

MAGONIA Supplement

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THE UNINVITED AND THE UNLIKELY

Nigel Watson

NICK POPE's book *The Uninvited* (Dell, 1999) provides an overview of the abduction phenomenon from its origins in folklore, the transitional role of the contactees to the evaluation of abductions since the reports of Villas Boas and Betty and Barney Hill's encounters. After considering the various attempts to apply scientific principles to the study of abductions, Pope looks at how the British government has dealt with the subject. Since he was assigned to the Ministry of Defence's UFO department from 1991 to 1994 he shows the dilemmas that confront the authorities. As he readily admits there is no solid scientific evidence for alien abductions but something is happening to people that suggests that they are being subjected to profound stress and trauma. Technically and officially the MoD did not regard alien abductions as part of their remit, regarding it as more a matter for the civil police. In turn, the Home Office and the police regard the subject as a matter for the MoD. Pope himself believes that the MoD should be made responsible as it has the resources to deal with physically real alien invaders. Given official disdain and neglect for this subject, Pope had to deal with angry abductees who had no authority to turn to for help. One such exasperated abductee told him that "You work for the Ministry of Defence, so bloody well defend me!" (p.149.)

Although Pope is rightly sceptical of hypnotic regression and the scientific research that has so far been carried out to investigate abductions, he falls under the spell of John Mack's contention that abduction experiences are so exotic that they go beyond conventional scientific investigation. (p.145.)

Besides the abduction reports made famous by Fuller, Fowler, Hopkins, Strieber, Jacobs and Mack, Pope provides examples of several cases he has investigated in Britain. From them we can see if they go beyond the bounds of

science and whether they conform with US abduction reports:

1) Patsy (pseudonym) when 4 years old saw a giant black crab. At 7 she got out of a lift and entered a strange room. As a young woman she was lifted high into the air by a vortex. Afterwards she found a mark on her thigh. In 1995 'aliens' visited the shop where she worked.

2) Mary (pseudonym) had childhood brushes with the paranormal. Saw her younger sister fly into the air. Aged 8 saw two 'fairies' in her bedroom. During 1992 she had telepathic communication with aliens in London. When travelling by car from London to Newcastle experienced 3 1/2 hours of missing time. Has had dreams of spaceships and medical examination by 'beings'.

3) Jayne woke one night in 1992 to find herself being taken by aliens along a corridor to a bright room. Here they examined her head and stomach. Then, she suddenly found herself back in bed. On same night her son saw a light and felt paralysed. As a child she had bedroom visitors whom she regarded as Jesus or Santa Claus, and had alien bedroom visitors during adulthood. Has regularly seen ghosts, UFOs and developed the power of precognition.

4) Peter (pseudonym) was driving on a toll road to Boca Raton, Florida, when he experienced missing time. Four years later, in 1995, he was hypnotically regressed to discover what happened that night. He recalled that his girlfriend who was driving the car looked like a statue as the vehicle was floated 100 feet above the ground. He stepped out onto an invisible bridge and after entering a metallic corridor came to a room full of road maintenance equipment. He returned to the car, and it was brought to earth near

their destination. He has lost touch with his girlfriend so she was unable to confirm his story.

5) Vaunda Hoscik, who was 14 in 1989, saw 4 grey entities as she lay paralysed in her bed. Then, found herself in a brightly lit metallic room, that was full of computer screens. The aliens communicated with her telepathically and showed her geometric and numerical symbols on their computer screens. She had regular encounters of this type and her school work improved. They said they came from Zeta Reticuli. and that they were testing her psychic abilities. After 18 months these visitations stopped and restarted in 1996. Encouraged by her new boyfriend she had telepathic communications with aliens (Antholas, Crispin and Minnie) and was able to channel interviews with them. As Pope says she acted like a medium. She came to believe that she had given birth to a hybrid child. As her experiences became more negative she broke off contact and destroyed her notes about them.

6) Maria Ward grew up with poltergeist and ghostly activities surrounding her. In the local woods she often met small brown beings she called mud midgets. When 9 years old she went 'into the moon' one night and afterwards started getting regular nosebleeds. As a teenager she found a strange scar on her navel. In 1990, she woke to see an illuminated wheel in the sky. A telepathic voice told her to follow a beam of light projected from this UFO. Reluctantly she followed it downstairs and literally walked through her own front door and then floated into the sky. Suddenly found herself in the presence of small brown creatures who took her to a large round room. A larger being prodded her with a rod, took a fingernail clipping, ran a light over her body, and inserted an object into her neck

and another into her nose. At one moment she was able to see inside her own stomach. Afterwards, shown images of the destruction of our planet, the view of a planet with two suns and of her own life. Next morning she found blood on her pillow and stains on her T-shirt. In the following weeks she had flashbacks and suffered from claustrophobia. Under hypnosis recalled being put into a Perspex capsule that flew her to the moon, when aged 16. The capsule filled with liquid making her worried about being suffocated. As this fear overwhelmed her the hypnosis session was terminated.

