The Afterlives of the Archons: Gnostic Literalism and Embodied Paranoia in Twenty-First Century Conspiracy Theory

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Abstract

This article analyzes the reception of the ancient Gnostic archons, or rulers, in contemporary conspiracy theories. In the classical Gnostic myth these nefarious beings rule the cosmos, mold primordial matter into a prison for Adam and Eve, and blind the Elect to their divine nature. These archons send cataclysms to earth and serve as celestial gatekeepers that keep the divine light trapped in their creation. Contemporary conspiracy theorists such as John Lamb Lash, David Icke, and Carol Reimer read the archons not as allegories or metaphors, but as real beings at work in contemporary politics, media and religion. Utilizing Michael Barkun's concept of "superconspiracies," this article examines how conspiracists Lash, Icke, and Reimer weave disparate conspiratorial discourses together through the classical Gnostic myth. The article concludes that the vast gulf between the anticosmic and anthropic dualism of the classical myth and the generally pro-cosmic and humanist thrust of modern esoterica leads these authors into paradoxical understandings of cosmos, mind and eschatology.

Keywords

archons – conspiracy theory – gnostic reception – John Lamb Lash – David Icke – Carol A. Reimer

1 Classical Archons and Modern Reception

The rediscovery of ancient Coptic texts such as the Berlin Codex, the Tchachos Codex, and most famously the Nag Hammadi collection, has led to a dramatic resurgence of interest in Gnostic figures and ideas. Re-imaginings of Jesus through the Nag Hammadi codices are preached from mainline churches and have become the subject of blockbuster films, popular documentaries, and a mass of popular literature.¹ The Mary Magdalene presented in the Gospels of Mary and Philip has inspired a new paradigm for contemporary female Christians and a reevaluation of the political role of women in Catholicism.² *Gnosis*, or knowledge of the divine, as an alternative and valid orientation within Christian origins has helped catalyze new Christian churches, identities, and, with *A New New Testament*, even a new canon.³

By comparison, the reception of the *archons* or rulers, is relatively muted. This is puzzling given the surplus of reference to the archons in popular gnostic texts such as the Apocryphon of John (NHC II,1, III,1, IV,1, BG 8502,2) and the Gospel of Judas (CT 3). Religious interpretations tend to tame these most evil and intense characters in Gnostic myth to make them palatable for popular consumption. Archons are interpreted as personifications of intra-psychic forces resistant to individuation, existential agonists, or personifications in the service of polemic.⁴ In popular fiction and film the archons provide useful metaphors for the pervasive influence of technology, entertainment, and much else.⁵

Each of these receptions of the archons are important for understanding the broad influence of Gnostic thought in America today. But none really resonate with the high-pitched paranoid worldview we find in Gnostic myths

1 Brown 2004 and film; National Geographic, *The Gospel of Judas*; CNN, *Finding Jesus*. See Dillon 2017, 19–71 for complete discussion of this phenomenon.

2 Schaberg 2004; DeConick 2011; Margaret Starbird 1998, 2003, 2005, 2006; “Mary Magdalene Rides a New Wave of Interest,” 2004. For a full treatment of this topic see Dillon 2017, 158–209.

3 See Burns 2007 for discussion of how readings of the Gospel of Thomas help neo-Gnostics negotiate identities, including Christian. See Dillon 2019 for analysis of the role of the Nag Hammadi codices in contemporary neo-Gnosticism. On the development of *A New New Testament* see Taussig 2012. Further important instances of how the Nag Hammadi codices have been used to validate new forms of Christian identity, see Dillon 2017, 56–105.

4 On intra-psychic forces, see especially the works of Stephan Hoeller and Jungian interpretations in general. Hoeller 1982; Idem 1989; Segal 1995; Singer 1991. The *fons et origo* for the existential reading is of course Hans Jonas’s essay “Gnosis and Nihilism.”

5 Depictions of the archons which concern the all-pervasive influence of technology and entertainment include *The Matrix Trilogy*; *eXistenZ*; and *The Truman Show*. For discussion of this important phenomenon see Wilson 2006, DeConick 2017; Kwiatkowski 2017.

of the classical variety. By “paranoid” I do not mean an official psychiatric diagnosis, but rather the vernacular sense of disavowing consensus-reality interpretations and assuming that “real” reality (in the eye of the paranoid) is nefariously inclined to human beings or a subclass of them.⁶ This article analyzes contemporaries who offer *literal* readings of the archons as ontological beings who encompass the complex, evil, nature of these figures in the classical Gnostic myth.

In the classical Gnostic myth the archons play several interlocking roles.⁷ They reside in the seven visible stars of the Ptolemean cosmos.⁸ They assist in the creation of Adam’s psychic and physical bodies.⁹ They rape and impregnate Eve.¹⁰ They mold primordial matter into an earthly prison for Adam, Eve, and their progeny. They limit the days of humans and blind the human couple from their divine nature.¹¹ In certain texts, archons send cataclysms to Earth to eradicate the elect (the Gnostics, or Knowers).¹² And they serve as gatekeepers to prevent spirits from ascending to the divine *aeons*, often casting them back into the realm of rebirth.¹³

The most literal reception of the archons can be found in contemporary conspiracy literature. Archons are tailor made for conspiratorial hermeneutics, and especially well for what Michael Barkun calls *superconspiracies*. According to Barkun:

[Superconspiracies] are conspiratorial constructs in which multiple conspiracies are believed to be linked together hierarchically.... Event and systemic conspiracies are joined in complex ways, so that conspiracies

