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INTRODUCTION

Modern, religious satanism must be separated from historical examples, real or fictional, for a number of reasons. First, most if not all of the alleged historical instances pointing toward devil worship are inverted Christian rituals based on the theology of the Christian faith, or the misunderstood practices of some pre- or non-Christian religion. Modern satanism should be understood as a product of the meeting between modernity and Western esotericism, and as such a cousin to the New Age and Human Potential movements. Second, as Gareth Medway states in his *Lure of the Sinister: The Unnatural History of Satanism* (2001), what we have in terms of historical evidence amounts to statements made under torture, uncorroborated testimonies, and highly tendentious sources. In fact, even the often-cited Chambre Ardente affair in seventeenth-century France and the Hellfire clubs in England in the eighteenth century are more mythical than historical in nature. There might have been small groups of heretic Christians worshipping the devil at some point in history, but these instances are unrecorded and inconsequential, as are the "Black Masses" put on for show in the decadent cities of late nineteenth-century Europe. Even though it is impossible to prove a negative, we are left with no conclusive proof of any large-scale satanic activity, conspiracy or otherwise, before the twentieth century—and organized satanist groups are quite rare prior to the 1960s.

A new form of satanism was initiated with the founding of the

Church of Satan by Anton LaVey on April 30, 1966. It was not long, however, before satanism expanded well beyond the Church of Satan and became a decentralized movement; indeed, modern satanism continues to develop in various directions today. The Church of Satan originated from an attempt to reorganize modern occult and magical teachings around a satanic motif. The church advocated a philosophy of individual pragmatism and hedonism rather than emphasizing the worship of Satan. In LaVey's hands, Satan becomes a symbol for indulgence, vital existence, natural wisdom, and the human being's "true" animal nature. He also emphasized that the human being is just another animal. All of these themes can be found in LaVey's *The Satanic Bible* (1969). Rather than being a guide to devil worship, LaVey's work advocates a blend of Epicurean hedonism and Ayn Rand's philosophy of selfishness, flavored with a pinch of ritual magic.

LaVey is indebted to a number of different sources for his synthesis. Especially important are:

- 1) Traditional folklore about the devil and the novelists who creatively represent this folklore in their fiction (e.g., Dennis Wheatley).
- 2) Certain Romantic poets who, as a literary device, created a noble Promethean Satan at odds with the dehumanizing aspects of modern society and traditional religiosity.
- 3) The ritual magic tradition, particularly as that tradition was interpreted by the occultist Aleister Crowley.
- 4) Certain popular thinkers, especially Ayn Rand.

Although LaVey has often been dismissed as having done little more than throw together disparate ideas and practices into an artificial syncretism and dress it up in sensational trappings, it appears that his creation is highly attractive to some people.

In order to comprehend religious satanism, one must first understand that Satan has become an ambivalent symbol within the modern world. Part of the reason for the attractiveness of LaVeyan Satanism is its ability to hold together a number of diverse meanings found in this symbol. In the Western cultural tradition, the devil represents much more than absolute evil. By default, the Prince of Darkness has come to embody some very attractive attributes. For example, because traditional Christianity has been so antisensual, Satan became associated with sex. The Christian tradition has also condemned pride, vengefulness, and avarice

and, when allied with the status quo, has promoted conformity and obedience. The three former traits and the antithesis of the latter two traits thus became diabolical characteristics. LaVeyan Satanism celebrates such "vices" as virtues, and identifies them as the core of what satanism is really all about.

LaVey, who passed away in 1997, has two biographies, one historical and one legendary. The dichotomy of these two portrayals has become apparent only in recent years. His real life was far more prosaic than the story he fabricated for the benefit of the media. LaVey effectively promoted his carefully crafted pseudo-biography through conversations with his disciples, in media interviews, and in two biographies by associates that he appears to have dictated—*The Devil's Avenger* (1974) by Burton Wolfe and *Secret Life of a Satanist* (1990) by Blanche Barton. LaVey's fictional biography was clearly meant to legitimate his self-appointed role as the "Black Pope" by portraying him as an extraordinary individual.