Since 1990 Maria has had other alien encounters, including seeing living 'dolls' inside glass jars, and being stopped by a grounded UFO near Avebury. Her experiences sound the most like 'classic' abductions as described by US ufologists. From a sceptical viewpoint we can see that they are a mish-mash of accounts picked-and-mixed from UFO literature. The walking through the door and being immersed in a capsule come from the Andreasson abduction, the medical examination from the Hills, the Avebury encounter from the Alan Godfrey abduction, the rest from the works of Hopkins, Jacobs and Mack.

Patsy's and Mary's experiences only suggest possible abductions. Jayne's experiences are equally suggestive though they indicate that she is the victim of sleep paralysis. Peter's unusual abduction is indicative of a dream. Vaunda Hoscik is a medium or contactee dressed in abductee's clothing - certainly Jacobs would dismiss her as a channeler.

A programme called the *Scream Team* (broadcast on Ftn cable channel, on 10 December 2004 at 10 pm) featured a hypnotic regression of Alan Godfrey by Dr Tony Rae. It took place at Scaitcliffe Hall, Yorkshire. His original hypnotic regression sessions took place 22 years earlier (financed and organised by Harry Harris) so it was worthwhile to see if his 'memory' of the event was still the same.

Under hypnosis Godfrey said he saw a diamond-shaped UFO, 20 feet wide and 14 feet high hovering over the road ahead of him. It was causing nearby trees to shake. His police car radio stopped working. Inside the UFO aliens are touching him, they feel horrible. Showing strong, fearful emotions, he describes a light blinding him. They are frightening

him. He says: "I don't like this, there's something wrong. They are frightening me, I'm in a room. They're ugly - stood there, making horrible sounds, 2 feet tall. I'll kick their heads in." A door opens and a taller bloke comes in, he has a beard. He invites him to lie on a bed. As he recalls them touching him he covers his face with his hands. The hypnotist reassures him that everything is all right and asks him where he is. Godfrey says, "On this bed." They are attaching something to him, he wants to get away. At this point he is crying and shaking his head and comes out of the trance. "Have I been crying?" he asks Dr Rae and the 'scream team'.

I should point out that the scream team are a group of half-a-dozen young people who were bundled in a van by a TV crew and dispatched to ghostly and paranormal localities throughout the UK. They consisted of a mixture of believers and sceptics though they are all rather repulsive and ignorant people, whom the producers obviously selected in order that they would argue amongst themselves for our entertainment.

When they discussed Godfrey's case they wondered if he was really hypnotised. The hypnotist thought he was but there is the nagging thought that Godfrey was acting. Wondering whether it was a dream they do find that his account does match the details he gave 22 years earlier. Dr Rae tells them he is open-minded and that he thinks something extraordinary did happen to Godfrey in the early hours of that eventful morning on 28 November, 1980, near Todmorden, Yorkshire.

Having seen this programme and clips of the video recordings of Godfrey's original hypnosis sessions it seems clear to me that he has been traumatised by something that has blighted his life. The relatively easy solution is to say that he really did encounter aliens. Yet, what worries me is that his story, like those recounted by Pope, is fragmented and jumps from sighting location to the UFO's interior and back again. To cover these gaps abductionists like Jacobs have worked hard to create templates that 'genuine' abductions conform to, and Hopkins has created a range of terminology that also helps to paper over these gaps in people's memories. Thus, we get the concept of 'doorway amnesia' to explain the mystery of how abductees get inside the UFO, and if they see visions

of anything other than aliens this is explained as a 'screen memory' to hide their true identity. The problem here is that the alien attempts at covering up their tracks is totally inconsistent. In the case of doorway amnesia - why is it that some abductees do remember being walked or floated into a UFO? If they can effectively create doorway amnesia why don't they always use it and why can't they cause equally effective amnesia of the rest of the encounter? If they can use screen memories why should we believe that their real identity is alien, if they can manipulate our minds can we believe anything at all?

Much is made of the fact that abductees remember most of their alien encounters without recourse to hypnotic regression, but looking at Pope's cases and those in my own *Portraits of Alien Encounters* book, it is evident that these recollections are very fragmentary and open to interpretation. What the abductionists have done is create a range of techniques, terminology and templates (the three T's) to shoe-horn people's experiences into the abduction format. Jacobs claims that his abductees recall events that are totally impersonal and consistent, yet all my own research and most of the abduction literature indicates experiences that are intensely personal and idiosyncratic.