- 6 It is this vernacular sense of the paranoid that has been associated with conspiracy literature since the publication of Richard J. Hofstadter’s *The Paranoid Style in American Politics*. See Hofstadter 1964.
- 7 Layton 1995, 14–17; Layton’s classical Gnostic myth relies primarily on Irenaeus’s description of the Ophite (AH 1.30) and the Apocryphon of John. Close variants occur within texts classified as Sethian (those which feature the biblical Seth as revealer and savior).
- 8 Apoc. John NHC II,1 10.7–11.7 and parallels; Orig. World NHC II,5 101.24–102.5; Gos. Eg. NHC III,2 58.1.24;
- 9 Apoc. John NHC II,1 15.1–19.33 (psychic body) and 20.33–21.22 (material body) and parallels; Orig. World NHC II,5 112.33–113.5 and 114.33–115.14; Hyp. Arch. 87.25–88.7; Gos. Eg. NHC III,2 59.22–25; Apoc. Adam NHC V,5 66.14–67.10.
- 10 Apoc. John NHC II,1 24.13–25 and parallels; Orig. World NHC II,5 116.24–117.24; Hyp. Arch. NHC II,4 89.18–32 and 91.12–22.
- 11 Apoc. John NHC II,1 24.26–25.8 and parallels; Orig. World NHC II,5 121.13–28; Hyp. Arch. NHC II,4 96.4–12; Apoc. Adam NHC V,5 66.9–67.14.
- 12 Apoc. John NHC II,1 28.32–29.16 and parallels; Hyp. Arch. II,4 92.4–26; Gos. Eg. III,2 61.2–14; Apoc. Adam NHC V,5 69.1–70.6.
- 13 Apoc. John NHC II,1 26.33–27.10.

come to be nested within one another. At the summit of the conspiratorial hierarchy is *a distant but all-powerful evil force manipulating lesser conspiratorial actors. These master conspirators are almost always groups both invisible and operating in society* (emphasis mine).¹⁴

Archons, as rulers of the cosmos whose power extends to the very core of matter, religion, and politics, are a symbol tailor-made for master conspirators. Contemporary theorists imagine the archons as “master conspirators” whose diabolical plans link together subordinate conspiracies such as genetic alteration of humans, manipulation of the world economy, and the Iraq War.

John Lamb Lash, David Icke, and Carol A. Reimer—the three cases for this study—have translated the archons of the classical Gnostic myth into super-conspiracy. All three authors draw from familiar conspiracy tropes (ancient aliens, genetic manipulation, secret bloodlines, brainwashing, and stigmatized knowledge) to reimagine the actions of archons from prehistory into the present. After case studies on each author, I analyze means of combatting the archons put forth by each author. In the conclusion I examine how the archons function for conspiracy theorists as a symbol for social alienation, and how the vast differences between the second and twenty-first centuries lead conspiracists into some paradoxical interpretations of body, eschatology, and cosmos.

2 John Lamb Lash

Comparative mythologist John Lamb Lash (b. 1945) has published five books: *The Seeker's Handbook* (1991), *Twins and the Double* (1993), *The Hero—Manhood and Power* (1995), *Quest for the Zodiac* (1999), and *Not in His Image* (2006). In addition, Lash has posted nearly one hundred essays on his website metahistory.org and given dozens of interviews for alternative right websites such as RedIce. Lash identifies himself as a “true successor of Mircea Eliade and the rightful heir of Joseph Campbell.”¹⁵

According to Lash the ancient Gnostics glimpsed the origins of the Earth, solar system and humankind in altered states of consciousness and energy. Their revelations are expressed in the classical Gnostic myth. Lash translates the classic myth into the language of contemporary cosmology.¹⁶ According to his interpretation, the Pleroma is physically located at the core of the Milky

¹⁴ Barkun 2013, 22.

¹⁵ <http://metahistory.org/siteauthor.php>.

¹⁶ Lash, “Wooing the Whore of Wisdom.”

Way galaxy. It is a “spinning vortex of Organic Light,” a radiant substance that Lash compares to soft, luminous nougat. Aeons are currents of energy that emanate from the pleroma. The galactic arms of this primordial Milky Way, in contrast, are the *kenoma* or emptiness, composed of inorganic matter. This binary between the pleroma and kenoma, organic and inorganic, is central to Lash’s concept of the Gnostic cosmos.

Creation occurs through the imagination, or dreaming, of the aeons. The aeon Sophia creatively dreams the Anthropos (which Lash identifies as “the pre-terrestrial human genome”) into being and projects it outward into the kenoma.¹⁷ Infatuated with the Anthropos, Sophia “falls” from the galactic core and becomes ensnared within the galactic arms. Sophia’s panic and pain are incarnated in the Demiurge (Ialdabaoth) and his archons (the planets). From Sophia’s error, our solar system is created.

Lash goes much further than the classical Gnostic account. Sophia *literally* becomes the Earth (Gaia). Earth has no relationship to the inorganic matter of the kenoma. Sophia-Gaia emanates a divine radiance due to her origins in the Pleroma. This palpable, material, but invisible “Organic Light” imbues all substances on Earth. Lash equates the “Organic Light” with the “imaginal,” as described by Islamicist Henri Corbin, which humans contact through their *nous*.¹⁸

Neither the sun nor moon belongs to the cosmos of the archons either. The sun is Sabaoth, son of Ialdabaoth, who, in *On the Origin of the World* (NHC II,5 and XIII,2) and the *Hypostasis of the Archons* (NHC II,4), condemned his father after seeing the image of the luminous Anthropos.¹⁹ The moon is secreted from the Earth’s planetary body like a pearl. Humans are gifted *epinoia*, or imagination, conceived as the potential for superconscious experience of the “Organic Light.”

The archons are aliens whose goal is to thwart human realization of their divine Epinoia. Lash finds that the archons depicted in the Nag Hammadi codices correspond to two types of aliens in the abduction literature: reptilians and greys. Ialdabaoth, described as a reptile with an animal head, is the avaricious,

17 Lash 173. Compare Orig. World NHC II,5 99.24–100.10.

18 Corbin is referenced in Lash 2007, 308. Corbin’s primary writings on the “imaginal,” *Hurqalya*, or the *mundus imaginalis* are *Alone with the Alone* and *Spiritual Body, Celestial Earth*. Accessed through the *nous*, or heart, this imaginal realm is the intermediate space between matter and ideas, or the human and divine.

19 See Orig. World NHC II,5 103.32–104.10 and Hyp. Arch. NHC II,4 95.13–26. In *On the Origin of the World*, Sabaoth responds to Pistis denouncing Ialdabaoth’s cry that there is no God above me and exhibiting her luminous form in the waters above. In *Hypostasis of the Archons*, Zoe responds to the same call of Ialdabaoth, but her call turns into a fiery angel who casts Ialdabaoth into Tartaros.

violent reptilian type; the lower archons are less fully developed, resembling the greys.²⁰ Yet because archons are inorganic (they do not issue from Sophia's divine substance), they lack *epinoia*, love, and goodness.

