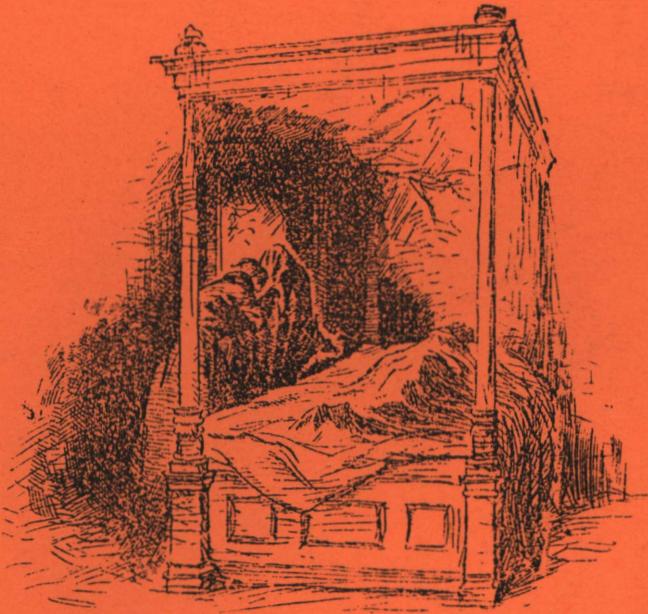


The Wild Places



The Journal of Strange
and Dangerous Beliefs

The Wild Places

6

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The Wild Places

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Talking to Strangers



I think we all have something we would like to be true, an event we know has been reported, but of which we would like to be sure.

I have a number of such hopes, but first among them is that physical, materialisation mediumship might really happen. And, better, that I might be there to witness it. Such a joint effort between this world and the next would display independent intellect, intent, decision-making, choice, and numerous other skills that would, the phenomena aside, strongly suggest the continued existence of substantial intelligence.

So, the endeavours of the Noah's Ark Society (NAS) in reviving the practise and demonstration of physical mediumship has particularly intrigued me. Or at least, it did till a revelation appeared in *Psychic News* for 7.11.92, under the headline 'Medium Caught Holding Trumpet'.

The medium referred to was 'Lincoln', the bright young star of the NAS, who had supposedly been fastened securely to a chair. In the middle of a well-attended seance held, as ever, in total darkness, the light unexpectedly went on and he was seen, free of his bonds, in the centre of the circle, holding an illuminated trumpet. Just previously, the movements of this trumpet around the circle had been amazing the sitters, and it appears that when the light went on, 'Lincoln' cried out before throwing himself backwards to the floor'.

The PN report derived from a very experienced Spiritualist, and its tenor was one of implied - if not overt - criticism. The initial explanation from the NAS was that a "mischievous earthbound spirit" (called Daniel) had allegedly entered the medium's body during the sitting, and that "the lights had been turned on by the spirit world in order to rid Lincoln of this possessing entity". I was not alone in thinking this unlikely.

In the *NAS Newsletter* for Nov.1992 Robin Foy tackled the events at length, under the title 'Warts And All'. Sadly, it turned out to be little more than a set of rather exotic excuses, making great demands on one's ability to suspend disbelief. Neither Mr.Foy himself (the Chairman of the NAS) nor, it seems, any other influential member would even countenance deliberate fraud, and the 'Daniel' theory appears in more detail, based on the premise that Lincoln's ill-

health had permitted Daniel's dominance, and that the guides had intervened in the only way available to them.

At a subsequent seance, it seems, Lincoln's guide 'Felix' not only confirmed this interpretation, but also instructed the circle "to perform a full 'rescue' to send 'Daniel' on his way". During this exercise "we all witnessed, in full red light, the snapping of the two strong cable ties securing his legs, as if they were no more than a cotton thread".

Prior to this event, the NAS had shown an impressive determination to permit video filming and some degree of scientific testing - subject to 'spirit' agreement. Since the event, they seem to be steadily retreating from that position, reverting to an attitude of 'only believe and thou shalt see', that sits uneasily with the declared aim of providing evidence of survival.

Ghosts, Scholars and Herbert Thurston

Some things add those little touches of quality to life. For me, one of these is the occasional arrival of *Ghosts and Scholars*, an exquisitely-produced, substantial journal about M.R. James and other writers in that tradition, combining new and rare fiction, reviews, criticism, and historical research, plus some fine artwork. All this is put together with a light and enterprising touch by the Editor, Rosemary Pardoe, who also publishes one-off collections of stories and other writing that takes her fancy. For anyone with any interest in the English ghost story, or just in fine writing, I recommend *Ghosts and Scholars* most highly. A sample copy is £2.50, or an £8.00 subscription gives you a 20% discount off any of the publications. Please write to The Haunted Library, Flat One, 36, Hamilton Street, Hoole, Chester, CH2 3JQ.

Anyway, the reason I mention all this is that Rosemary is seeking some information about a writer in our field, with which I hope some of you may be able to help her . . .

"Herbert Thurston's three books, *Physical Phenomena of Mysticism*, *Ghosts and Poltergeists* and *Surprising Mystics*, are quite well known in our field. They are basically collections of articles originally published in various periodicals. Far less well known is the fact that (according to his bibliography) he wrote vast numbers of articles not reprinted in these books. Some are not relevant to us, of course, but a great many are. Can anyone tell me if any of these have been reprinted in recent years - perhaps piecemeal in journals? I have often thought (especially since Thurston went out of copyright!) that it would be nice to produce a booklet containing three or four of the best of the unreprinted articles, but I would want to be sure before doing this that the pieces had definitely not been reprinted elsewhere."

If you can help, please write to Rosemary at the 'Haunted Library' address above. Thanks.

The following is an excerpt from a fascinating booklet titled *Visits by our friends from the Other Side*. This was written by Tom Harrison, the Founder Manager of Arthur Findlay College, and is about the remarkable mediumship of his mother, Minnie Harrison. All proceeds from the sale of the booklet - which is illustrated by some unusual photos of materialisation mediumship - go to cancer relief charities, and it is available for £2.50 from Saturday Night Press Publications, 27, Wood Lane Close, Flackwell Heath, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP10 9EP. In this account the surname, and name of the road only have been changed.

The Way Home by Tom Harrison

On Saturday evening, 10th January 1948, we all heard this soft and rather hesitant voice coming through the Trumpet which was suspended in the middle of our circle. It belonged to a boy who gave his name as 'James Andrew Fletcher'. He had passed over when he was about 12 years old, and had been attracted to our circle by the bright light emanating from it, whilst we were sitting in a darkened room.

By a series of questions and answers we obtained as much information as possible, but he was still rather unsure of himself. We gathered that he had passed over on 6th June 1941: he had no brothers or sisters but did have a pet dog of which he was very fond. He thought he had lived in Coniston Avenue, or something like that, in Haverton Hill, which is a village a few miles from Middlesbrough alongside the vast I.C.I. Billingham works. He had tried to visit his home, he said, but there seemed to be a mist which he could not get through. Was it near, and could we help him?

I was free the following Wednesday afternoon and told him I would go to Haverton Hill to see if I could find his home, and invited him to accompany me - with the help of perhaps Aunt Agg (one of the spirit personalities from Minnie Harrison's circle - Ed.) or other Spirit people familiar to him. We would try to penetrate that misty barrier and link him again with his mother and father - and his pet dog, if still there.

Not knowing Haverton Hill at all well, I stopped my car at a local shop. Did they know a Coniston Avenue? No. sorry - but there is a Collinson Road just around the corner. I thanked them and drove round. In front of me was a long road of council houses, four or five to a block, with small front gardens - similar to thousands built in the 1930's. I stood there wondering where to start my enquiries - which were unusual to say the least. 'Collinson' - 'Coniston' - they were similar, so I must have a try, for James's sake.

Three o'clock on a Wednesday afternoon and not a soul in sight. Which door do I knock on? The answer was given to me when I saw a lady coming out of her house about three blocks away.

