

Charles Manson as Neo-Nazi “Holy Man”

Spencer Sunshine

7 May 2024

Contents

Charlie's Appeal	3
Swastikas, Right and Left	4
Racism, Antisemitism, Manson	5
The Family and the Brotherhood	6
The Moon and the Sun	8
Manson in SIEGE	9
Initial Manson Worship Reception	12
Environmentalism	13
Red Letters, Blue Letters	14
The Pop Cult of Manson	14

Charles Manson was a late 1960s cult leader in California whose followers, mostly young women, were called “The Family.” He became infamous after members committed multiple gruesome murders in the summer of 1969, together referred to as the Tate–LaBianca murders. On the night of August 8 and 9, 1969, Manson Family members entered a Los Angeles home in a wealthy neighborhood and butchered five people, including pregnant actress Sharon Tate, and wrote “pig” on a door in blood. The next night at another home, they killed Rosemary and Leno LaBianca and wrote “Helter Skelter” in blood on the refrigerator. Although Manson did not personally participate in the killings, he and several Family members were arrested, tried, and sentenced to death. However, California abolished the death penalty before their execution, leaving Manson to serve the rest of his life in prison. There, Manson—often known by his nickname “Charlie”—became another kind of cult figure, with books, TV interviews, and movies made about him and the Family. While the audience for these varied, it never lacked an appeal to those interested in extremes.

Manson carved a swastika in his forehead during his trial and held racist and anti-semitic views. In the public’s eye, however, the swastika was often seen as just another eccentricity in Manson’s bag of extremes, while his antisemitism and racism were generally dismissed as products of his poor education. The result of this is that Manson is generally not associated with neo-Nazism.

But it was these very elements that drew Mason to him, leading to his attempt to create a neo-Nazi cult around Manson. Mason proclaimed him to be the new leader and under his inspiration made ideological and tactical changes.

Mason’s interest in Manson also led him to his connection with the Abraxas Clique—a group of the musicians, publishers, and Satanists consisting of Boyd Rice, Adam Parfrey, Nikolas Schreck, and Michael Moynihan. They would be four of his main collaborators for the next decade after SIEGE, with Moynihan being the one who would edit and publish *Siege*.

Charlie’s Appeal

There were some rather pragmatic reasons that Mason was attracted to Manson. Some of the more explicit draws of Manson included the swastika on his forehead; his racism, antisemitism, and praise of Hitler; ability to draw women followers but still within a misogynistic worldview; appeal to youth and acceptance of countercultural fashion and sexuality; and the fact that he was alive. Mason also worked his ideas into his political approach, including the notion of an underlying natural order, environmentalism, the role of families, and the use of dropping out of society.

Mason’s encounter with Manson also had a religious quality. This was perhaps not surprising, considering how many people fell under Manson’s spell over the years. As Gavin Baddeley put it, “Manson received his new disciples...in the same way that he’d learned to deal with everybody— reflecting back at them their own desires and

preconceptions.” A former Family member, Brooks Poston, said Manson “said the right words at the right time.” Mason openly described his first encounter as a “revelation.”¹

Mason was again seeking a new path for the neo-Nazi movement, which he saw as having reached a dead end. Manson was “the threshold of alienation and a symbol of radicalism beyond the most extreme.”² Mason described the feeling of his discovery as “a replay of 1966”—the year he fell under George Lincoln Rockwell’s spell.

It was all as intuitive as it was irresistible.... There had been Manson like a comet in the sky in 1969, only two years after Rockwell’s assassination, and not one of us had seen it. We were too wrapped up in “Hollywooding” with uniforms, etc.³

Manson, he said, had “provided the missing parts.”⁴

Swastikas, Right and Left

Immediately after the Tate–LaBianca murders, some leftists embraced Manson. This included Yippie leader Jerry Rubin and the armed June 2nd Movement in Germany.⁵ But the most infamous one was at the last Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) conference, the Flint War Council, which was the founding event of the Weather Underground. Bernardine Dohrn, one of the group’s leaders, gave a speech praising the Tate murders. “Dig it; first they killed those pigs, then they ate dinner in the room with them, then they even shoved a fork into pig Tate’s stomach. Wild!” Attendees chanted “Charles Manson Power!” and saluted each other by holding up four fingers to represent the fork. (Dohrn later called this an “ironic joke.”)⁶ Combined with his position as a countercultural icon, Manson’s association with a vaguely left-leaning ambience was never quite severed, despite his continued expressions of bigotry.

The symbol on Manson’s forehead went through several changes. In late July 1970, Manson came to court with an “X” carved in his forehead with a razor, saying it symbolized that he had “X’ed” himself out of society. (Some committed Family members

¹ Gavin Baddeley, *Lucifer Rising: Sin, Devil Worship & Rock’n’Roll* (London: Plexus, 1999), p.152; *Manson*, dir. Robert Hendrickson and Laurence Merrick, 1973, www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUUtAAdx-XA&t=3981s; Mason interview with Metzger/*Race and Reason* (video).

² George Petros, ed., *Art That Kills: A Panoramic Portrait of Aesthetic Terrorism, 1984–2001* (Creation Books, 2006), p.189 [Hereafter *Art That Kills*].

