

The 'Ritual' and 'Satanic' Abuse of Children: Crop circles and the organised abuse of children require a careful and considered approach

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If you go down to the woods today...

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), the nineteenth-century English poet, wrote about 'the live murmur of a summer's day', presumably referring to bees, birds and other bugs humming around the countryside. A twentieth-century American (whom I believe to be a poet though not all would agree) wrote that 'The Times They Are A-Changin' (1963). Nowhere have they changed more than in the English countryside. In 1991, it was the 'live murmur' of the summer's night that was more likely to be heard. Out in fertile rural England the English people have discovered crop circles in their cornfields.

It is good to be in England in (the admittedly all-too-brief) summer, but quiet evenings in cornfields sleeping off the effects of English ales are a thing of the past. These days, find a cornfield and you will find half the media and a sizeable chunk of the English population. In some country areas, they say, it is quieter sitting in the middle of the road because you avoid the crowds. Crop circles in cornfields have seized the imagination of the public.

In summer, in England, it is possible to travel for miles and see that 'the corn is as high as an elephant's eye' (Oscar Hammerstein II, *Oklahoma!* (1943)). The problem is that, every now and again, people find flattened areas of field. These horizontal bits, it is claimed, are not created by people or even elephants but by some strange unknown force.

There are coach tours of Americans careering around the countryside eager to see these creations. A research centre for crop circle studies has been set up. To celebrate these

phenomena there are T-shirts, post-cards, people in planes photographing the appearances, a magazine for crop-circle fans, *The Cerealogist*, which chronicles the happenings, and books including the best-seller *Circular Evidence* by Patrick Delgado.

One of my favourite magazines, *Fortean Times* ('The Journal of Strange Phenomena'), reported that 'serious researchers' from the Centre for Crop Circle Studies were appealing for farmers to contact them rather than the media to ensure proper investigation of new circles. The same issue of the *Fortean Times* (July 1991) carried a letter from a reader predicting that there would be a shift in 'cerealogy' from the comparatively simple circles to more complex and stylistic designs.

Known generically as crop circles, in fact these areas of squashed crops form lines, arcs, and apparently ever more complex creations. *The Sunday Telegraph* (27 August 1991) reported that:

The most complex mathematical model - known as the Mandelbrot set - has appeared as a beautifully executed design in a wheat field south of Cambridge.

At first presumed to be an elaborate hoax perpetrated by Cambridge University students, the area of flattened cereal - only visible from the air - extended for 180 feet...

'We know that it arrived overnight in a field of wheat 30 inches tall. It would have required floodlights to carry it out. It was incredibly precise,' said [farmer] Mrs Wombwell.

Each circle was perfect, the wheat flattened clockwise, and at the base of the heart it tapered down to a single stalk of wheat.

Every stalk had been flattened one quarter of an inch above the soil... It was beautifully done, but how, I can't even begin to speculate.'

(Gaskell, 1991)

The causes of crop circles

One of the most interesting aspects of the corn circle debate is concerned with how they got there. Some theories suggest that they are caused by the trampling of mating badgers or hedgehogs, the graffiti of extra-terrestrial beings, ball lightning, UFO's landing or the stress that pollution is causing to the earth. According to *The Sunday Telegraph* (8 September 1991), Colin Andrews and Pat Delgado of the Centre for Crop Circle Studies believe that the circles are 'created by some form of intelligence manipulating an unknown form of energy'. Both Andrews and Delgado suggest that the more complex shapes reflect 'a concern for the earth's ecology' (Neale, 1991).

Hundreds of devotees attempted a 'conference' in Glastonbury:

'Mother [Earth] is crying,' Mr Andrews told the meeting, to vigorous applause. The spiritual message was reflected in the conference organisation. 'Due to the fragile and changeable quality of our earthly existence, this programme is subject to flux', an announcement read.

(Neale, 1991)

Sadly, just before I left England, it appeared that the mystery had been solved. The books and attempts at scientific explanation were all for naught. The newspaper *Today* had the exclusive, 'MEN WHO CONNED THE WORLD' complete with banner headline:

EXPOSED: Two artists admit they pulled off the great corn circles hoax for 13 years.

