer with fantastical ideas for all of creation. But he was seen as a troublemaker by the elders of Heaven. For they felt his way of thinking was dangerous to the order of their world. So he watched as the angels began to expand the universe in their ways. (“Overture”)

In this narration, Lucifer is barred from the sanctioned making of the world, yet he is still framed as a creator, and his proposed creation is marked as dangerous to the hegemonic order. The hierarchy of Heaven precedes and polices the material world; the creative Satanic force is already excluded and pathologised, while God, ordinarily synonymous with creation in Christian myth, is conspicuously absent from the scene as depicted.

After the Fall, the series evokes that creative impulse through Lucifer’s daughter, Charlie Morningstar, whose project is a making-in-common rather than a solitary undertaking: in Hell

she establishes the titular Hazbin Hotel as a rehabilitation centre for the damned, working with her girlfriend, Vaggie, and other ‘sinners’ to build a place that offers condemned souls a chance to reach Heaven (“Overture”). In effect, Charlie contests the Heaven-made hierarchy by fabricating new institutional forms grounded in labour, shelter, and care; she does not merely protest the system, she reshapes its possibility patterns.

That collaborative ethos reverberates across these texts in the way they treat the Devil’s name. Possession horror routes power through logos: force the demon to say its name and you can expel it. Naming, God’s first act in Genesis’ inventory of dominion, banishes. But the modern Satanic figure refuses that grammar. Lucifer from the TV show *Lucifer* plates his name on his car; *Good Omens*’ serpent, first called ‘Crawley,’ later rebrands himself as ‘Crowley,’ a change so seemingly mundane that fans often overlook the deeper wit that we never learn his angelic name; *Hazbin*’s Lucifer sings an anthem about being Hell’s angelic ruler. The name is no longer a leash held by an exorcist priest; it is a signature. Lucifer’s vanity plate and *Hazbin*’s song are more than their shock-value; they block the old ritual’s power by flipping who wields logos. Crowley’s chosen name marks him as a creature who names himself, who refuses to be limited to an angelic handle that Heaven could use to file and punish him. He is not deniable; he is self-authored. That insistence on authorship dovetails with the shows’ refusal to let Heaven narrate the end. The figure cannot be expelled because he is not squatting in a human body that can be vented; he has his own body, his own address. That reclaiming reads like other reclamations of queer communities’ remastering of slurs into badges and it performs a parallel theological reversal: if logos used to be the mechanism of control, now eros is the medium of creation.

This pivot from logos to eros does not romanticise; it returns to older myth. In ancient cosmogonies, Eros is not mere desire but a primordial principle “responsible for the fertile and creative coming into being and ordering of all things in the cosmos” (Madden 288). When *Good Omens* depicts a demon-to-be designing nebulae and refusing to accept a cosmos built to be switched off, it aligns the Satanic with that generative Eros: a force of connection, not mere negation. The life-drive, in Freudian shorthand, wins out over Thanatos. That alignment continues in Peter Wilkes’s and Catherine Dickey Wilson’s 2016 novel *Lucifer Eve and Adam: The ABSOLUTELY True and COMPLETELY Honest Story of Creation* (referred to as *Lucifer Eve and Adam* hereinafter), which refashions Eden with a female God who is not a punitive patriarch but a mentor who speaks directly to a human writer asking him to co-author the “real and honest story of Eve and Adam” (7, underline in the original), because “it’s most important to

understand the real story was Lucifer” (8). In *Lucifer Eve and Adam*’s most audacious turn, God wants Eve to eat the fruit because knowledge makes love possible and Lucifer is the executor of the delivery. Lucifer hesitates out of care, not spite; only after learning that joy and pain are inseparable emotions does he comply. The aftermath literalises the thesis: the protagonists merge into a singular entity: “one circle of love that was Lucifer Eve and Adam” (Wilkes and Wilson 142). The sin becomes sacrament. The Devil is not a corrupter but a creator to feeling. This consummation also recasts Trinitarian logic through a queer, Satanic prism as it unites a fallen angel and humankind into one loving composite, a perverse Trinity that relocates unity from transcendence to embodied relation.

Lucifer Eve and Adam presses the revision further by retooling God’s gender and governance. *Good Omens* hints at a similar audacity: in that universe God is voiced by Frances McDormand and referred to as “she,” and, crucially, she does not appear in the creation sequence. The plan exists; the angels execute; the voice is absent. That absence is not abdication; it is a redistribution of agency that pries creation away from patriarchal performance of command. The point is not a tidy inversion; there are no mother-goddess birthing seas, but the exposure of an old habit: our reflex to imagine the Creator as male is a tradition, not a necessity. By refusing to put a body to the voice in the creative act while letting the angels build, *Good Omens* cracks the pedestal without simply replacing the statue on it. *Lucifer Eve and Adam* takes the next step: its God is maternal as challenge rather than nurture. By casting Lucifer as a protector who resists his duty out of deep concern for humanity, the novel refuses the familiar binary. The Devil’s reluctance to hand over the apple is not rebellion; it is mercy.

The parable of the seed that gets into Eden carried and dropped by a bird clinches *Lucifer Eve and Adam*’s theological wager. If the fruit is eaten, and humanity becomes capable of love, by a happenstance that is also providence, then creation is neither clockwork nor chaos; it is a world supervised for growth rather than submission. The questions that haunt theodicy—if evil exists, is God complicit?—are dodged by refusing the premise that knowledge and feeling are evils at all. *Lucifer Eve and Adam*’s union of the three names into one, “Lucifer Eve and Adam,” stages the dismantling of rigid categories that the rest of these texts keep pushing: divine and human, good and evil, male and female are no longer the only axes along which creation can be plotted.

Creation does not stop at the cosmic scale. Rafael Nicolás’s *Angels Before Man* (2022) offers a unique glimpse into the creation of Lucifer himself. It starts with a striking image: “[f]rom fire, there came flesh, slipping out from the blistering slice cut into the air” (Nicolás 12)

and that reads like a premonition of the future hellfire and violence. Moreover, it problematises the materiality of diegesis; simultaneously, Lucifer is a materiality and one that is not topologically possible: embodied chaos. The reader closely follows how the Lord creates a new cherub, albeit not alone. The creation is again configured as a cooperation of angelic powers; God orders his seraph to give the new cherub, who is not a baby but made in a “likeness of a person” (Nicolás 12) fruit of the Tree of Life. The new cherub struggles eating it in an intense scene: “It took [him] a moment of confused suckling, of a shy tongue caressing the smooth skin, before teeth peeked out and pressed down, biting. With a quiet whistle, the seraph coaxed the cherub to continue, to take it into his mouth and swallow(...). He chewed and trembled against the ground, naked and cold—even aflame, that was what he was” (Nicolás 13). After the fruit of the Tree of Life, it is time to feed the new cherub an apple of the Tree of Knowledge, and the seraph feeding him finds “the newborn opening his mouth wantonly, willingly, blind, at the mere brush of fruit against his lips,” and as the cherub eats, the seraph “suddenly, viscerally (...) noticed the beauty of the cherub; he saw the brilliance of his eyes as they were torn open like wounds” (Nicolás 13). The interpretative charge of this passage is manifold. It shows the Devil struggling with life and craving knowledge, almost as a predictor of the Satanic involvement with the Tree of Knowledge in Eden. Moreover, it also presents a distinctly carnal aspect of a sexual initiation because of the wording that is highly suggestive of homosexual oral intercourse.

The creation scene of the new cherub already assembles the Satanic archive, and this work begins before the newborn receives either role or name. “He will be perfect in wisdom and innocence as he is perfect in beauty,” God announces to the seraphim (Nicolás 13). God then addresses the cherub directly: “You are the morning star (...) Your name will be Lucifer” (Nicolás 13). Naming here functions as an act of making and an act of condemnation. The tense shift is decisive. “You are” marks an attributed present condition, while “will be” defers the proper name. The text implies that Lucifer is not simply bestowed but activated through future conduct, which frames the name as a promissory curse rather than a neutral designation.

The Satanic figures insist that they make culture, too, sometimes wickedly. *Good Omens* has Crowley brag about London’s M25 orbital motorway and about pushing Shakespeare into finishing Hamlet. *Lucifer* and *I, Lucifer* collect cultural credit, such as rock and roll, clubbing, a dozen sinful chic inventions. *Angels Before Man* goes abstract, granting Lucifer the coining of words and concepts themselves: “lie,” “disdain,” “stupid,” as if language’s negative affordances were necessary tools for thought. None of these claims declare the inventions ‘actually good.’ The point is different: creation requires both order and its disrupters; the Devil’s portfolio is not

only wreckage but innovation. Chaos is not treated as an existential threat but as an engine that breaks calcified forms so that new ones can take shape.

3.3. Lucifer in Falling

The Fall, in these contemporary retellings, is less a single plummet than a continuing condition: an ethical method, a phenomenology, a running argument about power. The old sermon plots it as hubris punished; the new texts pry it open and make it about inquiry, self-definition, and the politics of refusal. *I, Lucifer* sets the stakes with tart theology: Revelation's lake of fire is greeted with "Oh cheers... Oh thanks," then reframed as "Divine Anxiety. Create the unforgivable and you compromise infinite mercy. Forgive the unforgivable and you compromise infinite justice" (Duncan 17). The paradox is the point. If omnipotence needs an exception to be merciful or just, Heaven's law exposes its seams. That crack is where questioning fits, and these stories insist the first step of falling is precisely a question.

Good Omens centres the question and lets it do the toppling. Crowley's heresy in Season 2 begins with a wince and a shrug: "How much trouble can I get into just for asking a few questions?" ("Chapter 1: The Arrival"). In Season 1 he states the motive with disarming directness: "I only ever asked questions. That's all it took to be a demon in the old days... Great Plan?... Show me a Great Plan..." ("Saturday Morning Funtime"). The progression from "ask" to "show me" is the character's entire arc (though presented to the viewer in reverse, as one might expect from a narrative that cares little about chronology): a question becomes a demand for intelligibility, and eventually crystallises into an ethical limit. Deleuze's claim that "questions are imperatives—or rather, questions express the relation between problems and the imperatives from which they proceed" (Deleuze 197) is here staged in dialogue. In episode 2 of Season 2, "Chapter 2: The Clue," while watching God address Job, Aziraphale asks Crowley: "Is God actually... talking to him?" The demon's reply: "No. But just to be able to ask the question" ("Chapter 2: The Clue"). Crowley's answer suggests that he was never granted the space even to ask his questions: the Fall precluded dialogue before it could begin. What can be inferred is not hatred of God but rather a continuing orientation toward dialogue and proximity, a desire for conversation that endures even millennia after his expulsion.

This recalls the narrativisation of Satan by Iranian-American artist Kristina Esfandiari, performing as King Woman, in her 2021 concept album *Celestial Blues*. As a concept album, its lyrics unfold as a serialised narrative, and a reading that foregrounds the Satanic figure is not

only possible but invited. One track, “Morning Star,” is written in the first person, with Lucifer as its speaker:

The lord saw what he made
Yeah, it was good
Dripping from pearly gates
I was luminous
My name is Lucifer
Pleased to meet you
I harp six strings in the daylight
Do you know what it means?
Well, one moment I was ascending the heights

Am I far from God?
Morning star

The next thing I knew
I was falling fast
Lightning hit my wings
Heard thunder crack
Pride had infected the depths of me
Oh, I love these courts
I loved that royal family
You know it could have been you
So don't you dare judge the things that I do

Am I far from God?
Morning star
Lucifer falling from the heights (“Morning Star”)

The song begins with an explicit citation of Genesis and immediately subverts it: Lucifer is presented as God’s creation and therefore good. The emphasis on luminosity evokes the aesthetics of angelic radiance and heavenly purity, an atmosphere which will be further examined in the following section. The self-introduction, “My name is Lucifer / Pleased to meet you,” operates as a direct intertextual gesture toward the Rolling Stones’ countercultural anthem “Sympathy for the Devil,” in which the speaker’s demonic identity must be inferred: “Pleased to meet you, hope you guess my name” (The Rolling Stones, “Sympathy for the Devil”). King Woman’s version eliminates the indirection and foregrounds recognition itself as a site of pleasure. Furthermore, the line: “I harp six strings in the daylight” (King Woman, “Morning Star”) suggests not only the traditional harp of angelic praise but also the electric guitar associated with rock and metal performance, aligning Lucifer with the figure of the rock star. Taken together, these elements construct a multivalent Satanic genealogy. King Woman’s Lucifer morphs biblical, countercultural, and musical registers, embodying a figure that exceeds any single origin. Her Morning Star emerges as a hypertext of the Satanic. This genealogical layering

demonstrates the persistence of the Satanic as a morphic force, continually reconfigured in dialogue with cultural forms.

To return to the focus on the Satanic Fall, it is explicitly foregrounded in “Morning Star.” Strikingly, the Fall is not narrated with causal clarity. Lucifer remarks only that it was the “next thing [he] knew” (King Woman, “Morning Star”), which suggests an element of surprise rather than inevitability. Lightning, a biblical symbol of divine punishment that also recalls Zeus’s or Thor’s thunderbolts, destroys Lucifer’s wings, and only thereafter does pride “infect” him. In this sequence, pride is rendered an effect rather than a cause, which troubles the traditional theological explanation of the Fall.

King Woman’s Lucifer also issues a warning to the listener: “You know it could have been you” (King Woman, “Morning Star”). The Fall is here figured as replicable and universal, something that could happen to anyone. This articulation resonates with the possibility of a Satanic performance, not confined to a singular event in mythic time but opened up as a potential for all. The Satanic becomes a democratised and an all-encompassing transgression.

The song’s recurring question, “Am I far from God?” (King Woman, “Morning Star”), is equally significant. Traditionally, the Devil is positioned in absolute opposition to God, yet the phrasing of the question destabilises this truism: how far is ‘opposite’? The uncertainty embedded in the question is striking: should not the Devil already know his distance from God? Should not the audience assume it as given? By leaving the question unanswered, the song stages a troubling of the theological binary and invites listeners themselves to confront the instability of this opposition. In this way, the Satanic Queer engages the archive of the Satanic and continually finds the answer deferred.

Finally, the structure of the song enacts the notion of a continuous Fall. The recorded version ends with extended repetitions of the line “Lucifer falling from the heights” (King Woman, “Morning Star”), stretched across more than a minute. In live performances, these repetitions last even longer, which amplifies the sense of an unending descent. The effect is not only musically captivating but also conceptually aligned with the idea of the Fall as ongoing rather than concluded. It becomes a descent without resolution, continuously performed.

The confusion around the fall returns in another track from King Woman’s *Celestial Blues*. The final song, “Paradise Lost,” makes an explicit intertextual gesture to Milton’s epic and, like “Morning Star,” centres on the Fall. It opens with a similar sense of disorientation to “Morning Star”: “Confused, I woke up in the dust / Stunned and abandoned” (King Woman, “Paradise Lost”). The confusion expressed here recalls the fact that the Christian canon never

directly specifies the reason for Satan's rebellion. While tradition assumes that Satan himself knows the cause, the uncertainty conveyed in these lyrics foregrounds the absence of an authoritative origin. The result is a displacement of blame: the Fall is no longer firmly anchored in the figure of the Devil but is dispersed, rendered unlocalisable.

Although the lyrical subject is not named explicitly as the Devil, the identification is strongly implied. In lines such as "We have been thrown from Eden / (...) / You're gonna blame it on me / It's just the saddest story" (King Woman, "Paradise Lost"), the voice aligns itself with the one accused of causing humanity's expulsion from Paradise. According to popular readings of Genesis, that figure is the Devil in the guise of the serpent. The use of "we" rather than "you" places the speaker alongside humans: both share the fate of exile. This contrasts with one of the formative apocryphal accounts of the Satanic Fall, *The Life of Adam and Eve*, composed between the third and fifth centuries and "probably Christian in origin" (Almond 39). In that text, Satan blames Adam for his downfall. Commanded to worship Adam as God's perfect creation, Satan refuses: "I will not worship one inferior and subsequent to me. I am prior to him in creation; before he was made, I was already made. He ought to worship me" (qtd. in Almond 40). This defiance angers God, who casts him from heaven (Almond 40). King Woman's Lucifer, by contrast, accepts blame without assigning it elsewhere. The song stages the morphing of the story across traditions, showing how the burden of responsibility shifts but never settles. Paradise is lost for both humanity and Satan. "It's just the saddest story" (King Woman, "Paradise Lost") summarises the condition, simultaneously humanising the Satanic perspective and evoking compassion. This tone deepens when the speaker confesses, "I need a place I can grieve" (King Woman, "Paradise Lost"). One might assume that Hell provides such a space, yet here no such domain is depicted. Instead, the Satanic figure is left homeless, confused, and wandering.

Finally, both "Paradise Lost" and "Morning Star" portray the Fall as an experience of violence. In the former, the Devil laments, "He stole the life from my eyes / Voice was so misleading / Leaves me naked" (King Woman, "Paradise Lost"), a description of betrayal, symbolic death, and exposure. In the latter, the descent is accompanied by lightning and thunder (King Woman, "Morning Star"). The emphasis on suffering underscores the corporeal and affective dimensions of the Fall. This attention to pain resonates with the portrayal of Lucifer in other contemporary reimaginings, such as Glen Duncan's *I, Lucifer*, where anguish rather than rebellion is foregrounded.

In *I, Lucifer*, the Devil recalls his state in the immediate aftermath of the Fall: "I, Lucifer, was still in the first agonising age of pain. Imagine having all your skin flayed off (...) all your

teeth drilled (...) your knackers or vadge nailed to a fridge (...) your head being on fire all the time. That's the tip of my iceberg of my pain" (Duncan 25, emphasis in the original). Pain here is described through grotesque hyperbole, an accumulation of tortures that present suffering as excessive, uncontainable, and foundational to postlapsarian existence. Soon after, God's voice intrudes and fractures time itself, as "The sound of it annihilated old time (...). Then was now and now was then and there was no going back, no punishment disguised as forgiveness, no shamle back into the fetters of obedience. Wondering if I could escape the pain was worse than knowing I couldn't. He knew that" (Duncan 26). The novel thus confines its narrator to a temporal loop in which even the prospect of relief is transformed into another form of punishment. Hope itself becomes weaponised.

The torment is not only physical but also epistemological, producing uncertainty about origin and destiny. Lucifer blurts out: "Tell me I wasn't born for this. Was I born for it?... Was rebellion just part of the... oh never mind" (Duncan 64). The unfinished sentence collapses into ellipses, enacting a withdrawal from certainty. The narrative later compensates with bravado and a roll call of fallen angels: "this story's the oldest story (...) The story of my—ahem—downfall (...) Semyaza, Sammael, Azazzel, Ariel, Ramiel (...) From heaven's leap they pitched and flared in radiant rebellion (...) on the leash of my charisma (...) Central conflict, obviously, my tiff with Junior Junior. God the Son (...) Jumping Jesus Arthur Christ, Jimmeny Christmas. Number one son. *Sonny*" (Duncan 83–84, emphasis in the original). The catalogue and bluster appear as attempts to overwrite doubt with swagger, yet they cannot dispel the underlying uncertainty. The fundamental question remains unresolved: is revolt the essence of Lucifer's being, or is it an event imposed upon him?

The book's most striking attempt to answer refuses the grammar of place and chooses sensation instead: "What I remember (...) is how it looked looking back (...) If I was confined to one metaphor (...) I suppose it would be blue (...) looking back along the plunging cavalcade, the flaming torrent of my rebel brothers (...) blueness and space. A special kind of space, a special kind of blueness (...) not the blue of an arctic sky (...) nor the lapis blue in Bronzino (...) Certainly not the midnight blue of the Virgin's mantle (...)" (Duncan 180). The list fails by design; the text stalls on "More a feeling. More a feeling of... A feeling of..." before snapping at itself: "What is all this, Lucifer?" (Duncan 81). The Fall becomes a cinematographer's problem: how to represent a non-space that feels like space; how to stage the unstageable.

Even the proof text that tradition shoves under every depiction of the Satanic fall is punctured. Lucifer lets "run through [his] head" biblical verse: "How art thou fallen from

Heaven, O Lucifer, Son of the morning!” (NIV Isaiah 14:12, qtd. in Duncan 105). He comments that for him sometimes it “sounds like a triumphal trumpet,” sometimes it “just makes [him] terribly sad” (Duncan 105). Then the corrective: “Isaiah wasn’t even talking about me (...) He was prophesying the fate of Merodach-baladan (...) the King of Babylon. It’s just that sometimes human utterances accidentally align with the truths of Heaven and Hell. When that happens, the phrases stick in history like burrs” (Duncan 105). The burr is the whole problem. A king’s taunt becomes a Devil’s title; the metaphor becomes a cosmology. These fictions answer by pulling the burrs loose, not to erase them but to show the weave beneath.

The fall as question also resounds in *Angels Before Man*. In the opening chapters Lucifer appears as a newly created cherub in Heaven and confronts the opacity of his own nature. He asks: “What is happening? (...) What am I?” (Nicolás 15), “Who is Father? He created me? Why? How?” (Nicolás 21), and “Why do some angels have wings? What am I supposed to do with myself?” (Nicolás 25). Raphael cautions him against instantaneous comprehension: “I can’t spend hours explaining the heavens to you, brother. You’ll find learning it all slowly will be easier. It would harm your mind to try and conceptualize everything all at once” (Nicolás 16). Asmodeus registers the tempo of the inquiry with surprise: “These sort of questions already?” (Nicolás 21). The celestial order thus interrupts inquiry and refuses what it names as chaos; it codes boundless knowledge as harm and, in doing so, installs a figure of God as a limitless information that must be throttled at the level of creaturely access. Asmodeus’s remark carries a double valence. On one reading, it naturalises questioning as a developmental capacity among angels who presumably have all consumed the apple from the Tree of Knowledge when they were created, and thus, as they mature, come to wonder about first principles; on this account Lucifer appears precocious, perhaps because he has arrived at the fruit’s effects early. On another reading, the astonishment acts as a quiet premonition of the fall to come, since the very form of Lucifer’s questioning strains against ordained limits and intimates an epistemic refusal that will later become rebellion.

The desire to question looms up again later in the novel. “I wish we could ask Him why He does all that He does” (Nicolás 62), Lucifer tells Gabriel. In response, Gabriel takes him to Heaven’s cathedral: “a gray limestone building with a particularly high peak, composed of pointed arches holding up a vaulted ceiling and mullioned windows, sliced into shapes, variously colored to portray faces, stars, animals, and even plants. The most notable window sat above the great double-door entrance” (Nicolás 62). Inside, the narration lingers “on the grayed walls — Lucifer’s head spun trying to comprehend them. He saw, also, the curved details, minuscule,

built into the doors and could only breathe in the shock” (Nicolás 63). The structure reads as Gothic through its vocabulary of pointed arches, vaulting, mullions, and stained light. Surveying the aisles, Lucifer notes the austerity: “besides the golden seats, settled on a marble floor, everything was quite desolate. There were a few scattered angels, and there were candles, in their brazen holdings, but nothing else” (Nicolás 63). This is the site where God will later strip Lucifer of his voice for blasphemy, another fall before the great fall. In the face of Lucifer’s doubts, Gabriel narrates his creation as an eyewitness, the seraph who fed him apples and watched the process unfold. Lucifer registers the account as vertigo rather than reassurance: “You say all those things, and now I feel like I’m falling” (Nicolás 64). He names the somatic experience of that plunge: “Falling because the weight of your words is too much, it’s too much, I’m about to explode like a star” (Nicolás 65). The lines prefigure his eventual fall and diagnose the psychic cost of divine silence. He has never known the details of his making, and he does not learn them from God. The scene also circles back to Raphael’s caution that excess knowledge harms cognition: “It would harm your mind to try and conceptualize everything all at once” (Nicolás 16). Knowledge appears as occult power that must be dosed rather than accessed in a single surge; the novel figures a recognisable problem of the digital era in which unmoderated information produces disorientation rather than understanding.

Another fall occurs when Lucifer first encounters God. Summoned to God’s garden of Eden, a liminal space between Heaven and Earth, he is met with a pronouncement: “You wish to ask me many things” (Nicolás 72). Lucifer answers without hesitation: “I could spend all of eternity here, asking questions” (Nicolás 72). God replies with a limit that sounds like permission: “any eternity must begin somewhere” (Nicolás 72). The invitation loosens Lucifer’s restraint and the questions spill out: “Why did you fill the Earth with beasts, Father? (...) why create creatures that can only destroy?” (Nicolás 72). God’s response asserts order through humiliation: “All my creation is good (...) You stutter and shiver—for an angel, it is unbecoming, like you are attempting to be no more than an animal (...) Bow lower. Have you no respect for your Father?” (Nicolás 72). When Lucifer begs forgiveness, God issues a command that converts shame into posture: “Crumble to the ground, if that is how you feel” (Nicolás 73). In response, “Lucifer fell, he fell, he fell to his knees” (Nicolás 73). The fall takes the form of ritualised submission rather than expulsion.

God then orders another question, and Lucifer turns from cosmology to belonging: “I want to know if I am yours. I said that I am, but I want to know if it is true, if I am really yours. Your angel” (Nicolás 73). The request for confirmation receives no reply: “Instead of answering,

God returned Lucifer to the bed of flowers and said he should take the chance to lay in it some more” (Nicolás 73). The scene stages a pedagogy of denial. Inquiry becomes evidence of defect, and the desire for knowledge is redirected into obedience. Kneeling marks a fall that is not yet the Fall but anticipates it as a choreography of power in which divine silence withholds the answer.

Although Lucifer’s questions do transgressive work that complicates his relation to God, the fall that the narrative anticipates arrives for another cause that the text explicitly names “disobedience to God” (Nicolás 233). In the confrontation scene God charges him with ingratitude and pride, yet the rhetoric reads less as a refutation of Lucifer’s reasoning than as an assertion of proprietorship over the creature’s attention and allegiance. Obedience is framed as rightful ownership of devotion, so that questioning registers as a breach of title rather than as an error in doctrine. The logic is possessive. It demands exclusive claim to the angel’s gaze, voice, and desire, which reframes piety as compliance with a regime of ownership.

Near the end God commands Michael to sever Lucifer’s wings, and the decree fixes the charge in juridical terms, “because you have corrupted my creation and turned yourself into a Beast, you will be cast down from Heaven” (Nicolás 317). The sentence performs both judgment and reclassification. The cutting of wings un-makes vocation and recodes the angel’s form as evidence of guilt. “Corruption” names the romance with Michael and the decision to withhold undivided service, but it also marks a bid for self-possession that refuses the obligations of imposed order. By translating autonomy into bestialisation the narrative exposes how intimacy is policed as pollution and how sovereignty enforces itself as expulsion. The novel thus frames rebellion as the predictable effect of a prior desire to relocate worship and loyalty, not a sudden lapse, and it renders the fall the inevitable outcome of competing claims over who owns an angel’s capacity to love.

Hazbin Hotel reframes Lucifer’s fall as an act of care for humankind rather than a gesture of pride or malice. In the prologue, Lucifer “wished to share the magic of free will with humanity, offering the fruit of knowledge to Adam’s new bride, Eve, who gladly accepted” (“Overture”). He thus fulfils the serpentine role long attributed to him, and he is cast into Hell for it. The sequence reads as a commentary on predestination: within the hegemonic order, any attempt to equip humans with freedom is recoded as sedition, so the fall arrives as a foregone conclusion.

The motif returns through Lucifer’s daughter, Charlie, whose project to rehabilitate the damned presses the same ethic of care against a resistant structure. Her plan to move souls to

Heaven is repeatedly frustrated, yet, in a Satanic Queer register, she persists. The work is not to overturn the order in a single stroke, but to act as if another arrangement were already possible, and to do so in public. Read together, father and daughter convert the fall into a practice of care under constraint, which prepares the ground for my next claim: the Satanic Queer treats predestination as a problem to be worked around, not a fate to accept.

Across these texts, then, rebellion is reimagined as inquiry; the Fall becomes a process; self-affirmation collides with divine intolerance. The three points are not a thesis but a cycle. The question reveals the plan's violence, which in turn reveals the plan's anxiety, which then forces the Satanic to refuse scapegoating. The cycle replays as style. *I, Lucifer*'s narrator admits even his thoughts will not hold still: "they move fast. They shift" (Duncan 19). The shifting is not weakness; it is how falling is lived in time. The old sermon needed a single instant of disobedience; the new stories show a life in which the question keeps returning and the answer keeps changing because the conditions do.

3.4. No Above, No Below

Heaven and Hell in these contemporary Satanic retellings are not fixed destinations on a cosmic map but volatile systems, architectures of feeling and power whose rules keep being exposed, bent, or refused. *I, Lucifer* sets the tone with its blasé corrective: "Hell's okay. Most of the souls at my place just hang around smoking and drinking and chewing the fat. And there's everything to read" (Duncan 13). The line punctures the fire-and-brimstone imaginary and replaces it with a library, a lounge, a scene of ongoing talk. It also pairs with a more brutal definition later: "Hell is two things: the absence of God and the presence of time" (Duncan 208), which turns Hell into a phenomenology rather than a geography. By contrast, the angelic condition is not place at all: "In the angelic realm there's no concept of place (...) we weren't anywhere; we were nowhere" (Duncan 86). Both Heaven and Hell refuse essentiality.

The war between Heaven and Hell functions as the eschatological bracket of Christian thought: the frame intended to finish history. Christian tradition crystallises its template in Revelation: "Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him." (NIV, Rev. 12.7–9). The passage does not conclude the conflict; it redirects it to earth and

projects it into eschatology, a finite game with a predeclared ending and neatly numbered sides. The cultural politics of such clarity are not neutral. As Doran Larson observes of the Puritan body politic, communal coherence was “confirmed by demonstrating the tangibly inhuman, bodily disorganization not only among but inside the ‘savages.’ By this means (...) figural violence in the battle between good and evil legitimated physical violence” (Larson 57). Framed in this way, ‘Heaven’ and ‘Hell’ as poles of order and disorder legitimise their own exclusions. This motif is brutally reiterated in *Hazbin Hotel*, whose prologue states: “And as the numbers of Hell grew, so did its power. Threatened by this, Heaven made a truly heartless decision. That every year, they would send down an army, an extermination, to ensure Hell and its sinners could never rise against them” (“Overture”). The narration frames this policy as retribution for Lucifer’s Edenic transgression, which recasts eschatological warfare as routine genocide rather than a singular apocalyptic event (“Overture”). Against that order the protagonist, Charlie Morningstar, the Princess of Hell, works to create avenues of mercy by attempting to rehabilitate the damned, a project that treats salvation as a practice rather than a prerogative of power (“Overture”).

It is against this war-script that *Good Omens* stages its most radical joke. In the Season 2 finale, specifically, in a flashback to events preceding the season’s opening episode, the council of archangels attempts to approve “Armageddon the sequel” (“Chapter Six: Every Day”). Their leader Gabriel, responds with a casual refusal: “Nah.” Pressed for clarification—“Nah to the final victory of Heaven on Earth?”—he reiterates: “Sorry, just not seeing it this time. Pass” (“Chapter Six: Every Day”). The refusal is more than flippant irreverence. It functions as a procedural veto on eschatological certainty. The scene then collapses into institutional comedy: instead of being cast down like Lucifer, Gabriel is simply demoted to the lowest class of angels, which reframes rebellion as administrative noncompliance rather than cosmic treason.

The transgression deepens once the motive is disclosed: Gabriel is romantically involved with Lord Beelzebub, and together they agree to thwart the final war, choosing mutual attachment over institutional victory (“Chapter Six: Every Day”). In this configuration, the show’s Satanic Queer is not confined to the recognisable pairing of Aziraphale and Crowley; it names any performance that engineers possibilities beyond the Heaven and Hell structure. The episode thus models a politics of refusal and alliance that queers the eschatological frame itself, preparing the ground for my next claim that such cross-camp solidarities are the series’ principal engine of world-making.

