

child exploitation and ritual abuse, while rock music was blatantly connected with evil forces.⁵⁵ Those who might once have denounced rock as "jungle music" could now achieve wider social acceptance by stressing its satanic character, at the same time avoiding the taint of racism.⁵⁶

It is also possible to suggest more speculative aspects of the religious agenda. For example, the religious Right strongly opposed any change in women's traditional role as homemaker and denounced the trend toward two-career families where children remained in day care. By emphasizing the widespread character of "ritual abuse," the claim makers were attempting to depict day care centers as an extremely dangerous place for the young. They enjoyed enormous success in this, as witnessed by a rash of prosecutions, scandals, and school closures across the nation. It is possible that the widespread credulity reflected genuine ambiguity about the surrender of traditional family concepts and the abandonment of children to others. The ensuing parental guilt found expression in the urgent need to condemn an outsider preying on one's children. This may also explain the belief that children given up to adoption agencies might find their way onto the altars of sacrificial cults.

Another (admittedly speculative) explanation might also account for one of the most mystifying aspects of the current panic, the emphasis on "breeders." These are women who claim to have bred children explicitly for the purpose of sacrificing them in a cult setting. The charge apparently originated with "survivor" Lauren Stratford, but there are now hundreds of individuals claiming to be breeders, and the idea has been widely publicized.⁵⁷ In the context of the fundamentalist worldview, the focus on the breeders and their guilt reflects outrage at the prevalence of abortion. Here, too, women are seen to have bred children for slaughter and butchery, and the religious groups offer counseling and therapy for mothers who are "survivors" of this perceived crime. In the fundamentalist view, this post-Christian society expresses its hatred of God through many forms of child murder, and abortion or euthanasia are concessions to the devil little less overt than an actual ritual sacrifice. This may seem far-fetched, but the analogy is explicitly drawn in recent accounts of these "unholy sacrifices of the New Age."⁵⁸

HISTORY AND IDEOLOGY

The panic thus draws on many different social and political concerns. The themes can be discerned clearly when we consider the historical dis-

cussions of the "occult" provided in many recent works on satanic crime and repeated in the seminars offered to law enforcement. Most accounts attempt to place the movement in some kind of historical context, but the history presented is both wildly inaccurate and heavily influenced by simplistic Christian fundamentalism. History is thus one of the foremost vehicles for the strong ideological content of the movement.

Typical accounts note that devil worship is a pre-Christian idea, and some might mention the frequent biblical linkage between pagan religions and child sacrifices. This is ingenious as it provides a context for the alleged enthusiasm of modern satanists for ritual child abuse. The supposed movement went underground in the Middle Ages, though it was often recognized in the widely reported crime of witchcraft. Modern satanism was the consequence of a revival engineered by English enthusiasts like Aleister Crowley and witchcraft entrepreneur Gerald B. Gardner. In the 1960s, a new synthesis was promoted by Anton LaVey of the Church of Satan, with its subsequent offshoots and imitators.⁵⁹

Such an account is tendentious. It is medieval in its assumption that pre-Christian or nonmonotheistic religions are in fact devil worship. This was the sort of approach with which early missionaries set off for India and Africa. In fact, devil worship is a simple outgrowth of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and especially of Christianity itself, and the mere belief in a devil is much more likely to characterize fundamentalist critics than occultists themselves. The closest resemblance to "devil worship" in early times was to be found among heretical Christian sects like the Gnostics, who argued that the devil was a misunderstood enemy of the truly evil and homicidal god of the Old Testament. Such ideas may have survived into the Middle Ages, but the vast majority of witchcraft persecutions were the result of social and economic pressures that led to the stigmatization of innocent victims.

It is unsavory to find the witch trials soberly adduced as evidence for the activities of modern cults. *American Focus* offends especially badly in this regard, citing as factual the witchcraft cases of seventeenth-century Sweden. These are chosen explicitly because the convictions were secured on the evidence of children, but the authors do not mention that the children's testimony is universally regarded as deliberately false. This was not a case where witnesses might have been misled or their testimony misinterpreted: they lied, and for profit.