Given that most abductees seem to have a long history of paranormal experiences it seems likely that they are overly superstitious and sensitive to anything that can be interpreted as being unusual. Again, abductionists have provided such people with a whole range of possibilities that will help them 'discover' that they are abductees. Using such indicators I have discovered that I could easily be an abductee - only recently I found a long cut on my leg that I could not explain and as a child I had nosebleeds and have had one or two vaguely psychic experiences. With a slight push of my imagination I could easily stitch together these things to create a classic abductee story. The blinkers created by the abductionists have made hundreds of people believe in alien experiences that are highly traumatic and stressful. Instead of addressing their underlying psychological causes they have reinforced a range of fantasies that only help exacerbate or even cause these mental health problems.

GHOSTLY GREYS: EARLIER HAUNTINGS

Martin S. Kottmeyer

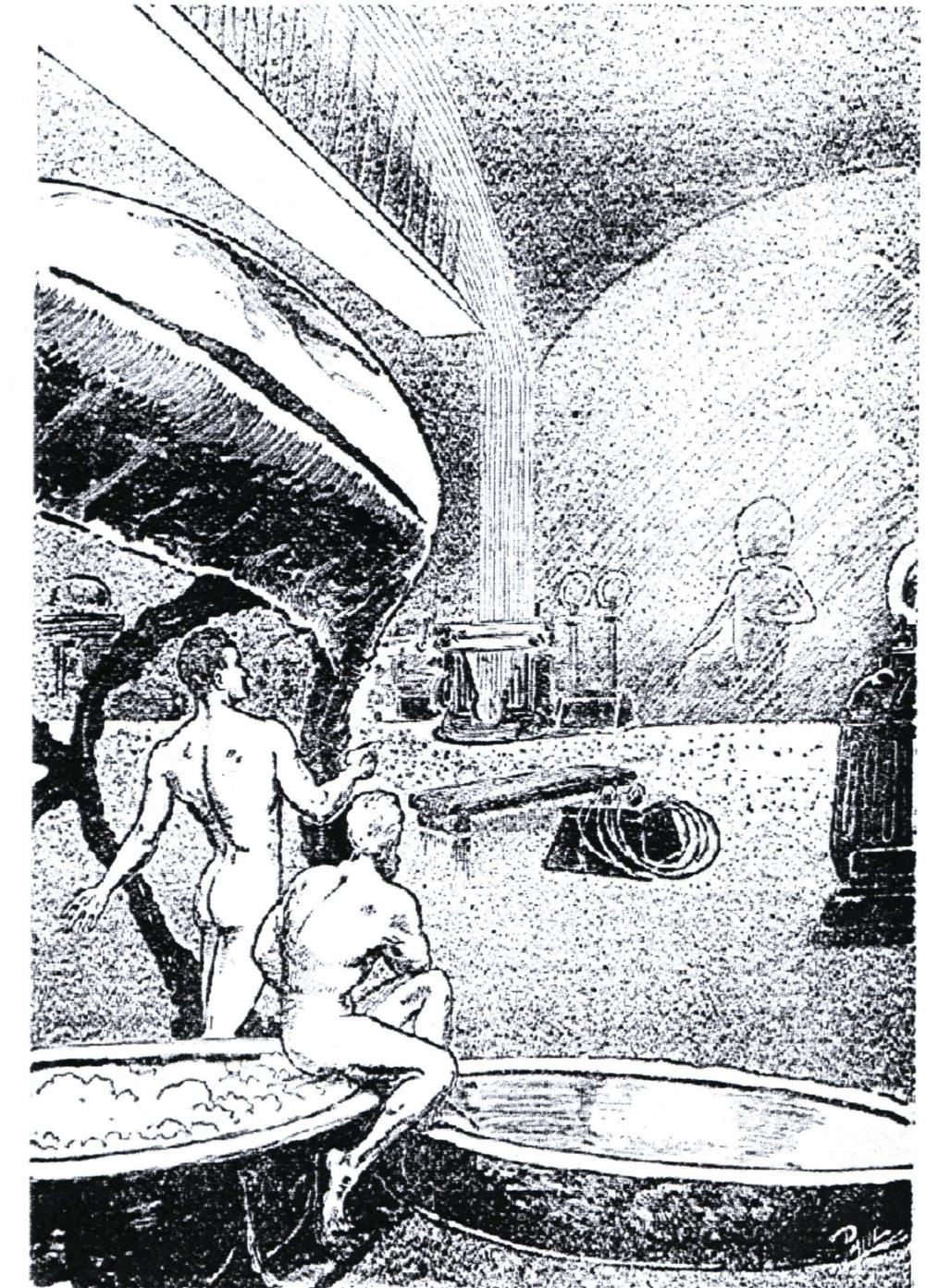
A FEW ISSUES back, we tackled the problem of aliens going through walls from a cultural history perspective - among other things. I had no plans of revisiting the subject, particularly this soon afterwards, but I've learned some additional things that I feel I should share.

