'Delivered from the Powers of Darkness’ Confessions of Satanic Riches in Christian Ghana

Birgit Meyer


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‘DELIVERED FROM THE POWERS OF DARKNESS’
CONFESSIONS OF SATANIC RICHES IN CHRISTIAN
GHANA

Birgit Meyer

In Accra the Devil is omnipresent. Popular high-life songs such as ‘You Devil, go away from me!’ come out of the loudspeakers in workshops and petrol stations. One can also read that cry on many T-shirts and car stickers. On posters and banners Churches declare ‘War against Satan’ and call for prayer meetings where demons will be destroyed and where the Holy Spirit, healing and riches will be received. Everywhere in town billboards depicting colourful monsters and the Devil advertise popular plays (‘concert parties’) which deal with the evil deeds of God’s dark opponent. In the video cinemas, where people can enjoy a film for next to nothing, they can see, alongside Western movies, horror films produced in Ghana with the Devil and his consorts—particularly witches—playing the leading parts. And every Thursday low-priced Christian, English-language papers appear which contain revelations about terrifying experiences with evil spirits, the Devil’s servants. These newspapers present in written form stories told in the cities and in the rural areas which expose and denounce the dark, evil powers afflicting people in Ghana. Many stories end with a sentence such as:

I am writing this to enable people to know that the Devil actually exists. But there is hope. Our Saviour Jesus Christ died so that we will live. So when we surrender ourselves to him the devil will always fall at our feet as what happened in my case. Be faithful. [Hope, No. 47, 17–24 October 1991]

In Ghana, at least in the central and southern regions, Christianity reigns supreme. Alongside the historical mission Churches there are a great number of ‘spiritual’ and, above all, ‘pentecostal’ Churches to whom the old Churches have lost many members in the course of time. Both spiritual and pentecostal Churches provide believers with remedies and protections against all sorts of illnesses and mishaps attributed to the machinations of evil spirits. But whereas the preachers and healers of spiritual Churches make use of incense, candles and stones in healing rituals, the pentecostalists, who describe themselves as ‘born again’, refer to the Word alone. In recent years these pentecostal Churches have become extremely popular in urban as well as rural areas (Assimeng, 1986); even some of the mission Churches have incorporated pentecostally oriented prayer groups in order to prevent their members from leaving the Church.¹ Most of the pentecostal Churches have their headquarters in Accra and are multi-ethnic and multilingual (that is, the services are in English and Akan, Ga or Ewe), though many have branches in rural areas which are inhabited by particular ethnic groups.

In my view a popular pentecostal complex has evolved in southern Christian Ghana which deserves more attention from anthropologists and other students of religion than it has received hitherto.² Although at the level of social organisation it consists of many different Churches and prayer
groups, at the level of ideas all these organisations have enough in common to be identified as one cultural complex. The members of pentecostal prayer groups and Churches, who consist mainly of young or middle-aged women and young men, share a popular Christian culture. One of its most striking features is the image of the Devil and the imagination of evil, in which witchcraft, money and family problems are recurrent features. This article attempts to grasp this popular Christian culture by way of studying popular literary and visual products which deal with Satan and are read, seen and discussed in pentecostal circles.

Before delving into these satanic stories it is necessary to address briefly the theoretical question of how to conceptualise and approach the imagination of evil. This question has increasingly become the subject of recent anthropological investigation (for example, Austen, 1993; Bastian, 1993; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1993; Fabian, 1978; Geschiere, in press; Lattas, 1993; Taussig, 1980; Thoden van Velzen and Van Wetering, 1989; Verrips, 1992; White, 1993). These studies show that belief in the existence of demons is not confined to pre-modern cultures and societies, but rather is part and parcel of modernity, both in the West and elsewhere. Moreover, anthropologists have realised the inadequacy of conceptualising imaginations of evil as expressions of ‘false consciousness’ in favour of viewing them as people’s attempts to understand their situation and grapple with changing conditions. Thus imaginations of evil are not mere reflections of ill-understood social, political and economic conditions. Rather, they are fields within which people produce meanings enabling them to analyse critically and thereby shape their life conditions. Therefore one has to go beyond a symbolic approach which merely seeks to decode images in order to find their ‘real’ referent in the outside world. A careful analysis of the iconography of evil itself is necessary to assess the reality of fantasy.

Studies of the continued existence of witchcraft and demon beliefs under modern conditions in Africa usually focus on (neo-)traditional cults and tend to neglect Christian Churches and movements. However, as is clear from the above, there is no reason to assume that conversion to Christianity would result in a decline of demonology. On the contrary, by providing believers with an image not only of almighty God but also of this dark counterpart, Christianity affords the opportunity to demonise traditional gods as well as ‘worldly’ temptations such as uninhibited consumption. This dualistic view is given particular emphasis in the pentecostal Churches. They have an uncompromising attitude towards traditional religion, which they depict as sheerly diabolical, and constantly preach a puritan ethic as the only way to escape satanic temptations. This article is an attempt to understand the attraction of the pentecostalists’ dualistic conception of evil.

These reflections result in the following approach to Ghanaian pentecostalists’ imaginations of evil. Firstly I present some popular stories told about the Devil and money. Secondly I analyse these stories and establish what sort of evil the Devil actually represents, or, in other words, the kind of evil that is denounced by means of Satan. Thirdly I reveal what these imaginations of evil have to say about Ghanaian pentecostalists’ perceptions of their life conditions, that is, I put forward an analysis of how they think
about poverty and wealth with the help of the notion of the Devil. An analysis of these themes will enable us to arrive at an understanding of the popularity of pentecostalism in Christian Ghana.

**POPULAR STORIES: THE DEVIL AND MONEY**

One hears about devilish or demonic activities by way of stories from people who, actively or passively, got involved with these powers. There are thus people who unintentionally became victims of evil powers, which mostly manifest themselves through financial loss, sickness and marriage problems. There are plenty of stories of this type; I can give only a few examples here. Witchcraft (adze in Ewe, aye in Ga, bayi in Akan), for instance, is an almost inexhaustible topic of conversation. In witchcraft stories witches attempt to destroy the lives of family members they envy for one or another reason. Witches are considered to be the principal agents of the Devil, and protection against their attacks can be gained only through prayer. Alongside witchcraft accounts that refer to family conflicts there are stories of more anonymous powers troubling people. Thus many an owner of a mini-bus used for public transport is said to give the Devil a bloody human sacrifice in exchange for the financial success of his enterprise every year, hence the frequent traffic accidents. Only through prayer to the Christian God can one hope to assure oneself of a safe journey. Especially among female traders the story circulates of a satanic banknote which, once put in the purse, starts to steal the owner's personal money in a spiritual way until not one cedi is left. Some people think that this money may be used in order to make others rich in a satanic way. Such a banknote can be rendered harmless only through prayer.

