

# **The Forensics of Sacrifice: A Symbolic Analysis of Ritualistic Crime**

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Ritual murder includes a wide variety of both sacred and secular acts committed by groups and individuals and is most often attributed to practitioners of occult ideologies such as Satanism, Palo Mayombe, Santeria, and other magical traditions, or to serial killers and sexual sadists who ritually murder their victims. Due to many legal, practical, and ethical controversies the study of contemporary religious violence is in its infancy. There have been no serious empirical studies of ritualistic crimes or classifications that adequately distinguish between ritual homicides committed for sacred versus secular motivations. In the law enforcement community, the investigation and analysis of ritual murder is viewed from a behavioral science perspective derived from methodologies in the fields of psychology, criminology, and forensic science. Problems arising from investigating ritualistic crimes are generally beyond most investigators' typical experience. Due to the lack of standardized categories, law enforcement professionals cannot agree on the extent of ritualistic crime, the types of crimes committed by individuals and religious groups, or the motives of the perpetrators. Hence, ritual violence is not often recognized, reported, or investigated accurately. Furthermore, academic research on the subject of occult religions typically situates them within the discipline of new religious movements, which is fraught with controversy. Scholars hold vehement debates concerning the credibility of accusations of violence, the validity of research, and the degree of authority that government and law enforcement agencies should assert with respect to new religious movements.

This article is the result of my ongoing research into the phenomenology of image worship, contemporary blood rituals, and sacred violence. It reflects my continual endeavor to protect the religious freedoms of members of alternative religions while assisting law enforcement professionals in the investigation of ritualistic crimes.

To introduce the problem I will summarize occult religions and their magical theologies, and describe the types of ritual practices that are illegal and designated

as occult crimes. This will be illustrated by examples from a variety of recent cases. The problem will be clarified by describing current methods of criminal profiling and showing how they are intrinsically flawed when applied to ritualistic crimes. I will argue that to understand the nature of contemporary acts of sacrifice it is necessary to suspend Western values, paradigms, and rational thought processes and examine sacrifice from the standpoint of the phenomenology of religious experience and the magical ideology of the practitioner.

Proposing a solution to the problem, I will introduce an alternative methodology that I have designated "Symbolic Analysis." The expression "Symbolic Analysis" was chosen because profiling is a highly charged word with negative connotations, but, more importantly, because this methodology concerns symbolism in every sense of the term, including those of semiotics, aesthetics, religion, anthropology, phenomenology, psychology, symbolic interaction, history, philosophy, and linguistics. I will contend that the broad interdisciplinary study of symbolism can provide unique insights into the subtle but significant differences in the characteristics of religious violence.

Finally, occult ideologies and ritualistic crime will be examined in the context of diverse theories of ritual murder to demonstrate that symbolic analysis is best understood as a "forensics of sacrifice," defined as pertaining to the legal proceedings or argumentation concerning ritual slaughter as a religious act.

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## **Part 1: Occult Ideologies**

The word occult is derived from the Latin word *occultus* which means hidden; it refers to secret, hidden, or esoteric knowledge and, more generally, to any matter concerned with the supernatural. Although there are many interpretations of the term, occult is most often applied to methods of developing hidden powers through extensive specialized training and discipline of the will. The most common practices associated with the occult include divination, magic, and spiritualism (also known as spiritism). There are numerous and diverse religions that have occult theologies. Occult religions are typically founded on nature-based polytheistic ideologies; their members believe they can magically intervene in the universe through specific spells, ceremonies, or rituals. The most widespread occult religions currently practiced in the United States include Afro-Caribbean Syncretic Religions (Santeria, Voodoo, Palo Mayombe and others), Neo-Pagan religions (Wicca, Druidism, Asatru and others), Satanism and, more recently, Vampire religions. There are also numerous new eclectic occult traditions practiced by individuals and members of small, loosely organized groups.

Although occult is intrinsically defined as hidden or secret knowledge, the World Wide Web has become a repository of such knowledge. Like a cyber-Oracle of Delphi the Internet guides spiritual seekers to unforeseen destinies. Groups that previously kept their theologies and ritual practices secret for fear of persecution are now proudly hosting web sites, spreading their beliefs and recruiting new disciples from all over the world. Occult philosophies, rituals, and spells are accessible in a manner that never could have been conceived of when they were instituted. Moreover, there are occult search engines to help navigate through the vast information. For example Occult 100 (<http://www.occult100.com/>), Avataresearch search engine of the occult internet(<http://www.avataresearch.com/>), Triple Six Occult Searchism (<http://www.my-find.net/cgi-bin/engine.pl?eID=8121>) and a variety of occult chat rooms such as occult forums (<http://www.occultforums.com/>)

However, not all occult theologies are easily accessible; for obvious reasons, groups and individuals that engage in violent illegal rituals choose to remain anonymous and keep their rites secret. Some groups will post only the positive side of their theologies on the Internet and introduce practitioners to more violent rituals only after they have reached a certain level of initiation. A few are bold enough to proudly flaunt their violent rituals on-line, for example a Satanic religion called the Order of the Nine Angles has a guide to human sacrifice on their web site (<http://members.easyspace.com/oww/satan/Satanism/Ona/Odoc10.htm>) or (<http://galileo.spaceports.com/~ona/>) Conversely, many groups are painfully aware of allegations of illegal activities associated with occult traditions and post lengthy disclaimers that they do not engage in animal abuse, ritual abuse or any type of criminal activity in order to disassociate their organization from accusations of violence. For example, The Legion of Loki, an official grotto of the Church of Satan located in St. Louis, Missouri, has a lengthy disclaimer on their web site (<http://home.ix.netcom.com/~ambrosi/about.html>). Regardless of disclaimers and attempts to educate the public, occult activities are considered unconventional, controversial, and more often than not dangerous. Various perspectives on the controversies surrounding the occult can be found at Religious tolerance.org (<http://www.religioustolerance.org/occult.htm>) and Apologetics Index (<http://www.apologeticsindex.org/o09.htm>) To assist in understanding the diversity of beliefs, demonstrate the types of social stigma associated with occult practices, and introduce the problem of ritualistic crime the following are descriptions of the most popular and widespread occult religious traditions in America.

## Syncretic Beliefs

Syncretic belief systems are religions that have combined two or more different cultural and spiritual beliefs into a new faith. Santeria, Voodoo, Hoodoo, Palo Mayombe, Candomble, and Shango are some of the syncretic Afro-Caribbean religions. Brujeria, a form of witchcraft, has distinctly Mexican cultural and religious roots. Afro-Caribbean faiths originated in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries during African slave trading when owners imposed Catholicism on their slaves and forbade traditional religious practices. In an attempt to maintain their cultural and religious beliefs, Africans disguised their religion by assigning each of their gods the image of a Catholic saint. The name of the religion corresponds to the geographical location it evolved in and the African region it derived from. For example, Santeria (the way of the saints), emerged in Cuba and derived from the Southwestern Nigerian Yoruba tribe. This new faith was eventually introduced to other Latin American countries; in Brazil it became known as Candomble and in Trinidad, Shango. Voodoo, often referred to as Hoodoo in America, evolved in Haiti and originated in Dahomey, today referred to as the Republic of Benin, and was practiced among the Fon, Yoruba, and Ewe. Magic and the belief in supernatural intervention occupy a significant place in the worship of all occult syncretic religions.

### Santeria

Santeria combines the cultural and spiritual beliefs of the Southwestern Nigerian Yoruba tribe with the religious practices of the Catholic faith; it consists of using magical rituals to worship or satisfy a pantheon of gods and goddesses known as *orishas*. The following web site provides a complete description of the Santeria pantheon of gods (<http://www.seanet.com/~efunmoyiwa/orishas.html>). In Cuba, where Santeria developed extensively, the Yoruba became known as Lucumi, a term derived from the Yoruba word *akumi*, which refers to a native of the Aku, a region of Nigeria where many Yoruba come from. OrishaNet provides excellent articles on the history, theology, and rituals of Santeria (<http://www.seanet.com/~efunmoyiwa/>).

Santeria is an earth religion, a magical religious system that has its roots in nature and natural forces. Santeria still retains the fundamental precepts of the ancient Yoruba tradition which includes the concepts of *ashe* and *ebbo*. *Ashe* is a Yoruba word that literally means “so be it,” but it is the symbol of divine power and energy, a term used to describe the energy that permeates the universe. This is a cultural variation of the Melanesian concept of *mana* or the American Indian concepts of *wakan* and *manitu*. *Ashe* is the power of the Supreme God who created the universe; everything is made of *ashe* and through *ashe* everything is possible. *Ashe* is manifested in persons, religious paraphernalia, invocations in the Yoruba language,

the sacred stones, the herbs, the *ngangas* (sacred cauldrons), and almost anything connected with Santeria magic.(1) The gods of Santeria are the repositories of *ashe*, the divine power/energy and Santeria spells, rituals; invocations are all conducted in order to acquire *ashe* from the Gods. This *ashe* is the power to change things, to solve all problems, subdue enemies, and acquire love and money. *Ebbo* is the concept of sacrifice and is the way that the *orishas* are worshiped so that they will give their *ashe*. Every rite and spell of Santeria is part of the *ebbo* concept. Fortunately sacrifice does not always require a sacrificial victim. *Ebbocan* be an offering of fruits, flowers, candles, any of the favorite foods of the *orishas* or a blood offering. The *orisha* determines what type of *ebbo* is required to solve a specific problem and the priest ascertains what the *orisha* wants by questioning him through the *Diloggun*, the divination system known also as the seashells.(2)

Santeria is essentially based on natural magic, and all of the basic elements of worship can be found in nature. The foundation of Santeria worship can be found in four natural elements: water, herbs, seashells, and stones. The bases of many of the major spells of Santeria are herbs, plants, roots, and flowers, each of which is believed to have a spiritual entity that guards it. Each root, flower, tree, or plant is believed to be full of *ashe* and belongs to one of the *orishas* who must be asked permission whenever the plant is used. Santeria rituals also require the use of sacrificial birds and animals. Each of the *orishas* is “fed” his/her favorite food or sacrifice in the *ebbo* rituals. The blood of roosters and goats is the most common sacrificial offering. Birds (pigeons, canaries, hens, etc.) are used in rubbing rituals where the client is cleansed, the function of which is that any negative feelings caused by evil are passed into the birds.(3) The magical practices of Santeria are a method for believers to gain control over their lives by invoking the proper gods who will effect changes. To truly comprehend this religion it is necessary to understand that for Santeria believers every aspect of human life is controlled by the pantheon of gods. For a complete description of Santeria magic, the following book entitled **Santeria, A Practical Guide to Afro-Caribbean Magic** by Luis M. Nuñez is online in its entirety.

(<http://w3.iac.net/~moonweb/Santeria/TOC.html>)

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Priests in the Santeria religion are known as *Santeros* (male) and *Santera* (female); they are also known by the Yoruba name of *omo-orisha*, which means child of an *orisha*. There is a sophisticated hierarchy of Santeria priests and high priests are known as *Babalawos*. One of the strongest precepts in Santeria is that the dead come before the *orishas*, hence ancestor worship is central to the practice of Santeria. The dead in one’s family, known collectively as *eggun*, must be fed periodically, just as the *orishas* are given offerings. “Therefore we have in Santeria a

religious system that honors the ancestors and recognizes a direct contact between mankind and the forces of nature, which are seen as direct manifestations of God himself. This contact between God and mankind through nature is enforced through ebbo, sacrifice, for the purpose of receiving ashe, power.”(4) The fundamental basis of Santeria is a personal relationship with the *orishas* that will bring the believers happiness, success and wisdom. This devotion or ritual worship occurs in four principal forms: divination, sacrifice, spiritualism, and initiation.

Until very recently, Santeria rituals were shrouded in a tradition of secrecy that was not part of the original Yoruba religion. Although the Yoruba were successful in hiding their *orishas* under the guise of Catholic saints, it did not take long for the Spanish settlers to realize what the slaves were doing, which resulted in severe persecution that forced them to cloak their religion in secrecy. This secrecy, which never existed in Nigeria, is still observed by many practitioners of Santeria today and is one of the reasons the religion is often misunderstood and viewed as dangerous.(5) Recently there have been organized attempts by Santeria practitioners to refute the stereotypes, superstitions, and fears associated with the religion. Many Santeria web sites are appearing that involve individual houses, religious supplies, and even bulletin boards and chat rooms. The O.L.U., “Organization for Lukumi Unity,” is a nonprofit cultural organization formed by Olorishas, Babalawos, and Aleyos who want to see all practitioners of the Lukumi Culture and Religion come together in brotherhood.

(<http://www.lukumiunity.org/mission.html>), Excellent websites containing descriptions of various ceremonies, links and photographs are Eleda.org

(<http://ilarioba.tripod.com/index.html>) and Ochareo.com

(<http://www.ochareo.com/portal.htm>) The following web sites belong to *botanicas* (religious supply stores)

(<http://www.eden.rutgers.edu/~binkyboy/englishindex.html>) and

Folkcuba.com (<http://www.folkcuba.com/>).

Currently there are several million people living in America who practice some sort of Afro-Caribbean faith, most of whom are not involved in criminal activity. Because of the growing population of Santeria practitioners, many officers routinely discover the remains of sacrificed goats, chickens, roosters, and other animals covered in sacrificial matter in areas such as cemeteries, beaches, near railroad tracks, and other places that have magical significance to the believers. Although it is illegal to discard animal corpses in public places, most of these cases are not indicative of violent criminal behavior but are remnants of ritual ceremonies. Controversies associated with the practice of Santeria most often involve misunderstanding of the use of magical spells, amulets, and food offerings, or the debates surrounding the practice of animal sacrifice.