I found an illustration in a science fiction pulp by Frank R. Paul that dates back to November 1934 depicting an alien floating through a wall. This pre-dates the van Vogt story I discussed in the earlier piece by five years. I won't make any defence of this as great art. Frankly, when I first saw it, I thought the illustration involved an alien visiting a couple of guys in a sauna. As a depiction of someone or something going through a wall, it fails to properly convey the wonder of it. Even as an example of Frank R. Paul's work, it is a poor mediocrity among his hundreds of works. (See Frank Wu's gallery of his work) Yet the intended subject is remarkable relative to contemporary obsessions. It depicts a short, brainy being who is an alien - both inhabitant of Mercury and a product of humankind's distant evolution - that has come to Earth and passed through solid matter to reach a pair of 'sleepers.'

The story in which the scene is set is one of high ambition. It is one of Eando [Earl and Otto] Binder's earliest science fiction efforts titled "Dawn to Dusk." It is a sprawling three-part epic that started in the November 1934 issue of Hugo Gernsback's premier pulp *Wonder Stories* and spread to the following two numbers.

In Part One we have a lengthy set up of how a biologist came to discover a way to achieve suspended animation. He intends to sleep his way to a future several thousand years in advance of the present. He asks some colleagues to join him. One walks away from this invitation. Two die when tremendous natural forces breach their sleeper 'caskets'. The inventor and a younger colleague, however, survive, and awaken to this:

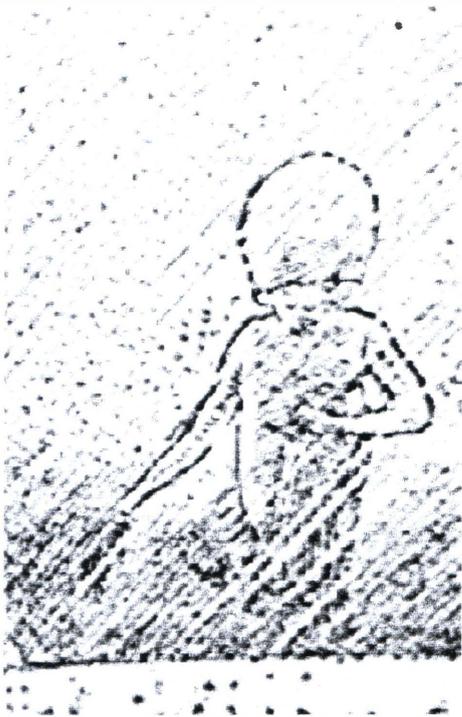
... three humans... watched his every move with quick excited eyes - they by no manner of mental flexibility could belong to the twentieth century. In fact, for a brief



panicky moment, Boswell wondered if they were humans, so amazingly different were they. But he realized that they were [human] immediately after, although altered in several astounding ways.

Boswell ran his eyes over the nearest figure, still propped on his elbows. He saw a dwarfed body with broad hips and thin,

short legs - not deformed to the standards he knew, but smaller and weaker-looking. Also the arms were thin but extraordinarily long and terminated by a hand of astonishingly long fingers. But the head brought a muffled gasp from Boswell. From a normal sized face tapered a bulky cranium that seemed ready to burst from



internal pressure. The instant impression of vast intelligence, betokened by that bulging, hairless skull struck Boswell like a blow in the face. He suddenly felt himself dwindle mentally to insignificance before the intellect that fairly poured out of the deep-set eyes fastened on him. He caught again an indefinable, intangible look of great, deep sadness, not only in one, but all three faces.

This matter of intelligence flowing out of eyes was a traditional trait of brainy beings by this date. It was a central concern of John Davys Beresford's earlier classic "The Hampdenshire Wonder" (1911) and appears in a number of subsequent tales, notably Vincent (1929). Binder's beings don't know English and can't answer the narrator's questions at first. He finds himself in an artificial gravity environment that allows the people to move heavy things around. They also show the ability to move through walls. Unlike contemporary Grey magic, the walls glow red when they do this. The beings also go around naked. The inventor's companion thinks they have overslept.

Now this man we have just seen, if he is typical of his race at present, could not in any way have evolved from our race in as short a period of time as ten thousand years, or even twenty thousand years.... Or even, I doubt, in *one hundred thousand years!*"

That unless these people are from another planet, we have somehow awakened at least, I should say, not twenty thousand years in the future, but perhaps three or four hundred thousand years! Because, Andrew, they are obviously no longer of the species *sapiens*, although they may be of the *genus Homo*.

The narrator begins describing the beings as having bulbous heads in part one and continues to do so in Parts 2 and 3.

In Part 2, the sleepers are debriefed and brought up to speed on their current predicament. They had slept two billion years and were now situated on Mercury. Post-humankind lives a largely utopian and conflict-free existence due in part to a learning process that physically directly imprints knowledge into the brain. The descendants have emotions but of a more refined restrained quality. They can also, using current vocabulary, download all a brain's contents. Proving their civility, they asked permission to do this on the awakened sleepers.