The Church of Satan is a rich source of splinter groups. In 1973 the Church of Satanic Brotherhood was formed by group leaders in Michigan, Ohio, and Florida. Other members of the Church of Satan in Kentucky and Indiana left to form the Ordo Templi Satanis, also short-lived. In 1975 LaVey effectively destroyed the Church of Satan as a functioning religious organization by disbanding the grotto system. (Grottos were local congregations.) This was partially in response to the mass defection of a significant portion of the most active members of the Church of Satan under the leadership of Michael Aquino. These ex-members proceeded to form a new group, the Temple of Set. Other splinter groups are the First Church of Satan and the First Satanic Church.

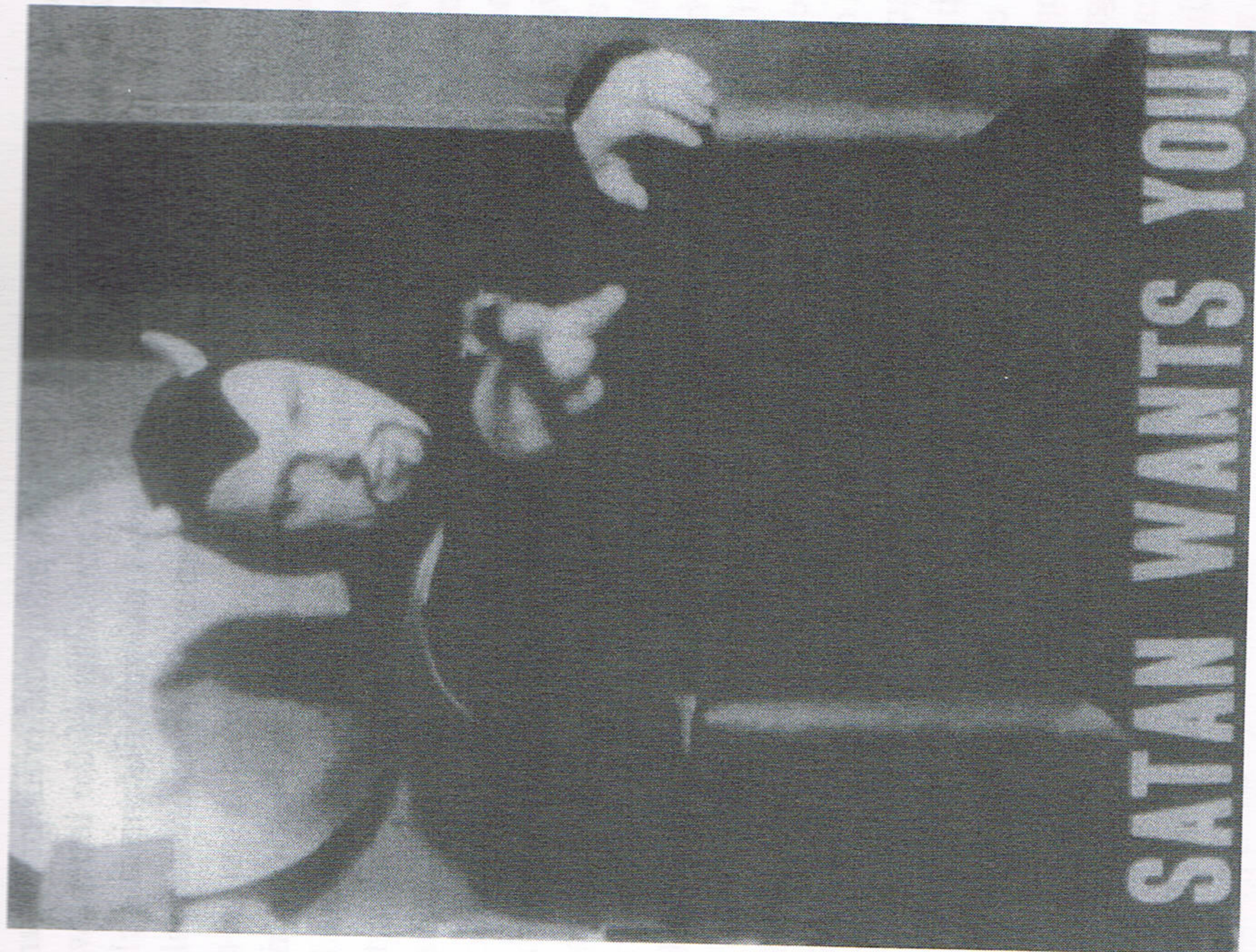
At present, Religious Satanism is a decentralized movement that coheres as a distinct religious community largely by virtue of adherence to certain themes in the thought of Anton LaVey, though few movement participants outside the Church of Satan would regard themselves as orthodox LaVeyans. Following the dissolution of the Church of Satan's grotto system and before the explosion of the Internet in the mid-1990s, the satanist movement was propagated almost entirely by *The Satanic Bible*, which has continuously been in print as a widely available, mass-market paperback. Although still an important work (as are LaVey's other books, *The Satanic Rituals* [1972], *The Satanic Witch* [1989], *The Devil's Notebook* [1992], and *Satan Speaks!* [1998]), the Internet has made other groups and their material visible and accessible online, through a new and powerful channel of communication.