"Excuse me, but could you tell me where the Fletchers live, please?" Imagine my surprise when she immediately replied - "Oh yes, just on the corner there at number 20". Could it be as easy as this, I thought? I rang the bell at number 20. No reply. I rang again. Still no reply, but a lady appeared at the door of the adjoining house. Could she help?

"Yes please - I was wanting to speak to Mrs Fletcher". Mrs automatically came to mind as I thought she was more likely to be at home at that time of the day. Mr. would no doubt be working.

"No, she is out at present - works at the ICI canteen and won't be home at that time of the day". I thanked her and said I would try to return about 7.30 and perhaps she would mention it to Mrs Fletcher.

Around 7.30 I did return - a pitch black and extremely cold January night, with very dim gas street lighting. Again I rang the bell at number 20 - rather more apprehensively this time, wondering what was ahead of me. This time there was a reply, quite quickly, and a man confronted me at the door.

"Are you the chap who came to see my wife this afternoon?" he barked at me before I had time to speak! Oh dear I thought - what have I done! "Yes sir", I replied, as friendly as possible, "But I would also like to speak to you if I may." "Well, what do you want?", he snapped.

As I have said, my enquiries were rather unusual, without such an opening confrontation. Ah well, I thought, here goes - just ask simple questions and play it by ear.

"Did you have a son called James Andrew?" "Yes", came the reply.

"Was he about 12 years old when he died?" Another curt "Yes".

"Did he die on 6th June 1941?" I asked, now feeling quite inwardly excited.

"Yes", he said again, not quite so aggressively this time - but quickly added - "How do you know, and what's this all about?" A very reasonable question to put to a complete stranger who knocks on your door on a dark winter's night.

"I'm researching some information about psychic phenomena and was hoping that you may be able to assist me," I replied. Little did he realise how much he had already done so, Three questions - three affirmatives! All this, still at the front door, in the space of three or four minutes. Had I really found the home of that 'voice' which we had all heard for the first time only four days previously? It certainly seemed like it - but more was yet to come. By this time a lady had appeared at the doorway.

"What's happening? What does he want?" she asked. Mr Fletcher explained briefly but in a much more subdued voice, and without the

original aggression. "Well, would you like to come in and talk?" said the lady, and I seemed to detect a sense of expectancy in her voice. "Many thanks - it is rather cold tonight out here."

From the moment we entered their living room the atmosphere seemed to change - much friendlier, although still rather apprehensive. A cheerful open fire greeted us and I sat in an armchair next to the sideboard, on which was - a framed photograph of a good-looking boy - surely James. Mr and Mr Fletcher sat on the settee on the other side of the fireplace facing me - still a complete stranger - asking questions about their dead son. But the friendliness continued. "Would you like a cup of tea?" "Many thanks," I replied.

As Mrs Fletcher went through to the kitchen a rough-haired terrier bounded out and immediately sat down in front of me; tail wagging vigorously, ears pricked and whining rather than barking. "Most unusual", remarked Mr Fletcher, "he's not usually so friendly with strangers." But as I explained to them, he wasn't looking directly at me. Yes, this was James's dog, 'Rags', and he was welcoming him home!

Mission accomplished I thought - and I would be leaving after I had enjoyed my cup of tea. But not so. As Mrs Fletcher handed me the cup of tea she rather diffidently said, "We're Catholics, you see," with all the attendant implications. I immediately offered to leave and assured them that I had no intention of offending their religious beliefs or principles.

"Oh no," she said, "we would like to talk to you", and her husband nodded in agreement. From then on Mrs Fletcher did most of the talking - a mother's natural love for her only child being very evident.

I explained briefly about our small group and how we had heard their son's voice last Saturday evening. They listened intently and with obvious interest. There was certainly no indication of any feeling of disbelief. Although it was a few days past 'Twelfth Night', I noticed there were still a few Christmas decorations in the room - but that is not unusual. What was unusual, however, was the reason they were there at all!

During our talk, Mrs Fletcher told me she had a 'strange' feeling around Christmas time to get a tree and decorate the room as they had always done when James was alive. The feeling was so strong, although she had no idea why, that she unpacked all the decorations which they had put away and never used since James died - over six years ago. She now realised, she said, why the feeling was so strong this particular year and felt so very pleased that she had done it!

I now felt that my visit had not only been instrumental in getting James back to his home, but equally important, his mother and father were aware of his presence and happily accepted the

situation. The 'mist' which James had been unable to penetrate had now been lifted and the Fletcher family was again complete. The 'bright light' that James had seen emanating from our Circle on that Saturday evening had been as a beacon to him, and he came to thank us the following Saturday - this time in a much stronger and clearer voice!

That same bright psychic light was also a beacon to many other frustrated, confused or simply 'lost' spirits whom we were so pleased to help over the years.

END TIMES BULLETIN

When I published, in the early Eighties, the only two independent issues of ETB, it was in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, at a time of great gloom and crisis. By the time I came to put a third issue together, there really wasn't enough to publish. The pressure was off, and folk were no longer much bothered about the apocalypse.

I rather think I wouldn't have the same problem now. For a start, we are much nearer the year 1999, and those numbers alone will, without doubt, ensure a great and growing passion for things eschatological. There are crumbling economies. There are numerous health and environmental problems, already being used to support all kinds of angles and beliefs, particularly among those who claim knowledge and understanding of what God is thinking, and doing, and why. With the end of the Communist monolith (don't bet on communism itself being finished - most faiths have revivals, and revivalists, too), there are sufficient conflicts afoot to fulfil the Book of Revelation twice over. In our own little field, the New Agers are longing for change without stopping to imagine its implications, and Ashtar Command and his innumerable chums are belting round the cosmos issuing threats and promises in roughly equal parts. In her own genteel way, the Blessed Virgin Mary seems to be tackling much the same mission.

So, I think it is time to expand this column to, hopefully, a few pages each issue, and to keep a really good account of End Times events and movements over the next seven years or so. Any relevant cuttings, references, news or ideas will be most gratefully received and thoroughly acknowledged, so that when it is all over - however it turns out - we can look back and see how we got where we're going. We'll look forward to hearing from you!

The Endless Encounter

by Kevin McClure

It is worth pointing out some of the key differences between UFOs and buses - of course, what they have in common is that neither turn up when you want one: unless you happen to live in Gulf Breeze.

Buses, to their credit, carry information to say where they're going, and you can usually work out where they've been, or at least where they were manufactured. They show up on radar. They show up on photos. If you board one - or leave it - other people can see you do it. If a bus drives down a busy street, the great majority of potential witnesses will agree that they can see it, and their descriptions of the bus will be substantially similar. If it runs over a patch of soft cement, it will leave tyre tracks. To remember a bus, you don't have to be subjected to hypnotic regression. Generally speaking, you don't get seriously sexually assaulted by deformed perverts on buses. And you don't only find out what the driver looks like 40 years after the bus crashes.

UFOs have none of these qualities, none of these properties. Simply, in terms of direct comparison with a bus, buses have physical existence - and UFOs don't. There's no Ian Allan Book of UFO Numbers, or UFO Types, or UFO Occupants. When UFOs evince the endless variety that they do, changing with time, scientific advances, and cultural background, they hardly lend themselves to such cataloguing. Imagine the Ian Allan Book of Messengers from the Stars, listing all the contacting and channelling entities reported as having communicated in the last 46 years. A loose-leaf volume in a ring-binder of infinite capacity, filled with the names and home planets of characters who have much to say about themselves, but know little or nothing of their myriad supposed compatriots, carrying invisibly in their thousands along the busy space lanes between Earth, the Pleiades, and Zeta Reticuli.