Beings in this age receive all nourishment, water, medicines, and the like through the air they breathe. In the stomach region is a mechanical device attached to the spine, which gives levitation abilities and powers like travelling through walls. This power is explained as a slight distortion of the time value of the wall so that it briefly ceases to exist. This bit of technobabble, though really quite offhand and inadequate, is still less embarrassing than abductology's mis-appropriation of superstring theory. Future evolution has shaped our descendants in the way H.G. Wells proposed.

When you are duly initiated into our life, you will see some of our oldest people, who have lost almost all muscular, floating about with their useless legs hanging limp. Perhaps in your minds you men from a vigorous past think of as degenerate specimens mankind in terms of physique. True it is that, unaided by our 'stomach' machines, we would be puny children in your more powerful hands, but that is unquestionably a minor consideration. Your physical body is a product of crude Nature; my body is a modification of that same body, altered by the easier circumstances introduced by the mind of man. Those same changes brought about by the application of science are not a degeneration, but an advancement.

By a terrible irony, our heroes have

landed in the last generation of mankind. They are heading to extinction. One of the beings elaborates,

When I was born three hundred years ago the majority of women were absolutely sterile. Today - he wrung out his words with an effort - all of them are. The last child was brought to life just thirty years ago... our race has become sexless and unproductive.

How like the Greys of today. Their vast science is unable to solve the puzzle. Our heroes get a virtual cyber-tour of the solar system showing all its worlds are dead. They zoom in on a monument on Venus showing the last of civilisation before the exodus to Mercury. On Mercury, life is lived underground. The sun is dimming. As a last desperate bottle - tossed - in - the - ocean gesture, they broadcast spores throughout the cosmos that they hope will spawn intelligent life elsewhere.

In part 3 we are told the Story of Mankind over 2 billion years. Civilizations rise and fall many, many times. Wars recur over the eons. As Venus warms up, some of humanity migrates and there is a speciation. The new species is bigger-brained and smaller bodied and eventually they can't interbreed with original humanity. A war erupts that spans the gulf of space and The Venusian branch wipes out the original species of humankind. All along there is some progress. Each fall of civilisation is never as far down the ladder as the prior fall. Peace finally comes to this new species. As the Sun cools, there are vast natural cataclysms. New bases go up on Mars, but the sun is just too dim. They visit interstellar space, but the worlds are much too alien to support human life. Mercury becomes their final resting place.

At the end, our two sleepers briefly outlast the extinction of this species. One dies on Mercury. The last human returns to Earth. He chooses to die amid a vast diamond monument giving the story of this civilization. Maybe someday interstellar descendants of the spores will return to ponder its message.

Science fiction historian Everett F. Bleiler sees the aura of Olaf Stapledon around Binder's piece. (Bleiler 1998) It is surely Binder's most epic and meditative piece. It is haunted by a philosophical question - the purpose of all this billions

of years of activity - but yet all dies. Bleiler sees a mystical element in this that is odd set beside the usual material in the pulps of the day.

A modern UFO buff can't help but be impressed by the string of commonalities to today's Grey mythology: Big, bald brains; small degenerated body; eye powers; unselfconscious nudity; subdued emotions; a [very] strange awakening; floating levitating bodies (Fowler 1979); the ability to pass through walls; impending extinction via sterility; the ability to download a brain; nourishment received without eating.

Most follow more or less logically from ideas of the future of evolution popular in this era. Gernsback loved these sorts of stories. We have a list of ten themes he asked his contributors to consider for story submissions. After such things as his wish for stories about interplanetary travel, atomic disintegration, future wars, ultra-modern cities, we come to number seven that gives his belief about future evolution:

There is no doubt that in the future man will evolve physically as well as mentally. He may have a large skull and a small body, long hands and short feet, etc. His mental processes in a highly complex civilization may also be very much different from what they now are, as well as his ideals and aspirations.

Binder was only one of many writers writing to Gernsback's market preferences, but his effort is grander than most. (Ashley & Lowndes 2004) Though I personally doubt man of the Year Two Billion will have the ability to travel through walls, science fiction writers are not bound by the constraints of providing the details in how to make their Greys believable. Their job was to make them wondrous. I presume ETH advocates will speculate that Binder was a UFO abductee without realising it. I don't see any evidence for this in Schelly's 2003 biography of Binder, but, then, I wouldn't, would I? Whatever. My feeling is that this 'coincidence' ultimately boils down to the imagination filling in the blanks of what future evolution has in store once presented with the same starting point, a similar cultural storehouse of concepts, and a drive to create wondrous scenes.

Is this the earliest example of Grey-like beings, or aliens generally, having the ability to travel through walls? I would be

surprised if earlier examples did not exist. I am, in fact, faintly puzzled I haven't stumbled across the motif in H.P. Lovecraft's writings given how much he transposed themes of supernatural literature into cosmic horror. His career straddled ghost stories and deep time alien gods and would a logical suspect. Still, we are probably close to the head of the line. Even if we withhold that particular honour, Binder's epic is praiseworthy for having so many exotic foreshadowings of Grey mythology this far before the saucer era.