Many different orientations within the satanic movement are repre-

mented by Web pages, and a certain amount of subcultural coherence is cultivated through the cross-referencing of hyperlinks and banners. While increasing the interaction of satanists previously separated by geographical, social, or even physical limitations, as well as the accessibility and visibility of satanism as a whole, this increased ease of communication has had a detrimental effect on the large off-line organizations' ability to control their potential and actual members. This has maximized conflict between groups and individuals, and stimulated the generation of a multitude of reevaluations and reorientations in the satanic community as a whole. Through the process of syncretism—the blending of different religious and philosophical traditions—new belief systems and practices are emerging.

Although Religious Satanism is interesting, academics have almost entirely ignored it. At present, there are few serious books—academic or otherwise—on contemporary Religious Satanism. What exists are a number of good scholarly volumes on the ritual abuse scare, such as James T. Richardson et al.'s *The Satanism Scare* (1991), Jeffrey Victor's *Satanic Panic* (1993), and Bill Ellis's *Raising the Devil* (2000). Beyond a couple of older articles on the Church of Satan (e.g., Alfred 1976; Moody 1974) and the "occult" (e.g., Truzzi 1972, 1974), a relatively recent paper on satanism in the UK (Harvey 1995) and a fairly long treatment on satanism and the Satanic Mythology (La Fontaine 1999), the only extended, academic treatment of organized satanism is William Bainbridge's now-dated *Satan's Power* (1978). However, even this book focuses on a single group, the Process Church, which has long since distanced itself from satanism. The matter is not much improved in other languages—noteworthy is Massimo Introvigne's *Indagine sul satanismo: Satanisti e anti-satanisti dal secolo ai nostri giorni* (1994) and *Il Satanismo* (1997), and Joachim Schmidt's *Satanismus—Mythos und Wirklichkeit* (2003).

The principal reason for this lack of attention appears to be that academics consciously or unconsciously perceive satanism as a trivial phenomenon rather than as a serious religious movement. The tendency seems to be to regard satanists as mostly immature adolescents who have adopted a diabolical veneer as a way of acting out their rebellion against parents and society. This view has been explicitly expressed in a number of professional publications, such as Anthony Moriarty's *The Psychology of Adolescent Satanism: A Guide for Parents, Counselors, Clergy, and Teachers* (1992). While never trivial, there is some truth in this picture when it is used to describe the varieties of "Teenage Satanism," "Pop-Satanism," and the Black Metal Scene, which is for the most part a diabolical veneer and not a serious religious practice—even if the rebellion



This photo was used as the cover of a "satanic party" invitation to be held on Halloween in the strip club district of San Francisco, North Beach, where Anton LaVey had his Witches Revue show. Text inside the invitation read:

TO ATTEND A "SATANIC" PARTY
AT THE FRED PAVLOWS
9:00 P.M. THURSDAY, OCT. 31
2417 Broadway
DANCING—DRINKING—EATING
AND SATANIC HAPPENINGS
DRESS: men-EVIL
 women-WICKED

RSVP: 567-█

is motivated by a serious intention. (For examples see Michael Moynihan and Didrik Söderlind's *Lords of Chaos: The Bloody Rise of the Satanic Metal Underground* [1998] and Massimo Introvigne's "The Gothic Milieu: Black Metal, Satanism, and Vampires" [1997].)