The archons' primary means of social control is religion, particularly the Abrahamic traditions. Lamb argues that the archons infected the first patriarch, Abraham, when he was anointed by Melchizedek.²¹ This "cult of Melchizedek" or "cult of righteousness" maintained a secret chain of transmission throughout Jewish history which remained independent from the filial lines of Benjamin, Aaron, and Levi, but came to thrive at Qumran.²² The Qumran Zaddikites included John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostle Paul.

Through these three, the archons infected Western culture with an ideological virus Lash calls the "the redeemer complex": the doctrines of a masculine creator God, a chosen people, the savior-messiah, and an impending apocalyptic judgment.²³ The Zaddikites extolled a form of social organization that was patriarchal, gynophobic, and oppressive. In the process, indigenous, matriarchal, and eco-consciousness pagans were wiped out in what Lash calls "the Gnostic Genocide." This ideological virus is deemed responsible for millennia of religious violence, global warming, exploitation of resources, and colonialism.

In the present age archons maintain power through media as well as religion. Lash argues that the archons created Hollywood so that they could infect the world population. Film and television push false history as truth. For Lash, the clearest example of this is the Holocaust. Lash claims that the Holocaust is an invention of Jewish Hollywood producers to cover up the fact that they attacked Hitler, and that Hitler was defending himself against the archontic intrusion.²⁴ All photographic and film evidence of the Holocaust is a hoax meant to create racial animus. The archons' ultimate goal is "white genocide": the extermination of the culture, identity, and history of the white race. As he stated in a recent interview:

20 Lash, "Alien Dreaming: The Enigma of the Archons." On Ialdabaoth as a serpent with a leonine head, see texts such as Apoc. John NHC II,1 10.8–9.

21 The reference is to Gen 14:18–20: Melchizedek, King of Salem, brought out bread and wine. Now he was the priest of the "Most High God." He blessed Abram, saying, "Blessed be Abram by the Most High God, Creator of heaven and earth. Worthy of praise is the Most High God, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Abram gave Melchizedek a tenth of everything.

22 Lash 2017, 64–65.

23 On the redeemer complex, see "The Cult of Righteousness" in Lash 2007, 57–70.

24 Lash, "Jews, Films, and Fraudulent History."

Lash: The extermination of any *human* race, uninfected, is an unnatural thing. The extermination of infections is a natural thing (pause). That should get some attention (laughter).... The extermination of infections is natural to the social organism of humanity as it is natural to the human body. And what are the cells in that immunological system called?

Interviewer: White blood cells.

Lash: *Right*. White blood cells.²⁵

In other words, according to Lash, exterminating the white race (who remain uninfected) is unnatural. Exterminating an unnatural virus (Jewish persons who are infected by the archons) is natural.

3 David Icke

David Icke (b. 1952) is one of the world's most popular and influential conspiracists.²⁶ He lectures in arenas suited for rock concerts. Icke's ten-plus hour presentation at Wembley Arena in 2012 sold more than six thousand tickets.²⁷ He is the author of over twenty books and oversees a popular website in his own name. As a teenager in the late 1970s Icke played professional soccer for clubs like Hereford United and Coventry City FC.²⁸ When arthritis led him to retire he became a sports journalist, and by the mid-1980s he had become a major sports reporter for the BBC. After *that* he turned to politics where he became a leader in the British Green Party.

Icke's turn to esoteric thought and from there to conspiracy began in 1990. At that time, he had a pair of spiritual experiences that led him to read more deeply into esoteric literature and, ultimately, to a Gnostic understanding of the cosmos. First, he visited a psychic named Betty Shine. In his visits Shine channeled an entity who identified himself as Wang Ya Lee (the name of his last incarnation in 1200 CE). Lee made several predictions, the most important of which concerned Icke's own life. Lee said Icke would become world famous. Lee and other "masters" would send him messages that he was to communicate with the world. Icke would need to quit politics in order to serve in this

²⁵ "White Genocide and the Archontic Infection."

²⁶ The most thorough and trenchant study of Icke and his thought can be found in Robertson 2017, 121–167.

²⁷ The entire presentation is available in four parts on YouTube. See "David Icke—Live at Wembley—Parts 1–4 (2012)."

²⁸ Icke's autobiography, *Truth Vibrations*, is the main source for information. Icke 1993b.

prophetic role. As he was told, “one man cannot change the world, but one man can communicate the message that will.”²⁹

Then in early 1991 Icke felt compelled to visit Peru. While there he had the second great spiritual experience of his life and the one which he declares completely rewrote him:

My feet could not move. It was as if two giant magnets were pulling them down and suddenly my hands were thrust into the sky.... Energy of incredible power poured through me from head to toe and vice versa. Then it began to pour out through my hands.... For well over an hour I stood there, arms to the sky, my feet never moving an inch, as the power built up. My head was pounding and it was like a piece of music getting louder and louder.... And then I felt the first drops of rain and it was like a switch had been turned off.³⁰

Icke's work began to take a conspiratorial turn in 1994. All of the features of his vast conspiracy (the reptilian Illuminati, Saturn-Moon matrix, reality-as-hologram, and the antagonism between the subtle body and physical perception, each of which will be discussed below) arose *before* he heard of the archons. Icke does not seem to have known about the Nag Hammadi codices or ancient Gnostics until 2012, when the term first begins to appear in his work.³¹ It seems likely Icke's primary exposure to the Nag Hammadi codices is Lash's writings. Most of Icke's references to the Nag Hammadi codices and much of his theorizing about them show a debt to John Lamb Lash. Since 2012 Icke has retrofitted his conspiracy theory and referred to the archons as the primary agents of cosmic and anthropic control. The archons give Icke an orienting symbol capable of plotting his superconspiracy as the work of a single, interdimensional set of agents.

Icke's theory begins with an alternative history of the solar system. Deep in prehistory the planets were aligned much differently than today. Saturn in particular orbited much closer to Earth. In Icke's estimation Saturn is not a “planet” but a brown dwarf or star. During this primeval era Saturn was the most luminous stellar body for the inhabitants of Earth. In Icke's alternative history the earliest solar religions were *not* directed at our current sun—they were

²⁹ Icke 1993a, 22. See 15–23 for further revelations.

³⁰ Icke 1993a, 180. It should be noted that Icke retells this story in later books and lectures.