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Now, a correction. In my earlier piece, I offered the Andreasson Affair as the first abduction with aliens going through a wall. There is an earlier instance. Sandra Larson reported a dream or 'strange awakening' from December 2, 1975 involving two space mummies that stood beside her, 'magnetised' her and then floated her through the wall to a glowing UFO several blocks away. (Lorenzen 1977) This datum arose on 8 February 1976. The authors express doubts about the transport because it happens near a busy highway and there were no witnesses. Nothing is said about the violation of physical principles implicit in matter interpenetration, but that is pretty typical of paranormal thought. Testimony is privileged over any such scientific considerations, the latter usually being regarded with contempt anyways. I should have suspected Andreasson wasn't first, but her 1977 drawing occupied a large presence in my visual memory.

Additionally, I found back a special case that I would have loved to include in that piece. Don Worley reports he has a case in his files where the Greys had problems with their permeator ray. It involved the return of an abductee to his home in Curtis, Michigan. The aliens wound up struggling with a frightened, flailing human when power problems developed with their light beam. They got him through and placed him in bed, but as they left the abductee saw a Grey bump his head on the ceiling, unable to pass through until their beam again powered up. (Worley 1998) Worley also provides a motif variant in how alien can magically leave a room. After an abductee in Wingate, Kentucky attacks a Grey and causes its head to snap backwards, its companions back him up

into the light beam where they simply vanish instead of travelling through the ceiling. I love this pair of cases. They have the taste of folkloric humour and instructively show the creative imagination in play. The connecting of wall penetration to light beam power levels is a neat bit of artistic licence. I wonder though if there hasn't been an example of aliens penetrating walls in low light.

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**MAGONIA
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 MEETINGS**

If you are over 18 years old and living in or visiting the London area, you are welcome to attend our informal gatherings on the first Sunday of each month, 1915-2230, at the Railway, opposite Putney station.



LITERARY CRITICISM

Reviews by

Peter Rogerson

Conspiracy Encyclopedia: the encyclopedia of conspiracy theories. Collis Brown, 2005. £25.00

James McConnachie and Robin Tudge, *The Rough Guide to Conspiracy Theories*, Rough Guides/Penguin Books, 2005. £9.99

Michael Newton, *The Encyclopedia of Conspiracies and Conspiracy Theories*, Checkmark Books/Facts on File, 2006 (i.e. 2005) \$21.95

In the wake of 9/11 conspiracy theories are making a major comeback; indeed the Collins and Brown encyclopedia here is a companion to a whole series, entitled Conspiracy Books, produced by that publisher. Between them, these books will take the reader on a gamut from well-documented cases of actual conspiracies, through conspiracy theories which might have at least some element of truth in them, to ones which are clearly the product of disordered minds.

Though international in scope, there is a clear emphasis on conspiracy theories originating in the United States. Whether that is because the US is a more conspiratorially minded country than most other places, or whether the First Amendment and fairly lax libel laws means one can get away with saying things there that on this side of the water would lead to m'learned friends being down on you like a ton of bricks. This perhaps accounts for the relative absence of British conspiracy theories, particularly those surrounding the conflict in Northern Ireland. For example, you will not read in any of these books of how the Provisional IRA was set up by the CIA in 1969 with the connivance of the Irish government, and the at least tacit support of the British

security services, and was supplied by funds from Saudi Arabia and Taiwan through an organisation called the World Anti-Communist League (British head, Patrick Wall, MP who later became President of BUFORA). The motivation was that the existing Official IRA was pro-Cuban and believed to be a front for the Irish Workers (i.e. Communist) Party. Given the situation there was going to an IRA anyway it was better that it was a good old Green Catholic IRA rather than a Red one.

I was also struck by the absence of any references to the conspiracy theories surrounding the Profumo affair.

Looking at the various conspiracy theories presented, they seem to fall into certain categories. The real conspiracies are either the product of ordinary greed and venality and protection of special interests, or follow from the old doctrine of my enemy's enemy is my friend. Unfortunately, my enemy's enemy is often just as unpleasant, and sometimes much more so, than my enemy of the moment. And of course, precisely who is my enemy and my enemy's enemy is always changing, yesterdays friend is today's enemy and vice versa.

The grander conspiracy theories seem to echo either; the great do not die young by accident, or by their own vices, or at the hands of petty lunatics. Instead they are brought down by the incarnate forces of cosmic evil. If he rich, famous and powerful can be brought down in the most pointless and squalid fashion, what hope is there for the rest of us?

The clerks are traitors; those hired to protect us and our interests are really conspiring against us, they are the real enemy or are in league with the enemy.

Mummy and daddy really do hate us. Or they hold secrets from us, because they know better; all these secrets perhaps are reflections of the big secrets of sex and reproduction that (at least used) to be hidden from children.

