

Chapter 2

Satanism: Performing Alterity and Othering¹

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From among the many religious identities available today, there are a few people who chose to name themselves Satanists. In this paper, discussion of the activities and interests of such people is generated by the related facts that (a) their Satanism is a performance of alterity and (b) discourses about Satanism are generally revelatory of society's obsessions. That is, both "insiders" and "outsiders" similarly construct "Satanic" identities even when their understandings are (or can be) quite different. Satan continues to be the archetypal "other" and "transgressor". The precise form of transgression encouraged by such archetypes is, in turn, generative of passionate discourses from both self-identified Satanists and those claiming to know what Satanism "really is".

The research base for this paper began as a short ethnographic project in 1995 which aimed to discover if there were, in fact, self-identified Satanists in Britain. Discussion of the results of that project forms the majority of what follows. The parallel question of what a wider (but "interested") population think about Satanism has concerned me in various ways since 1995. Unsurprisingly, evangelical Christians have a stake here. But so too do various kinds of therapists and journalists. A shift in the discourses of both some kinds of Satanism and some kinds of opposition to Satanism (whether real or imagined) has taken place since 1995. One example is the proliferation of material available on the internet and therefore the increase of access to ideas about (if not membership of) Satanist groups (Petersen 2002). Another example of shifting expressions of or about Satanism is media interest in violence committed by self-identified Satanist vampires in Germany. Thus, discussion of the Satanism of the Church of Satan, the Temple of Set and the Order of the Nine Angles (respectively the founding form, the largest exemplar and the intended most sinister form of Satanism today) is followed by some comments on "Satanic vampires." A conclusion will make explicit comments on the related processes and performances of alterity and othering.

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Self-identified Satanism

Some self-identified Satanists belong to organizations of various sizes, some do not. Satanists hold wildly different understandings about what Satanism might be, what Satanists might do in order to justify their self-identity, and indeed about whom they think Satan is. They also vary in their claims about the origins or earlier history of Satanism. This, of course, is unsurprising because that “history” is comprised (largely or entirely) of claims and accusations and counts for very little in the construction of Satanists’ identities. Thus, I offer no view of the origins of the Devil, and say nothing decisive about when the “Black Mass” might have originally been performed. In fact, it matters little for this discussion whether such rituals were literary fictions or carnivalesque parodies, instruments of political and religious power struggles or hedonism reified into identity-politics, or actual and genuine acts of veneration to a putative devil. For what it is worth, I doubt that anyone before the late nineteenth century willing accepted the label “Satanist”. Once people did begin to use the name it was almost certainly in order to appear more interestingly sinister. This, however, could only happen once it was fairly safe to do so – i.e. it is a product and evidence of a degree of secularization. However, only a very few individuals named themselves Satanists until the late sixties. It is to that time that I now turn.

Satanism’s Foundation

Anton Szandor LaVey founded Satanism by forming the Church of Satan (CoS) in the sixties in California, and by writing *The Satanic Bible* (1969) and other similar books (see LaVey 1972, 1992). Undoubtedly he drew on existing beliefs and claims about Satan and Satanism. But LaVey’s Satanism could only be mistaken for the “coming out”, going public, or admission of the reality of the earlier fantasies and fears by someone who refused to read what LaVey wrote, listen to what he said, and observe what his Church did. Almost all that the CoS has in common with what people might expect Satanism to be is the sinister mask its founder and members like to present to the gullible. Really antisocial or immoral “Satanism” is no more substantial in CoS than in LaVey’s alleged performance as the Devil in the film *Rosemary’s Baby*. Certainly the performance is supposed to disturb, perhaps even offend, people – but it is play acting. LaVey’s Satanism behind the mask and masquerade is something else: a “self-religion”.