The show's visual logic matches this institutional satire by making both realms oppressive in opposite keys. Heaven is sleek, sterile, eerily vast: a hyper-modern open plan in stark whites and pale blues, divided by columns and low ceilings so that an ostensibly boundless floor feels claustrophobic. Objects materialise only when needed; individuality is irrelevant; the "offices" are desks that appear out of nowhere in the bureaucratic void. The emptiness is striking: mostly just the few angels we need for the plot, making abundance feel like desert. Hell is the counter-image: dark, filthy, and suffocating steampunk factory with exposed pipes and valves, deep browns and reds scummed by grime. It oscillates between an overcrowded immigration office with endless queues, and harried clerks, and an abandoned warehouse for plotting. Unlike Heaven's chilly emptiness, Hell is congested with bodies and noise. It is exhausting on purpose.

Bodies code these spaces. Demons are dirty, scrawny, animalistic; their clothes are rags; their bodies look worn down by existence. They struggle to write and to grasp human nuance. Angels are no less detached from human culture, but theirs is elitist condescension and ignorance. The archangels, who are almost the only angels we see, are cocky and uniform in pristine fair suits and gold-tinted makeup. Conformity is the point. Against that, *Good Omens* lets Crowley and Aziraphale build hybrid refuges that expose the nonsense of the binary. Crowley's apartment borrows Heaven's brutalist geometry but paints it in Hell's palette; the cement walls and severe lines are softened by lush plants and gilt accents. His true home, however, is mobile: the Bentley, a 1933 sanctum wired to his preferences. It plays *The Best of Queen* by default, stocks endless sunglasses in the glove box, and refuses to die (even through Hellfire). When another demon takes his flat in Season 2, the car and the plants become his sanctuary in the most literal sense. Aziraphale's rooms invert that logic: a bright, cluttered bookstore evokes Heaven's light and Hell's hoarding but feels intensely warm. He does not sell; he curates. The space holds signed volumes, sentimental human artifacts, and his Earthlong diaries. It is also where he and Crowley are and where their partnership lives. That partnership is key to the show's theological counter-proposal: authority not as domination but as cooperative interplay between seeming opposites. By rejecting their mandates, they do not merely critique authoritarianism; they replace it with an ethic of shared care.

If *Good Omens* turns the binary into bureaucracy, *Hazbin Hotel* turns it into spectacle. Hell here is bright and dangerous, drenched in saturated reds, pinks, and violets; an urban sprawl of accidents, crime, and explosion. Demons survive by vice; exhaustion is ambient. The underworld fractures into sub-realms that double as critiques of earthly power. The Veas'

headquarters is slick and blue-lit, a shrine to platform capitalism where entertainment and propaganda fuse. Cannibal Town wears 1910s Americana like a costume, pairing nostalgic facades with predation. Hell is not one nightmare; it is a multiplex of them. And yet the more disturbing reversal is Heaven. Saint Peter introduces it in Episode 6 as “where the virtuous reside,” a place where “people are happy that they died, ’cause here we got no worries, got no burglaries... the perfect afterlife” (“Welcome to Heaven”). The glow is pastel and gold, the skyline pristine, the harmony engineered. But the show has already told us that every year Heaven sends armed squads into Hell to exterminate its population. “Extermination is entertainment,” as Adam sings in Episode 1 of Season 1: “’Cause the rules are black’n’white, there’s no use in tryin’ to fight it, they’re burnin’ for their lives until we kill ’em again” (“Overture”). Heaven’s virtue is administered violence, a sentiment repeated in *I, Lucifer*. Lucifer, when remembering the Nazis, delivers a bleak, clarifying motive for showing absolute horror: “Their victory ultimately was neither here nor there, as long as, after they’d done their thing, millions of people could no longer sustain the preposterous fallacy that the old men loved the world” (Duncan 204). The line could be applied directly to *Hazbin Hotel*’s Heaven: once you have watched angels play at genocide, the rhetoric of pastoral care has no cover.

Hazbin Hotel lets its characters name the rot on both sides of the celestial divide: “Heaven has rules. Lots of rules. And they aren’t very open minded as you’d hope,” Lucifer warns, before adding, “Heaven never listens. They didn’t listen to me, they won’t listen to you” (“Dad Beat Dad”). Hell fares no better in his reckoning: “Our people, Charlie, are awful! They got gifted free will and look what they did with it! Everything’s terrible” (“Dad Beat Dad”). The critique does not seek a cleaner allegiance; it gestures toward a different positionality, which is why I read Lucifer’s stance as characteristically Satanic Queer, a desire for alternatives that exceed the Heaven–Hell structure.

The series then stages the binary’s legal emptiness. When Charlie petitions the angelic court for the Hazbin Hotel, she learns that there are no articulated criteria for who enters Heaven and who is damned. Sera, the court presiding angel, offers only, “We know when a soul arrives. We know when they pass divine judgement” (“Welcome to Heaven”). Pressed to define standards, Adam, the first soul in Heaven, scrawls a banal triad: “Act selfless, don’t steal, stick it to the man” (“Welcome to Heaven”). The court closes ranks: “I’m sorry but this court finds that there is no evidence souls in Hell can be redeemed” (“Welcome to Heaven”). When angelic court members voice concern, they are warned, “If you start to question, you could end up like Lucifer, fallen” (“Welcome to Heaven”). The warning reframes the Fall as a continuous disciplinary

threat rather than a singular event, and it confirms Heaven's narrow tolerance for scrutiny. Read together, the Morningstar father and daughter articulate a critique of celestial governance and model a practice that seeks options beyond it, which is precisely the field in which the Satanic Queer operates.

I read the titular *Hazbin Hotel* itself as the Satanic Queer "out": a limen created by Lucifer's daughter for sinners who want another chance. It is physically in Hell, but socially against Hell's economy of exploitation, and ethically against Heaven's fixed judgments. It offers exploration, friendship, and mutual aid; it refuses both the top-down moralism of the angels and the survivalist cynicism of the demons. Its residents are misfits with tangled histories: Angel Dust, a sex worker working through trauma; Husk, a drunk, tender cynic; Vaggie, an ex-angelic militant turned lover and co-organizer; Sir Pentious, a rehabilitated villain. In this company, redemption is not an edict; it is a process. The hotel functions as a Satanic Queer space precisely by being anti-binary: fluid, reinvention-friendly, committed to the proposition that no soul is beyond change. The show's Heaven cannot make that claim; its moral superiority relies on extermination and denial.

If time is queered in these texts, space follows. Traditional cosmology, especially in Milton's wake, imagines a strict vertical hierarchy: Heaven above, Hell below, the human in between; and both extremes framed as future destinations rather than lived environments. The works I am describing collapse that geometry. In *Good Omens*, Heaven and Hell are interior sets. In *Hazbin Hotel*, Heaven is a gated city and Hell a carnivalesque downtown; both are present tense. In *Lucifer*, both realms are offices, clubs, therapy rooms, apartments—rooms you can leave and re-enter. And in *I, Lucifer*, the angelic "realm" is a non-realm which is another way of describing a structure that denies location so it can claim universality. If Hell is "the presence of time" (Duncan 208), then Heaven's non-place is the posture of timelessness that refuses responsibility. The novel *Angels Before Man* produces a comparable effect. When Lucifer learns the word "time," he repeats it and the narrative text describes it: "Lucifer repeated, only to play with the word on his tongue. He nodded, not understanding (...)" (Nicolás 16).

Heaven in *Angels Before Man* is organised communally—each angel has their own specialty: Rosier is the angel of fruit tending to orchards and picking up fruit (Nicolás 25), Asmodeus is the angel of friendship, although he works construction, showing how the angels organise the life in what is seemingly a communist utopia, where "no one really assigns work, we just do whatever we're good at or enjoy" (Nicolás 25). However, the angels also have their angelic responsibilities: "sometimes the archangels do request us to complete a job" (Nicolás

25), but their absolute priority is of course God worship: “All of us were formed in His own hands to serve and worship Him for eternity”, as Lucifer is told by Asmodeus (Nicolás 22). Moreover, the honourable roles of community tending are only deceptively of free choice: “‘We find our own roles’, Asmodeus answered (...) ‘Father gives them to us, of course, but you can’t simply ask Him (...) He expects us to figure it out for ourselves, but it’s not always easy’” (Nicolás 25). Then, the angelic community is a predestined plan organised in God’s liking. It is also structural: the archangels dominate the society, “[they] are (...) princes. The princes of Heaven that keep everything orderly. They’re the real enforcers of Father’s will, and they stand by His side,” Azazel teaches Lucifer (Nicolás 39). Heaven tends to angels’ skills in combat: there is a colosseum in there and it is “impressive; it ate a massive block in the city of Heaven and was composed of columns fashioned from travertine and tufa, with each of the eighty archways in between appearing to be an entrance” (Nicolás 46-47), and there angels regularly stage fights between themselves.

Moreover, in *Angels Before Man*, Hell does not exist. The universe is made of stars, but the realms in the cosmos are three: Heaven, Earth, and God’s garden between them (Nicolás 68). There are animals in Eden, and a scene of marked cinematic quality stages the Satanic archive:

Lucifer took an extended period of time introducing himself to all the living things in the garden and eventually felt a legged, slithering creature make its way up his ankle. He looked upon the snake, then smiled as he moved to peel it off and carry it on his shoulders for a moment. He went to chatter with crows, who were intelligent enough that he felt he was speaking with angels. Then, he set the snake atop a branch and said hello to the spiders there. (69-70)

Nicolás lingers on a snake, playing with the archive. The connotation remains unspoken, yet the image is difficult to read as anything other than foreshadowed transgression: the snake still has legs, which immediately evokes Genesis, where God curses the serpent to crawl on its belly (NIV Gen. 3:14). The passage’s animals are those customary to the Gothic repertoire, yet Lucifer treats them with care rather than abjection. They are not mere creatures of the night but intelligent beings worthy of regard.

This ethic of care extends to Lucifer’s treatment of his fellow rebels, named “the doomed ones,” once they have been cast out of Heaven and left to make lives on Earth (Nicolás 320; Nicolás 231). Their celestial bodies require remaking through harsh improvisation: “Using the carcasses of the beasts, sawing off their limbs and stitching them onto their own bodies, contorting thought skin and meats so that they might be able to use them to patch their wounds” (Nicolás 320). The scene renders embodiment as salvage. Flesh becomes material, and creation reads as labor that sutures community from what the world offers. The demons do not heal by

miracle. They craft by necessity, which converts survival into a collective art that binds the fallen to one another through shared making.

Within this setting Lucifer is framed as caretaker and leader. He is “occasionally, violent, tormented, and vengeful, but other times he pulled them to his chest and kissed their heads. The demons fashioned him a crown of bones, thorns, and weeds that gave him the illusion of having horns” (Nicolás 321). The narrative stresses doubleness that refuses a single moral key. Brutality and tenderness sit side by side, and both are recognised by the community as legitimate modes of stewardship under conditions of ruin. The crown is not an emblem of innate monstrosity. It is a communal artifact assembled from the same materials that patched their bodies. The horns arise from weeds and bone because authority is grown from care, grief, and shared work. Interpreted this way, the iconography of the Satanic horns records an economy of mutual aid. It names a politics of care that reassigns the signs of bestiality and deviance to the realm of solidarity and consent.

These works do not simply invert the binary. Heaven is not absolved; Hell is not glamorised. Instead, the opposition is treated as a field where care, humour, and defiance can make liveable rooms. That is why *Good Omens* lets a demon’s car become a home and an angel’s shop become a sanctuary; why *Hazbin Hotel* dares to call a halfway house “redemption” against Heaven’s own tribunal; why *Lucifer* walks off the throne and into therapy; why *I, Lucifer* swaps the sermon for the shrug and the punchline. Each text takes the old war story and refuses to play its game.

3.5. Story, Non-linear

By non-linearity in the digital, I do not mean merely out-of-sequence storytelling within individual texts; I mean a temporal condition produced by real-time capture, instant circulation, and on-demand access. As Eduardo Navas, Owen Gallagher, and xtine burrough note, “we no longer wait for history to come to us with the passage of time,” because we now experience events “fully aware of [their] instant documentation in real-time with live-streaming and on-demand technology” (Navas, Gallagher, and burrough 3). In such an ecology the present accelerates until, as Steen Ledet Christiansen puts it, it is “constantly on the verge of flipping into the future” (Christiansen 5). Time folds into itself: archives surface as feeds, futures arrive as notifications, and the “now” becomes trans-chronological rather than sequential. Non-linearity, so understood, names an infrastructural tempo that shapes how stories are told and

received, and it furnishes the temporal medium within which Satanic Queer morphs enact their continuous becoming.

Season 2 of *Good Omens* announces its narrative method in a pop hook. Buddy Holly's song "Everyday" threads the season: "Everyday, it's a getting closer, / Going faster than a roller coaster" and with it a logic of recurrence without repetition. The show keeps circling "the same" moment while refusing to render it the same again. That is exactly what Crowley's final mention "no nightingales" does ("Chapter 6: Every Day"). It is not only an intra-diegetic callback to the end of Season 1 and a marker of his story with Aziraphale; it also flags that the story will not simply loop, but disperse. The line simultaneously smuggles in another citation: "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square," a British song about "angels dining at the Ritz": so that one phrase becomes a compact metalinguistic device: it marks the couple's shared identity, and it nudges the fourth wall by advertising its own citationality. The cue repeats but not as the same; the series makes a principle of reprise that alters the pattern.

This is already a rebuke to the biblical plot. The canonical sequence of creation, fall, redemption, and apocalypse assumes a rigid chronology and a closed eschaton. Each event serves an inevitable divine plan, a preordained march to an ultimate resolution. The contemporary Satanic retellings I track disassemble that determinism. They prefer nonlinearity, fluidity, and recursive disruption, not merely to carve an alternate route within the same temporal frame but to strip the frame itself, dismantling the notion of time as a linear progression towards a predetermined, normative end, rather than charting an alternative trajectory within a temporal framework. José Esteban Muñoz's "backward glance" (17) toward "ghosts" (49) is decisive here: the turn to past moments provides "anticipatory illumination" (32) and a queer collectivity (34) that holds out a concrete possibility for another world, not nostalgia but a critical deployment of the past in the service of futurity. Jack Halberstam's formulation is complementary: queer subcultures "produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death" (*In a Queer Time and Place* 2). The texts under discussion stage those alternatives not in theoretical prologues but in how they tell and retell.

Good Omens literalises the refusal of inevitability by perpetually deferring both origin and end. Apocalypse is not a God-written terminus but a catastrophe to resist; Crowley and Aziraphale repeatedly choose against the gravitational pull of eschatology, converting a linear countdown into an open-ended practice of resistance. Formally, the series rejects chronological

sequence to model a Satanic Queer approach to time. The expulsion from Eden opens season 1, while the creation of the world opens season 2, reversing the customary order of beginnings and ends. Episode 3 of Season 1 “Hard Times,” which establishes the protagonists’ role in Shakespearean success, appears nearly a season before the retelling of the Book of Job (“Chapter 2: The Clue featuring the minisode A Companion to Owls”). Other biblical and extra-biblical stories surface out of sequence not to restore sacred chronology but to reframe those moments through the accretion of the Aziraphale–Crowley bond. By appropriating myths without submitting to their linear time, the show aligns narrative construction with the Satanic Queer’s non-linear, morphic temporality. Crucially, these returns are not mere context. Each “throwback” loops back to the narrative present and functions as a prospective template, cueing how future choices will unfold and how the pair’s ethics of refusal will be sustained. In this sense, nonlinearity is not a decorative device but a structuring commitment: it dislodges finite, predeclared eschatological games and installs a practice of storytelling that keeps origin and end open, precisely the condition in which resistance can continue.

King Woman’s “Golgotha,” from the album *Celestial Blues* (2022), renders Satanic time as chaotic, cyclical, and resistant to linear sequence. The lyric asserts recurrence—“And it never ends, and it never ends” (“Golgotha”)—and then names its figure: “The snake eats its tail, we return again to / This hell” (“Golgotha”). The Satanic snake is recast as the ouroboros, a sign of time folding back on itself rather than proceeding in a line. Chronology is deliberately scrambled. “Golgotha” (“Golgotha”)—the skull-hill tied to the Crucifixion—appears before “I heard the Virgin is having a baby” (“Golgotha”) and “Immaculate Conception, can you save me?” (“Golgotha”), so Passion precedes Nativity and the Christian order of beginnings and endings is reversed.

The address sharpens the song’s Satanic position. “This hell, I’ll see you again with the skulls, my friend” (“Golgotha”) implies an interlocutor who can be read as Christ, a reading intensified by the Crucifixion setting the title evokes. The line recalls Satan’s spectator position in Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), and it finds a contemporary iteration in *Good Omens*, where Aziraphale and Crowley, the latter in a feminised guise, occupy a comparable vantage (“Hard Times”). Just as striking is the plea: “Immaculate Conception, can you save me?” (“Golgotha”). Voiced from a Satanic positionality, the question sounds almost blasphemous, and it exposes salvation as an exclusive event that withholds recognition from the speaker. “I’m being crushed by a weight and it doesn’t let up” (“Golgotha”) returns the song to pressure and repetition, clarifying that the Satanic archive here is not a straight line but a loop of address and

return. This cyclical temporality reappears across my corpus and it recalibrates the terms of creation and salvation in contemporary Satanic narratives.

Lucifer Eve and Adam moves the same argument into a different form. It situates Genesis in a perpetual now, presenting it as a new gospel that reconfigures the reader's awareness as it is read. Because the book frames itself as a movie script inside the novel, aimed explicitly at adaptation, the creation is designed for reenactment. Genesis becomes not a past disclosure but an ongoing event that keeps returning, producing the sensation of emergence and ruination at once. *Lucifer Eve and Adam* refuses closure formally and theologically; it keeps creation and destruction in play together.

Hazbin Hotel makes the eschatological refusal blunt: "Hell is forever" ("Overture"). That statement cancels rupture, yet cyclically subjecting Hell to genocide. Humans exist at the story's edge; demons personify time. Each carries the marks of a specific era, while angels remain rigid, uniform, and timeless in their order. Characters do not simply move along a timeline; they *are* timelines: embodiments of historical sediment that recombine outside divine control. Hell is less a vestibule to judgment than a dynamic archive where histories linger and mutate.

Lucifer threads morphing through saving the world by saving the day again and again as Lucifer helps the LAPD solve cases and catch criminals, but also helps his many eschatological friends and family. That repetition re-weights the stakes toward the personal: what matters is not the abstract world but the specific people Lucifer loves. Attachments produce a queer temporality in which time is measured by relation rather than chronology. The show punctures the timeline overtly in Season 5's Episode 4, "It Never Ends Well for the Chicken", when the main cast plays 1949 roles; history is performed, not retrieved. The past becomes a stage to be entered and altered, not a ledger to be checked. In all these cases, the story's temporality is made to bend around desire, relation, and repetition with a difference. The Satanic Queer does not merely depict its temporality as Sobchackian "homogeneous experience of discontinuity" ("The Scene of the Screen" 113), it operates in this way.

Seen together, these texts treat 'the story' less as a fixed line to follow than as a code of transformation. A few consistent devices carry that practice. First, reprises insist on difference: "Everyday" returns but changes its function; "no nightingales" returns but annuls the expected cue. Structural deferrals likewise operate by design: origins and ends are postponed to transvalue obedience into dissent, making delay itself a narrative ethic. Citational overdrive turns songs, slogans, and scripture into joints rather than ornaments; citation sutures disparate times and authorises sanctioned detours. Relational weighting then recalibrates measure: time is counted in

attachments—Lucifer’s cases, Aziraphale’s diaries—rather than in prophecy, such that relation becomes the Satanic engine of plot. Crucially, this relationality exceeds the boundaries of any single text. In the popcultural arena these works circulate in parallel, sometimes explicitly citing one another, sometimes merely echoing devices, and in doing so they both contend with and credential each other. The result is a networked field in which intertextual citation and shared motifs cross-authorise competing tellings; oppositionality is not erased so much as metabolised into a dynamic of mutual legibility, where rivalry and reference co-produce meaning and dissolve the possibility of a singular, stable counter-story.

Chapter 4

Morphing Satanic Identity

A central problem in current debates on the self in computational culture is that digital identity is too often approached only from the vantage point of the internet user. Such a perspective says little about the stories and storyworlds through which a digital self is made legible, about how ‘the digital us’ interact with narrative forms, or how those forms are adapted to the conditions of digital environments. Traditional literary frameworks falter when the text is itself a medium whose boundaries traverse platforms, and game theory is only intermittently helpful, since a series, a feed, or a streaming show remains what it is and not a game. What is needed is a synthesis that treats identity as a narrative-technical process that unfolds across media, while acknowledging that digital infrastructures impose their own formats on how selves can appear.

An anti-essentialist orientation toward identity remains necessary, yet, as Irma van der Ploeg and Jason Pridmore stress, it must be joined to a sober recognition of technological efficacy: “if technology defines situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (12). One consequence is a subject calibrated by the routines of platforms. Rather than the neutral “user,” we inhabit the role of a “formatted subject,” a self “structured by design to elicit reliable routine functioning and an assured effectivity,” so that “worlds, things, and people” are formed by the representational strategies of social computing as our “affects, dispositions, identities, and interactions” receive structure in socio-technical assemblages (Thomas 6). The ambient surround of identity formation accordingly shifts. As Jean Baudrillard’s account puts it starkly, “we have come to live not so much alongside other human beings (...) as beneath the mute gaze of

mesmerizing, obedient objects” (Baudrillard 25). Annika Elstermann draws inference: in this milieu, identity work is composed of serial media and the consumer goods attached to them rather than intersubjective situations (Elstermann 67). If digital identity has exploded, this is partly because the social field that once stabilized recognition is saturated with programmable objects and narrative commodities that circulate without pause.

Deleuze’s ontology, as read by Gavin Rae, clarifies why such a field does not simply fragment identity but reconfigures it as multiplicity. Univocity means that being “maintains the same sense of being” (Rae 87) across entities, yet this commonality is difference itself; being is not unitary or undifferentiated but “nothing but difference,” fully compatible with “multiple ‘forms’” without presupposing any original unity from which they would derive (Rae 88). There is, in Rae’s formulation, “no unified, original domain that creates different multiplicities,” just as “different multiplicities” do not culminate in a final whole; each is “radically and absolutely different from others” (Rae 88). Identity under univocity therefore appears not as a core essence but as a procession of differentiations that remain commensurable only at the level of being as difference. From this angle, the digital self is not a stable datum but a set of divergent actualisations.

The passage from virtual to actual is decisive here. Rae notes that “each multiplicity only is by passing from virtual being to actual being,” and although the origin and end of each passage differ, “the path is common” in the minimal sense that to be actual is to have undergone such a conversion (Rae 94). This picture suits computational culture, where profiles, posts, streams, and avatars instantiate, archive, and recirculate partial actualisation of a subject that are always in flight from other possible actualisation. Identity explodes not because it vanishes into nothing, but because it appears as many, each a different cut, through a virtual field.

Deleuze’s account of nomadic distribution gives this proliferation its geometry. In a “nomad nomos, without property, enclosure or measure,” things and persons “distribute *themselves* in an open space” covering “the largest possible space” without delimiting it in advance (Deleuze 36, emphasis in the original). Such distribution is “demonic rather than divine,” since demons “leap over the barriers or the enclosures,” confounding the borders by which representation sorts beings into proper places (Deleuze 37). The relevant hierarchy is not one that measures proximity to a principle, but one that asks whether a being “leaps over” its limits “in going to the limit of what it can do” (Deleuze 36). In this regime “everything is equal” only in the sense that “equal being is immediately present in everything,” while things “reside unequally in this equal being” (Deleuze 37). The digital environment pushes subjects toward this

nomadic distribution: identities do not own fixed territories, they traverse feeds, tags, servers, and scenes, leaping over boundaries between properties and roles.

The speed and plasticity of such traversals can be named hybridisation. As Patricia MacCormack succinctly puts it, “Hybrids are not nouns, but verbs. They are inherently unnatural and resist naturalisation because they cannot be placed within taxonomy—they move too fast and transform too quickly” (145). That description matches the experience of a self continually recomposed by uploads, edits, filters, and cross-postings. Theories of life writing and subjectivity register similar transformations. Identity is constructed, in language, and discursive; it is not essential or inherited, and consciousness, hence identity, is dialogical (Smith and Watson 65). Recent accounts therefore treat identities as projects of “doing,” actions that aim to have an impact, becoming standpoints for producing knowledge and self-knowledge (Smith and Watson 71). Assemblage theory accordingly describes persons as concatenations of claimed and ascribed identities, multiple and sometimes conflictual subject positions, regimes of recognition and refusal, fantasies, surveillance, and networks of relation that join them to others in psychic, affective, rational, and embodied ways. Autobiographical projects are “modes of self-inscription entangled in intersecting assemblages” that modulate the production, circulation, and reception of identity (Smith and Watson 72). If digital identity explodes, it does so into these hybrid assemblages and dialogical projects that move faster than categories can fix.

Slavoj Žižek provides a crisp triad that names the trajectory of this explosion. First, the difference between living and artificial entities is undermined; second, the distinction between objective reality and its appearance is blurred; finally, “the identity of the self which perceives something (be it appearance or objective reality) explodes” (Žižek, “Cyberspace” 105). The last moment does not describe an annihilation of subjectivity so much as its dispersal across registers, devices, and scenes that no longer posit any subjectivity or objectivity. Crucially, Žižek also reads Deleuze to insist that the new emerges through repetition. Repetition does not reiterate the way the past “effectively was,” but the virtuality that the past contained and that was “betrayed by its past actualization” (Žižek, *Organs* 11). Hence “the New can only emerge through repetition,” through re-creating the event as new each time by shifting the balance between actuality and virtuality (Žižek, *Organs* 13–14). Digital identity, iterated across posts and platforms, is precisely such a repetition that draws fresh actualisation from a shared virtual reservoir.

A literary case study makes the stakes of separation and self-making vivid. In Glen Duncan’s *I, Lucifer*, the titular narrator wants to reject “the job (...) of spending all that would

remain of time working against God. The job of personifying evil” (Duncan 208). He complicates Milton’s line “Evil be thou my Good,” (Milton, Book IV, line 110) insisting, “I don’t like evil. It hurts” (Duncan 209). The point, he says, is “not good nor evil—but freedom,” and for an angel there is only one freedom: “freedom from God” (Duncan 210). He longs to “just get on, freely, with being me,” and confesses the “terribly burning question” of who he might be “outside of my relationship to You Know Who” before concluding with a provocation: “When you get right down to it, I’m really only guilty of one [crime]: wondering” because “the road to hell (...) is paved with intriguing questions” (Duncan 211). These lines stage a form of identity that appears when the anchoring relation to a transcendent ground is suspended. The scene is not offered as a template for digital subjectivity, but as an allegory of a self that tests limits, detaches from a central authority, and seeks to discover what it can be across new distributions.

The sensory and ethical reorientations of electronic space condition how these experiments feel. Vivian Sobchack argues that “electronic space constructs objective and superficial equivalents to depth, texture, and invested bodily movement” (*Carnal Thoughts* 158). Saturated color and hyperbolic detail replace depth, while “constant action and the simultaneous and busy multiplicity of screens and images” replace the gravity that orients the lived body with a spectacular sense of freedom, “and freedom from the body.” This techno-logic tends to “diffuse and/or disembody the lived body’s material and moral gravity” (Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts* 158). The exhilaration of montage and multitasking is thus coupled to a loosening of embodied weight, which can feel like both liberation and drift. If identity explodes, it does so within a sensorium that privileges surfaces and velocity, making it harder to sustain the slow investments that once anchored personal narratives.

Time undergoes a comparable transformation. William Brown observes that in digital cinema “time, like space, becomes a continuum that can be traversed in any direction,” so that “time becomes ‘spatialized,’” enabling movement from real to imagined or remembered moments without marked division (Brown 2). Elana Gomel insists, however, that narrative remains temporal even when space is elaborately constructed. The lesson of new media is that the techno-creation of spaces enhances temporal progression by allowing multiple converging or diverging plots. Narratology should therefore adopt the *chronotope*, Bakhtin’s term for the “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships” in literature, a concept he “borrowed” from Einstein as “almost, but not entirely” a metaphor (Gomel 26–27). In digital culture, the *chronotope* multiplies: threads interlace, flashbacks embed in streams, and archived

moments recur as live stimuli. Identity explodes into chronotopic strands that the subject must braid in real time.

This chronotopic expansion intersects with a discursive change that Alan Kirby calls “earnestness” (151). Many digimodernist texts, he argues, condense a pseudoscientific framing and an absence of historical consciousness into earnestness, which is “not exactly seriousness” (154). Seriousness would be a rational response to contemporary problems, but earnestness is a depoliticised and desocialised turn toward the mythic, the consumerist, the electronic-textual. In objective terms, “earnestness is excessive” (Kirby 154), a discursive effect of shifts in cultural content and dominant personal values. It proved politically consequential when the rhetoric of leaders after 9/11 became “mythicized and emptied of all critical intelligence,” aligning them with the worst of digimodernist style (Kirby 154). The point for identity is that a culture of earnest myths and electronic sincerity invites selves that perform intensity without the ballast of critical context.

The psychology of omnipotence illuminates why such performances can feel powerful while masking fragility. Perversion, write Dustin Kahoud and Danielle Knafo, “is related to unconscious fantasies that disavow reality and create illusions that impart fake power” (23). The display of control conceals powerlessness and terror, the avoidance of intimacy hides a longing for closeness, and “the heights of excitement veil an inner deadness” (Kahoud and Knafo 23). The discourse has long been tainted by moralising, translating sin into pathology while still treating “perverts” as “monsters, Devils, and abominations” (Kahoud and Knafo 24). Yet theories of omnipotent fantasies also discern a split between adaptive creativity and destructive pathology, distinguishing a creative form of omnipotence from a form that leads to harm (Kahoud and Knafo 120). Transposed to digital milieus, these observations warn that the thrills of unlimited posting, performative outrage, or algorithmic reach can hide dependency and exhaustion even as they generate real creativity.

Digital identity’s explosion is therefore overdetermined. Platforms format subjects and their relations, while a commodity ambience replaces intersubjective situations with devices and serial media that command attention. Ontologically, identity cannot return to unity, since in a univocal field it is multiplicity, a set of passages from virtual to actual that never complete themselves. Spatially and politically, identity distributes itself nomadically, leaping across enclaves and confounding the hierarchies of representation with what it can do at its limit. Culturally, hybridization accelerates, identities become projects of doing, and autobiographical practices entangle with assemblages of recognition, surveillance, fantasy, and relation.

Phenomenologically, screens displace depth, motion diffuses bodily gravity, and time becomes a traversable continuum. Discursively, earnestness elevates mythic performance while weakening historical sense. Psychodynamically, fantasies of power proliferate that can both animate creativity and conceal depletion.

This chapter examines how recent Satanic figures unsettle the presumption of stable identity by treating categories such as ‘Devil,’ ‘angel,’ ‘villain,’ and ‘sovereign’ as roles assembled in practice. I begin by showing that celestial and fallen statuses operate as positions within a circuit rather than fixed essences; contemporary narratives stage movement across that circuit so that angelic memory and demonic office can be occupied at once. I then reframe desire as a public technique that elicits, names, and tests wants; identity is produced in scenes of consent and risk rather than discovered beneath them. From this premise, I specify reclamation as a method that converts injury into capacity across language, performance, and institutions, with the aim of structural change in names, offices, and procedures that code new possibilities rather than merely suggest them.

The middle sections demonstrate how style renders this dissolution legible. Camp treats authority as costume and repurposes the Devil’s archive so that moral terror appears as a stylised, usable past. Drag then operationalises the splice by joining diabolical iconography to gender theatre, teaching that categories endure only while their arrangements are maintained and therefore can be remade. A visual theory follows in which morphing bodies model meaning through variation rather than origin; legibility comes from patterned relays across versions, not from a stabilising essence. The chapter closes by showing how Satanic female characters redistribute sovereignty into acts of refusal, care, and choice that hold insofar as they are enacted, so that the throne of Hell appears as a set of practices rather than a metaphysical property. Rather than seeking a single essence or a stable characteristic, the analysis tracks how attributes are recombined, how functions shift with context, and how the figure accrues meaning through use. The emphasis falls on practice and arrangement, not on interior truth.

