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# Language and the Illuminati: A Qualitative and Quantitative Examination of Diachronic Change in Theories Regarding the Illuminati

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# Language and the Illuminati:

A Qualitative and Quantitative Examination of Diachronic Change in Theories Regarding the Illuminati



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## 1. Introduction

Since the French Revolution, a sinister group of privileged individuals has been conspiring to take over the world, and they are intertwined in every significant historical event.<sup>1</sup> Just the sound of their name is enough to startle people: the Illuminati. Ever since Robison and Barruel's works (1798), people have been speculating about this group concealed in secrecy.<sup>1</sup> However, uncovering the truth about the Illuminati is not the aim of this thesis. It investigates, instead, the language used to discuss the Illuminati. By comparing 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources, when the Illuminati were first exposed, with modern conspiracy theory books, this thesis aims to identify if linguistic similarities exist in these sources. This paper does not intend to ridicule old or modern conspiracy theories but to compare them objectively based on their linguistic features. Previous scholarship has mainly looked at the development of conspiracies regarding the Illuminati from a historical perspective; this research approaches it from a linguistic perspective.

The primary sources which form the basis of this thesis are *Proofs of a Conspiracy Against All the Religions and Governments of Europe* (1797) by John Robison, Augustine Barruel's accounts of the Illuminati in his *Memoires Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* (1797), several sermons delivered by Jedidiah Morse (1799), and letters (1798) by Yale president Dwight.<sup>2</sup> The 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources are *The Illuminati* (2017) by Jim Marrs, *The Illuminati: Facts and Fiction* by Mark Dice (2009), *Bloodlines of the Illuminati* by Fritz Springmeier (2002), and *Hell's Mirror* by Texe Marrs (2017).<sup>3</sup> The justification of the sources can be found in section 1.3.

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<sup>1</sup> According to conspiracy theories regarding the Illuminati. Such as the sources mentioned in this thesis

<sup>2</sup> Robison, John. *Proofs of a Conspiracy Against All the Religions and Governments of Europe, Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies*, 1798.

Barruel, Augustine, Abbé Barruel, and Robert Clifford. *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism: With an Introduction by Stanley L. Jaki*, 1995.

Morse, Jedidiah. *A Sermon [on Ps. Xi. 3] Exhibiting the Present Dangers, and Consequent Duties of the Citizens of the United States of America*, 1799.

Yale, Timothy Dwight President Of. *The Duty of Americans at the Present Crisis, Illustrated in a Discourse [on Rev. Xvi. 15], Etc*, 1798.

<sup>3</sup>Marrs, Jim. *The Illuminati: The Secret Society That Hijacked the World*, 2017.

Dice, Mark. *The Illuminati: Facts & Fiction*. The Resistance Manifesto, 2009.

Springmeier, Fritz. *Bloodlines of the Illuminati*. Ambassador House, 2002.

Marrs, Texe W. *Hell's Mirror: Global Empire of the Illuminati Builders*, 2017.

This thesis utilizes both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The quantitative analysis is conducted through corpus linguistics. The qualitative analysis further examines the results from the quantitative analysis, i.e., the different linguistic choices, and identifies the underlying meanings of these choices. The explanation and justification of the methodological approach can be found in sections 2.1. and 2.2.

The first chapter provides a brief explanation of the terminology, a review of previous scholarship, and the methodology adopted by this thesis. The second chapter consists of the results from the quantitative and the qualitative analyses, and the final chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the results.

### **1.1. Terminology**

Before discussing the theories regarding the Illuminati, it is necessary to determine the terminology adopted by the present thesis. It is important to understand the differences between a conspiracy, a conspiracy theory, and a conspiracy theorist. A conspiracy is a plot by one or more people who are secretly planning to cause harm to an individual or a group of people.<sup>4</sup> One of the most famous examples of a conspiracy is the assassination of the Roman emperor Julius Caesar. This definition of a conspiracy is superficial and, therefore, ineffective for this research. Instead, this thesis aligns with Konda's view that "a conspiracy must lie at the core of a conspiracy theory."<sup>5</sup> Konda defines a conspiracy theory thus: "[a] narrative centered on the idea that a malevolent group of people is conspiring to bring about some state of affairs to the detriment of the people in general. Their conspiracy lies behind various events with which at least some conspirators have no apparent connection."<sup>6</sup> This definition aligns with Butter's, who states, "[c]onspiracy theories hold that a group of evil agents, the conspirators, has assumed or is currently trying to assume control over an institution, a region, a nation, or the world."<sup>7</sup>

Konda provides a clear definition of a conspiracy theorist; he defines a conspiracy theorist as someone who deals with the purely theoretical construct of a conspiracy theory. In addition, Hofstadter distinguishes between the clinical paranoid and the paranoid spokesman,

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<sup>4</sup> "conspiracy, n.". OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/39766?redirectedFrom=conspiracy> (accessed March 07, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Konda, Thomas Milan. *Conspiracies of Conspiracies: How Delusions Have Overrun America*. University of Chicago Press, 2019, p11.

<sup>6</sup> Konda, *Conspiracies*, p11.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Butter, *Plots, Designs, and Schemes: American Conspiracy Theories from the Puritans to the Present* (Walter de Gruyter, 2014), p1.

where the former sees conspiracies as a threat against his person, and the latter sees threats regarding an entire nation.<sup>8</sup> In this thesis, the term *conspiracy theorist* refers to people actively writing and publishing about conspiracies affecting not just themselves but most, if not all, of human civilization.

## 1.2. Literature review

In his essay *The Paranoid Style in American Politics (1964)*, Hofstadter examines a particular mode of rhetoric he labels the paranoid style. Hofstadter addresses key characteristics of conspiracy theories such as: “the scholarly style in which conspiracy theories seem to be presented and the leap of faith they ultimately require.”<sup>9</sup> In addition, Hofstadter argues that the perpetrators of the conspiracies have shifted.<sup>10</sup> In the conspiracy theories dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the theorists aimed to inform and warn their readers of the dangers of secret societies, foreign powers, and collaborators. In contrast, modern conspiracy theorists deem the government already lost, and its agents conspiring against their people.<sup>14</sup> Hofstadter is primarily focused on the rhetoric of the paranoid, and less on the conspiracy theories themselves. However, the conspiracy theory is more than just a paranoid writing style.<sup>11</sup> Conspiracy theories make clever use of connotations, rhetorical strategies, and the authority of the speaker. Therefore, Hofstadter serves as a basis for laying the groundwork of the terminology.

Konda provides an overview of the development of conspiracy theories from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present in his book *Conspiracies on Conspiracies (2019)*.<sup>12</sup> He provides context into how conspiracy theories spread and developed over time. Konda, among others, points to the Scottish chemist John Robison and Abbe Barruel as the founding fathers of the modern conspiracy theory.<sup>13</sup> These scholarly works do not address the linguistic properties of conspiracy theories, since their approach is historical in nature.

In their collective work, *Conspiracy Theory Discourses (2022)*, Demata, Zorzi, and Zottola offer an overview of existing linguistic research on types of discourse in conspiracy theories. They state the need to not simply attack conspiracy theories as false but to examine

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<sup>8</sup> Hofstadter, Richard. *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays*. New York, 1965, p4

<sup>9</sup> Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style*, pp36-37

<sup>10</sup> Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style*, p23

<sup>11</sup> Butter, Michael, and Peter L. Knight. *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*. Routledge eBooks. Informa, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429452734>. P5

<sup>12</sup> Konda, *Conspiracies*.

<sup>13</sup> Konda, *Conspiracies*, pp13-14.

them objectively and prioritize the language used in these theories.<sup>14</sup> According to the authors, conspiracy theories have distinctive features that have continued since the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> The present thesis tests this hypothesis with conspiracy theories roughly two-hundred years apart but with the same perpetrator, the Illuminati. Catenaccio's corpus-driven study, included in *Conspiracy Theory Discourses*, indicates that, through a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses, pervasive language features in conspiracy theories can be identified.<sup>16</sup> The present thesis evaluates if this claim is true in relation to texts concerning the Illuminati. In addition, this research examines if developments exist regarding these features.

### 1.3. Justification of primary sources

To be eligible for this thesis, sources needed to be written for an English audience. Since the Illuminati originate from Ingolstadt, there are German theories that have never been translated and are, thus, not used in this thesis. Barruel wrote his account of the Illuminati in England. Although it was originally published in French, he also wrote it with his English audience in mind, thus the translation is eligible for this thesis.<sup>17</sup> The second criterion for the sources to be eligible is the explicit mention of the Illuminati. Because of the overlap in theories regarding the Free Masons, Philosophers, and Illuminati, the selected sources needed to explicitly mention the Illuminati as a conspiring group. In addition, the sources needed to claim to be factual, i.e., not fiction. The final criterion is that the sources were digitally available. Due to the time restrictions and the methods applied, only electronic text files could be used.

Two sets of sources have been chosen based on the criteria mentioned above. 18<sup>th</sup>-century texts by John Robison (1798), Augustine Barruel (1798), Jedidiah Morse (1799), and Timothy Dwight (1799). These will be compared to the following books from the 21<sup>st</sup> century: *The Illuminati* (2017) by Jim Marrs, *Hell's Mirror* (2017) by Texe Marrs, *Facts and Fiction* (2009) by Mark Dice, and *Bloodlines of the Illuminati* (2002) by Fritz Springmeier. These works are all written in a scholarly style, using footnotes and claiming to be based on evidence.<sup>18</sup> The works from Robison and Barruel have been selected because these are often

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<sup>14</sup> Demata, Massimiliano, Virginia Zorzi, and Angela Zottola. *Conspiracy Theory Discourses*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2022, p9

<sup>15</sup> Demata, *Conspiracy Theory Discourses*, p11

<sup>16</sup> Demata, *Conspiracy Theory Discourses*, p22

<sup>17</sup> Taylor, Jordan A. "The Literati and the Illuminati." *Mémoires Du Livre / Studies in Book Culture* 11, no. 1 (January 1, 2019). <https://doi.org/10.7202/1066939ar>.

<sup>18</sup> Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style*, pp 34-37

referred to as the first “modern” conspiracy theories.<sup>19</sup> Conveniently, they both proclaim to give a historical account of the order of the Illuminati. The 18<sup>th</sup>-century books were freely available through the website of the Gutenberg Project. The sermons delivered by Morse are seen as the first evidence of conspiracy theories regarding the Illuminati in the United States.<sup>20</sup> The *Thanksgiving Sermon* delivered by Morse is not included in the primary sources because, despite being Morse’s first sermon featuring infiltrators trying to ruin the American government, it does not explicitly mention the Illuminati and, thus, does not meet one of the main criteria.<sup>21</sup> Timothy Dwight is the other American revenant who delivered the sermon *The Duty of Americans at the Present Crisis* where he preached about the Illuminati’s “dangers towards the new republic of America.”<sup>22</sup>

The contemporary sources have been selected because they all deal with the Illuminati, were available through Amazon, and were written in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In addition, they claim historical objectivity, which is essential because it enables a division in the literature regarding the Illuminati. For example, the books *Behold a Pale Horse*<sup>23</sup>, the novels by Robert Wilson, and *SYNARCHY: The Complete Guide to the Elite Groups That Rule the World in the 21st Century* do not address the Illuminati through this historical narrative and are, thus, not selected.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the contemporary books used for this thesis are approximately of the same size, containing 200,000-300,000 words each. Equal size is important because corpus analysis uses absolute frequencies. Hence, books like *The Illuminati: The History and Truth Behind the Illuminati* by Andrew Watkins, which only contains 68 pages, were excluded for the purposes of this thesis.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Konda, *Conspiracies*, p15

<sup>20</sup> Konda, *Conspiracies*, p30

<sup>21</sup> Morse, Jedidiah. *Sermon, Thanksgiving 1798*.