## Voodoo

Voodoo is also known as Vodun, Voudou, Vodoun, and Hoodoo and is derived from the Fon word Vodun, which means spirit or deity. The term Voodoo and its derivative Hoodoo originated as derogatory expressions to refer to systems of sorcery and magic, or to specific spells or charms stemming from these systems. Voodoo is an established religion with as many as 60 million followers worldwide, with large populations in New York, Miami, and Montreal, cities with the greatest concentrations of Haitian immigrants. Similar to Santeria, Voodoo is a syncretic religion that developed as a response to the African slave trade; Voodoo evolved among the slaves who were taken to Haiti. Although some of the rituals and ceremonies of Voodoo are comparable to Santeria, there are marked differences. The African tribes where the religious movements originated from were different and the rites varied with each tribe. Voodoo derived from the African tribes of the Nagos, Ibos, Aradas, Dahomeans, and others. Although they share Yoruba and Kongo influences, the cultures they assimilated into were different; Haiti was under French influence during the slave trade while Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic were under Spanish rule.

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Voodoo has a loosely organized priesthood open to both men and women. Male priests are called Houngan and female priests are called Mambo; these limit their practices to white magic, whereas Bokors, also known as Caplatas, practice what is referred to as left hand magic, black magic, or evil sorcery. It is the image of the Bokor that usually provides the stereotypical portrayal of Voodoo spells that are supposed to cause death, illness, or injury, to obtain riches, to bring bad luck to enemies or good fortune to a client, and also to invoke the zombie, a corpse that has been raised from the grave to live again as a mindless slave. Haitian Voodoo is comprised of both good and evil uses of magic, as utilized by the Houngon and the Bocor. There are many different types of Voodoo rituals including individual acts of piety such as lighting candles for particular spirits and large feasts sometimes lasting several days. Similar to Santeria, initiation, divination, sacrifice, and spirit possession are fundamental Voodoo rituals. For a complete description of Voodoo history, rituals, and ceremonies, link to The Vodou Page by Bon Mambo Racine Sans Bout Sa Te La Dagenen

(<http://members.aol.com/racine125/vleson1.html#part1>).

The Haitian form of Voodoo has many deities, known collectively as Loa, who participate in ritualistic ceremonies in several different ways. Rituals are most commonly held to invoke a particular god who best fits the need of the moment and gods are known either as Rada or Petro. Rada and Petro spirits sharply contrast; the



Rada spirits are known for their wisdom and benevolence while the Petro spirits are known for their power and Congo influence. Each Loa has its own attributes and form of worship. The following website describes the Voodoo pantheon of gods: ([http://fullmoon\\_deities.tripod.com/voodoo.html](http://fullmoon_deities.tripod.com/voodoo.html)). In addition to the attributes associated with Voodoo gods, each god also has their own symbolic drawings called veves; these are line drawings most often drawn during ceremonies to worship a particular spirit. Examples of Voodoo veves can be viewed at (<http://www.angelfire.com/mi3/ghostwatchers/veve1.html>).

Voodoo first came to the United States in 1803, when the prohibition against importing slaves from the West Indies was lifted to allow planters access to more labor. What began in Louisiana as the Haitian transplant of Voodoo eventually evolved into an American syncretism known as Hoodoo. This newer form of the ancient traditions developed differently in the United States, supplanting many of its religious aspects with more cultural and medicinal aspects.

Law enforcement issues concerning Voodoo are similar to Santeria and most frequently involve the use of sacrificed animals; however, the stigma associated with Voodoo takes an entirely different form than that of Santeria although their sacrificial rituals are similar. Stereotypes associated with Voodoo originated with the many inaccurate and racist depictions of the religion in Hollywood films and the media in general. Voodoo is still seriously ridiculed in recent advertisements on television and there are Internet web sites that make fun of voodoo magic, such as Instant Voodoo.com (<http://instantvoodoo.com/default.asp?flash=true&>), Virtual Voodoo (<http://www.runningpress.com/voodoodoll/index.asp>) and Pinstruck Digital Voodoo (<http://www.pinstruck.com/whatispinstruck.htm>). However, similarly to Santeria, Voodoo practitioners are now hosting web sites and bulletin boards such as Vodoun Culture (<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Delphi/5319/ayibobo.htm>), the Vodou Page, (<http://members.aol.com/racine125/index1.html>), West African Dahomean Vodoun (<http://www.mamiwata.com/>), Vodou, Vodou, Vodou ([http://www.salc.wsu.edu/fair\\_s02/FS14/vodou.htm](http://www.salc.wsu.edu/fair_s02/FS14/vodou.htm)), and the largest discussion board on Vodou Vodou Arts ([http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Vodou\\_Arts/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Vodou_Arts/)).

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### **Palo Mayombe**

Palo Mayombe is another syncretic Afro-Caribbean belief system that combines the cultural and spiritual belief systems of the ancient African Congo tribes with the religious practices of Yoruba slaves and Catholicism. It uses magical rituals that



manipulate, captivate, and/or control another person, most often for the practitioner's malevolent purposes. Like the people from Nigeria, the Congo slaves were forcibly brought to the Caribbean and subsequently forced to adapt their cultural and religious beliefs to the culture and Catholic religious tradition of the new land. Through their assimilation process, the Congo slaves also incorporated some of the beliefs, symbols, and rituals of Santeria. The result of this particular syncretism was Palo Mayombe, derived from the Spanish Palo meaning "wooden stick" or "branch" and referring to the pieces of wood practitioners use for their magic spells.(6) Priests of Palo Mayombe are known as Paleros or Mayomberos. Although the origins of the Mayombero and Santero share similar roots, there are two features that distinguish the rituals and beliefs of these different and individualistic belief systems. First, although many Mayomberos are originally initiated into Santeria, very few Santerians also practice Palo Mayombe. In fact, most Santeria practitioners fear the Mayombero, claiming he practices a sinister form of Santeria which they call *brujería*—black magic or witchcraft. Second, the rituals of Santeria most often focus magic on positive actions designed to improve one's personal position or please an *orisha*. Palo Mayombe, in contrast, centers its rituals on the spirit of the dead, often using magic to inflict misfortune or death upon an enemy. In fact, the Mayombero does not use the *orishas* but rather invokes the evil spirit of one specific patron who resides in his *nganga*, the cauldron used during most rituals.(7) For a description of the Palo Mayombe Religion(<http://www.inquiceweb.com/dondeKongo.html>).

Some practitioners of Palo Mayombe claim that although they are evoking the spirits of the dead, their intentions are not to harm, that they use Palo in particularly difficult cases because it works much faster and is more effective than Santeria rituals. Regardless, Palo Mayombe essentially is the practice of malevolent magic in the context of myths and rituals of Congo origin, and its magic is accomplished with the use of human bones. Practitioners of Palo Mayombe specialize in accomplishing sorcery through the spirit of the dead. The source of the Paleros' power is the cauldron where the spirits of the dead reside; the African name for the sacred cauldron, *nganga*, is a Congo word that means dead, spirit, or supernatural force. The following items are typically found in the *nganga*; a human skull, bones, graveyard dust, crossroads dust, branches, herbs, insects, animal and bird carcasses, coins, spices, and blood. The initiate in Palo is known as Mpangui, Nganga Nkisi, or Tata Nkisi. The *nganga* does what its owners order it to do, and working with it is referred to as "playing" with it. When the spirit of the *nganga* carries out its owner's wishes, he or she gives it blood as an expression of gratitude.(8) The Paleros also serve their ancestors, all the dead, and the spirits of nature. Chango is the *orisha* most often worshiped by the Paleros who call him "Nsasi" and claim he originates from the Congo. Palo Mayombe has a pantheon of Gods with both Catholic and Santeria counterparts. For a complete description of

the Nkisi, the gods and goddesses of Palo, see (<http://www.mayombe-cortalima.com/nkisi/index.htm>). For a personal gain or a fee, the Paleros will perform rituals to inflict mental or physical harm, even death, on an individual. A Brujeria or Bilongo is a black magic spell that is achieved in many ways, as when a person is given a magical preparation in food or drink, or when a spirit of the dead is “sent” with the intention of causing torment and misfortune to the victim. Other kinds of black magic include leaving animal carcasses (decapitated roosters, dead goats, human skulls, etc.) at the entrance of a business or home, or preparing special dolls stuffed with ritual items (pendants, herbs, names of people, etc.,) and kept at home.(9)

Surprisingly there are some Palo Mayombe web sites beginning to appear on the Internet, some that even have photos of actual *ngangas*. Hebrea Palo Mayombe-La Munanso Primitivo Siete Rayos Punto Firme (<http://mayombe.net/>), Munanso Siete Rayos Palo Mayombe-Corta Lima (<http://www.mayombe-cortalima.com/index.html>), and Ochareo.com (<http://www.ochareo.com/gallery/cgi-bin/liveframe.cgi/sample3>). There are even Palo message boards on the Internet (<http://pub188.ezboard.com/fnewlcocommunityboardsfrm9>) and (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/PaloMayombe-Kongo/>).

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Similarly to Voodoo and Santeria practitioners, Paleros claim that they are being persecuted for their religious beliefs and stigmatized for their ritual practices. However, there is a significant difference; regardless of whether the Palero’s intent is to heal or harm, Palo Mayombe ritually requires the use of human bones, hence this practice always entails the theft of human remains. Additionally, the types of animals sacrificed for Palo include domesticated pets such as dogs and other larger animals. The *nganga* is routinely fed with blood, so sacrifice occurs much more frequently than in Santeria rituals. Finally the religion of Palo Mayombe appeals to drug traffickers who believe that it has the power to protect them, and Paleros are hired to conduct special protection rituals. There are more crimes attributed to Palo Mayombe than any of the other syncretic traditions; they frequently include grave robbing, extortion, and animal and human sacrifice. Specific Palo Mayombe cases will be described in detail in the section on ritualistic crimes.

## **Satanism**

Satanism is a religion acknowledged by the U.S. Federal Government that maintains a set of ethical tenets, specific rituals, and true believers. This religion is widely practiced in Western society both individually and communally through Satanic

churches, covens, and grottoes. Similarly to other organized religions, beliefs vary among different sects and according to church leaders, ranging from a form of ethical egoism through worshiping a particular deity. In most sects Satanism is a reversal of Christianity, and similarities are found in the symbolism and ritual practices of each group. For a detailed description of Satanism, the reader is referred to my article in *Anthropoetics* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2001 / Winter 2002) entitled "Skandalon 2001: The Religious Practices of Modern Satanists and Terrorists" (<http://anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0702/skandalon.htm>).

## **Vampirism**

Vampirism, like other religions, consists of people who have committed themselves to an ideology, maintain ethical tenets within a hierarchical system, and participate in rituals specific to their clans. Practitioners of Vampirism, referred to as Vampires, are part of an extensive subculture. Currently, there is a prevailing phenomenon of Modern Vampires whose serious commitment to their beliefs, community, and culture meet the criteria to be designated a contemporary new religious movement. Since there is no agreed-upon definition of what constitutes a Vampire, the Modern Vampire is an amalgamation of characteristics derived from a variety of historical and cross-cultural archetypes. The subculture, like the Vampire, evolved from a combination of folktales, cultural myths, legends, and eventually the romanticized images found in Hollywood films and popular novels. There are many facets to Vampire culture, and members range from dabblers such as participants in role-playing games to the extremely devoted, who are referred to as "Real Vampires" within the Vampire community. Websites that link to all facets of Vampire culture include: Vampire Junction(<http://www.afn.org/~vampires/>), Vampires Among Us(<http://www.vampiresamongus.com/>) and Sanguinarius.org for Real Vampires, Blood Drinkers and Vampiric People (<http://www.sanguinarius.org/>).

Vampire belief systems are dependent upon the person's or group's interpretation of a Vampire and may be manifested simply as an aesthetic choice or as an entire lifestyle based on a sophisticated Vampire philosophy. Vampirism is specific to Real Vampires, and is practiced in Western society both individually and communally through many different organized Vampire groups, variously referred to as Clans, Churches, Covens, Orders, Houses, and Circles. There are many subgroups of the main clans and a significant number of individual unrelated less well-known groups. As with other new religious movements, it is difficult to establish an accurate number of followers; estimates range from 1000 to 100,000 self-identified Vampires throughout the world. For an idea of how widespread Vampire culture is, the Sanguinarius web site hosts a list of State & Regional e-Groups for Real Vampires (<http://www.sanguinarius.org/e-groups-USA.shtml>). Commonalties among the major Vampire groups include: hierarchical structures, opposition to Christian

tenets, occult magical ideologies, dark symbolism and aesthetics, blood rituals, strict codes of conduct, and advocating the acquisition of personal and political power. Similar to other organized religions, beliefs vary among different sects according to church leaders. Rivalry among the various groups is common, with each professing spiritual superiority over the others and claiming that they are practicing the one true faith. Similar to other new religious movements, many Vampire organizations and churches have asserted that they continually experience various forms of persecution by the media, film perceptions of Vampires, and actual physical threats. The problem is exemplified by The Real Vampire Coalition's web site entitled "Stop Vampire Hate"

(<http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Hollow/6416/stop.htm>).

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An essential attribute specific to practitioners of Vampirism is the inherent ability to acquire strength and energy from either empathic capability, imbibing blood, or drawing from the psychic energy of others. The latter is referred to as Psychic Vampirism, commonly referred to as "Psi" in the Vampire community. Psychic Vampirism has its origins in ancient folktales that identified Vampires as evil gods or demons and in medieval legends as incubus/succubus entities. In the nineteenth century when science started studying the paranormal through psychical research, the Psychic Vampire was viewed as a ghost-like figure, as opposed to the contemporary conception of a Vampire acquiring immortality as a resuscitated body. There are two primary forms of Psychic Vampirism. One maintains the existence of the *astral body*, a second invisible body that can separate from the physical body, usually at the moment of death. Astral Vampirism is the ability to send your astral body to attack others. The second, more common form of Psychic Vampirism is sometimes termed Magnetic Vampirism and refers to the ability to drain the life force of another person simply by being in their presence. Most contemporary Vampire religious philosophies involve either one or both forms of Psychic Vampirism. The ability to acquire energy from others, called "feeding" in the Vampire community, is considered intrinsic to Vampire predatory nature. There is a dispute among Vampire Churches whether it is ethical to feed off of the blood or psyche of unwilling donors. Since the acquisition of human life force is the fundamental core of all Vampiric teachings, distinctive methods of assimilating life energy are what distinguish the individual rituals, fundamental principles, and philosophy of each Vampire church. For a complete description of Psychic Vampirism from the perspective of a Vampire, the following article provides interesting insights: (<http://www.vampiresamongus.com/psyvamps.html>).

