

“If ‘less is more’ were true,
the world would not need witchcraft.”
–Jack Fritscher

Chapter 2

The Selling of the Age of Aquarius

“The true philosopher’s stone is found within yourself.”
–Sabaeon Pontifex Maximus, Frederic de Arachaga

Satan Goes Hollywood,
Pop Music, Wiccabilly Rock, Broadway, Television,
the Evil Eye, Camelot, *The Music Man*,
Mick Jagger, Roman Polanski, Kenneth Anger,
Jim Morrison, Frank Sinatra,
Haxan: Witchcraft through the Ages,
The Devil Is a Woman, Freaks,
How to Look Like a Witch, the Magic Capital of the World,
Nuns from Hell, Hispanic Botanica,
Satan with a Zip Code

MEIN CAMP: FROM UNIVERSITY TO DIVERSITY TO PERVERSITY

Kitsch and *camp* and *pop culture*: synonyms or not? For years *kitsch* was anything sentimental, precious, and dreadful, particularly in the art world and its collectors’ environs. *Kitsch* was Betty Boop figurines, Elvis on black velvet, and crystal balls with shakeable swirling snow resting on dragon claws. With Susan Sontag, *camp* emerged in the mid-1960s from the homosexual subculture into the over-culture’s straight word-hoard. What had once meant to act *queer*, *gay*, *effeminate* in public, came to mean *nostalgic*, or something that was “so bad it was good” such as professional Las Vegas temptress and gay icon Ann-Margret singing “Thirteen Men (and Me the Only Gal in Town)” without any irony.

In the 1950s, popular culture was scorned by most intellectuals as vulgar. At that time, the University of Michigan reportedly turned down an offer from a major Hollywood studio which had offered the university library thousands of scripts of produced movies. In the late 1960s, when cinema courses bloomed in university curricula, and film scholarship became serious, the library claimed it had turned down the written scripts because they weren’t suitably bound. Always, some sniffy followers of the high culture of, say, academic art and literature, mock anything *popular* as *vulgar*.

Professor Ray B. Browne, literary critic and folklorist at Bowling Green State University, founded the *Journal of Popular Culture* in 1967. With the journal’s success, Ray Browne, Russell Nye, and Marshall Fishwick reacting against their connection with the tightly traditional American Studies Association, founded the American Popular Culture Association headquartered at Bowling Green State University, Ohio, in 1969. Their controversial purpose established the

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principle that pop culture itself was intellectually defensible, and that it was important to study culture as it was happening and not leave analysis of culture to historians fifty years later.

Their pioneering theory, spinning out of Marshall McLuhan, said that students can be taught the essence of liberal arts and critical thinking through the serious study of film and television, as well as through Shakespeare and Milton. When Ray Brown founded the Department for the Study of Popular Culture at Bowling Green, he and the American Popular Culture Association basically opened up the landscape of American “universities” to the “diversities” of what came to be termed “alternative curricula.” Historically, in 1969, Ray Browne was the first to include witchcraft and homosexuality in pop culture studies when he, as publisher of the Popular Culture Association, signed the contract for this book.

Actually, *popular* means *belonging to the people*, as in, *people’s culture*. The very democratic Latin word, *vulgaris*, means “belonging to common people.” Pop culture, in short, is something—usually in mass media—that is known to many people: the Beatles, the Hell’s Angels, the television soap, *Dark Shadows*. Popular culture can also be measured by what people buy in large numbers: best-selling books, records, and toys. Pop culture is also a synonym for folk culture: what people make and do for themselves, for instance, family snapshots and home movies. The word *pop* by itself has also come to mean a style, particularly of art that depicts everyday life using techniques of commercial art.

In western culture, people believe there’s a price to pay to gain magical powers. They think the price is one’s soul. Actually, the price of witchcraft is the cost of “entertainment,” coven supplies, and dry cleaning.

CUT TO: THE RECORD INDUSTRY

Long before Gounod met Faust, music was essential to witchcraft and Wicca: from Druid drums to the mystical chants composed by Hildegard von Bingen; from Kenyan ritual music to the hillbilly and rockabilly of Wiccabilly; from ancient chants written down as Gregorian plain chant to country songs sung as Christmas carols. Because folklore considers the partridge a randy bird, the gift of “A Partridge in a Pear Tree” promises sex and fertility. French composer Charles Gounod adapted Johann Wolfgang Goethe’s *Faust*, the cautionary tale of a man who sells his soul to the Devil, into a five-act opera in 1859. In *Fantasia* (1938), pop-culture king Walt Disney cast his own alter-ego, Mickey Mouse, as the “Sorcerer’s Apprentice” from the poem by Goethe and the concert piece by Paul Dukas titled *The Sorcerer’s Apprentice*. Disney conjured magic and demonology, and anticipated the acid-culture, by sampling classical composers who were not unfamiliar with the occult: Modeste Mussorgsky’s *Night on Bald Mountain*, Igor Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*, and J. S. Bach’s *Toccatina and Fugue in D Minor*, which was part of the “fantastic genre” of organ music from northern Germany.

Mass-media producers of movies and television try to cross-pollinate their screen titles with hit songs. Gounod’s “Funeral March of a Marionette” was popularized into the theme for the suspense-driven *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* TV show (1955-1962). In 1964, Jack Keller and Howard Greenfield wrote the million-selling “Theme from *Bewitched*” which helped launch the initial success of that Elizabeth Montgomery TV series. Robert Cobert hit the Top 10 Hit List with his 1966 composition, “Quentin’s Theme,” for the afternoon gothic-horror soap opera, *Dark Shadows*. Wildly popular with every school kid in America, *Dark Shadows* featured the reluctant vampire, Barnabas Collins; the living head of Judah Zachery; and the man-wolf, Chris Jennings.