(*Today*, September 9 1991)

The apparent solving of the mystery meant that some lives and businesses would never be the same:

Corn circle expert Patrick Delgado admitted last night: 'We have all been conned. Thousands of lives are going to be wrecked over this'.

The artists not only fooled Mr Delgado, author of £3 million worth of international best-selling books on the phenomenon. They also managed to trick investigators across the world including:

- * Japanese scientists who came to Britain with £5 million for research
- * Government departments and military top brass who held special inquiries and
- * Farming organisations who were assisting research

(*Today*, September 9 1991)

Doug Bauer and Dave Chorley, both in their sixties, claimed that the circles were created by them using a couple of boards, a baseball bat and string. These two likely lads apparently started the whole process off after a night in their local pub. The story had ended - or had it? Mick Jagger's brother Chris, one of the guest speakers at the Glastonbury 'conference' was reported to be embarrassed. Patrick Delgado, however, said while some circles might be the work of hoaxers, Doug's and Dave's claims did not explain how up to twenty appeared in a night. No doubt the next English summer (whenever that might be) will bring more startling revelations.

The ritual or satanic abuse of children

Another story that has featured regularly in the English newspapers has concerned the 'ritual' or 'satanic' abuse of children. The newspaper headlines have been large and frequent; a random sample follows:

Children accused Orkney minister of leading sex rituals (*The Daily Telegraph*, 4 September 1991)

Seized children not allowed to take toys or spare clothes (*The Times*, 29 August 1991)

Police acted on the word of children in sex case (*The Daily Telegraph*, 27 August 1991)

Island children tell of sex ordeal with hooded man (*The Daily Telegraph* 28 August 1991)

Hooded 'master' hooked dancing children for sex in gas-lit quarry, inquiry hears (*The Guardian*, 28 August 1991)

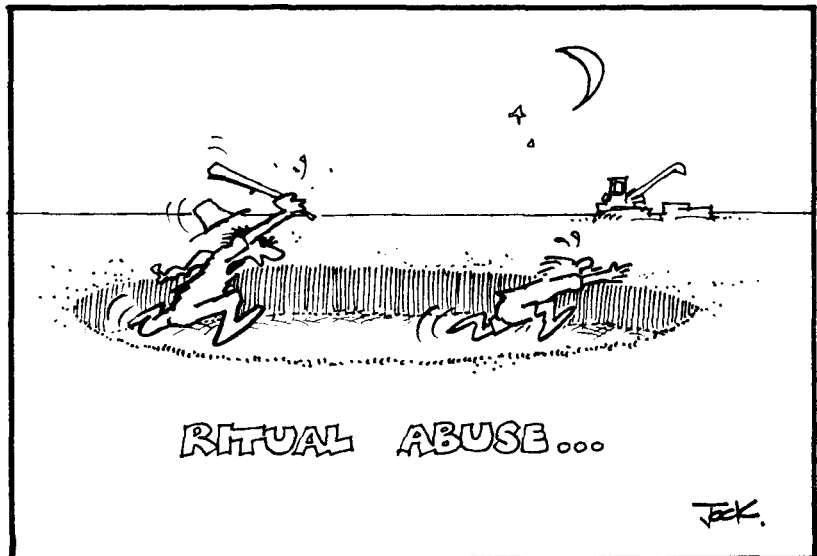
It can be seen that the responses of the police and social workers have been placed under intense scrutiny.

Viewed from the other side of the world, and through a lens supplied by the media, it is hard to judge what is going on. *Social Work Today* (26 September 1991) has provided a summary of Britain's most well-known ritualistic abuse cases and readers are urged to refer to this for more details. The following summaries are drawn from *Social Work Today's* article (Cohen et al. 1991).

started with a six-year-old boy telling his teachers about 'ghosts in his family' and all four children in the family were removed from their home:

Social workers were convinced there was organised ritualistic abuse and that the children had been given drugged drinks. Social workers were severely criticised in court for the way interviews were handled, particularly leading questions asked.