³¹ For example, in *Remember Who You Are*, published in January 2012, there is no mention of the archons. By the time of his ten-hour presentation at Wembley arena in October of the same year the archons are a featured topic.

directed at Saturn. A collision with another stellar system brought chaos. When Saturn was slammed off course and deep into space, Mars was brought much closer to Earth, and our sun became the most luminous body in Earth's orbit.

Icke avers that archons live in Saturn. They are energetic entities—not organic-biological—which allows them to live within a gaseous planet.³² Just as humans require organic-biological food to survive, energetic entities like the archons need energetic food. Humans are energy generators—the ideal food source. Human emotions and thought both, in Icke's telling, produce energetic phenomena. To receive nourishment the archons must either provoke low-vibrational emotional responses (fear, terror, anxiety, worry) or ensure humans focus their minds on the archons. As Icke puts it, "where attention goes, energy flows."³³

When Saturn was displaced it was no longer the most luminous body in the sky. If humans began worshipping the new sun the archons would lose their food supply. According to Icke, the archons responded by hacking into the human genome and creating a simulated reality. Today almost all attention is being unconsciously routed back to Saturn. In this Icke is offering his reinterpretation of the anthropogony and creation of the physical world-as-prison found in classical Gnostic myth.³⁴ First, the archons hacked into human DNA to limit our range of perceptions. What scientists refer to as "junk DNA," that is, DNA without any current purpose, is to Icke our most valuable genetic heritage. This DNA initially granted us conscious access to alternative dimensions and fuller realizations of human potential. This DNA was "switched off" by the archons and humans forgot their true nature.³⁵

Next, the archons genetically modified our brains so that the people of Earth would more closely resemble the archons. Icke is noncommittal on whether archons implanted the reptilian base-stem from scratch or simply enlarged and enhanced our evolved reptilian brain.³⁶ In either case, humans today are more inclined towards fear, aggression, obsessive-compulsive behavior, and lust—all emotional states that generate energy-food for the archons—as a result of the pernicious influence of the reptilian brainstem.

Third, the archons genetically modified humans in order to reduce their perceptual spectrum to a narrow sliver of the entire electro-magnetic spectrum.³⁷ Icke perceives the central nervous system as a receiver-transmitter,

32 Icke 2013, 146.

33 Icke, "The History of the Archons."

34 Icke 2013, 125–130.

35 Icke 2012, 47–52.

36 Icke, 138–142.

37 Icke, "The History of the Archons"; Icke 2013, 98–99; Icke 2016, 141–143.

like a DVD. It can only receive certain types of information (the laser) and, when received (as a laser reading a DVD) it “transmits” the experience of a particular phenomenal world to the individual (the film).

The archons generate, beam and control the band of wavelengths we perceive as visible light from the Saturn-Moon matrix.³⁸ Within this light is encoded information that manipulates the DNA of humans into believing that the simulated reality (or matrix) they are plugged into is reality. Put another way, while humans do have physical senses which perceive the phenomenal world, this phenomenal world is not coterminous with the world-as-it-is. The information beamed from the Saturn-Moon furnishes an alternative, deceptive reality. Our entire cognitive-perceptual experience of the world, including color, time, spatiality and causality, are codes in the matrix.

Finally, the archons manipulate and control human systems (such as religion, politics, medicine, media) through a genetically enhanced race of archon-human hybrids. Icke has long referred to this race as “Reptiles,” but shifted to “archons” after his discovery of the Nag Hammadi codices.³⁹ The genetic interaction between the archons and their human hybrids is as follows. Archons in their pure (interdimensional energetic) form cannot stay long in the three-dimensional earth atmosphere. To them it is radioactive. Genetic hybrids provide a suitable host for the archons to possess and remain on Earth for a longer period of time.⁴⁰

When not possessed these hybrids are programmed automatons similar to Agent Smith in *The Matrix*. The hybrids’ DNA has been programmed so that they ruthlessly seek positions of power and, once in them, manipulate human systems so that the archons receive an increasing supply of human energy. All human institutions diabolically promote human suffering because these low-frequency emotions (terror, fear, agony, anxiety) provide nourishment to the archons. For instance, Icke argues that 9/11 was a blood sacrifice to the archons as well as a false flag operation.⁴¹ This “inside job” legitimized the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, leading not only to massive human casualties but an increase in reptilian emotional states in soldiers and civilians alike. Terrorism, then, is crucial to the archon food supply.⁴²

38 Icke 2016, 143–161.

39 The reptile thesis initially appeared in *The Biggest Secret* and has remained a core piece of his theory since. Since 2011–12, however, the term “archon” has replaced “reptilian” in most of his work.

40 Icke 2013, 200–24.

41 Icke 2012, 275–79. Icke 2002.

42 On 9/11 as an inside job see Icke 2002.

Archons utilize religion for nourishment and to occlude humans into believing nothing exists beyond the matrix. For Icke, seemingly every religious symbol is an expression of Saturn and the archons.⁴³ Solar and lunar imagery, crosses, triangles, and bearded men all refer to Saturn. And insofar as Saturn (as home planet) is symbolically associated with Satan-Ialdabaoth (the lead archon and resident of Saturn), when humans worship religious symbols they are—unbeknownst to themselves—worshipping Satan⁴⁴ As such, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and especially Christianity, deceive worshippers into focusing their energy and intention to Satan-Ialdabaoth. More disturbingly still, hybrids conduct Satanic rituals of human sacrifice, pedophilia and bloodletting to increase energy until the archons can temporarily take three-dimensional form within the Earth's atmosphere.⁴⁵

In sum, for Icke, humans are trapped in a simulated reality created by the archons. The archons manufacture the content of this reality to ensure humans feed them with low-frequency emotions and worshipful intent. Stuck in a feedback loop, humans forget that their deepest nature is timeless awareness which transcends not only the matrix, but embodiment entirely.

4 Carol A. Reimer

Carol A. Reimer has worked for over two decades as an astrologer and hypnotherapist.⁴⁶ Over the same period she has self-published an enormous amount of material; first a blog on astrology, energy healing and other holistic medicines; later novels and nonfiction that embody her own conspiracy theory.⁴⁷ In 2011, she began to study the works of Icke and Lash. This led her down the conspiracy rabbit hole and into the Nag Hammadi codices. While her conspiracy theory is indebted to the two aforementioned authors, Reimer has improvised in her own direction. Most notably, Reimer is convinced that the goal of the

43 In Icke, "History of the Archons," Saturn is argued to be the signified behind signs ranging from circles, crescents, inverted crescents, and crescent-with-horns, to crosses, triangles, and interlocked triangles. See also Icke 2013, 180–201. Most of his research derives from Talbott 1980.