People who have become victims of diabolical agents argue that the Devil was able to affect their lives because they were merely churchgoers rather than true ‘born again’ Christians. Only when they were really converted to the Christian God did money, health and spouse come back. In their accounts they warn others that the Devil himself is indeed invisible but is nevertheless really at work and that he can cause disaster for all those who do not really have faith in God.

More spectacular than these stories are those about people who consciously got involved with the Devil or one of his agents and who saw the realm of the ‘powers of darkness’ with their own eyes. In the last instance they also see themselves as victims of the Devil. Satan could get hold of their spirit only because it was not possessed by the Holy Spirit. Once that had happened their peace of mind came back and they revealed all they had seen and done in Satan’s dark empire. Speakers able to talk about this on the basis of their own experience are the great attraction during the evangelising crusades held frequently in Accra and other large towns. From there the stories are spread throughout the whole country until they are told even in the smallest village.

In one way or another most of the stories of satanic and demonic activities are to do with money. In view of the poverty of many Ghanaians this is not astonishing. Many people have financial problems and are looking for ways and means to overcome them. I now present a number of the stories spun
around the Devil and money. My selection is restricted to accounts of people who actively entered into a contract with the Devil or one of his representatives. Let us first of all listen to the confession of a converted businessman which was published in the paper Relax on 7 March 1989.

Confession 1
This man was ‘a first-class businessman’, but the source he used to establish his business was ‘evil’. He and his brother were the only children of their parents. Their father died when they were still young. Whereas the brother worked for a firm in Accra, the narrator himself had become a teacher. Later he set up in business on his own with the financial support of his mother. Although trade was quite good, he started looking for ‘avenues to get richer quicker’. The mother, however, preferred the other son and planned to bequeath her house and property to him. Through a female trader the narrator was brought into contact with a prophetess in a spiritual Church. She sent him to her agent in Bénin. Having arrived there, ‘I was asked to offer my brother in order to become rich. In fact there were two options, either to give up my first child or to give up my brother. And since my brother was now a thorn in my side with regard to my mother’s property, I willingly agreed to give him up.’ He got a note for a powerful ‘juju man’ in Nzema (or Nzima), a region of Ghana renowned for the chances of getting satanic riches. There his mission would definitely be accomplished. Before he visited the man he consulted the prophetess in Accra, who gave him a powder which he had to mix into his mother’s and brother’s food. His brother would go mad and his mother’s life be shortened.

When five days later he returned from Nzema, where he was given a live rattlesnake to put round his waist, his mother was ill and his brother was behaving strangely. From then on his business improved, whereas his mother’s and his brother’s condition deteriorated. Nobody suspected him, and there even was talk of his mother being responsible for the brother’s odd behaviour. Everything was going fine, but having arrived at this point the narrator warns, ‘Dear readers, the devil is a liar and a thief: he has nothing good to offer anyone who follows him. He can only destroy and not build. There is nothing good in his kingdom, only misery, poverty and death.’

As soon as his mother had died the man had his insane brother put in an asylum, while he and his family moved into the mother’s house. As far as material things went his children were well-off, but ‘they were the dullest children in school’. Instead of learning they were always flirting. Every now and then he sent his brother some food through one of the relatives who had come to stay with him because of his wealth. After eight years the brother died. Then misfortune started to strike. One day the man forgot about his rattlesnake on the table when he went out to collect some money. His youngest daughter was bitten and the beast was subsequently killed by people in the house. The daughter died in hospital. There the man met a preacher who told him that all his children would die if he did not burn all his Nzema bayi things and turn to God. ‘He cited the death of my daughter as the beginning of worse things to happen to me. Then on my knees I accepted Christ Jesus as my personal Saviour and, dear readers, I have not been the same again.’
Confession 2

Under the heading ‘A taste of hell’ a man narrates in Hope (21–8 May 1992) how his beautiful young wife was always bothering him ‘to buy this or that for her’. He gave in to her wishes until his capital ran out and his business started going downhill. With two friends who were in the same situation he went to a fetish in a far-away village. They had to stay for two days in order to undergo certain rituals by way of a test, because only he whose spirit was suited would become rich. Everyone was given a concoction to drink and afterwards lay down on a raffia mat in a round hut. Before falling asleep ‘we talked a lot about what we would do with the money we were about to acquire and our plans for the future’. The narrator desired to put up a big ‘storey building’ in his home village. It was getting on towards midnight when they fell asleep.

A few minutes later I found myself in trance, but to me at that time it was real life. The room became totally dark. Then I saw my younger sister walk to where I was sleeping and asked me what I was doing there. It was as if I was hypnotised . . . ‘I say, what are you doing here, Kofi?’ she repeated. I had no answer for her, then she turned her back and walked away from me. I became very heavy within myself. Suddenly what I saw next was a big snake crawling on me. This time I jumped up and screamed and ran out of the room.

The ‘fetish priest’ tied him to a tree and beat him. It was only in the afternoon that the unfortunate, who all day had been mocked by the villagers, was freed. His friends too came, ‘but they looked different. They behaved as if they didn’t know me and as if I had never been their friend. They wouldn’t talk to me’.

Once home, the narrator went mad and was taken to a mental asylum by his parents. When he was eventually discharged he found his wife had left him. In the end the narrator became a Christian: ‘I surrendered myself to the Lord.’ His two friends ‘became fabulously rich’. But alas, one of them died in a fatal accident in his own car. The other friend’s wife died suddenly, and despite his wealth he became so unhappy that he, too, went crazy. The narrator advised him through another person ‘to leave any medicine or juju he might have and turn to Jesus for salvation. That was the only way he could be saved.’ The man was saved indeed. He lost some of his wealth, but not his life, and became a ‘born again’ Christian.

These two confessions partially articulate a shared narrative about satanic riches. Since it is known by hearsay throughout the country, readers or listeners understand the subjective and fragmentary confession against its background. People who want to get rich quickly will consult a priest in the countryside. However, they will achieve the desired wealth only in exchange for a blood relation, their spouse, their fertility or a part of their own body. Those who sacrifice only a part of the body will not become really rich; those who surrender the capacity to procreate will earn more, but a lot of money can be gained only by sacrificing a beloved, closely related person. In confession 1 the narrator kills his mother and his brother; in confession 2 the narrator’s sister appears, probably because she is to be sacrificed. But it seems that she is too strong to be killed—her strength is said to stem from the Holy Spirit—and her brother too weak to give her
up. It is clear that one friend kills his wife and that the other surrenders his body.