Paul Heelas coined the term “self-spirituality” to refer to the New Age movement (Heelas 1996). It usefully indicates what is central to a number of contemporary spiritualities: a project to discover, empower and enact our authentic (inner) nature currently contaminated by socialization. In the language of the New Age, “You are God, you are God, you are God.” And this “God” is to be found within, and its potential should be realized and expressed. This can generate spirituality of the mystical (or mystifying) kind separated from the everyday the ordinary and the

mundane. But New Age is usually more like other religions in that it is inseparable from other aspects of life. In fact, some critics object to the success orientation of some New Agers. Indeed, New Age is manifest as much in styles of business as it is in devotion to angels and cosmic harmony. There is a logic in the notion that people who know they are God should be able to sell whatever they wish to sell and receive whatever they wish to receive.

Anton LaVey’s CoS is a self-spirituality with a twist. It is not that Satanists insist “You are Satan, you are Satan, you are Satan” in some inversion of New Age and Christianity. Rather, it is that the attempted discovery of the true, inner self is undertaken not by positive thinking and harmonious living, and that the expression of one’s true divinity is all “light”, but that Satanism claims an even more radical rejection of socialization. According to LaVey religions are about power over people, gained when ordinary needs and desires are identified as “sin” or “delusion” and a “solution” (salvation or enlightenment) is offered to the obedient. Satan is the questioning of this system. Satan encourages each person to experiment and discover whether or not they find such needs and desires helpful.

LaVey’s writings and CoS’ magazine, *The Black Flame*, continually speak about Satan as if the name referred to an actual entity who speaks, acts, plans, desires, inspires and is addressed and summoned. Satan is, for example, said to be delighted when Christians use sensual music, and to accuse them of hypocrisy when they both bless troops and preach peace (LaVey 1969: 49). However, such talk of a seemingly personal Satan is intended to reinforce or empower the individual Satanist’s “rational self-interest”. Ritual, magic and lifestyle are boosted by such “psychodrama.” Satan is a useful image for encouraging individualism as it refers to “opposition” or “non-conformity”: “The reason it’s called Satanism is because it’s fun, it’s accurate and it’s productive” (LaVey 1992: 10). This is not a movement based on revelation from a divinity but a self-religion which encourages each individual to reach their own potential and promotes “rational self-interest”.

In fact, it was somewhat inaccurate above to speak of the “discovery” of the true self: “One does not ‘find’ oneself, One creates one’s self” (LaVey 1992: 44). In order to “create one’s self”, people are encouraged to honestly indulge their desires in the context of their society. CoS encourages people not to be abusive (a sign of immaturity) but to be oneself socially – albeit strongly and successfully. CoS does not offer a system of enlightenment or a technique for religious experience, but encourages “indulgence and a glorification of the carnal and the material” (Gilmore 1993). Satanism is not “a striving towards divinity” (either one’s own or that of some greater being) but an acceptance and celebration of humanity’s animal physical nature (Nadramia 1993). “The Satanist is expected not to worship diabolical deities but rather to manipulate them as symbols for the purpose of one’s own glorification and gratification” (Alfred 1976: 185).

The Satanism of CS can be summarized (though with careful attention to context) in the first two of “the Nine Satanic Statements” in *The Satanic Bible*:

1. Satan represents indulgence, instead of abstinence!

2. Satan represents vital existence, instead of spiritual pipe dreams!

(LaVey 1969: 25).

The Nine Statements are more fully explored throughout LaVey's writings and *The Black Flame* and are also discussed in Alfred (1976).

For our present purposes, the sociological structure of CoS is important for two reasons: first, it is indicative of the nature of Satanism, and second, it led to another organization. CoS spread as a series of "chartered grottos" led by people who could demonstrate their "satanic" credentials by buying a charter and attracting a group. In the 1975 CoS "ceased its chartered grotto system as it was an experiment that was completed" and has since then "truly encourage[d] individualism and self-achievement" (Gilmore 1994; also see Barton 1990: 119, 129). People who join CoS now become members of a network and are free to meet together but rarely do so, valuing the encouraged independence. Their major link is through *The Black Flame*, published in New York and distributed world-wide. Thus, there is now no *organized* group called the Church of Satan. But it seems clear that when CoS did function as a series of linked local meetings, this fitted uneasily with its ideology and was probably intended to fail. The affirmation of individuality, personal excellence and self indulgence might encourage people to play at being leaders, but their success must be counted by the lack of followers. This kind of Satanism does not generate group cohesion and congregational structures, but promotes individualism and networking. In the UK in 1995 the best indicator of the size of CoS was the distribution of *The Black Flame*, and that indicates very low numbers indeed. Neither was there evidence of any desire for growth and I have seen no indications that CoS has grown since then.