³ “Hollywood Nazis” is a derogative term for the “uniform and demonstrate” approach; Mason interview in *NO LONGER A FANzine*, p.13.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Vincent Bugliosi with Curt Gentry, *Helter Skelter: The True Story of the Manson Murders* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1974), ebook, “Part 4: The Search for the Motive”; Nikolas Schreck, ed., *The Manson File* (New York: Amok Press, 1988), pp.140–41.

⁶ Harold Jacobs, ed., *Weatherman* (Ramparts Press, 1970), pp.347, 481; “User Clip: Professor Bernardine Dohrn remarks on her Manson Family remarks,” *C-Span*, June 7, 2009, www.c-span.org/video/?c4460430/professor-bernardine-dohrn-remarks-manson-family-remarks.

followed suit.) In March 1971, while proceedings were still ongoing, he turned the X into a left-facing swastika, now saying that society was corrupt—but that he could bring order to the “anarchy.”⁷ While he was in prison, but before their own sentences, Lynette “Squeaky” Fromme and Sandra Good—two of Manson’s most dedicated followers—took to wearing capes embroidered with left-facing swastikas as well. (In the Family, Fromme was known as “Red” while Good was “Blue.”)⁸

According to Mason, after the appearance of Manson’s swastika, William Pierce said that “The Jewish/leftist Peanut gallery that had been cheering on Manson fell silent.” Mason, for whom the open use of the swastikas was important, specifically noted this image as part of his argument for adopting Manson. Around the time that SIEGE ceased being an NSLF publication, Manson changed the swastika on his forehead, so it was right-facing. (The arms on the Nazi swastika were right-facing, whereas in other swastikas the arms frequently face left.)⁹

Racism, Antisemitism, Manson

The “Helter Skelter” idea was also an inspiration to Mason. Vincent Bugliosi, who prosecuted Manson, said this was his plan to start a race war. While it went on, the Family would hide out in the desert, and after it was over, they would emerge and take power. The argument was tied to the graffiti left at the Tate–LaBianca murder scenes, which sought to implicate black radicals in hopes of kicking off the race war.¹⁰ Manson denied Bugliosi’s version of his views. But regardless of its veracity, Mason embraced the idea and wove it into his ideology.

Bugliosi reported that although Manson avoided slurs in court, privately he “often referred to blacks as ‘niggers’.” Manson claimed he had no ill feelings toward black people, while also saying “I know they hate me.” So it was not surprising that Manson promoted racial separatism. During his November 1970 testimony, he said, “my family is of the white family,” which he distinguished from black, yellow, cow, and mule families. Elsewhere, Manson denounced “blackie” for “balling the blond, blue eyed daughters

⁷ Douglas Robinson, “Manson Called a Megalomaniac By Prosecutor as Trial Begins,” *NYT*, July 25, 1970, www.nytimes.com/1970/07/25/archives/manson-called-a-megalomaniac-by-prosecutor-as-trial-begins.html; Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, “Part 6: The Trial”; Theo Wilson, “Manson Girl’s First Attorney Tells of Deal with DA,” *Daily News* (New York City), March 6, 1971, www.newspapers.com/image/464036723; Mary Neiswender, “Manson tells why he has a swastika,” *Independent* (Long Beach, California), March 12, 1971, p.A5, www.newspapers.com/image/720963953.

⁸ Jess Bravin, *Squeaky* (Buzz Books/St. Martin’s, 1997), ebook, chapter 7.

⁹ Mason interview in *Iron March* (Articles, p.256); SIEGE 10(9) September 1981, p.3 (*Siege*, p.396); Mason to author, January 1, 2023.

¹⁰ Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, “Part 4: The Search for the Motive”.

and making mixed babies. It's all leading to bad shit."¹¹ At a 1986 parole hearing, he said black people were

sub-underworld people for long over 700 years. This will be the fifth wave of negro babies your system has been bussing up your own children's ass. Negroes eat white people. Like wolves eat dogs.¹²

Just as with other White Supremacists, for whom racism and antisemitism are inseparable, Manson said Jews were "bloodsuckers" who "run everything."¹³ (Apparently, he was not too dogmatic on this matter, however, and one Family member, Catherine "Gypsy" Share, was Jewish.) Manson also praised Hitler because he "started putting order into the world," and said "I see how the Second World War has made people racists" against Jews.¹⁴ Manson Family member and future Mason friend Good espoused similar views. In one letter, reprinted in *The Manson File*, she said, "Would you cross a horse and a zebra and cause the zebra to lose its stripes? ... Mixing with whites would only destroy their race." Good also denounced the "American nigger type" for being "messed up in a phony Jews' culture."¹⁵

None of this was lost on Mason, of course. He was fond of Manson's statement denouncing society as "Dead in the Jews' Money." Mason was also sure to point out that Tate's husband, Roman Polanski, was Jewish. As for the fact that Tate was pregnant when she was murdered, Mason said he had no tears, as "it was, after all, a Jew."¹⁶

The Family and the Brotherhood

James Mason was not the first White Supremacist that Manson was allied with, however. In the early 1970s, the Manson Family had a chaotic relationship with the notorious White Supremacist prison gang the Aryan Brotherhood. Even among other prison gangs, the Aryan Brotherhood has stood out for their extreme violence, and different kinds of violence resulted during the two groups' short-lived relationship. But Manson's relationship to them may have paved the way intellectually to the later connection with Mason. (Despite his extensive prisoner contacts, Mason did not appear

¹¹ Ibid, "Epilogue: A Shared Madness"; Manson, "The Testimony of Charles Manson, November 19, 1970," in Schreck, ed., *The Manson File*, p.45; "Charles Manson," *Encyclopedia*, p.192.