<sup>22</sup> Dwight, Timothy. *The Duty of Americans, at the Present Crisis, Illustrated in a Discourse, Preached on the Fourth of July, 1798; By the Reverend Timothy Dwight, D.D. President of Yale-College; At the Request of the Citizens of New-Haven*. Gale Ecco, Print Editions, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Cooper, William. *Behold a Pale Horse*. Light Technology Publishing, 1991.

<sup>24</sup> Amy Hunter, *Synarchy: The Complete Guide to the Elite Groups That Rule the World in the 21st Century*, 2<sup>nd</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Watkins, *The Illuminati: The History and Truth Behind the Illuminati* (Createspace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015).

## 2. Methods

Similarly to Catenaccio, this thesis uses quantitative and qualitative approaches, explained in section 2.1. Both approaches are needed because of the overall aim of this research. The qualitative approach is accomplished through a corpus analysis. This analysis is required and possible because of the size of the source materials.<sup>26</sup> The 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources and the contemporary books are too extensive to analyze without corpus analysis. The results from the corpus analysis were subjected to a quantitative approach through (meta)discourse analysis. Conspiracy theories are, after all, a form of discourse.<sup>27</sup>

### 2.1. Quantitative Analysis

Corpus linguistics is a language analysis method that uses extensive collections of electronic texts to investigate patterns of language use.<sup>28</sup> A corpus is a structured collection of texts compiled to represent a specific language, variety, or genre. It can include various sources, such as books, newspapers, websites, speeches, and social media.<sup>29</sup> The target corpus for this research is formed by the primary sources mentioned in section 1.3. As Baker states, “Corpus linguistics is most effective when combined with qualitative methods to analyze linguistic features and patterns.”<sup>30</sup> To this end, the corpus analysis has been combined with a close reading of the data.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century and 21<sup>st</sup> century texts have been divided into two separate corpora to examine the difference between both periods. The 18<sup>th</sup>-century corpus was acquired by downloading the text files of the books by Robison and Barruel through [www.projectgutenberg.org](http://www.projectgutenberg.org), which contains digital files of historical texts. The text from Morse’s sermons was copied from Wallbuilders.com, and the sermon by Dwight from consource.org.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Baker, Paul. *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*. A&C Black, 2006, p25.

<sup>27</sup> Demata, *Conspiracy Theory Discourses*, p28

<sup>28</sup> Kennedy, G. “Corpus Linguistics.” *Elsevier EBooks*, January 1, 2001, 2816–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/b0-08-043076-7/03056-4>.

<sup>29</sup> Kennedy, “Corpus Linguistics.”

<sup>30</sup> Baker, Paul. *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis*. A&C Black, 2006, p2.

<sup>31</sup> WallBuilders. “Sermon - Fasting - 1798, Massachusetts (Morse) - WallBuilders.” WallBuilders, August 30, 2017. <https://wallbuilders.com/sermon-fasting-1798-massachusetts-morse/>. And WallBuilders. “Sermon - Thanksgiving - 1798 - WallBuilders.” WallBuilders, August 30, 2017. <https://wallbuilders.com/sermon-thanksgiving-1798/>. “The Duty of Americans, at the Present Crisis, by Timothy Dwight (July 4, 1798),” n.d. <https://www.consource.org/document/the-duty-of-americans-at-the-present-crisis-by-timothy-dwight-1798-7-4/>.

The texts have been inserted in text files, without the repeating sub-titles, sources, codex, etc., to solely analyze the texts. The choice of leaving out the footnotes and references was made to get unbiased results. Without these adjustments, words like *Illuminati* would appear more frequently than they do, since the sub-title re-occurs on each page.<sup>32</sup> Finally, *Proofs* and *Memoires* contain many letters as evidence of Weishaupt's plans.<sup>33</sup> However, since these letters do not contain the authors' original words, they have been deleted. The modern texts were adjusted like those of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The texts are all available on Amazon. The resulting target corpora consist of 154.000 words (18<sup>th</sup> century) and 520.000 words (21<sup>st</sup> century). Both corpora are thus relatively small, but as Baker (2008) suggests, a large scale is not required to investigate specialized corpora.<sup>34</sup> Similarity of subject matter rather than volume is prioritized (Baker 2008), hence why it is a hard criterion for the texts used in this thesis to mention the Illuminati explicitly.

### 2.1.1. Tools

The online tool Sketch Engine has been used to conduct the corpus analysis.<sup>35</sup> Sketch Engine was employed to produce keyword and frequency lists per category. A keyword list displays phrases that are statistically significant within a corpus. The keyword lists displays the keyness score. To calculate this significance, the words in the target corpus are compared to a reference corpus. So, a keyness score displays if a word is more frequent in one corpus compared to another. For this study, the reference corpus EngTenTen 2020 has been used, which consists of over 5.000.000 words and texts from 1700 to 2020. The formula used to calculate the keyness can be found on the site of Sketch Engine.<sup>36</sup> Sketch Engine recognizes the word class to which words belong too. Based on these grammatical categories, separate lists have been calculated, displaying the total frequencies of words occurring in the relevant corpus. The results of the keywords are given in keyness and the results for the lemma's per word category are given in raw numbers.

## 2.2. Qualitative Analysis

Through Sketch Engine, the most frequently occurring nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs have been identified. These have been examined in the sentences in which they occur and the

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<sup>32</sup> Baker, *Corpora in Discourse Analysis*, p122

<sup>33</sup> Adam Weishaupt is the founder of the Bavarian Illuminati.

<sup>34</sup> Baker, *Corpora in Discourse Analysis*, p28.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.sketchengine.eu/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.sketchengine.eu/documentation/simple-maths/>

data are presented in tables.<sup>37</sup> Depending on the word category, the results have been systematically analyzed, by defining the correct meaning, examining the environment, and looking, and finally by looking at individual concordances. To establish the correct meaning, the nouns have first been examined in the Oxford English Dictionary, hereafter OED. Then the nouns with similar meanings were grouped together. After the similarities in the environment were analyzed, the nouns were studied in their concordance to examine the nuances between them. The adjectives have been examined in the same way. In addition, it has been examined if there are patterns in relation to which nouns the adjectives modify. Verbs have been analyzed in the same manner as the nouns. Finally, the adverbs have been analyzed similarly to adjectives, examining which verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs they modify.

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<sup>37</sup> Also known as concordance

### 3. Results

In this section, the results of the corpus analysis using Sketch Engine are presented. The purpose of this analysis was to examine patterns in the language of the conspiracy theorists. Also, it served to gain insight into how words and phrases are used in different contexts. To present the results, the data has been organized into tables. Starting with the keyword analysis followed by the frequency lists per word category. Section 3.1. presents the results of the quantitative analyses. Section 3.2., in turn, contextualizes and explains these patterns.

#### 3.1. Quantitative Analysis

##### 3.1.1. Keyword lists

For an explanation of how keyness is calculated, see section 2.1.1. Sketch Engine has provided the following results for the analysis of the keywords. For all of the tables in this section, the first table displays the results from the 18<sup>th</sup> century sources, while the second table does so for the 21<sup>st</sup> century ones.

*Table 1.* Single keyword list 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources.<sup>38</sup>

Rank	Item	Keyness	Rank	Item	Keyness
1	weishaupt	1265,335	26	illuminatus	130,589
2	illuminism	699,832	27	impious	127,84
3	illuminee	469,373	28	zwack	123,572
4	bahrtdt	429,186	29	declamation	119,454
5	spartacus	413,533	30	illuminized	108,146
6	insinuator	367,228	31	brethren	101,082
7	epopt	333,245	32	epopts	97,07
8	minerval	321,611	33	shew	97,003
9	adept	287,453	34	pott	89,549
10	hierophant	254,048	35	scrutator	85,246
11	illuminati	248,212	36	jacobin	82,906
12	illuminees	243,961	37	licentious	81,952
13	areopagites	226,49	38	disorganize	81,7
14	knigge	205,501	39	hezekiah	81,533
15	sect	204,315	40	atheistical	78,729
16	sophister	185,54	41	profligate	78,51
17	mirabeau	184,133	42	despotism	78,458
18	philo	173,183	43	quibus	76,921
19	impiety	165,31	44	cato	70,431
20	illuminizing	164,861	45	prophane	68,088
21	nicholai	159,658	46	novice	65,572
22	artifice	158,805	47	subordination	65,271
23	illuminatism	153,475	48	zeal	64,792
24	proselyte	138,151	49	atheism	64,405
25	masonry	131,497	50	scotch	64,4

<sup>38</sup> The keyness score shows how many times a certain phrase is more likely to be found in one text compared to another text so a word with a keyness score of 1000 is 1000 times more likely to be found in text A instead of Text B. The comma is a decimal, so Weishaupt has a score of 1200 not 1 million.

Table 2. Single keyword list 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources.

Rank	Item	Keyness	Rank	Item	Keyness
1	illuminati	1987,399	26	walt	112,295
2	weishaupt	508,222	27	barruel	108,178
3	rothschilds	422,238	28	illu	96,985
4	illuminist	347,549	29	sion	94,755
5	rothschild	330,079	30	prieure	92,798
6	freemasonry	268,386	31	bilderberg	89,918
7	freemason	232,743	32	rockefeller	87,903
8	occult	216,14	33	knigge	86,686
9	masonic	191,351	34	robison	85,886
10	astor	187,208	35	occultist	83,564
11	mind-control	184,752	36	anunnaki	81,219
12	satanic	183,404	37	tion	80,827
13	satanist	179,569	38	bundy	78,906
14	bloodline	172,215	39	lavey	77,769
15	illuminism	163,571	40	amschel	77,374
16	templars	162,594	41	bohemian	76,668
17	satanism	152,178	42	triad	75,422
18	duyn	149,116	43	pont	74,326
19	krupp	147,164	44	dupont	73,187
20	rockefellers	139,73	45	duponts	72,689
21	onassis	126,011	46	krupps	70,536
22	lucifer	121,908	47	texe	68
23	templar	120,63	48	luciferian	67,976
24	illuminatus	119,471	49	cabala	67,376
25	bones	112,959	50	illuminized	66,991

Predictably, based on the method of calculating keyness (see section 2.1), the lemmas with the highest score in the single keyword analyses are all closely related to the topic. Therefore, it can be considered quite logical that names and specific topic-related lemmas are ranked high.

The high-ranking lemmas that are less content specific are more interesting to investigate. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Table 1), the lemma *sect* (rank 15) did not occur in the contemporary list. Subsequently, the modern families (Rothschild, Astor, Duyn, Rockefellers) are all occurring in high frequency in the modern sources (Table 2), but seem of no interest to the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources. Furthermore, the single key-word list of the modern sources shows an increase in words dealing with magic, i.e., *occult* (rank 8), *mind-control* (rank 11), and hence a closer relation with *satanic* (rank 12), *Satanists* (rank 13), and *satanism* (rank 17).

Although the single keyword analyses do not provide information to answer questions about the authors' stance or the usage of the mentioned lemma, they still offer a first insight into the different topics. In addition to the single key-word analyses, multi key-word analyses have been conducted. Since the single-word phrases yielded results that mainly consisted of proper nouns or were highly topic-specific, the multi-word lists provide more insight.

Table 3. Multi-word Keyword list 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources.