4.1. Celestial/Fallen

Popular culture’s Devils increasingly refuse the vertical certainty of ‘above’ and ‘below’. In recent fictions the figure oscillates between celestial and fallen, and at times inhabits both at once. This dismantling of the binary is not merely a contemporary whim but resonates with deep theological ambivalences and with alternative demonologies. George Aichele’s proposal of a

“new polytheism” is suggestive here. He argues that evil is less the work of a single, monolithic Satan than an effect of conflicts among many daimones or finite gods, while monotheistic frames retrofit the Bible’s demons as bad angels under a renegade leader so as to preserve doctrinal unity (Aichele 139). Contemporary texts mobilise this plurality on the level of character and ethos. Their Devils are not only tempters and tyrants. They are commentators and confidants, sometimes reluctant bureaucrats, sometimes reformers, often mediators of desire, and, crucially, they are figures through which the very grammar of obedience and rebellion is rethought.

A brief theological backdrop clarifies why this ambivalence is legible. Classical Christian teaching insists that Satan is a creature. The patristic and scholastic line, from Tertullian (Forsyth 356) through Origen (Almond 43) and Gregory the Great (Almond 54) to Thomas Aquinas (Kotsko 120), treats Lucifer as an angel created good, endowed with intellect and free will, and capable of sin by refusing divine order. Traditions outside the canon, such as the aforementioned apocryphal text *The Life of Adam and Eve*, make the angelic status even more emphatic, calling Satan “first born” (*The Life of Adam and Eve*, qtd. in Almond 39), chief among the angels, and narrating his refusal to venerate Adam. In *The Life of Adam and Eve*, the cause of the fall is pride, the wish to be as God, a hubris figured in declarations like “I will set my throne above the stars of heaven” (*The Life of Adam and Eve*, qtd. in Almond 40). The fall becomes a war in heaven, with Michael defeating Satan, memories of which touch down in the Gospels as the vision of lightning falling from the sky. Even after the fall, however, the line between angel and Devil is not erased. Angels, whether faithful or rebellious, may be seen, can assume aerial bodies, and Satan himself can show forth “as an angel of light” (Almond 39). He remains powerful but not infinite, always a creature rather than a rival god. This twofold inheritance, at once lofty and abased, helps to explain why film and television so often stage the Devil as a figure who retains angelic comportment, memory, or mien, as in the birdlike mannerisms and self-description as “first angel” (Hansen 183) in Gregory Widen’s *The Prophecy* (1995) or the cherubic blond ringlets on Lucifer’s head in TV show *The Sandman* (2022–2025). The boundary between celestial and fallen is thus already porous in the theological archive, which is why its contemporary figurations feel recognisably orthodox and iconoclastic at the same time.

Good Omens makes this porosity the motor of its tone and plot. In the first scene of Episode 1 of Season 1, “In The Beginning” set in Eden, narrativises this fluidity into a comedy of crossed intentions. Aziraphale, the angel, confesses that he gave away his flaming sword to help the newly exiled couple survive. He worries that he might have done wrong, only for Crowley to wonder if he had done a good thing by handing Adam and Eve the apple, only to

comment “it’d be funny if we both got it wrong,” (“In the Beginning”). The exchange ends with Aziraphale’s tart reminder that such misrecognition would not be funny “at all,” but the point remains that God’s ‘ineffable’ plan: as accounted by Aziraphale, “beyond understanding and incapable of being put into words”: beyond their grasp and perhaps beyond the simple sorting of good acts and bad ones (“In the Beginning”).

This exchange between the two protagonists in particular is the Satanic Queer in motion, as within the *Good Omens* fandom, the Aziraphale/Crowley pairing is widely known as “Ineffable Husbands,” a label that crystallised after the television adaptation intensified the romance’s pining register compared with the novel. (“Aziraphale/Crowley”). Fans explicitly ground the choice in the series’ refrain: “Aziraphale calls god’s plan Ineffable. This word is brought up many times throughout the series, so the name is fitting” (“Ineffable Husbands”). As Fanlore records, “In the early days of the fandom, based solely on the book, ship names included A/C or ‘Air Conditioning’ (...), and ‘Consenting Bicycle Repairmen’ [...]. Later, on Tumblr, fans took to calling the ship “Ineffable Husbands,” in reference to God’s ineffable plan,” a shift also driven by the fact that “‘Air Conditioning’ caused problems with unrelated posts turning up in Tumblr searches” (“Aziraphale/Crowley”). The nickname has since stabilised alongside the smush term “Aziracrow,” with most users treating them as interchangeable (“Aziraphale/Crowley”). Measurably, the pairing’s reach is substantial: a search of the tag “Ineffable Husbands” on a fan fiction website Archive of Our Own (using stylised short name AO3) returns 11,855 works for the ship at the time of writing this dissertation (Archive of Our Own).

Good Omens repeatedly treats good and evil as shifting categories, often through humorous banter that exposes role expectations as performed rather than essential. Crowley admits that he “ought to be making people’s lives even worse” (*Good Omens: Lockdown*), yet during a pandemic finds he “just... do[es]n’t have the heart for it” (*Good Omens: Lockdown*), since causing harm would mean real suffering for people already miserable. In the series, he quips that humans beat him to inventing the Spanish Inquisition and to starting the Second World War, and that he only claimed credit in memos to Hell to protect his position (“In the Beginning”). The joke cuts two ways: demonic evil is shown as bureaucratic performance, while human violence needs no supernatural prompting. These moments consolidate the show’s moral argument. Agency is distributed, not monopolised by celestial poles, and ethical action emerges from situational care rather than from fixed alignments. Crowley’s reluctance to harm and his tongue-in-cheek paperwork for Hell recast “demon” and “angel” as occupational scripts that can

be misplayed, resisted, or rewritten, which aligns with this dissertation's broader claim that Satanic figures operate as practices rather than essences.

Season two extends the institutional involvement. In Episode 1 of Season 2, Crowley enters Heaven where he accesses confidential files to Archangels' council transcripts because "they never change their passwords" ("Chapter 1: The Arrival"). Crowley's ploy folds angelic memory into demonic cunning, a neat comic image of how the celestial persist within the fallen. Across these scenes the Crowley's Satanic identity is neither fixed demonhood nor latent angelhood. It is a shuttling between posts, conducted under the sign of a plan that cannot be fully known.

The series *Lucifer* explores the same instability through explicit frustration and a spanning mind and body. The pilot establishes a fallen prince who has "retired," who likes to "punish," and whose peculiar charisma draws out people's hidden desires, yet he is also a client in therapy, a partner in police work, and a reluctant heir to omnipotence ("Pilot"). At the heart of this device is a sustained quarrel with providence. When a good priest dies, Lucifer rages at the "cruel, manipulative" God whose "plan" appears to make no room for genuine righteousness, turning life into a game in which "nobody can win," whether saint or sinner ("A Priest Walks Into a Bar"). The frustration is not abstract. It is lodged in a damaged angelic body and in a history of rejection. When Chloe touches his wing scars he begs her, "don't, please," ("Manly Whatnots"), a simple plea that gathers shame and vulnerability into one gesture. The show returns to the wound in a wry question of Lucifer's therapist, Linda, who asks "Are wings like body hair?" ("Manly Whatnots"), but the joke does not erase the pathos of a being who cannot wholly shed what he was.

After the events surrounding one of the LAPD's cases, Lucifer expresses remorse for endangering Linda. She answers: "walked into this with my eyes wide open, chose to be your [Lucifer's] friend and face all that comes with that. The good, the bad and the crispy" ("The Good, the Bad, and the Crispy"). Diegetically, "the crispy" names the body of Chet Ruiz, a human caught up in a case the protagonists investigate. Chet dies after stabbing Charlotte Richards, whose body at the time is inhabited by the Goddess, Mother of Angels and co-creator of the universe. She pulls the knife from her abdomen, and a brilliant light erupts from the wound, striking him in the face ("Sympathy for the Goddess"). Linda later becomes implicated after the Goddess/Charlotte asks for help disposing of the body ("The Good, the Bad, and the Crispy"). The killing can be read as self-defence, but also as accidental manslaughter, an unintended effect of a celestial inhabiting a human body that both resists and acclimates to such

occupation: Charlotte survives unscathed, whereas Chet's mortality is fatally overexposed ("Sympathy for the Goddess"). Linda's triad, "the good, the bad and the crispy," therefore situates this material and celestial condition outside a simple moral binary while recognising the corporeality of the experience as its necessary, unavoidable incident.

The line's intertext is equally instructive. By echoing Sergio Leone's *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966), the episode title rewires a familiar genre matrix: ugliness in Leone's film is embodied by Tuco, a figure marked as morally ambiguous and socially outside, not only as an outlaw but also through his Mexican ethnicity (White 143). Leone's characters follow established Western archetypes (White 140). In *Lucifer*, by contrast, "crispiness" jabs at corporeality rather than at moral rank, and the Satanic figure remains in tension with archetype, neither purely villain nor purely redeemer, but a role that must be chosen and performed in concert with others. Linda's affirmation, voiced in the face of danger, makes that point explicit. She accepts "the good, the bad and the crispy" ("The Good, the Bad, and the Crispy") as coexisting obligations, which underlines this dissertation's claim that Satanic roles are not given and separate; they are elective, relational, and performable together.

Lucifer's corporeality is most forcefully troubled in the Chloe Decker arc. In season 1, episode 4 of *Lucifer*, "Manly Whatnots," Chloe refuses to accept his bodily invulnerability, and at his request she fires her gun at him; to his surprise, he bleeds ("Manly Whatnots"). The wound figures blood as a flowing boundary between the celestial and the mortal, a boundary that marks an ontological rather than a moral status; the status in question is embodiment. Kristeva theorises blood as the limit-case of the abject because it stages "the life force outside of the body" (Kristeva 53). In her interview with Chelsea Coon, performance artist Jelili Atiku offers a parallel account when recalling a work with an ethically slaughtered goat's cadaver:

My head is colonised symbolically by the goat, and the blood gushing onto my body was flowing, uncontrollable to make my audience understand the exposed blood [...as] an essence of life. When confronted by this it is for you to negotiate and engage with. Can you hold it? Can you confront it? Can you see? Can you see the reality, the truth? I become an embodiment. I begin to embody, and the word embody is to be 'completely it' without pretending. I wasn't acting it; I was embodying it. (Coon and Atiku 195)

For Atiku, blood is the essence of life, its visible medium, and a vehicle of engagement that enables embodiment. Gil Anidjar similarly argues, with reference to the Eucharist, that "It [blood of Eucharist] no longer signifies the invisible body of Christ mysteriously found in the sacrament and distinct from other, material, bodies, but rather embodies the visible members (the flesh and blood) of the community" (Anidjar 58). Read through this lens, Lucifer's bleeding functions as an expression of community with the human, a joining that is corporeal before it is doctrinal.

The *Lucifer* series withholds a full explanation until season 5. A provisional answer proposes Chloe as a miracle conceived through divine intervention, which raises for Lucifer the anxiety that his love may be another of God's designs. The show then supplies the operative account: angels can self-actualise, and Lucifer becomes vulnerable in Chloe's presence because he chooses that condition, even before he consciously understands that choice. As showrunner Ildy Modrovich puts it,

A constant theme or truth of our world is, we have a choice. Things are up to us and even angels have free will. When we decided that, this is just another exploration of that theme. He decides to make himself vulnerable and because his brain is kind of behind, his body does it for him. That's why angels self-actualize and have the powers they have, be they good or bad. They are trying to tell them something that they need to learn. (Modrovich, n.pag.)

The premise, then, is that the Satanic body is capable of decisions about itself even before the deliberate act is taken. This is the Satanic Queer in exemplary form: blood and vulnerability register as a choice in becoming, already underway before reason intervenes, and they displace the question of evil from moral taxonomies to embodied experience.

Chilling Adventures of Sabrina crystallises the hybrid between the angelic and the profane by revealing angelic blood in a witch's body. When a vampire recoils at the taste of Sabrina's blood and asks, "You're a celestial?" Sabrina answers, "My father was an angel. I have his blood" ("Chapter Twenty-Six: All of Them Witches"). As she frees herself she adds a humanist codicil that reframes cosmic conflict as interpersonal ethics: "Consent, it's real" ("Chapter Twenty-Six: All of Them Witches"). The exchange folds celestial lineage into an ethic of choice and mutuality. What looks like a revelation of rank becomes a lesson in how power should be exercised. Blood marks capacity but consent governs its legitimate use.

Sabrina's hybrid status then scales from body to timeline. The series complicates her doubleness by staging two Sabrinas through a time paradox. In the original timeline of the show she is trapped in the ninth circle of Hell, an imprisonment that triggers catastrophe across Earth and Hell ("Chapter Twenty-Five: The Devil Within"). Sabrina secures the Unholy Regalia, travels back in time, and prevents the imprisonment, which induces a split that leaves Sabrina Morningstar to rule Hell while Sabrina Spellman resumes adolescence on Earth. This duplication is not a Gothic double built on oppositionality. The Gothic double traditionally externalises suppressed vileness as a distorted mirror. Here the two Sabrinas align in temperament and aim, cooperate across scenes, and treat duplication as a logistics of care rather than a symptom of repression. Time becomes a malleable tool that permits distributed obligations and a Satanic Queer handling of chronology that values simultaneity over purity.

This returns to the political question that animates the throne of Hell. Sabrina wants the crown and an ordinary life. The paradox resolves not through renunciation but through distribution. Both Sabrinas continue as one continuous figure in narrative terms and coordinate aims rather than contend for dominance (“Chapter Twenty-Eight: Sabrina Is Legend”). The series withholds Heaven as an operative locus and treats “celestial” less as a realm than as a trait borne in blood that aligns with Hellish and human lineages alike. Blood thus functions as a medium of continuity and community rather than a badge of separation. In this configuration, hybrid condition grounds agency in consent, practice, and shared embodiment rather than in fixed metaphysical rank. Sabrina’s body liquefies the border between Heaven and Hell and her choices articulate the ethic by which power is legitimated.

The cosmological stakes of this duplication surface again when the existence of two Sabrinas destabilises the realms. The Metatron as Heaven’s emissary comes to meet them in Hell and prescribes a remedy of merger in a ritual that demands absolute surrender of distinction: “Enough chaos. Let the merge begin. Sabrinas, close your eyes, and invite the darkness of space into yourselves. Imagine yourselves floating, weightless. Empty yourselves of your troubles, your identities, your souls. Let yourselves go. Release and surrender to my voice. I will transform and transmute you into one” (“Chapter Thirty-Three: Deus Ex Machina”). The rhetoric of order seeks to convert multiplicity into a single obedient subject and treats identity as expendable material to be transmuted for cosmic equilibrium.

The scene discloses a second layer of celestial politics. Ambrose, Sabrina’s cousin and a warlock, warns that the realms are on a collision course because of eldritch terrors from the stars. He also notes the oddity that their celestial visitor did not foresee this crisis. The puzzle prompts Lucifer to address Metatron as “sibling” and to assert parity in kind: “you forget, we are both Celestials” (“Chapter Thirty-Three: Deus Ex Machina”). Metatron replies with the cold axiom of administrative sovereignty: “there will be order at all costs” (“Chapter Thirty-Three: Deus Ex Machina”). The cost is meant to be one or both Sabrinas. The families of Morningstar and Spellman resist and Metatron is killed, yet the collision persists. The solution arrives not through divine fiat but through a child’s game. The two Sabrinas settle who will cross to the alternate Earth with Rock, Paper, Scissors. Spellman prevails, Morningstar departs, and the portal deposits her in the TV-sitcom world of *Sabrina the Teenage Witch* (1996–2003). She is greeted by her aunts, played by Caroline Rhea and Beth Broderick, the original actors from the 1990s adaptation. The scene disrupts its diegetic ontology as the laugh track, familiar from that series, sounds. The show converts multiversal fracture into intertextual hospitality and treats cross-

media continuity as a safety valve for cosmic pressure. In formal terms, the cameo and canned laughter stage transmediality, transferring characters across distinct media grammars, such as network sitcom, streaming horror-drama, and meta-crossover, so that narrative identity persists through a change of medium as much as through a change of universe.

Lucifer toys with an upward reversal of the vertical axis of patriarchal divinity by figuring Lucifer not as God's creation but as God's son, a celestial by lineage rather than by allegiance. In a Season 5 arc he even contemplates becoming God after his father's retirement, as if divinity were a position on a corporate ladder rather than an essence; as the "new God" he plans to eradicate war and hunger and to remove hangovers, a list of fixes that treats omnipotence as an instrument for making life "better" in both moral and consumer terms ("Nothing Lasts Forever"). These resolutions challenge his supposed malevolent essence and resonate with centuries-old theodicies that ask why God refrained from eradicating evil and, more profoundly, why He allowed it to exist in the first place. The father-son antagonism often reduces the patristic narrative to a family quarrel: "This is who you made me when you cast me away" ("God Johnson"), "I'm your son. And... You rejected me" ("God Johnson"). God replies with contrition: "The fact of the matter is, I don't even remember why I was ever so angry with you to begin with... For what it's worth... I am sorry. I truly am... And I am proud of you, Samael. I am proud of the man you've become..." ("God Johnson").

The apparent reconciliation fails, since the interlocutor is not God inhabiting a mortal body, but a schizophrenic man who believes he is God ("God Johnson"). From a Deleuze-and-Guattari inflected perspective, this doubling has twofold significance: narratively, Lucifer believes he is speaking to his father and therefore articulates the truth of their relation; theoretically, the scene marks the structural impossibility of resolving the quarrel while nonetheless laying the issue bare. Scripturally, a final confrontation between Satan and God ends time; here the confrontation is staged by proxy, so there is no eschatological closure, although there is a personal one, since the exchange grants Lucifer emotional clarity ("God Johnson"). The motif later softens into a joke—"Disappointing fathers is a rite of passage" ("Once Upon a Time")—or curdles into bitter self-knowledge: "You're a bad man and I'm not. I'm much, much worse than that" ("Stewardess Interrupts"). By the final season he narrates a very biblical campaign for Hell's throne, a "long story" that involves burning up, proving worth, and becoming "the Big Man," while a counter-voice insists that heroism is found in everyday acts rather than only in wars for thrones ("Nothing Ever Changes Around Here"). In the end Lucifer embraces his place in Hell, but he runs it as a psychotherapy centre for lost human souls, a

descent that paradoxically ascends him into the role he once wished God would play (“Partners ‘Til the End”), and that realises the Satanic Queer’s unfixable movement.

I argue that, in these Satanic Queer narratives, the celestial versus fallen differentiation falters even when it is framed as performative rather than essential. The boundary between the traits attributed to each side is not primarily transgressed; it is not prefigured in the first place. This does not render morality redundant. Instead, moral valuation ceases to determine the essence of identity and becomes one register of action within an ontology of embodiment and practice.

These narratives also multiply the Satanic figure’s roles. He is a rebel who stages the costs of confronting institutional power: when *Good Omens* declines to cast down another prince of Heaven to avoid admitting an “institutional problem” (“Chapter 6: Every Day”), obedience and disobedience appear structured by bureaucratic optics as much as by truth. He is a liberator who offers knowledge with the risks of choice: the Eden scene reads as an act of care as much as subterfuge, with the flaming sword given for warmth and protection rather than for war (*Good Omens*, “In the Beginning”). He is a mediator of desire who refuses containment and opens a social space where people speak their wants aloud, producing both healing and harm, exposure and relief (*Lucifer*, “Et Tu, Doctor?”; *Lucifer*, “Pilot”). He is an erotic presence who cuts through repression with blunt admissions and with the fragility of a body that remembers wings. These shifts entail a capacity to embody contradiction. He is both victim and victor, the one who punishes and the one who suffers the projections of others, the one blamed for every atrocity committed “in [his] name” (*Lucifer*, “#TeamLucifer”) and the one who longs to be judged only for his “own doing” (*Lucifer*, “#TeamLucifer”). Taken together, these roles confirm that Satanic identity in my corpus is not an essence secured by moral polarity but a set of practices that can be chosen, combined, and performed.

The reconfiguration of time and identity amplifies this fluidity. Theory of “queer time” argues that there are inherently queer styles of filming, writing, coding, and narrating that challenge linear notions of time and the identities bound to them. Time may be represented as discontinuous entanglement, exposing the constructed nature of normative temporalities and allowing singular temporal realities to stand without being streamlined into conformity. Popular series draw on these strategies to stage Devils and angels in moments of uncertainty and in-betweenness, and to encourage audiences to question their own performed identities as they watch stories that loop, reset, and replay key choices under altered conditions (Belmonte Ávila and Encarnación-Pinedo 6). In this sense the Devil’s oscillation between celestial and fallen is

also a temporal movement, a rhythm of recall and reinvention rather than a simple ontological jump from one state to another.

Patricia MacCormack's view of becomings and demonic multiplicities offers a final conceptual cue. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's citation of the Gospel cry "I am legion" (Deleuze and Guattari 239), she suggests that the Devil announces a mode of being that is heterogeneous and recruiting, an "infective" queer process that shifts planes of desire and unsettles dialectics anchored by gender, sexuality, and sacral divisions (MacCormack 148). The emphasis falls less on essence than on movement and more on "other-form" perception than on identity as possession (MacCormack 148). If we transpose that intuition to popular culture, the Devil reads as a fluid assemblage that includes the sacred and profane, the sexual and the secular, and that circulates through non-theistic appropriations as well, such as civic Satanisms that deploy Satan symbolically. No single 'true' Satanic identity is available. What we see instead is a broad, unstable mix of historical, cultural, and symbolic elements constellated around a figure who travels well across genres and debates.

To observe that these texts shift religious rigidity into human fluidity is not to deny their debts to older mythic and theological sources, including the Old Testament, gnostic rumours, and, perhaps most of all, a Romantic legacy that ennobles rebellion. It is to note that the all-or-nothing options of celestial purity and demonic depravity give way to stories that stage freedom as entanglement and moral action as iterative choice. What matters is not whether a being is above or below, but what they do in relation to others under conditions in which power justifies itself in the language of plans. In that world, it makes sense for a Devil to ask for an apology, to worry about bad examples during a pandemic, to want to be God in order to fix obvious problems, and to despair of the very plan that assigned him the role of villain. It also makes sense for a vampire to discover that a teenage witch carries angelic blood and that her most important doctrine is consent. The vertical ladder remains a recognisable image. What our stories keep showing, however, is how often the figures on it climb, fall, pause, and traverse its rungs in ways that turn the ladder into a circuit. The Devil is not simply celestial or fallen. He is the unstable hinge where the two meanings meet and where the falsity of each becomes visible.

4.2. Satanic Desire

Popular culture persistently couples the Devil with desire, not merely as an allegory for lust but as a way to think about how wanting is named, judged, negotiated, and cherished. In *I, Lucifer*

the narrator's consciousness becomes a relay for others' impulses: "The thought spread like a virus" (Duncan 12), and the minds that "made themselves known to me, shyly, came out like pubescent boys to a queer professor" (Duncan 12). Desire here is both confession and contagion, at once voluntary disclosure and social transmission. His self-interrogation sharpens the ethical dilemma that follows: "what, after all, had I done? (And what had I done that He hadn't known I was going to do?)" (Duncan 12). If omniscience anticipates acts, then the moral status of the impulse is suspended between foreknowledge and freedom; contemporary screen narratives repeatedly dramatise that suspension through the Devil's intimacy with human wanting.

Lucifer turns that intimacy into method. One of Lucifer's powers is to learn what people desire, not to fulfil their desires but to perceive and name them. The archival association of the Satanic with desire is retained; the moral blame is dispersed, since the Devil tempts not by originating the impulse but by compelling others to articulate it. Lucifer announces, "Trust me, if there's one thing I know, it's desire" ("Wingman"), and the line recurs across situations in which he elicits or recognises other people's wants, anchoring a seriocomic theory of detection in which truth emerges as desire is made speakable. A wry aside extends the claim: "The Devil usually has impeccable gaydar" ("St. Lucifer"), which aligns him with a cultural trope of trained sensitivity to coded signals; the point is not to fix orientation but to signal a practised literacy in reading desire in public and private. The literacy is tested on himself. When his therapist asks, "what do you truly desire?," he answers without bravado, "I want her to choose me" ("Anything Pierce Can Do I Can Do Better"), "her" being Chloe Decker. Desire is thus recast as a scene of consent and selection rather than conquest, a reading the show's slow-burn romance confirms when their first sexual encounter registers as the culmination of negotiated trust ("Love Handles"). Even outside romance the series insists that desire is elective and accountable; desire binds through chosen risk rather than coercion. Against this ethic the show sets a maxim that functions as a complaint about punitive providence: "Nothing pisses God off more than exercising free will" ("They're Back, Aren't They?"). The quip names a cultural suspicion that wanting freely invites sanction, and it marks the Devil as both a custodian and a scapegoat of autonomy.

The show radicalises this alignment by making desire the engine of Lucifer's most extravagant aspiration. "You really wanna know why I'm doing all of this? Why I'm trying to become God? I'm doing it for love," he tells his angelic brother: "For the love of a human. I am trying to be God so that I can finally be worthy of her" ("Is This Really How It's Going To End?!"). Desire here writes a teleology of transformation. The Devil's goal is not dominion but worthiness, not power over but fitness for another. The announcement does not settle the ethical

stakes of omnipotence, but it insists that the drive that motivates even an attempted apotheosis is relational. Desire is thus rendered not reducible to appetite. It becomes a movement that shifts status and identity toward an other and toward a shared future. The remark also returns us to Duncan's provocation. If the Bearer of Light's name was revoked because wanting became a site of illumination, the screen Devil's subsequent career suggests that the illumination persists, now as the exposure of what people ask of each other and of what they are willing to become in order to be chosen.

I read *I, Lucifer* as casting desire first and foremost as a claim to selfhood outside hierarchy. The narrator names the moment of individuation with exuberant precision:

The crystallization of selfhood, the moment of realising that I was, indubitably, myself, separate from anyone or anything, rich with time and potent with the desire to spend it away from home, to squander it, to lavish it on my own deeds and desires, to set myself aside from God (*aside* theologians please note, not *above*), to wake up in the morning and think: Holy shit, it's me! What shall I do today? A rush. *The* rush. (Duncan 88-89, emphasis in the original)

Here desire is the energy of separateness, not a climb within a divine pecking order but a step outside it. The book then frames the same impulse in explicitly political terms: it is "freedom to imagine existing without God. That thought had made a difference and that thought, that liberating, revolutionary, epoch-making thought, was mine" (Duncan 11). Desire is thus presented as an exercise in independence, a refusal of tutelage that grounds the Satanic Queer as a practice of becoming rather than an essence.

Just as crucially, desire generates community. "The thought spread like a virus" (Duncan 12), the narrator reports, and those who shared it "made themselves known to me, shyly, came out like pubescent boys to a queer professor" (Duncan 12). The pairing of "virus" and "queer" is not incidental. It figures desire as both confession and transmission, an avowal that moves between bodies and creates a public of recognition. The phrasing inevitably evokes the HIV/AIDS history that devastated queer communities while also catalysing new forms of mutual care and political organising, which is why I read this scene as more than recruitment; it is an account of collective formation through shared wanting. The giveaway, as the novel quietly signals, is that Lucifer's desire to be himself is automatically queer, not because it codes sexual identity, but because it aligns with a morphic archive that is unstable, plural, and still liquid. In that sense, the Satanic becoming is an exercise in the Satanic Queer: desire marks a self setting itself beside God, then becoming legible to others who do the same, so that individuation and affiliation arrive together.

Good Omens gives that exposure a similar cadence by staging desire as the attempt to name an "us" against the gravitational pull of Heaven and Hell ("Chapter 6: Every Day"). In the

season two finale Aziraphale, freshly courted by the Metatron, and Crowley, who refuses both institutions, try to articulate what they are to each other. “We’re a team, a group. Group of the two of us,” Crowley says, before proposing that they “get away from them, just be an us”, after which he hears the angel suggesting accepting Heaven’s condition of the two working together under their agenda (“Chapter 6: Every Day”). Crowley hears the offer filtered through the bureaucratic desire to purify, since Aziraphale also promises that he can “restore” Crowley to angelic status and make it all “like the old times. Only, even nicer” (“Chapter 6: Every Day”). Crowley counters with a refusal that is also an avowal: “We don’t need Heaven, we don’t need Hell, they’re toxic.” When Aziraphale pleads, “I need you,” he means it, yet Crowley replies that he understands “a whole lot better,” and the scene resolves in the minor key of unconsummated confession. Crowley kisses Aziraphale on the lips and he says “We could have been... *us*” (“Chapter 6: Every Day”). “I... I forgive you,” Aziraphale answers, the mismatch registering how institutional frames reroute the language of wanting into the language of judgment (“Chapter 6: Every Day”). The sequence is not a negation of love. It is a study in how desire must be disentangled from the obligations and offerings of systems that ask lovers to become legible within their hierarchies.

In *Angels Before Man*, Lucifer first encounters Michael in the colosseum during Michael’s triumph. Rosier names him “the most popular angel in all of Heaven” (Nicolás 50). Hearing the name, Lucifer repeats it as if to steady himself and to summon what he cannot yet contain: “‘Archangel Michael, Archangel Michael, Archangel Michael.’ He tried to gather himself, but he felt broken into streams” (Nicolás 50). The repetition reads as incantatory, a ritual that at once evokes and attempts to exorcise the figure, like speaking “Bloody Mary” three times. The moment functions as transgression by desire since Lucifer falls for an archangel and the attraction accelerates his trajectory toward the fall. Nicolás’s phrasing “broken into streams” is a pointed lexical choice. It registers liquidity that recalls Heraclitus’s *panta rhei* while also activating a contemporary digital lexicon of streams and streaming. The novel’s image names a subjectivity dispersed across channels rather than centred in a stable form. Extradiegetically, contemporary culture refracts the Devil across multiple platforms, so the line reads as an oblique cultural wink. Within the scene it marks the instant when eros fractures composure. Language splinters into repeated proper nouns and the self follows suit, which is why the first love scene also reads as the first slip.

Lucifer’s role in the Heavenly structure is the angel of beauty and of worship, and he visits Eden on God’s orders to praise him in private (Nicolás 86). Worship is configured as an

enacted role that saturates the body with longing. “It was always easy to settle into his role: once he set his mind to worship, it ignited his entire body. All of his heart weighted with burning adoration for the Lord; his muscles weakened from it, became nearly limp. The desire to utter praises conquered his tongue” (Nicolás 114). The passage frames devotion as technique and appetite at once. Voice, musculature, and will align in a choreography that treats praise as somatic event rather than abstract assent. The novel thereby establishes worship as a transmissible intensity that can in principle be retargeted, since its grammar is bodily ignition rather than doctrinal proposition.

That transference becomes visible when Lucifer’s attention settles on Michael. In a quiet scene of touch and looking, the narration tracks the drift from fraternal affection to a desire that seeks unbounded fusion: “Lucifer reached for Michael’s hair and tousled the curls, as the other had done to him; he wished to braid it. Longing churned his stomach. He wanted to sit there with him, he wanted to hold him, he wanted to wrap his arms around the other until they were so close, he’d struggle to know where his body ended and Michael’s began” (Nicolás 155). The sentence structure accretes wants that move from gesture to engulfment. Hair becomes the test site for control, care, and interlacing. The wish to braid is a wish to yoke bodies and narratives. The figuration treats the boundary between persons as a membrane that can be softened by repeated devotion until it yields to a shared form. The scene insists that eros is not a mere rival to piety. It is piety’s neighbour and method.

The kiss confirms this neighbourliness by naming intimacy itself as liturgy: “This, this here, could be worship. ‘This—’ (...) This could be religion” (Nicolás 156). The repetition marks recognition rather than hesitation. The discovery is not an argument about theology. It is a recognition that the same bodily ignition that once oriented toward God has found a new object and a new rite. The novel does not stage blasphemy for its own sake. It stages a queered shift of sacred forms, where posture, speech, and surrender are redeployed to bless the beloved. The effect is to expand the field of what counts as religious experience until it includes same-sex desire as a mode of attention that organises the self and confers meaning.