(Cohen et al. 1991: 11)



In Ayr allegations of ritualistic abuse appear to have been accepted in one court with the Sheriff stating that 'systematic sexual abuse and corruption' of young children had occurred for more than a year. In Nottingham, ten adults were gaoled after being found guilty of incest, cruelty and indecent assault against more than twenty children. The children are reported to have alleged that drinking blood and animal sacrifices occurred in ceremonies. The police, however, claimed that there was no evidence of ritual abuse. In Manchester and Humber-side there were more cases involving allegations of ritualistic abuse. In Manchester there was medical evidence of sexual abuse and 'overtones of satanic conspiracy' in proceedings involving thirteen children. The victims reported that they had been abused in ceremonies involving 'chanting, dressing up and killing animals' (Cohen et al. 1991: 10).

It is the cases in Rochdale and Orkney that have been reported in the press in Australia. The Rochdale case

More children were made wards of court but when the cases were heard the judge was extremely critical of the social workers, suggesting that they were 'obsessive' in their belief that the fantasies of a six-year-old were true. The Judge proposed that what the boy was describing was something he had seen on video. Nevertheless, the Judge decided that in sixteen of seventeen cases the children should remain wards of the court. Two men were arrested but were later released and not charged.

It is the cases in Orkney, however, that have attracted the most widespread media coverage. At the time of writing (January 1992) a judicial inquiry is still being held into the events. Social workers and police removed nine children from four families in February 1991 in what the media have described as a 'dawn raid':

The grounds of referral included allegations of lewd, indecent and libidinous behaviour between parents, their children and other adults. [Social work and police action] stemmed from disclosures made by three children who had been in care, along with five brothers and sisters,

since the previous November. The three children came from a very large family whose father had just received a seven-year prison sentence for child abuse.

(Cohen et al. 1991: 11)

In a succession of hearings, the decisions of social workers and police appear to have been both criticised and supported. The children have been returned to their homes and are on the social work department's 'at risk' register.

Attempting to name and define the problem

So what is 'ritual' or 'satanic' abuse? The first point to make is that there is general confusion over terminology. A recent issue of *Child Abuse and Neglect* (which readers are also encouraged to study) uses the terms 'ritual/satanic abuse of children' (Krugman 1991: 161) 'ritualism and child sexual abuse' (Jones 1991: 163), 'multidimensional child sex ring' (Lanning 1991: 171), 'satanic ritual abuse' or 'SRA' (Putnam 1991: 175), and 'ritualistic child sexual abuse' (Jonker and Jonker-Bakker 1991: 191).

Finkelhor and Williams, in their book *Nursery Crimes: Sexual Abuse in Day Care*, define 'ritualistic abuse' as:

...abuse that occurs in a context linked to some symbols or group activity that have a religious, magical or supernatural connotation, and where the invocation of these symbols or activities, repeated over time, is used to frighten and intimidate the children.

(Finkelhor and Williams 1988: 59)

Finkelhor and Williams report that a number of such cases have been connected to sexual abuse in day care.

Finkelhor and Williams also propose that there are three sub-types of ritualistic abuse: 'true cult-based ritualistic abuse' where abuse is but one component of a system of indoctrination into a spiritual or cult system and where abuse is probably not the major goal; 'pseudoritualistic abuse' where the sexual abuse of children is the primary goal and the ritual elements are used to frighten children into participating and keeping activities secret; and 'psychopathological ritualism' where adults with major mental health problems may abuse children in a ritualistic manner but this ritual is part of a delusional or obsessive system (Finkelhor and Williams 1988: 61-63).

The problem with such attempts at classification (apart from the disturbing fact that they contain words that are seventeen and eighteen letters long) is that it may become a matter of judgement and of potential dispute whether a participating adult perpetrator is in touch with reality or not. It may also be impossible to decide (and may not even be relevant) whether the true motives of the perpetrators involve converting children to alternative 'religions' or perverted molestation of minors, or both.



The media attention

The role of the media in these events in Britain has been extremely interesting. The following story almost speaks for itself. The headline of an article by Anthea Hall in *The Sunday Telegraph* (1 September 1991) reads: 'Sadness of isle where innocence is on trial'. After setting the scene with a description of the 'beauty of these lonely islands' the children's removal is described:

It was along this twisting road, across sea and rolling land, that a convoy of police cars set out in the dark from Kirkwall one cold February morning to disperse to four different destinations over South Ronaldsay.