The practice that is most readily identified with Vampirism is blood drinking and bloodletting. A group of members who imbibe blood are referred to as a "feeding

circle” and, as opposed to media depictions, rarely bite each other on the neck but usually use razor blades to make cuts into each other’s bodies and suck the blood from those cuts. It is important to clarify that not all Vampires engage in this practice. Each church has an official position concerning blood drinking/letting, ranging from a neutral view of simply recognizing that it exists without encouraging it to considering it the highest sacred act of Vampire worship. All churches post disclaimers concerning the high risk of contracting blood-borne diseases and emphasize that these practices should only occur between consenting adults who have had blood testing and are aware of each other’s status. Even with official disclaimers, blood drinking/letting is sanctioned, extremely prevalent in the Vampire community, and often engaged in publicly at nightclubs, private havens, and churches.

For Modern Vampires, the use of blood is what separates the dabblers from the Real vampires. In Vampire culture the use of blood is commonly referred to as blood sports, blood play, blood lust, and blood fetishism; it is an expression of sexual, spiritual, recreational, or artistic activities that involve cutting and drinking blood. Blood rituals in the form of sacred acts of worship are fundamental to real Vampire religious beliefs. Blood sports in the form of recreational and/or sexual activities are one of the most dangerous aspects of Vampire culture and are noticeably increasing in popularity. This activity is so popular that there are several websites specifically dedicated to what are called “donors,” defined by Vampires as those who give a little of themselves to calm another person’s cravings. Donors can be psi (feed on psychic energy) or blood donors and feed on actual blood. Some of the web sites where people can meet and exchange blood are Blood Letters Donor Community Board (<http://disc.server.com/Indices/107353.html>), Drink deeply and dream.com (<http://www.drinkdeeplyanddream.com/realvampire/donor.html>), and Society of the Black Swan (<http://www.angelfire.com/goth/blackswan/>). Blood play involves cutting the body, then having another person lick or suck the blood from the cut. Cutting is most often done with a surgical scalpel or fine razor blade making shallow cuts in the top layer of the skin. At many of the Vampire nightclubs it is not unusual to see a group of people cutting and sucking each other’s blood in what is referred to as a feeding circle. Blood play frequently is intertwined with sexual activities and becomes an integral part of the intimacy shared. Occasionally blood sports entail using a syringe to draw blood and then imbibing it or sharing the blood with your partner. Essentially blood sports involve any sadomasochistic practice that involves blood and encompass all forms of body mutilation such as self scarring and play piercing in addition to cutting. Some Vampire web sites provide suggestions for safe feeding, such as the Sanguinarius Vampire Guide: Vampires & Blood Matters: Safe Bloodletting & Feeding (<http://www.sanguinarius.org/guide/blood/safe-feeding.shtml>) and Vampires Among Us tips and information on bloodletting

(<http://www.vampiresamongus.com/bloodlettingtips.html>), while others provide chat rooms and forums, such as Bloodfetish.com (<http://www.bloodfetish.com/>). For a detailed description of how blood rituals evolved from movements in the art world and popular culture to blood sports, self mutilation, and sadomasochism found in the Goth, Vampire, and Fetish movements, please see my previous article in *Anthropoetics* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1999 / Winter 2000) entitled "The Sacrificial Aesthetic: Blood Rituals from Art to Murder" (<http://anthropoetics.ucla.edu/ap0502/blood.htm>).

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Another characteristic immediately associated with the Vampire and related to blood drinking is immortality or more specifically life after death. More than any other attribute the conception of immortality held by Real Vampires differs from mythological and fictional accounts that portray a person rising from the grave and maintaining life by drinking the blood of living people. For Real Vampires, immortality is achieved in similar ways to other religious traditions. In some instances the Vampire God(s) will rise again to restore faithful Vampires to their original state. For others it is a form of reincarnation. Additionally some Vampires already consider themselves immortal by virtue of their ability to consciously connect to their incarnations and walk in both the spiritual and physical realm. None of the Vampire religious groups claim to achieve immortality exclusively or instantaneously through the imbibing of blood.

A custom frequently affiliated with the Vampire scene includes bondage & discipline sexual activity, fetishism, and sadomasochism. This is related to the characteristic of the "Vampyre" as predator/hunter and is a mandatory ritual in some religious groups to achieve higher levels of spirituality. In Vampyre religion sadomasochism is theologically one form of feeding, because, according to The Vampyre Codex (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/goth/vc/index.htm>), energy coupled with strong emotion is more fulfilling than simple energy alone. According to the Codex, the most intense emotion to feed off of is fear and the next is ecstasy, either sexual or religious. Sadomasochism in the form of Vampire religious ritual provides a combination of all three emotions, hence an intense form of assimilating energy from another.

One particularly large and influential Vampyre group has an intricate network of members and is referred to as "The Sanguinarium." This term is derived from the Latin word for blood, *sanguis*, and signifies how Vampyres regard each other, as in "of the blood." The Sanguinarium's website is now referred to as Vampirealmanac.com so there will no longer be confusion between the Sanguinarium web site (<http://www.sanguinarium.net/>).



The Sanguinarium promotes a common Vampyre lifestyle comprised of specific customs, etiquette, aesthetics, and ethical tenets. Organization consists of a board of directors called the Sanguinarium Council or Council of Vampyre International Community Affairs (COVICA); board members are designated as Ministers who each have a specific function. The Legacy is the inner circle of the Sanguinarium. Important texts include a combination of fundamental writings from member groups including "The Black Veil," a code of conduct, "The Vampyre Codex" a spiritual understanding of Vampirism, and the Sanguinarium Lexicon of Terminology. The Vampyre Almanac is the official publication of the organization. The code of conduct is enforced by the Elders in the tradition of the "Black Veil" ([http://www.sanguinarius.org/articles/black\\_veil\\_2.shtml](http://www.sanguinarius.org/articles/black_veil_2.shtml)) and is comprised of thirteen ethical tenets which all members are expected to abide by.

Currently there is only one international church authorized as a Vampire Religion by the United States Federal Government. The Temple of the Vampire (<http://www.vampiretemple.com/>) has been legally registered as a religion since December 1989 and has paved the way for other Vampire religious groups to be acknowledged as practicing an authentic religion. Sacred rites of the Temple of the Vampire include magical rituals to achieve the traditional powers of the Vampire, contact with Undead Gods, and, eventually, the holy act of Vampiric Communion. The Temple of the Vampire is a millennial religion whose origin and resurrection is explained in their Vampire Bible. According to Temple theology, Vampirism is an ancient religion that distinguishes between Living Vampires and Vampires who have experienced physical death who then become known as the Undead Gods. Genuine Vampirism is the exchange of energy between the Living Vampires and the Undead Gods in a ritual that the Temple refers to as Communion. Through this Communion the person gets closer to the Gods, develops higher levels of Vampiric skills, and ultimately achieves immortality by becoming an Undead God. Energy that is offered to the Undead Gods is collected astrally from sleeping human beings.

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Another well-known religious group is The Vampire Church (<http://www.vampire-church.com/pageweb48.html>), which has an ecumenical philosophy. The stated purpose of The Vampire Church is foremost to offer a haven for Vampires, to share with others of their kind, and to learn from one another. Unlike the elitism of many of the other Vampire sects, they do not tolerate racism (among Vampires), welcome diversity, and their goal is to unite all vampires in a common bond. The Vampire Church considers psychic attacks and forceful feeding as unethical and barbaric, and they are not tolerated. The organization consists of a church council that is responsible for all activities, projects, web site, and general well being of the church. The council is chaired by the Church Elder, who is head of



the council and founder of the church.

Other Vampire groups include the Kheprian Order (<http://www.kheperu.org/>), whose members are primarily scholar-monks, and their sister house the Sekhrian Order (<http://www.geocities.com/sekhemu/>), whose members are comprised of mystics and scholars. Both orders follow the Sanguinarium Black Veil or what is also called the “Rules of 13”; the Kheprian Order is where the Vampyre Codex originated.

There are several Vampire religious groups who openly state that they practice the black arts or what is referred to as the Left Hand Path. Some of the better known groups are Lucifer’s Den (<http://www.angelfire.com/mi/LUCIFERSDEN/>), House Lilitu (<http://www.houselilitu.org/Main.html/>), and Order of the Vampyre (<http://www.xeper.org/ovampyre/>). Some of these groups also identify themselves as Satanic orders and their philosophies focus on individuality, self-preservation, and personal empowerment. One particular Vampyre religious organization known as Thee Empyre ov Nozgoth attempted to unite all Satanic, Left Hand Path, and other occultist groups who follow the dark paths into a new alliance. Their stated goals were political as well as religious and included overthrowing “Zionist majorities” and creating a pure-blooded race and a promised land for the Vampyre race. Although all Vampyre religions are theologically supremacist, the Empyre ov Nozgoth was suggestive of white supremacist hate group ideologies. Fortunately their web site has shut down and hopefully the organization has also.

Other individual and Vampire religious groups include: House Quinotaur (<http://www.quinotaur.org/>), The Loyal Order of St. Germaine (<http://saintgermaine.com/>), House Verthaine (<http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Labyrinth/2497/index.html>), and many more unpublished, underground, and developing groups.

Many people are introduced to the Vampire scene through the role-playing game “Vampire: The Masquerade” (<http://www.white-wolf.com/Games/Pages/VampireHome.html>), others through the erotic nature of the lifestyle, and many more through popular literature such as Anne Rice’s *The Vampire Chronicles*. However, similarly to Satanic groups, the most renowned source for reaching new members, disseminating information, and gathering is the Internet, which contains thousands of web sites for Vampire organizations, churches, support groups, supplies, and so on. Vampires pride themselves on their use of graphics and technology to create the most distinguished and intricate web sites. The Vampire Society web site has links to almost the entire vampire community (<http://www.100megs3.com/vamlegacy/legacy9.htm>).

Vampirism, the most recent manifestation of the occult, has led to many crimes, ranging from vandalism to murder. Vampire culture is relevant to law enforcement because many juveniles and young adults dabbling in the Goth movement are seduced into the more serious level of the subculture, the Vampire and Fetish Scenes, where blood rituals, sexual sadomasochism, and bondage discipline are regular occurrences. The dangers implicit in drinking and exchanging blood and violent sexual activities are more insidious when they are viewed as sacred rituals that are required for initiation, membership, and status in the group. Example of murders committed by juveniles and young adults who embraced a variety of vampire theologies are found in the ritualistic crimes section.

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## **Neo-Paganism**

There are hundreds of different Neo-Pagan groups whose commonalities include a reverence for nature (animism and pantheism), belief in the existence of many gods (polytheism) and the practice of what they refer to as white magic. Many neo-Pagan religious groups attempt to recreate ancient European pre-Christian religions, such as Druids, Goddess Worshipers, Nordic Paganism, and others, but one of the largest neo-pagan religions practice Wicca, a form of witchcraft. Neo-Pagan principles do not entail illegal activities and, significantly, “Witches” as they refer to themselves, do not engage in animal sacrifice or other blood rituals. Since there are so many different neo-pagan groups and their philosophies do not entail violent rituals it would go beyond the scope of this article to even briefly describe all of their philosophies. The following are just a few of the hundreds of neo-Pagan web sites that provide information on various groups, theologies, magical ideologies, ethics, and much more: Neo-Pagan Religious Traditions

([http://www.religioustolerance.org/neo\\_paga.htm](http://www.religioustolerance.org/neo_paga.htm) ), The Celtic Connection (<http://www.wicca.com/>), Witches Voice (<http://www.witchvox.com/>), WiccaNet The Home Of Wicca and Wiccans on the Web (<http://wiccanet.tv/>), Witch Craft, The Practice, The Tradition (<http://www.angelfire.com/games3/ladyashmon/wicca.html> ), A Guide to the Druids and Celtic Spirituality (<http://www.wildideas.net/cathbad/druid.html>), Druids and Druidism (<http://www.esotericart.com/fringe/druidism.htm>), Pagan Link: Pagan networking in the United Kingdom (<http://www.paganlink.org/>).

## **Part 2: Ritualistic Crimes**

In the law enforcement community, illegal ritual activities are typically referred to as “occult crimes.” However, “occult crime” is an inaccurate and pejorative designation; the term “occult” is applicable to many religions and practices that are

fundamentally nonviolent. Furthermore, not all violent ritual acts are committed in the worship of a religion. A more objective and accurate expression is “ritualistic crime,” because it encompasses crimes that may entail ritualistic behavior completely unrelated to the occult or any religious tradition. Similar to the term occult, there is no agreed upon definition of ritualistic crimes. Building upon a 1989 California Law Enforcement study of occult crime, ritualistic crime is most precisely defined as any act of violence characterized by a series of repeated physical, sexual, and/or psychological actions/assaults combined with a systematic use of symbols, ceremonies, and/or machinations. The need to repeat such acts can be cultural, sexual, economic, psychological, and/or spiritual.[\(10\)](#)

Crimes typically associated with ritual violence include: trespassing, vandalism, church desecration, theft, graffiti, arson, extortion, suicide, kidnapping, ritual abuse, animal sacrifice, and ritual murder. Trespassing related to ritualistic crime usually involves persons entering private areas such as woods, barns, and abandoned buildings for the purpose of having an isolated place to worship. Since most occult theologies are nature based, rituals are frequently held outdoors and altars are often constructed of natural elements. Vandalism most often associated with occult crime includes cemetery and church desecration. The most common types of cemetery desecration attributed to occult groups are digging up graves, grave robbing, and tampering with human corpses or skeletons. This is frequently motivated by religious beliefs that require human bones to fulfill specific rituals. Church desecration frequently includes destroying Bibles, urinating and defecating on holy objects and furniture, tearing crucifixes off walls, and destroying rosaries and crucifixes. It is important to note that the motivations behind such vandalism can also be attributed to hate crimes. Thefts from Christian churches, Jewish synagogues, hospitals, morgues, medical schools, and funeral homes are often linked with ritual violence. Items that are most often taken include cadavers, skeletal remains, blood, and religious artifacts that are considered sacred: crucifixes, communion wafers, wine, chalices, and so on. Frequent motivations for these thefts are that particular groups require actual holy artifacts or human organs, bones, and the like for their rituals.