Rank	Item	Keyness
1	free masonry	238,407
2	grand object	168,253
3	last mystery	118,621
4	original writing	91,68
5	young adept	91,144
6	reading society	79,477
7	minerval academy	74,487
8	public mind	63,396
9	major illuminee	63,182
10	patriarchal life	63,002
11	free mason	60,372
12	such man	58,907
13	secret society	57,345
14	right of man	56,234
15	preparatory class	55,621
16	amis reunis	51,876
17	degree of epopt	51,876
18	lodge theodore	51,876
19	quibus licets	51,876
20	mason lodge	51,718
21	grand mystery	51,493
22	secret correspondence	50,799
23	happiness of mankind	50,751
24	great object	47,62
25	private correspondence	47,088
26	supreme council	46,294
27	minor illuminee	46,223
28	illuminizing legislator	46,223
29	view of the sect	46,223
30	object of the sect	46,223
31	national inspector	46,148
32	grand revolution	46,13
33	local superior	45,911
34	new degree	45,134
35	such doctrine	43,861
36	antichristian empire	40,57
37	degree of illuminism	40,57
38	brother insinuator	40,57
39	universal philanthropy	40,528
40	order of illuminati	40,482
41	object of the order	40,479
42	man of talents	40,357
43	whole universe	40,066
44	human nature	39,568
45	grand orient	38,192
46	part of the code	35,116
47	masonic lodge	35,012
48	minor illuminees	34,917
49	illuminatus minor	34,917
50	major illuminee	34,917

Table 4. Multi-word Keyword list 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources.

Rank	Lemma	Keyness
1	secret society	317,22
2	illuminati family	166,522
3	new world order	161,093
4	walt disney	118,895
5	knights templar	107,684
6	bavarian illuminati	101,556
7	illuminati member	82,975
8	prieure de sion	81,773
9	adam weishaupt	76,867
10	ancient mystery	72,192
11	collins family	72,062
12	modern illuminati	70,459
13	secret doctrine	69,205
14	bilderberg group	62,122
15	be wise	61,91
16	mystery school	59,017
17	satanic hierarchy	58,78
18	masonic lodge	57,951
19	mystery religion	57,714
20	knights templars	55,133
21	member of the illuminati	54,763
22	part of the illuminati	53,578
23	scottish rite	52,936
24	du pont	52,098
25	sacred architecture	51,057
26	grand master	47,664
27	top illuminati	47,208
28	strict observance	47,195
29	li family	46,841
30	satanic ritual	46,368
31	bones society	45,004
32	all-seeing eye	44,03
33	van duyn family	43,998
34	foreign relations	43,343
35	church of satan	42,924
36	mickey mouse	42,807
37	john jacob astor	42,359
38	grand architect	41,671
39	mind-control programming	40,563
40	van duyn	40,395
41	snuff film	40,237
42	grand orient	39,863
43	serpents book	39,037
44	astor family	38,554
45	lucis trust	38,416
46	john todd	38,039
47	satanic family	37,274
48	externalization of the hierarchy	37,229
49	rothschild agent	37,075
50	powerful man	36,707

The multi-word analysis, similar to the single-word analysis, shows many phrases closely related to the core subject, namely the Illuminati. Interestingly, the phrase *secret society* ranks

differently in the two tables. *Secret society* is the highest ranked keyword in the list of the modern sources (Table 4), but in the list from the 18<sup>th</sup> century sources it is ranked 13<sup>th</sup> (Table 3). An explanation for this difference could be that the contemporary sources mention many different societies, while the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources are mainly concerned with the Freemasons and the Illuminati.<sup>39</sup> The phrase *secret societies* is examined in more detail in section 3.2.1. Other notable examples include the phrase *New World Order* (rank 3, contemporary sources) coincides with Hofstadter's notion that modern conspiracists deem the world already lost.<sup>40</sup> The phrase *original writing* (rank 4, Table 3) is a way to increase the author's credibility, but it does not occur in the contemporary sources.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, in the modern list, *Bavarian Illuminati* (rank 6, contemporary sources) suggest that the texts deal with multiple types of Illuminati. *Illuminati family* and *modern Illuminati* indicate a similar division, but these phrases occur in Springmeier's book only, and are therefore not representative of the entirety of the modern corpus. Finally, the high ranking of the phrases *grand object* (rank 2, 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources) and *great object* (rank 24) indicate that the Illuminati have far-reaching goals.

In conclusion, both key lists provide useful insights regarding the topics of the texts but not enough information about the occurrence of the ranked lemmas. The lists offer a starting point for additional examination. Frequency lists have been made regarding nouns, adjectives, lexical verbs, modal verbs, and adverbs to aid this further examination.

### 3.1.2. Nouns

The frequency lists per word category are all given in absolute frequency. Sketch Engine provided the following noun frequency lists:

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<sup>39</sup> Such as the Pilgrim Society, the Jason Society, the Fabian Society, the Skull and Bones Society.

<sup>40</sup> Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style*, 23

<sup>41</sup> For explanations how the modern authors determine their credibility see section 3.2.3.

Table 5. Noun frequency list 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources.

Rank	Noun	Frequency	Rank	Noun	Frequency
1	man	527	26	page	144
2	order	478	27	name	139
3	degree	279	28	code	138
4	weishaupt	245	29	nature	134
5	religion	239	30	illuminism	127
6	society	238	31	instruction	127
7	sect	221	32	account	125
8	thing	217	33	brethren	124
9	principle	215	34	world	123
10	time	211	35	power	118
11	adept	202	36	work	115
12	mind	189	37	mean	113
13	nation	187	38	liberty	111
14	law	183	39	plan	110
15	god	178	40	superior	107
16	lodge	172	41	people	106
17	country	171	42	manner	106
18	part	170	43	doctrine	104
19	government	169	44	place	104
20	object	169	45	spartacus	104
21	mystery	162	46	conduct	104
22	person	159	47	view	100
23	reader	159	48	france	100
24	state	152	49	hand	100
25	life	144	50	letter	99

Table 6. Noun frequency lists contemporary sources.

Rank	Noun	Frequency	Rank	Noun	Frequency
1	illuminati	2659	26	part	450
2	world	1469	27	organization	418
3	family	1263	28	money	410
4	order	1117	29	author	408
5	book	1098	30	america	386
6	people	1057	31	thing	385
7	man	994	32	life	380
8	society	903	33	church	376
9	disney	805	34	conspiracy	376
10	member	798	35	freemasonry	375
11	god	739	36	state	362
12	year	739	37	way	361
13	time	724	38	united	359
14	new	679	39	satan	359
15	page	652	40	fact	355
16	group	650	41	today	344
17	power	618	42	system	339
18	name	543	43	weishaupt	336
19	war	540	44	control	334
20	government	534	45	bank	332
21	film	488	46	history	330
22	rothschild	479	47	rothschilds	326
23	child	478	48	work	323
24	john	452	49	knowledge	323
25	walt	451	50	other	318

The most frequently occurring nouns are closely topic- related for both corpora, as was the case with the key lists. Surprisingly, *Illuminati* (fr. 97 vs. fr. 2,659) is not in the top 50 nouns of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources, as would have been expected.<sup>42</sup> This difference could be due to the large number of derived words from *Illuminati* in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources, such as *Illuminees*, *Minervals*, *epopt*, and *brethren*. In the contemporary sources, however, members of the *Illuminati* are simply called ‘member(s) of the *Illuminati*’, hence its prime position on Table 6.

Of interest is a difference in the means employed to refer to a multitude of people. The older texts favor *sect* (fr. 221 vs. fr. 55), whereas the modern texts prefer *group* (fr. 0 vs. fr. 650) and *organization* (fr. 2 vs. fr. 418). In both corpora, *order* (fr. 478 vs. fr. 1,117) is the most frequently occurring lemma together with *society* (fr. 238 vs. fr. 903). The in-depth analysis section below provides an informed justification for the (dis)similarities in usage and frequencies.

### 3.1.3. Adjectives

Sketch Engine provided the following adjective frequency lists:

Table 7. Adjective frequency list of 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources.

Rank	Adjective	Frequency	Rank	Adjective	Frequency
1	such	359	26	free	68
2	great	323	27	young	67
3	other	276	28	political	66
4	many	206	29	moral	65
5	own	204	30	french	64
6	same	204	31	true	64
7	good	153	32	natural	61
8	first	150	33	much	58
9	more	114	34	particular	55
10	high	113	35	little	54
11	public	105	36	universal	54
12	general	104	37	real	52
13	new	99	38	least	51
14	present	96	39	worthy	51
15	last	96	40	former	50
16	whole	91	41	several	50
17	secret	85	42	common	49
18	religious	84	43	short	47
19	civil	81	44	few	44
20	grand	80	45	most	44
21	human	77	46	poor	43
22	very	77	47	only	43
23	necessary	76	48	scotch	42
24	different	69	49	low	42
25	certain	69	50	important	42

<sup>42</sup> Fr. is an abbreviation for frequency. On the left is the frequency of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century corpus and on the right is the frequency of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century corpus.

Table 8. Adjective frequency list of contemporary sources.

Rank	Adjective	Frequency	Rank	Adjective	Frequency
1	other	952	26	german	231
2	secret	952	27	real	230
3	many	886	28	important	228
4	such	796	29	old	228
5	first	433	30	top	226
6	great	406	31	true	225
7	more	405	32	human	212
8	good	402	33	british	210
9	ancient	400	34	few	209
10	masonic	392	35	french	187
11	occult	354	36	christian	178
12	new	337	37	public	176
13	satanic	335	38	financial	175
14	own	332	39	able	169
15	powerful	316	40	religious	168
16	high	300	41	major	166
17	jewish	296	42	spiritual	158
18	same	291	43	late	151
19	several	288	44	modern	145
20	most	286	45	big	142
21	american	279	46	bohemian	140
22	various	250	47	small	137
23	large	248	48	clear	132
24	early	232	49	last	131
25	political	231	50	close	130

The frequency lists show that the texts of both periods are similar in their use of adjectives. Thus, the adjectives *great* (fr. 323 and fr.406 ), *many* (fr. 206 and 886 ), and *high* (fr. 113 and 300) all occur with high frequencies in both corpora. In addition, *several* (fr. 50 and fr. 288), *most* (fr. 44 and fr. 286), and *various* (fr. 17 and fr. 250) appear in both selections but are predominantly used in the modern texts. Similarly, *powerful* (fr. 12 and fr. 316), *important* (fr. 42 and fr. 228), and *top* (fr. 0 and fr. 226) are predominantly or, in the case of *top*, exclusively used by the contemporary sources. Much like in the previous section, the reason for these similarities and differences is addressed in the second part of this chapter.

#### 3.1.4. *Lexical verbs*

Lexical verbs are verbs that typically express an action or state.<sup>43</sup> Sketch Engine provided the following lexical verb frequency lists:

<sup>43</sup> Modal verbs have also been examined but have not been included in this thesis because of space constraints.

Table 9. Lexical verb frequency list of 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources.

Rank	Verb	Frequency	Rank	Verb	Frequency
1	be	6299	26	declare	80
2	have	2077	27	show	73
3	make	405	28	tell	73
4	say	390	29	lay	72
5	give	332	30	get	70
6	do	312	31	hold	70
7	see	280	32	put	70
8	find	214	33	send	68
9	call	188	34	destroy	68
10	know	181	35	publish	68
11	take	178	36	employ	67
12	think	171	37	leave	66
13	let	165	38	bring	65
14	appear	118	39	hear	63
15	follow	110	40	keep	63
16	become	102	41	believe	61
17	write	92	42	lead	60
18	form	92	43	contain	59
19	go	91	44	begin	59
20	observe	91	45	pretend	57
21	receive	86	46	read	57
22	come	84	47	teach	56
23	wish	83	48	admit	55
24	consider	82	49	expect	55
25	learn	80	50	seem	55

Table 10. Lexical verb frequency list of contemporary sources.