We seem to have reached an important watershed in the development of ufology. A point where we break free from the past and declare that the UFO is as good as dead. That as UFOs have nothing in common with buses, we may as well admit that there is no point in studying them in that way, and that we neither want nor need them. There will always be those who want to hold skywatches, those who can be bothered with LITs and UAPs and even CEIs. But the mainstream of the subject has in recent years moved on from planet misidentifications, meteorological events and the lights of planes. I have great respect for those who research such issues, who cultivate contacts with the local

airports, and distribute those wonderfully old-fashioned sighting report forms. But for all the work on the landing at Delphos, and the raising of a plaque at Livingston New Town, the CE2 as well has died for lack of evidence.

Many of our investigations now have as their starting point the sort of close encounter of the third kind that little more than a decade ago was the ultimate mystery. In the term 'UFO' the element of 'flying' is now of minimal importance. The definition as an object is at best shaky, unsupported by the evidence. And no one seems much bothered about whether the backdrops of more modern reports remain unidentified or not. If you're seeing the doctor, you don't worry much about the architecture of the surgery.

What really matters is what goes on in the locations in which percipients now place their experiences, who does what to them, when, how often, and with what perceived or presented motive. It is not surprising that more traditional UFO investigators have reverted to the relative safety of long-buried - and forgotten - crash and retrieval reports. The cultural and scientific naivete of recent reports from Eastern Europe only emphasises the changes that have been taking place in our subject, and how and why they have happened.

In passing, as we acknowledge that we are no longer much concerned about things seen in the skies, perhaps we can look briefly at what over 40 years of such research has taught us. To be honest, not much. What traditional UFO research has achieved is to identify what was identifiable, and to fail to identify what was unidentifiable. It goes little further than that. We have no understanding of any sort of plan or intention of contact from elsewhere that relates to the presence of physical objects. If Roswell is the best physical evidence case we have, then that measures only the paucity of what is on offer. After 45 years of hard work, we can only say that there may once have been some bits of a physical construction that might have come from somewhere other than Earth. And on the other hand, they might not, and anyway, we don't have them now.

I guess that the heart of our problem is, that while we have been believing we were investigating events, we have actually been investigating memories. And those memories have themselves been of responses and emotions arising from a range of intangible stimuli we could never hope to experience at first-hand. Those stimuli have ranged from the strongest fear and terror, to the joyous hope of a new age on Earth, to the most deliberate of lies. Yet we have sought, and seek in all of them, confirmation of our own desire to prove a genuine mystery true.

We - and this applies as much to my search for proof of survival of death in Spiritualist phenomena as to that of UFO researchers

for evidence of ETs or UTs - are still trapped in this same pattern of behaviour. Because we are human and demand some sort of reward for our efforts, we go and talk to the oddest people about the oddest things, and expect something special to come of it. Mind you, that's never stopped me yet!

So, if we're going to persist in this pattern of behaviour, can we at least give some order to it, make it accessible to others without the same motivation? Can we apply some academic discipline that gives it lasting value, and us some standing in society, before the next chat-show or documentary makes buffoons of us again? Thus far, we haven't done too well. Our approach to physical sighting cases - CE1s and CE2s in particular - has been consistent with my bus metaphor. Count the wheels, note the colour, guess the dimensions, calculate the distance, count the windows, guess the speed, sketch the engine it just might use, and wonder why it changes colour and disappears. Interesting, as they used to say, but stupid. We have filed away descriptions of thousands of buses - sorry, UFOs - and there isn't a thing we can do with them.

We have been in a new area of research, dominated by reports of abductions and intrusions, for several years now. We are still investigating memories, but they are memories of a different kind, and their nature seems to give us the opportunity to frame our research within existing academic paradigms, in areas of study that have established patterns and precedents. For, if you take away the clutter of unidentified flying objects from the abduction reports of the last decade or so, you take with them the historical exclusion imposed by the technology. To put it another way: without the inference that the abduction experience relies on the physical arrival of the abductors at the location by technological means, the experience can be safely and usefully evaluated in the rich and rewarding context of thousands of years of accounts of religious experience.

Anyone who is familiar with my work will know the importance I place on the significance of historical context in researching any claim of paranormal experience. If something extraordinary appears to be happening for the first time, especially if there are multiple reports within a group that has access to common information, I would look particularly hard at those reports, and the source from which they emanate. Almost invariably, there are identifiable stimuli for the reports of such events, and specific cases can be found in the history of Spiritualism, of visions of figures like the Virgin Mary and, of course, in ufology. In most of these cases there is not only a starting point, but a finishing point, too. Contemporary examples of this sort of situation would include the whole crop circle phenomenon, and the reported revival of physical mediumship - a grouping of survival phenomena reported regularly from 1890 to 1950, hardly ever in the past 40 years, and

now, apparently, occurring again. The eschatological - end of the world - beliefs underlying much New Age thinking are also worth a look, coming as close as they do to the numerical Millennium. At the risk of sounding like a psycho-social theorist - which I'm not - I suspect that cultural and social factors do have an important role in all these sets of reported events and perceptions.

As I'm taking the liberty of suggesting that we should look at the abduction experience - and others - in the context of religious experience, I must make clear what I mean by religious experience. Am I just insulting both those who claim to be currently in contact with higher intelligences, and those who follow traditional religions. Or is there more to it than that?

In proposing a definition, I stress that I'm not only talking about a specific event, visionary, revelatory or otherwise. Perhaps a working definition might be as broad as - 'an understanding or acceptance that a non-human intelligence or intelligences can of its/their own volition influence, interact or communicate with one or more human beings'. That means that I see religious experience as being a state of mind, an ongoing condition. How an individual comes to be in that state of mind, and whether they perceive the contact - yes, it's that word again - in terms of good or evil, threatening or caring, as hierarchical, oppressive, redemptive or whatever is a slightly different issue. It is the informed predisposition to accept the reality of contact that I'm concerned with: the endless encounter between humanity and something else that has probably been the primary formative influence on individual and social behaviour since the inception of language. One of the classical 'a posteriori' - based on the evidence - proofs of the existence of God was what the Stoics called *κοινὴ ἐνοχή* - the common notion that God exists. It was common then, and in a world with a vastly increased population, it's still common now.

I am very conscious of the fact that many people - including a number of Wild Places readers - lay their beliefs on the line, explaining the nature and significance of their contacts and communications with non-human intelligences. It is easy for someone like me to criticise, and among some who claim extraordinary experiences I am regarded as no more than a sceptic, with no experience that gives me any understanding of what they are going through, and the priorities that they have. I would not accept this opinion, but what can I offer in terms of dramatic personal experience that might afford me credibility among the 'belief-oriented' community? On what basis do I make judgements to say that an abduction has so much in common with a religious vision?

Well, apart from my poltergeist that broke an alarm clock and hurled my treasured copy of 'The Wizard of Oz' six feet across my bedroom from a tightly-packed bookcase, two fairly tasty pre-

cognitive dreams, one good ghost, and some night terrors involving a particularly malevolent snowman, there is a little more.

From about seven years old onwards, I was very involved in the life of our local Anglican church. Singing in the choir, attending many of the social events. By the time I was 10, and went off to boarding-school, my only ambition was to be an Anglican vicar. I was happy with the theology of the church, with the concept of redemption through the birth, death and resurrection of Christ. The boarding-school, too, was strongly Christian, and though I was disappointed at experiencing no sense of physical change at the moment of my confirmation, or the taking of my first communion, I lived very much within my religious experience, conscious not only of my beliefs, but also of the way in which I felt they set me a little apart from many of those around me. In my motivation for what I did, and my approach to life, there was certainly a slight element of superiority over most of my contemporaries, and I made no secret of my plans for ordination.

Adolescence proceeded as it will, I read widely, and immersed myself with passion in pop music and its incipient culture. My Christianity wasn't so much challenged as overwhelmed by the wealth of input available in the mid-Sixties. I found myself drawn, via the Pelican book and a few copies of 'The Middle Way' that I happened on, to a very Western form of Buddhism. About this time I became aware of my powers of persuasion: within a couple of months I had made several converts to a religion about which I knew virtually nothing. I guess that's about the only thing the Beatles and I had in common!