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Graffiti is frequently related to occult crime. While a small amount of graffiti is related to other occult groups, the vast majority is directly related to involvement in Satanism. Nearly all instances of Satanic-related graffiti are committed by juveniles and young adults, most of whom are dabbling in the occult. Occult related arson is also almost always attributed to Satanists, especially juveniles and young adults. Among the most common places for juveniles to commit arson are churches and synagogues in which particularly holy sections or artifacts are burned, and houses

or buildings where damaging evidence could be uncovered by investigators. It is important to note that the motivations behind the arson of churches and synagogues can also be attributed to hate crimes.

Although group practice of extortion is not a known activity of any occult group, individual practitioners of some occult belief systems have used their religious involvement as a method to extort money and information from followers. Investigators have noted that such crimes are especially difficult to prosecute because the victims will not come forward. More often than not, the victims do not perceive themselves as victims because they trust the High Priest and believe their economic sacrifices are being used to protect them. Occult related suicide appears to be the primary domain of juveniles and young adults involved in Satanism and is a major concern among many criminal justice practitioners and therapists. One of the more controversial crimes is kidnapping; kidnapping people of all ages, but especially children, is thought to be a prevalent crime among some occult practitioners. Especially accused are Traditional/Cult Satanists who are said to kidnap victims needed for ritual sacrifice, self-styled juvenile Satanists whose dabbling has taken them "to the point of no return," and Mayomberos, whose rituals require a human skull. A particularly heinous and controversial crime is known as ritual abuse, ritual child abuse, or, more specifically, Satanic ritual abuse. The alleged perpetrators of such abuse are most often Satanists. In the broadest sense, ritual abuse of children, adolescents, and adults involves repeated physical, sexual psychological and/or spiritual abuse, which utilizes rituals. Currently, there is probably no more divisive issue within the criminal justice community than that of Satanic ritual abuse. While no one disputes the existence or increase of ritualistic abuse, few agree about several other aspects: the extent of ritualistic crimes committed specifically by Satanists, the motivations of perpetrators, and the veracity of the victims who claim to have survived ritual abuse at the hands of Satanists.<sup>(11)</sup> For a more detailed description of occult crime, a report entitled *Occult Crime, a Law Enforcement Primer* can be found on the Internet in its entirety at (<http://coyotewicca.org/report/27.htm>).

There are many scholars who argue that occult crime does not exist and that allegations can be attributed to witch hunts, satanic panics, and false memories. Occult crime debates are essentially theoretical disputes based on the perspective of the person interpreting the violence. When viewed from the standard behavioral science approach, crimes are the result of deviant behavior and are frequently attributed to teenage pranks, sadists, or gangs. When viewed from the perspective of the belief system of the perpetrator, they are ritualistic crimes and attributed to occult beliefs. Because of conflicting theoretical perspectives, the degree and prevalence of such crimes are unknown. The examples below will illustrate the diversity and frequency of the problem. Although I have assisted with some of the

cases cited, the information provided is derived solely from previously published articles and news reports. Since the main concern of this article is sacrifice, the following examples are limited to animal mutilations and ritual homicide.

## **Animal Sacrifice**

Animal sacrifice is practiced by believers in Satanism, Santeria, Voodoo, Palo Mayombe, and Vampirism, as well as by young serial killers. The symbolic objects at the crime scene, types of mutilation, and other forensic evidence generally indicate which belief system is practiced.

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In Santeria, Voodoo, and Palo Mayombe, animal sacrifice is a fundamental aspect of the belief system and ritually required as offerings to the gods. For most Satanic and Vampire religions, animal sacrifice is viewed more as an assimilation of power through the torture, pain, and blood of the victim and frequently escalates to larger animals and occasionally humans. In Satanism the torturing and killing of animals is also a common indoctrination method. For serial murderers, the killing of animals is not connected to any theology. Although the crime scene may initially appear similar, serial killers' motivation for torture and slaughter is primarily secular; they may use animal sacrifice as an opportunity to hone their skills before applying them to human victims. An excellent online database on animal abuse is Pet-Abuse.Com, dedicated to breaking the cycle of violence through action, education and information (<http://www.pet-abuse.com/>).

Relatively speaking, animal sacrifice for Santeria and Voodoo rituals is the least disturbing and least heinous. There are three basic types of Sacrifice in Santeria: ritual cleansings, offerings to the *eggún* or the *orishas*, and initiation offerings. Ritual cleansings, known as *despojos*, are carried out when the animals are believed to take on the negative vibrations surrounding an individual and therefore cannot be eaten. During a ritual cleansing the blood of the animal is offered to the saints and the remains of the animal are disposed of in accordance with the wishes of the saint. Cleansing rituals are best explained as cathartic techniques in which the bad feelings caused by the evil in the person are passed into the birds, and the herbs' curative properties pass into the consultant. Many of the sacrificed animals that are routinely found along the beach, rivers, or railroad tracks are the product of ritual cleansings.

The other two types of offerings are made to *eggún* and the *orishas* are known as *asebbos* and initiation offerings. During initiation offerings the blood is always given to the saints and the meat is always eaten because it is believed to be full of the energy of the gods, whereas in *ebbo* offerings the meat is not always eaten. Many

of the animals used in ritual sacrifice are fowl and include male and female chickens, roosters, ducks, guinea hens, and pigeons. They are known collectively as *plumas*, “feathers.” Other animals sacrificed in Santeria include goats, sheep, pigs, and occasionally cows.

Sacrifice to particular *orishas* is also used in a variety of magical spells for very specific results. There are numerous spell books that individual practitioners can consult if they do not consult a priest. These books, very similar to recipe books, provide the ingredients, amounts, and detailed directions to conduct the ritual. The spells are most often arranged by the desired goal; for example, recipes may be organized under headings such as: love spells, overcoming enemies, acquiring money, protection against evil, and help during court cases. In communities with large populations of Santeria and Voodoo practitioners it is not unusual to find headless chickens on the doorways and steps of courthouses and government buildings where practitioners discard the sacrificed bird as part of a spell that will protect them from being found guilty.

Although animal sacrifices conducted for Santeria may be theologically benign, they officially constitute crimes under most state statutes and local ordinances and represent a continual problem for Health Departments, Humane Societies, and animal rights groups. The New York courts, in a case entitled *First Church of Chango v. American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals*, 134 A.D.2d 971, 521 N.Y.S.2d 356 (1st Dep’t 1987), affirmed in 70 N.Y.2d 616, 521 N.E.2d 443 (1988) that animal sacrifices were not protected, and could be prohibited under the New York State anti-cruelty law, that is, a neutral, generally applicable statute. A later case concerning the practice of animal sacrifice went all the way to the Supreme Court: *Church of the Lukumi Babalu Aye v. City of Hialeah*, 508 U.S. 520 1993, in which a Florida Santeria church was being prevented from conducting animal sacrifices(<http://online.sfsu.edu/~biella/santeria/dec1.html>). In 1993 the justices unanimously ruled in favor of the church, arguing that animal sacrifice is protected by the First Amendment. However, this historical decision providing rights for Santeria practitioners cannot accommodate all of the rituals that are in opposition to city health codes. For example, the ruling does not allow for disposing of animals in public places, which may be necessary according to a particular ritual. Essentially Santeria sacrifice can never be completely reconciled with U.S. laws because it conflicts with health codes and interpretations of what constitutes cruelty to animals. Arrests are still made and they frequently make the news.

In August 2002 in Middletown, Connecticut, police investigated whether an animal’s tongue nailed to a tree outside the Middlesex Superior Court was a threat or an



element of religious animal sacrifice. In March 2003 in Houston, Texas, authorities seized 12 goats, 11 chickens, and two pigeons that were about to be sacrificed in a Santeria ceremony. Evidence at the home showed ritualistic sacrifices had taken place there. In June 2003 in Aberdeen, New Jersey, police investigated a case of four beheaded ducklings that were painted blue and black and found scattered among discarded fruit off the New Jersey coastline. The man arrested in the case claimed he was performing a Santeria ceremony. In August 2002 in Tampa, Florida, four men and one teenager were arrested for animal cruelty while conducting a Santeria sacrifice. Their naked bodies were covered in the blood of a dead goat-and the yard around them was strewn with dismembered heads of chickens, pigeons, and doves. Each was charged with three counts of animal cruelty, a third-degree felony, and \$3,000 bail was set for each

<http://www.religionnewsblog.com/archives/00000495.html>).

In October 2003 in Passaic, New Jersey, in an attempt to bring attention to the issue of animal sacrifice in the Santeria religion, a Santeria priest sacrificed two red roosters at an altar behind his religious supply store on the city's main street. "Felix Mota, 43, a santero, or priest of the Afro-Cuban religion, vowed last Wednesday to perform the sacrifice and advised city officials of his plans. Mota's lawyer, Jesus Pena, said the ritual was protected by a 1993 Supreme Court decision, *Lukumi Babaluaye v. the City of Hialeah, Fla.*, in which the court ruled the sacrifice was a form of religious expression shielded by the First Amendment. Last week, Mayor Sammy Rivera said that his administration has never interfered with an animal sacrifice if it involved a religious ritual. Police were posted outside the botanica Monday night for crowd control"(12)

<http://www.philly.com/mld/philly/news/local/7062153.htm>). This highly publicized event evoked a variety of responses including those of the nation's two largest animal protection organizations. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), called on Passaic municipal authorities to enforce New Jersey animal cruelty statutes and prosecute Felix Mota. In a bizarre turn of events a month after the sacrifice, in Newark, New Jersey, a 67-year-old woman was arrested and charged with making terroristic threats against the Santeria priest after she vowed to make a "human sacrifice" of the priest himself. In addition to threatening the Santeria priest, the letter also threatened Passaic Mayor Sammy Rivera and Mota's lawyer, Jesus Pena. "It's time to make human sacrifices to make your ancestors even more happy," read the letter. "The letter also said: "Santeria is an evil, pagan, ancient bloodthirsty cult which enjoys killing animals. . . . The mayor said he did not believe [the woman] meant to carry out her threat to kill him and others, and he even sympathized with her opposition to animal sacrifice."(13)

[http://www.religionnewsblog.com/5073-Santeria\\_priest,\\_Passaic\\_mayor\\_threatened\\_after\\_sacrifice.html](http://www.religionnewsblog.com/5073-Santeria_priest,_Passaic_mayor_threatened_after_sacrifice.html)).



Animal sacrifice in the worship of Palo Mayombe surpasses basic problems for health departments and humane societies and has been associated with more serious crimes such as grave robbing, drug trafficking, and murder. Not only is the intention of the worshiper characteristically to cause harm but the items required for particular spells can only be obtained illegally. Additionally Palo Mayombe animal sacrifice is much more disturbing because it entails the use of domesticated pets such as dogs. Since Palo Mayombe focuses its rituals on the spirits of the dead instead of the Palo gods, rituals require human remains, specifically the human skull and other body parts. The central theology of Palo is that the spirit of the person whose bones are placed in the *nganga*, the sacred cauldron, carries out the owner's wishes. Animal sacrifice occurs because the *nganga* must be initiated and continually "fed" blood.

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Although penalties for animal abuse and grave desecration vary from state to state, the more serious ritualistic crime is generally the theft of human remains. There have been several recent cases of cemetery desecration connected to Palo Mayombe. In Delaware there were two recent incidents of grave robberies in which mausoleums were broken into and human skulls were taken. The first incident occurred in November 2002 at the Riverview cemetery in Wilmington, and the second in the Brandywine cemetery in New Castle. Although many occult groups conduct rituals in mausoleums and teenagers commonly execute pranks in cemeteries, symbolic evidence at the crime scene is unique to each religious tradition. The theft of a human skull is commonly associated with Palo Mayombe. No arrests have been made at this time in the Delaware cases. For further information on the Delaware grave desecrations and their alleged connection to Palo Mayombe, see the following article in the *Delaware News*

*Journal*(<http://www.delawareonline.com/newsjournal/local/2003/08/25skulltheftmaybe.html>).

In Newark, New Jersey, several arrests were made in connection to Palo Mayombe rituals. In October 2002 a father and son were arrested after a search of their home uncovered both animal and human remains. Dean Maglione, Essex County Assistant Prosecutor, stated, "They take the head and they put in a cauldron. And after they put it in a cauldron, they put some other ingredients in there and they sell services, they sell ceremonies. People pay to sit in a room with a cauldron"(14) ([http://abclocal.go.com/wabc/news/WABC\\_100802\\_stolenremains.html](http://abclocal.go.com/wabc/news/WABC_100802_stolenremains.html)). In one news article the reporter specifically recognized the crime scene as a temple: "A raid on the basement temple of a religious sect uncovered human body parts allegedly stolen from cemeteries and the remains of several animals that may have been sacrificed by worshipers. The human remains, including three skulls, were

found Monday in cauldrons set up on altars in a building owned by Eddie Figueroa, 56, who authorities believe is a high priest in the Palo Mayombe sect. It was the second time in two months that Newark authorities have recovered stolen body parts from worshipers of the sect, whose priests use human remains in their rituals. The raid grew out of an investigation that began in July, when some remains were stolen from a crypt at Mount Pleasant Cemetery in Newark”(15) (<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/766389/posts>). In March 2003 another arrest was made; 60-year-old Miriam Mirabel was charged with leading the Palo cult and ordering her followers to steal bodies from local cemeteries. This highly publicized case is scheduled for trial early in 2004 in Newark (<http://www.religionnewsblog.com/archives/00002590.html>).