Rank	Verb	Frequency	Rank	Verb	Frequency
1	be	21544	26	involve	347
2	have	6104	27	control	332
3	do	1658	28	want	320
4	know	984	29	think	313
5	say	943	30	explain	285
6	make	885	31	bring	258
7	use	803	32	keep	254
8	go	797	33	name	252
9	write	735	34	build	248
10	take	706	35	accord	245
11	see	695	36	lead	245
12	become	686	37	appear	242
13	come	684	38	help	239
14	get	664	39	try	239
15	give	658	40	live	234
16	call	644	41	look	226
17	believe	594	42	put	223
18	find	538	43	follow	220
19	include	498	44	set	214
20	work	489	45	run	213
21	create	464	46	continue	202
22	begin	419	47	hold	202
23	tell	365	48	understand	201
24	claim	362	49	need	197
25	show	360	50	publish	188

The high frequencies of *be*, *have*, and *do* were expected since these are generally the most used verbs in English. More interesting are the high frequencies of verbs regarding how information is conveyed. Note *know* (fr. 181 and fr. 984), *say* (fr. 390 and fr. 943), *write* (fr. 92 and fr. 735), *claim* (fr. 12 and fr. 362), *show* (fr. 73 and fr. 362), and *explain* (fr. 33 and fr. 285). These verbs appear in both corpora, but with greater frequency in the modern corpus. In addition, the different verbs regarding how the information is to be received are: *see* (fr. 280 and fr. 695) and *observe* (fr. 91 and fr. 18).<sup>44</sup>

### 3.1.5. Adverbs

Sketch Engine provided the following adverbs frequency lists:

Table 13. Adverb frequency list of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources.

Rank	Adverb	Frequency	Rank	Adverb	Frequency
1	not	934	26	there	72
2	most	320	27	always	72
3	as	309	28	particularly	63
4	so	297	29	far	63
5	even	235	30	no	60
6	more	216	31	again	55
7	only	215	32	long	53
8	very	169	33	almost	52
9	then	165	34	alone	52
10	also	163	35	soon	46
11	now	156	36	surely	42
12	therefore	137	37	once	41
13	well	129	38	just	41
14	here	114	39	immediately	37
15	still	112	40	frequently	35
16	much	106	41	perhaps	35
17	thus	94	42	easily	32
18	already	92	43	often	32
19	all	90	44	really	32
20	ever	90	45	less	32
21	never	85	46	first	32
22	too	83	47	afterwards	30
23	however	78	48	carefully	30
24	yet	77	49	equally	29
25	indeed	74	50	rather	29

<sup>44</sup> The verb *find* yielded similar results to *observe* and *see*, but is not included due to space constraints.

Table 14. Adverb frequency list of the contemporary sources.

Rank	Adverb	Frequency	Rank	Adverb	Frequency
1	not	2422	26	too	172
2	also	1136	27	yet	165
3	so	745	28	however	160
4	even	639	29	always	150
5	then	585	30	ever	146
6	as	575	31	really	134
7	only	544	32	perhaps	131
8	well	438	33	together	130
9	very	415	34	again	127
10	most	411	35	once	124
11	just	406	36	secretly	121
12	later	362	37	far	120
13	now	338	38	almost	112
14	more	302	39	thus	110
15	back	290	40	soon	108
16	still	268	41	away	102
17	all	246	42	first	102
18	actually	233	43	already	102
19	about	228	44	no	102
20	never	221	45	long	101
21	much	200	46	rather	99
22	often	192	47	instead	95
23	simply	191	48	clearly	91
24	there	190	49	indeed	90
25	here	183	50	up	85

Similar to the other categories, the adverbs used across the different periods show similarities and differences. One categorie of adverbs are distinguished as most salient in my datasets. Namely, adverbs that intensify the following phrases, such as *even* (fr. 235 and fr. 639), *most* (fr. 320 and 411), *also* (fr. 163 and fr. 1,136), *as* (fr. 309 and fr. 575), and *only* (fr. 215 and fr. 544).

Overall, the quantitative analyses have highlighted some interesting similarities and differences between the two periods in terms of the language used by conspirators. Frequency and keyness alone, however, are not informative enough parameters. Therefore, the following section presents an in-depth analysis from a qualitative perspective in order to shed more light on the results presented above.

### 3.2. Qualitative analysis

#### 3.2.1. Nouns

As presented on Table 5 and 6, the nouns *order*, *sect*, *society*, *groups*, and *organization* all refer to a multitude of people. At first glance, it appears these terms are used interchangeably in both corpora. However, upon closer examination, subtle nuances emerge.

#### *The differences between order, sects, society, groups, and organizations.*

An order is a group of people living by common consent under the same religious, moral, or social regulations and discipline.<sup>45</sup> Since the texts describe many different groups of people who fit this description, it is unsurprising that it occurs frequently. *Order* also carries a connotative meaning; the word *order* derives from the different Christian Orders and is thus linked to the faith of Christianity. The Illuminati, however, are often in complete contrast with Christianity. They are depicted as wanting to abolish Christianity in the 18<sup>th</sup> century sources, or even worshipping Satan in the modern texts. *Order* appears in two environments in these texts. The first one is an abbreviated version to refer to previously mentioned groups:

Table 15. Concordance of *order* in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources

1	doc#1	ly relegated to footnotes.</s><s>It is known that the <b>Order</b> flourished, becoming extraor-
2	doc#3	><s>Wood reports that in the Manual of the Rosicrucian <b>Order</b> (A.M.O.R.C.–Ancient and Mystery Order Rosae Crucis)
3	doc#1	</s><s>But Masonic authors themselves reveal that the <b>Order</b> is not without metaphysical thought, rather it is very mu
4	doc#1	unist party, was forced to keep them secret.</s><s>The <b>order</b> held firm until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the
5	doc#0	ir fellow elites; managing the creation of the New World <b>Order</b> .</s><s>Should there be a part 3 to this series, it will In
6	doc#1	r-rorizing the Earth.</s><s>Members of the True Cross <b>Order</b> must not only battle supernatural but also the Illuminati,
7	doc#2	inity will prove to be a priceless asset as the New World <b>Order</b> solidifies.</s><s>You should also reach out and educat
8	doc#1	ed the flow of both information and command within the <b>Order</b> .</s><s>Sitting at the top of this struc- ture, Weishaupt t
9	doc#3	ie illumined Mason give first allegiance to the Masonic <b>Order</b> and their secondary faith attachments are subsumed an
10	doc#1	nankind well into the twentieth century.</s><s>She saw <b>Order</b> members as occultists plotting world domination.</s><s

In 1, 3, 4, 8, and 10, the word *order* is used to refer to a previously mentioned group. The other instance in which *order* appears is when it is part of the full name of a group. For example, in lines 2, 5, 6, 7, and 9, *order* occurs as part of a proper name. The title of *order* is only given to groups that either exist or are accepted to be real, as visible in Table 15. Thus, by giving the Illuminati the title of *order*, the authors consequently establish it as a real and

<sup>45</sup> "order, n.". OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press.  
<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/132334?rskey=Vz6Oi9&result=2> (accessed April 20, 2023).

existing group. For example, the Masonic order, mentioned in example 9, is an order that exists. Thus by giving the New World Order the same title the author implies that they exists. While this existence is not proven in any way.

A sect is similar to an order, meaning a multitude of people that follow the same religious rules.<sup>46</sup> A sect, however, has a more negative connotation than order. A group of individuals who assign significance to an unusual tradition are often mockingly given the name of *sect*.<sup>47</sup> Given the combination of the negative attitude of modern writers toward the groups they are describing and the negative connotation of the word *sect*, a high frequency of occurrence would be expected for this word. Contrary, however, the word *sect* occurs predominantly in 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources. An explanation for this difference in frequency is that the noun *sect* might have been one of the few negative connotative words for religious groups in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Meanwhile, the modern writer has many negative words. For example, the word *cult* (*fr. 100 in the contemporary sources*) describes a sinister religious group that came into use in the late 1800s, thus could not have been used by the authors of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the noun *group* does not appear in 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources, probably because it came into use around 1730 and became a general term for a collective of people after these sources were written.<sup>49</sup>

*Society* is similar to *order* and *sect*, because there are *societies* with a capital <s>, linked to named groups and *societies* with a lower case <s> to refer to smaller undefined groups.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, *societies* with lowercase <s> refer to smaller undefined groups. The most distinctive feature of the noun *society* is its modification by the adjective *secret*. The phrase *secret society* occurs 314 times in the modern sources. In comparison to *secret order* (*fr. 10*), *secret group* (*fr. 19*), and *secret organization* (*fr. 12*), such high frequency emerges as significant.

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<sup>46</sup> "sect, n.1". OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press.  
<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/174576?rskey=HVSbPO&result=1> (accessed April 20, 2023). Meaning 1B

<sup>47</sup> "sect, n.1". OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press.  
<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/174576?rskey=HVSbPO&result=1> (accessed April 20, 2023). Meaning 6

<sup>48</sup> "cult, n.". OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press.  
<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/45709?rskey=2iRjpb&result=1> (accessed April 20, 2023).

<sup>49</sup> "group, n.". OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press.  
<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/81855?rskey=G7GD1h&result=1> (accessed April 20, 2023).

Table 16. Nouns modified by *secret* in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century corpus.

nouns modified by "secret"		
society	341	...
doctrine	41	...
group	19	...
teaching	18	...
document	16	...
meeting	12	...
organization	12	...
establishment	11	...
order	11	...

The phrase *secret society* seems to be well-established, falling into the special collocative groups of the OED and thus more used than *secret order* or *secret group*.<sup>50</sup> This general acceptance would also explain the difference with the older sources where *secret society* appears 25 times and is modified in equal amounts by *civil*. When *society* is modified by *civil*, it refers to another meaning, namely that of a group of people living together in harmony.<sup>51</sup> In the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources, this phrase is rarely used in this context, and *society* is mostly used to refer to different non-religious secretive groups.

A *group* is less clearly defined than an *order*, *sect*, or *society*. The main exception to this rule is *The Bilderberg Group* which is a clearly defined group. A *group* can be any people who associate together for social or professional reasons.<sup>52</sup> *Group* exclusively appears in the modern corpus. Furthermore, *group* has a very neutral connotation, as evident in the OED entry for the word. This neutral connotation might be why *group* is modified by fifty different adjectives in the modern corpus. Compared to the seventeen different adjectives that modify

<sup>50</sup> "secret, adj. and n.". OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/174537?redirectedFrom=secret+society> (accessed April 20, 2023). Meaning 4C

<sup>51</sup> "society, n.". OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/183776?redirectedFrom=society> (accessed April 20, 2023).

<sup>52</sup> "group, n.". OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/81855?rkey=7CPQgs&result=1> (accessed April 20, 2023).

*order*, *order* has almost double the occurrence rate of *group* (see Table 6). In the texts, the noun *group* refers to a multitude of people who are hard to identify. Hence, if the members are unknown, authors tend to use *group*, as illustrated by the examples below:

Table 16. Concordance of *group* in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources.