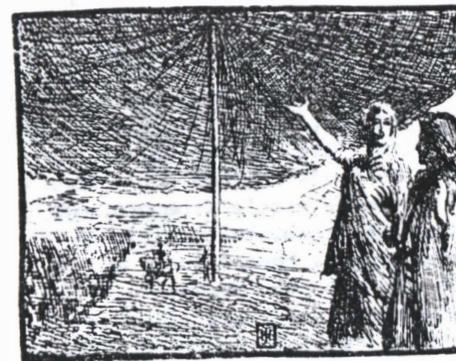
By the beginning of 1968, Buddhism had lost most of its attraction. I could hardly say I was going off to be a monk, and avatar was a mite beyond me - though don't imagine that the thought never crossed my mind . . . I found myself in the unhappy position of those who have 'lost their faith' - something also experienced by Mary Jones of Egryn, in North Wales, shortly before the extraordinary phenomena known as the Egryn Lights began to appear as part of her mission to carry revival to Merionethshire. I came up with nothing so remarkable, but after a thoroughly miserable Easter, documented in poetry heavy on teenage angst, I had a conversion experience that was astonishing in its ferocity. At the time it gave every impression of coming from without, rather than within, and of being virtually physical in its force. I sensed a tremendous light coming from the back to the front of my head, seeming to go through the information paths in my brain, cleansing and changing, and filling me with the utmost conviction that everything I so wanted to believe about Christianity was, without doubt, true. I have since wondered what would emerge were I to be hypnotically regressed to that time.

It didn't actually change how I lived my life, but I have seldom been so filled with joy and optimism as I was for months after that. Of course, with my customary humility I started trying to reconvert such of my previous victims as still retained any interest in what I had to say. But more important, I was content again, my future career and internal status thoroughly restored.

Why I'm not now clad in cassock and dog collar is more a matter of factual analysis than of any stronger conviction taking over. Reading theology, and looking at the mechanics of the development of texts and doctrines chipped away steadily at my faith, and a growing interest in the paranormal provided alternative ways of looking at my own experiences, and those of others. But even now, I would never doubt the reality of the internal experience, or the range and power of the information that kind of experience can in some way convey. And I will never deny that the experience really happened, for all that it was one I was looking and hoping for.

So, this is why I feel I can claim to share some of the emotion and power - the transformative element, if you like - of whatever it is happens to contactees, abductees, channellers and others. For many years I regarded myself, with my vocation, as one of the 'chosen'. I had a purpose and a ministry to fulfil. Not as exotic as some, but still involving the will and word of non-human intelligences on whose behalf I intended to act.

There are many others who feel they have been chosen, with or without their consent, and who will hold specific beliefs and plan their lives accordingly. While I may find much to criticise in the actions of those who build fame and fortune on the backs of those individuals, while claiming to comfort and support them, I can to a degree relate to their experiences. I can also say that they aren't the first, and they won't be the last, and that the whole of human history is out there to be learned from in seeking an understanding of what is really happening, to them, and to all of us.



In a couple of listings here, I mention a review of recent books by Andy Collins and Paul Devereux. I've written this a couple of times now, but I'm not really satisfied with it and, anyway, both versions are too long to fit! A feature covering both the books, and the 'Spirit Paths' and 'Orgone' theories will appear in TWP 7.

News From The Front

ANCIENT SKIES Nov/Dec 1992. Official Logbook of the Ancient Astronaut Society. Intriguing material from Bulgaria in Ancient Thracian Monuments by Boyanov & Dimitrou, The Emerald Tablet of Hermes-Thoth by Andrew Tomas, and Dr. Stuart W. Greenwood on Babylonian Venus Observations. Good, original writing. Benefit of membership of the A.A.S. at 1921, St. John's Ave, Highland Park, Illinois 60035-3105 U.S.A.

ANOMALY - The ASSAF Journal of Research into the Paranormal. Issue 11. John Spencer (of BUFORA) on the coincidences that have happened to him, ASSAF's Investigations Coordinator on Organising a Vigil, The Case for EVP by Gilbert Bonner, mediumship and more. £1.50 from SKS, Saint Aldhelm, 20, Paul Street, Frome, Somerset, BA11 1DX.

CAMBRIDGE (Ontario) UFO RESEARCH GROUP NEWSLETTER. Issue No.42. December 1992. Excellent value as usual: 60+ A4 pages of fine original reports, clippings, great cartoons, reviews, channeling, ads & loads more. Send \$8 to Bonnie Wheeler, 170, Strathcona Street, Cambridge, Ontario, Canada, N3C 1R4.

CATASTROPHISM & ANCIENT HISTORY - A Journal of Interdisciplinary Study. The copy I've recently received is dated Jan.1991, but I hope this is still being published. Learned, thoroughly researched, and making the most of the implications of Velikovsky's work that I've seen so far. If I receive a more recent issue, I'll give more details of content. \$4 from Marvin A. Luckerman, 3431, Club Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90064, U.S.A.

THE CEREOLOGIST No.7. Harvest 1992. Everything you wanted to know about human fortitude in the face of adversity is encapsulated here. Despite the (to me, anyway) unavoidable conclusion that crop circles have only ever been a mix of meteorological phenomena and excellent hoaxing, the true believers who contribute to this charming journal are putting up the shutters. As it is now clear that even CCCS investigators don't know what is meant to distinguish a man-made circle from one made by whatever else it is they believe makes them, the articles of belief are now moving away from the circles themselves. We now have the "luminous orange globes low over the fields . . . it seems more likely they are the progenitors of the circles and pictograms". We have "trilling". We have "strange blue lights in the circles

. . . a sound of whirling blades, like a helicopter without the engine noise." There are "beautifully coloured lights that sank into the corn and just vanished with no noise." Then there's the 'Grasdorf Plates' - large slabs of amazingly pure gold, silver and bronze, apparently found underground beneath a formation, bearing an engraving of the very formation itself! worst of all, perhaps, is an article entitled 'Dealing with the Circle Makers', an incredible melange of medieval superstition - "Individuals who then ascribe this phenomenon to 'hoaxers' want to avoid direct address on the source of this intelligence" . . . "It seems evident from these unique approaches that the designers direct themselves to more educated and thoughtful persons" . . . "Evidence of non-human activity has now been documented." To put it simply, forget about genuine research and investigation, there's another religion in the making, and it's as daft as the rest of them - despite the undoubted presence of "more educated and thoughtful persons". £2.50 a copy from SKS, Saint Aldhelm, 20, Paul Street, Frome, Somerset, BA11 1DX.

CHRISTIAN NEW AGE QUARTERLY Oct-Dec 1992. You'll see from the piece by Catherine Groves elsewhere in this issue the range of the Editor of this excellent journal. This is another fine and thoughtful issue, available for \$5 from P.O.Box 276, Clifton, NJ 07011-0276, U.S.A.

CHRISTIAN PARAPSYCHOLOGIST Dec.1992. (And other recent issues) Good to see Leslie Price playing a lively role here, looking at the history of Psychic News, and at the activities of the Noah's Ark Society - which we've tackled elsewhere in this issue. The Letters, Reviews and News items are often the best parts of CP: the articles - such as, here, 'The Bridge between the Scientific and the Spiritual' by Abdul Hassam - often seem more to represent a personal wrestling with problems of belief than any attempt to move forward in a particular direction. 4-issue sub. £5 from CFPSS, The Rural Workshop, South Road, North Somercotes, Louth, Lincs, LN11 7FT.

COSMOLOGY NEWSLINK - International Magazine of the Cosmos No.45. I think I can remember reading this title 20 years ago, and not a lot has changed. UFO-oriented and very British, it is a little heavy on reprints, but there is some original thinking, and the endeavour deserves your support. Only £1 from E.Harris, 16, Newton Green, Great Dunmow, Essex, CM6 1DU.