In the case of Salem, the work notes that "undoubtedly innocent people were executed in the widespread panic, but, one must seriously consider the occultic practices which sparked the fear, and wonder how many innocent people were killed in a ritualized fashion."⁶⁰ This is to introduce

a charge not imagined at the time and undreamt of even by Cotton Mather, but it is fascinating to see how charges of "witch hunting" are here turned against the skeptics.⁶¹ There is a close parallel in the treatment of the "blood libel," the alleged Jewish sacrifices of Christian infants throughout the years.⁶² At first sight, the credence given to these earlier stories seems to cast doubt on contemporary tales of child sacrifice, and the medieval tales were widely reported and documented in similar terms—the criterion by which we are today asked to believe stories of ritual child abuse and murder. However, Carl Raschke even tries to use the blood libels as a weapon against contemporary satanism. In a particularly contorted passage, he suggests that the Jews became the scapegoats for real sacrifices carried on through history by aristocratic satanists and occultists.⁶³

Equally unsatisfactory is the view that the mysticism at the turn of the century can all be categorized as "satanism." In reality, the key group was a highly respectable and intellectual circle known as the Order of the Golden Dawn, many of whose members would in fact term themselves Christian. Undoubtedly, this claim would be dismissed by the modern Bible Belt "demonologists," but it is questionable if these experts would be intellectually qualified to judge the spiritual subtleties of such a brilliant and diverse group, which included some of the leading literary figures of the day.⁶⁴

The Golden Dawn initiates were enthusiastic about Freemasonry, about Greco-Egyptian and Oriental occult theories, but their main emphasis was on Qabalistic mystical practices and ritual magic. Qabalism is a strain of esoteric Judaism that may be two thousand years old and although it represents a mere fringe of Jewish thought, it is a powerful tradition that has attracted brilliant minds.⁶⁵ Only the most bigoted fundamentalist could term these speculations "devil worship," a term that could equally well be applied to Hindu or Buddhist ideas. The calumny of the Golden Dawn is reminiscent of the contemporary theory that "New Age" ideas are little but veiled satanism.

Aleister Crowley's groups, like the A.: A.: and the OTO, grew out of the Golden Dawn. He was primarily an eclectic pagan who acknowledged no devil in any Christian sense.⁶⁶ He was also an outrageous self-publicist and practical joker, who loved to promote stories about his alleged evils, including child sacrifice. The stories about his "satanic" career are the result of an unholy encounter between his bizarre and obscene sense of humor and the credulous gutter press of the day. Even the far from credulous Jerry Johnston⁶⁷ takes seriously Crowley's boast to have sacrificed one hundred and fifty children during his career. In fact, the magus admitted to five such sacrifices during a single day. He was actually parodying a statement by the

Catholic Church that each ejaculation contained a potential human life and that masturbation or contraception thus ended this life. In this sense only, we can accept Crowley's macabre boast at its face value.⁶⁸

In reality, modern satanism is the creature of Christianity. It first appears in the France and Italy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where it may well have reflected anticlerical sentiments within a society where the Catholic Church was under attack. This was the time at which the Black Mass first appears.⁶⁹ These ideas enjoyed a revival in the "decadent" atmosphere of the 1890s, and it is this generation that marks the flowering of modern satanism.⁷⁰ "Devil worship" is not as old as religion itself; it has barely celebrated its centenary and it is a wholly artificial and intellectual creation. LaVey, Gardner, and the rest were thus drawing on a relatively recent tradition upon which they could easily impose the seal of their distinctive ideas. It was Gardner, for example, who invented most of the terminology and ritual of modern witchcraft, and the Wiccan emphasis on ritual flagellation reflects nothing more than his personal sexual predilections.⁷¹ LaVey was equally successful in creating his own "immemorial traditions."⁷²

THE INVENTION OF SATANISM

The antiquity and universality of satanism have been exaggerated by the religious critics to promote the image of a serious and deep-rooted threat to "Christian America." In reality, the phenomenon has emerged very recently and has been largely shaped by a handful of entrepreneurs with a strong sense of public relations. The "satanic" movement of the 1980s has been powerfully influenced by factors deriving neither from ancient religion nor from misguided antiquarianism. In reality, mass media and popular fiction played a central role throughout.