1	doc#0   geographic area and seen for themselves that a small <b>group</b> of people control their nation and the world from behind
2	doc#0 'st hand reports from very informed people that an elite <b>group</b> did rule the world.</s><s>My research into Satan's hier
3	doc#0 o mention a few,</s><s>All our favorite secret fraternal <b>groups</b> appear in Dope, Inc, too,</s><s>For instance, the Triad
4	doc#1 s>Commission spokespersons like to point out that the <b>group</b> does not receive any government funding.</s><s>Early
5	doc#1 .atlawed Knights Templar Order,</s><s>Other secretive <b>groups</b> whose memberships were mixed with those of the Tem
6	doc#1 ple claim to have been in contact with or members of a <b>group</b> that emulates the ideals of Illuminism.</s><s>More tha
7	doc#2 e light on the subject, but his real name, and that of the <b>group</b> he represented remains a mystery.</s><s>The book ex
8	doc#2 sheets it was more than obvious— this was no ordinary <b>group</b> .</s><s>The names spelled Power, with a capitol P. As
9	doc#2 ivate clients interested in manipulating populations and <b>groups</b> of people.</s><s>Underground Bases and Tunnels A S
10	doc#3 cast a spotlight on the secretive organizations and elite <b>groups</b> operating behind the scenes to erect these grandiose, (
11	doc#3 perfectly reasonable and understandable that an elitist <b>group</b> of men who perceive themselves to be of superior intel

Note also the high occurrence of adjectives before *group* in lines: 1 (small), 2 ( elite), 3 (fraternal), 5 (secretive), 8 (no ordinary), 10 (elitist), and 11 (elitist).

Each *group* appears to be self-contained, meaning that they are not dependent on any other aforementioned group , unlike *order*. They can serve as the main subject of the sentence without any prior reference. As mentioned earlier, the noun *group* does not occur in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources. The lack of *group* could be because the term *group* was not as customarily used to refer to a multitude of people as it is now.

An *organization* is an organized body of people with a particular purpose.<sup>53</sup> *Organizations* differ from the previously mentioned collectives since they seem to require less modification from adjectives than *groups*, and are less often linked to established groups as *orders* and *societies*. The difference is a result of *organization* being an autonomous group, as the definition in the OED demonstrates. Therefore *organizations* seem to be “strong” enough to function on their own. Similar to the other collectives, *organization* has a fairly neutral connotation. Nevertheless, *organizations* tend to be associated with monetary worth and are

<sup>53</sup> "organization, n.". OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/132452?redirectedFrom=organization> (accessed April 20, 2023).

frequently employed to describe groups with a business-oriented nature, as evident in my dataset. Like *group*, *organization* was not yet in use in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as it is today.<sup>54</sup>

**3.2.2. Adjectives**

Before going further with the in-depth analysis, it is useful to remember the authors’ goal. The authors aim to warn their audience about the people who are trying to destroy society (18<sup>th</sup> century) or about the people who are already (secretly) in control (21<sup>st</sup> century). These people threaten humanity, and it is thus logical that the adjectives employed convey a sense of urgency that could stir its reader into action. For example, “*many* or *several* people conspiring” sound more ominous than “*some* or *a few* people conspiring.” Hence, to attribute their messages with the required amount of urgency, the authors use two types of adjectives. The first category is quantitative adjectives such as *many*, *several*, *most*, and *various*. The second category is descriptive adjectives such as *great*, *high*, *powerful*, *important*, and *top*.

**Quantitative adjectives**

This section covers exclusively the results from the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources. *Many* is used to indicate a large group of unspecified persons.<sup>55</sup> It thus suits the needs of the authors perfectly since the threat comes from a group of people gathered in secrecy.

Table 17. Concordance of *many* in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources.

1	doc#2 f the world and the workings of God.</s><s>This is what <b>many</b> occultists believe is actually the Holy Grail.</s><s>The k
2	doc#0 an Original Member) were hereditary members.</s><s> <b>Many</b> of the high ranking Masons who were also officers in the
3	doc#0 r taking over Germany,</s><s>Hitler had romances with <b>many</b> beautiful women,</s><s>Although Hitler was very strict v
4	doc#3 1 suspect that planet earth is Satan’s playhouse and that <b>many</b> of the buildings, statues, and other structures which cons
5	doc#1 rue based on the letters of the Found- ing Fathers is that <b>many</b> of them, including Washington and Jefferson, grew cann
6	doc#2 peak or write about activities at the retreat.</s><s>While <b>many</b> public officials are grove members, the press is a distinc
7	doc#0 any leading FBI agents have not only been Masons. but <b>many</b> have been Satanists.</s><s>The FBI sends out reports

In all of the sentences above, *many* is used to modify nouns that are directly related to the Illuminati or otherwise evil subjects. The exception is line 3 with ‘beautiful women.’

<sup>54</sup> "organization, n.". OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/132452?redirectedFrom=organization> (accessed May 06, 2023). Meaning 4A  
<sup>55</sup> "many, adj., pron., and n., and adv.". OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/113819?redirectedFrom=many> (accessed April 20, 2023).

However, this paragraph is about the possibility of Hitler having a large offspring; thus, many beautiful women have a negative meaning.

*Several* seems predominantly used when indicating time, i.e., several years, days, and hours. *Several* is similar to *many* in that they both modify indefinite amounts. However, *several* implies that it is not too many. Thus, *several* conflicts with the earlier statement that the authors choose words that increase the urgency.

Table 18. Concordance of *several* in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources.

1	doc#0   that there are 13 Illuminati bloodlines.</s><s>Further, <b>several</b> ex-Illuminati people have confirmed my list of 13 families
2	doc#0   in the exact ties, I can safely say that if one goes back <b>several</b> hundred years the Kennedy aristocrats all tie together,
3	doc#0   as Mouton Rothschild, and he lived at these vineyards <b>several</b> months of the year,</s><s>His descendants, the Mouton
4	doc#0   te slavery, Illuminati mind-control, and the seduction of <b>several</b> generations into witchcraft.</s><s>Disney's involvement
5	doc#1   passed his secrets along to Weishaupt, who then spent <b>several</b> years determining how to consolidate all occult systems
6	doc#1   torus; a proposal for a branch of Illuminism for women; <b>several</b> hundred impressions of Government seals (with a list of
7	doc#1   "He said only a few months after the 1973 congress, " <b>several</b> members of the 'Monastery of the Seven Rays' adopted
8	doc#2   minated masons" were eradicated upon their exposure <b>several</b> hundred years ago.</s><s>Albert Mackey's entry on the
9	doc#2   f strippers and high-class call girls for the club.</s><s> <b>Several</b> prostitutes have gone public with claims they worked in
10	doc#2   , it has sold steadily for the past 16 years at the rate of <b>several</b> hundred copies a month."</s><s>Antony Sutton was a
11	doc#2   eathened her for investigating the organization.</s><s> <b>Several</b> years later during the build up to the 2004 presidential
12	doc#2   of Dzyan which is said to originate from Tibet.</s><s> <b>Several</b> prominent occult authors claimed to have seen the book

Additionally, *several* is used to modify numerals, such as “several hundred” or “several thousand,” and is thus used again to indicate high volumes. Finally, *several* could also indicate specific groups, such as people who claim to have been the victim of the Illuminati, or who have been part of specific groups. An example of such a specific group is the authors mentioned in line 12. *Several* might thus seem like an odd choice but is used in a systematic manner by the authors. Further interpretations for the occurrence of *several* are provided in the discussion section.

*Most* is used to indicate a large group of things but not its entirety. It is also the superlative form of *many*. In the texts, *most* is used in two ways. First, *most* indicates that a large percentage of the general public does not believe in conspiracies. The phrase *most people* seems to point at the ignorant people who refuse to acknowledge the threat the authors warn about.

Table 19. Concordance of *most people* in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources.

1	doc#0 ve New World as a picture of things that were to come -- <b>most people</b> think as a expose, but it was really more as a pla
2	doc#0 milies.</s><s>Further, One of the unthinkable items that <b>most people</b> do not want to consider is that their leaders who
3	doc#0 trolled slaves are very difficult to detect, especially since <b>most people</b> don't even know that they exist.</s><s>[1] The c
4	doc#1 icture can be applied to whole nations.</s><s>But while <b>most people</b> can relate to or understand this structure on a sr
5	doc#2 mp, and uncovers a scandal so large and perverted, that <b>most people</b> simply do not want to hear about it, let alone beli
6	doc#2 st one of numerous cases of such horrific things.</s><s> <b>Most people</b> assume that such disgusting things are extremel

In the examples above, the writers show awareness that most people do not believe them. The authors use this ignorance to validate their notion of urgency. Since most people do not believe them, the writers have to challenge their enemies alone or with little help, which makes their situation even more difficult. Furthermore, the ignorance strengthens the authors' roles as saviors.<sup>56</sup> As a result, the reader of the book might be converted by the author to the "informed" side and thus count themselves among the people who are in the possession of the truth. By creating this division, the author aligns themselves with the reader, making it easier for the reader to trust the author. In addition, it is relatively straightforward to disprove the claim that everyone knows something since one only has to find someone unaware of this knowledge to invalidate the claim. By using a more vague term, such as *most*, the authors make it harder to be discredited. For example, "most high military men were Satanists" indicates that not everyone was a Satanist, which would have been easy to prove. However, it is harder to prove that none were Satanists (although still fairly doable). In section 4 will be an additional explanation regarding vague quantifiers, such as *most*. *Most* is also frequent in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century texts, but it functions as an adverb instead; hence it will be reviewed again in the adverb section below.

### ***Descriptive adjectives***

As stated at the beginning of section 3.2.2., it is vital for the authors that their work is taken seriously. This need explains why all nouns indicating negative consequences are modified by an adjective that would increase these negative consequences. Considering the authors' goal, it is unsurprising that *great* appears with high frequencies in the texts. In both the old and

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<sup>56</sup> Konda, *Conspiracies*, 8

modern texts, *great* is used to predominantly modify nouns related to the goals, capabilities, aims, or secretive manners of the Illuminati. The examples below illustrate this point.

Table 20. Concordance of *great* in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources (above) and the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources (below).

1	doc#0 shaftpt ever had a master, or whether he is himself the	<b>great</b>	original of those monstrous doctrines on which he four
2	doc#0 lly; but with a genius like that of Weishaupt, formed for	<b>great</b>	crimes, it was the confidence of unlimited wickedness.
3	doc#0 ies of Priests and of Regents or Princes, </s><s>In the	<b>greater</b>	mysteries are comprized the two degrees of Magi or P
4	doc#0 utebank knows that he is going to fob them off with the	<b>greatest</b>	follies, the grossest impieties and errors. </s><s>I have
5	doc#0 the Sophister informs the public that he takes them for	<b>great</b>	fools, </s><s>Let the contempt with which he treats his
6	doc#0 oymment in the state, or in the Order, would he fill to the	<b>greatest</b>	advantage, or in which would he be the most useful?<
7	doc#0 icht they were to exercise over the rest of the Order?--	<b>Great</b>	Conspirators will seldom brook control even by their fe
8	doc#1 the miseries of mankind will everywhere be great, and	<b>greatest</b>	on those nations which have contributed most to the si
9	doc#1 the sacred writers are distinctly interpreted to predict a	<b>great</b>	definition, approaching to annihilation of those lawful p
10	doc#3 active virtue, are synonymous characters, and that the	<b>great</b>	aim of Free Masonry is to promote the happiness of m
11	doc#3 the service of the Pr, de Salms, who soon after had so	<b>great</b>	a hand in the disturbances in Holland, </s><s>By destr
12	doc#3 s only the[90] lowest degree, and even this is liable to	<b>great</b>	suspicion. </s><s>The accounts given by the four Prof
13	doc#3 ! unfrquent even out of doors. </s><s>He asserts with	<b>great</b>	confidence that the troops were much corrupted by the
14	doc#3 se assertions by facts, which, to our great shame, and	<b>greater</b>	misfortune, are but too numerous, </s><s>Having now
15	doc#3 claring their opinions on these questions. </s><s>It is a	<b>great</b>	misfortune undoubtedly to feel ourselves in a situation
16	doc#4 </s><s>The leading members of this Order are men of	<b>great</b>	talents, zeal and industry; and governed by their maxim
17	doc#4 families, "those little communities which constitute the	<b>great</b>	public body," and reform, as far as in us lies, whatever
1	doc#0 l large have all gone to England. </s><s>They still wield	<b>great</b>	financial power in the United States through proxies. </s>
2	doc#0 ot a great many critical thinkers. </s><s>A conspiracy of	<b>great</b>	magnitude has had this nation in its grips since the nati
3	doc#0 nmittee of UNESCO, </s><s>The Rockefellers maintain	<b>great</b>	influence in the United Nations, 120 3, </s><s>They pro
4	doc#0 were feed this type of stuff. </s><s>But there is a much	<b>greater</b>	hidden agenda. </s><s>Manly P. Hall for instance was p
5	doc#1 iocrats and professionals could afford an education, the	<b>great</b>	mass of the public was illiterate and susceptible to supe
6	doc#1 have circulated in public without exposing the author to	<b>great</b>	danger. </s><s>I found, that this impunity had gradually
7	doc#2 heard? </s><s>Judge nothing lightly; they are guilty of a	<b>great</b>	crime; they have exposed to profane eyes the sanctuar
8	doc#3 ld make them dangerous and, indeed, capable of doing	<b>great</b>	harm to humanity and to themselves. </s><s>Regrettabl