There are different versions of the way a person is sacrificed. Usually the images of various candidates appear one after the other in a mirror or on the surface of water. The person who wants to be rich may thrust a knife or shoot an arrow into the image of his victim. This kills the victim in spirit, and after a few days he will also pass away in body, for instance through a car accident. The victim’s spirit will haunt the offender in his dreams. It is often related that the offender is not allowed to weep during the victim’s funeral. Anyone who goes as far as intending to kill without being able to carry out the bloody deed will go mad, as in confession 2. Often the wealthy person will not be allowed to enjoy his riches unreservedly. When the years have passed, as we saw in confession 1, the money requires another sacrifice. Before the would-be rich man leaves the priest he will be given a snake. The snake may be kept in a black pot, but it is also possible that it may have to be swallowed or worn somewhere about the body. In any case, the snake is essential for the production of money. At a set time, when its master has performed some ritual or other, it will secretly vomit brand-new banknotes. Once one has got involved with satanic money all rites and rules—sometimes there are certain food taboos—have to be observed, otherwise wealth will turn into poverty, sickness and death.

‘Diabolo’ (summary)
The very popular Ghanaian film Diabolo, directed by William K. Akuffo, which appeared in December 1991, takes up the story of satanic wealth. The main figure is an attractive, good-looking man called Diabolo. To the Ghanaian public the name instantly signals that the film is about someone who has made his money by satanic means.

The opening scene is set in a bar. Diabolo approaches a prostitute, offers her some 30,000 cedis (about US$75 in 1991/2, a month’s salary for the average office worker) and she willingly agrees. They drive to his elegant villa outside town. There he hands her a drink, which almost immediately makes her faint. He carries her up to the bedroom and binds her to the bed. After drinking a strange bubbling concoction he starts trembling and shaking until he is transformed into a python. In that form he enters the prostitute’s vagina. In the next scene he has become a human being again. We see him sitting on the bed by the woman, who is vomiting banknote after banknote. Impatiently Diabolo slaps her cheek whenever things don’t go fast enough. He fills a whole suitcase with neatly stacked 1,000 cedi notes. When the stream of money comes to an end he sends her away. Groaning, she stumbles through the streets until she collapses, dead, in her mother’s compound, vomiting a few last coins and red slime. In the shape of the snake Diabolo visits her Christian burial, which is conducted by a catechist. He is discovered and the preacher shouts at the snake to go away. He chases it away as if to cast out an evil spirit.

Afterwards Diabolo invites more prostitutes. The next one only takes a sip of his drink and wakes up when he has just turned into the snake. She tries to escape, but since nobody will believe that she is being followed by a snake man Diabolo can eventually kill her. He finds the next woman so beautiful
that he wants to make love to her as a man. Afterwards he sends her away. She stumbles home, complaining loudly. Her mother calls in a ‘mami water’\textsuperscript{12} priest, but he cannot help her. In pain she gives birth to the fruit of Diabolo—a clew of snakes—and dies. The last prostitute Diabolo brings home turns into a cat after taking the drink.\textsuperscript{13} In this she is more than the snake bargain for. After fleeing from the house and sending several people into fits the snake is burned by some courageous car mechanics. Amidst the flames we see the head of Diabolo emerge, the ‘snake man’.

\textit{Delivered from the ‘Powers of Darkness’ (summary)}

The confession of the Nigerian Emmanuel Eni, who revealed his involvement with evil spirits in the booklet \textit{Delivered from the Powers of Darkness} (1988), is very popular in Ghana.\textsuperscript{14} In this work, too, the connection between the Devil and material profit holds a central place. The story is a bestseller in the towns and in the countryside alike. The author regularly testifies to his conversion all over the country.\textsuperscript{15} Hence his confession is known everywhere. What it comes down to is this.

Eni’s parents, with whom he lived in a small village in Nigeria, died in mysterious circumstances. It is suggested that they fell victim to witchcraft motivated by envy. As soon as he is alone, Eni feels insecure in his extended family and yearns for protection. Eventually, at the age of fifteen, he meets Alice, a former classmate three years his senior who now works in a bank in Lagos. She claims she wants to marry him, and he moves into her elegant apartment. Gradually Eni realises that her wealth stems from supernatural sources. On one occasion he wakes up in the night to find not Alice but a snake lying beside him. Nosing round, he finds human remains, ‘both fresh and dry’, in one of her four refrigerators and in another room a black ‘native pot’ full of blood. Eventually Alice introduces him to her occult congregation, among whom there are many intellectuals. She sends his name to the ‘Occult Society in India’, into which he is initiated.

He seals a contract with the ‘queen of the coast’,\textsuperscript{16} a beautiful woman who lives under the sea. ‘Dear reader, this happened in my physical form! At a point we sank into the sea bed and to my surprise I saw us walking along an expressway. We moved into a city with a lot of people, all very busy. \ldots I saw laboratories, like science lab., designing lab., and a theatre’ (\textit{ibid.}: 18). In those ‘underworld laboratories’, where Eni spends two months, he also sees psychiatrists and scientists at work.

The work of these scientists is to design beautiful things like flashy cars etc., latest weapons and to know the mystery of this world. If it were possible to know the pillar of the world they could have, but thank God, \textit{only God knows}. I moved into the designing room and there I saw many samples of cloth, perfumes and cosmetics. All these things according to Lucifer are to distract men’s attention from the Almighty God. I also saw different designs of electronics, computers and alarms. \textit{There was also a TV from where they knew those who are born again Christians in the world. There you will see and differentiate those who are church goers and those who are real Christians.} [\textit{Ibid.}; capitals in original]

At this stage Eni is endowed with several occult powers. He works for the Devil but has yet to meet him. When he has killed two old men in his home village by spirit means he may meet Satan, who also lives at the bottom of
the sea. The Devil declares that people love ‘flashy and fanciful things’, so he will make sure that such things are always produced. He will use money, riches and women to destroy the Church. Once having met Satan, Eni no longer knows human emotions or mercy. He causes all sorts of disasters such as houses collapsing and car accidents, and in this context he tells the reader that ‘A LOT OF DESTRUCTION HAPPENING IN THE WORLD TODAY ARE NOT MAN MADE. The Devil’s duty is to steal, kill and destroy. I say it again, SATAN HAS NO “FREE GIFT”’ (Eni, 1988: 23).