¹² Cited in Jeffrey Kaplan and Heléne Lööw, eds., *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization* (Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira, 2002), p.249.

¹³ *Charles Manson Superstar*, dir. Nikolas Schreck, 1989, www.imdb.com/title/tt009704, www.youtube.com/watch?v=cI292IidG8M; Schreck, ed., *The Manson File*, p.194.

¹⁴ Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, "Part 8: Fires in Your Cities"; Kaplan and Lööw, eds., *The Cultic Milieu*, p.250; *Charles Manson Superstar* (video).

¹⁵ Sandra Good, "A Letter from Sandra Good," Schreck, ed., *The Manson File*, pp.155–56.

¹⁶ SIEGE 11(4) April 1982, p.2 (*Siege*, p.425); SIEGE 11(11) November 1982, p.3 (*Siege*, p.439); *Siege* p.437.

to have any more than a passing, at most, association with members of the Brotherhood.¹⁷)

The Family-Brotherhood alliance started in 1971 when Manson—already known for his racist views—became worried about being attacked by black prisoners. Manson received protection from the Aryan Brotherhood, apparently “in return for Family women providing sex for AB members on the outside.” Manson’s Aryan Brotherhood contact was Kenneth Como.¹⁸

Como escaped from custody twice during a brief period. Along with five Family members, he took part in a failed robbery of a Hawthorne, California gun store that resulted in a shootout with police. Back inside, Como ended up in physical altercations with Manson over his romance with Share, a Jewish member of the Family. (They were later married.)¹⁹

An even more violent set of crimes came from a different Family– Brotherhood pairing. Members of both groups were arrested together for murdering a married couple in Sacramento, California, morbidly burying the woman in the basement of the house they were staying in.²⁰ A second marriage between a Brotherhood and Family member came out of this as well.²¹

Last, Bobby Beausoleil, the first Family member arrested for murder, was also identified as being in the Aryan Brotherhood, in both a newspaper article and an interview with author Truman Capote. Beausoleil later claimed the article quoted a prison spokesperson who was misinformed, and furthermore that Capote fabricated that part of the interview. Beausoleil also adamantly denied that he was ever in the Aryan Brotherhood, saying “It would have put my life at risk to even claim such an affiliation, especially when it was untrue. Moreover, I have never been an adherent to any racial supremacist [sic] or racial separatist ideologies.”²² But regardless of Beausoleil’s disavowal of white separatism, he was connected to Moynihan; the latter interviewed

¹⁷ Mason said the father of Eva, Mason’s teenage girlfriend in Colorado, “had been an A.B. member and loathed Manson”; Mason to author, November 26, 2022.

¹⁸ Jeff Guinn, *Manson: The Life and Times of Charles Manson* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), p.386

¹⁹ Edward George with Dary Matera, *Taming the Beast: Charles Manson’s Time Behind Bars* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), ebook, chapter 4.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ UPI, “Michael Monfort, a convicted double-murderer and onetime associate of...,” www.upi.com/Archives/1984/05/04/Michael-Monfort-a-convicted-double-murderer-and-onetime-associate-of/7605452491200.

²² Robert Hollis, “3 Inmates Hurt In Wild Fight,” *San Francisco Examiner*, April 25, 1973, p.13, www.newspapers.com/image/460220674; “Then It All Came Down” (interview with Beausoleil), in Truman Capote, *Portraits and Observations* (New York: Modern Library, 1993/2013), p.423; “The Farcical Capote Interview,” *Bobby BeauSoleil Reference Archive*, <https://bbreferencearchive.tumblr.com/post/154781012640/the-capote-interview> (Originally written summer 2006. BeauSoleil confirmed that the quote was accurate; email to author, July 21, 2022).

him for a 1999 *Seconds* issue, wrote about him for *Apocalypse Culture II*, and even played on a 2018 album Beausoleil made from prison.²³

The Moon and the Sun

Mason had shown interest in the Manson Family while still in the National Socialist Movement, as early as 1975 praising Fromme's attempted presidential assassination.²⁴ In 1977, he made his "independent genius" flyer, which he reprinted numerous times. It was a picture of Manson with a quote from the playwright George Bernard Shaw: "Whilst we...the conventional...were wasting our time on education, agitation and organization, some independent genius has taken the matter in hand..."²⁵ (The original quote was no less outrageous, as it was about Jack the Ripper!) Mason would later say, "I did it almost as a gag, just to rock 'em and shock 'em"—although he also suspected there was something deeper behind it.²⁶

Because of the old clipping, Mason knew where Good and Fromme were and he started writing them in September 1980.²⁷ According to Mason, they soon told him, "We only represent the moon. We only reflect the sun's light. You must go directly to the sun." And so, as an introduction him, they passed on to Manson the letters that Mason had sent them.²⁸