Although animal sacrifice for Santeria and Voodoo is disturbing to persons unfamiliar with these practices, it pales in comparison to animal sacrifice that occurs for particular Satanic and Vampire religions. In syncretic religions animals are sacrificed by either quickly slitting their throats or by snapping their necks; at worst, the heads of pigeons or other birds may be bitten off by the Priest. However, in Satanism animals are slowly tortured and heinously mutilated. In most occult traditions blood is believed to consist of life force energy. For Satanic and Vampire religions bloodletting or imbibing blood from a victim represents the assimilation of raw power. The longer an animal is tortured and the pain is prolonged, the more life energy/power is emitted. Ritual torture is viewed as a powerful form of magic that releases energy that can be directed by the perpetrator and used for specific goals. A basic magical principle is that intense emotion releases energy; in nonviolent groups such as neo-paganism this emotional energy is achieved through sexual magic and in traditional Satanism it is achieved through pain. In many cases traditional Satanic and Vampire practitioners will commit sexually sadistic acts to increase their power by harnessing the energy of their victim. Paul Elvidge describes this magical principle in his book, *Satanism: An Examination of Black Magic*:

Satanists seek to find liberation by utilizing ritual procedures which also, if effective enough, release large amounts of psychical energy which can then be directed towards specific goals be they external or internal of the practitioner. Magic in this context is defined in two ways, largely dependent upon the way the word is spelled. Traditionally magic has been spelled “magic,” the definition of which is generally understood to mean causing changes in the world or the individual’s consciousness in accordance with the individual’s will using psychical or occult forces. The second spelling of magic adds a “k” to the end of the word, thus “magick.” This spelling dates back to Aleister Crowley’s system of

magick–itself based upon older kabalistic and eastern magical traditions. Crowley added the letter “k” in order to differentiate between his own brand of sex magick and other non-sexual forms of magic(16) (<http://www.globusz.com/ebooks/Satanism/00000011.htm>).

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In his chapter on ritual sacrifice, Elvidge states,

The concept of ritual sacrifice has been the subject of much debate within the sphere of the Satanic underground. On the whole there can be seen to be two main camps emerging. On one side lie groups such as the Order of Nine Angles and the now-defunct Friends of Hekate. These groups, although differing in their approach to ritualistic magic, can be said to promote the use of human and/or animal sacrifice under certain conditions and for specific reasons. That is, they promote the conscious and willed use of sacrifice rather than the weak indulgence epitomized by the modern day serial killer who has no or very little control over his actions. On the opposite bench can be found the Society of Dark Lily, the Church of Satan and the Temple of Set. Lying in-between both camps can be found the diabolist who may sacrifice animals during his or her rituals of invocation. Yet whilst the diabolist—who often is a solo practitioner, working alone and in secret—may kill animals in his rites, it is doubtful if he would perform human sacrifice on the scale of the Order of Nine Angles or the Friends of Hekate and it is to these two groups one should turn in order to gain a deeper and more constructive insight into the concept of human sacrifice.(17)

For a complete description of Satanic black magic and the subsequent theological justification for animal and human sacrifice this book is available on line in its entirety (<http://www.globusz.com/ebooks/Satanism/00000016.htm>).

Cats are frequently the victims of Satanic ritualistic crimes, so much so that during the month of October many humane societies around the country will not allow cats to be adopted because they are frequently tortured and mutilated. In a recent article in the University of Idaho’s newspaper the *Argonaut*, the director of the Humane Society, Lori Freeman, confirmed reports that it does not allow black cats to be adopted around Halloween. One of the reasons she gave included the nationwide humane society’s policy not to adopt animals during Halloween because

of perceived threats of ritualistic occult animal mutilation and murder (<http://www.argonaut.uidaho.edu:16080/archives/103103/>). In 1999 in Saratoga, California, three cat mutilations prompted the sheriff's department to warn residents to contain their pets on Halloween. Cats were taken from the area, killed and mutilated, and then returned to the same area the next morning. An investigation was under way to see if those incidents were related to a string of 20 other cat mutilations in the Almaden area (<http://www.svcn.com/archives/saratoganews/10.27.99/cats-9943.html>).

Dismembered and skinned animals are frequently part of satanic rituals that are held in cemeteries. A recent case occurred in Ephraim, Utah on September 4, 2003, where residents found eight heads of decapitated cats placed in a line surrounded by severed cat paws and legs in a circle on top of a grave in the local cemetery. The manager of the Ephraim animal shelter said their little arms and legs were arranged in a pentagram on top of the grave. She also said that cat and dog killings have been going on throughout the summer. In addition, one of the residents found three grocery bags filled with dried blood hanging from an arch above her husband's grave (<http://www.sltrib.com/2003/Sep/09232003/utah/94978.asp>) and ([http://www.religionnewsblog.com/4679-Reward\\_offered\\_in\\_mutilation\\_case.html](http://www.religionnewsblog.com/4679-Reward_offered_in_mutilation_case.html)). In the summer of 2003 in Denver, Colorado and Salt Lake City, Utah, there were reports of over 50 different cases of cat mutilations. The Salt Lake City Police Department, in conjunction with the Humane Society of Utah and anonymous donors, offered a reward of \$8,500.00 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for the cat mutilations that occurred over the past two years. In most of the cases a hole was cut in the side of the cat, organs were missing, or the animal was decapitated or severed in half. These attacks were the subject of national and international news reports ([http://www.ci.slc.ut.us/police/press/cat\\_mutlate.htm](http://www.ci.slc.ut.us/police/press/cat_mutlate.htm)), (<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/06/20/national/main559603.shtml>), and ([http://www.aliendave.com/UUFOH\\_CatMutilations.html](http://www.aliendave.com/UUFOH_CatMutilations.html)). A task force, which consisted of members of Salt Lake County Animal Services, Salt Lake City Police, and the Humane Society of Utah, was established to investigate the incidents. After months of investigations the task force attributed the mutilations to animal predators, not humans. Based on evidence they had collected, they concluded that a den of foxes were responsible. Hair fibers found in the claws of one of the mutilated cats came back positive for fox hair. In addition, a fox den was found near the top of H Street, where many of the cat mutilations occurred. Cat hairs were found in and around the den. Furthermore, the task force looked at the drought situation of the region; the migratory patterns of animals and determined predators were living closer to residential areas than ever before, partly because, according to an animal services report, cats are an abundant source of food. Personally it was a welcome relief to work on a case where the mutilations were the result of natural as opposed to human predators

(<http://deseretnews.com/dn/view/0,1249,510043484,00.html?>).

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There have also been numerous incidents of cows and horses that have been ritually mutilated; it is much more difficult to attribute their deaths to animal predators. The mutilation of cows was so prevalent in the 1970s that the FBI was called in to conduct a special investigation (<http://foia.fbi.gov/ufoanim.htm>). This has become an infamous case in support of a variety of conspiracies. The conspiracy theories began when an Appaloosa gelding called Snippy from Alamosa, Colorado, was inexplicably killed in 1967. Its carcass was found with all the flesh neatly removed from its head and neck. The gelding's death set the pattern for a series of bizarre animal mutilations that have occurred across the U.S.A., Canada, and South America. In all cases, parts of the bodies were removed, such as the eyes, ears, genitals, or anus. Many people argued that the deaths were the result of experimentation conducted by UFO aliens. Others suspected that Satanic cults used the animals in their rituals. Another theory that emerged is that cattle were being used in secret U.S. government experiments involving chemical and germ warfare. Although some ranchers and skeptics seem to favor the theory that these animals were mutilated by natural predators, such as wolves and coyotes, the specific types of mutilation are inconsistent with those claims, particularly the manner in which the flesh was removed from the bodies and the surgical skill in which the organs were removed.

Reports of cattle and horse mutilations are still prevalent. In September 2003 in Lexington, North Carolina, a severed cow's head was found in an apartment complex; the rest of the body, which had been stabbed, cut, and had organs removed, was found in a pasture several miles away. The acting Davidson County Sheriff stated that the mutilation style killing and the timing (the autumnal equinox) suggested a satanic ritual

([http://www.religionnewsblog.com/4671-Sheriff\\_Animal\\_Mutilation\\_Appears\\_Related\\_To\\_Cult.html](http://www.religionnewsblog.com/4671-Sheriff_Animal_Mutilation_Appears_Related_To_Cult.html)). The same month, the mutilations of three calves in Faulkner County, Arkansas were being investigated for possible satanic group involvement. The calves died separately beginning in August and ending in September. One of the calves was gutted and the organs and brain were removed, another had the eyes removed and the third was found with no blood([http://www.religionnewsblog.com/4978-Occult\\_expert\\_looking\\_into\\_suspected\\_cattle\\_mutilations.html](http://www.religionnewsblog.com/4978-Occult_expert_looking_into_suspected_cattle_mutilations.html)).

Horse mutilations are also a frequent occurrence. In 1995 in the district of Maple Ridge outside of Vancouver, Canada, horses were being cut and stabbed with a sharp instrument and questions were being raised as to whether it was the work of

a satanic cult, a knife wielding vagrant, or a wild animal (<http://www.ufobc.ca/Supernatural/AnimalMutilations/horse.htm>). There were so many incidents of horse mutilations in Great Britain that The Metropolitan Police Service initiated an Equine Crime Prevention Unit which, for 15 years, acted as a centralized clearing-house for national reports until it was shut down in 1996 due to downsizing. Just two weeks later, more horses were mutilated. "The volume of attacks in Hampshire between 1989 and 1993 followed a pattern which might provide an insight into motive. For instance, Botley's four previous victims were geldings, whereas the attacks commonly attributed to the Ripper mostly involved mares. Sexual assault featured heavily. There was an ostensive modus operandi-vaginal or anal penetration with a knife and/or blunt instrument, such as a broomstick or a fence-post, used with sufficient force to cause serious internal damage. The genitals of either sex were sometimes mutilated with a sharp instrument, and many horses were stabbed or slashed elsewhere"(18) ([http://www.forteantimes.com/articles/094\\_ripping.shtml](http://www.forteantimes.com/articles/094_ripping.shtml)). For a detailed description of horse mutilations in Great Britain between 1993-1997 go to ([http://www.forteantimes.com/articles/094\\_ripfull.shtml](http://www.forteantimes.com/articles/094_ripfull.shtml)).

As recently as October and December 2002, horses were still being attacked in the United Kingdom. The following incidents occurred in Scotland. When a group of horses had their tails chopped off in their stables, the Grampian Police believed the incident was linked to occult rituals and Halloween (<http://www.news.scotsman.com/latest.cfm?id=2103797>). When incidents continued into December, details about the attacks were reported in the press:

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At the very least, tails and manes are hacked or carefully cut. In some cases plaits covered with a sticky substance have been woven into the horse's mane. In others blood appears to have been taken from powerful males and fertile brood mares. Less often, the horses are sexually abused and assaulted. Increasingly, owners have found disturbing ritualistic symbols hidden in corners of fields, ranging from tiny stone altars where hair has been burned to pre-Christian power signs such as double-headed axes.(19)

A retired police officer was convinced that the attacks on horses were a twisted form of Wicca which consequently provoked the Wiccan community and the Pagan Federation to get involved and offer their assistance to solve the mystery. They immediately asserted that there is nothing involving horses in any of the old or new Pagan spell books. Interestingly, in the practice of Santeria a common ritual item is

called an *iruke*, a scepter made from a horse's tail, but it would be highly unlikely that Santeria practitioners would be attacking animals in this fashion and *iruke* are not used in the manner described. The description of the types of mutilations, stone altars, burning of hair, and symbols of the double headed axe are indicative of satanic rituals. Since 1993 two separate task forces were set up by the police but subsequently disbanded. Currently, concerned groups such as the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the National Equine Welfare Council, in conjunction with police forces, are setting up a database to monitor all incidents (<http://www.religionnewsblog.com/1564-.html>).

## **Ritual Homicide**

The most controversial crime committed for religious purposes is human sacrifice. Currently, Palo Mayombe practitioners, Satanists, Vampires, and serial killers have been linked to ritual murders. Although sacrificial magical ideologies of various occult traditions have fundamental principles in common, the rites and theologies differ between religions and individual religious sects. Common goals include the acquisition of power to manipulate events that result in harm, healing, protection, initiation, transformation, achieving knowledge, and the ultimate goal of self-deification. The least common motivation for human sacrifice and the one most people associate with Satanism is to draw down dark forces or entities. The following cases of ritual murders are described in the context of the perpetrator's belief system. Arguments that these crimes were actually the result of disturbed, dysfunctional, or disenfranchised individuals are the result of Western behavioral scientific theories which marginalize the offenders as deviants or "others." This perspective hinders the investigation, prosecution, and prevention of ritualistic crimes and frankly only serves to help its proponents sleep better at night. Understanding the religious beliefs of the perpetrators is essential to analyzing ritualistic crime.

There have been numerous ritual murders committed by juvenile and young adult Satanists who are dabbling in magical ideologies. In many of the cases the perpetrators previously engaged in some form of blood ritual, either by cutting/mutilating themselves, drinking and/or exchanging blood during initiation ceremonies, sacrificing animals, or all of the above. On October 1, 1997 in Pearl, Mississippi, sixteen year old Luke Woodham stabbed his mother to death, then went to school and opened fire with a rifle, killing two of his classmates and wounding seven. Luke Woodham was part of a larger group of kids who had embraced Satanism. His new peers, who were part of a group known as the Kroth, which sought to destroy its enemies and practice satanic worship, instructed Luke that murder was a viable means of accomplishing the purposes and goals of their shared belief system. Prior to the murders Woodham brutally beat, tortured, set fire to, and



killed his dog, Sparkle. In his personal journal, Woodham described the dog's death as a thing of "true beauty." Rejecting an insanity defense, a Mississippi jury found 17-year-old Luke Woodham guilty of two counts of murder and seven counts of aggravated assault. He was sentenced to two consecutive life terms for the murder convictions and seven 20-year sentences for the aggravated assault convictions. Another life sentence was added for the murder of his mother (<http://www.cnn.com/US/9806/11/school.shooting.03/>). Grant Boyette, the leader and alleged instigator, and four other members of the satanic group the Kroth were charged with conspiracy to murder. Boyette, who prosecutors claimed had put Woodham up to the slayings, pleaded guilty to conspiring to prevent a principal from doing his job. He originally had been scheduled for trial on murder-accessory charges but instead was sentenced to six months at a boot camp-style program called Regimented Inmate Discipline, or RID and five years' supervised probation (<http://more.abcnews.go.com/sections/us/pearl1014/>).