Meanwhile, despite the important and lasting influence of LaVey and CoS on contemporary Satanism, their non-metaphysical approach and rejection of hierarchical degree structures has led some Satanists to form their own diverse groups. A brief aside on claims about multi-generational Satanism might be useful before that, in order to be very clear about an implication of the above.

Multi-Generational Satanism

Contrary to the claim of the previous section that Satanism was initiated by Anton LaVey in the sixties – or, perhaps more accurately, that LaVey took various available fictional images of Satanism and created a reality – it is sometimes asserted that Satanism exists in particular families or groups over many generations, perhaps originating hundreds of years ago. Not only have I found no evidence to demonstrate the veracity of such claims, but I am persuaded that there is good evidence to question the likelihood of such multi-generational Satanism. The claims themselves are usually both exaggerated and inexact. Exaggerations include extravagant assertions such as that ten percent of the British population

are Satanists. At the same time it is often claimed that "a member of the royal family is a Satanist" without anyone publicly naming the accused. Similar claims are made in many other countries, all politicians and other famous figures are evidently suspect of leading a conspiracy that includes a remarkably large number of other people and threatens to engulf entire societies. In my research among a wide variety of self-identified Satanists I have yet to hear a narrative that is commonplace among most other religionists. Wiccans often claim to have been initiated by a grandmother, evangelical Christians often claim to have been led to Jesus by a relative. The only people who make even vaguely similar claims about Satanism are those claiming to have escaped. It is, at least, most unlikely that if multi-generational Satanism exists it never includes those who are happy to be Satanists. More than this, the very nature of Satanism requires doubt about it being disseminated within families or the kinds of groups alleged.²

The Temple of Set

The Temple of Set (ToS) is an international organization which was incorporated as a non-profit Church in California in 1975, receiving state and federal recognition and tax-exemption later that year.

During research about "Satanic ritual abuse" (Harvey 1995a) I was approached by a UK member of the ToS who was concerned that I might be given false information regarding Satanism and the ToS. After some correspondence the ToS agreed (with some enthusiasm) to distribute a questionnaire specifically designed for its membership in Britain. Both the senior British ToS initiate, David Austen, and the Temple's High Priest, Michael Aquino, were said to have been keen that members responded to the questionnaire. I published the results of that questionnaire survey (Harvey 1995b) and here provide a summary of the Temple's interests and activities. The continuing validity of my previous research has been checked by reference to the vast amounts of information now easily obtainable by careful internet searches.³

It may be useful to begin with the question of numbers. In 1995 I received eleven responses to my questionnaire. When I discussed this with David Austen in an interview he suggested that this was around twenty percent of the UK membership. I am fairly confident that ToS is the largest "Satanist" organization in the UK (and in many other countries) and conclude that there are less than one hundred such Satanists in the UK. However, even these numbers might give a false impression. We should not imagine a gathering of fifty ToS Satanists for whatever purposes. Jean La Fontaine reports that "according to one former member I spoke to who attended several meetings, they never assembled more than about twelve

² For a discussion drawing similar conclusions see La Fontaine 1998.

³ Most of this information was only available to ToS members in 1995 but some of it was made available to me during that research.

members" (La Fontaine 1998: 47). As with CoS, the ToS encourages individualism, not congregationalism. Members network (especially through the medium of the internet) but rarely meet.

ToS Satanists – perhaps I should call them Setians – are mostly male, between the ages of twenty and fifty. Questions about employment and sexual orientation provide a pattern much like that for the rest of the population. The only surprise (to me) came in response to a question about political affiliations as demonstrated in voting patterns in the previous Parliamentary Election. Despite all that I had already been told I still expected a high incidence of extremism – at either or both extremes of right and left. However, the responses revealed very ordinary voting patterns: all had voted for the three main political parties, including Liberal Democrats. There are, of course, many religionists who manage to separate their politics from their religion (as, indeed, they separate other aspects of life into more-or-less discrete domains). However, and also eschewing all conspiracy theories that might imply a devious ploy to infiltrate "normal" society, I believe these responses mean that Satanists like to project a sinister façade, but are actually very little different to their neighbors.