44 Icke has associated Saturn and Satan worship together for over a decade; his recent discovery of the Nag Hammadi writings has led him to alternate uses of "Satan" and "Yaltabaoth" (or Ialdabaoth). See Icke 2013, chapter "Archon Satanism," 245–68.

45 Icke, "The History of the Archons"; Icke 2013, 249.

46 <http://www.astramate.com/aboutcar.html>

47 See her website www.astramate.com/expressions.html. Reimer has written six books on the Gnostics and Nag Hammadi: *Sophia and the Archons*; *Sophia and Yaltabaoth*; *Psychopaths*; *Trial of the Archons*; *Hologram*; and *Sophia's Call*. Each book is self-published.

archons is to commit mass genocide and replace human beings with human-animal hybrids and cyborgs. She therefore argues that what is needed is a new apocalypse brought on by Sophia herself—that the goddess must return and destroy her perverse son and his archons.

It seems likely that Reimer's introduction to the Nag Hammadi codices came through the work of Lash.⁴⁸ She accepts Lash's cosmogonic reading of the classical Gnostic myth, with the sun, moon, and Earth, composed of different matter than the surrounding planets. She departs from Lash and Icke however in matters of anthropogony.⁴⁹

Reimer reads the classical Gnostic myth, particularly the iterations found in the Hypostasis of the Archons (NHC II,4) and On the Origin of the World (II,5 and XIII,2), as literal retellings of the genetic manipulation of humans in prehistory. The archons in these texts become enamored with the luminous Eve. They are attracted to the divine nature emanating from her in the form of light; unable to capture this divine light, they proceed to rape and impregnate a (now merely human) Eve.⁵⁰

For Reimer, this points to a counter-history where the archons raped a genetically modified human being in order to create a cross-breed—what she calls the “serpent race.”⁵¹ The serpent race was dispersed around the world to be exalted and worshipped in positions of power. Great antique empires of Egypt, Sumeria, Vedic India and Rome were all seeded by this “serpent race.”⁵² Today, the serpent bloodlines procreate via artificial wombs and adopt their children out so they remain undetected.⁵³ This allows for individuals as diverse

48 Reimer's first book to touch on the Nag Hammadi codices, *Sophia and the Archons* (2013a), largely recapitulates Lash's own telling of the Sophia myth. Reimer 2013a, 7–49

49 Reimer here follows the work of another prominent conspiracist, Michael Tsarion, whose *Atlantis, Alien Visitation, and Genetic Manipulation* she adapts to fit the Gnostic myth. Tsarion argues that there have been several technologically advanced civilizations prior to our own; each was destroyed by a natural disaster, most recently the flood referenced in Genesis and the Epic of Gilgamesh. Atlantis and Lemuria perished in this latest catastrophe. However, for Tsarion these were not advanced *human* civilizations. Rather, alien beings—the *Nephilim*—came to earth, enslaved primitive human beings, and manipulated their genes in order to program human beings as slaves. See Tsarion 2006.

50 See NHC II,5.116.8–117.15

51 Reimer 2016, 17–18.

52 Reimer 2013b, 49 and 65–68. See also Reimer 2013a: “all religion, magical systems, traditions and practices were devised by extraterrestrials to facilitate their use of a spiritual/psychological process to control humans.”

53 Reimer, 62. “Except for a few, all [the serpent race children] are produced through sperm bank breeding programs to insure [sic] genetic purity. These Rothschild children are brought up in other families and do not officially use the Rothschild name. They can then

as George W. Bush, George Soros, and Barack Obama, to be members of the serpent race—or to use Reimer's more scientific jargon, "Homo Atlantis."⁵⁴

The archontic bloodline is exceedingly small relative to their influence. Reimer attributes this to genetic manipulation performed in the prehistorical lost civilization of Atlantis. Here the archons manipulated the neuroanatomy of a strain of human beings whom Reimer refers to as psychopaths (the technical terminology is antisocial personality disorder or ASPD).⁵⁵ Reimer cites James Fallon's *The Psychopath Inside* to argue that psychopaths exhibit a lack of activity in the orbital cortex and amygdala.⁵⁶ This results in an inability to regulate reptilian traits such as rage, aggression, and sexual appetites, as well as a diminished capacity to experience empathy.⁵⁷

While the serpent race maintains itself in positions of great power, the more plentiful psychopath population gives the archons an easily infected host to enact their will. For instance, while George W. Bush is part of the archontic bloodline, the financial collapse of 2009 required more than neglect on the part of the executive branch: it required numerous psychopathic investors wholly consumed with the desire for money and power, and a lack of concern for others.⁵⁸ As such, Reimer's superconspiracy requires the archons, their hybrids, and the population of psychopaths.

Between the serpent race, psychopaths, and intervention of the archons themselves, the influence of Ialdabaoth and his minions today is pervasive—yet not total. For Reimer, the archons have amassed this power in view of a single goal: reducing the population of human beings on Earth to a more manageable number (five-hundred million).⁵⁹ At this number they would be able to enslave humans and nourish themselves on their energy by sheer force of will—no deception necessary.

The enslavement of humans will be accomplished via genetic manipulation, both overt and covert. Reimer sees the archons working towards this goal in politics, agriculture, and medicine. Take the issue of vaccines as an example. For Reimer, vaccines retard the natural health of the human being. At

come into power in the institutions of society, including presidents and prime ministers, without anyone realizing the connection."

54 Reimer, 69–76.

55 See especially Reimer 2014b. For criteria and discussion of Anti-Social Personality Disorder see DSM V, 659–63.

56 Reimer quotes Fallon's *The Psychopath Inside: A Neuroscientist's Personal Journey into the Dark Side of the Brain* at length in *Psychopaths*, 73–80. See Fallon 2014.

57 Reimer 2014b, 71–72. It should be noted that impulsivity, aggressiveness, lack of remorse, and deceitfulness all are found in the DSM V diagnostic criteria for ASPD. See DSM V, 659.