THE CROP WATCHER Issues 12 & 13. I had the pleasure of meeting Editor Paul Fuller in the summer, and found him to be one of the most perceptive and committed individuals within anomaly research. He doesn't debunk cereology: he tells you what has really happened, with no overlay of belief, no need to make money. Sadly, he does have to be careful of litigation, the courts apparently being the last resort of the greedy in their pursuit

of the gullible and deluded. I realise that it's not enough just to affirm the simple equation that natural events + hoaxes = the crop circle phenomenon. The Crop watcher, issue by issue, takes you through that equation, proves it, and makes a darned entertaining job of doing it. Quite indispensable. £1.50 an issue from Paul Fuller, 3, Selborne Court, Tavistock Close, Romsey, Hants, SO51 7TY.

DEAR MR THOMS - A Folklore Miscellany No.28 Nov.1992. This is published by the British Folk Studies Forum, and simple as its production qualities may be, I'm very impressed by it. Here we have the folklore behind the twisted spire at Chesterfield (in the context of which, does anyone know what happened to the two chaps who ran Project El International nearly 20 years ago?), some great Photocopylore, and excellent updates of Satanism, Stolen Kidneys, Crocodiles and Vampires. £1 an issue from Gillian Bennett, 28, Brownsville Road, Stockport, SK4 4PF.

DELVE No.7 Another lively mix of UFO and paranormal research and anecdotes, with a feature article, 'Below the Surface' dealing with life underground, another about Robert Lazar, progenitor of much of the 'alien conspiracy' material, and a feature about UFOs and Secret Aircraft. Good stuff! \$4 from Gene Duplantier, 17, Shetland Street, Willowdale, Ontario, M2M 1X5, Canada.

EARTHQUEST NEWS Vol.2. No.2 I've covered this one in the review of Andy's 'The Circlemakers'. £2.50 from ABC Books, P.O.Box 189, Leigh-On-Sea, Essex, SS9 1NF.

ELSEWHEN No.13 An unusual and informative piece on Britain's Haunted Airfields, On the Trail of the Demon-Girl, Japanese Monsters, an impressive crossword and more - though I do miss the coverage of time-travel that Elsewhen was pretty well unique in covering. \$3 from SUPRA, P.O.Box 20173, Keizer, OR 97307-0173, U.S.A.

FAR CORNER - The Bulletin of Obscure Research Vol.1. No.5 A small but fascinating journal, seemingly at the conspiracy theorism end of the field. Some big names here - Neal Wilgus with 'MIB - Trilateral Link Revealed', and an interview with Robert Anton Wilson. There's also some very informed editorial content, and this one comes with my recommendation! Only \$1 from Obscure Research Labs, P.O.Box 15266, Santa Rosa, CA 95402.

FAR OUT - The Unexplained, The Unusual and the Unreal. This is a large-format news-stand glossy from the U.S.A., which I picked up at the Sheffield Conference. Enigma may be stocking this one. It's the first issue, and I haven't seen another since, but I guess it's still publishing. Edited by the energetic William L. Moore, though it feigns a certain scepticism and commitment to analysis, it actually presents some rotten material: 'Killer Cults' (Splatter Day Saints, Krishna Hari . . . Hari Killer), UFO

Hybridization, Hangar 18, The Jersey Devil, Lost Aztec Gold, Russian ET Artefacts, Ike & Aliens, Area 51 and the rest of it. The magazine UFO research didn't need, and which I hoped Bill Moore might be above editing. The contact address given is 9171 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 300, Beverly Hills, CA 90210, U.S.A.

FATE MAGAZINE Now regularly available from Enigma, Fate is a consistently worthwhile read for its regular columnists alone - John Keel, Jerome Clark and Mark Chorvinsky. The articles are often more speculative and a lot less disciplined, but anyone actively involved in this field should read Fate.

FLYING SAUCER DIGEST No.118/119 Great cover graphics make these instantly recognisable. The content deals with sighting reports and related experiences, cryptozoology and more. Quite brief, but worth \$3 from UAPA, P.O.Box 347032, Cleveland, Ohio 44134, U.S.A.

FOAFTALE NEWS No.26 An absolute gem - the lead article alone - 'Contemporary Legends About Parisian Monuments - The Eiffel Tower's Hydraulic Jacks and the Pyramid du Louvre's Satanic Significance' - is worth the money. But there's also a fine piece on 'The Vanishing Lady' in media history, The Hildesheim Crop Circles, Satanism, death rumours concerning Ernie of the Muppets, child abductions and plenty more, including lots of recent media references. This consistently carries some of the best material I see. For a year's sub, send a £10 cheque to ISCLR, c/o Paul Smith, Dept. of Folklore, Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, A1C 557.

FOLKLORE FRONTIERS No.17 The study and collection of 'urban legends' (which could well be said to include the whole UFO abduction scenario, cereology and more besides, if you wanted to look at it that way) is becoming more and more important. Paul Screeton is an old hand and produces a literate and wide-ranging magazine, here including a neat report on the ISCLR Sheffield Conference. Essential reading, particularly at £5 for 4 issues from Paul at 5, Egton Drive, Seaton Carew, Hartlepool, Cleveland TS25 2AT.

FORESIGHT Jan-March 1993 No.114. It's a good few years since I last saw an issue of this one - or since I saw that good old ad. for the Rosicrucians featured on the back page. Is AMORC still going on in its own quaint way? There's a lot of reprinted material here, about various fringe science/fringe paranormal subjects, with a green and caring editorial outlook to link the magazine together. Will certainly appeal to some of you out there! Send £1 to John & Judy Barklam, 44, Brockhurst Road, Hodge Hill, Birmingham B36 8JB

FORTEAN TIMES Issues 64, 65 & 66. Started at a high-point, and continues to improve, with major articles and investigations of

the highest standard - literate, original, and making a real contribution to our field. The series on hoaxes (particularly Alternative 3) is invaluable, and I have much time for the historical material. To my great relief, the level of 'freak' content seems to have dropped, and the dependence on drivel like the National Enquirer and its pathetic ilk has ended. This seems to be in most decent or imaginative newsagents, or by post for only £2 from Fortean Times, 20, Paul Street, Frome, Somerset, BA11 1DX.

THE GATE Issues for Oct.1992 and Jan.1993. A great range of short but informative pieces on various anomalies - spirit communication, crop circles, mutilations, Bigfoot, aliens and more. \$3 from P.O. Box 43516, Richmond Heights, Ohio 44143.

GHOST TRACKERS NEWSLETTER Oct.1992 Some quality, first-hand investigation reports here, as usual. Tom Perrott's 'The Life of a Ghost Researcher', 'Voices from the Beyond', 'The Ghosts of the Crusades', good reviews and more. \$5 from Dale D. Kaczmarek, P.O.Box 205, Oaklawn, IL 60454, U.S.A.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE EARTH MYSTERIES No.14 Thanks to Editor Jo-Anne Wilder for sending me this - beautifully designed and produced, and with a provocative and intelligent range of material. For guessable reasons I was particularly taken with Jo-Anne's telling review of a lecture by Busty Taylor at Stroud, but the features on Gloucs leys, on The Midhurst Triangle, and the interview with a Wessex Sceptic are just as good. Impressive! £2 from G.E.M. P.O.Box 258, Cheltenham, Glos, GL53 0HR

INFO Journal No.67 Oct.1992 It's a couple of years since last I saw this title, and things seem to have improved greatly. The editorial comments and news items are perceptive, the letters well-chosen, and the features very good. The omnipresent Ulrich Magin offers 'A Church Alignment in Worms, Germany', Steven Mirach makes an excellent exploration of 'UFOs reconsidered as a Fortean Phenomenon', plus some fine contemporary items from and relating to Charles Fort himself, and more recent case histories. Only \$4 from INFO, P.O.Box 367, Arlington, VA 22210-0367, U.S.A.