Later he is sent to the bottom of the sea again. His new task is to help people achieve satanic wealth. In this context the well known story of satanic riches is treated extensively. Not only the acquisition of satanic money but the opening of any lucrative business regularly demands a human sacrifice, since—Eni never tires of repeating—‘REMEMBER, SATAN HAS NO FREE GIFT’ (ibid.). He tells how Satan overpowers Christians by making them ill or barren or by weakening their faith, thus finally winning their souls. It is clear that he works not by force but by seduction with pleasant things.

The second half of Eni’s story is about his salvation. He meets Jesus Christ himself and, after the ‘powers of darkness’ have finally been exorcised, becomes an active member of the ‘Assemblies of God’. In the last chapter he again warns people not to fall prey to satanic agents, who in human form even operate in churches. They also send confusing dreams. Another important scene of their activity is the market, reason enough for Christians to be on the alert not to buy certain jewellery or tinned produce from under the sea which will link them with the Devil. According to Eni, Satan is well aware that Christ’s second coming is at hand. Hence these days he is constantly urging his agents to action. For that reason Eni calls upon everyone to be converted now. The convert ‘shall be like a tree planteth by the rivers of waters, which bringeth its fruits in his season, HIS LEAF SHALL NOT WITHER AND WHATSOEVER he doeth shall prosper’ (ibid.: 58).

Before turning to the interpretation of these narratives we have to deal with the question of why people find them so fascinating as to want to read or hear them, keep them in mind and pass them on to others. Accounts by people who deliberately or unconsciously got in touch with the Devil are ‘confessions’. Narratives of this genre qualify as first-hand accounts of evil from people who have just distanced themselves from it. Such people feel guilty and publicly admit their wrongdoing. The fact that they say things about themselves which nobody would like to be accused of makes the confession very credible. For anyone who admits to having killed others by witchcraft or done harm to people must indeed be telling the truth. Since Eni admits to having killed, the rest of his story is taken at face value. In this way many people in Ghana told me about material objects from beneath the sea whose existence they did not doubt after hearing a confession like Eni’s. His admission that he was responsible for exchanging human beings for money confirms the story of satanic riches as reconstructed above.

Confessions are considered eye-witness accounts of the realm of darkness. Listening to a confession affords a glimpse into the realm of the ‘powers of darkness’ from a safe distance. The popularity of confession stories stems
from the fact that they brighten the dark and make visible what happens therein. They are, in other words, revelations explaining how and why things go wrong in the physical world.18

Thus in the pentecostal context the narratives of satanic riches are considered to be not mere stories but true revelations of the invisible. By constructing narratives of evil powers as confessions, pentecostal Churches represent themselves as purveyors of true knowledge. By revealing what is otherwise confined to secrecy and discussed mainly in the context of gossip they render this diffuse theme discursive.

Evidently the pentecostal Churches are not the first organisations to achieve this. They were preceded by anti-witchcraft movements and spiritual Churches whose leaders also encouraged public confessions, giving rise to stories similar to those outlined above (cf. Debrunner, 1961: 182 ff.; Field, 1960; Garlick, 1971: 107 ff.). The main difference between anti-witchcraft movements and spiritual Churches, on the one hand, and pentecostal Churches, on the other, is the latter’s strict dualism of God and the Devil and their claim to true knowledge about the world as a whole. The evil deeds confessed are represented as part of a greater international satanic complex. The pentecostal Churches claim to be the only ones able to chart this realm and offer truly effective remedies. What is new about these Churches therefore is not that they admit of confessions as such but that they incorporate them into an all-encompassing, rigidly dualistic and global world view, and preach a rigid stance towards traditional religion and the pitfalls of modern consumption, thereby offering ‘the possibility of being otherwise’ (Marshall, 1993: 234).

INTERPRETATION

The confessed evil

To what evil do the confessions allude? In order to find an answer to this question I shall examine the confessions’ imagery. The crux of the stories of satanic riches is that money is never got for nothing, but always in exchange for a living human being, preferably a blood relative or spouse. Moreover, there is the possibility of becoming infertile, which means the sacrifice of future offspring. All cases thus deal in principle with human fertility being exchanged for money. The capacity to procreate or its products and the relations stemming from it have to be sacrificed.

Satanic money itself also has to be produced, which happens through the snake vomiting money. In the above confessions it is not revealed how the snake itself gets the money. Traditionally, at least for the Ewe, the snake symbolises fertility. A woman who dreams that she has been bitten by a snake is said soon to become pregnant. Moreover the snake has traditionally been associated with acquiring money or gold. Alongside these positive associations the snake has also been imagined as one of the animal shapes a witch may take. This negative image has been strengthened with the introduction of the Christian account of the Fall, which depicts the reptile as a representation of the Devil. Hence the snake has developed into a highly ambivalent creature linked alike with the positive value of the continuity of life and money and the destructiveness of witchcraft and the Devil.
Precisely this ambivalence is expressed in the image of the snake which gives birth to satanic money instead of children.

There is a story circulating about the wealth of female traders that I heard not in the form of a confession but as gossip. On the basis of that story we can learn more about the imagined connection between the snake and money. Many of the people I talked to in Ghana would know of someone who had once seen a snake appear between the legs of a rich market woman. Some of these women are said to have a snake in their belly, feeding upon the sperm which unknowing lovers leave in the vagina. Since the belly is already occupied by the snake, the woman cannot become pregnant with a living child. At certain times the reptile leaves the vagina, eats an egg and then vomits money. In that case, in line with the principle of the satanic riches, the woman exchanges her procreative capacity for money. Moreover—and here this story surpasses the accounts treated so far—she misuses her belly for its production. In the production of satanic money the snake makes use of the female reproductive organs. The Devil, in the shape of the snake, appropriates the means by which, and the place where, a human being would normally develop.