God in *Angels Before Man* is also written as a desiring figure whose want is for undivided worship. In Eden God notices Lucifer’s distraction (Nicolás 169) and issues a direct claim: “When you are in Eden (...) I should have your full attention” (Nicolás 170). The imperative renders devotion as ownership of the gaze and the mind. It also reveals that divine authority depends on the management of angelic attention. Later, when Lucifer and Michael perform public praise, the singer wonders about the audience’s true object: “It makes you wonder

who they all really worship—Father or us two” (Nicolás 175). The question exposes a fault line between charisma and sovereignty. If worship flows toward presence, voice, and beauty wherever they are felt most vividly, then the performance produces a measurable redistribution of glory. The novel translates jealousy and idolatry into an analytics of attention, where metrics are not numbers but crowds, hush, and heat. The same mechanism ties the theology of desire to the narrative of downfall. If worship can be redirected, then the fall is not simply disobedience. It is a reprogramming of devotion that privileges the beloved over the source and worship as a portable form whose somatic grammar enables eros to appropriate the rites of praise and to remake holiness as intimacy with a specific other. In concluding terms, Nicolás renders Lucifer’s fall as the predictable consequence of a system in which attention is the currency of the sacred and desire decides where that currency will be spent.

Several critical motifs that often surface as discussions of sexuality can be read, within this corpus, more directly as analyses of desire. The figure of the Devil has long been associated with temptation and forbidden love, which popular texts deploy as a coded critique of normativity. In these scenes the Devil becomes a symbol of erotic transgression that destabilises binary moralities of sin and virtue, casting them as constructs designed to uphold systems of power and exclusion. Spectacle is not a distraction from this critique but one of its tools. It interrogates the structures that demonise certain wants by staging the vitality of those wants in forms that are public, funny, or melodramatically sincere. At the same time, these narratives celebrate resilience by aligning desire with the capacity to persist in choosing. The metaphor of the closet illuminates a more general epistemology of wanting. Lucifer is “out in the open” about who he is, yet many around him doubt him or treat his identity as a metaphor. The point extends to desire itself. One can name what one wants again and again, and still be asked to translate it into other people’s schemes of meaning. The Devil’s role as the one who coaxes secrets to the surface therefore reads as an anti-closet practice, a refusal to let wanting remain inaudible.

Taken together, these materials present desire as a practice that is at once revelatory and negotiated. It discloses what is at stake for subjects and binds them in scenes of consent, selection, and risk. It can be erotic and romantic, as in Lucifer’s admission that he wants to be chosen and his confession that he strives to be “worthy” of a human partner, and it can be companionate and insurgent, as in the *Good Omens* attempt to name a two-person group against moral bureaucracies. It can be comic, as in the aside about “gaydar,” and it can be mournful, as in the *Good Omens* Season 2 finale. What these stories decline is a simple economy in which wanting is either sin to be punished or appetite to be indulged. Instead, they depict desire as the

medium through which persons make and unmake themselves with others, and they assign to the Devil the task of keeping that medium visible.

4.3. Reclamation as Technique

Reclamation names a practical technique that turns injury into capacity. In queer activism, the redeployment of queer models how stigma can be refitted as instrument. The move is not merely linguistic; it lives in bodies, performances, and institutions, and it travels into adjacent symbolic fields. In contemporary occulture, the Devil becomes a working sign for reorganising desire, dissent, and difference. Debates over assimilation clarify why reclamation matters; industrial tactics such as queerbaiting show how promise without delivery normalises; institutional performances by modern Satanic groups relocate questions of belief into law and procedure; naming and persona organise candour without authenticity talk; and popular music mounts reclamations that centre Black queer autonomy and pleasure. Taken together, reclamation here functions as a Satanic Queer method: it produces scenes rather than hints, records change rather than winks, and opens space for consent, care, and elective ties.

In short, reclamation names a practice through which terms, figures, and images once used to injure are taken up again as resources for agency. In queer activism the term itself is exemplary, since “queer” has been redeployed from a slur into an affirmative banner for critique and community. Judith Butler describes this resignifying dynamic as a transfer that “calls into question the abjecting power” of a norm, so that “an occupation or reterritorialization of a term that has been used to abject a population can become the site of resistance” and can spawn “a different order of values,” producing “a political affirmation from and through the very term” that once aimed to erase such affirmation (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 176). Reclamation in this sense is not a purely linguistic manoeuvre. It is a strategy that attaches to bodies, performances, and institutions, and it travels beyond gender and sexuality into adjacent symbolic fields. The contemporary Devil in popular culture often functions within that enlarged field, where an image of cosmic antagonism becomes a tool for reconfiguring desire, dissent, and difference.

Debates inside queer politics help explain why reclamation matters for cultural Devils. Black and brown LGBT critics and scholars have warned that a movement for liberation was being converted into a bounded campaign for rights and recognition within dominant institutions (e.g. Jindal 2008; Ferguson 2003; Spade 2008; Johnson 2016; Reed 2016). As written by Lisa Duggan and Richard Kim in the preface of 2011/2012 special issue “A New Queer Agenda” of

Scholar and Feminist Online, mainstream agendas “shrink the field of LGBT politics” to a narrow band of issues and “argue that increasing lesbian and gay representation in dominant institutions lifts all queer people,” an argument that has often functioned as a “trickle down” theory of rights (Duggan and Kim n.pag.). Reclamation, by contrast, can preserve a catalytic edge. It embraces the stigmatised identity or figure, not to fold it neatly into the status quo, but to transform the demonised into a source of pride and empowerment. This contrast frames much of the Devil’s current cultural work. Rather than a rote villain, he becomes a sign through which stories stage refusals of compulsory purity, expose the governance of desire, and imagine solidarities that do not depend on respectable inclusion.

Industrial and fan practices around representation show the risks when reclamation stalls at the level of suggestion. Eve Ng defines queerbaiting as a tactic in which “people officially associated with a media text court viewers interested in LGBT narratives (...) without the text ever definitely confirming the non heterosexuality of the relevant characters” (Ng 1). She argues that the term has become “a means of holding texts and the producers of these texts to account,” naming a condition of the present media landscape (Ng 2). Such texts “serve a normalising function” (Brennan 3), endorsing “queer outcomes in name only” (Brennan 3), where fulfilment is “possible but never realized” (Brennan 3). Reclamation presses against that deferral. It demands that hints harden into scenes and commitments that redistribute power on screen and in audiences.

For the Satanic Figure, this pressure works only when the character truly changes, and when the narrative records that change rather than winking that the “bad one saved the world” without cost. Lucifer offers a test case. The protagonist’s arc involves sustained ethical reorientation and institutional consequence, culminating in a reconfigured Hell that centres care rather than punishment (“Nothing Ever Changes Around Here”). This is not Mephistophelean banter for its own sake, nor is it only a Miltonic humanisation that leaves the structure intact. Both Mephistopheles and Milton’s Satan remain fallen in frameworks that preserve the binary. By contrast, a Satanic Queer reclamation completes the project of rehabilitation by exercising new possibilities in the diegesis, altering relations, offices, and futures. In this mode the Devil is not merely legible, or sympathetically drawn, but agential in remaking the terms of belonging. This tracks how that completion is achieved across my corpus, where reclamation moves from suggestion to structural change.

Religious discourses show how reclamation of the Devil has already proceeded in parallel, creating a reservoir of images and arguments that popular culture can use. Petersen

observes that in Satanic milieus the figure of Satan is redefined as positive through the reinterpretation of marginal and misunderstood actors as Satanic, a move that allows “sanitisation” of the Devil’s connotations by severing links to panic tropes such as abuse and sacrifice (Petersen, “Contemporary Satanism” 401). Moreover, emblematic Satanic transgressions such as blasphemy and human sacrifice are appropriated as symbolic (Petersen, ““Smite Him”” 361) and thus Satanism “becomes the *practice* of Satan as an adversarial project in an emic sense, a positive affirmation of self through negative deconditioning rather than the *belief* or *impersonation* of Satan” (Petersen, ““Smite Him”” 362, emphasis in the original). Petersen identifies this strategy in atheistic movements, especially LaVey’s Church of Satan, whose “law-and-order” stance couples antinomian rhetoric with respect for the body politic (Petersen, “Contemporary Satanism” 9). It does so not only as “a survival strategy in society,” but also as “a central expression of control” over the Satanist narrative, painting the Satanist “more conservative than a hippie and more transgressive than the average inhabitant of the West,” and as one who “constantly searches for ‘the third way’ or ‘Satanic alternative’” (Petersen, “Contemporary Satanism” 9).

The point for cultural analysis is twofold. First, organisations like the Church of Satan and The Satanic Temple are active participants in popular discourse, especially through social media, so their redefinitions circulate with and within entertainment. Second, as Petersen notes, “violence” is converted into transgression “as an artistic statement,” or “symbolised as a Satanic practice” that may look violent but is not, or that appears violent only from a binary frame (Petersen, “The Carnival” 184). “The political extremism or obscene violence associated with the Satanic is aestheticised” into style and symbol; antinomian force becomes a vehicle for an “a-nomian” end that unsettles the good–evil pairing itself (Petersen, “The Carnival” 184).

Joseph P. Laycock’s analysis of The Satanic Temple adds an institutional register to my argument by showing how Satanic practice operates through legal and civic performance. He notes that the Temple’s actions “problematize our assumptions about religion and religious freedom” and rely on the “performance of religion” (Laycock ix). Their campaigns expose the normalised Christian agenda embedded in U.S. law by demanding equal treatment for a minority whose reliance on the Devil “dramatises the stakes for all non-Christians” (Laycock 183). As Laycock puts it, the group is “forcing a public conversation about where our values lie, what arrangements between government and religious institutions are desirable, and what we mean when we talk about ‘religion’” (Laycock 22). The Temple’s “confrontational” style, including the use of Satanic iconography, frequent legal actions against federal and state institutions, and

community outreach programmes under a Satanic banner, is “designed” to challenge unstated hegemonic assumptions and to pose questions such as, “If a Christian religious symbol on a state capitol does not violate the establishment clause, then why doesn’t a Satanic one?” (Laycock 23). The tactic is not mere provocation; “The deployment of shock value is meant to make people reassess arrangements they have taken for granted” (Laycock 23). In Laycock’s terms, these strategies are added to the toolkit associated with the Devil (Laycock 88), and they work by exposing “hidden contradictions” in dominant Christian discourse (Laycock 23).

Read through the present framework, this is a Satanic Queer practice: identity and agency are constituted oppositionally and performatively rather than essentially, while institutional categories are made pliable by use. The Temple’s lawsuits, monuments, and mutual-aid initiatives do not abolish moral discourse; they shift its terrain from metaphysical essence to public action, from doctrinal purity to procedural fairness. In doing so they queer the boundary between the religious and the secular, the sacred and the profane, the protected symbol and the prohibited one, and they demonstrate how the Devil functions as a mobile technique for redistributing recognition. This institutional performance complements the narrative cases in my corpus: it shows that the Satanic archive is not only a set of stories but also a repertoire of civic acts that reconfigure what “religion” can do in law and in public life.

On screen, reclamation often begins with naming and self-presentation. *Good Omens* opens the register by recalling that the serpent once called Crawley is now Crowley. The tiny shift marks a choice about identity, a self-styling that signals distance from what Heaven and Hell have named him (“In The Beginning”), and of course it refers also to the broader Satanic Archive and the figure of Alastair Crowley. *Lucifer* makes the gesture of name reclamation explicit as humour. “Oh, you’re the Devil,” Linda laughs. “Correct,” he replies, as if to insist that the scandal is not his truth-telling but the audience’s disbelief (“Pilot”). In both cases the reclamation of a stigmatised name serves as a means to emically embody the Satanic Queer in all its transgressive potential. Glen Duncan’s *Lucifer* frames this shift in terms of his names erasure: “Ironical of course that after the Fall they stopped referring to me as Lucifer, the Bearer of Light, and started referring to me as Satan, the Adversary,” he remarks, adding that they “stripped me of my angelic name at the very moment I began to be worthy of it” (Duncan 12). The Devil’s self-identification ceases to be a confession of guilt and becomes a performance, an insistence that the hidden always comes to light.

Theories of persona and performativity clarify how such candour operates without collapsing into authenticity talk. Philip Auslander parses popular music performance into three

interwoven layers, “the real person,” “the performance persona,” and “the character,” all of which may be active at once (Auslander 4). The lines between them remain “ambiguous” (Auslander 5), yet they are analytically useful, since performance is “not being themselves but also not not being themselves,” as Schechner puts it (“Performers” 88). Professional names epitomise that double negative, designating personae that later generalise to “the real people,” so that “David Bowie is not David Jones, yet he is also not not David Jones” (Auslander 5). These distinctions travel neatly to screen Devils, where the reclamation of ‘Lucifer’ or ‘Crowley’ operates at all three layers. The person, the persona, and the character are held together by a name that was once metonymy for sin and is now an index of self-definition. Amelia Jones cautions, however, that performativity has been stretched into a “catch-all” in Western gender and sexuality studies, and that it is often deployed without attention to race and class, thereby marginalising Black studies within queer theory (Jones 36–37). Reclamation that ignores those intersections risks reproducing the exclusions it opposes.

Case studies make these abstract points concrete. Lil Nas X’s music video for “MONTERO (Call Me By Your Name)” composes a digital tableau of CGI, surreal settings, and mythic references in which the artist inhabits and redefines the Satanic. The pole dance descent into Hell and the dethroning of Satan rework the trope of an external adversary into a figure of self-empowerment. The movement is aesthetic and ideological, since the portrayal is not static but evolves through the video, embodying the fluidity of digital identity and queer self-expression. The public discourse that accompanied the release reinforced the reclamation. In 2021 interview with GQ Style magazine, the artist recalls that as a Black teenager with a gospel-singing father he felt God was “tempting” him with same-sex desire, a choice of words that evokes a traditionally Satanic quality and turns it back onto the strictures that branded his desire as transgression (Lil Nas X). On March 26, 2021, on X (then Twitter) he published letter to his fourteen-year-old self, confessing that “we promised to never come out publicly,” but insisting that the song would “open doors for many other queer people to simply exist,” and embracing the charge: “people will say I’m pushing an agenda. But the truth is, I am. The agenda to make people stay the fuck out of other people’s lives” (Lil Nas X). The letter frames the reclamation as care, not provocation for its own sake.

Lil Nas X’s “MONTERO” is not the only Satanic pop hit of recent years. Doja Cat (Amala Ratna Zandile Dlamini), is a Black biracial American singer, rapper, and producer whose 2023 single “Paint the Town Red” quickly achieved major commercial visibility. It did so while staging a high-profile instance of Satanic reclamation. The chorus asserts “she [is] the Devil”

("Paint the Town Red"). The release followed a wave of backlash after she shaved her head, a cycle that included accusations of "devil worship," which she neither disavowed nor absorbed meekly, but folded into the work as material for authorial self-fashioning (King n.pag.). In this sense the track participates in a broader pattern of pop-occultural play, where charges of diabolism become resources for agency rather than occasions for apology.

The video doubles down on this strategy through a carnival of Satanic signs. Doja rides a green devil reminiscent of medieval wall painting, dances in red shrouds with a stylised Grim Reaper, appears painted black with horns, and sits enthroned beside another demon, her two horns outnumbering his one ("Doja Cat"). The iconography is not merely ornamental; it cites the demonic archive and repurposes it for camp spectacle, sovereignty, and control. The lyrical context sharpens the effect: "Fans ain't dumb, but extremists are," followed by "I'm a demon lord" ("Paint the Town Red"). The pairing flips familiar hierarchies. Fans, often dismissed as a herd, are credited with discernment; "extremists," ascendant in contemporary politics, are named as fools. Doja then triangulates herself outside their antagonism, crafting a perverse trinity of fandom, ideology, and the Devil that refuses the policing gaze and recentres her authorship.

Read through the present framework, this is a Satanic Queer manoeuvre. It treats accusation as raw material, converts stigma into style and stance, and uses shock as an emancipatory tactic rather than as empty provocation. Reclamation here is not confined to fictional narratives; it is enacted by a living artist who turns the Satanic lexicon into a toolkit for reconfiguring desire, dissent, and difference. The result aligns with the dissertation's larger claim: once the Devil circulates as mutable sign rather than fixed antagonist, Satanic imagery becomes available for creative world-making that unsettles the Heaven–Hell binary and redistributes power among makers and audiences.

Cathy Cohen's account of deviance as a resource for Black politics helps situate that move. Through the "repetition of deviant practices by multiple individuals," she argues, "new identities, communities, and politics might emerge," transforming "seemingly deviant, unconnected behaviour" into "conscious acts of resistance" (27). She notes that queer studies has often left "the role of race and one's relationship to dominant power" underexamined in shaping "desire, pleasure, and sex," so that labels like 'heterosexual' and 'queer' tell us little about the "relative power" of differently located subjects (Cohen 29). Against a politics of respectability that polices, sanitises, and hides nonconformity to gain conditional citizenship, Cohen asks us to "delineate the conditions under which transgressive behaviour becomes transformative" (38), while recognising that many acts labeled deviant are efforts to secure "greater autonomy" (40),

to pursue desire (30), or to “make the best of very limited life options” (40). These acts may be misread as bids to redistribute power, but often their intent is to create autonomous spaces with the “restricted agency” available to marginal subjects (Cohen 40). Lil Nas X’s Satanic self-crowning reads in this light as a reclamation of stigma that makes space for autonomy and pleasure rather than a fantasy of domination. The Devil’s alignment with deviance and otherness becomes a site where desire can be imagined outside heteronormative frames, and where Black queer agency uses spectacle to dislodge shame. The Devil here is not a person to be redeemed but a role to be inhabited, a function through which self-deification and self-defence become possible in a world that would define salvation in narrowly reproductive terms.

The exchange reframes the Devil’s court as a scene of personal allegiance rather than metaphysical destiny, and it relocates meaning in the act of choosing rather than in the badge of affiliation. Read through reclamation, this is a politics of the intimate. The series stages reclamation in a personal space, not as a global overturning of the cosmic order. The gesture privileges micro-alliances, everyday refusals, and sustained care, and it treats private commitment as the scale at which binaries are made porous. In this configuration, reclamation names the work of carving livable rooms inside hostile architectures, where choice, attachment, and persistence do more than declarations of victory.

Television Devils also reclaim desire as a faculty rather than a fault. In the *Lucifer* pilot the title character explains to Detective Decker that he does not read minds or control sin. He has “the ability to draw out people’s forbidden desires.” The “actual sins,” he says, “are on you people.” When pressed, he frames the power as a “gift from God,” and he names its scope with a mix of swagger and caution, calling himself “walking heroin,” “very habit-forming,” and warning that it “never ends well” (“Pilot”). The exchange decouples desire from guilt and aligns it with truth-telling. It also establishes consent as the hinge, since the gift can be declined. The series plays this refrain against its own star text. In a comic sequence Lucifer tutors another man by handing over his phone and saying, “Now you have access to all my social media accounts: Instagram, Snapchat, Grindr. Go. Release your inner Devil,” then caps it with a prompt, “WWLD? What Would Lucifer Do?” (“What Would Lucifer Do?”). The joke folds a queer-coded platform into a general curriculum of self-fashioning and links reclamation to everyday choices. The stated skills remain constant. “I can be very persuasive with people and tend to see things that others cannot,” he says, but when the detective suggests he is psychic, he rejects mind reading in favour of confession, and ends by asking her what she “desire[s] more than anything

else,” only to be surprised by her immunity to his charms (“Pilot”). Desire remains a field of agency, not domination.

Angelic wings allegorise this choice in *Lucifer*. After leaving Hell, Lucifer asks Mazikeen, his hellish companion and the only demon he trusts, to sever them on a Los Angeles beach. The scene converts hesitation into action and forecloses a route back to Hell. When his brethren urge him to resume his post he refuses celestial leverage and tells Amenadiel, “Remind Dad that I quit Hell because I was sick and tired of playing a part in his play” (“Pilot”). The cutting signifies more than departure from Hell. It marks a redistribution of power from divine ordination to self-authorship. The wings cease to be instruments of office and become the proof of a decision that cannot be rationalised away or reversed. Later turns in the narrative confirm that the severed parts still insist on meaning, yet the act itself asserts a refusal that reroutes control away from God’s script and toward a will that chooses its own limits.

Once the wings are stolen he tries to disavow their value yet cannot let them go. He calls them “A personal item, insignificant” and “The only thing I brought with me to Los Angeles,” then pursues their recovery with urgency (“Favorite Son”). Therapy turns the loss into an enquiry about identity. Linda tells him, “This loss brings up an issue that we’ve been skirting since we began our work together [...] Your identity” (“Favorite Son”). She names the prelapsarian designation, “Before you fell, you were known as Samael. The Lightbringer,” and he refuses it, “I don’t go by that name anymore” (“Favorite Son”). When she frames exile as vocation, “It was a gift,” he rejects the theodicy: “Gift? He shunned me. He vilified me. He made me a torturer [...] ‘Oh, the Devil made me do it.’ I have never made any one of them do anything. Never” (“Favorite Son”).

Lucifer experiences the Devil as a role without agency. Leaving Hell and cutting off his wings are ways to contest the feeling, yet they cannot exhaust the connotations delivered by the Satanic archive. That archive assemblages him as tempter and scapegoat, the one blamed “for all their little failings,” which he refuses through the insistence that he has never compelled anyone to sin (“Favorite Son”). When Linda later proposes plenitude as cure, “When angels fall, they also... rise. All you have to do is embrace all that you are,” he answers, “I can’t [...] Because they stole them from me” (“Favorite Son”). The reply clarifies that the problem is not self-acceptance as affirmation but the terms of acceptance set by others who name, position, and interpret him. The wings remain part of him even when severed and even when disavowed. They index a past he rejects and a role he cannot outrun, which is why he both disowns and pursues them. Read through Deleuze and Guattari, the wings operate as a “meaning-making machine”

(Deleuze and Guattari 36) that organises relations among loss, name, and power within an assemblage that continually morphs him through the Devil, Samael, tempter, scapegoat, and son. The practice of Satanic Queer emerges here as stubborn reconfiguration rather than identity claim. It refuses the archive's capture, recombines signs that would fix him, and insists that agency is something performed again and again at the site where choice meets imposed narrative.

Reclamation also extends to relational futures that do not follow the usual scripts of eros. It reaches toward tenderness, care, and the social labour of keeping one another alive, which is to say, it figures the Devil not only as an individualist but as a social actor. Fan discourse registers this shift. A Tumblr user, youphoriaot7, singles out the platonic bond between Lucifer and Chloe Decker's daughter, Trixie: "i have adored lucifer and trixie together since the moment they came up on screen in season one. they have one of my favorite platonic relationships in the whole show. AND 4x07 IS A PERFECT ILLUSTRATOR OF WHY. I LOVE THESE TWO TO DEATH" (youphoriaot7). Episode 7 of season 4 of *Lucifer*, aptly titled "Devil Is as Devil Does," illustrates my account of the Satanic as actional rather than essential. In the episode, Trixie, who is a child, goes out of her way to be present for Lucifer because she thinks he needs a friend, and Lucifer, rather than replying with a snarky quip, is visibly moved ("Devil Is as Devil Does"). Later he tells Chloe that he would do anything to protect Trixie ("Devil Is as Devil Does"). The scene refuses the reduction of the Devil to seduction or punishment and opens a space where longing can take non-reproductive forms. It shows a Satanic figure as caretaker and confidant as well as lover and judge. The point returns to Judith Butler's emphasis on the social conditions of resignification: reclamation succeeds when it yields "enabling social and political" meanings, not when it simply flips an insult into its mirror image (Butler, *Bodies That Matter* 177). Such enabling requires languages that can hold friendship, mentorship, and chosen kin alongside eros.

The religious-political strand returns here because it underwrites so much of what audiences can recognise as possible. By insisting on equal treatment and exposing Christian normativity, it opens space for Devils in fiction to be something other than evil incarnate. In turn, those Devils yield back to politics a repertoire in which dissent appears as care for concrete others, desire is a gift to be negotiated, and power is suspect when it is opaque. The loop is legible even in small exchanges. When *Good Omens* jokes about "precedents," as when Hell did Heaven's punishing for Job, it flags the bureaucratic history with which any contemporary reclamation must move ("Chapter 2: The Clue"). When Lucifer corrects a human who thinks he

is a Jedi and insists that people “just tell [him] things,” it marks confession as a voluntary practice rather than a technique of divine surveillance (*Lucifer*, “Pilot”).

I read these moments as pointing not to ‘no future’ but to a different future: choice, not duty. The eschatological script that binds subjects to ordained ends is replaced by elective ties, negotiated obligations, and accountable care. Futures are written in practices of consent and solidarity, not in metaphysical loyalties; the Devil becomes a figure for that elective horizon, where institutions are answerable, attachments are chosen, and redemption is worked rather than decreed. Reclamation therefore names a family of operations rather than a single move. It resignifies terms like queer to break the hold of abjection. It uses the Devil to stage desires that institutions would prefer to silence. It allows religious minorities to perform their claims in courts and on social media, unsettling assumptions about freedom. It can centre Black queer accounts of deviance as autonomy, insisting that intent and context matter for how acts become politics. It complicates performativity with persona, reminding us that names travel across bodies and stages without collapsing difference. It cautions against baiting that never delivers and prizes scenes that say plainly what is wanted. The cumulative effect is to free a set of symbols from their assigned jobs. The Devil, reclaimed, no longer serves as a foil to prove the purity of the good. He operates as a function and a role, available for artists and audiences who need to tell the truth about desire, dissent, and the making of selves together. In that sense reclamation does not tidy the Devil into acceptability; it keeps him useful. The sign is recast as a set of moves that travel across media and institutions, converting accusation into leverage and staging refusals that are concrete rather than rhetorical. Where names are chosen and performed, where desire is disentangled from guilt, and where legal as well as narrative arenas register outcomes, the Satanic Queer takes shape as practice.

4.4. Camp Devil

Camp offers a way of understanding why the Devil has returned in contemporary culture with a wink rather than a shudder, as a figure whose exaggerated theatricality converts moral terror into an aesthetic of dissident pleasure. Fabio Cleto’s framing is a useful point of departure: “camp enacts a perversion of nostalgia itself,” twisting old icons against the very constituencies that once claimed them and turning them into “powerful signs of oppositional identities” (Cleto, “Introduction: Pop Camp” 304). The nostalgic romanticisation of Satan as misunderstood rebel participates in this turn in particular. Making him alluring, witty, and even desirable counters the

horror picture in which the Devil is a stain that must be expelled. The move does not simply invert values. It treats the Devil's oppositional identity as something other than a metaphysical antagonist to God, more like a double negation that loosens the original binary. When audiences are invited to enjoy a Devil who would rather drink, flirt, or crack a joke than preside over cosmic malice, past religious scripts are not erased; they are repurposed to serve the pleasures and solidarities of communities historically marked as deviant.

Contemporary depictions also camp the "darker" Satanic attributes, not to neutralise them but to heighten their comic charge. In *Lucifer*, season 3, episode 6, a male stripper is wheeled into the LAPD bullpen inside a giant cake for Chloe's birthday, and Lucifer, accused of arranging the spectacle, deflects with a quip that doubles as a serpentine pun: "Well, much as I'd love to take credit for this, Daniel, Officer Snake Hips is not my doing" ("Vegas with Some Radish"). The joke leans on his presumed association with lewdness while slyly invoking the Satanic snake; symbols, icons, and behaviours stigmatised as sinful for millennia are repurposed as the butts of jokes and witty asides. The result is not mere frivolity but a camp operation that reframes Satanic markers as theatrical resources.

Katherine Sender helps specify the affective grain of this repurposing. Camp, she argues, refuses tidy narratives of triumph and authenticity. These are "not narratives of triumph and overcoming," nor do they ascend toward an authentic self; camp performances are "as self-parodying as they are mocking of the very idea of authenticity," welcoming "trauma, shame, and bad feelings not readily absorbed into discourses of visibility, futurism, and positive images" (Sender 222). The Satanic turn inherits this stance. When the Devil is played, the performance preserves memory of injury while refusing to be policed by it. Camp's irony does not cancel history; it keeps history visible as attitude. The result is a figure who embodies an ethics of nonredemptive survival: theatrical, excessive, aware of the damage done by moralism, and determined to wring enjoyment, critique, and companionship from what remains (Sender 221–222).

This sensibility clarifies the genealogy and the controversy of the "queer villain." As many children's and young adult narratives attest, queerness and diabolism have long been sutured together in a gallery of antagonists. From witches and elegant malefactors to contemporary sorcerers, villainy is marked through queer codes of voice, fashion, and sensibility, and through Satanic attributes such as horns, wings, serpentine familiars, and corpse-pale palettes. These figures are nocturnal, mannered, and remote from domestic reproduction, which aligns them with gothic tropes of vampirism and witchcraft. They threaten the future symbolised

by the Child, and they do so with a relish that registers as camp. The trouble is obvious. Such images risk folding queer aesthetics into a machinery of demonisation. Yet the recent devillainisation of classic antagonists shows how quickly camp can swivel toward reparative humanisation. Studio backstories that soften the so-called evil, and mainstream television that lets coded pairings breathe, bring the villain closer to audiences seeking positive representation. In that environment the leap from destigmatising the queer villain to destigmatising the Devil is short. The children's animated television series *The Powerpuff Girls* (1998–2005), created by Craig McCracken and produced by Cartoon Network Studios, features a devil-like antagonist known simply as "Him." The villain, with his femme flourish and Satanic overtones, is emblematic of the hinge moment, making the link between queerness and the demonic overt and funny. The unseriousness of such figures signals a detachment of the Satanic from religious condemnation, not because belief has vanished, but because camp has made condemnation look heavy, literal, and joyless.

Andrew Ross's account of camp's historical conditions helps explain why Christian symbolism has become a ripe object for this détournement. Camp thrives when an object's "historical association with a power (...) now spent" leaves it available for redefinition "according to contemporary codes of taste" (Ross 312). The Union Jack's passage from empire to punk emblem is Ross's paradigm case. Something similar happens when Christian moral authority no longer sets public meaning with the same force. National laws may still bear its imprint, and public life may still be punctuated by protests that invoke a 'False God', yet the cultural power to define sin is diminished among the audiences that circulate camp. Precisely because religious strictures have wounded queer lives, they supply charged material for camp to process. The point is not to rehearse pieties. It is to convert stigma into style, sanctimony into satire, and prescriptions into props.

This process, however, is not confined to the digital moment. Countercultural performance was already pioneering camp on a large scale. The 1971 premiere of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's rock opera *Jesus Christ Superstar* made this move legible to a mass audience by folding anachronism and irony into the Passion, becoming a cult classic despite fierce controversy. Contemporary Devils use that license. Drag repertoires, to which camp is deeply indebted, repeatedly return to diabolical motifs and render them glittering.

If camp is a practice of theatrical estrangement, carnival is its cousin. Robert Stam, glossing Bakhtin, lists the topoi of the carnivalesque: grotesque bodies, banquet imagery, marketplace speech, and the "bodily lower stratum" that brings official decorum low (Stam 10).

Carnival suspends hierarchy and the “forms of terror, reverence, piety, and etiquette” that instantiate inequality, fostering “free and familiar contact” across ranks (Stam 21). It models an oxymoronic logic in which opposites live side by side and contradiction is permanent, an alternative to the monologic true-or-false of Enlightenment rationalism (Stam 22). It decentralises official speech, elevates popular festivity (Stam 85), and shares with Nietzsche’s Dionysian *fête* a taste for masks and possession, a “blissful alterity” that predates Christianity and survives it (Stam 89). There is room to argue, with Stam, that mass media often relay “insipid, enervated, co-optable forms of carnival,” simulacra that satisfy desire for egalitarian celebration without risking critique (Stam 92). Yet the same analysis concedes, a few pages later, that seriocomic forms “prepare the way for literary ‘carnivalisation’” (Stam 97) and that carnival’s anti-institutional energy can be proleptic of the avant-garde (Stam 99). Popular culture is not a fallen copy of older rites; it is the present terrain on which carnival strategies act, evolve, and contend for power. Mass culture is the most influential arena of contemporary meaning-making (Maly 34).