Consequently, one has to distinguish between different aspects of satanism today—on one hand, note the diffuse complex of Cultural Satanism:

- The vague "satanism" rooted in (inverted) Christian myths and morality, and manifested as a symbolic (and sometimes violent) insurrection targeting everything "Christian," as in the violent subculture found among some Black Metal enthusiasts. This has little to do with Modern Satanism in any religious sense, and is often inflated beyond proportion by the media and conservative Christian groups.
- Teenage "Satanism," combining the demonology of popular TV shows, inverted crosses, black lipstick, and a copy of some popular coffee table book on the occult and witchcraft. While, as indicated above, this practice can be deeply meaningful and performed with great sincerity by the people involved, it reflects common concerns and anxieties of adolescents, not necessarily satanism as such (but see Kathleen Lowney's "Teenage Satanism as Oppositional Youth Subculture" in this volume for interesting observations on this issue).

And, on the other hand, what could be called organized satanic worldviews:

- The structured and rational, if provocative, LaVeyan Satanism found in *The Satanic Bible*. This is an atheistic, egoistic humanism aiming at cultivating the carnal nature of the exceptional few through psychodrama and self-observation, so as to liberate them from conventional "herd" morality with the focus on guilt and sin.
- The modern, syncretistic religions honoring Satan as a metaphysical force or a personified being in no way connected to the dichotomies of Christianity, often as a symbol of nature, humanity, the intellect, or cosmic rebellion. These religions draw heavily on Western esotericism, such as the Kabbalah, ceremonial magic(k), mysticism, and/or the Left Hand Path, influenced by Tantrism, Taoism, and champions such as Aleister Crowley and Austin Osman Spare.



The "Black House." Anton LaVey's home and Church of Satan HQ during its heyday. Photo courtesy of Ole Wolf.

Our selection of articles manifests the paucity of solid academic analysis indicated above in that the collection is fairly comprehensive and spans the entire range of available material of organized satanic worldviews. The articles are organized by chronology to illustrate the development of analysis, from the early studies of the Church of Satan to the present interest in Modern Satanism as a decentralized movement. Many of the articles have not been published. The chapters on Religious Satanism are supplemented by a collection of primary materials and by a second set of scholarly papers that examine various aspects of the Satanic Ritual Abuse hoax.

The Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA) scare of the 1980s and 1990s was a paradigmatic example of what sociologists refer to as a "moral panic." During these years, the reality of a vast underground network of evil satanists abusing children and others was accepted by significant seg-

ments of the law enforcement and mental health communities. Less responsible members of the mass media, attracted by the sensationalism of these claims, avidly promoted the idea. The SRA scare declined sharply in the United States after about 1992, but continued in, among other countries, Great Britain and Norway. By the mid-1990s, public opinion had shifted, and soon the SRA perspective had been rejected by almost everyone except conservative Christians.

Because the basic notions underlying SRA derive from Christianity, many analysts have pinned the blame for the "Satanic Panic" on conservative Christians. While this evaluation is partially accurate, it ignores the roles that a number of other parties played in promoting, disseminating, and providing a degree of legitimation for SRA ideology. Although the threshold event kicking off the SRA hoax was the 1980 publication of *Michelle Remembers*—a book in which a young woman "remembers" previously repressed memories of ritual abuse—the foundational ideology for the Satanic Panic dates back to the Middle Ages. During this period, it was believed that a vast secret network of devil-worshipping witches periodically gathered together to celebrate the Black Mass, a blasphemous parody of the Catholic Mass that was thought to be the central rite of Satanism. It is highly unlikely that these diabolical gatherings were anything more than literary inventions of church authorities.

The serious resurrection of medieval notions about diabolical conspiracies began during the counterculture of the sixties. During that decade, traditional conservative Christians became concerned about what they perceived as the breakdown of tradition and the accompanying rise of Satanism. Phenomena like the popular movie *Rosemary's Baby* and the formation of LaVey's Church of Satan appeared to provide concrete evidence for the growth of the Prince of Darkness's earthly kingdom. Although LaVey was clear that Satan was no more than an iconoclastic symbol for a basically secular philosophy promoting self-seeking individualism, Christians assumed that LaVey actually worshiped the fallen angel Lucifer.

Another phenomenon noted by alarmists was the Manson Family—followers of Charles Manson responsible for several ritualistic murders, some of whom had tenuous connections with Satanism. Prominent "family" member Susan Atkins, for instance, was indirectly associated with organized Satanism by her participation as a topless dancer in a short-lived nightclub act, Witches' Workshop, organized by none other than Anton LaVey. By identifying Manson as a Satanist, certain Christian writers were able to claim that real satanic groups existed that were

involved in ritualistic murder. Manson's priority of place would hold until the Matamoros murders in the late eighties.