58 Reimer, 137–38.

59 Reimer 2014b, 187.

best the child becomes susceptible to diabetes, autism, and cancer. At worst the vaccines trigger an autoimmune response so severe that the child dies. The Affordable Care Act and mandatory health care serve as a law by which the archons can enforce these vaccines and oversee so-called “death panels” for the elderly.⁶⁰

Or take the political issue of same-sex marriage. For Reimer, the permissive attitude to same-sex marriage, which exists in popular culture and is now enshrined into American law, is part of this same genocidal plan. Vaccines and other medications subtly alter the hormonal balance in children, causing them to question their sexuality. Archons promote homosexuality in order to reduce the birth rate.⁶¹

More overt manipulation is found in transhumanism. In Reimer’s estimation the transhumanism espoused by the bestselling author Ray Kurzweil is the *telos* of all archontic-genetic manipulation. Kurzweil has written several books, most famously *The Singularity is Near*, to argue that the survival and advancement of the human species must now be accomplished through human-technology interface.⁶² Early stages of transhumanism include artificial limbs, virtual senses (eyesight), and synthetic organs.⁶³ In time this should lead to the development of human-technology hybrids capable of living much longer than we can today; alternately, Kurzweil has predicted that consciousness, personal identity, and memories will all in time be transferrable to nonbiological hardware.⁶⁴

Kurzweil’s transhumanism terrifies Reimer in that it seems the latest and most dangerous effort of the archons to hack into divine consciousness.⁶⁵ In the classical Gnostic myth, the archons desired Eve and fell in awe of Adam due to the luminous light. For Reimer, this light is “Consciousness”—a divine faculty of imagination that is nonlocal and manifests in super-psi capacities such as telepathy and telekinesis.⁶⁶ Archons cannot possess this light because, as inorganic beings, they do not provide the necessary organic substrate. By

60 Reimer 2013b, 124–26; Reimer 2014b, 48–49.

61 Reimer 2013b, 220–21; Reimer 2014b, 49.

62 Kurzweil 2000; Kurzweil 2005; Kurzweil 2011; Kurzweil 2012.

63 Kurzweil 2005, 206–25.

64 Kurzweil 2005, 198–204 and 320–29.

65 Each of Reimer’s books includes an extensive argument against transhumanism. See especially Reimer 2014b, 148–161; Idem 2016, 200–10.

66 Reimer 2016, 42. For fuller discussion see Reimer 2014b, 105–111 on the seven-fold body [clearly indebted to H. P. Blavatsky and Theosophy] and how these bodies relate to distinct faculties.

analogy, the archons are incapable of serving as “receivers” for the “signal” that is divine “Consciousness.” However, transhumanism suggests that the archons could hack into the organic substrate. A human-robot hybrid, or cyborg, would potentially allow the archons a genetic bridge into the human brain and, by extension, epinoia.

They would then have no use for human beings and the cyborgs would exterminate humans at will. Or in Reimer’s own words:

Hidden in remote laboratories worldwide, psychopathic madmen are secretly experimenting and interbreeding human genes with the unthinkable. Monstrous creations are being developed with off-planet *Archon* technology resulting in the production of an offspring entirely different from either of its parents.... These seducing spirits [transhumanist scientists] are guiding and tricking mankind to unwittingly commit *genetic suicide*. The ‘*replacement race*’ stands poised to bring about the total annihilation of the human race.⁶⁷

5 Transcending Evil and Restoring Eden

In classical Gnostic myth, cosmogony and anthropogony answer problems of theodicy: why death, pain, and suffering exist. The condition of evil, however, can be transcended. Several Sethian texts refer to visionary forms of ascent-baptism whose apparent purpose is to seal the spirit of the aspirant in order that they can escape the material cosmos.

The ceremony of the “five seals” is most important in this regard. It is mentioned only in a few texts—the Trimorphic Protennoia (NHC XIII,1), the Gospel of the Egyptians (NHC III,2 and IV,2), and the long recensions of the Apocryphon of John (NHC II,1 and IV,1).⁶⁸ References to it are sufficiently vague as to have led to diverse reconstructions from respected scholars, but most recent scholars follow the work of John Turner that the “five seals” refer to a visionary form of baptism.⁶⁹ Later Sethian texts, such as Zostrianos and Allogenes, feature complex visionary ascents that begin with contemplation

⁶⁷ Reimer 2016, 200–01.

⁶⁸ Puma, *A Gnostic Prayerbook*, Kindle edition, “Initiation: The Mystery of the Five Seals.”

⁶⁹ See Turner 2000; Logan 1996; Logan 1997; Logan 2006; Brakke 2010, 75–76. References to the five seals themselves can be found in Gos. Eg. NHC IV, 2.78.4–5; Tri. Prot. NHC XIII, 1.50.9–15; Apoc. John NHC II,1.30.11–32.

(withdrawing attention from the senses) and are propelled by baptisms at each aeon until the individual achieves angelification or divinization.⁷⁰

Another means of escape concerns apocalyptic eschatology. Ialdabaoth's evil material cosmos is temporary. Several Sethian texts claim the material cosmos will be destroyed. Trimorphic Protennoia, the Gospel of the Egyptians, and the Apocalypse of Adam each refer to the end of the dead aeon (material cosmos).⁷¹ What happens to persons who are not among the elect varies. In texts such as the Apocryphon of John, there is reference to a day when those who followed the counterfeit spirit will be banished and tortured eternally.⁷² In later Platonic-Sethian texts like Zostrianos it appears that the non-elect pass away with the material world.⁷³

In either case we see two methods of release from the cosmic prison and its evil: transcendence either through contemplation-ritual or through the apocalyptic destruction of matter. Conspiracy theorists offer transcendent and eschatological solutions to theodicy as well, albeit with a shift in discourse. For Icke, Lash, and Reimer, language of the "subtle body" or "chakras" has replaced the spirit. The pre-Lapsarian Earth each imagine is the Earth prior to the infestation of the archons—a prehistorical "Golden Age."

Each author locates the vehicle of liberation from the archontic prison in the subtle body.⁷⁴ Icke argues that the same genetic manipulation which reduced our perceptions to a narrow band of the electromagnetic spectrum also limited us to operating from the lowest two chakras. The hologram-matrix will dissolve once we learn to release our energy from these two lower chakras and raise it into the heart. Icke discovered this secret on an *ayahuasca* tour in 2003. He describes the experience as follows:

All that exists is one infinite consciousness, which was referred to as 'The Infinite,' 'Oneness' and the 'One.' In our manipulated, illusory reality we had become detached from the One (in our minds, though not in fact) and therefore we viewed everything in terms of division and duality

70 In Allogenes the language for contemplation is *withdrawal* (NHC XI,3.60.13–18). Allogenes NHC XI,3.59.20–61.2 for contemplation and divinization. Zostrianos NHC VIII,1.4.24–7.20 for series of visionary baptisms resulting in angelification (7.13).