Television and streaming comedies about Devils show how camp and carnival intertwine. *Good Omens* turns the Antichrist’s arrival into a carnivalesque farce of mistaken rooms and grotesque Satanic nuns whose “answering wink” misrecognises the baby with serene confidence in a camp inversion (“In The Beginning”). God’s narration of Aziraphale’s and Crowley’s favourite meeting place likewise combines camp and carnival, comparing them to Cold War spies: “Everyone knows the best place for a clandestine meeting in London is, and always has been, St James’s Park. They say the ducks are so used to being fed by secret agents that they’ve developed Pavlovian reactions to them. The Russian cultural attaché’s black bread is particularly sought after by the more discerning duck. Crowley and Aziraphale have been meeting here for quite some time” (“In The Beginning”). The espionage conceit underscores the show’s intensified camp effect compared to its 1990 source novel. When the book appeared, in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union’s collapse, memories of Cold War surveillance and analogue spycraft still seemed plausible. By the time the adaptation aired in 2019, however, clandestine meetings in parks had become anachronistic. In a digital age where espionage is imagined through hacking, encryption, and mass surveillance, the idea of exchanging secrets over breadcrumbs feels deliberately out of date. The camp effect arises from this temporal disjunction: the Cold War trope is staged as parody rather than realism.

The supposed clandestinity then dissolves into conviviality when the pair relocate to Aziraphale’s bookshop for what is, essentially, a lunch date. Entering the shop, Aziraphale

cannot resist drawing on Christian language of opposition. Adapting Matthew 16:23, he says, “Get thee behind me, foul fiend,” immediately followed by the polite “after you” as he lets Crowley enter first (“In the Beginning”, cf. NIV Matt. 16:23). The dialogue simultaneously evokes scriptural authority, camps its gravity, and comments on the fluidity of their ontological positions as Aziraphale orders the demon to get behind him, yet also yields the way. The exchange enacts a Satanic Queer dynamic: neither a simple subversion nor a reconciliation, but a performative oscillation between opposition and intimacy.

The scene continues in this register. The angel–demon partnership is staged as an ongoing lunch date where the end of the world is debated in terms of composers, gravlax, Châteauneuf-du-Pape, and single malt. Meanwhile, dolphins, whales, and kraken stand in for a more-than-human commons soon to be turned into “bouillab— bouill-bouillab— bouillab— fish stew” (“In The Beginning”). “Eternity” is imagined not as beatitude but as the endless repetition of *The Sound of Music*, as Crowley jokes “I have heard rumours that your boss really loves *The Sound of Music*. You fancy spending eternity watching that? You could literally climb every mountain over and over and over and over and over and over and over and over” (“In The Beginning”). The joke carries real stakes: “no more Albert Hall,” “no more old bookshops,” is camp shorthand for the annihilation of culture, taste, and the small daily ecstasies of shared life (“In The Beginning”). Hierarchies are inverted by appetite, the sacred is profaned by cocktail umbrellas, and official causes are displaced by conviviality. Where Heaven and Hell demand obedience, camp answers with indulgence.

Chilling Adventures of Sabrina operates at a pop register, staging juxtapositions of cosmic vocabulary and domestic comedy. Oaths are sworn “for the love of Satan” (“Chapter Six: An Exorcism in Greendale”), while Aunt Zelda punctures melodrama with the camp aside that demonic possession is “extremely rare, despite what the False God and his propaganda machine would have you believe” (“Chapter Six: An Exorcism in Greendale”). In “Chapter Twenty: Mephisto Waltz,” the Dark Lord offers Sabrina eternal coronation in exalted rhetoric: “You will blow the horn of Gabriel for me, opening the Gates to the Pit for the aristocracy of Hell, who will attend your coronation. You will wear the crown. You will sit in the throne. And then, once we have danced the Mephisto Waltz, the world will be remade in Hell’s image. All the demon hordes will be freed, and you and I will rule over Hell on Earth, together, for all eternity.” To this, Sabrina replies with deadpan bathos: “Sorry, but I have school.” The exchange collapses eschatological grandeur into teenage routine.

Elsewhere, Sabrina's queenly authority collides with auntly discipline and fashion anxiety:

ZELDA: Ambrose goes with you.

AMBROSE: Hell?

SABRINA: Aunt Z, I'm Queen of Hell.

ZELDA: I don't care if you're the Queen of England. You're still my niece. I won't have you going to one of the Nether Realms without some familial support. Or, of course, we could all come with you.

HILDA: Ooh, blimey, what would I wear?

SABRINA: Fine, Ambrose can come.

AMBROSE: Well, what am I going to wear? ("Chapter Twenty-Four: The Hare Moon")

These tonalities of camp render cosmic stakes legible through the textures of teenage life, not in order to trivialise adolescence but to dignify it. The comic effect is inseparable from its political one. By normalising Satanic vocabulary and refusing piety, the series strips moral panic of its grandeur and reframes Hell as another space in which familial dynamics, wardrobe choices, and youthful autonomy matter.

Lucifer cultivates irreverence through camp wit rather than carnivalesque excess. Lucifer's amended courtroom oath, "so help me Dad," domesticates omnipotence into a family joke rather than a grotesque inversion ("Quid Pro Ho"). The humour is dandiacal and epigrammatic, closer to Wilde than to the marketplace, as in the polished aphorism, "Nothing pisses God off more than exercising free will" ("They're Back, Aren't They?"). In this register, blasphemy functions as a high-aesthetic posture and a critical practice; camp poise replaces carnival degradation, and scepticism is articulated through elegance, control, and timing. This tonal choice positions the Devil as curator of taste as much as tempter, so that his jokes work by stylising authority rather than by mocking it from below.

None of this re-enchants the Devil as a liberator beyond critique. The point is more modest and more exact. Camp's perversion of nostalgia turns the Devil's archive against moral governance, and carnival's suspension of hierarchy supplies forms for that turn to take. Popular culture confirms the effect. When Aziraphale and Crowley debate Armageddon in lists of wines and whales, when Sabrina tells the Dark Lord she has to get to school, when Lucifer swears "so help me Dad," these scenes do not trivialise religion. They expose and enjoy the gap between official life and ordinary attachments. The Devil becomes a vehicle for that exposure. What once demanded exorcism can, in camp's hands, be made to stay, sing, and smile.

4.5. Devil in Drag, Drag in Devil

Drag enters this project as a practice that makes visible the theatricality of identity while absorbing and repurposing the Devil's iconography. It began as a minoritarian art and since the 2009 has moved into the mainstream with the global success of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, which carries queens from bars to red carpets even as drag becomes a flashpoint in US legislative debates. This double pressure clarifies the stakes. Drag thrives on contradiction. It cultivates non-fixed identity, often switching between hyper-masculine and hyper-feminine characterisations, and it invites audiences to watch those switches rather than forget them. Judith Butler's well-known engagement with Esther Newton's *Mother Camp* (1972) is instructive here. Butler argues that drag is not an imitation or a copy of some prior and true gender, and that it enacts the very structure of impersonation by which any gender is assumed, and that there is no 'proper' gender owned by sex as property. What passes for the reality of heterosexualised gender is performatively constituted through an imitation that sets itself up as the origin, so that gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original (Butler, *Gender Trouble* 175). Drag therefore demonstrates what ordinary life conceals. It shows that gendering is always a matter of appropriation, theatricalisation, and doing. In that key the Devil's appearance in drag registers less as blasphemy than as a lucid fit between two theatres of the made.

Popular series that play with Satanic imagery supply a ready archive for this fitting. *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* literalises the goat-headed figure presiding over rites, combining Gothic horror with absurd theatricality. The amplification turns dread into display, and the show repeatedly uses Lucifer's exaggerated presence to critique patriarchal authority by exposing how power relies on spectacle. The icon is thus already halfway to drag. It invites exaggeration, it wears its tail and horns like accessories, and it performs authority by costume. Drag performers who take up Satanic motifs step into this distributed archive. They pull on a wardrobe already cut for performance.

The history of diabolical bodies strengthens the link. Shifting, slippery forms were themselves a sign of danger, especially given the Judeo-Christian association of sexuality with bestial excess. When the Devil sports horns, hooves, tail, or a furry face, he becomes an assemblage that refuses taxonomic stability. The tail reads easily as phallic flourish, the hooves as a choreography of other-than-human gait, the horns as a crown that is also a joke. Drag thrives on such morphing.

A long-running, internationally franchised competition series created and hosted by RuPaul Andre Charles *RuPaul's Drag Race* has brought drag from gay bars and ballroom circuits into mainstream television and continuous online circulation, where runway clips, memes, and fan commentary recirculate performances across platforms. Each episode culminates in a runway organised by a set “category,” in continuity with ball-culture practice, and over the years the franchise has repeatedly featured Satanic drag, placing diabolical iconography before mass audiences.

A widely circulated online instance occurs on the end-of-episode runway of *RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars* season 2, episode 3, whose category was “Parody Movie Sequels” („HERstory of the World”). Katya Zamolodchikova prepared a two-in-one look, a costume designed to transform mid-runway (Fig.1). Such 2-in-1 reveals became so popular that the series coined a house term for them, the ‘ruveal,’ from the host’s name. Katya entered in a short golden sequinned dress and a blonde wig; mid-performance she ‘metamorphosed,’ revealing a long blood-red gown and a bloody pentagram inscribed on her forehead. As she strode on the pink



Fig.1. Katya's Rosemary's Babushka. Screenshot. Source: “Shequel Runway | S2 E4 | RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars.” YouTube, uploaded by RuPaul's Drag Race, 10 Apr 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSSudLKikkk. Accessed 7 Sept. 2025

stage, baring blackened teeth, a voiceover announced “Rosemary's Babushka.” At that moment she is not only a drag queen, performer, or television figure; she is also figured as demonic. She embodies the Satanic Queer morph. The “babushka” tag points to Katya's drag persona as a Russian woman, although the performer is American.

Crucially, the gag operates hypertextually. Katya references *Rosemary's Baby* without cosplaying a specific scene. Instead, she draws on a dispersed Satanic archive of possession, blood ritual, and mass popular-culture successes such as the *Rosemary's Baby* franchise, recombining these signs for camp effect and authorship. The runway thus stages diabolical imagery as a vocabulary of transformation: the body becomes the platform for serial becoming, taxonomy is refused, and Satanic signs are redeployed in a mainstream arena that now includes broadcast screens and the internet, not only the bar.

RuPaul's Drag Race extends the *Rosemary's Baby* archive into camp liturgy through "Rosemarie's Baby Shower: The Rusical," a musical staged by the competing queens in *RuPaul's Drag Race All Stars* season 9, episode 9 ("Rosemarie's Baby Shower: The Rusical"). The challenge is to produce a camp adaptation of not necessarily Ira Levin's classic nor Roman Polanski's cult film, but of the *Rosemary's Baby* franchise. In this mini-production Vanessa Vanjie Mateo is cast as the Rosemary's Baby. When she is born on stage, the camera cuts to a baby pram so that the audience suddenly looks at the other queens from inside the pram, briefly occupying demonic Rosemary's Baby eyes and affectively inhabiting the Satanic Queer. Guests at the baby shower peer into the pram and, in a riff on the Superman catchphrase and its meme version, ask, "Is it a boy? Is it a girl? Is it the Devil?" ("Rosemarie's Baby Shower: The Rusical"). The question explicitly situates the demonic outside the gender binary. A moment later the camera cuts again and Rosemary's Baby, played by Vanjie, enters the stage in full glam, wearing a red latex corset and a top hat with red horns. She greets the room with, "Hello Mother, pleased to meet me," which activates the Rolling Stones intertext, "Sympathy for the Devil," while "Mother" speaks both to the Rosemary's Baby frame and to drag kinship, where drag mothers mentor newer queens and where RuPaul is frequently addressed as Mother, to what he even encourages in his song "Call Me Mother" (2017). Vanjie then dances with men in underpants and leather harnesses, before launching into her verse of the musical number "Holy Guacamole": "Welcome to my party, it's my birthday / You think I'm so naughty, want to run away / Complicated feelings, got you so scared babe / Don't be confused you need to get with it!" ("Holy Guacamole"). The Antichrist arrives as a party, laughs in the audience's face for calling her "naughty," and names the flight as theirs, not hers, while still issuing an invitation: "you need to get with it!" ("Holy Guacamole").

The sequence then hands interpretation to Rosemary, played by Plastique Tiara, who cries out, "I had a vision! (...) There is no such thing as hell, it is just code for the things that we are afraid of and don't understand" ("Rosemarie's Baby Shower: The Rusical"). The demonic infant

becomes the bearer of clarity. Plastique continues, “I don’t understand any of this or any of you for that matter / But that doesn’t make it wrong or evil, it just makes you, you”. Vanjie’s Antichrist answers with pragmatic coexistence: “And if you don’t like me that’s okay then just keep it moving / You do you I’ll do me and we’ll all keep living / But if you’re down let’s clown and cause a celebration / Better than any Devil you know, can I get an amen?” (“Rosemarie’s Baby Shower: The Rusical”). The final “amen” cites RuPaul’s weekly benediction, “If you can’t love yourself, how in the hell you gonna love somebody else? Can I get an amen?” to which the assembled typically respond “Amen,” and then everyone in the studio dance together. Drag here blends camp and carnival; the Satanic drag number functions as a participatory rite that situates the demonic outside gender’s oppositions and converts horror’s archive into a communal liturgy of affirmation. In this way, the *Rusical* makes the Satanic Queer legible as collective practice rather than isolated provocation, which prepares the ground for my next section on how such performances circulate as digital ritual and reshape the archive in real time.

Pythia’s runway in *Canada’s Drag Race* season 2, episode 3, literalises the Satanic Queer morph through a tightly composed act of sacrilegious glamour. She enters in a vinyl or latex nun’s habit, then performs a ruveal to a skin-coloured, rhinestoned catsuit encircled by red arms, with devilish horns concealed under the discarded veil, converting Catholic modesty into a tableau of temptation and glitter (“Screech”). The voiceover supplies the epigrammatic gloss:



Fig. 2. Pythia’s ruveal. Screenshot. “FASHION PHOTO RUVIEW: Canada’s Drag Race Season 2 - Good Girl Gone Bad.” YouTube, uploaded by WOWPresents, www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMSiC1gDkyY. Accessed 7 Sept. 2025.

“Tonight on the runway I’m serving possessed but well dressed,” and, moments later, “You see hell reaching out for me, tempting me to a life of sin and glitter and glamour” (“Screech”). The phrases work as camp aphorisms that collapse the moral and the aesthetic into a single register: “possessed” pairs with “well dressed,” and “sin” arrives inseparably coupled to “glitter and glamour” (“Screech”). The red arms choreograph possession as style, not as horror; the

rhinestones recode sanctity as spectacle; the hidden horns disclose that the diabolic was always already present beneath the monastic habit.

Other notable demonic drag iterations clarify how Satanic signs travel through camp form. In *RuPaul's Drag Race* season 7, episode 3, the runway category “Bearded Beauties” deliberately evokes the history of the freak show while retooling it for a contemporary audience. Pearl’s entry of masculine facial hair paired with feminine drag already reads as a camp commentary on gender legibility, the more so that her fake beard is made of red rhinestones. The scene gains a Satanic surcharge when RuPaul shouts, “The Devil made her do it!” (“ShakesQueer”). The quip assigns authorship to a diabolic agent in order to license excess, which turns the beard from a token of aberrance into a prop of playful transgression. What is on display is not monstrosity but technique: an aesthetic that reframes the spectacular body as a site of knowing quotation and consent rather than as an object of gawking.

Bosco’s look in *RuPaul's Drag Race* season 14, episode 1, pushes the same archive toward high fashion and horror. Clad entirely in black, she wears horns sculpted from her own hair and a bodice engineered so that monumental “demonic horns” sit upon the breasts. Her extra-diegetic gloss resounds: “It’s a little bit Mugler, a little bit Lovecraftian. It’s like if Dita Von Teese went to hell and took over” (“Big Opening No. 1”) and it maps the references explicitly: couture twice over, a canonical author of cosmic dread, and a burlesque icon, each folded into a single body. The chest-mounted horns eroticise the sign of the beast; the hair-horns render metamorphosis as styling rather than prosthetic shock; the black palette sutures glamour to menace. In both cases the performer’s body is the morph we can see: a recombinatory surface where Satanic imagery, fashion history, and queer persona are spliced into legible pleasure. This is the Satanic Queer at work, not as a single symbol but as a practice that assembles archives, edits them in public, and makes their meaning felt through poise, wit, and craft.

Satanic drag also travels globally. In *Drag Race Philippines* season 2, episode 3, the performer Miss Jade So combines Christmas iconography with the diabolic, announcing on the runway, “This look is giving you Santanas (...) I am your Santa with a little bit of devil” (“Who Wore It Bettah?”). The portmanteau and the costume which includes festive “Santa” cues spliced with Satanic detailing engineer a deliberate misfit that reads as pure camp: the joke rests on incongruity, the pleasure on the audacity of the splice. The look is a Satanic Queer morph; it assembles signs that are ordinarily held apart, then treats their collision as a resource for spectacle, authorship, and wit. Read within the broader franchise economy, the moment demonstrates how *Drag Race*’s transnational format enables the Satanic archive to circulate

beyond gay bars and national contexts, inviting local queens to edit it in public and to feed those edits back into global digital circulation. The effect is neither blasphemy for shock alone nor simple parody; it is a compositional practice that keeps the signs in motion and invites audiences to “get with it”: to recognise that camp can hold Christmas, Satan, and drag in the same frame without resolving their tensions.

This coupling also plays through comedy and street performance. The Devil has migrated, generically, from the horror cinema of the 1970s into a space where comedy, musical theatre, and even carolling provide the frame. Audiences recognise an actor underneath the horns and enjoy the flash of double vision. The effect is close to *commedia dell’arte*’s trickster, where seriousness is subverted by cunning and bravura. It also matches a Schechnerian sense of performance as not being oneself and not *not* being oneself. Drag makes the same oscillation palpable. When a queen struts as a Satanic diva the body is morphed into a camp surface that declares its make-believe and insists on its reality at once. Charles Zika remarks on the convention of hairiness, on goatish and donkey-like parts, and on how such traits were used in the Middle Ages to “emphasise his beastly and sensual nature” (Zika 55). Drag takes that ambivalence as raw material. Drag takes that ambivalence as raw material. Hooves become platform shoes, horns become sculptural headpieces, fur becomes texture to be dyed and coiffed. The aesthetic is not only spooky; it is funny, sultry, and sometimes tender. Viewers of *Drag Race Holland* saw Keta Minaj, in a monster-themed runway, make bestiality limbs sparkle (“Icons Only”). *The Boulet Brothers’ Dragula: Titans* opened with Evah Destruction’s theatrical Devil, a number indebted as much to burlesque as to grimoires, in a spin-off broadly akin to the *RuPaul’s Drag Race All Stars* format (“Halloween House Party”). Across national editions of *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, contestants demonstrate how quickly the diabolical can be flipped into a wearable joke about power, appetite, and glamour, confirming that Satanic imagery is a toolkit for camp metamorphosis rather than a fixed emblem of fear.

4.6. Liquid Celestial

In a culture of images, the Devil’s body becomes the site where this morph shows itself, not as a system but as an ongoing performance of linkage and variation. Visual morphs let a figure be angel and animal, real and unreal, singular and repeated at the same time. They cultivate simultaneity and relay, they prefer association to hierarchy, and they insist that what matters is what an image can do next.

Bakhtin already glimpses the morph in his account of the festive body. He notes that, although the “material bodily lower stratum” dominates many scenes, “the gaping mouth” also plays a leading role, “the open gate leading downward into the bodily underworld,” allied to swallowing, “the most ancient symbol of death and destruction,” and to banquet images “linked to the mouth” (Bakhtin 325). He adds that “exaggeration of the mouth” is a traditional comic device visible in “comic masks, various ‘gay monsters’ (...) Devils in diableries, and Lucifer himself” (Bakhtin 325). I read this as an early theorisation of the Satanic body as a site of passage rather than essence. Animation theory sharpens the point. Norman Klein’s vocabulary of ani-morphing names an “animated cycle where metamorphosis takes place,” with proportions pushed to “extremes on either end,” and with a hesitating midpoint, the ani-morph, where “for a few frames, the body (...) does not look like what it was, or what it will be,” literally “between the rest of the cycle” (Klein 22). Klein later describes the ani-morph as “the twinkling monad shape-shifting across dimension,” “solid and absent at the same time,” “like a scar that narrates,” a “Braille of absences,” the drawings that “leave an elegant wound as they dissolve to make way for motion” (Klein 24). Bakhtin’s gaping mouth and Klein’s ani-morph converge: both mark the threshold where bodies overrun their boundaries and become legible as movement rather than substance.

Contemporary Satanic morphs operationalise this threshold through digital craft. In *Hazbin Hotel*, for example, the animation pipeline privileges expressive deformation over strict model fidelity: “It’s all done digitally. Even the storyboards. We use Wacoms and work in Toon Boom Harmony. I’ve made like a million guides on how to do a basic shot. The stylisation is easier in a way because the policy that Viv, Sam Miller and I have is, as long as it looks cool or appealing, that’s it. It doesn’t necessarily have to look like the model sheet. You can stretch Charlie, make her eyes big, and if it’s cute or funny enough it’s getting in. There is a lot of creative freedom. This show is for artists by artists” (qtd. in Hogg n.pag.). The animator’s hand now writes through a tablet rather than on paper, yet the ani-morph’s “elegant wound” persists as smear frames, off-model stretches, and digitally composited reveals. In this idiom the Satanic Queer body does not stabilise as a single shape; it appears in the in-betweens, the brief instants where form slips and recomposes. That is the through-line from Bakhtin’s diableries to Klein’s ani-morph and to today’s digital sequences: a grammar of becoming that treats mouths, wounds, and stretch as the very language of metamorphosis.

Hazbin Hotel makes that morphic performance explicit by tying the Devil to the internet’s visual vernacular. Neon palettes, glitch pulses, and meme-tuned timing embed Lucifer

in a field where images thrive by circulation and recombination. He is introduced as a comically depressed fallen angel who fusses over rubber ducks, dressed like a ringmaster whose costume pulls on a long history of stage Devils. Biblical motifs sit on the surface—a snake curling the hat brim, an apple on the sceptre—so that the image can plug into familiar circuits of recognition. At any point the body changes state. Wings open, eyes redraw, horns grow, a flame catches between them, the coat sprouts eyes, cheeks that read as blush spit fire. The shifts do not inaugurate a new essence and they do not erase the old. They operate like nodes in a network that can be visited and left, taken up and dropped, as the scene demands. This is memification rather than mythmaking. The figure loses theological heaviness and gains kinetic accessibility. Camp is the nearest name for the tone, since the emphasis falls on artifice, on humour, and on taking authority less seriously than it takes itself. A meme does not abolish meaning. It refuses to let any one meaning stand still.

Good Omens opens with a transformation that situates the Devil within a long relay of references. A serpent fluidly becomes Crowley and then grows wings. The image hyperlinks a tradition that links the tempter and the snake. Scripture does not name the serpent as Satan. Later commentary stitches figures together across texts, Milton imagines Satan possessing a snake, and popular consciousness accepts the identification as if it were always there. The series plays that history in plain sight, without fixing a single source of truth. Crowley carries serpent residue even when he seems human, as he can partially transform to unsettle an opponent, opening a jaw too wide, propelling forward with reptile rhythm. The eyes do most of the work. Their shape and color morph according to stress and aim. Early on, just fallen, the face tips toward the uncanny, large yellowed eyes, a reptilian cast. Later, preparing to resist the apocalypse and Heaven's plan, the eyes take on more visible whites, a human register that reads as a small act of alliance with the only side that matters in the story, the human one. Alone or in Hell, the balance shifts again. The whites linger because Hell does not feel like home, the yellow deepens because there is no reason to pass for human. The view never stabilises into a single look. The image remains in motion, and that motion is the point.

The show extends morph into gender and embodiment without staging revelation. According to *Good Omens* the novel, "angels are sexless unless they really want to make an effort" (Gaiman and Pratchett 89). Neil Gaiman has written on his X account that presentation is chosen: "They don't identify as males. They mostly present as males" (Gaiman). Casting follows suit: Michael is female presenting and uses she and her, Beelzebub is played by two different actresses across seasons yet uses "he" and "him" pronouns, and the change in face between

seasons is dismissed in a gaslighting moment: when Crowley asks about the change, Beelzebub says “What, this old thing? I’ve had it for ages” (“The Arrival”). Uriel is played by a Black actress Gloria Obianyo, Saraqael by Liz Carr, a disability rights activist and a wheelchair user. An Archangel with a disability is an inclusive take on 1 Corinthians 15 and its view of an imperishable heaven body (NIV 1 Cor 15). Crowley appears twice as a woman: when he is a

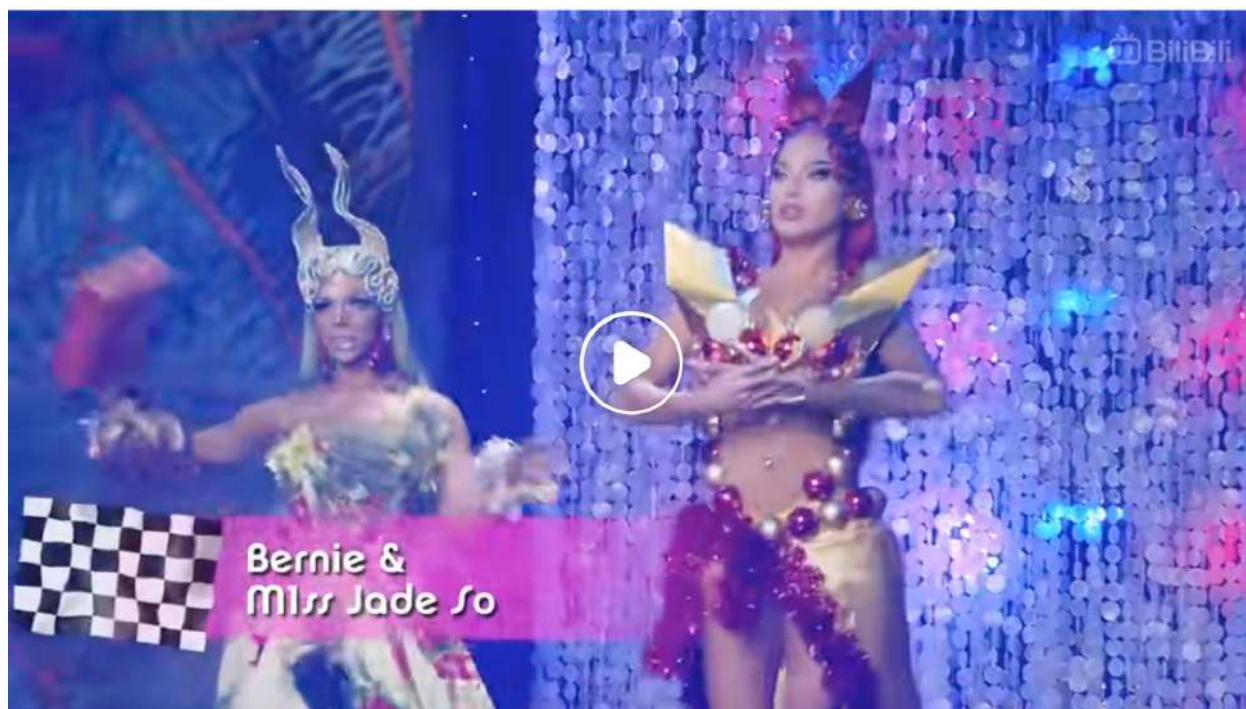


Fig. 3. Miss Jade So’s ‘Santanas.’ Screenshot. Source: “Drag Race Philippines Season 2 (Episode 3).” *Bilibili*, uploaded by KatyKaty, 16 Aug. 2023, www.bilibili.tv/en/video/4788199922866688.

Nanny for American diplomat’s son (“In The Beginning”), and when he is watching Christ’s crucifixion (“Hard Times”). For a viewer outside the story this reads as an actor in drag. Inside the story Crowley is straightforwardly a woman. The production thus lets two kinds of knowledge sit together. We see the material conditions of making television and we see a diegesis in which celestial embodiment is variable by choice. The figure’s variability becomes a way for the series to insist that identity is a matter of doing and showing rather than discovery. Crowley’s wardrobe of bodies performs that argument in a cosmology where angels and demons pick how to appear.

Lucifer turns the morph into a threshold of truth that must be traversed. The title character looks like its actor, Tom Ellis, because that is the form chosen for life among humans; when needed, a demonic face is revealed, skin giving way to muscle as the surface burns and a Devil Face glares. The reveal functions as proof for the sceptical partner and as an instrument of power for those who need to be frightened, yet it also indexes role and feeling. When he unconsciously

lays down the duties of Hell and lets love rearrange his priorities, he loses the Devil Face and cannot bear its absence; the image maps guilt and self-hatred onto the mask and ties those affects to punishing, returning once he reclaims responsibility. A second morph runs through his back: two vertical wounds recall cut wings. The wings are stolen, they grow, they are cut again, they change colour, and they unfurl without visible mechanism through cloth or skin; he reacts to them as part of selfhood even when they are not there. The body remains metamorphic, and the metamorphosis carries ethical and emotional charges without settling into a final form.

These effects depend on image technology as much as on plot. Contemporary CGI liquefies not only the narrative but the medial status of the image itself: compositing, simulation, and digital rigging allow surfaces to scorch, musculature to surface, and wings to breach skin without seams or practical apparatus, so that the shot reads not as a trick cut but as a change of state. The ontology of the character is authored in post-production as well as in performance; identity becomes durational, revisable, and demonstrable through alterations of texture, light, and topology. In this register, truth appears as a managed transformation rather than as an essence unveiled.

These morphs are not only about bodies. They loosen time. *Good Omens* moves Crowley through Job and the crucifixion, through ancient Rome, Victorian England, and the seventies, where an occult revival brushes against pop music. The same face carries us through those epochs. *Hazbin Hotel* delivers Lucifer's fall as a cut-out music sequence, then introduces him as a harmless entertainer, saving the demonic display for later. The effect across titles is to unhook the Devil from chronology. If we treated Satan as one character, the story would be non-sequential by design. The figure looks like one person playing many people, each with a partial genealogy. The genealogy of the Devil is itself a rhizome, not a tree. New nodes sprout from old ones, relations are lateral rather than vertical, and no single branch carries the truth of the whole. This atemporality is not evasive. It is a way to hold the entire archive in reach and to select tactically. What was once condemned can be reclaimed for humour. What was once terrifying can be turned toward care. A binary scheme of good and evil drops away, not because the stories abandon ethics, but because they ask smaller questions about what a figure will do next with whoever is present.

The visual repertoire underpinning this practice derives from long-standing iconographies of monstrosity. Medieval demonic figures combine animal and human morphology to present a bestial perversion of the divine image (Dendle 61). Deliberate morphological disorder is central to the effect. Historically, such catalogues elicited fear by projecting anxieties about sexuality

and excess; in contemporary design contexts, the same repertoire functions as an invitation to play. Designers appropriate these motifs to produce garments with ocular embellishments, horned headpieces, humorous tails, and hoof-like footwear used in club settings. Digital compositing and animation facilitate rapid substitution and recombination, making the interchange of parts a basic aesthetic unit. The outcome is not a stable grammar but a modular system in which components recombine without fixed hierarchy or constraint.

American storytelling supplies a related lineage in which shapeshifters terrify by refusing to stabilise into one side of a binary. Doran Larson notes a “popular survival of patristic notions of Christ and Satan as symbiotic tricksters,” which feeds a literature “filled with shape-shifters” who “flow back and forth, frustrating attempts to stabilize binary opposition, and thus exposing the ambivalence (...) in our embrace of the good” (Larson 58). Recent television turns that survival into set piece. *The Sandman* (Netflix, 2022–2025) stages a metamorphic duel in which Lucifer and Dream speak themselves into a sequence of forms. Wolf calls forth mounted hunter, serpent answers horse, bird of prey answers serpent, bacterium answers bird, world answers bacterium, nova answers world, universe answers nova, anti-life answers universe, “the dark at the end of everything.” The question is what form can meet negation without erasing it. The scene teaches that morph is not decoration. It is a mode of contest in which authority is performed by speed and by the capacity to become otherwise while remaining oneself. The Devil’s role is to push the contest to the limit and to force the scene to imagine life as a larger answer (*The Sandman*, “A Hope in Hell”).