With well-planned synchronisation they snatched at dawn (or 'up-lifted' as the social services put it) nine children considered by the police, the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and the social services to be at risk from a network of child abusers.

(Hall, 1991)

The article then describes what is supposed to have occurred:

The allegations, elicited after two months of questioning the children in care, of children dressed as cowboys and turtles, of dancing and sexual acts in a quarry with a man with a crook called Morris, grabbed headlines which caused wry laughs in South Ronaldsay.

The now much-photographed and inspected quarry, where the 'W' children were known to play, is an area partly excavated by a local farmer for stones for road surfacing, with a shallow pool of spring water, a pile of sandstone and a discarded bike - all of which might prove hazardous to dancers in the dark.

(Hall, 1991)

One of the alleged perpetrators is then described:

The local vicar, who occasionally wears his cassock after services and whose house was searched by police at the time of the February 'up-lift', is a frail, elderly man with a heart condition, who wryly commented after the original accusations: 'I'm a bit over the hill for these sorts of goings-on.'

(Hall, 1991)

The Observer of 17 March 1991 also described the vicar:

[He] is a large man in his sixties, placid, soft-spoken, ailing and still slightly dazed by events and the importunities of newsmen. He survived a stroke some years ago and now suffers from angina pectoris. As he put it: 'I'm a bit over the hill for these goings-on.'

(Bermant, 1991)

Three days later *The Daily Telegraph* (the sister paper of the one that carried Anthea Hall's story) carried three stories concerning abuse of children: one was the continuing report of the Orkney inquiry; one reported the rape by a church minister of his adopted daughter (see below); and the third piece was a report of the gaoling of a thirty-six-year-old woman who had intercourse with one French teenager and blindfolded and massaged another.

Bea Campbell challenged journalists to review the stories and events in Orkney more critically. According to *Social Work Today* (17 October 1991), Ms Campbell is an author and journalist whose programme on ritual abuse in Nottingham (shown on television in Australia) won an award for courageous reporting. She pointed out that six judges believed the evidence of the children in the Nottingham case but the police did not (*Social Work Today*, 17 October 1991).

It appears that almost anything is possible

At the same time as the media have been covering the Orkney inquiry and sometimes treating the allegations of abuse as the aberrations of deluded police and social workers, a number of other stories have appeared in the newspapers:

A deputy head teacher was given a six-month jail sentence suspended for two years at Exeter Crown Court yesterday for indecently assaulting three girls aged 10 and 11 in his class.

(*The Daily Telegraph*, 5 September 1991)

A Pentecostal minister was jailed for nine years at the Old Bailey yesterday for raping his adopted daughter. As he was led to the cells he waved to friends in the public gallery and called: 'Keep on praising the Lord'.

The man...raped the girl, who was then 14, in her bedroom as she got ready for school...She became pregnant and he took her to an abortion clinic, where he lied about her age.

(*The Daily Telegraph*, 4 September 1991)

An 'evil' foster father was jailed for seven years at Sheffield Crown Court yesterday for torturing and sexually abusing two girls over a 14-year period...

...[The foster father] had lifted a manhole cover and forced one girl naked into a sewer pipe before replacing the cover with her inside...

He had held one girl's head under water in an outside tub and tied a scarf round her neck so her screams could not be heard.

(*The Daily Telegraph* undated)

A battered baby girl slowly died in her cot while her parents celebrated Christmas in another room, a court was told...

Doctors found that [the girl] 11 months old, suffered 22 separate wounds - including 11 fractured ribs - in the 30 days leading up to her death.

The fatal blow came on Christmas Eve and she was left to die while her parents celebrated with friends...

Neither was charged with the murder or manslaughter of their daughter because investigating officers were unable to determine which of them was responsible...

(*The Daily Telegraph* undated)

From *The Observer* of 8 September 1991:

A fifteenth-century Scottish castle is the British headquarters of a right-wing Christian cult built on fear, physical and mental abuse and crude brainwashing, former cult members are claiming.

They have alerted police and social services and an inquiry is expected.

Lochnow Castle...has been owned since 1956 by the Australian-based sect known as Tinker Tailor. Last week, former members - including some who were born into the cult - described a catalogue of intimidation and abuse.