All of these factors contributed to the emergence of a significant antisatanist literature within the conservative Christian subculture. The first important book containing the personal confessions of an alleged ex-Satanist was Mike Warnke's 1972 *The Satan Seller*, which sold hundreds of thousands of copies. Warnke, who asserted that he had been a satanic high priest, claimed he had attended secret strategy meetings with, among others, Anton LaVey and Charles Manson, as a part of a nationwide conspiracy to erode the moral integrity of the youth through drugs, sex, and alternative lifestyle choices.

Though Warnke's book would eventually inspire many imitators, the threshold book identified as the key publication setting the Satanic Panic into motion was *Michelle Remembers*. This work, purporting to present a true story based on the recovered memories of Michelle Smith, provided the remaining components of SRA ideology, namely, the key concept of Satanic Ritual Abuse, plus a paradigm for recovering repressed memories of such abuse through what became known as Recovered Memory Therapy.

Michelle Remembers describes extreme physical, sexual, and physical abuse supposedly subjected upon Smith when she was a child. The horror story she told from her psychiatrist's couch struck such a chord among readers that the Vatican investigated her claims and Hollywood offered her a movie contract. Dedicated to His Satanic Majesty from the age of five by her own mother, Smith claimed to have witnessed murder, extreme debauchery, the mutilation of animals, and the sacrifice of babies. She was forced to eat worms and drink blood. Her therapist, Lawrence Pazder, who apparently coined the expression "ritual abuse," left his wife to marry his patient. Reciprocating, Smith left her husband to marry her therapist.

A prominent example of the development of the "survivor" stories was the "breeder" or "broodmare" motif found in another alleged eyewitness testimony recovered during therapy: that of Lauren Stratford in *Satan's Underground*. Building upon the framework established by Lawrence Pazder and Michelle Smith, the story continued to disclose the existence of large child-breeding rings where women were kept imprisoned, drugged, and impregnated for the sole purpose of supplying babies for satanic rituals. Even though Stratford's story was later rejected completely due to internal inconsistencies and lack of corroboration with empirical facts, it initially supplied complementary "evidence" for the power and ruthlessness of the satanic conspiracy.

Concerned that a network of secret satanists might really exist, law enforcement officials began to take charges of SRA seriously in the 1980s. It quickly became evident, however, that there was no hard evidence. Often investigators went to extreme lengths and great expense to recover physical evidence. The only evidence was in the "recovered memories" of numerous "survivors." Retrospectively, however, it is now clear that these were false memories resulting from improper interview techniques, which, in effect, implanted memories of imagined events by suggestion and leading questions.

Another factor impacting the satanism scare was the increasing concern over abused children as an important public issue. Many SRA cases were pursued on the basis of the testimony of children. Therapists had been influenced by the then-prevalent line of thinking that children's claims of sexual abuse must be believed at face value and that the same children were to be disbelieved if they later took back their claims. This particular approach would later be abandoned after researchers demonstrated that children could be prompted to recount imagined incidents as if they were true in the face of constant questioning. But at the time of the SRA scare, such methods were still regarded as not only acceptable but as state-of-the-art. Thus counselors and child protection officials pumped children full of leading questions reflecting ritual abuse ideology and, not coincidentally, ended up finding evidence for the existence of ritual abuse in children's responses.

Another player in the Satanic Panic was the Anti-Cult Movement (ACM). The SRA movement adopted both the stereotype of sinister cults and the mind control notion of the ACM. Although understood as a variant on cult mind control, satanic mind control was originally invoked for a completely different reason: cult mind control explained why someone's adult child could join a self-evidently "crazy" religious group. Satanic programming, on the other hand, helped to legitimate SRA ideology by explaining how a hypothetical network of secretive underground satanic cult groups could manage to control both their victims and their members so that no one would ever reveal the truth about their existence. It also provided a theoretical background for understanding how Recovered Memory Therapy (hypnotizing alleged victims to uncover repressed memories of abuse) worked, and why Recovered Memory Therapy was necessary. The ACM, for its part, climbed onboard the ritual abuse bandwagon to expand its own scope of activities. As public concern over satanism grew, ACM groups received so many inquiries about satanism and clandestine satanic cults that they developed information packets to sell to callers. Composed largely of Xeroxed

newspaper and popular magazine articles, such packets simply repeated popular stereotypes. Entering into the arena of public concern about satanism also gave the ACM a new forum within which to promote its perspective on cults and mind control.