Supremely important in creating the new mythology was Dennis Wheatley (1897–1977), author of novels like *The Satanist*, *They Used Dark Forces*, and *To the Devil—a Daughter*. Wheatley himself was not a believer in the occult and merely used it as a source of material. On the other hand, it was his novel *The Devil Rides Out* (1934) that played a seminal role in the new occultism, introducing Crowley himself as a villain in the character "Mocata." In effect, this book imported French satanism into the English-speaking world of the 1930s, with powerful consequences for Gardnerian witchcraft. This is worth emphasizing. What most people mean when they refer to a "satanic ritual" is in fact a

variant of the Black Mass, an institution wholly unknown in Britain or the United States before the mid-twentieth century. This is natural enough if we recall the strong Protestantism of earlier times: a blasphemous parody of the Mass only had the power to shock in a Catholic society. It was rather as if one expected Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses* to shock in a society without Muslims.

At every stage, we find that the mythology invented for Wheatley's fiction had an enormous influence on current perceptions and practices of occultism. It was Wheatley, for instance, who synthesized the hitherto unrelated worlds of ritual magic (real) with the accounts of the medieval witch trials (largely fictitious). Thus the evil magicians in the novels do not work alone as in tradition: they have followers who gather in covens at the great seasonal meetings, or Sabbats. This idea is fundamental both to the modern practitioners and critics of the occult, but it was invented within living memory. Wheatley grafted onto satanism such Oriental concepts as reincarnation and karma, themes that survive in much of the occult to this day. Another of his novels invented the idea that Crowley's son was killed during an unsuccessful invocation, an idea that is today repeated as sober fact by the "demonologists."

The 1968 Hammer film of *The Devil Rides Out* (known in the United States as *The Devil's Bride*) was as influential as the book, and the magic disseminated by popular occultism in 1960s Britain drew heavily on Wheatley rather than Crowley. This was certainly true in the lyrics of the pioneering occult rock group, Black Widow. Better remembered were other groups who drew both on Wheatley and Crowley. Black Sabbath was one such: their lead singer was the later notorious Ozzy Osbourne, whose name regularly features in "satanic" graffiti. More sophisticated were Led Zeppelin, whose guitarist Jimmy Page was a highly intellectual Crowleyite who even purchased his hero's Scottish estate. With Black Sabbath, Led Zeppelin were the most powerful influences on the new "heavy metal" music of the 1970s. The modern "occultism" of groups like Venom, Megadeth, Slayer, and Iron Maiden thus derives indirectly from Crowley but with a large dose of Dennis Wheatley acquired en route.

The profoundly literary and synthetic character of modern satanism is also illustrated by the frequent references to that mighty book of dark magic, the *Necronomicon*, the work of the "mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred." The book never had an authentic existence and was the invention of the early twentieth-century pulp horror author, H. P. Lovecraft. Largely as an extended intellectual joke, a book titled the "Necronomicon" was compiled from ancient Mesopotamian texts and published in a mass-market paper-

back as recently as 1977. LaVey also created rituals based entirely on Lovecraft's fictions.⁷³ Of such is the "ancient tradition" of devil worship.

The cinema was another powerful force in the 1970s, the time of a boom in "devil pictures" following the commercial success of *The Exorcist* (1973). It was the film of *The Omen* (1976) that introduced the crucial figure of the Antichrist and the number 666, themes that were quite unknown in "classical" continental satanism. In fact, this element is only possible in the more heavily Bible-influenced tradition of Crowley, whose parents believed resolutely in the prophecies of Revelation. The modern popularity of 666 in satanic graffiti would not have been possible before *The Omen* series and the rock music derived from it. More recently, the "satanic" drug gang active in Matamoros undoubtedly drew on Afro-Hispanic magical traditions like Palo Mayombe, but their specific beliefs in human sacrifice were apparently drawn from the popular Martin Sheen film *The Believers*.

