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be made between the delinquent and the dependant or neglected."

The Child Savers by Anthony Platt

In other words, this system served to protect not the young people themselves (who continued to be subject to punishments by those who took over the management of their delinquencies) but the operations of the protectors. Platt's 1969 book tells the story that today's social services would like to forget; it would hardly find a publisher today. That ordinary rational criteria can be suspended when child protection is invoked is still affirmed by the Rochdale Council Chief Executive at the height of the recent scandal: "it must be stressed that social workers are not police. The standards of proof required for a criminal prosecution and for social services to take action are quite different." One of the sure signs that a man is guilty of child abuse, social workers say, is that he wears white socks in court. And one of the Satanic Indicators is "a preoccupation with faeces, urine and passing gas". Compared with expertise like this, how could a jury of lay people be trusted to reach the right verdict?

In the 20th century children have been made to represent a new kind of negation: no longer do they have to symbolise purity, innocence and an idealised nature to be saved from moral contamination; now they stand for the value of an investment - a stake in the possibility of a future which will somehow supercede the present. The risks to which they are exposed are conceived using an insurance mentality, according to which any kind of sexual experience at an inappropriate stage must irrevocably waste the entire life. The child today shoulders the symbolic burden of having to represent a better future: they will somehow redeem today's sins and vicariously fulfill their parents' own ambitions. Whoever harms a child threatens our hopes of survival, and any unplanned and unauthorised influence by adults on children is harmful. In this society, which believes it has nothing worth transmitting to its children except its capital, the greatest fear is that children might unwittingly absorb and thus perpetuate something of the past. What every human society in history has sought to ensure (cultural reproduction), this society strives to extirpate. G.K.Chesterton described the slogan *Save the Children* as "an evil cry" (*What's Wrong With The World*, 1910) because it condemned them to childhood whilst the self-styled child savers were the worst possible model of adulthood.

In this way, the child today signifies everything society is unsure about: above all, responsibility for the future, even the very possibility of one. But children can only represent a future if the past is allowed to shape the future (the child's present is the future's past) - and this is perpetually negated by a society locked in the prison of a continuous present. Let there be no doubt about this deepest secret of the rituals which consecrate childhood and which explain the symbolic role of "satanic child abuse" as the ultimate desecration. To imagine that

Satanism threatens children can only be a desperate projection by people with no understanding of childhood fantasy or of the reality of sex itself.

It does not take a psychoanalyst to recognise an *unconscious* in play within the psychobabble of the social services themselves. (Why do they pretend their own discourse to be exempt from such interpretation?) The anxiety to protect which generates the ever-growing list of hitherto unsuspected dangers is perhaps rooted in the insecure social identity of social work itself and, more generally, of the evisceration of its own concept of the "social". What is it for, this discipline whose existence depends upon demonstrating that "human society" cannot exist left to its own devices without properly-financed career structures and proper training. (Who trains those who train?) The inability to show that social workers have ever done any good for anyone forces them into the politics of panic (along with ecological catastrophists and medical hucksters), with their alarmist rhetoric about the invisible hell lurking behind outwardly normal appearances. Gross poverty no longer captures the imagination of the carers whose travelling expenses long ago soaked up the funds that would have housed and clothed the poor: the money made out of "poverty" has dried up or been exported. Newer, less materialist social problems have had to be manufactured which can evade this reductionist explanation.

The target of the attack, from the Christian point of view at least, is *occultism*. Or perhaps it might be better described as the pretext? Under various names (paganism, the *New Age*, or simply the various schools of magic which have undergone such a spectacular revival since the 1960s), a diffuse culture of occultist practices and beliefs has grown up in the wake of the late sixties "counterculture". Everyone can see for themselves whatever facets of this culture impinge upon their own world: whether it be feminists who want to see themselves as witches ("Wiccans"), or consumers with various degrees of brand loyalty to a variety of patent therapies and remedies, all having in common little more than the claim to be "alternative", or more committed practitioners in various cults ranging from tightly-organised psycho-manipulative corporations (Moonies, TM, Scientology, etc.) to the looser, and more self-consciously "deviant" currents who place themselves in a specific tradition of the magical revival inaugurated by the *Golden Dawn* in the 1880s, of which Aleister Crowley is the best known historical figure. That whole milieu is too vast to be summed up in any simple formula, and is really due for a more considered analysis than it has ever had.

Conclusion

What is the most likely outcome of this whole SCAM? What at first sight seemed to be an incipient moral panic may, in the end, subside into oblivion amidst official inquiries into yet another social work fiasco. Only the most incorrigible zealots for whom the very thought of being wrong is inconceivable would be prepared to uphold the

same month, and three other dren were taken into care to another family on the same ho ing estate on 7 September.

During interviews with social workers, a child spoke of ghosts in a bedroom. One of the ghosts was called Bob. The boy described being placed in a coffin which made him fly.

The judge added: "Another boy said he had eaten a cat." But his mother said this was probably a reference to pasta creatures in the soup they were eating."

The judge said that the failure of Rochdale's social services department in obtaining an expert psychological overview of the case amounted to a "very serious error of judgement".

He said: "There is no valid reason why an expert should not have looked at the material, and every one should."

ent ends months of both the Rochdale the children. The ve in difficult circum- financially and so- using estate on the chdale.

Justice Brown said yesterday there was no evidence parents had been involved abuse, and there was no of sexual abuse in all but

of the last century invented the category "juvenile" and the institution of the juvenile court to provide subjects for an emerging professional colonization of the social - to save children from themselves, in effect.

"The juvenile court was a special tribunal created... to determine the legal status of children and adolescents. Underlying the juvenile-court movement was the concept of *parens patriae* by which the courts were authorised to handle with wide discretion the problems of its least fortunate junior citizens. The administration of juvenile justice differed in many important respects from the criminal-court processes. A child was not accused of a crime but offered assistance and guidance; intervention in their lives was not supposed to carry the stigma of criminal guilt. Judicial records were not generally available to the press or public, and juvenile-court hearings were conducted in relative privacy. Juvenile-court procedures were typically informal and inquisitorial. Specific criminal safeguards of due process were not applicable... the critical philosophical position of the reform movement was that no formal, legal distinction should