The adjective *high* is similar to *great* but occurs mostly as a modifier of ranks or positions. It appears most in combination with *level* and *degree*. The combination can be explained since the texts warn about the most prominent members of the secret societies, and it is thus logical that they address these prominent ranks. Notably, in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources, the adjective *high* (*fr.* 27) is mostly found in its comparative form *higher* (*fr.* 55) and modifying the noun *mysteries*, referring to the previously unknown information about Weishaupt's Illuminati which Barruel and Robison disclosed. Weishaupt used different degrees of mysteries for his followers, thus the division between higher and lower mysteries.

Table 21. Concordance of *high* in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources.

1	doc#0	lost his life because he had been close to the inside as a <b>high</b> ranking Freemason who worked for the Mafia.
2	doc#0	minati began to reconfigure its outward face. The <b>higher</b> levels started creating innocent sounding cover organiza
3	doc#0	s><s>It goes without saying that It is Impossible to be a <b>high</b> level Satanist and not have MPD.</s><s>Any person wi
4	doc#1	uch things.</s><s>What matters is that some of those in <b>high</b> and powerful positions do believe in such occult matters
5	doc#1	ired World Revolutionary Movement (WRM), along with <b>high</b> officers of Europe's Illuminized Freemasonry, met in Sw
6	doc#2	man" was obviously written into the script to represent a <b>high</b> level Illuminati member.</s><s>The film ends without gi
7	doc#3	bylon in the days of the prophet Jeremiah (602 BC), the <b>high</b> priests escaped with the holy stone.</s><s>They carried

Contrastively to *high*, *top* as a modifier of ranks and positions is only found in the contemporary sources (except for 1 instance found in the 18<sup>th</sup> c. dataset). *Top* mostly occurs in the phrases *top secret* and *top secret documents*, thus indicating that the documents described are of the highest secrecy but somehow known to the authors. Similarly to *high*, *top* is also used to indicate the highest ranking members of the Illuminati and the other secret orders.

Table 22. Concordance of *top* in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources.

1	doc#0	ind the scenes.</s><s>In contrast, to some of the other <b>top</b> families, the Astors preferred not to sit on boards of corp
2	doc#0	ilies learn what they need to know, no more.</s><s>The <b>top</b> bosses have cover jobs, and give their orders orally.</s>
3	doc#1	le most mem- bers were simply fervent worshippers, the <b>top</b> leadership had other agendas, 71 Origins Hasan's killer
4	doc#2	; book he continues to make repeated references to "the <b>Top</b> Secret documents" he saw when working in the Navy an
5	doc#2	sed UFO sightings are fully explainable and the result of <b>top</b> secret aircraft, unknown atmospheric conditions, and ev
6	doc#3	usceptible men—and women.</s><s>In fact, many in the <b>top</b> leadership ranks of the occult orders and secret societie

In line with what was previously said about the goal and the language employed by the authors, it is unsurprising that *powerful* occurs frequently. *Powerful* is predominantly used to modify groups of people, i.e., man, family, figure, and people. Since the families, groups, and societies that are mentioned are not just any group but the people who control humanity, it is understandable that *powerful* is the word of choice by the authors. This also explains why *powerful* frequently appears (fr. 316) in the modern sources but not in the old sources (fr. 17), since the Illuminati were not as powerful in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as they are claimed to be nowadays by the modern authors.

Table 23. Concordance of *powerful* in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources.

1	doc#0 d   discovered the names of some of the more obvious <b>powerful</b> families.</s><s>For instance, in David's notes he write
2	doc#0 de Sion appears to have been the idea of a number of <b>powerful</b> bloodlines, and included various descendents of the M
3	doc#1 context of all this, the Illuminati managed to contrive a <b>powerful</b> New World Order, and have since been running a cons
4	doc#1 rty, which only increased their already prosperous and <b>powerful</b> order.</s><s>With the loss of the Holy Land, the Hosp
5	doc#2 ers.</s><s>Most all media sources are owned by very <b>powerful</b> groups who have no intention of divulging the truth,</s
6	doc#3 cret society whose members include some of the most <b>powerful</b> men in the world (including both George H.W. and Ged

*Important* is similar to the previously mentioned adjectives, since it indicates that some part of a story holds a particular significance; it is used by both the old and the modern sources to highlight senses of secrecy and urgency. Contrary to *powerful*, *important* mainly modifies inanimate objects, such as documents, facts, points, and links, as well as groups of people.

Table 24. Concordance of *important* in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources.

1	doc#0 yston store.</s><s>What you have just received is the <b>important</b> link in tracing the Satanic Collins bloodline.</s><s>Sa
2	doc#0 for many generations.</s><s>The Rothschilds are an <b>important</b> part of the history of the Seal of Solomon (also known
3	doc#0 was occupied by the Schiff family who were to play an <b>important</b> role later on as agents of the Rothschilds,</s><s>Eve
4	doc#0 e thing, with minor variations.</s><s>One of the most <b>important</b> things in satanism is sealing.</s><s>Everything is sea
5	doc#2 e titled Why Johnny Can't Come Home.</s><s>What's <b>important</b> to understand about the Johnny Gosch case is that nu
6	doc#2 e him highly.</s><s>I think relativity is one of the most <b>important</b> ideas of the twentieth century.</s><s>Einstein gave u
7	doc#3 sexually deviant.</s><s>In summary, yet another very <b>important</b> reason why the Illuminati elite pursue the building of n

### 3.2.3. Lexical verbs

The lexical verbs that have been analyzed display the tendency of the authors to use arguments based on authority. The verbs used over the time periods to support their arguments differ, as is explained in more detail in this section. In addition, modern writers tend to use verbs that contain a judgment on whether the following statement is true or false.

#### *I know*

The authors go to great lengths to prove their credibility and establish trust in their readers. The trust their readers have in the writers provides them with authority to use the verb *know* in the first person. Especially Springmeier, writing about the modern Illuminati families, makes claims based on his authority, as seen in the examples below.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>57</sup> The other modern authors also use this construction, but since Springmeier predominantly displays this technique only his work has been used in the Table 24.

Table 25. Concordance of *I know* in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources.

1	doc#0 th, </s><s>Why?</s><s>Dope, Inc, doesn't say this but I <b>know</b> that it is because the Committee of 300 decides such thi
2	doc#0 l from other people, but that doesn't hold water. </s><s>I <b>know</b> of no one else who has openly talked about the Collins f
3	doc#0 go through this all so you can see. </s><s>Immediately, I <b>know</b> this whole thing was a frame. </s><s>I wasn't sure what
4	doc#0 ɜ found innocent, </s><s>I knew I was innocent. </s><s>I <b>knew</b> the evidence was there to prove it. </s><s>And the lawyer
5	doc#0 y working with it to secretly destroy Christianity. </s><s>I <b>know</b> from inside information that the hierarchy is sending orde
6	doc#0 I up in prison in connection to the illegal drug trade that I <b>know</b> that Bill Clinton was also involved with helping while he v

Springmeier uses his authority to conveniently relieve him from the duty of proving his claims (Table 25). Another device used is claiming that something used to be universally known and that knowledge has now been lost, except, conveniently, by the author and, by extension, the audience which he is trying to educate (Table 26). By making these claims, the authors relieve themselves of the duty of showing further evidence since it is proven firsthand by themselves.

Table 26. Concordance of *known* in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources.

1	doc#0 British settlers, mostly Puritans, some of whom are also <b>known</b> as Pilgrims and Congregationalists settled in New Engla
2	doc#0 led Magic, "...</s><s>[the] pentagram. </s><s>This was <b>known</b> to medieval alchemy as the sign of the cloven hoof ... (f
3	doc#1 ncient Sumer in Mesopotamia, </s><s>This was the first <b>known</b> great civilization and was located between the Tigris and
4	doc#1 some kind which we have now identified and who were <b>known</b> as the Shining Ones." </s><s>Gardiner and Osborn said
5	doc#2 Secret documents was nothing but a retelling of publicly <b>known</b> information that had been talked about in the anti-New V
6	doc#3 esoteric metaphor of the "Diamond in the Lotus" is well <b>known</b> among both Hindus and occultic-minded illuminists. </s>
7	doc#3 emation of Care," and theirs is the exclusive men's club <b>known</b> as the Bohemian Grove. </s><s>Most of these wealthy s

The authors thus use the verb *know* to convey information they regard as true and which should be believed on account of their proclamations alone.

***See and observe***

The verb *see* in the corpora indicates that something has happened or will happen. Given in the past tense and present perfect constructions, *saw* and *seen* refer to instances where the author claims to have proven something, often referring back in the first person plural (“we saw” or “we have seen”).

Table 27. Concordance of *see* in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources.

1	doc#0 and the world from behind the scenes.</s><s>They have <b>seen</b> for themselves the power that secret societies exercise f
2	doc#0 the Astor family after John Jacob died.</s><s>We have <b>seen</b> more of their meanness and 19 connections to corruptio
3	doc#0 ristians will not even stand up for their own kind, we can <b>see</b> how much hold the idea of the "Chosen Race" theory ha
4	
5	doc#2 ) shut down and give up his radio show.</s><s>One can <b>see</b> how a large percentage of the viewers of his video claim
6	doc#2 most people accept as the truth.</s><s>But now that you <b>see</b> beyond this false reality that is presented to the world, th
7	doc#3 in shall be!</s><s>As Above, So Below.</s><s>Now we <b>see</b> the reason for the many pagan "serpent mounds" discov
8	doc#3 re Deity worshipped by true Christians.</s><s>As we've <b>seen</b> , their god is the polar opposite.</s><s>Throughout the (

The present tense urges people to witness what the writers are claiming. Examples of this are sentences 5, 6, and 7. The verb *see* is thus mostly used to address the reader directly and reaffirm the information that has been expressed. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century sources, *see* displays similarities to *know*. Both of these verbs use the speaker's authority as their main source of credibility.

Table 28. Concordance of *I see* in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources.