INSIGHT - Exploring the Occult No.41. A British occult/magick magazine of long-standing, edited for many a long year by Deric James. This issue includes contributions from William Gray, Israel Regardie & Dion Fortune, and some interesting contact ads for individuals and publications. £1.50 an issue from D.R.James, 25, Calmore Close, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH8 0NN.

INTERNATIONAL UFO LIBRARY MAGAZINE Vol.1.No.3 This one looks great. Large, 84 pages, glossy, with an elegant and arty cover, one of the smartest of the U.S. imports. Inside, the truth emerges. There are some pretty deluded UFO items - Wendelle Stevens with 'Reticulian Extraterrestrials Misjudged', Bob

Oeschler preaching the Gulf Breeze gospel, 'Are You an Alien in Your Own Body?', 'Glyphs in the Grain', Rael and more. But there's also 48½ pages of advertising, mostly for the publishers' own products. If anyone still believes that money is not the prime motivation behind those who publicise the UFO abduction mythos, they ought to take a look at this publication. \$7 will bring you an issue from 11684 Ventura Blvd, #708, Studio City, CA 91604, U.S.A.

INTERNATIONAL UFO REPORTER July/August 1992 The cover and lead article here are devoted to U.K. crop circles, so that's pretty much a waste of space. Otherwise, this issue of one of the very best journals goes wildly in two directions. The editorial, and a Randle/Schmitt article, 'Missing Time' take apart the claims of Gerald 'UFO Crash on the Plains of San Augustin' Anderson, as publicised and accepted by 'researcher' Stanton Friedman. On the other hand, John E.Mack M.D., a psychiatrist who believes in the reality of abductions, talks about 'Helping Abductees' (which I doubt he is, in the long run), and David A.Gotlib, another psychiatrist, reviews abductions as found in Kenneth Ring's 'Omega Project', and the sceptical views of Robert A.Baker in 'Hidden Memories'. Overall, I'm profoundly grateful that I won't be needing psychiatric treatment in North America in the foreseeable future! IUR costs \$6 an issue from CUFOS, 2457, West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60659, U.S.A.

JOURNAL OF BORDERLAND RESEARCH Nov - Dec 1992. An interesting issue, as professional as ever, with a lead article about the fascinating Chaco Canyon - apparently a site of the Anasazi civilisation. There's also 'Recording Telluric Signals' and a complex piece, full of maths and musical theory, 'Astronomical Correlations found in Crop Formations' by Colette M.Dowell. send \$5 to BSRF, P.O.Box 429, Garberville, CA 95542-0429, U.S.A.

KINDRED SPIRIT - The Guide to Personal and Planetary Healing. Winter 1992. Mostly the usual acres of glossy advertising, and the customary half-baked New Age taradiddle, but there are some lovely illustrations of 1992 crop circles. The accompanying article contains a report collected by the proverbial Peter Glastonbury which says, in part, "Something invisible was pulling the grass into the centre and plaiting and weaving it into a dense mass. After five minutes a pillar began to grow in the centre. It was very neat and so dense that it could not be seen through. It grew to be 9' high and 5' thick before it slowly and deliberately moved in a straight line for 100 yards towards the second oak tree . . . The column began to sink into the ground and spun another circle. It did not completely disappear. About 5' of the column stayed spinning while a massive amount of grass was forced into the tightly knitted circle . . . the mass of grass formed a ball 40 to 50 feet across and majestically rolled off in the direction of Ashburton

. . . Alan also noticed that there was an absence of sound, as if all the surrounding sound was somehow being sucked into the column . . ." The article also includes a diagram of a UFO, a colour photo (?) of an alleged time-shift, and Leonie Starr channelling 'beings of light'. Either this is garbage of the worst sort, or it's time to rewrite science as we know it. Guess which option I'm going for!

THE LEY HUNTER No.117 Following my review in Wild Places 5, I was treated to a rude letter and, clearly, was knocked off the freebies list. So I bought a copy of this issue from the Editor's wife at a New Age Fair recently, and am unsurprised to find that Paul has decided to print lots of material supporting his Spirit Line 'theory', and an article linking the genesis of AIDS with voodoo and zombieism. Just how rational can any one magazine be? Still literate and nicely printed, mind. £7 for 3 issues from Empress, P.O.Box 92, Penzance, Cornwall, TR18 2XL.

LIGHTEN UP! (to personal growth and planetary stewardship) - Channelled Guidance to Touch your Intuition. No.5. Well, it isn't pessimistic, and it isn't dull! Indeed, it's one of the most genuine and cheering collections of channelled material I've come across, with a wide range of contacts and ideas. Give it a try! \$4.50 from Box 182, Bronxville, NY 10708, U.S.A.

LOBSTER No.23 Britain's finest conspiracy/para-politics journal, edited by Robin Ramsay, who will be writing a conspiracy column for Wild Places starting with the next issue. It ranges very wide, this time with an interesting twist - two impressive contributions from the mysterious and confusing Armen Victorian, who has recently put another nail in the pathetic little coffin of the MJ-12 Documents. Here, he comes up first with a well-referenced, fascinating 'U.S. Army Intelligence mind control experiments', mainly about the use of LSD, often on unwitting subjects. More in our line is his review of an aspect of an aspect of Tim Good's 'Alien Liaison'. Through direct contact with a U.S. Admiral - with whom Good had only a poor secondhand link - Victorian establishes that much of Chapter 10 - re. alien landings and technical cooperation - has no factual basis whatsoever. This is important, as is most of what is published in 'Lobster'. Send £2 to Lobster, 214, Westbourne Avenue, Hull, HU5 3JB.

MAGONIA October 1992 An important issue, this. Apart from the excellent UFO historian Martin Kottmeyer's account of UFO hostility in the Fifties, and folklorist Thomas E. Bullard's continuing struggle with the reasonableness of abduction reports, there is Dennis Stacy's 'Alien Abortions, Avenging Angels'. Dennis is the Editor of MUFON Journal (see below), and has class. His article is one of the most coherent attempts at answering the 'why' part of the Abduction question. It's complex enough to prevent me summarising it here - anyway, if you like Wild Places, you really

should be familiar with Magonia at only £1 an issue from John Rimmer, John Dee Cottage, 5, James Terrace, Mortlake Churchyard, London, SW14 8HB.

MERCIAN MYSTERIES - Alternative Studies of Past and Place in the Midlands No.13. This has just gone to A4 format, and is better value - and smarter - than ever. And I like it the more because it doesn't confuse history - with all its fascinations - and the New Age, which hasn't yet happened, and almost certainly won't. Bob Trubshaw, the Editor, contributes a lot; no problem, because he writes very well. I'll be interested to see what else appears about Leicestershire - quite the least mysterious place I've ever lived! £1.75 from Bob Trubshaw, 2, Cross Hill Close, Wymeswold, Loughborough, LE12 6W.

MEYN MAMVRO - Ancient stones and sacred sites in Cornwall No.19 If you have any affection for the inner heart of Cornwall, this is the magazine for you. God knows, earth mysteries hold no excitement for me, but this deals with real events, old and new, and is the better for that. There's the absurdity of a born-again Christian farmer uprooting a fine standing-stone because he fears, in his ignorance, "pagan practices". There's the problem of a greedy owner charging to visit St. Nectan's Glen. There's 'The Folklore of the Fogou', a 'Guide to Inscribed Stones', a report on the festival at Harmony Pottery and more. A considered and worthwhile read. £1.50 from Cheryl Straffon, 51, Carn Bosavern, St. Just, Penzance, Cornwall.