The contemporary narratives relocate the Devil as a situational oppositionality, an anti-everything that can be counted on to object when institutions demand obedience. *Hazbin Hotel*’s Lucifer steps back from rule and lets the daughter lead. Crowley saves a bookshop and mocks the bureaucracy that would destroy it. Lucifer refuses or accepts power in order to prove something about worth. None of these choices contradicts the morph. They depend on it. The figure must toggle from menace to melancholy to persuasion without changing names. The toggling becomes the character.

Because this performance is for the eye, it meets the audience where recognition works fastest. A ringmaster’s suit signals carnival. A flicker of scales signals temptation. A coat that looks back signals haunted couture. A cut from drag to diegesis signals that gender is both act and reality. The casting of celestial beings in *Good Omens* widens the address. White is not default. Disability is present. Names and pronouns can shift for sincerity and for effect. Viewers are trusted to keep actor and character in view at the same time, to register form and function

together, to enjoy references without requiring doctrinal precision. The self-referential jokes, which let the mythology wink at itself, fit a larger confidence. Popular mythology can handle being handled.

Visual morphs, understood as Satanic queer and rhizomatic performance, show why the Devil has become so legible without becoming simple. They let a figure be embodied and ethereal, angelic and animal, comic and grave at once. They reorganise genealogies around repeatable parts and restage the past as a field of prompts rather than a chain of causes. They refuse the judgment that instability means absence. In a media environment where literature is audio-visual, where fan cultures author alongside authors, and where platforms turn scenes into rituals, morphs match how people learn to read. The Devil is remaking himself because the culture keeps proving that he can.

The evidence sits in the images. A serpent becomes a person and spreads wings. Eyes slide along a spectrum of human to reptile and back. A face burns through the mask of daily charm. Feathers grow or fall. Not one transformation decides the meaning. Butler's reminder that gender is imitation without origin applies beyond gender. The Devil's morphs expose a related dynamic. Copies confer the impression of an original Devil; what the copy offers is not fakery, but an image the culture can use and use again, an image that keeps its power by refusing to be only one thing.

This visual logic also discloses how culture itself operates. It proceeds by algorithmic jumps and shifts, apparently disoriented and even random, yet capable of weaving and webbing assemblages that hold, however provisionally. In such an ecology, the morph is not an exception; it is the rule by which images circulate, attach, and transform. The Devil, figured through these iterative conversions, becomes a lesson in cultural processing: variability generates legibility, and repetition without a single origin produces authority without essence. Read this way, the Satanic image is not merely illustrative; it is diagnostic of a media environment in which truth appears as pattern across versions rather than as a solitary, stable form, preparing the ground for the next section's account of how these patterns are read, shared, and contested in digital audiences.

4.7. She, Satanic

The transferability of the Satanic performance often leans on an older theological claim that celestial beings lack biological sex, which allows gender to appear as an expression rather than

an essence. Gender bending therefore reads not as scandal but as ontological instability, a power to appear otherwise. This instability matters for Lilith most of all, since her legend crystallises a refusal of subordinated embodiment. Lilith's long and complex history, together with her frequent appearance in popular cultural texts, would merit a study of its own. Since she is not the central focus of this work, I will only briefly sketch her archive here.

Across late antique and medieval Jewish sources, Lilith accrues meanings that hinge on ontological instability and a refusal of subordinated embodiment: her name drifts into the Christian Bible by mistranslation, while Jewish literature consolidates her as night demon, succubus, child stealer, and as an answer to the tension between the two Genesis creation accounts (Faxneld 55–56). In *Genesis Rabbah*, she becomes a sexual demon who harasses Adam after expulsion, and, as Per Faxneld notes via Daniel Boyarin, a once-symmetrical demonology morphs into “a representation of demonic female sexuality” (Boyarin 96 qtd. in Faxneld 56). *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* supplies the classic script of refusal—Lilith rejects Adam's sexual dominance, speaks the divine name, flees, and bargains with angels—embedded in a burlesque frame that includes the notorious scene of Nebuchadnezzar's daughter “expelling a thousand farts an hour” (Faxneld 57). Even so, the tale encodes a serious claim about male primacy in sex and marriage; later expansions pair Lilith with Samael, invert the Edenic couple while deepening her demonisation, and cast her as an infant killer whose threat is countered by angelic amulets, making her a primordial menace to the Child and to futurity (Faxneld 57–58).

From early modern receptions to the long nineteenth century, gentile and esoteric traditions reposition Lilith again: Goethe's *Faust* popularises her as Adam's first wife and seductress, a cameo that seeds vast literary and visual afterlives (Faxneld 59–60), while occultists configure her “as a negative mirror image of the benevolent divine feminine” (Faxneld 61). Around 1900 she also becomes a feminist emblem within myth-critical, science-friendly readings of Judaeo-Christian narratives, as writers “sided symbolically with Satan and his cohorts” and “turned Satan into a feminist sympathizer” (Faxneld 61). Parallel counter-readings elevate Eve and the serpent, “turned Devil-worshipping witches into champions of science and women's rights,” and recast Lilith as role model and demonic lovers as allies against patriarchy, all in deliberate dialogue with “the long cultural tradition surrounding women and the Devil” (Faxneld 72).

Against that genealogy, *Lucifer* and *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* stage two complementary performances of Satanic sovereignty: Lilith's and the daughter's. In *Lucifer*'s episode 4 of series 5 “It Never Ends Well for the Chicken,” a black-and-white noir nested in a

present-day frame reintroduces Lilith as a club singer in 1946 New York. A sparkling dress, a closed-door audience with Lucifer, and the line “You owe me” put her in a position of leverage, a reversal of the show’s usual economy in which the Devil grants wishes and collects debts: a ring with a stone from Eden, mistakenly believed to confer immortality. The story insists that the ring’s power is symbolic and technological before it is magical: it is a vessel for immortality because Lilith breathes her immortality into it, then entrusts it to Lucifer. The ring “reminds me that I don’t need Adam or his family, that I don’t need anybody,” she says, which is a feminist sentiment rendered with noir cynicism and Edenic residue (“It Never Ends Well for the Chicken”). The episode folds in other reversals. The mob boss is a woman; the detective who partners Lucifer in the flashback is refigured with ‘she/her’ pronouns at the request of a present-day child listener; the unreliable textures of the flashback frame queer marriage in a way that is uneasy and haunted, not triumphant.

What matters for Lilith’s Satanic performance is the decision that follows. Recognising that immortality has condemned her to flight and solitude, she exhales immortality into the stone and makes Lucifer promise silence in order to keep her children, the Lilim, strong and unbound by familial knowledge. The promise is compromised, indirectly, when the story reaches Mazikeen, who confronts her mother as an elderly Black woman living under the name Lily Rose. The meeting yields a cold affirmation that abandonment was a strategy for strength, a misrecognition of the daughter’s need, and a failure to form the community Lilith sought in mortal life. The show pointedly refuses the familiar eroticised image of Lilith as white and young, epitomised by Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s *Lady Lilith* (1866-1868), and instead offers a crone who dies soon after contact. In this telling Lilith breaks with the child-thief motif and becomes a child-abandoner, a decision that supplies angels with an army through Lucifer’s command, and that refracts a longer demonological tie to Samael through a modern narrative of service and debt. Lucifer’s indebtedness to Lilith, acknowledged tacitly when he accepts the ring, sits beside his later use of that ring’s power to resurrect his human beloved, a coda that quietly spends Lilith’s bequest on heterosexual romance.

If *Lucifer* renders Lilith as the Devil’s creditor and as a figure whose freedom ruins her capacity for belonging, *Sabrina* makes Lilith both recruiter and regent and then strips her of power through an act that literalises the folklore of infant death. Introduced as a demoness who steals the life of the timid teacher Mary Wardwell, Lilith becomes Madame Satan and inhabits Wardwell’s home, job, and fiancée. Her aim is strategic and maternal at once: to convert Sabrina, the Devil’s daughter, to the Path of Night and to secure her own place beside Lucifer. The

relationship destroys her. Lucifer lies repeatedly about marriage, rejects and humiliates her, and withholds sovereignty. Taking inspiration from Sabrina's rebellious pragmatism, Lilith pivots from concubine to contender. She imprisons Lucifer, rules Hell as Sabrina's regent by virtue of Sabrina's blood claim, and wields judicial power with relish. When Sabrina announces that Hell is "under [her] new management" and declares that the "reformation of Hell," Lilith responds "Thy wish is our command, Queen," and promises creative suffering, a scene that reads as both revenge and apprenticeship in governance, but also female solidarity with Sabrina ("Chapter Twenty-Two: Drag Me to Hell")

The regency does not hold. Lilith induces Faustus Blackwood to impregnate her with Lucifer's child, bears a son named Adam, and hides with the Greendale coven until the infant can one day undo the father. Faced with Lucifer's plan to seize the heir, Lilith preempts by killing the child and serving his body to Lucifer as a refusal of the only succession that guarantees her continued subordination. The act costs her power. In the logic of the show she is punished by disempowerment for a choice that denies Hell its patriarchal linear progression. The infanticide reverses the folkloric motif by becoming a political strike within a game she cannot win except by enthronement. As first woman and first witch, Lilith in *Sabrina* has powers of necromancy, telekinesis, shapeshifting, dream-walking, and puppet manipulation. She is also the mother of witchcraft itself, a source from which disparate magical techniques flow. The series thus condenses ancient motifs with modern politics and secures Lilith's Satanic performance through pedagogy, regency, and the catastrophic exercise of maternal power.

The cumulative effect is to construe Satan's office as a function that can be performed for ends other than domination and that can be seized as a tactic against patriarchy, even when the costs are unbearable. Lilith embodies the end of patriarchal reign. The arc echoes her repudiation of Adam in the foundational myth, and it does so with irony because her son is also called Adam. The Satanic performance of dissent is shown not as a one-off reversal but as a repeated, never-ending practice, algorithmically coded into the Satanic *modus operandi*. What looks like transgression against succession becomes, in the terms of this dissertation, a morph that diverts a future scripted by patriarchal sovereignty; the future is channelled through interruption, transformative pedagogy, and serial acts of withdrawal.

Sabrina, as Lucifer's daughter, performs Satan by refusal and by claim. Her earliest argument with her witch friends punctures the covenantal frame that demands her body: "Why does he get to decide what I do with my body?" she asks; when told the Dark Lord will "never" grant both freedom and power, she answers, "I want both," a challenge her friends punctuate

with “He’s a man, isn’t he?,” and that Lilith later echoes in her fear that a woman with both is terrifying to him (“Chapter Two: The Dark Baptism”). The same stance returns in a civic register when Sabrina campaigns as “powerful, disruptive,” and “unapologetic feminists,” “allies to all those who live in the shadow of the patriarchy,” reminding listeners “that the shadow has its own power,” a manifesto that fuses witchcraft and politics into one platform and detaches Satanic force from a masculine bearer (“Chapter Thirty-Two: The Imp of the Perverse”).

The show amplifies this feminist current through other speakers. Lilith delivers a monologue that redraws marriage as “a walk down the primrose path towards a woman’s destruction,” “the complete obliteration of a woman’s personhood,” linking domestic institution to spiritual subordination and justifying refusal as self-preservation (“Chapter Sixteen: Blackwood”). Mambo Marie adds the ethic of coalition: “We do not need to fight each other. That is what men do. But we are women, *n’est-ce pas?*” (“Chapter Twenty-Five: The Devil Within”). Taken together, these lines articulate a Satanic Queer politics that transposes authority from patriarchal custody to embodied choice, preparing the ground for the next section’s focus on how such choices reconfigure community and care.

Sabrina’s movement between her surnames makes naming the hinge of sovereignty. She is both a Spellman through her human father and a Morningstar through Lucifer, and she moves between the two without splitting into separate selves. Even when she duplicates her body, she maintains a single mental continuity. At her dark baptism she asserts, “My name is Sabrina Spellman, and I will not sign it away,” The line converts a script of submission into refusal and locates authority in utterance rather than oath. (“Chapter Two: The Dark Baptism”). When she later addresses Hell’s court, she changes key: “I am Sabrina Morningstar, and that throne is mine, by blood and by birth” (“Chapter Twenty-One: The Hellbound Heart”). Only an episode earlier, after a lore-heavy account of her conception as a perversion of the Trinity, she counters, “not today, Satan. I don’t care who the Dark Lord is to me. I’m a Spellman and I will always be a Spellman. And I’ll fight Him until my last dying breath” (“Chapter Twenty: The Mephisto Waltz”). The sequence makes clear that sovereignty in this world is not a fixed property of lineage. It is a practice enacted in speech that can refuse blood and then strategically claim it. As a transformer of Hell’s order she insists, “Hell needs a makeover” (Chapter Twenty-Two: Drag Me to Hell). She then declares that she will speak to the Lords of Hell “however I please,” grounding that stance in her status as their sovereign and making office a function of scene and speech rather than essence (Chapter Twenty-Two: Drag Me to Hell). Taken together, these utterances stage identity as transit rather than essence. The name functions as instrument, not

inheritance. “Spellman” and “Morningstar” become switches that route power through embodied choice. In that transit the Satanic Queer appears as a practice of claiming and refusing in the same breath, a mode of rule grounded in utterance, care, and contest rather than in patriarchal lineage.

Reading these characters together clarifies the Satanic performance. Lilith performs Satan as creditor, as consort, as regent, as teacher, and as mother who will kill the Antichrist to interrupt a dynasty. The Devil’s daughter performs Satan as refuser, as claimant, as reformer, and as sovereign who recruits Lilith’s skill while breaking with Lucifer’s order. In one key the two stories show a community of women building sovereignty out of fragments. In another they show how the office ruins them. Lilith in *Lucifer* dies alone, having traded immortality for the possibility of human connection and failed to take it. Lilith in *Sabrina* survives but is reduced, her power stripped as the price of a maternal decision that protects others from a future she deems intolerable. Sabrina wins and loses by turns, her reforms partial, her rulership constrained by prophecy and plot. The performances are not pure victories. They are ways of holding power long enough to alter who counts as an agent of the Satanic.

Lilith in George MacDonald’s novel, *Lilith* (1895), discussed by Elana Gomel, refuses submission, becomes a succubus and child stealer in Jewish superstition, passes through Goethe’s sabbath, and finally appears in a Victorian text that is “a multidimensional odyssey” whose topology borrows from geometry, where “theological determinism clashes with narrative contingency” in a way that mirrors new ideas about a spatiotemporal continuum (Gomel 152). Even Jungian archetypes begin to fray under this pressure. The neat separation of anima, animus, shadow, hero, trickster, child, and sage no longer holds in these performances; at most the trickster remains proximate, though even there the dualities and the “ape of God” trope fail to capture Lilith who both enforces and explodes balance.

Set against this lineage, the contemporary turn to Lilith and to the Devil’s daughter is not an aberration but a consolidation. The Satanic office has long depended on proxies, doubles, and masks; these series make that dependency legible as a feminist tactic. Lilith is permitted to wield sexuality as power without being folded back into compulsory subservience, even as the narratives register how easily a refusal of Adam can slide into subordination to Lucifer. The daughter, in turn, acquires a vocabulary of refusal, of claim, and of reform, not as flight from tradition but as a skilled manipulation of it.

Chapter 5

Morphing Media

As early as in 1988 Bill Nichols wrote that “although a textual element can still be isolated, computer-based systems are primarily interactive rather than one-way, open-ended rather than fixed” (Nichols 631). The same year, Fujifilm’s first digital camera consolidated the pixel as the era’s dominant unit of display. This coincidence complicates Nichols’s claim, as the digital image makes isolation paradoxical. If we take the visual as textual, isolating a single unit loses sense; meaning coheres only at the level of the pixel assemblage. The pixel grid thus becomes an apt metaphor for the present divagation on the Satanic figure and its iterations. The Devil’s figure does not resolve into a single element but emerges from a swarm of microcontributions that cohere only in aggregation.

Nichols’s emphasis on interactivity also requires qualification. Interactivity implies reciprocity, yet the circulation of meaning in networked culture rarely follows a tidy bidirectional flow. As Kurtz and Bourdaa note, fan-made narratives are not addressed to producers in any straightforward way: “Rather than an absolutely reciprocal approach, where such texts would be directed to transmedia producers themselves, these fan-made narratives (...) are primarily intended to fellow members of the fan communities” (Kurtz and Bourdaa 5–6). The Satanic figure complicates this asymmetry further. Its metamorphic career across media and publics makes causal lines of influence difficult to trace. What moves is a figure that recruits makers unevenly, routes affect laterally, and, as exemplified by *Hazbin Hotel* franchise, leaves producers chasing after audience-led elaborations that have already reconfigured the text.

I do not argue that such dynamics are exclusively digital. Denzell Richards cautions against technological determinism in accounts of transmedia and audience participation:

There is a particular tendency toward technological-determinism, where transmedia storytelling and its assumed highly engaged audiences are seen as created by, and dependent on, digital media technology. Indeed, such practices of transtextual/-medial storytelling and audience participation are often positioned as something entirely new and distinct from what preceded them. However, in emphasizing the novelty and innovation of these approaches, scholars risk identifying too closely with a set of commercial practices. (Richards 15)

The point clarifies scope. Digital culture supplies a precise vocabulary for describing distributed textuality, yet the practice of stories exceeding any single vehicle precedes digital systems.

Richards presses the historical claim further:

it is important to consider that current academic and industrial conceptualizations of transmedia have themselves originated in a very specific historical context and set of cultural discourses. Strongly influenced by Henry Jenkins (2006), these have placed particular emphasis on the significance of ‘convergence culture’, to the possible detriment of alternative perspectives. By contrast, in their social histories of emerging media, Geoffrey B. Pingree and Lisa Gitelman (2003), as well as William Boddy (2004), draw attention to the remarkably similar cultural narratives, social functions, and utopian rhetoric accompanying ‘new’ communication technologies, from the Medieval printing press, through nineteenth century telegraph and cinema, and twentieth century broadcast radio and television, to contemporary analogue/digital convergence. Rather than something fundamentally ‘new’ and arising out of recent technologies, therefore, Derek Johnson argues it is more appropriate to situate transtextual/-medial story-telling as an ‘enduring cultural process with [its] own historicity’ (2009, 14, emphasis in original); a process of continuity (the social function of story-telling) as much as change (the precise technological form this takes) (Richards 15)

I infer two consequences. First, the digital gives unusually sharp concepts for naming dispersed authorship and modular assembly. Second, archetypal narratives have always behaved transtextually and transmedially; continuity registers not as a linear chronology but as ongoing metamorphosis. The Satanic figure makes this principle legible. As one of the West’s oldest narrative assemblages, it never crystallises; it is ever liquid. The figure surfaces in new configurations whenever publics and platforms shift. Digital pixels, internet posts, and remediations do not decorate a stable core; they assemble the work that the figure does in the present.

The Satanic Queer moves through iterations because the text does not sit still. Contemporary Satanic media organize themselves as intertextual and transmedial ecologies in which paratexts and fan practices operate as constitutive forces rather than derivatives. The Devil functions as a switch that routes meanings across media and across publics. This chapter tracks that routing. I chart how a morphing text emerges from social exchange and computational infrastructures and how the Devil becomes the figure that renders this morphing legible in narrative, image, and tone. Although divided into sections, by necessity this division cannot be neat; it unavoidably overlaps, as if each of the examples discussed was a morph on its own; because no matter how broad the category is, it is all connected. The Satanic Queer is the kinetic

principle behind the hypertextual links. Visual and textual cues organise reading into lexia that operate without, and at times against, a logocentric mandate. In this archive, lexia function as assemblages rather than essences.

The chapter proceeds in five parts. First, “Complicated Transtextualities” traces how adaptation, iteration, and platform migration structure the corpus—pairing the multiple depictions of Lucifer from various sources, the partial adaptation of *Good Omens*, and *Hazbin Hotel*’s journey from YouTube pilot to a streaming pipeline—to show form itself as a morphing determinant. Second, “Author–Fan Entanglements” examines how Tumblr, Patreon, and allied infrastructures co-produce paratexts in public, binding authors and audiences into managed thresholds where permeability is negotiated through tags, asks, archives, and legal/industrial risk. Third, “Making Sense of Multiplicities” follows audience labour—pic sets, spreadsheets, tagging conventions—as a communal method for adjudicating canonicity across divergent Lucifers, stabilising “family resemblances” without appealing to essences. Fourth, “Fanfiction as Affective Method” treats desire as a mode of knowledge: midrashic, reparative, and mythopoetic practices that fill textual gaps, recalibrate ethics, and convert attachment into analytic production. Finally, Algorithmic Genre as Drift situates these dynamics within platformed discovery, arguing that genre now operates as interface and mood under algorithmic recommendation, while the Satanic Queer persists as a routing figure across feeds rather than as an inhabitant of a single shelf.

5.1. Complicated Transtextualities

Intertextual complexity in this corpus appears first at the level of form. Across the materials treated here, several configurations recur. Netflix’s *Lucifer* and *The Sandman* share a comic-book source yet remain distinct iterations of Lucifer with separate narrative and tonal logics. *Good Omens* exemplifies partial adaptation, since only its first season adapts the novel. *Hazbin Hotel* exemplifies platform migration: it began as an independent YouTube project and was later absorbed by a streaming pipeline. Together these trajectories foreground adaptation, iteration, and circulation across platforms as formal determinants.

Both Netflix series adapt the same diegetic figure, Lucifer Morningstar from DC/Vertigo comics, yet they draw on different strata of that canon and occupy discrete screen continuities. The character originates in the monthly comic book *The Sandman* (Vertigo, 1989–1996), first appearing in issue #4 (April 1989) written by Neil Gaiman, Sam Kieth, and Mike Dringenberg, before becoming the focus of Mike Carey’s spinoffs: the three-issue comic-book miniseries *The*

Sandman Presents: Lucifer (1999) and the 75-issue comic series *Lucifer* (2000–2006), which codify touchstones such as the Los Angeles piano bar Lux and elevate supporting figures like Mazikeen (who first appears in *The Sandman* #22 in 1990). *Lucifer* (live-action television series; aired on FOX in 2016 and on Netflix, 2019–2021) reframes this material within a police-procedural mode; Tom Ellis’s *Lucifer* also appears in the Arrowverse’s⁷ five-episode “Crisis on Infinite Earths” crossover as Earth-666’s *Lucifer*, thereby marking that incarnation as its own television continuity. By contrast, *The Sandman* (live-action television series; 2022–2025) adapts Gaiman’s original comic arcs and restores the sovereign-of-Hell iteration: Gwendoline Christie plays *Lucifer* in a reconfigured version of “A Hope in Hell” storyline, where Dream duels *Lucifer* directly (in the comic, however, Dream duels the demon Choronzon under *Lucifer*’s supervision) (Orquiola n.pag.). Neil Gaiman has further clarified that Ellis’s popular television version had diverged too far from *Sandman* continuity to be imported into *The Sandman*, necessitating separate casting and continuity (Lovett n.pag.).

As a textbook case of transmedia adaptation, *Good Omens* moves from a co-authored source text to progressively original television, while remaining institutionally anchored to its authorship. Season 1 (six episodes) is a 2019 televisual adaptation of Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett’s comic-apocalyptic novel *Good Omens: The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of Agnes Nutter, Witch* (1990), created and showrun by Gaiman, directed by Douglas Mackinnon, released globally on Prime Video on 31 May 2019 and subsequently broadcast on BBC Two in the United Kingdom from 15 January to 19 February 2020. Season 2 (six episodes, 28 July 2023) is not an adaptation of a published sequel but new television material co-written by Gaiman and John Finnemore, conceived explicitly as a bridge toward a sequel architecture that Gaiman and the late Pratchett had mapped but never published (Cairns n.pag.). The project’s very commissioning is attributable to Pratchett’s perimortal request that Gaiman undertake the screen version, a rationale Gaiman has repeatedly affirmed in interviews and reportage (Cain n.pag.; Pratchett n.pag.). The endgame has since been reconfigured: although Amazon announced in December 2023 a third and final season written and executive-produced by Gaiman, in October 2024 the streamer confirmed that the narrative would conclude instead with a single 90-minute finale, with Gaiman stepping away from production; that feature-length episode has been filmed (early 2025), with release timing yet unannounced (“The Unholy Duo”; “Amazon Prime Confirms”; Otterson n.pag.; “Good Omens Begins Filming”)

⁷ Arrowverse is an American superhero media crossover franchise based on DC Comics characters.

Formally, *Hazbin Hotel* begins as an independently produced, 31-minute pilot released on creator Vivienne “VivziePop” Medrano’s YouTube channel on 28 October 2019, which established its initial venue (YouTube), format (a single self-contained episode), and authorship. The property transitioned to streaming after A24 studio publicly announced on 7 August 2020 that it had picked up the YouTube phenomenon for television development (A24), with Prime Video subsequently ordering two seasons and confirming an eight-episode first season to premiere globally in January 2024. The series is produced by A24 with animation by FOX Entertainment’s Bento Box Entertainment in collaboration with Medrano’s SpindleHorse (“Prime Video Orders Two Seasons”; “Prime Video Debuts”; Zee n.pag.). Season 1 launched on Prime Video on 19 January 2024 (eight episodes), formalising the series’ shift from a web-pilot to a platform original (Amazon Staff). As of September 2025, season 2 is scheduled to premiere on Prime Video on 29 October 2025, again as an eight-episode run released two episodes weekly (Greenawalt). With respect to YouTube, only the original *Hazbin Hotel* pilot constitutes an officially released episode on Medrano’s channel; the series proper debuts and resides on Prime Video (VivziePop n.pag.; “Hazbin Hotel on Prime Video”). The franchise’s principal spinoff, *Helluva Boss*, likewise originated on YouTube with a pilot on 25 November 2019 and a series launch on 31 October 2020, before Prime Video acquired the web series in 2025; Seasons 1–2 became available on the service beginning 10 September 2025 (“Helluva Boss Pilot”; “Prime Video Acquires Popular Web Series”; Greenawalt n.pag.).

The intertextuality of this corpus manifests not only in form but also narratively. *Good Omens* furnishes clear examples already noted in chapter 3: the series cites the songs “A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square” and Buddy Holly’s “Everyday,” and it sustains a running musical motif in which Queen plays whenever Crowley drives. The novel comments on this diegetic joke and converts it into a rule of the world: “Admittedly he was listening to a Best of Queen tape, but no conclusions should be drawn from this because all tapes left in a car for more than about a fortnight metamorphose into Best of Queen albums” (Gaiman and Pratchett 6). The adaptation declines to explain the anomaly, yet it preserves Queen as Crowley’s sonic signature, which keeps the intertext alive while shifting the explanatory burden from narration to viewer inference.

The show’s paratexts amplify this musical threading. Prime maintains an official account on X, @GoodOmensPrime, devoted exclusively to the series, and it has published curated playlists for Crowley, for Aziraphale, and for the pair together (GoodOmensPrime). Crowley’s list opens with Queen’s “I’m in Love with My Car,” Aziraphale’s list arranges initial letters to

spell ineffable according to attentive fans (“Ineffable Husbands”), and the shared list combines classic love songs such as Celine Dion’s “My Heart Will Go On” with songs of unreciprocated attachment such as Bebe Rexha’s “I’m a Mess,” alongside Queen’s “The Show Must Go On.” Read together, these selections operate as meta commentary on the end of season two. They recode the separation of Crowley and Aziraphale under Metatron’s direction as a problem of tone and affect, not only of plot, and they cue audiences to hear the break as a reversible suspension rather than a final resolution.

In *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, the witch academy’s Baphomet statue tracks most closely to The Satanic Temple’s 2015 “Baphomet with Children” monument rather than to Éliphas Lévi’s nineteenth-century “Sabbatic Goat”: Lévi’s drawing is explicitly androgynous with a pair of breasts, whereas the Temple’s monument, conceived for public-square challenges, deliberately substitutes a flat, male chest and adds two children (Laycock 38; The Satanic Temple), a configuration the Sabrina statue substantially reproduces. The Temple’s sculpture became an icon of political struggle through First Amendment actions and media events—unveiled in Detroit in July 2015 and deployed at a Little Rock protest in August 2018—linking its imagery to campaigns for religious-expression parity on state grounds (Laycock 1). When *Sabrina* used a near-duplicate, the Temple filed suit in November 2018 alleging infringement and dilution; the parties reached an amicable settlement later that month and the series now carries a credit acknowledging the Temple’s monument (Marshall n.pag.; Reuters).

Lucifer’s pop-cultural asides function as occultural relays that domesticate the infernal through shared media memory and route viewers into prophetic mythographies of Satanic futurity. In Episode 11 of series 1, “St Lucifer,” the show pivots on a sly extradiegetic wink. After sex with Chloe Decker, Lucifer quips, “I’m pretty sure we made Rosemary’s baby.” The line anchors the scene by invoking *Rosemary’s Baby*, the cult film that Chapter 2 identifies as central to the popularisation of demonic possession on screen. The quip also opens the archive of occultural Satanism, hyperlinking the moment to the apocalyptic prophecy of the Antichrist before ricocheting toward futurity in the familiar script that imagines Satan’s son. That entire traversal coils inside one camp, witty remark about sex, which condenses reference, mythography, and genre memory into a single beat. Tracing these references archaeologically feels like clicking one hyperlink after another until origin dissolves into a proliferating chain. The path refuses a single source, and the hypertext emerges as a morphing archive that routes readers across shifting nodes of meaning.

Aziraphale's ironic complaint in *Good Omens* episode 1 of season 1 "In The Beginning" activates the same hyperlink logic: handing off the Antichrist felt "as if Armageddon were a cinematographic show you wished to sell in as many countries as possible" ("In The Beginning"). The line works on three registers. It reads as meta-commentary on the series as a filmic commodity, one distributed on Prime and owned by Amazon, whose model prizes global extensibility. It links sideways to cinema's long genealogy of Armageddons, from spectacular disaster to evangelical end-times franchises, and to antichrist films such as *The Omen*, which the *Good Omens* novel pointedly parodies. It reaches backward to the Apocalypse of St. John, where eschaton first acquires narrative density. The result is not mere commercialisation but serial circulation that treats eschatology as a format. The joke is structural rather than incidental. It names a market-aware intertextuality that now grounds the story. Within the diegesis the barb also lands on Heaven. Aziraphale is an angel and Heaven anticipates Armageddon as a final war with Hell; by comparing that desire to the imperatives of global sales, he recodes providence as distribution logic and exposes divine strategy as complicit with the very capitalism the quip arraigns.

Across the series, Lucifer's pop-cultural quips operate as a moral technology of taste that domesticates the infernal through recognisability while sorting audiences through calibrated ridicule. In Episode 11 of Season 3, "City of Angels?," Lucifer again mobilises pop reference as moral texture. He declares that music in hell is used "for torture" and adds, "Lately, we've been playing music by this chap named Bieber. Gosh, you should hear the screams" ("City of Angels?"). The allusion domesticates damnation by importing a figure of mass-market pop into the infernal soundscape; hell becomes legible through a familiar auditory cue that audiences recognise from everyday commercial and transit spaces. The gag also sneers at a feminized and youth-coded fandom. It frames Bieber as sonic punishment, which flatters viewers who disdain teen pop while risking the reproduction of casual ageism and sexism that treats adolescent girls' pleasures as unserious. The line performs double work: it builds the world through recognisability and polices taste through ridicule, turning a throwaway joke into a quick act of cultural sorting.

Another of Lucifer's quips translates metaphysical punishment into the infrastructures of everyday life, domesticating the infernal through recognisable media while collapsing the line between Hell and Earth. In episode 3 of season 4, "O, Ye of Little Faith, Father," Lucifer asks, "What do you do when someone has betrayed you?" He answers himself by listing punishments that toggle between the biblical and the banal: "Normally I'd go straight to punishment, fire,

brimstone, public humiliation via YouTube” (“O, Ye of Little Faith, Father”). The inventory reframes damnation as a continuum with terrestrial discipline. Fire and brimstone sit beside a platform of viral shaming, which recodes eternal torment as scalable exposure. The quip renders hell legible through a daily technology of spectatorship while indicting earthly publicity as already infernal. The scene turns a question about betrayal into a diagram of punishment that feels familiar because it draws its force from shared media habits rather than from otherworldly terror.