They have stolen the fairy gold which would end all our problems, whether it be free energy or the cure of cancer and other dread diseases. Perhaps indeed they are witches who have put spells on us.

They are in control, nothing happens by chance, someone is in control of the situation, a malevolent force in charge is better than no one at all.

The big one, all the heartache, pain and suffering in the world are caused by the terrible others, the children of perfidy and darkness, against who we, the children of light and righteousness, are in constant battle.

Of course the fact that real life politics is often a grubby, amoral game of power play, far removed from the claimed noble purposes of political actors only serves to exacerbate the situation.

For those who want guidance through the murky world of conspiracy theories, the *Rough Guide* is not only by far the cheapest it is the best of the three, with insightful commentary and almost always well balanced and sane. *Conspiracy Encyclopaedia* is a bit expensive but it is generally reasonable if a little whitewashy in its section on magazines and organisations. The Newton *Encyclopedia* is a typical Facts on File tome, ie written by a hack who doesn't know much about the subject, is filled with irrelevant padding, and contains numerous factual errors, biases and tendentious commentary.

March Roach, *Spook: Science Tackles the Afterlife*, W. W. Norton, 2005. \$24.95

Gary E. Schwartz and William L. Simon, *The Truth About Mediums: extraordinary experiments with the real Allison DuBois of NVC's "Medium" and other remarkable psychics*, Hampton Roads, 2005. \$19.95

Mary Roach, an American journalist - whose previous book was *Stiff: the curious life of human cadavers* - takes a perhaps less than reverential look at the evidence for life after death than the traditions of psychical research and some modern researchers. She runs the gamut from the ectoplasm of Kathleen Goligher, still stored in the SPR archives at Cambridge University (and you thought archives were dry and dusty and dull places didn't you?), through experiments with the weighing of the soul, to accounts of reincarnation, and from ghost hunting and electronic voice phenomena to work with mediums past and present. What she manages to point out is how little things change in this field and today's new and exciting experiments always seem to echo something done years and years ago with equally indecisive results.

One interesting development is her re-examination of the notorious 'Chaffin Will' case, in which the ghost of a North Carolina farmer is supposed to have returned to reveal the existence of a hidden will which conveniently disinherited his by then widowed daughter-in-law. While I had assumed that Chaffin Senior had written this will himself and hidden it as a back up in case his favourite son died before he came of age and there was a danger of the widow remarrying (telling his other children about this beforehand), Roach has had this will examined by a documents expert who thinks there is a good chance that the signature on this second will is a forgery. Another case of yours truly not being sceptical enough I am afraid.

Amid all the dross there is the odd incident which sends that shiver down the spine, in Roach's case when medium Alison Dubois comes up with images of hour glasses, which Roach's brother collects.

DuBois is one of the main subjects of Gary Schwarz's rather wide eyed book. Schwarz performs "experiments" on mediums which seem to involve him

ranking the statements they make about people he knows. Though these seem to produce hits, to the outsider many of them seem typical mediumistic waffle and clichés. None of the mediums' statements are transcribed in full, so there is no way of knowing whether Schwarz is simply selecting from a wider sea of clichés those that fit. It should also be said that many of these relate to Suzy Smith, a well known figure in spiritualist/psychical research circles whom Schwarz regards as an honorary grandmother.

The obvious way to test these claims, at least to eliminate cold reading, would be to reproduce all the medium's statements and show them to a large group of people, to see how many they fitted. This is not done of course.

As I said few of the statements are impressive to the outsider; no one comes up with anything like this hypothetical example: "Do you remember that holiday in Long Island when you were 10..never forget it... You know we were travelling in that blue Chevrolet, the one with that stain on the left back seat where your cousin Kirsten threw up that Christmas when we were visiting Aunt Rebecca. We were going to that old cabin by Globtown, nice enough expect for that ghastly yellow wallpaper in the third bedroom. Of course we never got there did we, because your dad ran into that fawn and you and your friend Colleen were so upset that we had to take it to the vet and we spent the holiday money on vet's bills, and we took it to Puddletown zoo, you called it Mimi and we used to visit almost every Sunday for years, and you'd feed it strawberry ice-cream bought from that green van with the red flash. Then you met Jamie in junior high, funny the way he used to keep one red pen in his left shirt pocket. Honey you didn't make out with him in that blue Chevrolet did you on the day of Uncle Enoch's funeral..."

But that example is really what would expect from 'surviving personalities': a mixture of obscure domestic details and testable facts, and a sense of real conversation, very difficult to fake. Of course much of this would be untestable to outsiders, but my example does give snippets which could be verified by independent investigators.

Better still, as some of these mediums claim to be in touch with Albert Einstein and James Clerk Maxwell, get some physicist colleague to hold a natural

EDITORIAL

As there are no real UFOs and space aliens we have to make do with fake ones. One of the latest, allegedly discovered in the loft of a cottage in Norfolk, is a "delicate 30 cm (12 inch) figure of a baby alien ... stored in a pungent liquid and has a US serial number painted on its four-toed foot. Possibly sculpted from a clay-like substance and painted grey, the model closely resembles the aliens depicted in a hoax film of an autopsy of the infamous 'Roswell incident'."