ToS origins include deliberate self-differentiation from CoS in several ways, most significantly in theology and sociology. In the publications of LaVey and CoS it may seem that Satan is understood as an ontological being, truly existent in some way that transcends ordinary reality, a divine figure. For example, *The Satanic Bible* (LaVey 1969) seems to include revelatory statements, some in Enochian (held by some magicians to be the angelic language). However, these should be understood (according to members of CoS) as symbolic or metaphorical stimulants to thought, endeavor and personal growth of the kinds valued and encouraged by CoS. That is, there is no Satan in CoS. Official ToS theology seems rather different. The understanding closest to being the "official" view of the TS is that "Set is a real being" (some ToS members are happy to speak of Satan, but many speak instead of Set). Michael Aquino founded ToS after, he claims, Set's self-revelation. One respondent to my questionnaire wrote:

Set is a real being who has offered his Gift of the Black Flame to mankind. This means that man can become fully Self-conscious rather than remain tied to the cosmic order. Set is not worshipped as a god, but is approached as a friend.

Even if Set is "not a god", he is clearly understood to be more than a projection of human desire or fear, more than an anthropomorphism justifying this or any religion. To those respondents who insisted on distinguishing between Satan and Set, the former is a "bogus bogeyman," a "Judeo-Christian adversarial stereotype" invented "to justify their [Christians'] own continued existence (they needed an opposition, a wolf outside the village)," and something to "terrify believers into submissive adherence to the utterings of the various faith leaders". These views match those eloquently expressed in *The Satanic Bible*. But many Setians go further, understanding Set to be a real if "incorporeal entity," "a metaphysical or

mystical reality," "an all powerful deity which has different faces, on the one side I think it is the same as the Christian God, on the other is Set," "a guide" and "the Lord of this world," "the ancient Egyptian God whose legends were twisted and became the basis for the Christian Satan." Some Setians consider Set to be "the archetypal rebel," "a figure representing pride, self-interest and self-gratification," "the undefinable [sic] thing that separates man from the other apes" or "the driving force in human evolution." Initiates are expected "to become" (a ToS catchword), that is to become increasingly truer to themselves, increasingly independent, increasingly like Set: "As Set was, we are; as Set is, we will be." The shift between the affirmation of Set's reality and the recognition that this language might be metaphorical is rarely systematized and never problematic in ToS. Whether Set is "real" or not does not, finally, seem to matter a great deal: his role (as being or as idea) is to encourage self exploration in those who speak of (and perhaps to) him. Whether he symbolizes humanity's difference from animals, or whether that difference is Set's gift (rather than a merely evolutionary change) is less important than the chosen task of "becoming".

Sociologically, ToS is also different from CoS. At first it seems as though ToS is organized much like many other magical orders. There are deliberate hierarchical, initiatory or sociological similarities to groups such as the Golden Dawn and other esoteric movements (see York 1995 and Hanegraaff 1996). However, ToS' "degree structure" works somewhat differently. Initiates are not expected or required to attempt to progress to what elsewhere might be the higher degrees. In ToS these are largely administrative or overseer functions. The majority are expected to be second degree or Adept II°, as ToS is more interested in individuals developing themselves and finding their own level than in creating a group-identity arising from everyone following exactly the same path. Basically, Adepts are recognized as competent Black Magicians.