On January 18, 1981, Mason wrote Manson for the first time, approaching him as if he was a spiritual seeker. Mason said that the neo-Nazi movement had "been in some trouble for the past several years," and during this time he has been searching for answers. While he said he'd done his best, "Red [Squeaky Fromme] tells me something I've always known: I've only got *part* of it. She says you have the rest of it."²⁹

²³ "Bobby Beausoleil" (interview with Moynihan), *Seconds* #50, 1999, pp.14–23, reprinted in Steven Blush and George Petros, eds., *.45 Dangerous Minds: The Most Intense Interviews from Seconds Magazine* (Creation Books, 2005), p.28 [Hereafter *.45 Dangerous Minds*]; Moynihan, "Inaugurator of the Pleasure Dome: Bobby Beausoleil," in Parfrey, ed., *Apocalypse Culture II* (Venice, California: Feral House, 2000), pp.253–75; Bobby BeauSoleil, *Voodoo Shivaya* (Ajna Offensive, 2018), www.discogs.com/release/12160434-Bobby-Beausoleil-Voodoo-Shivaya; "Bobby BeauSoleil comments on this album release," *Bobby BeauSoleil*, www.bobbybeau-soleil.com/voodoo-shivaya.html (written Summer Solstice, 2018).

²⁴ "Heroes of the Revolution," *Ohio National Socialist* #14, p.4. Mason had written Rust that the was going to praise Squeaky "to fire things up a bit and to become operational as the communists have been doing with great success. Such types as the Fromme woman may be a far cry from National Socialists but anyone who would take a crack at Ford can't be all bad"; Mason to Rust, September 29, 1975 [Box 15, Folder 13].

²⁵ The flyer is in *Siege*, 1st ed., p.xx; Schreck, ed., *The Manson File*, p.139.

²⁶ Schuster, "Introduction," *Siege*, p.27; Alan Prendergast, "Beyond the Pale: On the fringe of the fringe, racist guru James Mason preaches a siege mentality," *Westword* 16(48) July 28–August 3, 1993, p.27 (*Articles*, p.55).

²⁷ Mason interview with Schuster (video); SIEGE 11(11) November 1982, p.5.

²⁸ *Art That Kills*, p.189; Schuster, "Introduction," *Siege*, p.29.

²⁹ Mason to Manson, January 18, 1981 [Box 9, Folders 1–3].

At the very beginning of their correspondence, Mason sent Manson a copy of the flyer he made of him. In their ensuing discussion, Manson made his recommendation to replace the existing logo with the scales of justice. In June 1981, Mason told Ed Reynolds that he had established a working relationship with Manson.³⁰

Manson in SIEGE

In September 1981, Mason said in SIEGE that he had been looking for “truly a personality of extraordinary proportions,” just as Hitler was.³¹ After this nameless buildup, under the heading section “The Power to Blow Nazis Minds”—“We were supposed to be the ultimate mind-blow,” but after Rockwell, “One man succeeded in doing this without so much as trying”—Mason reveals who this Hitler-caliber person is: Manson. One of the Manson Family women (undoubtedly either Good or Fromme) was cited as saying, “Where Rockwell stops, Manson begins.” About his own relationship to them, Mason said “We have essentially arrived at the same place having come across widely divergent paths. We have a lot to offer one another.”³²

In March 1982, one of Mason’s visitors suggested that a southern California neo-Nazi they knew, Perry “Red” Warthan, become a go-between with Manson. In July, Warthan made his first visit—the first of four he would make that year until his own arrest. Afterward, newspapers made note of this connection.³³

After the August 1981 SIEGE, in order to placate Karl Hand, the Manson references were tamped down, but in June 1982, there were a few important paragraphs. With the abandonment of traditional right-wing politics, Manson’s actions were described as being consistent with parts of *The Turner Diaries*.³⁴

It was once said of Hitler and the Swastika that they represented the “threshold of anger.” At the very mention most will curse you, a few will join you, none will remain neutral. I have found the same is true of Manson and the Swastika, even within the Nazi Movement. Manson is the threshold of alienation.³⁵

³⁰ Mason to Hand, February 19, 1981 [Box 25, Folder 25]; Mason to Reynolds, June 30, 1981 [Box 33, Folder 9].

³¹ SIEGE 10(9) September 1981, p.3 (*Siege*, p.395).

³² SIEGE 10(9) September 1981, pp.4–6 (*Siege*, pp.404, 406–8).

³³ AP, “Manson refuses to help ‘good friend’ Warthan,” *Stockton Record*, December 12, 1982. It was also incorporated into a Universal Order flyer “Lies, Distortions & HalfTruths,” which Mason reprinted in both *Siege*, 1st ed., p.301 and *Articles*, p.28. The AP article was based on a longer piece in a local paper; Roger Aylsworth, “Manson: Warthan is on his own,” *Chico Enterprise-Record* (California), December 10, 1982, pp.1, 18, www.newspapers.com/image/680270137, www.newspapers.com/image/680270235. See also Appendix 3, “Gary/John Jewell and Perry ‘Red’ Warthan”.

³⁴ SIEGE 11(6) June 1982, p.2 (*Siege*, p.325).

³⁵ *Ibid*.