(Macrae 1991)

Meanwhile, back in Australia and the *Herald-Sun* of 29 October 1991:

A DEVIANT who headed a child-sex ring which included his wife was yesterday sentenced to 23 years in jail...

The man, 33, who cannot be named because two of five victims were his own sons, plotted with other convicted paedophiles in Sale prison to abuse children on their release...

His wife, who made the notorious molester 'Mr Baldy' the godfather of her daughter, was also jailed for her part in the aggravated rape of her eight-year-old son.

'I held ...'s legs, I shut my eyes... I heard him screaming and screaming,' she told police.

(Quine 1991)

From the *Herald-Sun* again and on the same day (29 October 1991):

A MUM who stabbed her five-year-old daughter through the heart was insane when she killed the child, a supreme court jury decided yesterday.

The court heard [mother] had a history of serious mental illness and had told police an unknown force made her kill her daughter.

(Ross 1991)

'Police free youth from satanic cult' was the headline in the *Sunday Sun* of 17 March 1991:

[NAME] and six other children were the subject of continued sexual abuse by the man for three years...

[He] was 'ripe for recruitment' by a group... They had their own passwords and names. And everything was secret. The family ...was a satanic cult.

Every month they engaged in sexual orgies where unrestricted sexual acts - homosexual and heterosexual - were performed.

(Sweeney 1991)

A semi-naked boy was thrown into a pond at night by members of a religious sect after regular beatings failed to cure his bed-wetting, a court heard yesterday.

The boy's 29-year-old stepfather said he and three other male members of the Intercessors of Christ were rostered on 'be alert' last winter...

...three men had already been sent for trial for allegedly using kitchen scissors to circumcise the boy without proper anaesthetic.

(*Herald-Sun*, 28 March 1991)

And *The Age* of 19 December 1991:

A convicted paedophile who ran a child-minding centre in a small Victorian town was sentenced by a County Court judge yesterday to 12 years' jail.

(Minter 1991)

And the *Sunday Herald-Sun* of 27 October 1991:

Notorious child-sex molester Mr Baldy was allowed regular visits from young children while he was in Sale Prison...

...dubbed Mr Baldy for his bizarre sex attacks against young boys, gained permission from jail authorities to receive visits from the children of another convicted paedophile who once shared his cell.

(Ryan 1991)

Or, as I write, *The Age* 17 January 1992:

Detectives investigating the abductions of three teenage schoolgirls have smashed a big child pornography racket in Melbourne.

A senior employee of Melbourne University has been charged with distributing pornographic material, including videos and magazines, in Victoria and other states.

(Tobin 1992)

Sources of information

Health and welfare workers have two main sources of information about organised abuse: children who describe such abuse, and adults who claim they were abused when they were children. Children who report organised abuse and adults who report such abuse in childhood describe remarkably similar events. There have been few if any admissions by perpetrators, and police investigations at the scene of the reported crimes have repeatedly failed to find the bodies of babies or the blood of animals. What is happening?

Jones (1991: 166) in his article *Ritualism and child sexual abuse* states that there are three possible explanations: firstly, that the events occurred exactly as the children and adults describe; secondly, that the events did not occur and, therefore, the children and adults are telling lies or are at least mistaken; and thirdly, that some events occurred and others did not.

Jones notes that another problem with the first option, in addition to the absence of police verification from the scene of the crime, is the lack of

accounts from adult cult members who knew about the abuse but were only peripherally involved, although he acknowledges the pressures that cults use to avoid discovery (1991: 166).

The second option, that the accounts are fictitious, is explained, according to Jones, by:

...mass hysteria, contamination from one source to another, leading interview practices by over zealous practitioners, child fantasies fed by video films containing occult and horror scenes.

(Jones 1991: 166)

Jones' (1991: 166) third possibility, that some events actually occurred and others are invented, may be explained by the use of overwhelming psychological abuse that accompanies the traumatic sexual assaults. Jones suggests that the abuse may be so overwhelming that it distorts memory and the abuse may be accompanied by the use of drugs and hypnotism which further humiliate and befuddle the child victim. Jones (1991: 166-167) also draws on research (Terr 1988) that suggests that early overwhelming trauma may, on occasion, be coped with by a process of 'defensive elaboration'. The victims may construct a 'fantastic overlay' to the 'overwhelming, noxious past memories' which turns out to be easily disproved thus creating the impression that all the abuse is fictitious. Another contributory factor to such a blend of truth and fiction, Jones considers, may be social contamination, including mass hysteria (1988: 167).