THE MISSING LINK Issues June - October 1992. A quality U.S. glossy that is a worthy exception from the general rule that publications about abductions are as committed to profit as to genuine research. Blessed with good and original graphics, 'Missing Link' covers a wide range of UFO material, with first-hand sighting reports as well as the - now - more common tales of internal experiences. In the October issue, 'Close Encounter in Russia' deserves a particular mention. At only \$3, monthly, this is excellent value from Galaxus Communications, P.O.Box 223 Lake Hiawatha, NJ 07034, U.S.A.

MUFON UFO JOURNAL Sep & Oct 1992 A high quality monthly journal edited by Dennis Stacy, always well up with the news. The news in the September issue is of a claim that has shaken ufology in recent months but not, perhaps, stirred it too much. Budd Hopkins, High Priest of the Abductees, has claimed that two men, police or CIA, bodyguarding a Famous Person (seemingly Perez de Cuellar, former Secretary-General of the U.N.), saw a UFO and figures abduct a woman (already a member of one of Hopkins' abductee support groups!) from a room 12 stories up in New York City. She remembers the event to a degree. To quote Hopkins himself, "The importance of the case can hardly be exaggerated. It establishes the physical reality of the UFO abduction exper-

ience and the deceptive behaviour of the UFO occupants at the highest levels. It is the strongest evidence yet for the reality of UFOs, their occupants, and their program of systematic .. abduction of human beings."

For me, the real importance of Hopkins' presentation of this case lies in the simple fact that he has never either spoken to or met any of the three supposed key witnesses. All communication has either been by garbled and contradictory letters, or via the supposed abductee, who claims variously to have been kidnapped, imprisoned, and more and worse by the two 'policemen', but will make no official complaint about the supposedly dreadful - life-threatening - treatment she has received. Of course, seeing as the case has received carefully engineered publicity, the police and CIA are no doubt wholly aware of the allegations anyway, but know perfectly well that there is nothing to investigate. Sadly, though, it seems that several intelligent and respected investigators have accepted all the claims as true. For me, this looks like the point when Hopkins steps on the long, slippery slope to ridicule, previously trodden by so many others. At the end of his piece he says that he expects debunkers to subvert the case from within ufology, and clearly implies that those who do so may be "officially sanctioned intelligence agents." I don't think this combination of paranoia and self-delusion will actually convince anyone who has retained the capacity for rational thought, and who is not strung out on the need to believe. Read this issue of MUFON Journal, and anything else you see about this case - the 'victim's' name is given as either Linda Cortile or Linda Napolitano - as it will become one of the turning-points of ufology. Think about it every time you feel tempted to believe in anything else deriving from Hopkins' work over the past dozen years or so: most of the Abduction Mythos does. I gather that Hopkins will be at the Sheffield Conference this summer. I think he needs to be challenged comprehensively. I can feel a train ticket coming on . . . You couldn't find a better use for \$3 than sending it to MUFON UFO Journal, 103, Oldtowne Road, Seguin, TX 78155-4099, U.S.A.

THE NEW JERSEY (MUFON) UFO CHRONICLE July/Aug 1992 The usual lively mix of leading edge (speculative) ufology, again with a feature about the 'Linda Cortile' case mentioned above. \$3 from P.O.Box 6103, North Brunswick, NJ 08902, U.S.A.

NEWS LOCUM - News & Views of the Paranormal Autumn 1992. Edited by Beryl Mercer - a prominent humanist down here - this is a good, discursive mix of short articles, and a lot of reader input and discussion, with items including Fairies & Elves, Rudolf Steiner and Crop Circles. £1 from 'Amber', Short Cross Road, Mount Hawke, Nr.Truro, Cornwall, TR4 8EA.

THE NOAH'S ARK SOCIETY NEWSLETTER - monthly. You'll find out more about the content of this one in this issue's Talking to Strangers. This is now smartly produced, and available for £1 an issue from the NAS, Street Farmhouse, Scole, Diss, Norfolk.

NORTHERN UFO NEWS Issues 156, 157, 158. Apart from a sound collection of sighting and investigation reports, this is always very strong on current events in ufology, and on media matters. Not surprisingly, because Jenny Randles, the editor, is much our best representative to the media. However, I'm a little mystified as to why space is being regularly given to the strange ramblings of Robert France, a leader of the 'new pilgrims' I mentioned in TWF 5. "We continue our look at the contactee and abductee with the magical grades. Within them there is the rank of high adept . . . He can create an object and through ritual and the manipulation of will draw this form into the three-dimensional reality of the world in the manner of a controlled form of apparition . . . Why should there not be a 'magickal' content to the UFO/alien phenomenon? There is a mass of circumstantial evidence which points to its origin being essentially magickal rather than extraterrestrial . . ." And so on. More words than meaning, I'd say. Perhaps the aliens have implanted a minute but fatally flawed Thesaurus, or maybe Mr France is part of Ashtar Command, and sends those wretchedly dull, word-choked messages to channellers? We shall see. NUFON is £1.25 an issue from Jenny Randles, 37, Heathbank Road, Cheadle Heath, Stockport, Cheshire, SK3 0UF.

OCULAR - The Journal of Occult-Paganism & Holistics. No.4 New to me, this has a definite touch of class. Strikingly illustrated, it covers a wide range of pagan/occult issues, from Gaia and Holy Wells at the 'soft' end, to contributions from Chris Bray and David Austen (of the Temple of Set) at the other. Well worth a try at £2 from Lesley Wilkinson, Rosewood Cottage, Langtoft, Driffield, East Yorks, YO25 0TQ.

ORBITER Sep/Oct 1992 No.36 Invaluable as usual, this has one particularly important feature. This concerns the supposed role of Sheriff George Wilcox in the Roswell Affair, putting further pressure on the veracity of those supporting the 'crashed saucer' theories. There is plenty more fine material here - try sending some useful exchange items, or maybe even money to Jim Melescuic, P.O.Box 652, Reading, MA 01867, U.S.A.

OVNI Nov & Dec 1992 Newsletter of the Phenomenon Research Association. I haven't seen this one before, but Omar Fowler, the editor, is one of the cornerstones of British ufology. This is a fairly brief magazine, with a UFO bias, but I'm sure it will develop. Unpriced, but try £1 to Omar Fowler, 12, Tilton Grove, Kirk Hallam, Ilkeston, Derbys, DE7 4GR.

PAGAN NEWS - Many Voices, One Spirit. No.35 Bi-monthly now, this is an unusually serious/mainstream issue, with only limited amounts of the incisive zaniness I have come to depend on. Probably proves I'm not a pagan, or perhaps I'd find articles about the pineal gland, Sacred Queens and the Magical Influence of Rocks more interesting! Still well worth having - £1.50 from Phoenix Publications, P.O.Box 196, London, WC1 2DY.

PEGASUS - Journal of the Surrey Investigation Group on Aerial Phenomena. I think Omar Fowler was editing this title last time I saw it - now it's in the apparently capable hands of one Gordon Millington. A good variety of views here - 'UFO Abduction Phenomena and Temporary Schizophrenia' by Roland M.Horn, Jimmy Goddard recalling a SIGAP/BUFORA skywatch, and the editor with 'Pictograms - The Meaning and the Message'. A good effort all round: £1.25 from Gordon Millington, 126, Grange Road, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 6QP.

PENDRAGON Nos.20 & 23 Eddie Tooke becomes the first editor to review my Visions of Bowmen and Angels - thanks for the kind words! No.23 has a fine idea - various writers dealing with their concept of 'What Merlin Means to Me'. This works well because Merlin is such a strong and many-layered character, and the concept is neatly rounded off by 'What Mankind Means to Me' by Merlin! There's always a nice spark of life to Pendragon - £1.50 an issue from Eddie Tooke, c/o The White House, Fleet Lane, Twynning, Glos, GL20 6DG.

PERCEPTIONS Issues 1 & 2. A smart, if at this stage rather brief, nicely presented monthly from Texas. It comes from a culture where psychic skills are an accepted part of the pattern of life, and there is little sceptical, or even objective here. Nonetheless, a bright start - send \$3 to Kathryn Adams Osburn, D & K Publishing, F.O.Box 9019, Mail Station # 114, Lewisville, TX 75067, U.S.A.