I discuss what ToS means by both "magic" and "black magic" in my earlier article (Harvey 1995b). To briefly summarize a complex cosmology and psychology, "magic" is the deliberate process of making changes according to "Will". There are "lesser" magics which might be the manipulation of things or events in the objective (rather than subjective) universe, and "greater" magics which cause change in the subjective universe. "Will" should be understood in line with the theories of other magically orientated movements, which themselves recognizably draw on Augustinian tradition. After all Aleister Crowley did not coin the phrase "Love and Do What You Will" but derived it from Augustine, perhaps via Christian esotericists. Something may be called "white" if it arises from and expresses the false consciousness that the individual is doing something for altruistic reasons: the benefit of others, the praise of deity, reaching for harmony with the cosmos or some other "Other". The ToS recognizes that a gift to charity is at least as much an act of self-gratification as it is an attempt to be helpful. For the ToS this truism encourages self-gratification as the best possible reason for action. Something is "Black" when it celebrates the awareness of subjective benefit (even when this includes the alleviation of others' suffering, for example).

Beyond the degree structure and the encouragement of “magic”, ToS is organized around a (non-hierarchical) series of affinity groups called Pylons after the gateways to Egyptian temples. Members of these too might never meet outside of cyberspace and other forms of correspondence. They network about topics of mutual interest that further the aims of ToS: broadly, to encourage self-development. As a final reinforcement of this oft-repeated point, TS has no set calendar and encourages the celebration of one’s birthday as the most important point in one’s lifecycle.

Other Satanic Groups

There are a number of other Satanist groups. Most of these are small even when they seem to have a larger presence. The Order of the Nine Angles (ONA) is a good example. A prolific author who uses several different pen-names (e.g. Anton Long, Stephen Brow and Christos Beest) has developed a form of Satanism that is distinguishable by the complexity of its cosmology and by its assertion of the need to be sinister. The former, however, elaborates ideas that are common ground to many esotericists and to sci-fi films and books (e.g. that the everyday world is not the only dimension of reality), while the latter is almost certainly the presentation of a face designed to shock. My own (1995b) discussion of this group (or, more likely, solitary individual) should be compared with that of Kevin Logan (1994) – not because I am uncertain of my own conclusions, but to demonstrate that we are engaging with polemics that are all too often entangled with preconceptions and generated by self-promotion. ONA’s own documents are available via various websites (for example: “Necronomi” and “Satanservice”) alongside those of various other organizations and individuals.

Magic and Witchcraft

In case any confusion remains, despite the similarities between some aspects of Satanists’ worldviews, rhetoric and rituals and those of wider magical groups, there is much that definitively distinguishes Satanism. The practices and self-identities of witchcraft are also distinguishable from Satanism. The groups introduced above are centrally concerned with individual personal growth and/or self-development. They are akin to New Age in that they are correctly identifiable as self-religions or self-spiritualities. Contemporary western witchcraft traditions are “nature-religions” even when some of them are deeply interested in the self (e.g. Crowley 1989). The difference is that the “self” for nature-religionists is relational, while it is thoroughly individual in self-religions. Some types of Pagan witchcraft and magic might be no more deity centered than Satanism, but their foundations, goals and flavors are quite different (see Harvey 1997). On the other hand, the typical Pagan polemic against Satanism – that the latter shares a Christian worldview

– is a misunderstanding. While “Satan” certainly derives from Christianity, the Satan of Satanists is a far from biblical character. Satan here is far more like a Jungian archetype, albeit of values not celebrated by Jung and his students. What Christianity provided, possibly via popular imagination and Hollywood films, is a sinister image. What that image both masks and reveals is very different in the various communities of discourse that clash in misunderstanding what each other mean. My suspicion is that some Satanists, at least, are happy for this clash of misunderstanding to continue to make them seem more sinister. However, my point in this section is to point out that while some Satanisms might be magical, most magical groups are of a very different nature.

Satanic Ritual Abuse

In the eighties and nineties in the UK and elsewhere, a scare about the ritual abuse and murder of children and adults proliferated. The allegations and controversies did not remain in the arena of popular conspiracy theories, but became the subject of police investigations and Court cases. The most comprehensive research and publication about these issues is Jean La Fontaine’s excellent *Speak of the Devil* (1998). It is unsurprising that much of the debate was fueled by conservative evangelical Christians. More interesting is the role of the psychotherapeutic community because that indicates much more about trends in contemporary societies. For example, La Fontaine (1998: 191) concludes that “some therapy displays an approach to allegations of satanic abuse that encourages belief and discourages scepticism in a manner similar to that of fundamentalists”. This alone is powerfully indicative of problematic tensions in modernity (including late- or post-modernity) between critical enquiry and the overbearing authority of experts. Academics are in the business of raising questions and continuing debate. The plethora of accusations require examination but what is most interesting (for academia) is the question of how particular knowledges are legitimated (Habermas 1975).