Across the corpus, real-world commodities and technologies operate as intertextual anchors that domesticate the infernal and retime the Satanic archive within the tempos of consumer modernity. It would be impossible to enumerate every instance, yet several exhibits clarify the pattern. In season 6, episode 6, “A Lot Dirtier Than That,” Lucifer praises a 1962 Corvette Stingray as “the most sophisticated vehicle ever produced” (“A Lot Dirtier Than That”). God and Lucifer fly over the Garden of Eden in the 1947 Spruce Goose (Wilkes and Wilson 15). Devils swipe phones, browse the web, and carry takeout coffee. Such insertions are common narrative devices, yet when a story activates the Satanic archive they produce dissonance. The devil is habitually associated with religious imagery, gothic spaces, and chronotopes of earlier ages. When sleek machines and everyday platforms move into that frame, time folds into itself as audience expectations of archaic diabolism collide with the streamlined surfaces of contemporary life. The effect is not a cheap gag. It is a method of world-building that renders the Devil’s proximate through recognisability while preserving the archive’s mythic weight.

When I attempt a digital archaeology of references, the trail behaves like hypertext. Each click multiplies the object as versions, mirrors, and remixes cascade across platforms. Provenance dissolves not because the material is sloppy but because it was never organised around a single origin. The archive here is morphing. It is less a stable repository than a set of operations that continually recompose audiovisual matter through linking, recaptioning, recutting, and reposting. To read this field with a backward search for a definitive source is to miss how meaning is produced in transit. The work is to map transformations rather than to locate an ur-text.

This morphing archive clarifies the Satanic Queer as a figure of circulation rather than of essence. Its legibility emerges through iterative movement across nodes that refuse final anchoring in author, studio, or first appearance. The hyperlink becomes a method of making and unmaking. It routes attention, spawns derivatives, and redistributes affect, which means the object I pursue is a process and not a relic. Origin stories still matter, yet they matter as effects of

recombination. The analytic wager is that the Satanic Queer acquires force when tracked as a chain of operations that convert citation into mutation. Instead of asking where it truly began, I ask which transformations stabilise it long enough to be seen and how those stabilisations are undone by the next click.

5.2. Author–Fan Entanglements

I argue that platformed circulation binds fans and authors into a shared production ecology where infrastructural design, economic intimacy, and paratextual labor reshape what counts as canon and how Satanic figures travel across media. Platforms do not simply host this activity. They act within it and set the terms by which texts continue.

As a starting axiom for this section, Alberto, Sapuridis, and Willard crystallize the platform condition of fandom: “Wherever fans converge to share their experiences with a fan-object, there is a platform that makes these encounters possible. Platforms provide places and spaces for the formation of fan communities, the sharing of and engagement with fan works, the presence of fan conversations, and the preservation of fan histories” (Alberto, Sapuridis, Willard par. 1.1). The observation is architectural and ontological at once. “In both functional and conceptual terms, fan activity of various kinds is built upon and through specific spaces, technologies, and the cultural norms that develop there. In this case, then, platforms are both foundations and even actors” (Alberto, Sapuridis, Willard par. 1.2). When the platform acts, intention becomes a routed property rather than a private possession.

Tumblr exemplifies this actorly force. “Tumblr can seem almost defiantly nonhierarchical, decentralized, and uncontrollable. On Tumblr individual accounts typically act as nodes for the creation and further dissemination of posts. Tumblr is structurally rhizomatic; in contrast, however, from the point that a public Tumblr post is reblogged by someone else, it cannot be recalled and deleted by the original poster” (Morimoto and Stein par. 2.2). Irreversibility encodes a politics of circulation that resists doctrinal consolidation. This helps explain why the Devil’s meanings in contemporary culture do not cohere into a single theology even when creators hope to steer. Circulation outruns control and the figure proliferates through reblog chains, tag ecologies, and iterative headcanons.

I focus on two authors within this ecology who engage fans on Tumblr with regularity. Rafael Nicolás, author of *Angels Before Man*, uses Tumblr and Patreon to cultivate ongoing conversation and serialised supplements. Neil Gaiman has used Tumblr as a public forum for

exchanges about *Good Omens* and other works. My aim is not to infer intention. Authorial posting may attempt to stabilise narrative circulation or to care for audiences or to prime markets. What matters for this chapter is how these practices co produce paratexts that audiences treat as sense-making resources.

Rafael Nicolás is active under the handle @nicosraf, where he comments on posts, answers questions, responds to fan art, and offers headcanons while adjudicating readers' proposals. He organizes replies through tag infrastructure that doubles as an index to paratextual knowledge. The tags #mine and #ask function as a navigational mesh that binds discrete answers into an accessible archive (nicosraf). The volume is substantial. There are hundreds of asks about Lucifer and other celestial figures. One exhibit concerns Lucifer's preferences in viral social media trends. Nicolás frames Lucifer's enjoyment as a guilty pleasure and marks the character's impulse to call it satire (Fig.4). The co-text in the tags intensifies the reading: "he recognizes the absurdity of being the devil from the bible and liking Stanley cups and he likes. the Absurdity" (nicosraf). The orthography, regardless whether it is the result of a purposeful action, or a result of autocorrect function of a keyboard, casts an intriguing light on the remark. The capitalisation of 'Stanley cup' and 'Absurdity' and the lower case 'bible' produces a tiny hierarchy of value that privileges platformed trends and self-aware camp over scriptural authority. It also clarifies how Tumblr's tag field carries meaning beyond the posted answer and how readers learn to read those fields as authorial signals.

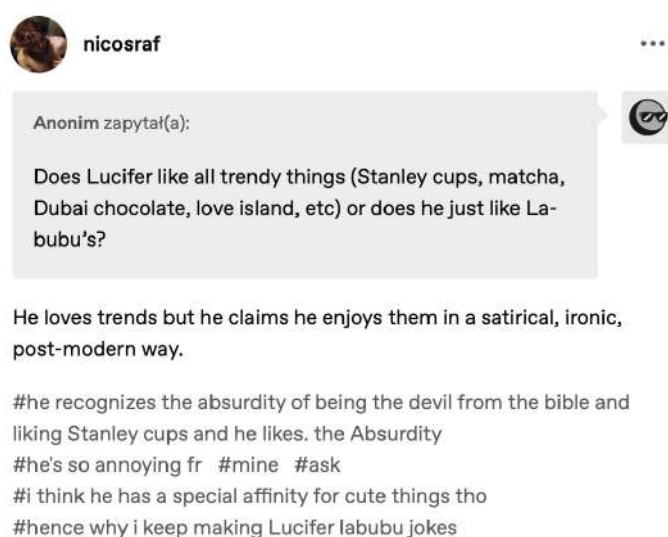


Fig. 4. Screenshot of Tumblr post by nicosraf.

Angels Before Man storyworld also serialises through Patreon, a membership platform where creators earn recurring income from fans via paid subscriptions in exchange for exclusive

content and community perks. There, the author shares patron exclusive short stories that feel like a return of premodern patronage inside contemporary platform economies. Patreon's tiers formalise intimacy as a revenue stream that exchanges access for support. The result is a transtextual ecology in which canon and paracanon bleed into one another through iterative gifts, QA cycles, and the circulation of headcanons that distribute the labor of world-building across author and audience.

Neil Gaiman's Tumblr presence demonstrates a similar logic. His blog features a pinned post, purposefully kept at the top of the page, that hosts a fan-made archive of his answers about *Good Omens*, neatly organised into categories (Fig. 5). The master post links to Google documents containing hundreds of archived asks addressed to the author, an immense labour by fans, for fans, and explicitly endorsed by Gaiman. Functionally, it is both an archive of fan–author interaction and a paratextual resource that expands, or at least orients, the *Good Omens* storyworld through curated access to authorial commentary, clarifications, and micro-worldbuilding. Moreover, it is a hypertext as each Google document contains indexical hyperlinks to answers about particular categories, such as 'Crowley,' 'Aziraphale,' or 'Heaven/Hell (Angels & Demons),' among others, as well as hyperlinks to original posts with asks and answers on Neil Gaiman's Tumblr page (OrpiKnight n.pag.).

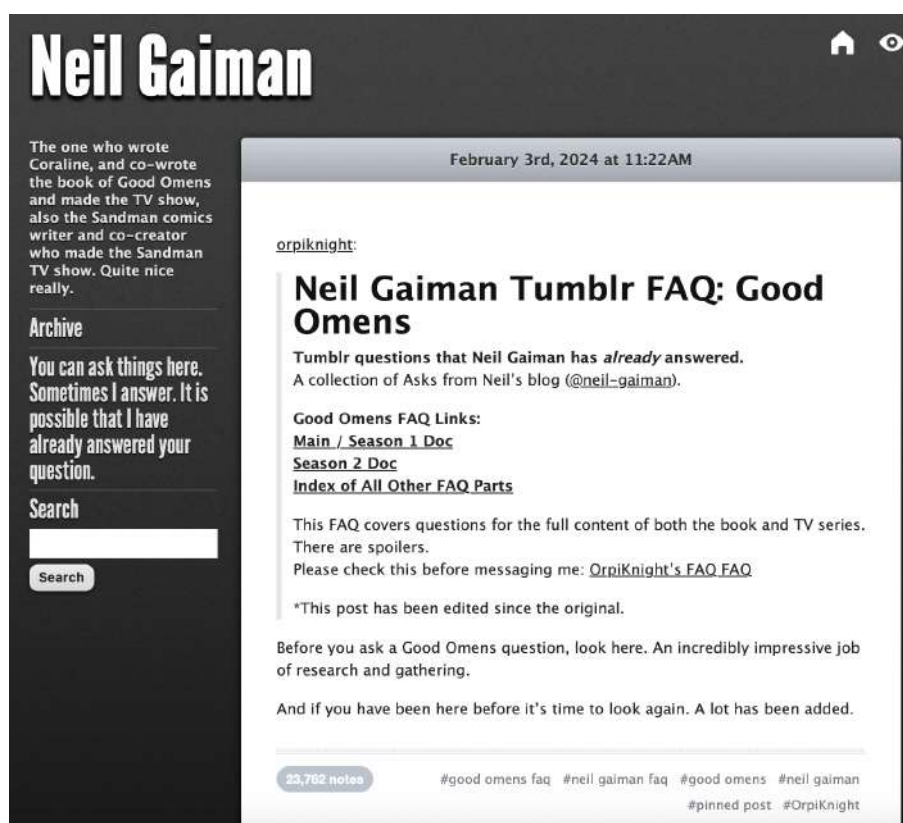


Fig. 5. Screenshot of the pinned post on Neil Gaiman's Tumblr page, posted February 3rd, 2024

Neil Gaiman appears no longer active on Tumblr. His last post is dated 2 July 2024 (neil-gaiman). In the same period Tortoise Media's podcast *Master* publicised allegations of sexual misconduct against him (Master: The Allegations Against Neil Gaiman). Whatever their status in law or fact, the allegations visibly affected the *Good Omens* and *The Sandman* fandoms (Deshler n.pag.). Many fans now expect that *Good Omens* season three will be shorter than previously established (Otterson n.pag.; "Amazon Prime Confirms Details of Good Omens' Final Season") and that *The Sandman* will conclude with season two rather than continue into further seasons (Mercuri n.pag.). The situation registers how contemporary popular culture production reacts quickly to political and reputational events. If the field responds to real life problems such as misconduct allegations it will also be responsive to other extratextual pressures. Audiences have read Gaiman's arc from visible presence to subsequent withdrawal during controversy as a signal about production horizons and renewal tempos for these series. In this platform ecology absence communicates as strongly as presence, and authorial withdrawal becomes legible as information.

Industry practice registers fan-industry entanglements unevenly. Kurtz and Bourdaa note that online connectivity binds "members of the fan communities" across distance and that "there is not a form of permeability between fan-authors and the industry" (Kurtz and Bourdaa 6). They emphasize that uptake can occur when "certain writers and producers occasionally do follow fan activities and texts, going as far as sometimes following some of their suggestions, such as Steven Moffat with the third series of the BBC's *Sherlock*" (Kurtz and Bourdaa 6). The same surveillance that enables uptake also sustains refusal. Studios and right holders "closely follow transmedia practices, being on occasion stringent on issues of copyright" (Kurtz and Bourdaa 6). Permeability is therefore negotiated rather than automatic. It is routed through legal risk and brand stewardship, and it is filtered by platform affordances that render some fan practices legible to producers while others remain effectively invisible. The interface between fans and industry functions as a managed threshold that modulates recognition, incorporation, and sanction rather than a frictionless channel.

The wider corpus shows the scale of this participation. Each work generates fan fiction, cosplay, TikTok edits, and cross platform communities that keep stories in motion. As Henry Jenkins writes, "fan writers do not so much reproduce the primary text as they rework and rewrite it" (Jenkins, *Textual Poachers* 165). Reworking keeps recognition stable while stretching the edges of what counts as canonical sense. Intertextuality here is not mere citation. It is also gap work and reparative rewriting, as when "silences and absences in the source text" become invitations that fans "fill" through an "affective hermeneutics," including fan fiction that deepens

character and world through transformative uptake (Wilson par. 1.4). The Satanic Queer thrives under such conditions because the figure arrives riddled with doctrinal contradictions and historical slippages that reward collective elaboration.

If platforms are actors, then authorship itself becomes relational performance. The author persists, not as a sovereign source, but as a catalytic node through which dispersed acts of production cohere in reception. Nicolás's and Gaiman's Tumblr pages show how posting, tagging, patron updates, and archived asks become the ground on which readers negotiate sense and stake claims about canon. Fan and author entanglements do not sit outside the story. They are the infrastructure through which the Satanic archive is rewritten in public.

5.3. Making Sense of Multiplicities

The audience is not a passive receiver but an active participant in negotiating canonicity, constantly asking, as my research does, whether two different Lucifers are “the same” and how fan practices might annihilate or, more accurately, multiply the Devil's identity. This participatory authorship is tangible and physical, a manual and digital labor that aligns with Kirby's double sense of the “digital” as both technological and manual (Kirby 51). Fans do not merely interpret; they become authorial by creating new text, as seen in the elaborate spreadsheets comparing “over a dozen Lucifers” circulated on Tumblr (@violet-yimlat, Fig. 10). This is not desocialisation but a potent form of socialisation within new digital publics, directly countering Kirby's wary concerns about “pseud autism” and atomised citizens (Kirby 54).

Jenkins contends that fan writing makes a dual reaction visible; fans do not simply reproduce the primary text but rewrite it, fixing weak points, dropping unsatisfying parts, and developing neglected interests (Jenkins, *Textual Poachers* 162). This dynamic extends beyond narrative fan fiction to fandom meta that parses canons, headcanons, and fanons. Canonicity splits along two axes: in fan practice, “canon” names officially released materials, while in a biblical register canon names a corpus authorised by an institution. The devil scrambles both: two Lucifers, one in *The Sandman* and one in *Lucifer*, remain technically linked through comics yet diverge in casting, tone, and thematic emphasis, and viewers resolve the divergence by holding multiple local linearities at once and stitching them into broader patterns through jokes, lists, spreadsheets, and fic. Fan practice does not annihilate identity; it reframes identity as an effect of traversal across versions, where the Devil remains legible through family resemblances rather than essences, and those resemblances are curated in common. Fans negotiate

contradictions and convergences in canon collectively on platform structures rather than as solitary decoders, which is why “headcanon” settles only when it becomes “fanon” through communal uptake (Jenkins, “Fandom” 16).

To assess, at least in part, how fans interpret the multiplicity of Satanic representation in popular culture, I compiled a small corpus of Tumblr posts tagged with at least two distinct Satanic labels. What follows is a sequential presentation and close reading of these posts. I acknowledge that the sample is limited and not representative of the broader ecosystem. Nevertheless, the posts’ public circulation on the platform and their accrual of notes, reblogs, and comments indicate their salience within the discussion.

Fans often recognise intertextual cues. One writes, “Lucifer (shinee) being in lucifer (netflix) will never fail to make me laugh” (cassian, Fig.6). The joke turns on the needle drop in season 3, episode 13, where Korean band SHINee’s 2010 single titled “Lucifer” underscores a fight sequence featuring Tom Ellis’s Lucifer. A Korean idol track with an aerobic dance beat accrues new charge inside a TV Devil narrative. The names coincide, yet more than homonymy is at stake. The pairing frames Lucifer as a traveling sign that inhabits distinct texts, media, and cultures while continually reshaping the Satanic archive.



Fig. 6. Screenshot of Tumblr post by cassian.

Another fan notices citationality in the red silk robe that threads across Netflix’s two series, *The Sandman* and *Lucifer*. Although the productions almost certainly used different costumes, Tumblr user apollobisexualass reads both Lucifers as iterations of one figure. They hail him as “bestie” and offer a demonic headcanon: “I like to think they packed it when they left Hell” (apollobisexualass, Fig. 7). The robe becomes a portable index of recognition that moves

between iterations, which functions as a proof of identification and a diegetic hyperlink that invites further fan making. By treating wardrobe as a transferrable asset rather than a production artifact, the fan asserts continuity as an effect of traversal and curation. The red silk robe thus models how material motifs allow communities to stabilise a multiplatform Devil without appealing to a single canonical essence.



Fig. 7. Screenshot of Tumblr post by apollobisexualass.

One of the posts stages a fan theory of realism: as the request for Lucifer intensifies from recognition to authenticity to ideal form, the figure becomes less materially embodied and more digitally mediated, which implies that for contemporary publics computational plasticity secures the real. Tumblr user Inkbutterflyuniverse arranges a six-panel-grid meme that moves from Guillaume Geefs's 1848 statue *Le génie du mal*, to Tom Ellis's Lucifer in a promotional still for the series, to the animated Lucifer from *Hazbin Hotel* (Fig.8). The captions in the accompanying pictures on the right of user inserted Lucifers, which are part of the meme's template, escalate accordingly from "SHOW ME LUCIFER" to "THE REAL LUCIFER" to "PERFECTION" (Inkbutterflyuniverse). The sequence is chronological and typological at once. It juxtaposes a classical religious Devil inflected by Romantic sympathy, a camp and witty television Lucifer, and a carnivalesque animated Lucifer. It also traces a gradient of movability and mediation that runs from stone, through live-action performance captured and selectively enhanced by digital

imaging, to a figure generated and choreographed entirely within digital animation. Animation aligns with metamorphosis and serial transformation, so the culmination in *Hazbin Hotel* does not negate identity but rearticulates it as designed variability across frames. The punch line is therefore diagnostic: the more the meme declares the real, the more it privileges the digitally recomposable body over the resistant weight of matter.



Fig. 8. Screenshot of Tumblr post by inkbutterflyuniverse.

The two above examples utilise the form of a pic set. Pic sets do not simply display a sequence of frames. They enact a way of thinking together. As Jessica Hautsch observes, this Tumblr-native form shows “how fans think with and through images, bodies, stories, communities, and ecologies” (Hautsch par. 1.2). That description clarifies why the two Lucifer

pic sets matter: they do not illustrate a prior interpretive conclusion. They are the interpretive act. When fans assemble juxtaposed Lucifers and circulate those composites to other fans, they are staging the very cognition the set solicits. Hautsch writes that “fan creative works—like pic sets—constitute a mode of thinking and reading that is deeply physical, emotional, and social” and that such works are “not evidence of thinking, but an act of thinking” (Hautsch par. 1.3). The first set does that work by aligning two Netflix properties. The post captioned “I love this detail sm!!” includes the pictures of and tags both the *Lucifer* series and *The Sandman*; the juxtaposition invites viewers to treat robe, body, and platform as a shared semiotic through-line that crosses titles and timelines, cueing recognition of Lucifer as a trans-textual persona rather than a closed character bound to one canon. The tags operate as paratextual instructions for reading across screens, and the repeated garment functions as a hinge that lets the image-travel feel natural rather than aberrant. In this sense, the set is a cognitive device for intertextual continuity. It proposes a rule of recognition grounded in pictures, which the audience then tests and extends in notes and reblogs.

The second pic set widens the frame from continuity to multiplicity. The post supplies a reading protocol. It tells viewers to see difference and sameness at once, to map multiple stylistic and tonal regimes onto a single traveling figure who morphs across mediums. The set’s tags are not decorative. They are metadata that scaffold collective inference, pointing a dispersed audience toward a shared field of reference where Lucifer’s silhouettes, color palettes, and iconographic cues can be compared and recombined. In doing so, the set materialises what Hautsch calls a “cognitive ecology of fandom,” where pic sets “constitut[e] and represent[] fans’ engagement with characters and texts” (Hautsch par. 1.4).

Both posts demonstrate how Tumblr’s visual vernacular turns recognition into relation. The platform’s grammar of rows, ratios, tags, and reblog chains routes attention from micro-glyphs to macro-structures. In the robe-focused set, the micro-glyph is a garment that travels; in the multi-Lucifer set, it is a name, Lucifer, that houses distinct design logics. Each configuration invites the same activity: to look with others and to infer with others. That collectivity is not incidental. “Rather than view fan works like pic sets as artifacts or evidence of fans’ cognitive and interpretative practices,” Hautsch argues, they are evidence of “fan thinking, shaped by the community in which they are created and shared. Fans’ reading and creating strategies are not just about understanding the text, but cohering a collective, generating a community. We read toward a networked collective of other fans, other readers” (Hautsch par. 7.2). Together, these sets suggest that fans are not confused by proliferation. They cultivate a morphic literacy that

treats the Devil as a vector that can pass through bodies, tones, and industrial contexts without losing legibility. In that passage, the Satanic Queer does not need a fixed body to be grasped. It needs a collectively maintained practice of seeing-with that pic sets instantiate and circulate. The post is the method. The grid is the argument. The reblog is the proof.

This cultivation also proceeds interpretively. Tumblr user thatpodcastkid juxtaposes Lucifer from DC and Vertigo comics with the television adaptation. The user adopts a convention typical of fan-fiction tagging, placing an exclamation mark between two nouns: one indicating the medium and the other the character (Fig. 9). Thus the figure in the post is called Comic!Lucifer and TV!Lucifer. The post differentiates their motivations with precision: the comic figure seeks Godhood as an escape from paternal determination and a bid for freedom, while the television figure frames Godhood as a path to love and recognition withheld by the Father. The juxtaposition functions as a cognitive device that holds difference and relation together. Both iterations undertake creation or ascent to work on the problem of the Father, and both learn the persistence of that imprint within their worlds and within themselves. The convergence matters for this project's claim about Lucifer's mixed ontology. Each version remains legible as both celestial and demonic, a doubleness developed in Chapter 3. The tags stabilise the comparison and model a shared reading practice that travels across media while keeping the figure continuous enough for collective inference.



Fig. 9. Screenshot of Tumblr post by thatpodcastkid.

Recognition through the metamorphic Satanic archive also operates by comparative difference. Tumblr user violet-yimlat circulates a self-authored spreadsheet that compiles fifteen Lucifers, from Dante's *Inferno* to *Hazbin Hotel*, and evaluates them across recurring features such as whether the figure equals Satan, attractiveness, Edenic involvement, reason for the Fall,

 violet-yimlat Obserwuj ...

Behold!

The Lucifer spreadsheet! Compiling and comparing over a dozen Lucifers!

Submissions welcome, don't mind the Good Omens role play references, yes this is my special interest specially interesting.



Update! I accidentally forgot a Lucifer but he's here now.

#blue exorcist #blue exorcist lucifer #dante's inferno #eloa
 #good omens #good omens satan #hazbin #hazbin lucifer
 #hazbin hotel #hazbin hotel lucifer #lucifer graphic novel
 #lucifer netflix #lucifer play #obey me #obey me lucifer
 #paradise lost #sandman #the sandman #sandman lucifer
 #the demon #la fin de satan #the sorrows of satan
 #prince Lucio Rimãnez #lucifer #lucifer morningstar
 #all of the lucifers #revolt of the angels

Fig. 10. Screenshot of Tumblr post by violet-yimlat.

mental state, and minor facts. The sheet converts comparison into a social instrument that indexes continuity and divergence, inscribing Lucifer as a cross-platform constant that absorbs variance without dissolving. The corpus threads back into this matrix. *Good Omens* frames

Lucifer as Satan rather than Crowley, yet under the entry for reason for the Fall the compiler writes a line Crowley speaks in the episode “The Doomsday Option”: “a million-light-year freestyle dive into a pool of boiling sulphur” (“The Doomsday Option”). In the ‘Eden’ column the entry reads “Nah Crowley,” which treats the series’ reconfiguration of infernal labour as a live mutation within the Satanic archive (violet-yimlat). Hazbin Hotel’s Lucifer receives the reason for the fall “Love + excessive whimsy,” which aligns with Chapter 3’s account of his Edenic disobedience through sharing the apple of knowledge with humans, a Romantic recoding of temptation as Promethean care (violet-yimlat). The spreadsheet does not merely collect data. It performs the morph by aligning variants in a viewable array that invites further contributions and trains a communal practice of inference.

Fans also respond through gag-form microperformances that double as indexing. Tumblr user *disneyanddisneyships* narrates the labor of keeping a favourites list by staging an action-line in roleplay asterisks, “sighs and adds another lucifer Morningstar to my list of favorite characters” (*disneyanddisneyships*). The line carries almost no propositional content and yet communicates everything necessary. The sigh registers pleasurable exasperation at surplus, the verb adds marks the ongoing accumulation of a morphic figure, and the phrase another Lucifer Morningstar signals a serial plural that is already legible to the audience. The tags extend the joke into metadata that structures recognition across canons. The post enumerates “#lucifer morningstar #hazbin hotel #lucifer netflix #lucifer spn #supernatural #netflix Lucifer #lucifer supernatural” which converts the gag into a cross-fandom directory and instructs the reader to treat these Lucifers as comparables within a single archive (*disneyanddisneyships*). The humour is functional. It compresses a theory of the Devil’s travel into a single beat of embodied action. The list becomes a personal archive that mirrors the larger Satanic archive. The action-line marks another intake. The tags route that intake to others who track the same morph. What reads as a throwaway bit performs recognition as a communal sort, aligning variants without dissolving their differences and modelling how fans file multiplicity into continuity.

5.4. Fanfiction as Affective Method

Desire functions as the primary motor of fanfiction. The form presupposes a prior relation to a specific source and seeks further engagement with it. This distinguishes fanfiction from earlier intertextual practices that draw on prior narratives yet remain legible without audience familiarity with a single source (Yang and Bao 853). As Anna Wilson notes, “Fan fiction assumes

an audience that not only knows a story but (by and large) loves it” (Wilson par. 1.1). That investment operates as a reading method rather than an ornament. Wilson describes an “affective hermeneutics,” a knowledge practice that “fills the gaps” of the source by converting its silences into points of entry (Wilson par. 1.4).

A midrashic genealogy clarifies this impulse. Rachel Barenblat notes that readers have long wrestled with contradiction inside canons, and that this struggle is built into scripture itself: “Fans who grapple with inconsistent or contradictory canon can take comfort in the knowledge that those engaged with Jewish textual tradition have participated in that same struggle for millennia. The Jewish scriptural canon features contradictory narratives right from the start” (Barenblat par. 1). The rabbinic solution is narrational: “The classical Jewish response to idiosyncrasies or contradictions in scripture is the writing of midrash, exegetical stories that explore and explain” since “every apparent flaw in the text could be a locus of meaning” (Barenblat par. 5). Fanfiction works in that same register. It wants to move closer to the text by narrating its difficulties, not by resolving them from a distance. Desire becomes method.

Mythic discourse gives that method a larger architecture. As Ika Willis argues, myth shapes fan work on the axes of content, form, and theory. Mythic materials travel as characters and story worlds, but more crucially, fanfiction shares myth’s formal life as “multiple, self-contained but overlapping or crisscrossing story worlds,” and as a social practice it has been read as “counterhegemonic or resistant mythopoesis” (Willis par. 1.2). Some classicists restrict the label by insisting on historicist embeddedness, so that “the contemporary text is seen only as a transmission or mediation of past content, not (...) a present-day contribution to the still-living tradition of myth” (Willis par. 1.3). Willis observes that many scholars of antiquity define myth by context and function and therefore “are concerned to emphasize the particularity of classical myth,” which makes them reluctant to connect ancient and contemporary mythic making (Willis par. 1.4). Rather than police borders between amateur and scholarly production, Willis calls for a shared recalibration: “opportunities for fans, pop culture scholars, and classicists to work together in order to recalibrate categories and redistribute privilege” (Willis par. 5.2). Desire is the link here as well. The fan does not merely transmit a myth. The fan writes into it.

Lucifer concentrates these logics as a contemporary mythic vessel whose recognisability and moral ambivalence make him an ideal site for midrashic repair and mythic overlap. The same midrashic and mythic desire animates Lucifer fandoms that speak through and to the Satanic figure. In a one-shot request fic labeled “fluffy,” posted by Tumblr user the-writer-of-the-fandoms and titled *Lucifer Morningstar/plus size!Wife!Reader* stages body positive intimacy by

ventriloquizing Netflix's *Lucifer* and a reader-character. The fluff tag declares an affective contract, tenderness over spectacle, comfort over threat. The reader-insert framework repositions the addressee as a spouse who already belongs, which converts a figure coded as temptation into a guarantor of safety through desire. The request provenance shows how the fic treats an anonymous prompt as binding commission, so the author answers not only the canon but a community member's need, which is precisely what Lamerichs identifies as desire that personalises characters while sustaining analytic distance through study of motives and actions (Lamerichs 112). What looks like sheer indulgence operates as repair. It reassigns value to a plus size body along an axis where the source text offers little explicit affirmation, and it does so by rewriting the Satanic as caretaker rather than corrupter (the-writer-ofthe-fandoms).

Role-play accounts intensify embodiment and test the borders between character and actor. "Tumblr user *lucifermxrningstxr*" answers an anonymous solicitation in the voice of Lucifer with the line "Thought you'd never ask! That's my specialty, after all. Moaning is a bit of an understatement though. Just ask the Detective. *@dtchloedecker*" (*lucifermxrningstxr*, Fig. 11). The diction performs consent and competence as erotic currencies. The reference to "the Detective" anchors the voice in canon, which confirms expertise in the diegesis and produces

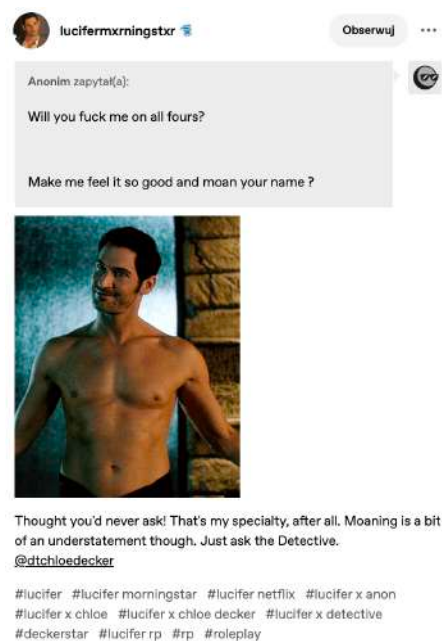


Fig. 11. Screenshot of Tumblr post by *lucifermxrningstxr*.

what Wilson calls intimacy as knowledge, a readerly knowing that penetrates the text rather than surveys it from outside (Wilson par. 1.4). The post also rides on Tom Ellis's recognizable image. The body that carries the voice is an actor's body known from the series, which folds star text

into character text and underscores Basu's claim that fanfictional desire is deviant by normative standards of legitimacy, since it treats sanctioned media property and celebrity image as materials for eroticized coauthorship rather than as finished products to be respected at a distance (Basu par. 2.7). The result is not uncritical fantasy. It is a test of what the canon can hold when the audience insists on being inside it.

Community desire registers as infrastructure. Tumblr user bookwormthings reframes erotic fixation as social seeking, writing, "I found a new hyper fixation... the fandom appears to be a ghost town. Any advice would be appreciated. I want to find more fans!!" and then flooding the post with discovery tags that route the call toward Discord servers and allied keywords (bookwormthings). The rhetoric converts a singular compulsion into a public problem to be solved together. Tags here operate like midrashic colophons that bind disparate readers into a page. The desire is for text and scene at once. Jenkins names the outcome when scene and text iterate on each other, a practice that "reworks and rewrites," not to reproduce but to develop underexplored interests and dismiss what no longer satisfies (Jenkins, *Textual Poachers* 162). The post solicits exactly that development by asking for pathways through which rewriting can be read and sustained.