71 Tri. Prot. NHC XIII,1.42.19–21; Gos. Eg. NHC IV,2.72.22–27; Apoc. Adam NHC V,5.75.9–16.

72 Apoc. John NHC II,1.27.29–30.

73 Zost. NHC VIII,1.128.13–14.

74 I use "subtle body" in a comparative sense for any metaphysical body that underlies, but can also separate itself from, the gross material body. It is the case that these authors are all indebted to Theosophy in varying degrees, with Icke and Reimer reproducing Blavatsky's idea of the seven bodies in their work.

instead of seeing that all is connected, is the same infinite Oneness. This illusory sense of disconnection is the mind prison I call the Matrix.⁷⁵

Reimer sees the physical body as just the anchor for seven layers of the “Auric body” that comprises each human being: etheric, emotional, mental, astral, the etheric template, celestial body, and ketheric template.⁷⁶ Archons focus on manipulating the lower bodies (physical, etheric, emotional, mental) and in so doing divorce consciousness from its higher levels. Through meditation and ritual imagination, the celestial body and ketheric template allow individuals to regain full consciousness of God.⁷⁷

Lash read two primary techniques for transcending the archons in ancient texts: enteogens and sex. The “tree of Gnosis,” familiar from numerous texts in the Nag Hammadi codices, is regarded as a psychedelic brew along the lines of the Eleusinian *kykeon*.⁷⁸ In psychedelic states, Gaia imagistically reveals to humans the nature and function of the world, from the Sophia mythos to discovery of the double-helix DNA model.⁷⁹

In terms of sexuality, Lash sees references to the snake in the garden of Eden as a Gnostic reference to the *kundalini*.⁸⁰ In order to defend themselves against archontic intrusion, Gnostics would raise the kundalini in sex rituals. References to the bridal chamber, or *nymphon*, are for Lash “a code term for the cell-of-light or protective aura generated by ritual intercourse. Within the cell, the initiates overcome the influence of the Archons who produce error in our minds, and threaten to take over our bodies.” The more Gnostics attuned themselves to the energy of the kundalini, the more *siddhis*, or energetic super-powers, they developed: remote viewing, molecular vision, telepathy, even teleportation.⁸¹ By raising the kundalini and tapping into Epinoia, humans

75 Icke 2003, 325.

76 Reimer 2014b, 107–110. It is clear from Reimer’s descriptions that she is influenced by Drunvalo Melchizedek’s writings on the “Flower of Life” and the Merkaba.

77 Reimer 2014b, 110.

78 Lash 2007, 221.

79 Lash is here invoking the arguments of Jeremy Narby in *The Cosmic Serpent*. See Lash 2007, 153.

80 Within Hindu Tantric traditions, the *kundalini* is technically the female serpent that “sleeps” within the subtle body, with her mouth over the lingam. The awakening of the kundalini is associated with an “altered state of energy” as the “serpent” shoots up the subtle body, activating the chakras and infusing the practitioner with ecstatic energy. See White 1984, 59–61.

81 On the kundalini, Gnostics, and siddhis, see especially Lash, “Kundalini and the Alien Force.”

aid Gaia-Sophia in her evolution: to become a pure manifestation of “Organic Light,” like the pleroma itself.

By 2014, however, Lash had evidently determined that raising the kundalini was insufficient in the battle against the archons. He then established the Kalika War Party, an organization which takes its name from the Hindu Goddess Kali and is dedicated to “eliminating social evil.”⁸² The KWP identifies itself as a “counter-terrorist elite strike force using shamanic magic and other weapons to attack all aspects of social evil.”⁸³ Targets range from bankers to pedophiles and religious ideologues, but in each instance it is clear these are individuals or organizations Lash has identified as infected with the “archon virus.”

Weapons include tactics and tools for guerrilla warfare, intellectual definitions such as contra-violence, memes, slogans, insignia, symbols, and so forth, as well as artistic, literary, musical, cinematic, and theatrical skills of every conceivable kind. Weapons also include paranormal faculties, such as remote viewing, telepathy, bilocation, magical techniques, erotic rituals, incantations, mudras, and tantric spells including the lethal strike or killing spell.⁸⁴ While the website is public, the rest of the KWP’s actions appear to be anonymous. It is unclear if there have been any major efforts, violent, magical, or other, on behalf of the KWP—or if there even *is* a KWP beyond Lash’s website.

Reimer, otherwise deeply sympathetic to Lash, departs from him here. There *is* no human solution to the evil perpetrated by Ialdabaoth and his archons: “humans have been seized by a ‘supra’ evil that requires a ‘supra’ intervention.”⁸⁵ Reimer has in the last three years written two novels and two nonfiction books which center on Sophia’s intervention.⁸⁶ Sophia, the Anthropos, Barbelo and others must violently and forcefully extinguish the archons and correct Ialdabaoth’s error. No human solution remains.

6 Closing Thoughts: Archons, Social Alienation and the Paradoxes of Reception

While there are enticing parallels between the ancient Gnostics and metaphysical religion in the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries, these parallels emphasize social and epistemological elements such as transgression, an emphasis

⁸² <http://kalikawarparty.org/>.

⁸³ <http://kalikawarparty.org/thunderbird/>.

⁸⁴ <http://kalikawarparty.org/thunderbird/>. Lash teaching how to perform the lethal killing spell can be accessed here: <http://kalikawarparty.org/strike/>.

⁸⁵ Reimer 2016, 106.

⁸⁶ Reimer, 2013a; Reimer, 2013b; Reimer, 2016.

on transformative experience, revealed knowledge, and self-religion or personal divinity.⁸⁷ The distinctions between the ancients and contemporaries are much greater when considering issues of cosmology and embodiment.