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On June 6, 2000 in Chiavenna, Italy, three teenage girls, Milena, Ambra, and Veronica, brutally murdered Sister Mary Laura Manetti after they had formed their own satanic group, which, they said, was influenced by the lyrics of heavy metal musician Marilyn Manson. Prior to the murder the girls had made a satanic pact and conducted a blood ritual as part of the initiation. Milena admitted that they had met outside the church one night and cut their hands, drinking the blood while they pledged an oath of eternal loyalty to each other. "We decided to go for a nun," Veronica told her interrogators, "because she was the opposite of us. We believe in Satan." (20) They beat the nun into unconsciousness with a tile and by beating her head against a stone wall. When that failed, they took out knives and stabbed her to death. Throughout her ordeal, Sister Mary Laura prayed for her attackers and promised them that God would forgive them even as she did herself. When the carabinieri searched the girls' homes they found diaries testifying to their obsession with Satanism and the lyrics of Marilyn Manson. It also became evident that all the girls had dabbled in self-mutilation. The girls received rather light sentences for their crime. Ambra had the case against her dismissed on the grounds of diminished responsibility, and was sentenced to three years' rehabilitation. Milena and Veronica were found guilty of first degree murder and were each sentenced to eight years and six months. There is a move in Chiavenna to have Sister Mary Laura, who had taught in the town for more than thirty years, beatified (<http://www.ewtn.com/library/ISSUES/ZVIROCK.HTM>).

In June 1988, in Sedalia, Missouri, three teens, Theron Roland II, Ronald Clements, and James Hardy, were sentenced to life in prison for the gruesome death of 19-year-old Steven Newberry. The three struck Newberry over the head with a baseball

bat more than 50 times during a satanic ritual while chanting, "sacrifice to Satan, sacrifice to Satan." Then they dumped the body in a cistern, which already held the remains of mutilated cats and squirrels that they had previously sacrificed. "In a 1991 court of appeals document, Roland claimed he murdered his friend after becoming involved in Satanism, began using drugs, and listening to groups like "Megadeth" that "advocated sexual and physical violence." He began hallucinating, practiced self-mutilation, tortured and killed animals and "chanted" to Satan for power. He developed a mentor relationship with another teen Satanist and they both decided to sacrifice Steve Newberry by clubbing him to death. Roland believed this human sacrifice would "cause Satan to appear and give them power." [\(21\)](#)

In June 1984 in Northport, New York, Ricky Kasso and James Troiano were accused of killing 17-year-old Gary Lauwers by gouging his eyes out and stabbing him 17 times during a three-hour torture session. At the end of the ordeal, Kasso and Troiano forced Lauwers to say, "I love you Satan" Although Police claimed Kasso and Troiano killed Lauwers in a dispute over stolen drugs, Kasso had previously become obsessed with black magic and Satanism (after reading LaVey's Satanic Bible) and after the murder was openly boasting of his human sacrifice. Kasso confessed to the murder and later hanged himself. Troiano was acquitted of second-degree murder(<http://www.geocities.com/Area51/Shadowlands/4077/kasso.html>). It is not unusual for ritual murderers to be glorified and even have fan clubs. Ricky Kasso has been celebrated as a cult hero and there is even a Yahoo group dedicated to him (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/rickykasso/>).

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There have also been a number of ritual homicides committed in the Vampire religious tradition. Typically the magical goal is connected to achieving power and immortality. Drinking blood and cannibalism frequently occur in Vampire murders for the reason that blood is a fundamental aspect of the religious tradition. In November 1996 in Eustis, Florida, Rod Ferrell bludgeoned Richard and Naoma Wendorf to death with a crowbar in their home. Sixteen year old Rodrick Justin Ferrell was the leader of a vampire clan that included four other teenagers and whose rituals included cutting each other's arms with razors and sucking the blood. On the day of the murders Heather Wendorf, the daughter of the victims, participated in the "embracement ritual" with Ferrell and "crossed over" into the clan by drinking each other's blood in a cemetery. Ferrell then became her "sire." That evening he killed her parents. The letter "V" was burned into the victims' bodies, symbolizing Rod whose Vampire name was "Vassago." Smaller burns on each side of the "V" represented the other members of the clan. A close friend of Ferrell's stated that his motivation for the murders was that he was "possessed with

the idea of opening the gates to Hell, which meant that he would have to kill a large, large number of people in order to consume their souls. By doing this, Ferrell believed he would obtain super powers.”(22) His ultimate goal was self-deification, which is consistent with practicing particular forms of Vampire magic. Ferrell was sentenced to death in Florida’s electric chair on February 27, 1998, but in view of his age the sentence was later reduced to life in prison. Another teenage clan member, Howard Scott Anderson, is serving life in prison after pleading guilty to participating as Rod’s principal accessory in the double murder. Prior to the murders Rod Ferrell and Scott Anderson had been arrested as juveniles for breaking into an animal shelter and torturing and ritually killing two puppies. The legs of one had been ripped off and were never found. The murders were sensationalized in books, television interviews, and an HBO special entitled Vampire Murders. There are several websites that glorify Rod Ferrell and his Vampire clan, including one that has links to the “serial killer central store” where you can buy a copy of a poster of Ferrell or a journal with his picture on the cover

(<http://roswell.fortunecity.com/seance/500/killers/family.html>) and (<http://vampireclan.skcentral.com/home.html>). In Loudon County, Virginia in December 2001, Michael Paul Pfohl, Katherine Erne Inglis, Kyle Hulbert, and Clara Schwartz used a two foot sword to murder respected scientist Robert M. Schwartz. Again the victim was the parent of one of the group’s members, Clara’s father. They were involved in a self-described coven, fascinated with vampire culture and the occult and engaged in self-mutilation and blood drinking. Schwartz was stabbed and slashed repeatedly with the sword in what law enforcement officials described as a ritualistic slaying. His body was found facedown and an “X” was carved into the back of his neck. Hulbert wrote that he drank Robert Schwartz’s blood and went into a frenzy. Scores of knives and an altar were found during a search of the home Pfohl and Inglis shared and investigators seized a computer, a rabbit skin and a book of runes from Clara Schwartz’s dorm room at James Madison University. During the investigation authorities worked to decipher a code the suspects used in e-mail, studied the book titled *The Vampire’s Bible*, and researched an Internet role-playing game called “Vampire: The Masquerade.” Hulbert pleaded guilty to murder and was sentenced to life in prison. Clara Schwartz was convicted of murder and solicitation to commit murder and is serving a 48-year sentence. Pfohl pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and is serving an 18-year sentence. Inglis initially was charged with murder, but prosecutors dropped that charge after she agreed to cooperate with authorities and she was released after spending several months in jail

(<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A48180-2002Feb8&notFound=true>) and (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&node=&contentId=A54037-2003Feb10&notFound=true>).

On November 24, 2001, in Llanfair, Anglesey, United Kingdom, 17-year-old Mathew Hardman broke into 90-year-old Mabel Leyshon's home and stabbed her 20 times. He then arranged her dead body on an armchair with her legs propped up on a stool, placed two brass pokers on the floor below her feet in the form of an inverted cross, placed two candlesticks by her body and a candle on the mantelpiece. Hardman then proceeded to slice her chest open, ripped out her heart, wrapped it in newspaper and placed it in a saucepan on top of a silver platter. He then made three deep gashes in the back of Mrs. Leyshon's leg and drained the blood into the pan before drinking it in a Vampire ritual. Hardman believed that he would become immortal by butchering the 90 year old pensioner and drinking her blood. When police searched his bedroom they found a substantial amount of vampire related books, magazines, and Internet related material. On August 2, 2002, Mathew Hardman, now known as the "Vampire Boy Killer," was sentenced to serve a minimum of 12 years for the brutal murder. Hardman who had lived nearby had been Mrs. Leyshon's paper boy (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/2166683.stm>).

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In all of the previously mentioned cases the perpetrators' method of operation is indicative of "dabbling." Dabbling involves people who are intermittently and experientially involved in occult activities. While dabbling in supernatural belief systems also involves non-criminal activity that stems from a vague, curious interest, the aforementioned cases inspired an intense preoccupation that culminated in criminal behavior. Such perpetrators most often act alone or in small, loosely-organized groups. Dabblers usually make up their own belief system based upon some occult ideology and perpetrate criminal activity that conforms to that ideology.(23) Dabbling may be distinguished from another method of operation referred to as "ritualism." Ritualism involves people who commit criminal activities characterized by a series of repeated physical, sexual, and/or psychological assaults combined with a systematic use of symbols, ceremonies and/or machinations. The need to repeat such acts can be cultural, sexual, economic, psychological, and/or spiritual.(24)

Another important distinction when investigating ritualistic crimes is the difference between motives of true believers and "true criminals." True believers are religious practitioners who commit crimes because such acts fit into and/or are required by their particular belief system. These persons are involved in crime primarily because the ideology, rituals, and tenets of their beliefs require them to do so. True criminals are persons who use the occult as an excuse to justify or rationalize their criminal behavior. They are committed not to the belief system but to the criminal action.(25) Richard Ramirez, more commonly known as the Night Stalker, is a

classic example of a true criminal and self-styled Satanist. In 1985 he terrorized Los Angeles by breaking into people's homes, raping, torturing, mutilating, and murdering his victims, and most notably forcing them to declare their love for Satan. In the spring and summer of 1985 Ramirez committed over twenty attacks. In 1989 Ramirez was found guilty on thirteen counts of murder and in an infamous gesture during the trial raised his hand with a pentagram on it and said, "Hail Satan!" Self-styled Satanists such as Ramirez are not viewed as true believers since their primary interest is usually the acquisition of personal power, material gain, or gratification through criminal activity rather than spiritual Satanic worship. This does not mean that Richard Ramirez was not conducting ritualistic crimes; his crimes involved obvious ritual activities and contained Satanic symbolism, and he clearly identifies himself as a Satanist. Although dabblers, true criminals, and true believers can all be identified as Satanists, the differences in motivation significantly affect the types of rituals they conduct—hence the investigation and the evidence sought at the crime scene. For example, true criminals are not as concerned about the accurate symbolism, place, date, or victim of the rituals and are not connected to any organized group or specific Satanic tradition; consequently the symbolic evidence will be unique to that person. Dabblers most often are true believers who are emulating a particular tradition or theology but are not yet experienced enough to accurately conduct the ritual. Occasionally dabblers are true criminals who use the occult as a method to gain followers; in either case, the crime scene reflects a lack of knowledge or skill in sacred rites.

Ritual homicides committed by true believers reflect a serious knowledge of the particular theology, a high level of skill, and meticulous attention to detail. Essentially, ritual murders committed by true believers are contemporary acts of human sacrifice. The perpetrator considers the murder to be a sacred act and the crime scene will reflect this. The victim is selected according to the purpose of the ritual and can be a stranger or a member of the group. The death will occur in a designated sacred space determined by the group's doctrine, often an isolated outdoor area. The date is often significant and may correspond to an occult holiday or a group holiday. Since human sacrifice is a blood ritual the most common weapon is a ritual knife. Depending on the group's doctrine, death may be slow and tortuous or a quick slitting of the throat. A common forensic indicator of ritual sacrifice is for blood to be drained from the victim. Other indicators are mutilation, carving symbols into flesh, cannibalism, sexual abuse, and dismemberment. The purpose of sacrifice is to increase personal power and/or fulfill the requirements of the belief system. True believers are the most dangerous perpetrators of any kind of religious violence because of the degree of their commitment to their beliefs, their disregard for civil authority, and their nontraditional worldview that permits them to murder without remorse.

Contemporary human sacrifice has occurred in a variety of religious traditions. A recent well documented case of multiple human sacrifice occurred in the worship of Palo Mayombe and was discovered in April 1989 in Matamoros, Mexico. In this case, a young American University of Texas student, Mark Kilroy, and several Mexican citizens were kidnapped and later ritualistically killed by orders of drug dealer and Mayombero Adolfo de Jesus Costanzo. Adolfo de Jesus Constanzo was a Miami-born career criminal and leader of the most violent Palo cult in modern times. He practiced Palo Mayombe, which was an integral part of his serious drug trafficking operation and was responsible for many incidents of human sacrifice where his victims were slaughtered in meticulous and elaborate ceremonies. He was known to his followers as either El Cubano (The Cuban) or El Padrino (The Godfather). Constanzo's ritual activities stretched from Mexico City to the impoverished areas around Matamoros, near the U.S. border. Constanzo and his many followers committed numerous sadistic murders; although no final number of victims was ever agreed upon, 23 ritual murders were well documented. When the bodies of victims were dug up, which included at least fourteen separate remains, it became evident that some of the bodies were beheaded and trussed with chicken wire, others were totally dismembered. Hearts, brains, and other vital organs had been removed as they were being tortured; at least a few of them were more than likely alive during the process. Still others had obviously been skinned alive. In a nearby shed, other decomposing human organs were found in blood-caked vats and cauldrons. Unfortunately, in the brief decade since this group was discovered, many scholars have published articles refusing to acknowledge the ritual murders as human sacrifice and relegate the deaths to a form of sadism. "Matamoros, many scholars of Afro-Caribbean belief systems assert, was an aberration involving an especially deviant personality who used his involvement with and knowledge of Palo Mayombe for his own economic, criminal, and psychological needs. To these scholars, Constanzo was yet another true criminal involved in spiritual ritualism. Others believe that Mark Kilroy was a human sacrifice murdered because Constanzos' true belief in Palo Mayombe required his death; for these adherents, what happened in Matamoros could and does happen across the nation." [\(26\)](#) It is difficult, even for well educated, good intentioned persons, to recognize religious violence for what it is. Although it may be easier to comprehend brutal crimes as a form of psychopathology or as a method of achieving one's goals, to conduct a comprehensive investigation, these murders must be viewed in the context of the belief system they were perpetrated in. The crime scene had all the symbolism associated with Palo Mayombe a *nganga* complete with human skull, sticks and blood, a ritual machete, and an assortment of ritual artifacts specific to this practice. Most significantly Adolfo was a true believer who conducted ritual sacrifices for their magical benefits. Hell Ranch was the subject of many books and



articles ([http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial\\_killers/weird/constanzo/1.html](http://www.crimelibrary.com/serial_killers/weird/constanzo/1.html)) and (<http://www.skcentral.com/adolfo.html>).