Yet another important player in the Satanic Panic was the mass media. Because of its sensationalist appeal, satanism and SRA were the topics of numerous talk shows, including those of Oprah Winfrey, Sally Jesse Raphaël, Phil Donahue, and Geraldo Rivera. Of these talk show hosts, Rivera has been identified as contributing the most to the ritual abuse topic. Rivera's most influential program was the television special "Devil Worship: Exposing Satan's Underground," broadcast by NBC on October 25, 1988. Aired for two hours during prime time, this special was obviously designed to fit in with the Halloween season programming. It has been said that this special was watched by more people than any other previous television documentary.

One of Rivera's guests on this important program had listed in her 1987 book *Prepare for War* numerous potential "doorways" to demon possession and satanism, such as fortune tellers, horoscopes, fraternity oaths, vegetarianism, yoga, self-hypnosis, acupuncture, biofeedback, fantasy role-playing games like Dungeons and Dragons, adultery, homosexuality, judo, and karate. Rock music was described as "a carefully mas-termined plan by none other than Satan himself." Rivera was careful to confine his questions to this particular "satanism expert" so as not to elicit anyone else's comments on these surrealistic aspects of the satanic threat.

Eventually a handful of states (California, Idaho, and Illinois) were prompted to actually pass laws that addressed Satanic Ritual Abuse—though the word "satanic" was often left out of the rubric so that the laws did not sound like hangovers from the Middle Ages. These laws were composed and passed at the height of the ritual abuse panic in the early nineties. Because such laws appear to officially recognize the real existence of SRA, they represent a victory for people and organizations promoting the myth of ritual abuse.

One of the key documents leading to the demise of SRA as a topic of criminal investigation was an influential 1992 FBI report, Kenneth V. Lanning's "Investigator's Guide to Allegations of 'Ritual' Child Abuse." This report, which dismisses the reality of SRA, has been described as the most influential document ever written on the subject. The early nineties also saw the publication of a series of important books that added yet more weight to the debunking of the ritual abuse myth. These books include Robert D. Hicks, *In Pursuit of Satan: The Police and the*

Occult (1991); James T. Richardson, Joel Best, and David G. Bromley, *The Satanism Scare* (1991); and Jeffrey Victor's *Satanic Panic: The Creation of a Contemporary Legend* (1993). Unfortunately, despite the fact that ritual abuse has been thoroughly debunked, a number of people convicted during the height of the Satanic Panic continue to languish in prison. In addition, the "scare" ideology still surfaces from time to time in connection with isolated cases all over the world, confirming that the framework can be easily resurrected.

Our selection of articles related to the SRA scare is just that—an assortment drawn from hundreds of pieces—based on the flexible criterion of accessibility combined with reputation. We have mainly selected papers and articles previously unpublished or published in inaccessible journals and anthologies, while deliberately avoiding articles from books such as Richardson et al., *The Satanism Scare*, which this collection should complement. Our intention is to cover the academic analysis up to and beyond the millennium.

We have grouped the articles thematically to illustrate the areas of interest. Part I, "Satanic Ritual Abuse as a Moral Panic," covers mainly sociological and sociopsychological articles engaged in the analysis of the moral panic of the eighties, while Part II, "Satanic Ritual Abuse as Demonology," focuses on more anthropological and folkloristic dimensions of the same phenomenon. Part III, "Satanism and the Media," is a collection of material directly related to the representation of satanism and anti-satanism in newspapers and television. Part IV, "Modern Satanism," covers the phenomenon of Religious Satanism. Finally, Part V, "Primary Material," presents a selection of primary documents on modern Satanism, including two government reports on the SRA scare.

The chapters on Religious Satanism are supplemented by a collection of primary materials and are preceded by a set of scholarly papers examining various aspects of the Satanic Ritual Abuse hoax, in order to describe other uses of the term *Satanism* (and its imagined threats) as a context for modern satanism as a religion or worldview.

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