1	doc#0 ned as a strenuous opponent of the Sect.</s><s>I have <b>seen</b> no publication with his name to it, except an Apology in
2	doc#0 shown in combating the public enemy, and am happy to <b>see</b> that he has wrought on the best materials.</s><s>Witho
3	doc#0 >I never could conceive what this Mr, Stark was whom I <b>saw</b> perpetually abused by the Illuminees,</s><s>Nicolai an
4	doc#3 society, it was the little principality of Neuwied.</s><s>I <b>saw</b> it in 1770.</s><s>The town was neat, and the palace ha
5	doc#3 hevalier du Soleil of the French Masonry.</s><s>I have <b>seen</b> three different forms,</s><s>In the Regent degree, the
6	doc#3 those we know were in the upper ranks of life; and I can <b>see</b> that it required much wheedling, and many letters of lon
7	doc#3 rom them.</s><s>It is therefore with double regret that I <b>see</b> any of them join in the arrogant pretensions of our Illumi
8	doc#3 rs were found their patents of Illumination.</s><s>I also <b>see</b> the fate of Geneva ascribed to the operations of Illumina
9	doc#3 shaupt's Association.</s><s>I was not surprized when I <b>saw</b> marks of its interference in the French Revolution.–In hu
10	doc#3 .–The effects of this must appear in many faults, which I <b>see</b> , without being able at present to amend them.</s><s>I

Furthermore, the high frequency of *see* in the first person plural indicates an alignment between the author and the reader. As the readers, whom the authors have shown their alleged evidence to, are now knowledgeable about the subject matter, the authors create an us versus them mentality by aligning themselves with the reader. This alignment is reinforced by the authors' tendency to frame the narrative as a dichotomy between good and evil, since the reader will place themselves on the side of the alleged good. Both periods use this alignment

strategy.<sup>58</sup> However, where the modern sources employ it solely to look back (Table 28), the older texts also employ the first person plural to indicate what is coming.

*Observe* carries a similar meaning as *see*. However, *observe* requires a more careful approach. The verb *observe* is predominantly present in the 18<sup>th</sup> c. works of Barruel and Robison. The usage of *observe* is two-fold, as can be seen in the examples below.

Table 29. Concordance of *observe* in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources.

1	doc#0 isorganizing mysteries of Manichaeism, since we may <b>observe</b> him recommending the study of them to his disciples a
2	doc#0 ucation had been but little attended to.</s><s>We may <b>observe</b> Weishaupt consulting with his confidant Zwack on this
3	doc#3 cannot produce such wonderful and certain effects, (for <b>observe</b> , that Weishaupt repeatedly assures us that his means
4	doc#3 thoughts which have not yet come before us.</s><s>{ <b>observe</b> it is to the Illuminati Regentes he is speaking, whose of
5	doc#3 his point.</s><s>Philo says, [163] Brutus writes, (N. B. <b>Observe</b> here the casuistry.) We need not wonder that Diomed
6	
7	doc#3 lect on what passes in our own minds, and on what we <b>observe</b> in the world, of the mighty influence of our desires and

In lines 3, 4, 5, and *observe* is used as an imperative where the reader is directly addressed to notice something. In the other sentences, the authors use the first person plural to align themselves with the reader once again. *Observe* occurs less frequently in the contemporary sources (fr. 18). Such discrepancy in usage might be the result of the fact that modern readers of conspiracy theories want to carry out their own investigation and thus do not want to be told what to notice.<sup>59</sup>

### *Claim and explain*

The usage of *claim*, does not align with the traditional definition in the OED in the modern corpus, namely to demand recognition of a possession.<sup>60</sup> The usage is very similar to *proclaim*, since all of these claims were made in public (hence the authors know about them), and the objects of the claims are mostly concerning information opposed to titles or pieces of land, as the OED suggests. Consequently, the verb *proclaim* appears very little (30 times) in the modern corpus.<sup>61</sup> What distinguishes claims is their potential for being disputed. This

<sup>58</sup> The modern sources only use this strategy to look back. The 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources also use the construction *shall see*, to indicate the evidence they will supply. Due to space constraint this has been left out.

<sup>59</sup> Butter, Michael, and Peter L. Knight. *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*. Routledge EBooks, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429452734>. P59

<sup>60</sup> "claim, v.". OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press.

<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/33646?rskey=Ib4dD7&result=2> (accessed April 20, 2023).

<sup>61</sup> *Proclaim* appears 40 times in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources.

connotation is carried over to *claim* as a verb, hence implying that a statement might be false. The author has, therefore, already judged the claim's validity. It is worth noting that *claim* does not appear in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources in this manner, thus indicating an innovative usage.

Table 30. Concordance of *claim* in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources.

1	doc#0	letter of Tara Center Emergence, Jan 1982 Issue.) He <b>claims</b> that in 1959, he telepathically received a message from
2	doc#0	or information than all the other people?</s><s>People <b>claim</b> he simply borrowed from other people, but that doesn't
3	doc#0	founded in 1956,</s><s>Just like Reverend Moon they <b>claim</b> to be Christians, but teach and practice other things,</s>
4	doc#1	: themselves to explain.</s><s>The answer is that they <b>claimed</b> everything they achieved came from beings who came
5	doc#1	sonic symbol of the square and compass,</s><s>They <b>claimed</b> it originated as a stylized form of the ancient symbol for
6	doc#2	riter.</s><s>In the late 1970s a man named John Todd <b>claimed</b> to be a former Illuminati member and told audiences th
7	doc#2	» of launching the Christian Rock industry.</s><s>Todd <b>claimed</b> that the lyrics didn't matter, and that the music had a de
8	doc#3	exual objects that could bring forth children.</s><s>He <b>claimed</b> also that diamonds watered with dew during the May D

In all the examples above, the authors discredit the prime source, and they do so by employing the verb *claim*, which is exclusively used in the context of information shared by people other than the authors whom they seek to discredit.

Just like *claim* is employed to indicate that the following phrase is false, it is clear that *explain* is used in the opposite manner. Explanations stand for proof, hence invalidating the need for further evidence. The agents explaining can be human and non-human (movies, books, letters). In the dataset, these explanations need no further proof since someone else has already proven them. For instance, modern sources often quote each other as explanations, and to add validity to their claims, thus going in circles without providing real proof. Similarly to *claim*, the authors have already decided whether what is being said is true or untrue. In the case of *explain*, the phrase following is deemed trustworthy. This usage is solely found in the contemporary sources; in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources, *explain* is mostly used to address Weishaupt explaining his goals to his followers.

### 3.2.4. Adverbs

Regarding the adverbs, two categories can be identified. The first category is conjunctive adverbs, which show the relation between different independent clauses. The second category is degree adverbs which are solely represented by *most*.<sup>62</sup>

#### Conjunctive adverbs

The adverb *also* expresses amplification.<sup>63</sup> Since the members of the Illuminati are accused of many crimes, it is logical that a conjunctive adverb is high on the frequency list. Taking the function of *also* into account, its high occurrence after a noun phrase and before a form of *to be* is also logical.

The adverb *even* functions as a discourse marker, indicating that what is referred to represents an extreme case.<sup>64</sup> Since the authors' goal is partially to shock their readers into believing them, it is thus logical that *even* occurs with a high frequency. In both periods, the usage of *even* is high, thus indicating that there are a lot of extreme cases in the texts.

Table 31. Concordance of *even* in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources.

Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1	doc#0 I therein we behold him entreating a first, a second, and	<b>even</b>	a third confidant, to seek, or cause to be sought, and to
2	doc#0 he might infuse the same wish throughout the world; he	<b>even</b>	assured himself of success.</s><s>With the talents of a
3	doc#0 id spreading from the towns to the country, and resident	<b>even</b>	in the courts of Princes,</s><s>He already heard those
4	doc#0 </s><s>He has seen the people agitated, animated, and	<b>even</b>	misled to ferocity; but he must also be informed how tho
5	doc#0 superiors sent to the different towns and provinces, and	<b>even</b>	into distant countries, to propagate its doctrines and to e
6	doc#0 s the means; that is to say, that there are no means, not	<b>even</b>	theft, poison, homicide, or calumny, but are just and lau
7	doc#0 3 to live without princes or governments, without laws or	<b>even</b>	civil society, is to be the general tendency of all his lesse
8	doc#1 f the Clergy become, so confident of their strength, that	<b>even</b>	in our legislature, they have lately ventured to bring forw
9	doc#2 ies of the like infernal nature, were taught as lawful, and	<b>even</b>	as virtuous actions,</s><s>To crown such a system of f
10	doc#3 ither offensive pamphlets were in secret circulation, and	<b>even</b>	larger works of very dangerous tendency, and several o
11	doc#3 oofs of a combination of the Journalists, Reviewers, and	<b>even</b>	of the publishers and booksellers, to suppress the writin
12	doc#3 id capable of great things; but lost to truth, to virtue, and	<b>even</b>	to the affectation of common decency--In short, a shame
13	doc#4 ng us, so lost to every principle of religion, morality, and	<b>even</b>	common decency, as to reprobate the measure; as to co
14	doc#4 tended its branches through a great part of Europe, and	<b>even</b>	into America.</s><s>Their aim is to enlist in every coun

<sup>62</sup> There are other interesting adverbs, but because *most* is the most interesting one it has been prioritized.

<sup>63</sup> "also, adv. and n.". OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/5740?redirectedFrom=also> (accessed April 20, 2023).

<sup>64</sup> "even, adv. and prep.". OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press. <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/65255?rskey=rOqhxA&result=7> (accessed April 20, 2023).

The examples above display the amplification conveyed by *even*. Usually, it follows the pattern of fact number one, (optional) fact number two, and then *even* which modifies the most shocking fact number three.

At first glance, the adverb *only* seems to be the exact opposite of *also*. *Only* has an extremely limited scope, with its meaning being nothing else. However, the use of *only* is quite logical. Firstly, both in the old texts (*fr.* 250) and in the modern sources (*fr.* 540), *only* is modified by another adverb (*fr.* 50 and *fr.* 110), namely *not*. As a result, *only* conveys the opposite meaning, and thus the phrase *not only* has a broader scope. When following a form of *to be*, *not only* seems to take the function of *also* and otherwise that of *even*. So, *not only* functions as a linking adverbial phrase, simultaneously boosting the preceding phrase and the following phrase. See Table 32 below for examples.

Table 32. Concordance of *not only* in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources.

1	doc#0 c House of David with their blood which they believe is <b>not only</b> from the House of David but also from the lineage of Je
2	doc#0 ough to stand up & write the truth.</s><s>Disney has <b>not only</b> left mind-control victims in its wake, but they have hara
3	doc#1 lain both history and society.</s><s>Examples include <b>not only</b> tales of the Great Flood, but also a virgin who produces
4	doc#1 signs used by the old Illuminati are mimicked frequently <b>not only</b> by entertainment celebrities but by sports figures and p
5	doc#2 easure.</s><s>Many believe what they were after was <b>not only</b> gold, but some hidden documents as well.</s><s>Som
6	doc#3 of past Sovereign Grand Commanders.</s><s>But it is <b>not only</b> the Masonic Lodge that reveres the Serpent and Drag

Secondly, the adverb *only* adds to the secretiveness of the subjects. Often *only* refers to the people who possess information hidden from the public (modern sources) or the small misstep it will take to lose civil society (18<sup>th</sup> century). Table 33 below shows examples from the modern sources.

Table 33. Concordance of *only* in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources.

1	doc#0 story about him very much under wraps.</s><s>Perhaps <b>only</b> people like the CIA and intelligence personnel know the
2	doc#1 what they were told.</s><s>As with the future Illuminati, <b>only</b> their leaders knew the underlying truths of their order.</s>
3	doc#1 t, this is true.</s><s>Masonic literature makes clear that <b>only</b> those initiates who progress beyond thirty-three-degree
4	doc#2 ention foreign policy.</s><s>Paul is one of the few, if not <b>only</b> Congressman who has no strings attached to him by spe
5	doc#2 the whole story of the CIA's attack on the mind.</s><s> <b>Only</b> a few insiders could have written that, and they choose t
6	doc#2 he Illuminati and occult hierarchies have kept secret and <b>only</b> allowed certain initiates to learn the contents of.</s><s>
7	doc#3 o the "profane," undiscerning reader.</s><s>To this day, <b>only</b> the deepest of occult philosophers are able to uncover th

### **Most**

The adverb *most* is used to modify negative adjectives, as illustrated by the examples below.