The story of Diabolo also features such appropriation of the reproductive organs. In the film, in contrast to the story of the female trader carrying a snake in her belly, a man misuses the belly of an unsuspecting woman by impregnating her in the form of a snake. Here the snake becomes a phallus, whereas in the story of the female trader money pours out of its mouth. As far as its sex is concerned the snake is thus ambivalent: it can take the place of the male penis as well as of the female belly in order to produce money instead of a child. Diabolo has given away his fertility and is no longer able to beget children. As we have seen from his sexual intercourse with the third woman, even in human form he is able to sire only snakes. In the story of Diabolo the satanic money results from the perversion of human sexuality. The woman is impregnated by the snake, but instead of a child she gives birth to money and dies, whereas Diabolo profits. That the money comes out of her mouth instead of her vagina once again underlines the perversion of nature.¹⁹ The appropriation of the sexual organs to the production of money in the stories of the female trader and Diabolo can be schematised as in Fig. 1. This method of money production supports the affirmation of many Ghanaian Christians, which we have already encountered in the confessions, that the Devil would be unable to create anything. Satan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normal case</th>
<th>Female trader</th>
<th>Diabolo</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>man</td>
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<td>woman</td>
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<td>sperm</td>
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<td>belly</td>
<td>snake</td>
<td>belly</td>
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<tr>
<td>child</td>
<td>money</td>
<td>money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(via vagina)</td>
<td>(via snake’s mouth)</td>
<td>(via woman’s mouth)</td>
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FIG. 1 Sexual organs and money production
is purely destructive. His money stems not from a new mechanism of production invented by him but from the parasitical appropriation of human sexuality which is thereby withdrawn from its original purpose. Saying this, I do not wish to postulate an essential purpose of sexuality; I refer to the ideas about sexuality as I encountered them in Ghana. There, giving birth has a very high cultural value. In this vein a grown-up person with no children can quickly arouse suspicion. Barren women are often suspected of witchcraft or a Devil contract, and childless men can easily trigger talk about their being a sort of ‘Diabolo’.

The hidden theme of the stories about satanic riches is the continuity of the human capacity to create new life and of the family relations resulting from it. Hence the production of money by the perversion of human sexuality is closely connected with the first condition of acquiring diabolic money: the willingness to exchange relatives or one’s own fertility for money. Killing a family member and abstaining from procreation both boil down to neglect of the family and the assertion of individual interest above that of the family. And anyone who has once gone that far will be ready to misuse sexual organs for money production. Indeed, such misuse seals the isolation of the individual from the family. The contrast of satanic money serving the individual, on the one hand, and human fertility whereby kin relations are continued, on the other, is the construct at the basis of ideas about evil inherent in the confessions. Evil is the exchange of the potential to create new life or of living human beings for material profit. It is the misuse of human sexuality for money production, and the predominance of individual above family interests. This evil leads to death for both the agent and the victim.

However, Delivered from the Powers of Darkness goes further than the confessions of people who have exchanged potential or existing life for money. Therefore it is possible to learn more about how people conceptualise evil in Christian Ghana from Eni’s confession. According to him, those who willingly join forces with the Devil are as much victims of the Evil One as those who are sacrificed. The source of all the evil that the one commits and the other suffers is the Devil. From his place in the realm of darkness at the bottom of the sea he keeps a tight rein on everything. Like the head of a police state, he has a perfect vantage point from which to see everything that happens on earth. Eni makes it seem as if this were a great conspiracy against humanity to which any ignorant person could easily fall victim. People who are not ‘born again’ can easily be sacrificed by others in a diabolical contract and as a result may die in any unforeseen accident. Those who deliberately get involved with the Devil will not die immediately, but they give up their humanity, as we have seen in the confessions and in Eni’s own account. Apart from sexual abstinence, Eni had to refrain from food prepared by human beings. Total attachment to the Devil thus results in total renunciation of the two most essential things through which relations with others come into being: sex and food. The perfect agent of the Devil is the completely independent individual.

Satan, in whom all evil culminates, has no particular iconographic form. To do evil he can be depicted in the shape of a human being or of an animal. He has the knowledge of the traditional ‘native doctors’ as well as
of the latest technological and psychological developments at his disposal. The native doctors in the countryside, as well as the scientists in their laboratories, are in the Devil’s service and help to win people to him. As Eni has revealed, Satan wins souls not by force but by arousing the desire for beautiful things. These are developed by scientists and put on the market. Once bought, they turn out to be a direct link with the realm of darkness, sending frightening dreams in which people search for a remedy from traditional priests and other diabolic agents. A purchased object can also arouse sexual dreams and as a result people may never more be able to procreate in their life on earth. More often, however, it is the case that beautiful material things make human hearts beat faster which, for lack of funds, are unattainable. In that case people may decide to get rich quickly through ‘native doctors’, as we have seen in the confessions. In the end luxurious material things, as well as the scientific knowledge that produces them and the traditional knowledge that provides money for their purchase, are satanic evil. Linea recta they lead to destruction and death, for the Devil gives only in exchange for life.

 Evil in the context of poverty and wealth

The confessions presented in this article clearly refer to tensions surrounding financial matters within the family. Originally all penitents lacked sufficient money and this lack had to do with their families. Eni’s parents were probably killed through witchcraft, and jealous family members could snatch their property, leaving Eni penniless amidst his hostile kin. Whereas the narrator of confession 1 intended to open a larger business, and envied the brother who was their mother’s favourite, a greedy wife enticed the penitent of confession 2 to waste more and more money, until the capital was eventually exhausted. His friends found themselves in a similar situation.

In the confessions financial problems are thus attributed to the obligation to help needy relatives. Conversely, the way out of the problems suggested in the stories of satanic riches comes down to the claim that only an individual who has no interest in the family will be rich. Given the actual economic situation of Ghana, this is an accurate conclusion. As Debrunner pointedly stated in his short discussion of Nzima bayi, ‘How otherwise can a man become rich unless by neglecting his beloved ones, by meanness and avarice, in sharply anti-social means?’ (1961: 188). The fantastic story of satanic riches thus leads directly to the harsh reality of the economy, which makes it difficult for most people to provide themselves, their spouses and children with such basic needs as food, shelter, clothes, education and medical treatment. Their lives are characterised by a chronic lack of money.

In this situation the (extended) family is an extremely important factor in the life of every Ghanaian. People use the term ‘family’ in two ways: firstly, to refer to one’s blood relations, with whom one does not necessarily live, and, secondly, to the actual people with whom one forms a single household, that is, one’s spouse(s), children and other relatives. Many relatively prosperous men and women experience the conflicting demands of their blood relatives on the one hand and marriage partners on the other, and find it difficult to satisfy both parties’ financial expectations (see Garlick, 1971: 94). Where state and economy are unable to offer security, the family, as an ideal at
least, provides relief, though in practice such is often not the case. However, people in general still expect support, not from the state but from their family. Conversely, the causes of mishaps are also sought in the family, and the result is often witchcraft accusations or suspicions (see Bleek, 1975: 319 ff.; Debrunner, 1961: 81 ff.).