The works of Lash, Icke, and Reimer exhibit the tensions between the ancient, classical Gnostic worldview and the conceptual grammar of the twenty-first century: the anti-cosmic thrust of the classical myth versus the pro-cosmic orientation found in most metaphysical religions; an ancient approach that finds the body vile and evil in tension with the celebration of embodiment in metaphysics; and the apocalyptic Gnostic pessimism vis-à-vis the post-millennialism so characteristic of metaphysical religion. In attempting to square these circles Lash, Icke, and Reimer proffer paradoxical ideas of the cosmos, body, and end times.

The archons of the classical myth fashioned and manipulated the psychic and physical bodies of Adam. In the classical myth this supports a suspicion of sense experience, sexuality, and a desire to release the spirit from the realm of matter. Our contemporary authors interpret this story by positing that genetic manipulation is the origin of evil among humankind. Advances in medical understandings of the body provide a new language to express what Ioan Couliano called the denial of the anthropic principle—that humans are not made for this Earth.⁸⁸ New medical understandings of human physiology, including DNA, RNA, triune brain theory, optometry and the unseen agents of medical evil such as viruses and disease, replace the language of the psychic and hylic bodies found in the classical Gnostic myth.

The paranoia of these authors is also deeply embodied. There is no certainty that *any* phenomenological experience is real. Lash understands the Gnostic virus to infect human hosts and create simulacra institutions and ideas that obfuscate Sophia's Epinoia. Reimer expresses concern that most every substance that passes into the body—water, food, chemtrails in the air, our very blood through vaccines—has been contaminated or manipulated by the archons to weaken our immune system and exterminate humans.⁸⁹ Icke has taken these ideas to their furthest extreme: the brain has been modified to experience a narrow spectrum of reality, and the archons have manipulated this spectrum to embed our minds in a holographic universe divorced from interaction with

87 The parallels between ancient Gnostics and modern American religion (especially the branch identified as metaphysical) have inspired and influenced a large number of works in the last two decades. Here is a selection of the most influential: Raschke, 1980; Bloom, 1992; Davis, 1998; Nelson, 2001 273–92; Kripal, 2007b 126–161; Kripal, 2011; DeConick, 2017; Partridge, 2018.

88 Couliano 1992, 1–19.

89 Reimer 2013, 97–127.

our *real* bodies and *real* Earth. The world as we experience it is a matrix used to redirect human energy to feed the archons.

Yet release from the matrix is itself embodied—or, put more precisely, relies on the subtle body. As Catherine Albanese points out in *A Republic of Mind and Spirit*, in American metaphysical religion the language of healing has replaced the language of salvation. This remains true here. Icke, Lash and Reimer do not seek ascent-visions or extraterrestrial escape. It is by healing the subtle body and awakening the heart chakra that humans can recover the primordial image of the divine.

Second, for each of these authors the archons provide a theodicy for their own perceived social alienation. Modernity is felt as dehumanizing. The pre-archontic Eden these authors seek to return to is profoundly anti-modern. Institutional religion, the medical establishment, mass agriculture, large governments, globalized media, and technology—all are expressions of the globalized power of the archons that must be wiped from Earth in order to return to paradise. Like the “watchers” in 1 Enoch or Babylon in Revelation, the archons here are coded references to social-political actors deemed responsible for the authors’ experienced evil: mass immigration from non-European nations, the end of the middle class, white genocide, and so forth.⁹⁰ Those individuals deemed infected or hybrids with the archons typically fall along racial and ethnic lines: Obama, Jewish financiers like the Rothschilds, and Muslims.⁹¹

In the classical Gnostic myth the condition of the evil cosmos required transcendence of the cosmos either through rituals or through intervention and eschatology.⁹² While the hope for divine intervention persists in the works of Reimer, both Icke and Lash bridge the hope for transcendence with the celebration of human agency characteristic of post-millennialism. Lash sees human efforts to save the planet and align their consciousness with Sophia as the key to eradicating the archons: “With the incorporation of Gnosis into deep ecology, the way is open toward eco-gnosis: intimate perception of the life force [or organic light], such that brings humanity into alignment with Sophia’s correction.”⁹³ As humans align their consciousness with Sophia’s Epinoia, they will help the planet become a pure manifestation of the “Organic Light” that can easily cast off the archontic intrusion.

90 See for instance Icke, “The Planned Destruction of European Nations”; Reimer, *Psychopaths*, 147–166; Lash, “The Archons and White Genocide.”

91 In addition to references above, see Reimer 2013, 128–156; Reimer 2014, 201–19; Icke 2012, 228–66.

92 See previous section, “Transcending Evil and Restoring Eden.”

93 Lash 2006, 349.

The Kalika War Party, while much more violently inclined, is an organization whose goal is to eradicate the archontic virus in order to facilitate this shift in consciousness. Icke's vision of release from the matrix entails that humans awaken from the perverse reality beamed into their nervous system. Although Icke does not outline what this millennial kingdom might look like, he is convinced that by raising consciousness to the heart chakra the archontic prison will cease:

People might expect me to set out a whole plan and manifesto for bringing down the Archontic system, but I don't need to. The answers are simple and they lie in the heart. Effective action will follow—and *only* follow—once we have freed ourselves from the perception deception. This requires ... remembering that we are Infinite Awareness and not little me.⁹⁴

The reality the archons hijacked was a paradise, and when all the manipulations, engineered conflicts, systematic scarcity, and suppression of knowledge are no more, what will be left?

7 Paradise

Finally, a profound tension underlies the cosmology purported by Lash, Icke, and Reimer. As noted by scholars of modern metaphysical and esoteric religion, there is a general pro-cosmic thrust to late twentieth-century esoteric and metaphysical movements.⁹⁵ The classical archons, gatekeepers and prison-masters within an inimical cosmos, are a poor fit.

Lash, Icke, and Reimer cannot bring themselves to call the Earth itself *evil*. To reconcile pro-cosmism and anti-cosmism each of them reinterprets the myth so that the cosmos—conceived of as the order of planets and stars beyond our own—remains evil, but the Earth and sun are ontologically different. The archons rule the planets beyond Earth and have invaded our atmosphere. Yet Earth, or Gaia, is divine. For now, the archons manipulate embodiment, engineer social systems and create technological webs to obscure Earth's divine luminosity. But just flip the “junk DNA” switch, raise the kundalini to the heart chakra, and in a flash the black iron prison will disappear.

94 Icke 2013, 876.

95 Hanegraaff 1998; Schmidt 2005; Kripal 2007a; Albanese 2007.

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