Alongside this, La Fontaine draws parallels between fairly well established notions that accusations of witchcraft, sorcery or evil-doing become rife in periods of social change and uncertainty. The fact that recent scares have focused on fears for children’s safety significantly points to a pervasive nostalgia for a mythic past when children were (allegedly) valued inhabitants of families with established “traditional” patterns and roles. The fact is, however, that the accusations made are nothing new. Many more-or-less marginal groups (Jews, Mormons, Masons, Catholics, Protestants, Africans, Pagans, Communists, and many more) have been victims of similar accusations in the past. Indeed, many of these groups are still suspect to other groups (especially, of course, to evangelical Christians) as exemplified by a recent report from the *LA Times* (Faucett 2002). An internet search for information about Satan or Satanism will generate many links to sites that make accusations recognizably like those leveled at others in the past. Denial alone is not enough, despite the weight of evidence that points to the falsity of

accusations of a satanic conspiracy involving sacrificial deaths and sexual abuses.⁴ Certainly we learn much about the accusers from considering their construction of alterities. To remain academic, and avoid becoming collaborators in merely verifying particular insider's polemics (cf. Beit-Hallahmi 2001), is to continuously ask questions (including of ourselves and our society). This critical position may entail resistance to the temptation proffered by invitations to be an "expert" every time the media become interested in alleged Satanism. It is with recent media interest that I conclude this discussion.

Satanic Goths and Vampire Murderers

In addition to the adult members of self-identified Satanist groups, there are undoubtedly adolescents who identify themselves as Satanists. What they mean by this varies considerably. Even in one ad hoc group of male teenagers I met with on the streets of one UK city in 1995, understandings varied. Only one had read LaVey's books and knew of the magazine *The Black Flame*. Most were disinterested in such sources that seemed too close to bookish knowledge. Their Satanism was a statement of their "rebellion" and it was manifest in black clothes and occult symbolism. That the symbols were largely occult to the group did not matter; the only meaning that mattered was the hostility and/or fear the symbols generated in others. These adolescents considered the daubing of "satanic" graffiti to be infantile, especially in comparison with the complex artistry of more accomplished graffiti artists. So, while the police and some local Christians were disturbed by what generally turned out to be creative representations of fantasy images (whether from horror stories, children's literature or rock band iconography), these "Satanists" were content to be and wear their own self-representations. None had been approached by members of other Satanist groups, none knew of older Satanists (except the one who had read LaVey, and even that knowledge was literary). By now (February 2005), it is highly unlikely that any of that group continue with such a self-image or self-presentation. Some might have become "Goths" but my suspicion is that once their hormones settled down they moved on.

The "gothic" look of these teenagers, however, is not only a rebellious teen-fashion statement. There are older "Goths". Among them there are some who are deeply attracted to the image of the vampire. Like most Satanists they know that image is just image but that even "mere image" can evoke powerful responses in others. Thus they (both the Satanists and the vampires) can play with their chosen images. However, some "vampires" recently seem to have taken the image far more seriously. In the vampire club scene they had acquired the mannerisms

and costumes, and had replaced some of their teeth with animal canines to make them look like the stereotypical vampires. Even in clubs where these images and roles are played out, some indulged in the drinking of blood willingly provided by "victims". However, Manuela and Daniel Ruda came to believe that they were actually vampires. For a while in February and March 2002 the world's media seemed obsessed by "vampire satanism". *The Times* (18 January 2002) reported that "Satanists blame Devil for 666 ritual killing." This and similar reports of the German Court case (in which the Rudas are said to have admitted the killing but denied guilt because "the devil told them to do it") includes claims about a wave of killings and suicides inspired by Satanism across Europe. Rather than survey this new set of claims and accusations, I intend to raise a couple of questions that lead towards a conclusion about academic interest.