Despite Ghana’s integration into the capitalist world economy, initiated early this century with the production of cocoa by smallholders in the framework of the domestic economy, the importance of the family has not declined. On the contrary, the family has to counterbalance the negative consequences of that integration—the difficult situation of the Ghanaian economy is above all due to low cocoa prices on the world market—and so more strain than ever before has been placed upon the family. The appeal to the family by those in need echoes a pre-capitalist ethic in which the maintenance of kin relations and mutual assistance are central. More prosperous relatives are asked for support in the name of that ethic. Economic problems thus translate into family conflicts, resulting in the paradox that the family is a refuge for those in need as well as a burden to the more prosperous, who are unable to accumulate wealth because of their family obligations.

The stories of satanic riches can be approached as ‘collective fantasies’ (Thoden van Velzen and Van Wetering, 1988: 8; Thoden van Velzen, 1994). In adopting this concept I do not wish to reduce the narratives of satanic riches to mere chimerical products of ‘fancy’. I do not subscribe to the modern antithesis of reason as the domain of truth versus fantasy as the domain of fancy. It seems to me that ‘fantasy’ is much less bounded by the sway of ‘reality’, which urges people to stick to fixed behavioral and intellectual norms; fantasy offers a free space in which to explore new possibilities, to come up with empirically unprovable relations between phenomena, to play out (openly or in disguise) hidden fears and desires, and to play with contradictions without the necessity of turning them into a coherent, ordered system. Collective fantasies usually expose ideas in the framework of an ‘imaginary world’ and often employ the ‘realm of darkness’ in order to express and clarify existential questions. This occurs in the fantasies dealt with in this article. The conflicts between individuals and their families are externalisations of conflicts within people. The pentecostal Churches, by emphasising the person, propagate individualism both in the religious domain and in society. The members of such Churches, mainly younger people who have yet to ‘make it’ in life, find themselves in an ambivalent position. Despite this professed individualism, those who are poor find themselves dependent upon their family, whereas the prosperous feel the burden of their demanding family members. Thus, through their participation in pentecostal Churches, ‘born again’ Christians experience the conflict between individual and family even more strongly than other members of society. That is what makes stories of satanic riches, which address precisely this conflict, so popular among the members of pentecostal Churches.

How does the fantastic story of satanic riches represent the current problematic economic situation and resolve the tension between the individual and the family? According to the stories of satanic riches, individualism and indifference to the family, though tolerable in the context of a capitalist
economy, threaten human fertility and in turn family relations. Capitalism’s indifferent individualism as evil is exposed by reference to a pre-capitalist ethic emphasising the value of the family. In the name of that ethic the individualist egoism of a capitalist economy is denounced as life-destructive.

But does this mean that Ghanaian ‘born again’ Christians’ fantasy of satanic riches implies a more fundamental critique, much like those of the Colombian plantation workers’ and the Bolivian mineworkers’ fantasies of devil contracts studied by Taussig (1980)? According to him, the story of the contract with the Devil, whereby health and fertility are exchanged for money, emerged during the transition from a pre-capitalist to a capitalist economy and contained a fundamental critique of the capitalist economy, in which people risked their lives for material gain. This critical dimension can also be detected in the Ghanaian stories of satanic riches. But is the critique a necessary result of the confrontation of the two economies, as Taussig suggests? In the first decades of this century, when Ghanaian small-holders started producing cocoa for the world market, the pre-capitalist and the capitalist economies went hand in hand without great difficulty. It seems that no causal link can be established between economic change in general and witchcraft accusations (cf. McLeod, 1975: 109). People did not start telling stories of satanic riches from a feeling of nostalgic conservatism. The problem is not money but the personal lack of it. The reversion to a pre-capitalist ethic is historically situated in a time during which enormous economic strain is being placed on the family. It is not automatically implied in the transition from a domestic to a capitalist economy. In such a situation those who are urged to share their riches, as well as those who depend on financial assistance, may be fascinated by narratives about satanic riches which express perfectly the ambivalence characterising the Ghanaian family in a modern context.

Another related question concerns the consequences of this critique outside the boundaries of the fantasy itself. In other words, does the story of satanic riches make people turn away from capitalism, contemplate traditional values and repress the desire to be rich? Eni’s confession has already shown that such is not the case, for he cited a Bible passage promising that those who convert will prosper. Christians, too, want to leave their poor circumstances behind and earn money in order to buy material goods. The Christian dualism of the Devil on one side, God on the other, forms the basis of an ambivalent stance towards material goods and money. The stories of satanic riches are collective fantasies warning people in the name of pre-capitalist ethics not to become rich under the conditions set by capitalism and to stick to their family obligations. This, however, is countered by the fantasy of the miracle through which God renders the good Christian well-to-do, whether by a spiritual ‘cheque’ or the sudden success of one’s business. Waiting for a miracle is also, in a sense, a correct assessment of the situation. For even economic experts seem to have no idea how to improve the African economies. Depending on whether they were acquired with the help of God or the Devil, money and goods are a blessing or a curse. The individualist striving for wealth by recourse to the Devil is labelled as evil, but by hoping for a divine miracle the longing for riches in the context of a capitalist economy and without the help of ‘the powers of darkness’
continues. This counters the critical dimension inherent in the stories of satanic riches. For ‘born again’ Christians both poverty and wealth can be either godly or satanic.30

The Ghanaian stories of satanic riches are part of a popular culture which might be referred to as a ‘culture of poverty’ in the sense that lack of money informs all human relations and forms of cultural expression. Those who tell them find themselves in a different economic situation and in family circumstances which generate dreams of ‘big money’. The wealth that is denounced in the story of the satanic riches is at the same time people’s great desire (see also McCaskie, 1981: 136–7). This also becomes clear from the hope of divine miraculous financial support.31 By telling and listening to stories of satanic riches it is possible to confront one’s personal fascination with ‘diabolic’ money from a safe distance. By denouncing it morally it is possible to fantasise about one’s own desire for individual independence and recklessness towards one’s own family. In this sense, together with a critical analysis and a moral message, the fantasies of satanic riches also offer the possibility of dramatising hidden desires to indulge in the modern Nzima bayi type of witchcraft, and they may thus imply a cathartic effect.