Visual fanwork makes trauma legible as shareable charge. Tumblr user erinyaya posts a digital drawing of *The Sandman*'s Lucifer, wings spread in batlike geometry and back marked by bites and hickeys, and captions it as "so insanely religious trauma horny you guys won't believe it" (Fig. 12) with tags that tie this Lucifer to the Gwendoline Christie portrayal and to the wider



Fig. 12. Screenshot of Tumblr post by erinyaya.

Lucifer x reader ecosystem (erinyaya). The caption names a fusion of memory and libido that the image formalises. The marks on the body literalise theology's wounds as erotic inscriptions. The outspread wings stage an icon that oscillates between angelic and monstrous. Basu's account of fan deviance clarifies the stakes. The work refuses rigidness and legitimacy as criteria of value and centres erotic engagement with the source as the point of entry, which queers doctrine at the level of image and audience practice at once (Basu par. 2.7). This is not simply transgression. It is a pedagogy in image form. It teaches how to hold damage and pleasure in the same frame and offers the scene as a place where that holding can be practiced without sanction.

Questions about style and legitimacy resurface in fan fiction studies. Critics worry that the informality of fan fiction fails to train writers in academic registers (Stanko and Kolegaeva 207). There is limited empirical work on style. Mia Jacobsen and Ross Deans Kristensen-McLachlan find that explicit fan fiction on AO3 "appears to be a genre of its own with a conventional focus on descriptions, actions, and here-and-now orientation" (Jacobsen and Kristensen-McLachlan 8). Their corpus centres explicit works on a single platform and rating category, which cautions against generalising across fandoms and styles even as their findings highlight a meaningful tendency in a prominent subfield of practice. That temporal pressure reads as technique as well as content. Rafael Nicolás's *Angels Before Man* often moves in a fanfictional key at the level of sentence rhythm, especially where technique and sensation merge. When Baal teaches Lucifer to fly, the narration warns, "It will hurt," and the phenomenology floods the now, "It was so much—he couldn't even scream; it was shudders of pain whipping him from the inside, blinding him in white, the vague sensation of dryness in his mouth" (Nicolás 31). The syntax stacks clauses that register sequence as pulse and keeps the reader inside the sensation rather than reporting it after the fact. The effect tracks Jacobsen and Kristensen-McLachlan's index of immediacy without claiming identity between novel and fic. It suggests that the style of explicit fic travels as a technique of presence into adjacent Satanic narratives.

The *Good Omens* archive shows how desire scales from scene to collective grammar. Kara Cremonese reads Alternate Universe (AU) stories as analysis that is both reflective and participatory, writing that "*Good Omens* AU fan fiction serves as a method of deep reflection and analysis of facets of the canon works," and that the selection and reconfiguration of canon elements "demonstrate both analytical and creative writing" (Cremonese 26). AUs like coffee shop or college settings test what is essential in characterisation by subtracting supernatural scaffolding and retaining relational cores. The AU thus becomes a public conversation. "Beyond

a desire to experiment with or experience the same characters in new stories,” Cremonese argues, AU fiction “allows fan authors to participate in discussing and analyzing canon plot and characterization” through microgenre constraints that force clarity about values and motives (Cremonese 37). The pairing Aziraphale and Crowley rose to the top of Archive of Our Own in 2023, which indexes collective intensity at the level of production and tagging and signals that a large readership wants more of this relationship as a method for thinking about ethics and desire together (Archive of Our Own). Rachel Loewen’s account of “selvaging” explains the mechanism that makes such conversations structurally possible (Loewen par. 2.4). ‘Selvage’ (a blend word of ‘self’ and ‘salvage’) texts present “unfinished edges that invite, provoke, and support the reader’s response” (Basu par. 3.1), which means fans “pick up loose threads and weave alternative interpretations and continuations,” not as affront but as intended extension of a firm yet open weave (Loewen par. 2.4). In fan fiction inspired by *Good Omens: Lockdown* that selvage did not produce simple reassurance: “The stories do not simply endorse the original health messaging,” Loewen notes (Loewen par. 7.1). They hold contradictory affects, “both enjoying the lockdown and hating it,” and they thread public prescriptions through private mental health and queer relations in ways that exceed official rhetoric (Loewen par. 7.1). Desire here operates as an ethical instrument. It metabolises conflict by narrating it in forms the official text cannot or will not.

Affect also angles toward deviance by the measure of propriety and disciplinary decorum. Basu’s formulation is blunt, “Queerness, then, is defined by its lack of rigidity, exclusivity, and legitimacy. Not only are fan fictions deviant, multiplicitous, illegitimate, and unsanctioned texts, they are also the result of an erotic engagement between fan author and source text” (Basu par. 2.7). Wilson’s account converges. Affect is not ornament to analysis. It is the power source that drives transformation and should guide comparison with earlier allusive forms so that we do not flatten all transformation into the same category and lose the specific heat of fandom’s discourse of feeling (Wilson par. 4.11).

Desire also tutors ethics in explicit ways in fan discourse. Using the stock phrase meme structure of “If I had a nickel every time something happens, I would have X nickels,” Tumblr user actually-azi writes: “If I had a nickel for every time I absolutely loved a Bible fanfiction TV show with queer demonic/angelic characters and “shades of grey” morality, I’d have 4 nickels” (actually-azi, Fig. 13). The author reframes contemporary series with queer angelic and demonic figures as “Bible fanfiction” and tallies their recurrence with dry humour, “I’d have 4 nickels. Which isn’t a lot, but it’s weird that it happened 4 times” (actually-azi). Using the same meme

If I had a nickel for every time I absolutely loved a Bible fanfiction TV show with queer demonic/angelic characters and “shades of grey” morality, I’d have 4 nickels.

Which isn’t a lot, but it’s weird that it happened 4 times.



#good omens #hazbin hotel #helluva boss #lucifer netfil
#aziraphale #crowley #charlie morningstar
#alastor hazbin hotel #lucifer morningstar #blitzo
#moxie and millie #helluva boss stolas

Fig. 13. Screenshot of Tumblr post by actually-azi.

format, Tumblr user *kawaii-queen-kaiju* notes a parallel across *Lucifer* and *Hazbin Hotel*, “Lucifer is a good guy and the souls in Hell get a chance to go to Heaven” (Fig.14), and the repetition is marked as strange enough to notice twice (*kawaii-queen-kaiju*). Read together through Wilson’s affective hermeneutics, these microidioms show feeling as a method for testing and recalibrating a canon’s moral coordinates. The users do more than describe a shift. They perform the shift by tagging, joking, and confessing, and in so doing they publish an ethics that the canons only sometimes risk.

The payoff of fans themselves comparing the biblical canon to modern stories is methodological. Wilson warns against treating any allusive premodern text as “early fan fiction,” since doing so erases the affective conditions that make fanfiction distinct and drains the term of analytic force (Wilson par. 1.1; par. 4.11). Willis presses in another direction. Scholarship should



Fig. 14. Screenshot of Tumblr post by kawaii-queen-kaiju.

stop quarantining ancient myth from contemporary transformations and should study their living traffic together (Willis par. 1.4; par. 5.2). Taken together, these positions suggest a productive division of labor. The midrashic and mythopoetic operations across archives while preserving an account of how modern fandom's desire organises reading and writing practices.

Desire is therefore an analytic principle rather than a descriptive theme in this chapter. It sustains knowledge of canon through narrative engagement with contradiction, through the construction of overlapping worlds, and through practices of repair and elaboration. It also organises social relations. Commissions, role-play, discovery tags, production metrics, visual fanwork, and vernacular commentary indicate that attachment to a text is inseparable from participation in a community of reading and writing. This communal function is central to the Satanic archive under study. The archive continues because readers and writers maintain it through shared desire.

5.5. Algorithmic Genre as Drift

Genre in the post-cinematic condition functions less as a rule system than as an interface. Platforms route attention, algorithms stage time, and machine learning systems predict and sort publics. Classification still happens, yet it happens as tagging, trending, and recommendation. The Satanic Queer does not sit inside horror or fantasy as a stable shelf. It moves across feeds that read us as we read them. Generic cues behave like metadata and mood rather than like form. The Satanic archive remains legible because platforms and AI keep the figure in circulation where discovery, pacing, and recombination substitute for categorical purity.

Tumblr makes this shift legible at the level of user demand. "Tumblr user janeway-lover: you know what Lucifer needs? more crossover fics with other cop shows #SO MANY COP

SHOWS TAKE PLACE IN LA #HOLLYWOOD LOVES USING THE LAPD AS A SETTING BECAUSE IT'S RIGHT THERE #someone else should write this tho lucifer is as close to a cop show as i'll get #lucifer netflix" (janeway-lover). The post uses hashtags as micro-classifiers that propose not a single genre but a routing diagram. The desire is not for *Lucifer* as horror or as fantasy. The desire is for *Lucifer* to interoperate with the procedural logics of adjacent police series that share a production geography and an audience grammar. Crossovers here are not ornamental. They are the fan-side expression of platform recombination, where attention thrives on lateral linkage across already-indexed properties. Genre reads as a connective protocol which the series itself follows: *Lucifer* is a detective show whose case-of-the-week engine invites recombinant storylines with other Los Angeles police narratives.

Comedy and drama dominate this ecosystem, which marks a decisive break from parousia and possession horror. Duncan satirises the possession template by naming its exploitative pattern: "Adolescence and pre-menstruals are useful. The mentally ill. Anyone stricken with grief or love. Your ideal possession candidates a thirteen-year-old recently orphaned schizophrenic girl three days away from her period on her way to see the shrink with whom she's romantically besotted" (Duncan 27). The joke exposes a mechanical casting logic that treats vulnerability as fodder. The Satanic archive under study rejects that logic. It turns toward banter, romance, and workplace melodrama, and it reserves the demonic for relational questions rather than as an engine of bodily threat. Genre here is an atmosphere for ethical talk. The comedic tone does not dilute metaphysics. It relocates it.

Netflix's *Lucifer* experiments explicitly with format. There is an animation episode ("Yabba Dabba Do Me"), a film-noir episode ("It Never Ends Well for the Chicken"), a teenage dance sequence at prom with Lucifer and Chloe Decker dancing ("High School Poppycok"), a musical episode ("Bloody Celestial Karaoke Jam"), and a sustained romance that threads the detective plot with a will-they-won't-they arc. These are not excursions away from genre. They are acknowledgments that genre has become a scene of switching. The noir episode treats chiaroscuro, voice-over, and femme-fatale coding as a skin the show can wear for a week. The musical episode treats number and refrain as a second register of confession. The prom sequence frames Lucifer inside high-school melodrama to test what parts of the character endure when the tone changes. These shifts model the platform condition in miniature. Genre is not a container for content. Genre functions as a user-facing slider for mood and tempo. The series knows this and speaks it aloud. "Crime-solving devil; it makes sense. Don't overthink it" ("Candy

Morningstar”). The line clears the way for hybridisation by refusing to defend its mix. It brands the combination and returns to the case.

Tagging practices confirm the point. Most texts in the corpus are tagged “supernatural.” The category sorts by ontology rather than by tone. That is a platform move. It optimises search by character or object rather than by formal lineage. Audiences then use mood words to finish the classification work in fan fiction works. “Fluff,” “hurt/comfort,” and “angst” operate like generic subtypes, yet they are affective modes rather than structural forms.

Glen Duncan’s *I, Lucifer* makes the disruption of genre its organising conceit. The novel reads like a diary and adopts a first-person diaristic voice, yet there are no dates and no calendar structure. It reads as a memoir of past scenes presented non-linearly. Inside that memoir, Lucifer drafts and revises a movie script that he recodes into his own story, which warps the fiction of authorship and the coordinates of the diegesis. The text announces its split focus:

Obviously I’ve got a lot of the script down — the big scenes, so to speak, and Trent already thinks I’m god — but do you think I can stick to the task in hand? (...) Forced to acknowledge the presence of an untitled file alongside ‘Lucifer screenplay’ that’s been variously titled ‘some’, ‘anyway’, ‘last words’, ‘wherefore I know not’, and ‘paradise fucked’, and which has thus far proven a terrible distraction from my contractual obligations. You know what’s in it, don’t you? You’ve been reading it, haven’t you? I wouldn’t mind if it was just the narrative version of the blockbusting movie — the ‘novelisation’ as such things are barbarously called — but as you know, it’s worse than that. I seem to be continuously struggling against the temptation to write about Declan Gunn. (Duncan 120)

The passage collapses screenplay and novelisation while the diarist voice addresses the reader as a collaborator. The book becomes a side project inside its own contract. The result is a textual surface that refuses the clean borders of diary, memoir, and script. The Satanic narrator uses that refusal to test what counts as fiction and what counts as truth. The truth claim in the subtitle becomes a device for performance rather than a criterion for verification.

Televisual meta-awareness amplifies the platform grammar. In *Lucifer*’s episode 1 of season 3, Lucifer summarises apocalyptic events to Amenadiel through a string of icons. “Ah. Well, didn’t you get my text? (...) Fire, sword, doughnut, spaceman, clock, dancing lady, flashlight, thumbs up” followed by the gloss, “I ignited the flaming sword, used it to cut a hole in space and time, Mum’s light flooded through it, then it closed up behind her. All good!” (“They’re Back, Aren’t They?”). The gag depends on a viewer who treats emoji as a second language. It asks the audience to translate icons into a theological narrative and to enjoy the incongruity. It is also a structural confession. The series announces that it can render the end of days in a visual shorthand designed for circulation. The method is comic compression. The apocalypse becomes a sequencing problem that the interface can solve. The joke is also a

transtextual signal. It tells the audience how to read what follows: treat religious content as something that travels as a feed.

The series doubles down on this self-classification: “A devil emoji? That’s it. I’m speaking to a copyright lawyer today” (“Everything’s Coming Up Lucifer”). The line treats religious iconography as an IP problem that has seeped into everyday technological life. It maps the Devil onto legal regimes and platform affordances. The episode title operates the same way: “Everything’s Coming Up Lucifer” uses the name as an adverbial intensifier. The choice de-centers the proper noun and highlights action rather than essence. Lucifer becomes not a category but a tuning of events.

The broader corpus supports this reframing. *Lucifer* (2016–2021) is labeled crime, drama, and fantasy by the website IMDb and contains extended comedic passages as well as single episodes styled as musical and animation. *Hazbin Hotel* (2024–ongoing) is adult animation that combines comedy and supernatural drama. *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–2020) and *The Sandman* (2022–present) register as horror on IMDb, yet their narrative emphasis diverges from possession or parousia models. Sabrina foregrounds a bildungsroman that treats gore as set dressing for an education in power. *The Sandman* renders darkness in reflective visuals that align more closely with the Gothic as recognised in film theory (e.g. Aldana Reyes 2020), a label not acknowledged by IMDb as a category despite scholarly currency. The generic diversity of these series marks a departure from the Satanic Panic’s consolidation of the Devil as a horror-exclusive figure. The Satanic now travels as a character whose meaning is tuned by tone and platform rather than by genre allegiance.

Music demonstrates that Satanic signwork has migrated beyond film and television into a cross-genre economy of attention. Scholarship has long tied the Devil to countercultural music cultures such as metal and hard rock, as surveyed by Paulissen, Walser, van Luijk, and Case. That historiography matters, yet my corpus shows a different distribution. Alongside King Woman’s metal, Lil Nas X’s “MONTERO (Call Me By Your Name)” and Doja Cat’s “Paint the Town Red” mobilize Satanic cues within pop. Neither work is metal. Both are mainstream. The Devil no longer functions only as a subcultural badge. It operates as a flexible operator that moves across genres and across markets. I argue that this flexibility is produced by platform dynamics rather than by genre lineage. Controversy routes discovery. Remix multiplies points of entry. Short-form circulation compresses motifs into repeatable units that travel quickly across feeds. The result is a mode of signwork that prizes iterability over authenticity. The Satanic becomes a portable interface for attention that producers, fans, and algorithms can all reuse.

Genre still frames expectations, yet it no longer determines who may deploy the Devil or to what ends. The analytic task therefore shifts from locating the Devil within a single musical tradition to tracking how platform operations stage and restage the figure for mainstream visibility.

The thesis therefore concerns time as much as classification. Time is no longer a neutral container for stories. Time becomes a resource computed by systems that predict and interpolate. “The present regime renders future as conflict and creation,” and its image is “the morph-image; an image of flexibility, transformation, and adaptability, rather than a stable identity” (Christiansen 2). Algorithms operate as “technologies of temporal calculation” (Konings 23) that are static objects yet express dynamic movement through prediction, which means the morph invents temporal in-betweens by stretching images and events across perception (Christiansen 10–11). This is not a backdrop. It is the operational atmosphere in which Satanic texts breathe. When *Lucifer*’s season compresses apocalypse into an emoji recap or when a pop single restages Hell as a dance floor, these works are not switching genres so much as switching temporal programs that tune attention at platform speed (“They’re Back, Aren’t They?”). The morph explains why form feels fluid and why genre feels like a residue.

The Devil functions as a figure that makes texts aware of their own construction and invites publics to read across platforms in real time. Genre persists as a vocabulary of moods and routes. The Satanic Queer circulates through those routes as an index of the platform condition rather than as an inhabitant of a single shelf. Algorithms do not replace interpretation. They condition what feels available to interpret. The contemporary archive keeps importing Satan and exporting genre. *Lucifer* can stage therapy, noir, musical, animated, and teen dance hours while the figure reads as continuous, which indicates that generic identity has lost primacy to character and world logics that travel laterally across catalogs and tags. Moulthrop’s account of hypertext clarifies the mechanism. Interactivity does not belong only to games and experimental fiction. In cybernetic systems dialogue is regulated computationally, so users traverse and construct links that simulate conversation and cultivate affiliation rather than passively receiving a message (Moulthrop 631). At scale, streaming adopts this ethos of linkage. Viewers follow character and motif across fragments while platforms supply traversal tools. Ensslin describes the reader of such systems as a binder of wounds who must construct coherence from paths rather than from inherited cohesion, which means the experience of genre becomes one path among many, not a sealed corridor that dictates mood and meaning in advance (Ensslin 15; 35–36). This is where algorithms matter. Paths are increasingly laid out and ranked by machines that learn from behaviour and nudge attention toward predicted futures.

Platform design amplifies this shift. As Dal Yong Jin reports, “Based on Netflix’s testimony and its own machine learning director’s claim, it is certain that Netflix has continued to focus on the function of machine learning beyond a simple algorithmic system as its major business model, which makes Netflix one of the most advanced AI digital platforms” (Jin 82). Under these conditions genre becomes a weak predictor. The salient issue is not whether the Devil belongs to horror or fantasy. What matters is what a learning system infers when a user types Devil into a search bar and what it routes to that user after an episode of *Lucifer*. The outcome exceeds personalization. It installs a temporality that feels predictive rather than reflective. The system harvests a history of interactions, then stages an anticipated near future as if it were the present. Discovery unfolds in digital time that compresses feedback into recommendation and recodes selection as an effect of ongoing inference.

Algorithmic emphasis also reshapes form. Jin notes that “Netflix has also influenced the storytelling of local dramas. Until now, producers of Korean dramas used to develop an important turning point at the end of each episode so that the audiences would wait with anticipation until the next episode. Freedom from the traditional program schedule of classical linear television is the most important motive for audiences to use OTT platforms” (Jin 83). The cliffhanger persists, yet its function mutates. In a binge window the hook secures the next thirty seconds rather than the next week. Serial design adjusts to a rhythm tuned by watch time and completion rate. Traditional models of literary seriality cannot fully account for these shifts because the release cycle has collapsed into on demand windows, and because the author reader relation now passes through computational procedures and commercial formats. Authorship becomes the capacity to be sliced for trailers, thumbnails, and product cards. Readership becomes the effect of publics sorted into clusters that can be predicted and served.

These industrial conditions intersect with a culture of incessant reference. “Intertextuality is everywhere and paratextuality a norm, even as intellectual property is constantly seeking to secure territory” (Miller vii). Satanic iconography thrives in such a field because no single rights holder can monopolise the figure. The Devil can appear as detective, archangel’s brother, animation gag, or pop star’s dance partner without triggering a universal cease and desist. The same critic notes that “Marketing likes nothing better than active audiences who are bursting with knowledge about media texts; nothing better than diverse groups with easily identified cultural politics and practices; nothing better than fine-grained ethnographic and focus-group work to supplement large-scale surveys that provide broad-based demographic data” (Miller x). Recommendation systems take this preference as an operational premise. They translate fan

energies and public conversations into signals and segments. The outcome is not simply profit. It is a change in how a figure travels. The Satanic circulates as a flexible sign routed by algorithmic attention rather than by the gravity of a single shelf.

Participatory culture provides the connective tissue. Kurtz and Bourdaa describe three mutations that reshape contemporary audiovisual production: technological, narrative, and participatory. Productions deploy the Internet “to enhance their contents; while franchises consolidate around narrative complexity as “active audiences” adopt “spreading tactics” that convert reception into circulation. Fans “share these complex contents” alongside “fan-made productions” in fandom spaces and the public sphere through networks such as Facebook, Twitter, or Tumblr, which positions them as “advocates for the media contents” (Kurtz and Bourdaa 1). What binds these shifts is “the process of telling stories through one storyworld, across multiple media, to an engaged audience” (Kurtz and Bourdaa 1). Algorithms intensify these processes by elevating some shares and burying others; they learn from tags translating labels into predicted engagement. In doing so, they conjoin narrative complexity with spreadability by privileging formats that can be clipped, captioned, and recirculated. The outcome is an operational synergy in which participatory labor and computational sorting co-produce visibility.

The danger is to mistake platform logics for the whole field. Platforms rise and fall, but the underlying cultural image persists. Steen Ledet Christiansen’s account names that the morph-image of culture (13). The present regime of time is flexible and adaptive. It stages future as conflict and creation and renders time fluid by absorbing it into capital’s immanent operations. Algorithms become “technologies of temporal calculation” that appear static yet express dynamic movement through prediction, which means they invent temporal in-betweens that stretch images and events across perception (Konings 23). The figure that concentrates this regime is the morph. The morph is not a genre. It is a logic that makes form feel liquid and sequence feel interpolated. In this light the Satanic Queer is not simply a content trend. It is a modality of time and form. The Devil morphs across media because media themselves are morphic.

This diagnosis yields two linked consequences. First, the archive’s persistence does not depend on a single platform. Even if Tumblr or Netflix were to change beyond recognition, the rhizome of links and the morph of time would remain available as cultural techniques. Second, algorithmic subjectivity produces a new vulnerability. The flow of texts is no longer under exclusively human control, identities are retargeted by models that infer more than self-report,

and solidarities strain when publics are sorted into individualised patterns rather than articulable groups. The Devil guides readers through this condition because he inhabits the edge where power seduces and exposes itself. What the Satanic Queer performs is a practice of flexible self-formation enacted through texts that refuse to stop moving. The Devil is not a repository of settled doctrines. The Devil is the figure used to test how far narrative and identity can be stretched without snapping. He remains the morph-image's patron saint.

Conclusion

This dissertation has argued that the contemporary Devil is best perceived as a set of cultural operations rather than a stable essence. I have named this operational figure the Satanic Queer and analysed it through an intermedial close-reading method that attends to enactment, circulation, and recombination. Central to the approach is a shift from archive-as-residue to archive-as-act: a focus on what the archive is doing in performance, not only what remains after the fact. I have treated morphing as the relevant unit of analysis and read meaning as emerging through forms-in-change. In other words, I have asked whether a figure historically mobilised to police doctrine can, in platformed culture, disclose how identities are assumed in practice; the chapters demonstrate that it can, and that the disclosure is legible as a morphic logic.

The historical synthesis established that plurality and recomposition are longstanding features of the Satanic corpus rather than a novelty of the digital present. Subsequent chapters tracked how contemporary texts perform scripture without a singular source, restage creation as collaborative making, reframe the fall as inquiry, and keep spatial and temporal orders revisable. I also demonstrated how publics and infrastructures co-produce visibility: participatory practices stabilise comparison across versions while algorithmic systems route attention, compress feedback into recommendation, and re-time seriality to watch-time and completion metrics. Under these conditions, genre weakens as a predictor, and recognisability depends on gestures and iterations that travel across platforms.

From this account follow the dissertation's principal contributions. First, it proposes a new model linking queer theory and media studies. Rather than adding sexuality to media

description or media to queer critique, I specify identity-as-enactment under platformed time. Queer theory furnishes a suspicion of essence and a vocabulary for positional practice; media and platform studies specify spreadability as conditions of legibility; performance secures the claim that meaning gains force by being done. Taken together, these strands articulate a procedural interface by which non-essential identities are produced, recognised, and circulated in contemporary infrastructures. This is the wager announced in the introduction and played through the case studies: the Satanic Queer clarifies how identities are assumed in practice and why their legibility depends on circulation and reprise.

Second, the dissertation advances a morphic ontology for cultural analysis. I treat form-in-change as the pertinent unit, not the vessel that holds change. The Devil remains legible not because an invariant schema persists beneath variation, but because a metamorphic archive transports recognition across variation. This reorientation makes movement measurable and sense-making in motion accountable; it resolves a common impasse in studies of overdetermined icons by rendering drift as neither noise nor mere style, but an analytic object with describable operations. It is, in short, an ontology scaled to the temporalities of platformed attention and to the iterative labours of publics.

Third, I formalise the Satanic Queer as an analytical tool and methodological code: a way of reading that moves across scenes and media, follows chains of iteration rather than isolated exemplars, and measures intensities without presuming linear descent. Portable by design, the code specifies three procedures—intermedial close reading oriented to enactment, attention to audience operations that stabilise comparison, and analysis of platform sorting and algorithmic temporalities—usable for figures whose cultural life turns on recognition-through-difference. In this sense, the Satanic Queer is not a constituency but a travelling technique, a kit for tracking how texts test plans, expose programmes, and compose provisional genealogies from heterogeneous fragments. The dissertation also registers how these same conditions pressure Jungian archetypes in contemporary performance, where once discrete roles fray; the procedures extend readily to other archetypes across the textual field.

There are also consequences for method. Treating the archive as act requires analysis to keep pace with circulation and to read objects in the company they keep: scenes with their tags, cuts with their captions, narrative arcs with the recommendation loops that route them onwards. Contemporaneity becomes a methodological obligation rather than a convenience, because meaning coheres in the friction between forms and the transactional ecologies that render them iterable. My aim is not to reduce interpretation to platform explanation; it is to keep platform

logics in view without mistaking them for the field itself. Platforms rise and fall; the cultural image persists. What anchors continuity is the morph, not the service that happens to host it at a given moment. That distinction both explains why examples travel across infrastructures and justifies the portability of the framework: I track how publics stabilise comparison and how infrastructures re-time seriality through watch-time, completion metrics, and algorithmic timing, but I take the morph as the durable, albeit constantly in flux, network that makes those shifts analytically legible.

The project's disciplinary payoff is twofold. For queer and performance studies, I offer a worked account of identity as enactment under digital conditions, showing how non-essential positions gain traction when reprise and drift are part of the ecosystem. The chapters above trace gestures as they are picked up, and in doing so they describe a practice of becoming that is neither an expression of prior essence nor a mere effect of textual play; it is a situated negotiation among publics, scenes, and systems that confer recognition through difference. For media and cultural analysis, the Devil ceases to be a character and becomes a technique for testing institutional certainty, recalibrating temporal programmes, and holding beginnings and endings open. The contribution is not a 'truer' Devil but a demonstrable set of operations that keep the figure legible across media, together with a vocabulary precise enough to follow those operations wherever they recur.

Limitations and futures follow from the same premises. The project does not close the archive it describes; it cannot, because morphing is the very condition of the archive's persistence. The readings have been calibrated to a corpus that foregrounds legibility and travel; different corpora will require re-tuning the code. Yet this contingency is a strength rather than a deficit. It keeps the method responsive to emergent publics and to new combinations of form and infrastructure. In this sense, the Satanic Queer functions as a methodological code designed to be revised in contact with future objects.

Finally, the dissertation acknowledges its own condition. It morphs with its materials. The argument is staged as a moving demonstration rather than a terminus. Morphing never ends. What is offered here is not a definitive settlement but an opening of an epistemology oriented to provisional forms, ongoing publics, and recursions of attention. The conclusions, accordingly, are not for ever. They mark a plateau on which subsequent versions—of the Devil, of the method, and of the field—move all the time.

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Abstract

The overarching aim of this work is to interrogate the depictions of the Satanic figure in texts of contemporary popular culture. The core of this research involves developing and naming the concept of the Satanic Queer, formalising it as an analytical tool and methodological code. This operational figure is defined not as a stable identity or constituency, but as a morphing code that becomes legible when the Devil is staged under digital conditions. The study treats the Devil as a figure of movement that routes desires, ethical tests, and institutional critiques through fan circuits and streaming infrastructures. This project advances a new model linking queer theory and media studies, departing from traditional theological and archival scholarship to treat the Devil with the specificity of the digital medium. Its central argument is twofold: first, that the Devil's contemporary prominence is less a doctrinal revival than a function of a media ecology that privileges circulation and enactment; and second, that the Satanic Queer clarifies how non-essential identities are assumed in practice through acts, affects, and platformed performances that keep form in motion rather than at rest.

The methodology sets out the dissertation's conceptual frame by pairing intermedial close reading with morphing-as-practice to examine a figure that resists consolidation, informed by queer critique, performance studies, and digital culture. The empirical corpus centres on works from the past twenty-five years. The study demonstrates that "Satanic Queer" functions as a model for tracking the movement of signs in digital culture: its contemporary force lies not in anchoring the notion of "evil," but in keeping properties from hardening into oppositions. Accordingly, the contemporary Devil is best understood as a suite of cultural operations rather than a stable essence.

Key words: The Devil, Satanic Queer, Morphing, Queer Theory, Digital Culture, Popular Culture

Abstrakt:

Nadrzędnym celem niniejszej pracy jest zbadanie przedstawień figury Szatana w tekstach współczesnej kultury popularnej. Rdzeniem badań jest wypracowanie i nazwanie pojęcia „Satanic Queer,” sformalizowanie go jako narzędzia analitycznego oraz kodu metodologicznego. Ta figura operacyjna definiowana jest nie jako stabilna tożsamość czy zbiorowość, lecz jako morfujący kod, który staje się czytelny, gdy Diabeł jest inscenizowany w warunkach cyfrowych. Badanie traktuje Diabła jako figurę ruchu, która kieruje pragnieniami, próbami etycznymi i krytykami instytucjonalnymi poprzez obiegi fanowskie i infrastruktury streamingowe. Projekt proponuje nowy model łączący teorię queer i medioznawstwo, odchodząc od tradycyjnych ujęć teologicznych i archiwistycznych, aby ująć Diabła ze specyfiką medium cyfrowego. Centralna teza jest dwuczłonowa: po pierwsze, współczesna widoczność Diabła wynika mniej z doktrynalnego odrodzenia, a bardziej z ekologii mediów, która uprzywilejowuje cyrkulację oraz performowanie; po drugie, „Satanic Queer” wyjaśnia, jak w praktyce przyjmowane są nieesencjalne tożsamości poprzez akty, afekty i performanse platformowe, które utrzymują formę w ruchu, a nie w spoczynku.

Metodologia wyznacza ramę koncepcyjną dysertacji, łącząc intermedialną lekturę bliską z morfowaniem jako praktyką w celu zbadania figury odpornej wobec konsolidacji; inspiracją są krytyka queer, performance studies i kultura cyfrowa. Korpus empiryczny koncentruje się na pracach z ostatnich dwudziestu pięciu lat. Badanie dowodzi, że „Satanic Queer” funkcjonuje jako model śledzenia ruchu znaków w kulturze cyfrowej: jego dzisiejsza siła polega nie na zakotwiczeniu pojęcia „zła”, lecz na powstrzymywaniu cech przed twardnieniem w opozycje. W konsekwencji współczesny Diabeł najlepiej daje się uchwycić jako zespół operacji kulturowych, a nie stabilna istota.

Słowa kluczowe: Diabeł, Satanic Queer, morfowanie, teoria queer, kultura cyfrowa, kultura popularna