Surely such abuse is not possible?

Not long after I arrived in Australia in the late 1970's, I had lunch with two journalists from *The Age*. We were discussing serious child abuse, the horror of it all and the failure of services to protect the victims from further assault. One of the journalists started telling me about an organisation in Melbourne, numbering academics, social workers, doctors, psychiatrists and lawyers among its members that was, he believed, illegally 'adopting' children, and amongst other things, disguising them and smuggling them out of the country. We were about to finish our first bottle of wine, and I remember very clearly looking at him and wondering how

many drinks he had consumed before we started lunch.

At the time of this lunch I was in the process of starting what is now known as the Child Protection Team at the Royal Children's Hospital. In spite of the daily evidence that confronted and assaulted me of man's (and woman's) inhumanity to babies and children, I could not believe what I was being told. The journalist told me he had a file several inches thick with details of children being drugged and grossly abused, of a woman in white who insisted on bleaching the hair of the children so that they would look the same, and of people in high places who would make sure that the full story would never come out.

...unfortunately, some elderly men do abuse children, just as some people in positions of responsibility and power use those positions to molest children.

I remember the range of emotions I felt as the story unfolded and my opinions of this journalist. To be honest, I thought he had taken leave of his senses and was obsessed and mad. That evening I wrote down what he had said, and over the years his story has been confirmed by others over and over again. Indeed, charges have been laid against some professionals and the story (and the allegations of a cover-up) have become well-known (see, for example, Carol Georges's article in *The Australian Women's Weekly*, May 1991).

What do I believe?

In England, in the summer-time, crop circles have been mysteriously appearing for the last ten years or more. Newspapers and magazines from around the world have carried stories, diagrams and photographs. As Ridley (1991) suggests, an orthodoxy has developed that these creations are the work of strange unseen forces or creatures from outer space. People want to believe that the earth is communicating or that little green men are visiting. For some reason, the most unlikely explanations are the most popular.

I have long believed the 'Doug and Dave' explanation. It has always seemed obvious to me, with my admittedly only occasional experience of English pubs and ales, and subsequent escapades after closing time, that it is Doug and Dave or, even more likely, many such Dougs and Daves who are responsible for flattening the corn. It is a wonderful wheeze, and one of which I would have been proud: flattening small areas of crops and then convincing large numbers of people that we are being visited by aliens. The sight of farmers charging admission to their fields, camera-laden Americans and the Japanese funding research centres as a result of such a prank would have been something I would have treasured for the rest of my life if it had been my idea.

The role of the media in the shemuzzle is fascinating, but not hard to understand. Most of the crop circles appear in Hampshire and Wiltshire, delightful countryside scattered with enchanting villages. Almost every village has at least one pub, and where better to conduct research and interviews, and add 'local colour' than in *The Three Horseshoes*, *The Red Lion*, or *The Bat and Ball*:

A television crew I talked to the other day said they had been filming crop circles. And how did they find them? 'We asked about them in the local pubs and a few days later people said they knew of some'.

(Ridley 1991)

Doug and Dave, or their equivalent supping their pints in the corner (paid for, perhaps, out of the expenses of a reporter) will not want the five minutes of fame or the free beer to disappear. As for the journalists, there are far worse spots to report from than *The White Horse* or *The Carpenter's Arms*. Beirut, for example, or Birmingham or Belfast.

What is extraordinary is that so much time and effort (and money) should be spent on crop circles and so little credence be given to the stories of the child victims and adult survivors of so-called 'ritual' or 'satanic' abuse. Anthea Hall's story, quoted extensively above, is but one example: the local vicar, described as 'frail' and 'elderly' with 'a heart condition' may be entirely innocent of doing anything close to child molestation but, unfortunately,

some elderly men do abuse children, just as some people in positions of responsibility and power use those positions to molest children.