In conclusion, pentecostalism is as popular as it is in Ghana because it supplies people with an image of the Devil which can be used not only to demonise traditional gods and ghosts but also to diabolise negative aspects of the capitalist world economy. Referring to God’s dark counterpart enables people to face and explain their problems and confront their hidden obsessions concerning wealth and health from a safe distance. With the image of the Devil Christianity thus provides a powerful and productive image which is ‘good to think with’ in local apprehensions of global processes.

NOTES

1 Whereas the Roman Catholic Church institutionalised the Charismatic Renewal, the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, whose home base is Akuapem and Asante, and the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches, which is active among the Ewe, institutionalised so-called ‘Bible Study and Prayer Fellowships’. In the Evangelical Presbyterian Church severe conflicts arose between the Church leaders and the prayer group, which culminated in secession in 1991 (Meyer, 1992, 1994).

2 Only very few studies of religion in Ghana deal with a whole religious complex (for example, Assimeng, 1986; Middleton, 1983; Peil and Opoku, 1994). Usually, researchers still focus on one ethnic group (preferably in a rural area) or one Church (sometimes conceptualised as a surrogate tribe). In my view it is important to go beyond this focus on one group and study how popular culture evolves in an urban, multi-ethnic context. A good example is the work of Ruth Marshall (1991, 1993) on the ‘born again’ movement in Nigeria. My approach has much in common with hers. However, it seems to me that, at least in the Ghanaian context, the difference between pentecostal and holiness Churches is not as great as she suggests. According to her, the former are more open to the acquisition of wealth, whereas the latter are more puritan. In my view both types of Church share a popular Christian discourse which expresses a rather ambivalent stance towards money.

3 It would be worth while to devote more attention to the examination of African popular literature. For a stimulating study see Bastian (1993).

4 By contrast, studies of witchcraft and demonology in early modern Europe deal with the role of Satan in popular Christianity (for example, the articles by historians in Douglas, 1970; Schneider, 1990).

5 I collected the material for this essay during fieldwork in Ghana (fifteen months in the last four years). My research took place among the Ewe in Peki. Since I regularly stayed in Accra I have been able to collect much information on Christianity in Ghana in general. The stories analysed in this article were told in Accra as well as Peki.
CONFESSION TO SATANIC RICHES

6 On identifying the Devil with the witch see Meyer, 1992: 114 ff.
7 The so-called 'spiritual Churches' are being heavily criticised by members of the so-called 'pentecostal Churches'. The former are accused of being closely related to the practices of traditional healers and hence the Devil because they make use of herbs, incense and candles.
8 'Juju man', like 'fetish priest', is a collective noun for traditional priests which is used mainly by Christians. Whereas bayi (witchcraft) is said to be commonly practised by jealous people in order to bring about the fall of better-off relatives, Nziama bayi designates the enrichment of one person at the expense of a relative's life or of his/her own fertility. The term refers to the Nziama region in the south-west, where these riches are said to be acquired. But such places also exist in nearby Bénin, which has long been notorious for powerful magic.
9 See also 'Blood for money' (1989) by the investment analyst Kwame Osei-Poku, who made this popular story into a novel in order to show the reader what 'problems and troubles... result from the craze for quick money' (blurb). The novel's leading figure, Diawuo, who has sacrificed his second wife for money, realises that as a poor man he was much happier.
10 Sometimes it is also said that the one going in for riches after a period of fasting will be given plenty of food by the priest. Having eaten, he will see in this dream a chicken pecking up grains. The number of grains stands for the number of years he can enjoy his wealth. If he has greedily consumed the priest's meal the chicken will only peck a few grains.
11 I saw this film shortly after its first night, in the company of Jojada Verrips, with whom I discussed it later. The impetuous reactions of the public made it clear to me that Akuffo had indeed touched on a collective idea which is vivid in people's minds. I am grateful to Akuffo, who later placed a video-tape of his film at my disposal.
12 'Mami Water' is a creature the upper part of whose body is human and the lower half that of a fish. Such creatures are said to live at the bottom of the sea. They can be approached through priests and can provide children and money.
13 Witches are often said to take the shape of cats. I assume that Akuffo wanted to suggest that this woman had the power of witchcraft and therefore could not be victimised.
14 Marshall also quotes some passages from Eni's confession (1993: 227).
15 It is an African Pilgrim's Progress. But whereas Bunyan's story is consciously allegorical Eni claims that everything he describes really happened. Allegory is here replaced by the realm of the invisible wherein things happen spiritually which have great impact on the visible world.
16 She is clearly a Mami Water. Drewal has shown that the spread of Mami Water lore (in his writing 'Mami Wata') all over West and Central Africa is a 'transcultural phenomenon of remarkable proportions' (1988: 160). He has shown that Mami Water can be understood as an image mediating the African perception of the contact between Africans and the foreigners they are and were involved with economically. It represents an attempt to make sense of these contacts. This also holds true for the image of the mermaid held by Christians—a group Drewal does not deal with. Also, for Ghanaian Christians Mami Water mediates between the local and the global. However, by classifying her as an agent of the Devil Christians approach her from a negative stance. Thereby they can use Mami Water to 'think with' and fantasise about the acquisition of wealth without subscribing to it. See also Wendl (1991).
17 In Accra there are said to be certain stores to which no lorry is ever seen delivering goods. Such shops are believed to be supplied from beneath the sea.
18 This also holds true of the film Diabolo. Although that visual product is not a direct confession, for the audience it amounts to one.
19 It is not by chance that Diabolo's victims are prostitutes. The film suggests that they too misuse their bodies to produce money instead of children.
20 Thus there is a marked difference between this type of Devil contract and a European, Faustian one. Whereas, in the latter, the individual has to promise Satan his own soul, in the former it is family allegiance that has to be sacrificed.
21 One of my informants—an unmarried young man in his thirties who, because of his Christian faith, would not have sexual relations—told me that he once bought a pair of pants which repeatedly gave him sexual dreams. The dreams stopped only when he disposed of the pants. I also heard from women who would dream that they were giving birth, but who were barren in the real world. It is said that these women, after being impregnated by a devilish agent—Mami Water—bear the Devil's children.
22 I do not, however, agree with this idea that such stories are to be understood as a 'neurotic attempt to escape from these economic and sociological facts' (1961: 73). In my view these stories should not be seen as pathological reactions to socio-economic facts, because that implies a
distinction between subjective fantasy and objective, empirical reality which thus cannot take the stories seriously as attempts to understand people’s life conditions.