The July 1982 SIEGE also contains a similar short but explosive section, which said neo-Nazis needed a man who could “pick up where Hitler left off.” People like fascist writer Frances Parker Yockey had implied that “a man would one day come to take all the loose, unexplained, incomprehensible ends into his hands and make something of them that we could use, that we could understand and follow.” In fact, there had been a “historic pattern” of such a savior appearing amidst a crisis.³⁶

Mason’s description of this savior was tailored to Manson. The coming leader would be “be totally APART, right from birth, from this System.” He would be a charismatic leader of “exceptional magnitude,” and the System would deem him too dangerous to be free. Third, this coming figure, unlike most of the neo-Nazis of Mason’s day, would not be “a pretentious lout all decked out in gaudy uniform and demanding fealty from a handful of pitiful defectives like some idiot.”³⁷

Mason waited to print more Manson material, but in September 1982, things finally melted down with Hand, who became livid. He told Warthan, “*I consider any attempt to connect Manson and Hitler to be slander against the greatest white man to walk the face of this earth since Jesus Christ.*” To Mason he said that, since 1981, “I have kept quiet in the hope that you would funnel your talents for more constructive purposes, I sincerely hope that I was not wrong.”³⁸

He was wrong. Hand was essentially correct in his assessment that Mason hoped to turn the NSLF “into the political arm of the Manson family.”³⁹ While Mason held that Manson was “the greatest National Socialist alive today,” Hand saw him as “the anti-thesis of National Socialism,” merely “a hippie with slight racial overtones.”⁴⁰

Mason told Hand they should approach Manson as “an individual of historical magnitude in hopes of just maybe learning something. Let’s not make assholes of ourselves in front of this man.” Befitting his role as a new acolyte, Mason said, “Manson is, after all, the leader” and the key to their problems. Apparently, this was something “all but the blind” could see.⁴¹ The split became final, albeit cordial, leaving Mason finally free to openly evangelize.

SIEGE resumed its Manson content in October, proclaiming “The next big step forward has been found.” The next month’s issue, which was the first one published as Universal Order, was an analysis of the Tate murders. (One of its section heads, the “Night of the Buck Knives”—a riff on the “Night of the Long Knives”—would be recycled by others.) Mason said the murders were “prime examples of DIRECT ACTION, and

³⁶ SIEGE 11(7) July 1982, pp.1–3 (*Siege*, pp.400–401).

³⁷ SIEGE 11(7) July 1982, p.2 (*Siege*, pp.401–2).

³⁸ Hand to Warthan, September 2, 1982; Hand to Mason, September 6, 1982 [both Box 25, Folder 22].

³⁹ Hand to Mason, September 6, 1982; Hand to Warthan, September 17, 1982 [both Box 25, Folder 22].

⁴⁰ Cited in Schuster, “Introduction,” *Siege*, p.29; Hand to Mason, September 16, 1982; Hand to Warthan, September 17, 1982 [both Box 25, Folder 22].

⁴¹ Mason to Hand, September 12, 1982; Mason to Hand, September 18, 1982; Mason to Hand, August 30, 1982 [all three Box 25, Folder 22].

in cases of revolution, or national liberation, *direct action* alone merits the highest respect.”⁴²

In January 1983, the Manson Family was held up as an example of how white families should withdraw from the system. “Manson had the right idea about Family. It involved people of the same Race, the same Spirit, coming together for mutual security.”⁴³

In March 1983, he noted the very usefulness of Manson as a hook. “From direct personal experience I tell you that the name of Manson can be used for the same purposes the name of Hitler can be used...MINUS 95% of the usual hassles which immediately follow.” Neo-Nazis, however, did not understand Manson’s appeal to “average people”—especially those who were “wild, American, anti-Establishment, and finally, yes, a criminal type.”⁴⁴

In 1984, Mason tried to visit Manson, but although his request was approved, by the summer the visit was off. According to Mason’s future publisher, Ryan Schuster, it was because “Manson became irate at not being able to secure a private conference room.”⁴⁵ It may also have been in part or whole a reflection of Manson losing interest in Universal Order. In the August 1984 SIEGE, Mason said he was told, “by this man whom I revere that there is little more of a building nature to be exchanged between us, that I am in a position to take it on my own.” In the same breath, however, Mason continued to praise his guru.⁴⁶

I still consider this man as the only one who can teach or tell me anything. I can’t foresee the day when this feeling will change. I can’t foresee the day when I will no longer bow before this man as my own mentor and inspiration. The day will never come when this man will cease to be The Leader as long as he is alive.⁴⁷

In December 1984, however, the Manson–Universal Order connection received an unexpected boost in the form of a short article in a supermarket tabloid, “Is Charles Manson the New Hitler?”⁴⁸ However, the end of the “building nature” was not the end of their correspondence, and they remained in touch for several more years.⁴⁹

⁴² SIEGE 11(10) October 1982, p.5 (*Siege*, p.418); SIEGE 11(11) November 1982, p.4 (*Siege*, p.441).

⁴³ SIEGE 12(1) January 1983, p.5 (*Siege*, p.448).

⁴⁴ SIEGE 12(3) March 1983, p.2 (*Siege*, p.460–61).

⁴⁵ Mason to Reynolds, January 8, 1984 [Box 33, Folder 9]; Mason to Reynolds and Cindy, June 30, 1984 [Box 33, Folder 8]; Schuster, “Introduction,” *Siege*, p.29

⁴⁶ SIEGE 13(8) August 1984, p.4 (*Siege*, pp.422–23).