I believe that some adults are capable of the most horrific crimes against children. When I started in social work twenty years ago I had no idea of what I was about to see and hear, of young children raped and assaulted by 'friends' and relatives, sometimes assaulted by more than one adult. Sometimes I did not believe what I was told or did not want to believe it. I met many adults, not all of them clients, some of them friends and colleagues, trying to rid themselves of the damaging burden of the past.

I believe that severe abuse can cause extreme psychological damage, and that victims may require the most extraordinary defences and limitless strength in order to survive some of these assaults. We have very little understanding of the stresses that the victims are placed under, and many of them are too young to clearly communicate what happened. It is clear that the effects of actual and threatened violence can be so powerful that the responses at first sight do not always appear logical. The victims of child abuse (Fillmore 1981, quoted in Jones et al. 1987), the adult victims of domestic violence (Pagelow 1984), and even the professional helpers (Goddard and Tucci 1991) may become 'hostages' to the violence and suffer what has been called the 'Stockholm Syndrome'.

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Other effects of severe child abuse are only now being recognised. Victims of abuse are being described as having post-traumatic stress disorders and multiple personality disorders, reactions to the extraordinary stresses and threats that they have suffered. As David Lloyd suggests, it is quite possible that, in the past, victims of organised abuse tried to report their trauma but were disbelieved and sent to psychiatric institutions, labelled as psychotic (1991: 10).

What is to be done?

I believe social workers, and to a lesser extent other professions, have a major problem in Britain. It is quite possible that the same problems will occur in Australia. Social workers are described in the media as 'public enemy number one', and it is clear that if they claimed that night follows day they would not be believed:

I thought the parents were as likely to take off across the night sky on broomsticks as to abuse their children or engage in satanic rites, but it was only after I met the minister that I began to feel that it might not be a bad thing if social workers were disbanded as a profession and dropped to the bottom of the Orkney quarry.

(Bermant 1991)

There are a number of lessons to be learned. The first is that health and welfare workers need to be as accurate as possible when describing what children say. Words are sounds, or the written version of those sounds, that are used to signify concepts. We have to be aware that words concerning the abuse of children can arouse strong emotions in all of us. Such emotions may be helpful to children in trouble or they may mean that some people may turn away and fail to help. Some people will find some damage that is done to children just too disturbing to contemplate. That is not to say that we should reduce or minimise the seriousness of what is being done (and, unfortunately, that has happened too often). Rather it is to emphasise that terms such as 'child abuse' are umbrella terms, and that we must state as clearly as possible what is said to be happening; for example, 'this girl (or boy) is saying that something was pushed up her vagina (or his anus)'. This is much clearer than just using sentences like 'She (or he) is saying that she (or he) has been sexually abused'. We can then follow up our clear descriptions with others, such as 'Medical examination has revealed vaginal (or anal) damage that may be consistent with such abuse'.

Secondly, we must take care over the labels we apply. 'Satanic abuse' or 'ritual abuse' will mean a lot of different things to different people. Some people, for example, regard those who take part in satanic rituals as cranks, harmless eccentrics, or something of a joke. In these circum-

stances, by using the term 'satanic abuse' we may actually be minimising some people's perceptions of the abuse to the child. This was made clear to me when listening to a popular 'drive-time' radio programme in Melbourne in which the announcers were laughing openly at the idea of 'satanic' or 'ritual' abuse, and treating the idea as a joke.

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For this reason I prefer the term 'organised abuse'. One advantage of this label is that there can be few people who doubt that some adults develop and maintain links with each other in order to abuse children or trade in child pornography. Such cases are reported frequently and do not arouse the hostility that the terms 'ritual' or 'satanic' abuse do.

The use of the term 'organised abuse' will also avoid attempts at creating perhaps artificial or potentially impenetrable typologies such as those described by Finkelhor and Williams (1988) and referred to above. It will always be difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between perpetrators in such a way.

Also of particular concern are statements to the effect that sexual abuse is rarely a violent act. Lusk and Waterman, for example, when discussing the effects of sexual abuse, describe incest as 'typically nonviolent' (1986: 113). This is certainly not born out by the research that we have carried out at Monash University (see, for example, Hiller and Goddard (1990) where we found that much sexual abuse was accompanied by domestic violence and that a significant number of victims were subject to other forms of abuse). Such statements by Lusk and Waterman do not take into account the violence implicit in the threats that accompany so much abuse.