Among the Akan, Ga and Ewe there are two forms of witchcraft. Whereas one boils down to the fact that family members ruin the relatives through envy of their money and offspring (or for destruction’s sake) the other Nsima baiji type of witchcraft aims at the active search for material gain. The literature on witchcraft in Ghana suggests that the first form of witchcraft was traditionally more common than the second (Field, 1960: 35–9, 108–10, 121; Debrunner, 1961: 182; Bleeke, 1975: 319 ff.). An important research question remains when and why witchcraft became associated with the acquisition of wealth. Moreover, it would be worth their while for anthropologists to examine such shifts in African witchcraft idioms and analyse how they represent the problems and opportunities of global capitalism. Until now such studies have been scarce (but see Fisiy and Geschiere, 1991; Geschiere, 1995), since anthropologists have concentrated mainly on formal witchcraft accusations (see the critique by Austen, 1993; Thoden van Velzen and Van Wetering, 1989: 155).

For an attempt to re-conceptualise ‘imagination’ and ‘fantasy’ not in opposition to, but as part and parcel of, reason see Robinson and Rundell (1994).

Traditionally the discourses on politics and economy, on the one hand, and religion, on the other, have been separate (see Marcus and Fischer, 1986: 84–6). However, for a better understanding of people’s own ideas about their political and economic situation it is indispensable to cross the boundary between economy and fantasy constantly. This has recently also been acknowledged by Roberts and Seddon, the editors of the Review of African Political Economy. Through initially ‘unfamiliar with the idea of taking beliefs seriously’ (1991: 3), they devoted a whole issue to fundamentalism in Africa. For a very interesting discussion of the African witchcraft idiom as a discourse on the capitalist economy and power see Austen (1993).

Several authors have criticised Taussig for this view. For an overview see Edelman (1994: 59–60).

Whereas Debrunner (1961), Field (1960) and Ward (1956) suggested that, owing to modern economic changes, witchcraft accusations and suspicions were on the increase, Goody (1957) stated that they were also a feature of pre-colonial society. Although I agree with his argument that traditional society and religion should not be conceptualised as static, I would nevertheless maintain that the incorporation of Ghana into the global economy brought about new problems that were to be dealt with in new ways. In pre-colonial times the ambivalence of individualism versus family affiliation was never as marked as in colonial and post-colonial society (cf. McCaskie, 1981: 136–7). Through the analysis of narratives like those discussed in this article, it is possible to gain an insight into the ways in which people experience their actual economic situation. Thus, rather than merely stating that religious change always takes place, it is more fruitful to assess the particularity of historical situations through the analysis of narratives told at a certain place and time.

All over Ghana the so-called ‘Prosperity Gospel’, which promises that ‘born again’ Christians will become rich, is popular. The same holds true for other African countries. Gifford (1991) emphasises that the socio-political effect of this fundamentalist theology is the neglect of development. His argument is based on the assumption that pentecostal Churches mislead people into false consciousness about what really is going on. However, the point of my article is that one should understand ideas about the Devil and demons not as a distortion of reality but as powerful images people draw on to make sense of their reality in a critical way. In contrast to Gifford, Marshall, whose article is published in the same issue of Review of African Political Economy as his, concludes that Nigerian pentecostalists form a ‘self-conscious movement which sees itself as changing society and making history’ (1991: 37). This approach is similar to mine. Elsewhere (1994) I have shown that pentecostalism in Ghana should be understood in the first instance as an indigenous appropriation of Christianity at the grass roots. It is based on continuing belief in the existence of the former deities and ghosts which are now classified as evil spirits.

This evokes the Melanesian cargo cults, whose central feature was the striving for money (Burridge, 1971: 145 ff.). Unlike authors who see the cults as an expression of the incompatibility of local Melanesian cultures and capitalism, Parry states that cargo cults did not express any ‘moral qualms about the self-expanding nature of money as capital; only the problem of how to accomplish it’ (1989: 87).

My finding that Ghanian pentecostalists are provided with an ambivalent stance towards money supports the argument of Parry and Bloch (1989) that no transformative, revolutionary power should be attributed to money as such.
This is in line with Boyer and Nissenbaum’s finding about Salem witchcraft confessions that ‘even those who felt most uneasy about those developments were also deeply attracted by them’ (1974: 210).

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**ABSTRACT**

In Ghana, as well as in other parts of Africa, pentecostal Churches have recently become extremely popular. Within these Churches reference is made frequently to the devil, who is associated with the non-Christian gods and ghosts as well as Western luxury goods. Present Ghanaian popular culture reveals a striking obsession with images of the devil and of evil. By analysing stories told and published in Ghanaian ‘born again’ circles about money received through a contract with the devil or one of his agents, the author attempts to understand (1) what evil is denounced in these movements by means of the devil, and (2) how, with the help of the notion of the devil, ‘born again’ Christians think about poverty and wealth. It is argued that collective fantasies around the devil have to be understood against the background of difficult socio-economic conditions. These stories entail both a critique of the capitalist economy in the name of the pre-capitalist ideal of mutual family assistance (although a much more limited critique than Taussig suggested in his *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism*) and an opportunity to fantasise about things people cannot afford but nevertheless desire.

**RÉSUMÉ**

Au Ghana aussi bien que dans d’autres parties d’Afrique, les églises de la Pentecôte sont récemment devenues extrêmement populaires. Dans ces églises on fait fréquemment allusion au diable, qui est associé avec les dieux non-chrétiens et les fantômes aussi bien que les marchandises de luxe occidentales. La culture populaire du Ghana à présent révèle une obsession frappante avec les images du diable et du mal. En analysant des histoires racontées et publiées dans les cercles ghanéens de ceux qui ‘ont revécu’ concernant de l’argent reçu par le biais d’un contrat avec le diable ou l’un de ses agents, l’auteur s’efforce de comprendre: 1) quel est le mal qui est dénoncé dans ces mouvements en se servant du diable, et 2) comment, avec l’aide de la notion du diable, les chrétiens revécus perçoivent la pauvreté et la richesse.

Cet article affirme que les fantasmes collectifs autour du diable doivent être comprises dans un contexte où les conditions socio-économiques sont difficiles. Ces histoires entrainent à la fois une critique de l’économie capitaliste au nom d’un idéal pré-capitaliste d’assistance familiale mutuelle (bien que ce soit une critique beaucoup plus limitée que celle que Taussig suggérait dans *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism*), et l’occasion de fantasme sur des choses que les gens ne peuvent pas se permettre d’avoir mais désirent néanmoins.