The curious interaction between life and art is nicely illustrated by a curious incident reported in Milwaukee in May 1989.⁷⁴ It was alleged that Deborah Kazuck lured a man to a house where she and some other women attempted to kill him. The "sacrificial" group—if such they were—chanting "REDRUM," which is "murder" backwards. Kazuck believed herself to be a reincarnation of Jack the Ripper's mother, and a poster of Hitler played a role in the ritual. If this was accurately reported, this is a fascinating mélange of themes entirely drawn from fiction. "REDRUM" is from the Stephen King novel (and 1979 Stanley Kubrick film) *The Shining* in which it occurs as a "satanic" graffiti. There is no evidence that Jack the Ripper was in any sense an occultist, but a "satanic" or sacrificial context for the crimes was suggested by Crowley (in what was almost certainly a joke) and by the horror author Robert Bloch.⁷⁵

Similarly, the link between Hitler and the occult is an old canard used in sensationalistic books of little scholarly merit. (Fundamentalist writers assert the dictator's membership in a "Black Order of Germany," which influenced LaVey.)⁷⁶ The idea was finally laid to rest by an impressive recent study.⁷⁷ In other words, the Milwaukee incident may be regarded by some as one of the best authenticated modern examples of an attempt at "ritual murder" according to the strictest definitions, but it was clearly not the work of mysterious or sophisticated "cult satanists." This particular crime appears to owe more to the horror-fantasy section of the local chain bookstore than to any clandestine sect or church.

It is common for fundamentalists to criticize occult influences in the media because they allegedly lead young people into deviant and violent ways. In fact, the argument can be turned against them. If American cults

are so very weak and ill informed that they are ever ready to adopt the latest gimmick from a current film, fantasy game, or television series, it hardly suggests that they are a serious or deep-rooted menace. (British magicians are a more substantial and intellectually credible group.)⁷⁸ Far from being a manifestation of an ancient and wide-ranging evil, American satanism appears to be overwhelmingly a game for teenage dabblers and mentally unstable adults. To treat it as anything more should be to invite ridicule.

CONCLUSION: THE IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

Those who attempt to warn society of the dangers of satanism have also been swift to propose solutions. *American Focus*, for example, suggests the formation of a powerful Ritual Crime Task Forces, made up of local state and federal agencies, while groups like the Cult Awareness Network should provide "experts" for the extensive training of law enforcement officers. In addition, the full resources of the FBI should be used in prosecuting "ritual" offenders. By contrast, we have argued that occult crime is very different from the menace that is sometimes portrayed, and most of the serious charges are mythical. Whenever a police department has been tempted to credit the allegations, it has usually been embarrassed by the utter failure to produce results. There have been numerous local examples of wild-goose chases after alleged satanic altars and cults, and attempts to dig for the bodies of satanic victims have been humiliating failures. The most notorious was the Lucas County affair in Ohio in 1985, when an expensive search for sixty or more bodies produced nothing.⁷⁹

In conclusion, satanism is neither "the seduction of America's youth" nor "America's best kept secret," and it is not "terrorizing our communities." It is a tiny fringe movement worthy only of treatment in the least responsible and most sensationalistic media. It should have no place in the agendas of contemporary police agencies or in the files of responsible therapists. The satanism panic is of value chiefly for what it reveals about the enduring power of both conspiracy politics and fundamentalist religion in American life.

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Chapter 5

SATANISM, RITUAL ABUSE, AND MULTIPLE PERSONALITY DISORDER

A Sociohistorical Perspective

Sherrill Mulhern

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of psychiatry, clinicians have encountered patients who claim to be possessed by demons or persecuted by covert conspirators. Although traditionally these individuals' psychological sufferings were taken seriously, until recently their declarations were rarely if ever taken literally. Since the mid-1970s, however, growing professional endorsement of the traumatic theories of psychopathology espoused by the late nineteenth-century French masters of hypnosis and reformulated by Sigmund Freud in his early work on hysteria and obsessional neurosis has radically transformed many clinicians' attitudes toward their patients' productions.

This fundamental conceptual shift was precipitated by a number of social and clinical factors that include growing public acceptance of the heretofore unacknowledged prevalence of child maltreatment and its psychophysiological sequelae, formal recognition of post-traumatic stress disorder and the revival of interest in hypnosis and hypnotherapeutic techniques (Mulhern 1991b). Today, in the United States at least, effective psychotherapy is increasingly viewed both by therapists and the general

From Sherrill Mulhern, "Satanism, Ritual Abuse, and Multiple Personality Disorder—A Sociohistorical Perspective," *International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* 42, no. 4 (1994): 265–68.