If journalists in so-called 'quality' newspapers believe that social workers involved in child protection should be thrown into a quarry this means that abused children will have a major problem getting anyone to listen to their plight. There are adjustments being made. John Gilbert, editor of *Social Work Today*, reports that social workers are increasingly emphasising the sexual or physical abuse and 'playing down the evidence of ritual' (1991: 2). Gilbert rightly suggests that this approach, born of pragmatism, will produce results in individual cases but stresses that the needs for knowledge-sharing, theory development, and enhanced practice must not be overlooked.

The need for caution and accuracy is brought home in the articles in the issue of *Child Abuse and Neglect* (Volume 15 No. 3) that contains several commentaries and papers on the subject. Putnam (1991) is particularly critical of the Jonker and Jonker-Bakker (1991) paper and its lack of concrete data. Putnam (1991: 176), for example, criticises Jonker and Jonker-Bakker for the use of phrases such as 'some children' (1991: 192) instead of clearly identifying **how many** children. Putnam argues that the division in the 'child abuse community' (by which he means those working in child protection) about the existence of 'satanic ritual abuse' will only be resolved by 'objective and scientific' methods (1991: 178).

This is territory that I have touched on before in **Not the Last Word**:

...What we see depends not only on where we stand but also on what we want to see; how we then describe what we see depends on what we want others to believe we have seen.

(Goddard 1988: 19)

Social workers and others must also take every care in their practice. There are clearly two issues in the Orkney inquiry: the first concerns the very existence of such abuse; the second concerns child protection practice. The question must be asked whether it was really necessary for the children involved to be removed from their homes early in the morning in such a fashion. There are occasions when such practice may be necessary (if a child's life is believed to be in immediate danger, for example) but it is not clear whether such conditions

applied in the Orkney cases. Perhaps an unequivocal answer will never be given.

Conclusions

The Times, in an Editorial ('An Enquiry on Trial' 19 November 1991) on the Orkney inquiry, claimed that the inquiry had become 'a monster' and 'legal madness':

The blame must lie with lawyers. They have fallen upon the Orkney enquiry as prospectors might an oil strike.

(*The Times*, 19 November 1991)

The process will cost millions of dollars according to *The Times*, money that could be better spent. Continuing the oil exploration analogy, the Editorial continued:

Lord Clyde's enquiry was designed to be open-ended, into what happened and why. In some circumstances – an explosion on an oil rig, for example – what happened is broadly clear at the start and the answer to why will emerge soon enough in the course of the enquiry. In the Orkney case, the facts at the heart of the matter are bitterly disputed. It is as if an oil rig inquiry has to start not only by asking whether there really was an explosion, but whether there really was an oil rig.

(*The Times*, 19 November 1991)

The world is not an entirely rational place. Where crop circles are concerned, some people are prepared to believe that little green creatures from outer space appear at night and bend the corn. Others will spend vast sums of money studying these fabrications and appear to gain comfort from them. On the other hand, children and adults are asking for help and, rather than responding with concern and attempting careful discussion and investigation, in Orkney, at least, blank cheques and years of employment are given to lawyers (of all people).

In the not-too-distant past, anybody found in a corn field in the middle of the night who claimed to be awaiting the arrival of visitors from outer space would have been presumed to be fresh from the pub and drunk, or would have been led away for psychiatric help. Now they are granted the warm glow of media attention. In that very same not-too-distant past, it was assumed that children who said they were being sexually abused were fantasising. Now we know that most are (and were) telling

the awful truth, but the media vilify those in Orkney who tried to help children who said they were being abused.

I do not believe that crop circles are the coded messages of creatures from other planets (although I would enjoy being wrong), but I do believe that children and adults who describe terrifying experiences of abuse are trying to tell us of their pain. It is important that we attend to what they are saying, endeavour to find out what has been happening and how we can help. It is also crucial that we find out why it is easier for many people to believe in little green visitors from another world than to listen to and be prepared to believe the victims in this one.

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