⁴⁷ Ibid. In 1987, Mason gave one reason for the cooling of relations was because when Manson received money he would donate it to organizations to “Save the Whales” instead of someone like himself, and “so we sort of parted”; Mason interview with Schuster (video).

⁴⁸ “Is Charles Manson the New Hitler?,” *National Enquirer*, December 25, 1984 (*Articles*, pp.39–40); *Siege*, 1st ed., p. xxvi.

⁴⁹ The last letter Mason sent was in March 1989. [Box 9, Folder 9].

By 1986, SIEGE's praise of Manson had attracted the attention of another person in touch with Manson, Boyd Rice. Rice established a correspondence with Mason and then quickly introduced him to Adam Parfrey. Together with two other Manson fans, Schreck and Moynihan, the four of them would profoundly influence Mason's life.

As SIEGE wound up, Mason took stock of what he learned from Manson. The federal government was also interested; the undercover agent who cozied up to Mason was very interested in his relationship to Manson.⁵⁰ In the penultimate issue, he bemoaned the lack of acceptance from the movement. In the last SIEGE, Manson was praised as "the master" of the "total attack or total dropout" philosophy.⁵¹

In the end, like many spiritual seekers, Mason also expressed his frustration at not being able to grasp what he thought Manson had to offer—the "missing parts" he thought he had found. Manson remained

a source from which I can still draw understanding and knowledge—from which I can still LEARN. For these past five or six years, I have had a sure feeling that when I could approach Manson's grasp and understanding, I'd have achieved something truly great.⁵²

But that never happened. Like all good cult leaders, Manson had promised the key to revelation and wholeness, but did not—could not—deliver.

Initial Manson Worship Reception

Over its six years of publication, SIEGE's veneration of Manson did not gain traction among neo-Nazis. Mason's comrade Reynolds was definitely on board, as obviously was Warthan. Harold Covington made "FREE MANSON" stickers in 1982. Apparently independent of Mason, Joseph Paul Franklin said he was trying to copy Manson during his numerous murders. Some women who were members of the early Nazi skinhead group CASH (Chicago Area Skinheads) were "Manson girls" beforehand.⁵³

In 1982, Mason said that others in his movement were calling him "insane" and Manson a "freak and a murderer"; even Mason's allies had "opted to bypass the issue with some embarrassment." Pierce, whom Mason said he had remained "in very close contact" with, got cold feet over this.⁵⁴ Tom Metzger was also in this camp; in 1984, he asked permission to reprint one of Mason's articles—but only if the Manson references were removed. (Metzger later said, "I got off the track with Mason when he supported

⁵⁰ SIEGE 15(4) April 1986, p.2.

⁵¹ SIEGE 15(6) June 1986, p.3 (*Siege*, p.493).

⁵² SIEGE 15(5) May 1986, p.5 (*Siege*, p.431).

⁵³ Mason to Warthan, April 22, 1982 [Box 29, Folder 10]; Tom Callahan, "Race Stalker" (interview with Franklin), *Gallery*, September 1997, p.63; Christian Picciolini, email to author, July 2, 2022.

⁵⁴ SIEGE 11(6) June 1982, p.2 (*Siege*, pp.325–326); Mason interview with Schuster (video); Metzger to Mason, January 12, 1984.

Charlie Manson; that was just too much.”)⁵⁵ Some neo-Nazi reactions to Manson were even stronger. A member of Detroit’s SS Action Group told an interviewer that Manson was an example of someone he would execute without hesitation.⁵⁶

But SIEGE’s fusion of National Socialism and Manson would also attract a circle of musicians and publishers who were not traditional White Supremacists.

Environmentalism

Mason was not done promoting Manson yet, and Manson’s philosophy continued to influence Mason.

After his imprisonment, Manson had developed a new environmental philosophy, A.T.W.A. (Air-Trees-Water-Animals and sometimes All the Way Alive). Manson Family members Fromme and Good were also both imprisoned for threats and acts of violence in the name of environmentalism. In September 1975, Fromme was arrested for trying to assassinate President Gerald Ford, whom she blamed for failing to stop tree-killing smog. Good threatened to kill more than 170 corporate executives she held accountable for environmental destruction and was arrested that December.⁵⁷

In March 1987, Mason released the trifold pamphlet *Charles Manson: Drugs, Power & Sanity*, which consisted of two open letters from Manson about environmentalism. The first called on President Ronald Reagan to stop the “War on Drugs” because “Your war should be against pollution and for putting trees back before you lose the air, water and wildlife.” In the pamphlet’s other letter to a journalist, Manson ordered, “*Cars must stop. No more trees cut.*”⁵⁸

This gave Mason at least a small environmental consciousness. In a 1995 interview, he said had hadn’t considered environmental issues before his encounter with Manson. “I was concerned about racial purity to which he replied, ‘If the planet is poisoned, there aren’t going to be any races’.” Nonetheless, by 2002, Mason reversed the argument to

⁵⁵ “Radio Wehrwolf—Wolfman’s Activism & Entertainment: Tom Metzger, 4/30/18,” posted on May 1, 2018 by RWW, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180922070515/https://radiowehrwolf.us/2018/05/01/wolfmans-activism-entertainment-tom-metzger>. Mason was gracious in agreeing to Metzger’s edits around this and other things; Mason to Metzger, January 16, 1984 [both Metzger letters Box 7, Folder 21].