Hang on a minute. What is a "US serial number"? Why the "pungent liquid"?

"Curiously, the alien was discovered stored in an old toffee jar wrapped in a copy of the *Daily Mirror* dating from October 1947", continues the news report. Curiously indeed - it certainly looks like a rather feeble hoax.

However, a Professor Adam Roberts, "an expert in science fiction literature" was called in to examine it and dismissed the denial by a US Air Force spokeswoman that it had anything to do with them by saying: "That is the US Air Force line. They deny these alien encounters. It is quite possible they concoct stories to cover up for more nefarious activities."

At the time of writing it is impossible to say if there will be any further developments, or more mad professors solemnly pronouncing their verdicts on this affair. However, it seems the silly season has started rather early this year.

scientific conversation with them, using lots of technical terms and maths which they would find easy but the medium would find impenetrable.

Why do I suspect though that what they would come up with is yet more spiritualistic waffle and cliché?



ROGER SANDELL MEMORIAL ESSAY COMPETITION

THIS YEAR it is 10 years since our great friend and colleague Roger Sandell died, and many times during those years we have wondered what he would have made of some strange developments in the fields we study. With his characteristically incisive mind, encyclopaedic knowledge of the subject's literature, and his sheer wit and humour, it would undoubtedly be something which would illuminate the topic and help us understand it better.

To remember Roger we have on a couple of occasions held essay competitions on topics which were of particular interest to him, to try to encourage and develop discussion, and we felt that this sad anniversary would be a suitable time for another.

One of Roger's particular interests, as long-time *Magonia* readers will know, was the world of conspiracy theories - he was perhaps at the time the leading British expert on the subject of conspiracy theories surrounding the Kennedy assassination. Of course, this does not mean to say that he *believed* any particular theory, but that as a historian it was necessary to know about and understand them, and the climate in which they arose.

Similarly with the Satanic Abuse panic of the early nineties he brought an understanding of earlier conspiracy claims and rumours to bear on a contemporary issue. He also contributed articles to a number of political publications which stripped away some of the myths

surrounding political conspiracy theories and, indeed, revealed some of the realities behind them as well.

So we are inaugurating the third Roger Sandell Memorial Essay Competition, with two topics for you to choose from, as set out below:

Conspiracy Theories

Obviously we are not asking you to advocate any one particular theory, but to look at the history of theories, how they develop, the effects they have on society and the individual and the ways in which they shape their surroundings.

We are a UFO-oriented magazine, so our main interest will be in UFO-related theories, but in many ways, as Roger demonstrated in his essays, this whole field is indivisible - right-wing politics infiltrates ufology, UFOs turn up in 9/11 conspiracies - so no aspect of the subject can be ruled out.

Make Ufology History

There is another topic which we would like to offer for your consideration. We've had a bit of fun lately with The Pelican's 'Make Ufology History' campaign, but it does have a serious point. It is in fact asking if ufology really exists as a science or 'proto-science'. Is there any coherent intellectual structure to the study of UFOs, or is it simply a hobby, which involves collecting random pieces of data and arranging them into patterns, rather

like a stamp collector might set out an album page - an interesting exercise, and in many ways satisfying, even educational, but hardly a scientific endeavour. We would welcome your thoughts on this as well - is ufology a science, could it ever be a science, or is The Pelican right, and we should 'Make Ufology History'?

There will be a prize of £100 (or equivalent) for the best essay, which will be judged by the editors of *Magonia*. The winning entry and any other suitable essays will, subject to agreement with the authors, be published in *Magonia*. We are looking for contributions of about 6000-7000 words length, which should be in English. The closing date for entries will be 1 June 2006. Entries may be submitted typed on A4 paper and sent to:

John Rimmer
5 James Terrace
Mortlake Churchyard
LONDON
SW14 8HB
United Kingdom

They may also be submitted by email. Please use plain text or RTF format and email your essay to magonia@magonia.demon.co.uk with "Essay Competition Entry" in the subject line. The winning entry will be announced in our autumn issue in August or September.

MAGONIA Supplement Web Site

Please note that this site has now moved. The new url is: <http://www.users.waitrose.com/~magonia> It contains HTML editions of all issues of the Supplement, plus index.

Our other web sites are **MAGONIA**, <http://www.magonia.demon.co.uk> and **MAGONIA Extra**, <http://magonia.mysite.wanadoo-members.co.uk>

MAGONIA Supplement. Letters, articles and reviews welcome. Send all contributions to the Editor: John Harney, 27 Enid Wood House, High Street, Bracknell, Berkshire RG12 1LN UK. email: magonia@harneyj.freemove.co.uk