Another recent example of sacrifice committed by true believers occurred on September 21, 2001 in London, England, when the body of a young boy was found floating in London's River Thames. The body was clothed in orange shorts and had been in the water for up to 10 days. Police also discovered seven half-burned candles wrapped in a white sheet that had washed up on the southern shore of the Thames. The name Adekoye Jo Fola Adeoye was written on the sheet and the name Fola Adeoye was inscribed on the candles. Dr. Hendrik Scholtz, a South African expert in ritualistic murders who took part in a second autopsy of the boy, told a news conference on January 29 that the body bore all the hallmarks of a ritualistic death and was dismembered in a way that was consistent with human sacrifice. Dr. Scholtz said, "It is my opinion that the nature of the discovery of the body, features of the external examination including the nature of the wounds, clothing and mechanism of death are consistent with those of a ritual homicide as practiced in Africa, . . . The person is sacrificed to awaken or summon the supernatural force required to attain that goal." (27) Detective Inspector Will O'Reilly told the news conference that the name on the white sheet was common in Nigeria's Yoruba area, but so far they had not been able to trace anyone of that name in Britain. Detectives are now looking at whether the murder was part of a Yoruba or *muti* ritualistic murder. South Africa has seen several *muti* murders of people killed for body parts, which some traditional healers believe are essential ingredients for certain kinds of medicine. British police said they have been in close touch with detectives in Germany and Belgium, where there have been three similar cases involving the murder of children whose bodies were disposed of in running water. See (<http://edition.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/europe/01/29/uk.ritual/>) and (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1899609.stm>).

In addition to the previous examples of ritual murder, the following websites list numerous other incidents: Human sacrifice in the U.S.

(<http://www.rense.com/ufo6/HUMSAC.htm>) and Satanism and Ritual Abuse archive (<http://www.newsmakingnews.com/karencuriojonesarchive.htm>).

The interpretation of the aforementioned ritualistic crimes obviously depends on one's theoretical and theological perspectives. From a psychological viewpoint, violent rituals are all forms of psychopathology regardless of their religious intent because the discipline of psychology is based on Western secular scientific traditions. From an extreme fundamentalist perspective, a dualistic worldview that separates the world into good versus evil, all occult practices inclusive of nonviolent beliefs are indicative of Satanism regardless of individual traditions. From a



sociological perspective, ritualistic crimes are a form of social deviance shaped by environmental factors. Ironically, the only people who seem to recognize ritualistic crime as a religious rite in the belief of specific traditions are the practitioners themselves, and their opinions are invalidated because they have been designated as psychopaths. The fundamental problem when researching, investigating, or analyzing ritualistic crime is that the crimes evoke such strong emotions that tap into our deepest beliefs about human nature and spirituality. Hence there are numerous definitional, theoretical, and practical problems. To objectively address these problems I have identified the need for an investigative methodology that is based on symbolism, theories of sacrifice, and knowledge of alternative religious traditions.

## **Part 3: Symbolic Analysis**

Profiling is an investigative technique that is considered a type of applied criminology. It is a relatively new forensic discipline and, unlike latent fingerprints, ballistics, DNA, and other forensic methods, it is not a science but an investigative tool. Profiling has a variety of synonyms, including offender profiling, criminal profiling, psychological criminal profiling, psychological profiling, criminal personality profiling, socio-psychological profiling, and most recently, behavioral investigative analysis or criminal investigative analysis. Although its origins can be traced back as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the work of criminal anthropologists, profiling became a formalized endeavor when the FBI founded its Behavioral Sciences Unit in 1974 (<http://www.fbi.gov/hq/td/academy/bsu/bsu.htm>). Howard Teten and Pat Mullany, who were applied criminology and hostage negotiation instructors at Quantico, initiated profiling in the Behavioral Sciences Unit.

From 1975-1977, Robert Ressler, Dick Ault and John Douglas joined the unit, took on various responsibilities, and eventually became instructors in all the various training programs in applied criminal psychology. Other instructors were Tom O'Malley and Dick Harper who both taught sociology and Jim Reese an expert on stress. The FBI's VICAP team (computer reporting system) was founded in 1983 by Pierce Brooks and the National Center for Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC) whose primary mission is identifying and tracking serial criminals was founded in 1984.(28) (<http://www.fbi.gov/hq/isd/cirg/ncavc.htm>)

Additionally, in the late 1980s and early 1990s academic criminologists started researching serial killers and began to conduct studies in profiling, offer college

courses on the subject, and consult with law enforcement agencies.

Given the various methodologies and different approaches to profiling, there is no agreed upon definition. However, Howard Teten, now considered the grandfather of profiling, put forth the following definition:

Offender profiling is a method of identifying the perpetrator of a crime based on an analysis of the nature of the offense and the manner in which it was committed. Various aspects of the criminals personality makeup are determined from his or her choice of actions before, during, and after the crime. This information is combined with other pertinent details and physical evidence, and then compared with the characteristics of known personality types and mental abnormalities to develop a practical working description of the offender.[\(29\)](#)

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The current FBI definition of criminal investigative analysis, a new term for profiling, is

an investigative process that identifies the major personality and behavioral characteristics of the offender based on the crimes he or she has committed. This process involves a behavioral approach to the offense from the law enforcement perspective as opposed to a mental health viewpoint. The law enforcement perspective focuses on the identification and apprehension of the offender while the mental health viewpoint centers on diagnosis and treatment.[\(30\)](#)

Current psychological profiling methodologies based on preconceived categories of personality and behavioral characteristics of the offender are intrinsically flawed when applied to ritualistic crimes. Psychological typologies are fundamentally based on Western scientific values, paradigms, and methodologies, which are often contrary to non-Western, non-scientific, religious explanations for events. Hence a profiling system that focuses on significant aspects of religious experience and phenomenology is needed to assist the investigator in shifting his frame of reference from a Western rational perspective to a magical religious perspective by providing suggestions for interpreting evidence based on knowledge of alternative religious ideologies, rituals, and values. Additionally, it is needed so that alternative religions that practice legal albeit unfamiliar rituals are not stigmatized as criminal.

Building upon Howard Teten's definition of profiling, I propose the following working definition of symbolic analysis: Symbolic analysis is a method of identifying the perpetrator(s) of a crime based on an analysis of the symbolic nature of the offense and the ritual manner in which it was committed. Various aspects of the criminal's beliefs are determined from his or her choice of actions before, during, and after the crime. This information is combined with other pertinent details and physical evidence and then compared with the characteristics of known symbols, rituals, and practices of subcultures and/or alternative religions to develop a practical working description of the offender.

Symbolic analysis is based on the premise that the single most relevant factor in determining motive, method of operation, victimology, and forensics of the crime is the sacred (holy) meaning held by the offender. Although the crime scene characteristics may resemble actions typical of sexual, personal-cause, or group-cause homicide, as described in the FBI's crime classification system, in symbolic analysis the primary motive is found in the offender's need to ritually express his perception of the sacred.

The FBI's crime classification typology refers to ritualistic motives and methods of operation as the signature aspect or calling card of the crime. Another term the FBI uses for the signature aspect is "personation," defined as

Unusual behavior by an offender, beyond that necessary to commit the crime. The offender invests intimate meaning into the crime scene (e.g., by body positioning, mutilation, items removed or left, or other symbolic gestures involving the crime scene). Only the offender knows the meaning of these acts. When a serial offender demonstrates repetitive ritualistic behavior from crime to crime, it is called the signature. The signature aspect of a crime is simply repetitive personation.[\(31\)](#)

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Ritualistic crimes by their very nature involve personation. The premise that only the offender knows the meaning of his ritualistic acts is based on a behavioral approach that does not recognize unfamiliar religious rituals. If an investigator is aware of alternative religious practices it is very possible that he will comprehend the meaning of the offender's ritual acts. Interpreting the signature aspect of a crime is precisely where symbolic analysis departs from behavioral analysis. Although the FBI's category of the signature aspect of a crime is useful in distinguishing ritualistic crimes from nonritualistic crimes, it is not specific enough to distinguish between types of ritualistic crimes. A symbolic analysis approach

would distinguish between types of ritualistic crimes through the identification of the religion, rites, and intent of the offender(s) based on symbolic evidence, the sacred context of objects, ritualized behavior, and forensic findings at crime scenes. In the final chapter of my recent book *Investigating Religious Terrorism & Ritualistic Crimes*

([http://www.crcpress.com/shopping\\_cart/products/product\\_detail.asp?sku=1034&parent\\_id=&pc=](http://www.crcpress.com/shopping_cart/products/product_detail.asp?sku=1034&parent_id=&pc=)), I introduced a ritual homicide typology to distinguish among types of ritual murders. It is based on five religious concepts: sacrifice, ritual murder, millennialism, holy war, and iconoclasm. The principal purpose of the ritual homicide typology is to assist law enforcement investigators in distinguishing the subtle but significant differences in characteristics of offenses. For this reason the typology maintains the standardized categories, terminology, and crime analysis forms of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (VICAP), while expanding upon the FBI's National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime crime classification system. It is designed to correlate to the symbolic analysis methodology.

Since religions are living traditions that are continually evolving, symbols and magical ideologies will keep emerging. For this reason symbolic analysis is an inductive methodology that begins with actual items found at crime scenes that are then analyzed in relation to current and evolving ritual activities. Statistical data and empirical research into the prevalence of ritualistic crime cannot begin until there is an accepted methodology based on unanimously accepted definitions, typologies, and legalities of religious violence. The only logical place to begin to fully appreciate sacred violence is to consider theories of ritual murder and fundamental questions of sacrifice.

## **The Forensics of Sacrifice**

Literally hundreds of theories of violence have been posited in the study of crime. Some of the major criminological theories are: subcultural theories, blocked opportunity theories, control theories, labeling theories, learning theories, and social learning theories

(<http://www.umsi.edu/~rkeel/200/subcult.html>)(<http://www.umsi.edu/~rkeel/200/learnin.html> and(<http://www.umsi.edu/~rkeel/200/labeling.html>).

Unfortunately, these theories have not been applied in criminal investigative analysis. Profiling evolved from the FBI's understanding of serial murder, and from the somewhat broad mandate of the behavioral science unit within the FBI in the early 1970s to formally introduce psychological and behavioral science principles into law enforcement. Although alternative profiling methods are being developed around the world based on a variety of theoretical perspectives such as geographic profiling, methods that focus on offender profiles are still predominantly based on

psychological theories of criminal behavior that revolve heavily around personality and psychological anomalies. That is the core of the problem. Since ritualistic crimes are the result of ethnic and religious diversity, they need to be examined from interdisciplinary and cross-cultural perspectives. The most advantageous method of interpreting religious violence is to apply knowledge of world religions and theories of sacred violence, ritual, and sacrifice to the crimes. This does not imply that the work of scholars in academic disciplines that traditionally study crime and criminal behavior is not pertinent. In fact, two scholars in the fields of sociology and psychiatry have recently posed unique theories of violence that involve concepts of symbolism and sacrifice.

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In an extraordinary book entitled *Seductions of Crime*, Jack Katz, a UCLA professor of sociology, takes an atypical position that questions standard sociological methods of analyzing crime. He argues that the study of crime has been preoccupied with a search for background forces, usually defects in the offenders' psychological background or social environment, to the neglect of the positive attractions within the lived experience of criminality. He proposes that empirical research turn the direction of inquiry around to focus initially on the foreground rather than the background of crime and to make it our first priority to understand the qualities of experience that distinguish different forms of criminality.[\(32\)](#) Although it may be problematic to apply empirical research to what is essentially a philosophical endeavor, I certainly agree with Katz when he states:

As unattractive morally as crime may be, we must appreciate that there is genuine experiential creativity in it as well. We should then be able to see what are, for the subject, the authentic attractions of crime and we should then be able to explain variations in criminality beyond what can be accounted for by background factors . . . I suggest that a seemingly simple question be asked persistently in detailed application to the facts of criminal experience: what are people trying to do when they commit a crime?[\(33\)](#)

When applying that question to ritualistic crimes, the first point that needs to be emphasized is that perpetrators do not consider their actions criminal although they understand them to be illegal. For perpetrators of ritualistic crimes, the violent act is a necessary religious ritual, hence the phenomenology of religious experience is the key to understanding the motivation. Violence has been at the core of religious experience throughout history; the only difference is that in other times and places religious violence has been morally integrated into society.

Katz addresses the subject of homicide in his first chapter entitled "Righteous Slaughter" and poses the following questions; "What is the killer trying to do in a typical homicide? How does he understand himself, his victim, and the scene at the fatal moment? With what sense and what sensuality is he compelled to act?" (34) Ruling out murders committed for robberies or other predatory crimes, Katz describes homicide as a form of sacrificial violence and argues that "the modal criminal homicide is an impassioned attempt to perform a sacrifice to embody one or another version of the "Good." (35) Katz considers homicide as a form of sacrifice that derives from humiliation and disrespect and whose goal is to restore offended respectability and honor. He argues that the practical project that the impassioned attacker is trying to accomplish by lashing out against insistent humiliation is analogous to the practices of criminal punishment under the ancient regime, which were continuous with ancient traditions of sacrifice that demonstrated respect for the sacred.

The nature and gravity of punishment defined the offense of which the condemned was guilty. To sustain the symbolism of the king's regal sensibilities, each affront to the king's rule must be given idiosyncratic punishment. The extent of the offense was defined for all to see by the pains the offender was forced to experience. The callous desecration of the criminal's body was a method of celebrating the precious sensibility that the crime had offended. Such punishments exacted in the name of divine right were continuous with ancient traditions of sacrifice that demonstrated respect for the sacred. When a lamb's throat is slashed in a religious ceremony, the production of a dead animal is not the objective. A ritual slaughter might follow, the choice parts to be burned in a deferential offering. On other occasions, the drawing of blood, the scarring of a body, or a nonfatal dismemberment might demonstrate sufficient respect. Overall, the practical project—the concern that organized the bloody, righteous behavior—is the manifestation of respect for the sacred. It is not enough to feel devotional spirit. Respect has to be objectified in blood . . . What is at stake in everyday contemporary violence is not a king's divine right but the sacred core of respectability that the assailant is defending and defining through his violence. (36)

Katz also argues that in the details of the assault, the project of sacrificial violence recreates the truth of the offense received. He exemplifies this by analyzing cursing that occurs during impassioned attacks. Katz initially distinguishes how expressions



that are common when venting anger against the victim differ from expressions used in sacrificial violence.