⁵⁶ Raphael S. Ezekiel, *The Racist Mind: Portraits of American Neo-Nazis and Klansmen* (New York: Viking, 1995), p.179.

⁵⁷ “Fromme saw Ford as a symbol of government inaction on smog,” *CBC*, August 27, 2017, www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-friday-edition-1.4201433/as-it-happened-the-archive-edition-the-fightin-words-episode-part-i-1.4201435 (transcript of a 1976 interview with Barbara Frum); William Endicott, “Sandra Good Indicted in Death Threat Conspiracy,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 23, 1975, p.1, www.newspapers.com/image/382807880.

⁵⁸ He humbly added that, “Only a one-world government will redeem ATWA on earth.... You will do what I say or there will be *nothing*”; *Charles Manson: Drugs, Power & Sanity* (trifold pamphlet), Universal Order, 1987.

make race central again; a pure environment would be meaningless if white people were contaminated by racial mixing.⁵⁹

Red Letters, Blue Letters

Even after they referred him to Manson, Mason stayed in touch with Fromme and Good. Mason got Reynolds to write all three, and in turn the east-coast neo-Nazi got his romantic partners to do the same.

At the start of 1981, Mason tried to procure copies of Rockwell's *This Time the World* and *White Power* to send them. At the time, Fromme was reading Pierce's short biography *George Lincoln Rockwell: A National Socialist Life*, while Good perused *Mein Kampf*.⁶⁰ In March, Mason was allowed to visit Good, spending 20 hours with her until the authorities wised up to who he was. Mason continued to write both of them for many years.⁶¹

Reynolds and Rita, his partner at the time, also wrote them. Mason passed on the women's address in February 1981 and soon after asked if Reynolds could fill a request from Good for a cassette of Pink Floyd's *The Wall*.⁶² That summer, Rita was pregnant, and they asked Manson if he would name their baby.⁶³

The Pop Cult of Manson

Moynihan's busy schedule, and the scope of the work, frustratingly delayed *Siege's* release for years. But this turned out to be fortunate as the book's release came as a revival of interest in Manson was at its peak.

Like almost all media stars, Manson's popularity went up and down. The national attention following the murders was accompanied by numerous books, including Ed Sanders's *The Family* (1971), although it was Vincent Bugliosi's *Helter Skelter* (1974) that became a best-selling classic. In the 1980s, a series of TV interviews, including with Tom Snyder in 1981 and Charlie Rose in 1986, were aired.⁶⁴ These coincided with SIEGE's focus on Manson.

⁵⁹ Mason interview in *Ohm Clock*, p.7 (*Articles*, p.95); Mason interview with Schuster (video).

⁶⁰ Mason to Duffy, January 15, 1981 [Box 13, Folder 18].

⁶¹ Mason to Reynolds and Rita, March 13, 1981 [Box 33, Folder 9]; Mason to Parfrey, June 18, 1987 [Box 17, Folder 4].

⁶² Mason to Reynolds, February 26, 1981 [Box 33, Folder 10]; Mason to Reynolds and Rita, March 13, 1981 [Box 33, Folder 9].

⁶³ Rita to Mason, [June-July] 1981 [Box 33, Folder 9].

⁶⁴ Charles Manson interviewed by Tom Snyder, *The Tomorrow Show*, June 12, 1981, www.imdb.com/title/tt0726337, www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0BFZiKe4i0; Charles Manson interviewed by Charlie Rose, *Nightwatch*, March 7, 1986, www.cbsnews.com/news/charles-manson-defiant-in-1986-cbs-news-interview-happened-in-your-world-not-mine, www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4uT6ou_ZGw.

But it was interest from musicians that would be of crucial importance to *Siege*. Manson was one himself and, although his music never garnered much interest before the murders, the Beach Boys recorded a reworked version of one of his songs. (He did not receive publishing credit for it, as it was apparently payback for favors that band member Dennis Wilson gave the Family when they stayed at his house.)⁶⁵ However, after Manson's arrest, interest in his music spiked. His first and best-known record, *Lie: The Love and Terror Cult*, was released in 1970, but songs he recorded in prison would be issued as different albums starting in the 1980s.⁶⁶

Attention also came from the underground music scene starting in the mid-1970s. In particular, the pioneering industrial band Throbbing Gristle was fascinated by him. Their interest spilled over into both later industrial bands as well as the genre's more commercial successor, industrial dance.⁶⁷ Punk bands like the Ramones referenced him, and in 1985, Sonic Youth and Lydia Lunch released the Family-inspired song "Death Valley '69".⁶⁸

In the early 1990s, Manson reached his pop culture popularity peak. In 1990, an opera was made about him. In 1992, Trent Reznor, singer of the industrial dance band Nine Inch Nails, rented the house where the Tate murders had been committed; there he recorded both *The Downward Spiral* (which also featured Marilyn Manson) and the *Broken* EP.⁶⁹ In 1993, "Manson Can't Surf" t-shirts became a national fad, drawing public condemnation. But the peak of Manson's popularity was when hard rock band Guns N' Roses recorded his song "Look at Your Game, Girl" for their 1993 platinum album *The Spaghetti Incident*.⁷⁰ The timing with *Siege*'s release was perfect.