Table 34. Concordance of *most* as an adverb in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources.

	Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1	doc#0	he deceives, and wishes to delude his proselytes in the	<b>most</b>	atrocious manner.</s><s>When he has misled, he scoff
2	doc#0	tifices, all designed to form adepts for the most general,	<b>most</b>	astonishing, and most dreadful Conspiracy that ever exi
3	doc#3	ng increasing pain, he died on the 23d of April 1793, the	<b>most</b>	wretched and loathsome victim of unbridled sensuality,<
4	doc#0	reader here sees a list of the most Anti-religious and the	<b>most</b>	Atheistical works, [*8] and that they are reserved for the
5	doc#3	lan and Aim of J— C—,</s><s>These books are of the	<b>most</b>	Antichristian character, and some of them aim at shakin
6	doc#4	s of Christianity of all kinds, from the most corrupt to the	<b>most</b>	pure, are reviled and abused, in a singular manner, in si
7	doc#2	it the effusion of which is accomplished a wonderful and	<b>most</b>	affecting convulsion of this guilty world, and the final rui
8	doc#0	the discovery of such a code of artifice and cunning; the	<b>most</b>	unrelenting wickedness and hypocrisy had invented it; a
9	doc#2	utchery of great multitudes of fathers and sons, and the	<b>most</b>	deplorable dishonour of wives and daughters; That the s
10	doc#1	s>Believing, as I firmly do that the foundations of all our	<b>most</b>	precious interests are formidably assailed, and that the
11	doc#1	nerous emissaries among us; to reject, as we would the	<b>most</b>	deadly poison, their atheistical and destructive princip
12	doc#3	l, that though it is here that Christianity has suffered the	<b>most</b>	violent attacks, it is here that the place is most tenable.-

*Most* occurs in both periods as a degree adverb. The use of *most* as an adverb is similar to that of *great*, namely, to boost the evilness of the perpetrators. The 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources use *most* to emphasize the wickedness of Weishaupt and his Illuminati, while in the contemporary source, it mostly co-occurs with the adjective *powerful*.<sup>65</sup> This difference can be explained by the fact that the old texts mainly illustrate how deplorable a character Weishaupt is, while the modern texts try to convince the reader about the people who are secretly in control.

<sup>65</sup> The phrase *most powerful* occurs 60 times in the contemporary sources.

## 4. Discussion

### Key Findings

The present thesis has examined the linguistic similarities between the 18<sup>th</sup>-century and 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources regarding the Illuminati. The keyword lists provide little insight into the authors' stance since they are mostly filled with highly topic-specific words. They do, however, provide valuable insights into the topics the texts cover. These insights confirm the shift that Hofstadter predicts that the threat, which conspiracy theorists warn their readers about, currently comes from within the government, instead of from a foreign power. The frequency lists provided useful information for a more in-depth analysis. The qualitative analysis revealed that the main noun to refer to the secretive groups, namely *order*, has remained the same. The analysis also indicates that the modern authors have a greater range of nouns to refer to groups of people, which allow for more varied writings. The manner in which adjectives are used remains similar, but since the modern writers focus not solely on the existence of the Illuminati but also on related concerns such as mind control, satanism, and the occult, there are more adjectives relating to these topics. The authors from both periods use verbs to support their authoritative arguments. The 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources use *see* while the modern sources use *know*. In addition, the contemporary sources use epistemically loaded verbs, that is, verbs that already indicate whether what is said is true or false. Both periods tend to use conjunctive adverbs to shock their readers.

### Interpretation of Results

*Order* and *society* occur in both the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources with the highest frequency to indicate a collective of people. This similarity can be explained due to the fact that the historical groups (*orders*) and the secret *societies* have remained the same. Data start to contrast when the authors use nouns with an overt negative stance. The older sources use the pejorative term *sect* when referring to Weishaupt's order, while the modern sources interestingly refrain from using negatively loaded nouns. Instead, the modern authors use neutral nouns such as *group* and *organization*, perhaps as an attempt to present their books as objective. Instead, the writers portray the Illuminati's objectives as incredibly wicked to persuade their readers to take action against these groups.<sup>66</sup> Another reason for these almost inconceivable evil goals of the Illuminati is that modern books need to sell. Their books are commercial products with a following that demands more and more extreme claims. A

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<sup>66</sup> Among the goals are: total mind control, drinking the blood and raping of children, and trying to summon the Antichrist.

suggestion for why these books keep becoming more extreme is thus that, since the authors need to stand out from the others, their book needs to be increasingly extreme.<sup>67</sup>

The two categories of adjectives discussed in 3.2.2 demonstrated that they which serve the same purpose, namely to convince the reader that the authors are warning about people that are great in numbers, occupy high positions in society, and that their goals are far-reaching. It is thus unsurprising that the adjectives with the highest frequencies intensify the nouns they are modifying. Raising the level of the threat might not be the only explanation. By using phrases such as *several people*, *most high ranking officials*, and *many women*, the authors can refrain from giving concrete evidence. Instead, they can use vague, threatening terms to conceal the fact that they do not possess any concrete evidence.

The verbs show the biggest developments between the periods. The older sources use *see* in the first person to declare truths based on their authority, meaning they support their arguments by letters *they have seen*. This use is similar to the usage of *know* by the contemporary writers. Both verbs are used to support arguments based on authority, that is, the author wants the reader to believe what they are saying because they are saying it. This trust from the reader is vital to the authors, since the evidence they deliver can be scarce. These claims would thus only be well received by readers who have already put their trust in these authors. Because the authors are believed based on their authority, they are no longer required to prove their claims, allowing them to explain events with claims that most people would find unbelievable. In addition, *see* is used in both periods to repeat what has already been said by the writers, and to rephrase what should have been understood by the reader. This use of *see* predominantly occurs in the first person plural, where the authors align themselves with the reader. This alignment serves to reduce the distance between the author and the reader and, consequently to raise the level of connection (and trust) between the author and the reader. *Observe* is similar to *see*; the reader is reminded or told what to understand, but *observe* occurs predominantly in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources. The authors do this since there is a lot of information in their texts, and they want it to be understood as they meant it: there is no room for personal interpretation. This attitude can explain the lack of

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<sup>67</sup> Butter, Michael, and Peter L. Knight. *Routledge Handbook of Conspiracy Theories*. Routledge EBooks, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429452734>. P486

*observe* in the modern sources, since the modern readers mostly want to do their own research and thus do not (directly) want to be told what to assume.<sup>68</sup>

*Claim* and *explain* are used by contemporary sources but not by 18th-century sources.<sup>69</sup> By actively disputing the phrases that come after the verb *claim*, the authors create an environment where they solely need to use *claim* to imply that someone is lying. Since conspiracy books are primarily about uncovering truths, verbs that indicate that someone is lying are vital, especially if this meaning is recalled unconsciously in the reader. *Explain* carries the exact opposite meaning as *claim*, and the authors predominantly use *explain* to indicate that another author has uncovered a hidden truth or provided enough evidence. When further examined, the evidence from the person that allegedly explained or proved a claim is often lacking; however, in their texts, it enables the writers to present their truths as undisputed in a continuous circular argument. The reason for the absence of *claim* in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources is obvious; it was not yet in use as it is today. The lack of *explain* in the 18<sup>th</sup>-century sources can be accounted for because it used to be more accepted that a well-respected author made claims on authority. Morse and Robison are cases in point, whose claims ought to be believed on the basis of their good authority.<sup>70</sup> The acceptance of authoritative arguments renders the need for a third-party explanation redundant. Adverbs have a similar role as adjectives, namely to intensify the following elements. In the dataset, adverbs might seem less sensational than adjectives since they are concerned with satanism or dark magic; their function is no less. Conjunctive adverbs are frequently used by the authors from both periods. Their high frequency can be explained by the fact that the authors make connections between the suspected members of the Illuminati and specific events. In contrast to the adjectives, the chosen adverbs have remained relatively unchanged.

### **Limitations of work**

There are many limitations to this work. Firstly, the time that could be spent on it and the space given to present it were limited. Further, only books that were obtainable online could be analyzed for this research. In addition, the sources needed to be in a specific file format because they could otherwise not be analyzed in Sketch Engine. Although the sample for this

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<sup>68</sup> Douglas, Karen M., Joseph E. Uscinski, Robbie M. Sutton, Aleksandra Cichocka, Turkey Salim Nefes, Chee Siang Ang, and Farzin Deravi. "Understanding Conspiracy Theories." *Political Psychology* 40, no. S1 (March 20, 2019): 3–35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12568>.

<sup>69</sup> At least with the meaning with which they occur in the modern sources.

<sup>70</sup> That good authority being Barruel and Robison, and even each other, showing the circular reasoning.

research was selected with great care, a larger sample would be better since it would yield more detailed results. The final limitation is the knowledge of the author. I did a lot of reading on the subject and the methods used to analyze these texts. However, corpus linguistics, pragmatics/in-depth analysis, and the use of Sketch Engine are all still relatively new fields for me; thus, with more experience in these fields, the results might be more informative.

### **Recommendations for future research**

Regarding future research, I would recommend the combination of quantitative and qualitative research to analyze modern writing styles. Since using only a quantitative approach would give insufficient information about the subtle nuance found in the conspiracy theories. Contrary, only a qualitative approach risks overlooking important features. It might be interesting to examine other specific conspiracy theories, such as 9/11 or the Corona Virus, and compare these results to other conspiracies. In addition, the combination of quantitative and qualitative research could prove illuminating to examine and identify loaded language, for example in the Tweets of politicians.

## 5. Conclusion

The present thesis examined the linguistic similarities between the 18<sup>th</sup>-century and 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources. These sources are generally seen as presenting conspiracy theories regarding the Illuminati. The main intent of the writers remains, namely to inform their readers about conspiring groups that mean harm to humanity. This thesis has demonstrated that quantitative analysis must be accompanied by careful, qualitative analysis. The qualitative analysis unveils interesting nuances, which would be lost in the ocean of raw data obtained by means of quantitative analysis. The comparison between the 18<sup>th</sup>-century and the 21<sup>st</sup>-century sources indicates that the language used by the authors has in some respects stayed the same, and evolved in others. For instance, the type of nouns to refer to the members of the Illuminati has remained the same, hence *order* and *group*. Contrary, since the modern author has more words to refer to specific types of groups, they make use of a greater variety of nouns to indicate collectives of people, hence *organization*, *group*, and *cult*. In addition, the modern authors use nouns with more neutral connotations to claim an objective view on their topics. Adjectives underwent a similar process., The modern writers use more extreme adjectives such as *satanic*, *occult*, and *ancient* to convince the reader of the wickedness of the Illuminati's goals. The inclusion of these adjectives is also topic-related, as explained in the discussion. However, the adjectives appearing with the highest frequency have remained the same.<sup>71</sup> The examination of the verbs demonstrated that the authors from both periods use their authority only to support their claims. However, the verbs used to support their claims are different: the older sources favor *see* and the modern sources do *know*. In addition, the authors use the verbs *claim* and *explain* to signal to their readers whether they judge something to be valid or invalid. The most occurring adverbs are conjunctive adverbs, which can be explained by the tendency of conspiracy authors to connect people and events.

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<sup>71</sup> See section 3.1.3

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