If Manuela Ruda required a tooth transplant in order to make her look like Bram Stoker's fictional character is she really a vampire? If the answer is "yes but only because we should allow people their own self-identification", do we (scholars of religion) have to accept her implicit definition of vampires? If a vampire is not an immortal "creature of the night" who lives only by drinking blood from victims, but someone who mistakes Hollywood stereotypes for reality and tries very hard to live up to her fantasy, does anything she claims about Satanism carry weight? Do the fantasies of self-made vampires match those of evangelical Christian constructors of Satanism as genuinely Satanic? If so, what does it mean that evangelical opponents of Catholicism (among other things) are enamored of a medieval Catholic representation of the Devil? Meanwhile, those interested in self-identified Satanists might ask (a) whether it is possible to exclude those whose Satanism is indeed focused on obedience to "the Devil" rather than self-definition or personal growth, and (b) whether the claim "the Devil made me do it" means that all Satanists should be mistrusted as likely criminals? In short, there are many very different things that are called Satanism. These differences are important and should not be confused. The majority of self-identified Satanists are engaged in a religion that is very different to almost everything vilified as Satanism by most other people. Realities and accusations can be instructive about a host of fascinating and important issues, but they should never be confused.

Modernity and its Alterities

Attempts to understand the nature of contemporary societies might be greatly furthered by the recognition that not only do people identify themselves as Satanists (meaning different things in different discourses) but also people continue to accuse others of being Satanists. That such rhetoric continues says much about the era in which we live. In particular, both the "sinister" image performed by self-identified Satanists and the accusations leveled against alleged Satanists are the alterity of "polite society", two sides of the same coin and, thus, necessarily viewed together if an appreciation of the whole is to be gained. Both Satanic

⁴ The addition of the word "ritual" to "abuse" is only polemical and tries to divert attention away from the commonplace everyday occurrence of violence to children in ordinary and even "God-fearing" families. Cashman 1993: 47 is instructive here.

performers of alterity and Christians who further "other" their own alterities (some of which have no real, independent existence beyond such rhetoric) reveal some of the key concerns and fears of the contemporary world. While the everyday may be dully mundane, part of the enchantment that maintains our interest is that it is also suspect and questionable. The media may continuously hint that the everyday actually provides a mask for unspeakable horrors. Although the majority of the few people who identify as Satanists are not part of such possible horrors – even when they (perhaps playfully, certainly deliberately) perform the transgression of "normal" social discourse in order to appear as the alterity the rest of us seem to need – they fully participate in the construction of a culture they pretend to transcend. Both self-identified and alleged Satanism reveal facets of the wider society that is modernity.

Modernity may have alterities identifiable as pre- or post-modernity. Satanism, however, is neither pre- nor post-modern in any of its existing guises. Members of existing Satanist organizations are demonstrably modern when they form an individualized "priesthood of all believers", when they pursue their goals by entirely rational(ist) means, and when they seek self-knowledge and self-empowerment in entirely modern ways. Those who make allegations about the existence of Satanic conspiracies are equally modern, even when they fantasize about the power of an alleged personal Satan to hide evidence of heinous crimes. The goals they impute to alleged Satanists are, once again, entirely modern. As far as I am aware, all manifestations of these entangled alterities continue to inhabit and elaborate particular metanarratives (albeit opposed ones) that cannot be considered postmodern. While each kind of Satanism (self-identified or alleged) may be equated with enchantment, it does not thereby escape the confines of modernity. Rather, it exemplifies the kind of tension eloquently indicated in Bruno Latour's statement "We have never been modern" (1993). Modernity has always been a project at odds with itself. Satanisms are forms of enchantment suited to the contested attempt by modernity to subject the messy realities of the world to human will. They evidence a struggle to form communities out of individualized, self-interested, self-motivating, self-aware, self-motivating persons. They are neither a return to pre-modernity nor a leap into post-modernity. A fuller understanding of the nature and dynamics of Satanist self-religiosity and of evangelical Christian scare-discourses promise to cast interesting light on the contests and constructions of modernity.

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