⁶⁵ Manson's "Cease to Exist" became the Beach Boys, "Never Learn Not to Love," *20/20* (Capitol, 1969), www.discogs.com/master/78053-The-Beach-Boys-2020; Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, "Afterword," note 11.

⁶⁶ Charles Manson, *LIE: The Love And Terror Cult* (Awareness, 1970), www.discogs.com/release/1506934-Charles-Manson-LIE-The-Love-And-Terror-Cult.

⁶⁷ Industrial music is sometimes split between early "industrial noise," like Throbbing Gristle and Whitehouse, which played with atonal and no chord sounds. The later genre, "industrial dance," had more traditionally structured songs, and included acts like Ministry and Front 242. Some, like Clock DVA, transitioned from the first to the second.

⁶⁸ Ramones, "Glad to See You Go," *Ramones Leave Home* (Sire, 1977), www.discogs.com/master/39289-Ramones-Leave-Home; "Death Valley '69" (with Lydia Lunch) on Sonic Youth, *Bad Moon Rising* (Blast First/Homestead, 1985), www.discogs.com/release/381545-Sonic-Youth-Bad-Moon-Rising.

⁶⁹ Allan Kozinn, "Will the Manson Story Play As Myth, Operatically at That?," *NYT*, July 17, 1990, www.nytimes.com/1990/07/17/arts/will-the-manson-storyplay-as-myth-operatically-at-that.html; "The Truth About Trent Reznor's Time in the Manson Murder House," *Grunge*, December 17, 2020, www.grunge.com/226761/the-truth-about-trent-reznors-time-in-the-manson-murder-house.

⁷⁰ Susan Christian, "Manson Shirt Brings O.C. Firm Notoriety: Fashion: Some decry the garment, but the two brothers behind it capitalize on the attention," *Los Angeles Times*, December 14, 1993, www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1993-12-14-mn-1845-story.html; Guns N' Roses, "Look At Your Game, Girl," *The Spaghetti Incident* (Geffen, 1993), www.discogs.com/master/9620-Guns-N-Roses-The-Spaghetti-Incident.

Manson's music also interested the musician Moynihan, who helped White Devil Records release *Commemoration: Sixty Years of Struggle Against Cowardice, Stupidity and Lies* in 1995. Based on tapes that had been given to Mason, it included liner notes from both him and Moynihan.⁷¹ (The label later released a number of other Manson records, including *Manson Speaks*, where he expressed negative views about both Mason and Rice.) Moynihan built a song around Manson's voice for a Blood Axis album. Internationally, numerous bands played songs by or about him.⁷²

There were films and videos, too. In 1989, artist Raymond Pettibon released a homemade documentary, *The Book of Manson*, and that year Schreck's *Charles Manson Superstar* also came out. In 1992, Abraxas Circle member Nick Bougas made a documentary about Manson.⁷³

When *Siege* was finally released in 1993, it was dedicated to "The Son of Man"—Charles Manson. In addition to the text, it included almost a dozen images related to Manson.

Although 1993 was the second peak in Manson's popularity, the fascination with him has never abated, and new films and books continue to be released. While the Atomwaffen Division continued to venerate Manson, interest in this aspect of Mason's ideology was minor compared with the centrality that it had occupied in the 1980s and 90's. And even though it was certainly not what he was best known for, when Manson died in 2017 amid the height of the Alt Right's popularity, his influence on its neo-Nazi wing was not missed by the media.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Charles Manson, *Commemoration* (White Devil, 1995), www.discogs.com/master/1138588-Charles-Manson-Commemoration; "The Storm Before the Calm: An Interview with Blood Axis" (by Wulfing One), *EsoTerra* #5, 1995, <https://web.archive.org/web/20010217112633/www.esoterra.org/moynihan.htm> (*Articles*, pp.196–97, 199).

⁷² Charles Manson, *Manson Speaks* (White Devil Records, 1995), www.discogs.com/release/759982-Charles-Manson-Manson-Speaks; Blood Axis, "Herr, Nun Laß in Frieden," *The Gospel of Inhumanity* (Cthulhu/Storm, 1996), www.discogs.com/release/188151-Blood-Axis-The-Gospel-Of-Inhumanity.

William Scanlan Murphy told Bugliosi that, as of 1994 and in Europe alone, there were at least seventy bands that had songs by or about Manson; Bugliosi, *Helter Skelter*, "Afterword".

⁷³ *Charles Manson Superstar* (video); *The Book of Manson*, dir. Raymond Pettibon, 1989, www.imdb.com/title/tt0096967; *Charles Manson Then and Now 1992*, dir. Nick Bougas, 1992, www.imdb.com/title/tt2426948.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Adam Lusher, "Charles Manson: Neo-Nazis hail serial killer a visionary and try to resurrect fascist movement created on his orders," *Independent*, November 20, 2017, www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/charles-manson-death-dead-serial-killer-neo-nazis-resurrect-fascist-movement-cult-family-universal-a8065781.html.

The Ted K Archive

Spencer Sunshine
Charles Manson as Neo-Nazi “Holy Man”
7 May 2024

1st Edition. Routledge, Taylor & Francis, London, 2024.
<doi.org/10.4324/9780429200090>
ISBN 9780429200090

www.thetedkarchive.com