Attackers curse, not in the superficial sense of throwing “dirty” words in the vicinity of their victims, but in the more profound, ancient sense of casting a spell or invoking magical forces to effect degrading transformations in a polluting offender. Such cursing is at best an indirect way of venting anger and is often useless or even counterproductive in removing the irritant. But it is a direct and effective way of doing just what it appears to do: symbolically transforming the offending party into an ontologically lower status . . . Cursing is an eminently sensible way of making a subsequent attack into a service honoring the sacred. Now the attack will be against some morally lower, polluted, corrupted, profanized form of life, and hence in honor of a morally higher, more sacred and an eternally respectable realm of being . . . Cursing sets up violence to be a sacrifice to honor the attacker as a priest representing the collective moral being. If the priest is stained by the blood of the sacrifice, by contact with the polluting profane material, that is a measure of the priest’s devotion to society.(37)

Although the perpetrator may not be aware of this dynamic, Katz is essentially arguing that contemporary murders conducted in righteous rage fulfill the same purpose as ancient sacrifices: to restore respect for the sacred, in this case the sacred core of the individual. Although religious scholars may argue with Katz’s interpretation of the function of sacrifice, it is extraordinary that a sociologist contemplates criminal behavior in terms of sacrificial experience.

In another unique interpretation of criminal behavior, psychiatrist James Gilligan suggests in *Violence, Our Deadly Epidemic and Its Causes* that in order to understand murder and other forms of violent behavior we must learn to interpret action as symbolic language with a symbolic logic of its own. Although Gilligan essentially views the underlying causes of violence as humiliation and shame, he acknowledges that murder is carried out in violent rituals that are profoundly symbolic and meaningful. In Chapter Three, entitled “Violent Action as Symbolic Language: Myth, Ritual, and Tragedy,” he describes a twenty-year-old man named Ross L. who on a cold winter night had run into a former high-school classmate who offered him a ride home; during the ride he took out a knife and stabbed her to death. He then mutilated her eyes, cut out her tongue, and threw her out of the car. He was neither stealing her car nor had he raped her. He was sentenced to prison for the rest of his life. Gilligan questions why Ross felt the need to stab out her eyes

and cut out her tongue. Ross L. had utter absence of remorse or guilt and feelings not only of total innocence but of wounded innocence despite the fact that he admitted he had committed the acts. He felt that the only justification he needed for his crime was that he didn't like the way she was looking at him and he didn't want her talking about him.(38) Gilligan interpreted the underlying symbolic logic of Ross's mutilation as a desperate attempt to ward off intolerable emotions of shame and humiliation. Gilligan states,

To understand or make sense of this man's mutilation of his victim, which is senseless from any rational standpoint, we need to see it as the concrete, nonverbal expression of the following thought (which has the structure of all unconscious thought, of magical thinking): "If I destroy eyes, I will destroy shame" (for one can only be shamed in the [evil] eyes of others); in other words, "If I destroy eyes, I cannot be shamed"; and "if I destroy tongues, then I cannot be talked about, ridiculed or laughed at; my shamefulness cannot be revealed to others. The emotional logic that underlies this particular crime, then, which I called the logic of shame, takes the form of magical thinking that says, "If I kill this person in this way, I will kill shame-I will be able to protect myself from being exposed and vulnerable to and potentially overwhelmed by the feeling of shame.(39)

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Gilligan further describes mutilations in terms of rituals that provide insight into the motivations for the murders,

The rituals surrounding violence, then, like all rituals, are profoundly symbolic and hence profoundly meaningful (that is, they express many highly specific and closely related meanings, which cannot be translated into a consistent set of propositions). In fact they are more symbolic, and hence more meaningful, the more "senseless" they appear to the rational mind, because they follow laws of magical thinking rather than rational thinking.(40)

Gilligan's description of ritual essentially sums up my basic premise concerning the analysis of ritualistic crimes; there is, however, a significant difference in our interpretations of magical thinking. For Gilligan and most psychiatrists, magical thinking is an unconscious endeavor, whereas, in an occult religious worldview,

magical thinking is a literal conscious endeavor. The different theoretical interpretations have significant consequences. For example, Gilligan states:

the mutilation served as a magical means of accomplishing something that even killing one's victim cannot do, namely, that of destroying the feeling of shame itself . . . So an intensification of the whole project through the introduction of magic, by means of ritual, is necessary, if it is to be powerful enough to enable the murderer to stave off the tidal wave of shame that threatens to engulf him and bring about the death of the self.[\(41\)](#)

In a symbolic analysis mutilations such as cutting out eyes, tongue, or heart can represent religious rituals in the context of specific theologies that magically empower the murderer without having anything to do with feelings of shame.

Although both Katz and Gilligan have proposed extraordinary theories of violent behavior, the problem is that they are describing sacrifice and magical thinking as a subconscious activity of the perpetrator. Both scholars have a fundamental understanding of symbolism, magical thinking, and sacrifice, but cannot completely depart from the Western psychological assumptions of their respective disciplines. They both claim that the underlying motivation for violence is humiliation and shame and the reclaiming of self-respect. What they fail to recognize is that for some perpetrators of ritualistic crimes, magic and sacrifice are conscious endeavors whose underlying motivation is to develop hidden powers to magically manipulate events through violent rituals. This may or may not produce the result of reclaiming self-respect. However, it is important to mention that, as in the case of Ross L., not all ritualistic crimes are enacted in the context of a belief system, but the symbolic analysis methodology provides for this scenario, relegating the crime to a secular ritual killing. It is also necessary to emphasize that the various theoretical perspectives are not always mutually exclusive. In the previously mentioned cases of dabblers who committed ritual murders, shame and humiliation were the underlying emotions that initiated their interest in the occult. The significant difference when applying theories to the analysis of ritualistic crime is that sacrificial theories and magical ideologies are more useful for profiling. Although symbolic analysis recognizes ritual murders conducted for secular reasons, psychological theories are not always applicable to true believers who are not conducting their violent rituals because they were shamed or humiliated. For true believers ritual murder is nothing less than sacrifice in its original form. For this reason, magical thinking, the key to ritualistic crimes, has to be examined in terms of conscious choices, not subconscious feelings.

Magical thinking has been studied in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, anthropology, and religion. Scholars generally attribute magical thinking to primitive peoples who did not have explanations for the world or to a developmental stage in children whose cognitive abilities have not developed an understanding of the principles of cause and effect. The only explanation that is provided for adults who engage in magical thinking is that it is a form of psychopathology or subconscious wish fulfillment. This is the essence of the problem: ritualistic crimes are not interpreted from a worldview that allows for the possibility of magic to exist.

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Religious magic is founded on the ideas of participation, contagion, contiguity, and similarity. For the purposes of understanding ritualistic crimes it is useful to focus on the concept of sympathetic magic which is essentially based on the law of similarity and expressed in the magical principle that “like produces like.” When events can not easily be explained by scientific principles of cause and effect but are merely correlated, they are perceived as related to each other through the similarity between the two events and/or things involved in them, or by the fact that the two events are occurring at the same time or same place (spatial and temporal contiguity). “Magical thinking is the belief that (a) transfer of energy or information between physical systems may take place solely because of their similarity or contiguity in time and space, or (b) that one’s thoughts, words, or actions can achieve specific physical effects in a manner not governed by the principles of ordinary transmission of energy or information.”[\(42\)](#) In brief; magical thinking occurs when there is no clear explanation concerning causal relationships. The practice of magic is the ability to manipulate energy to bring about particular effects in accordance with the will of the magician (priest) through his manipulation of particular objects, rituals, and ceremonies. Sympathetic magic, which is completely unscientific and a reverse reasoning from causal relationships, assumes that things act on each other at a distance through unidentified and inexplicable attraction. For example, in sympathetic magic it is possible to exert influence on someone through what is known as contagion: if you have items that have been in contact with a person such as clothing, hair, and nail parings, they can be used to cause things to happen to that person. Another example is the classic wax doll that is molded in the image of the person so that through the likeness of the person whatever happens to the doll will also happen to the intended victim. In our *Kodak moment* world, sympathetic magic is also worked frequently through photos or images of a person, which is exactly why some religions prohibit having one’s photo taken—they are concerned not only that their soul is being diminished but that it can be manipulated by others.

Another significant expression of magical thinking is known as “word magic,” the

prime example of which is prayer. Followers of traditional religions pray with the hope that their words will intercede and effect changes. Followers of occult religions use words in a more deliberate and methodical manner to produce very specific results. In many religious traditions, names of deities are considered so sacred that the believer is not supposed to either know or utter them and a variety of euphemisms are used instead. In Satanism and the practice of other forms of black magic, it is essential to know the name of the spirit or demon whose power is being invoked. Recognizing specific ritual incantations can be an excellent opportunity to identify individuals who have previously committed similar crimes or establish their membership in a particular group.

To investigate ritualistic crimes you have to enter the mind of the perpetrator, and this entails suspending your typical rational thought processes and engaging in magical thinking. You are investigating religions that embrace man's deepest, darkest urges: incest, blood rituals, and sacrifice, the very impulses that mainstream religions have spent centuries suppressing. The most effective method of eradicating those urges has been to relegate magic to mere superstition by not recognizing any form of thinking that cannot be explained from a rational scientific perspective. To fully comprehend ritualistic crimes, magical ideologies, sacrifice, and blood rituals have to be used to model contemporary religious violence with the same veracity that psychology has been applied to current profiling methods.

Across cultures and throughout history, the one practice common to all religions is sacrifice, and the most potent form of sacrifice is achieved through blood rituals. Whether animal or human, blood historically is the mandatory substance for religious ritual and sacrifice is the ultimate religious experience. Symbolically, blood represents both purity and impurity, the sacred and the profane, life and death. Blood is extremely significant in religious ideology; there are specific rituals, attitudes, and prohibitions on blood in almost every society. Rituals that involve blood sacrifice date back at least twenty thousand years, until Biblical prohibitions on idol worship abolished communal blood rites and made human and animal sacrifice morally repugnant. The use of blood in ritualistic crimes is more revealing than any other form of evidence. This is not to be confused with blood stain pattern analysis; in occult crime the physical pattern is not as important as the symbolic meaning of blood. Additionally, the level of experience of the perpetrator is immediately evident in the cleanliness of the crime scene or victim. For example, it takes a high level of experience to remove blood from a person or animal without soiling the scene; a juvenile dabbler will not be able to remove blood in the same manner as an experienced high priest, who could have the skills of a surgeon. Additionally, dabblers do not always treat the scene with the proper regard for sacred space, as do true believers. Both historically and today, the role of the sacrificer is an honored and privileged position and will most likely be given to the

leader of the group.

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The term sacrifice derives from the Latin *sacrificium* (*sacer*, holy and *facere*, to make) “to make holy,” and carries the connotation of a religious act in the highest or fullest sense; it can also be understood as an act of sanctifying or consecrating an object.<sup>(43)</sup> Historically, theologians have proposed four purposes of sacrifice, (1) homage / praise, a form of pure adoration, (2) thanksgiving, thanking for a favor that was granted, (3) supplication, asking for anything from material goods to divine intervention, and (4) expiation, placating or requesting forgiveness or the removal or prevention of evil and misfortune. Traditionally the recipients of sacrifice are divine beings who are either worshipped or feared, such as gods, spirits, demonic beings, and sometimes humans, although sacrifice in the proper sense is offered to humans only when they have died and are considered to possess superhuman power.<sup>(44)</sup> Religious scholars have proposed nine basic purposes of human sacrifice. In addition to the four previously mentioned reasons, they include: transformation, communion, regeneration, divine assimilation, and the achievement of immortality.

Human sacrifice involving the killing of humans and/or the use of the flesh, blood, or bones of the human body for ritual purposes has been a widespread and complex phenomenon throughout history. The examples above of juveniles who conducted blood rituals, cannibalism, and ritual murder demonstrate that even dabblers have a fundamental understanding of sacrificial practices. The significant ideology behind sacrificial ritual is that blood consists of life force energy and constitutes the highest offering to the gods or ancestors. In specific occult worship, bloodletting or imbibing blood from a victim represents the assimilation of raw power. Additionally, the longer a victim is tortured and the pain is prolonged, the more life energy/power is emitted. In this manner, ritual torture, cannibalism, and homicide make up a contemporary act of human sacrifice that is for the perpetrator a sacred communion meal in which the power of life is assimilated and regenerated; it is a way of achieving immortality and/or becoming a god by unifying the divine and the mortal. The theology of many contemporary occult groups describes their most sacred rituals in sacrificial terms. For example, The Temple of the Vampire claims that Genuine Vampirism is the exchange of energy between the Living Vampires and the Undead Gods in a holy ritual that the Temple refers to as Vampiric Communion. Through this Communion the person gets closer to the Gods, develops higher levels of Vampiric skills, and ultimately achieves immortality by becoming an Undead God. This philosophy was evident in the aforementioned Vampire murders, in which most of the perpetrators wanted to achieve superhuman power and immortality. Many occult groups have specific rituals and degrees of initiation that culminate in



achieving a superhuman or godlike level of being.

Research into historical acts of sacrifice is remarkably pertinent to contemporary ritual killings. Applying academic theories of ritual murder and blood rites to contemporary ritualistic crimes reveals similar motivations, goals, and justifications. The classical works on sacrifice posit specific questions such as: Who offers the sacrifice? What is offered? What external forms belong to the act of offering? In what places and in what times are sacrifices offered? Who is the recipient of the sacrifice? For what reasons are sacrifices offered?[\(45\)](#) Answers to these questions are not only relevant to a classification system of historical acts of sacrifice but to a contemporary typology that can contribute to solving and preventing ritualistic crimes. Ritualistic crimes are best viewed as a form of “ritual anachronisms”: sacred violence that is out of place or time, emerging out of an innate primal sense of the sacred. Examining the history of blood rituals, applying cross cultural theories of sacrifice, and understanding the magical ideologies of contemporary religions will establish a “forensics of sacrifice” whose legal conclusions emerge from understanding ritual slaughter as a religious act in the highest or fullest sense.

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