PSI REVIEW Summer 1992 This Californian magazine makes an excellent contribution to the field. This issue offers a range of ghosts, crop circles in Kansas, Spirit Guides, and some more formal parapsychological material, all presented in a manner both intelligent and approachable. Send \$7 to Florence A.Trouché F.O.Box 4123, Santa Barbara, CA 93140, U.S.A.

PSYCHIC READER October 1992 Everything you've ever heard about kooky Californians and their beliefs is encapsulated here. Published in newspaper format, high quality, with 20 large pages, this is a dazzling collection of articles, features, news and ads covering activities of all kinds in the area - channelling, healing, transformation, meditation and far more, plus some intriguing UFO content. Try sending \$4 to Deja Vu Publishing Co., 95, Belvedere Street, San Rafael, CA 94901, U.S.A.

QUEST No.91 Sep.1992 I remember buying the very first issue of 'Quest', back when I had hair, and could see my feet more easily! It's an appealing, very British pagan/wicca magazine, well-written and genuinely committed to the caring and concerned lifestyle that many feel has more to do with paganism than aggressive self-righteousness. The articles are good, the contacts invaluable, and there are courses available which I have reason to believe will be excellent. I would commend 'Quest' to anybody at £1.50 an issue from BOM-SCL Quest, London, WC1N 3XX.

SAUCER SMEAR Ufology's answer to Private Eye, only I think it gets the facts right more often! An invaluable source of news and information from a man often hailed as one of the Great White Brotherhood of ufologists (if I keep this up, he might give us a mention!) A love-gift of \$2 or so an issue should secure your future understanding of what is really (probably) going on from P.O.Box 1709, Key West, Florida 33041, U.S.A.

THE SCIENTIFIC AND MEDICAL NETWORK NEWSLETTER No.50. A last minute arrival, so I don't have time to read it properly. It looks like an excellent mix of features, correspondence and reviews, covering the usual areas of philosophy, religion, esotericism and transformation. Write for further information to Lesser Halings, Tilehouse Lane, Denham, Uxbridge, Middlesex, UB9 5DG.

SHAVERTRON - The Only Source of Post-Deluge Shaveriana. No.28 Sometimes I have a really good feeling about a magazine, and this is one of those. You'll remember that Richard Shaver, with a fair bit of help from Ray Palmer, was the mind behind the 'Shaver Mystery', concerning races of beings living beneath the earth. This is a literate, cool-headed but somehow affectionate look at that material and its spin-offs, and I'm sure that many of you will find it fascinating. \$6 from Richard Toronto, P.O. Box 5237, Napa, CA 94581, U.S.A.

THE SKEPTIC July/Aug & Sep/Oct 1992. Despite its links with the unpleasant and unscientific CSICQ' in the U.S.A., The Skeptic continues to make sound and intelligent criticisms of many reports of anomalous powers and phenomena. I was impressed by a long two-parter spread across these issues, 'Physics in the New Age - Should New Agers appropriate aspects of modern physics?' by Tim Axon. I understand little of physics, ancient or modern, but I can tell that the only link between chaos magic and chaos theory is almost certainly the word 'chaos'. And while fractal geometry may look great on a poster, it has no more to do with transformation than that young lady tennis player scratching her bottom, who sold millions of posters a few years ago. Seriously, this is a very good article, and you won't be disappointed if you send £2 for each issue to The Skeptic, P.O.Box 475, Manchester, M60 2TH.

THE STAR BEACON Oct & Dec 1992 'Earth Star's Monthly News-letter.' Some fascinating UFO sighting & contactee material in both these issues: unusually fresh and first-hand. A nice, neat monthly at \$2 an issue from Earth Star Publications, P.O.Box 117, Faonia, CO 81428, U.S.A.

STRANGE PHENOMENA INVESTIGATIONS - ENIGMAS Nov/Dec 1992. A particularly good and varied issue of this Scottish-based magazine. I was sorry not to have had the chance to speak to editor Malcolm Robinson properly at the Sheffield Conference - of which there is a good account here. Stuart Campbell, always keen to explain away anything he sees as unscientific, has a good try with the 'Dance of the Sun' at Fatima in 1917, concluding that a remarkably rare cloud of remarkably rare dust happened, yet more remarkably, to pass across the Cova da Iria at the very time that the child visionaries had predicted - weeks before - that a vision of the Virgin Mary would occur. It isn't a bad explanation, though not as good as Guy Playfair's, but I don't think that any natural event, however unlikely, and however rare, can account for reports made by thousands of those present, but certainly not made by thousands of others, who seem to have seen nothing extraordinary. There's masses more here for £2 from 41, The Braes, Tullibody, Clackmannanshire, FK10 2TT.

THE UFO DEBATE October 1992. This has developed a clear character now. There are still interesting articles on more general issues of ufology, but the approach and ideas of the researcher Clive Potter and researcher/investigator/prophet Robert France hold sway. In particular, Robert France plugs the work of his research project 'Pendragon', investigating what he calls 'Artificial Intelligences'. It seems that these A.I.'s may solve the mysteries of UFO entity experiences, religious visions and Spiritualism. Well, it's a thought. £1.40 from editor David Barclay, 46, Prospect Walk, Shipley, West Yorkshire, BD18 2LR.

UFO MAGAZINE (the Yorkshire one) Sep/Oct 1992 I know that many ufologists don't approve of YUFOS and their belief-based, marketing-oriented approach to what are often thin and unbelievable stories. On the other hand though, the magazine is lively and engaging, and I enjoy it. Leaving aside the latest UFO crashes, and the rotten 'Linda Cortile' abduction, there is one potentially important story. This comes from the pen of Armen Victorian, a man of many aliases, and maybe contradictory interests. However, he here picks up one of the inherent weaknesses in the MJ-12 story (involving the highest echelons of the U.S. government in cooperation with living, earth-dwelling aliens), and he widens it to a chasm. If the source, and Mr Victorian's reported contact with the source are credible, then a number of the foremost U.S. investigators are shown to be ineffective to the point of being completely misleading. From what I know of some other areas of Mr Victorian's work, he does seem to have the commitment

to research, the range, and the methodology to have probably got this one right. You should read this piece. £2 an issue from Quest Publications International Ltd, 18, Hardy Meadows, Grassington, Skipton, North Yorkshire, BD23 5LR

UNICUS - The magazine for Earthbound Extraterrestrials. Vol.2. No.2. Presuming the title isn't connected with the Colin Andrews interview, I must say that this is a fascinating magazine. Good quality, large format, it covers the extremes of our subject in some style. Where else could you find features like, 'Ancient Egyptian City in the Grand Canyon', 'Dolphins Among Us', 'Earth Built Alien Ships', 'Lost Land of the Lizard People' (under L.A.!) and 'Jesus a.k.a. Immanuel'. \$7 from Unicus, 1142 Manhattan Ave, Suite 43, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266, U.S.A.

VOICES FROM SPIRIT November 1992 This U.S. Spiritist magazine is always challenging and original. This issue has an interview with the Spirit of the Comte de Saint-Germain, and other intriguing items. Send \$2 for a couple of issues from P.O.Box 5104, Ellsworth, ME 04605, U.S.A.

WOOD & WATER Winter 92/93. This is an intelligent magazine for, I guess, moderate but literate pagans. This issue, and the last, have some very good material on the Satanic Abuse Debate, from a much less defensive standpoint than we may be accustomed to. Sensible, I reckon - there are Satanists, and it's pretty unlikely they're going to be the sort of people you'd trust your kids with. Other good material, too. Only £1 from Daniel Cohen, 77, Parliament Hill, London, NW3 2TH.

WORLD UFO JOURNAL No.1. Compiled by Edward Harris, who edits Cosmology Newslink, this has items on Roswell, crashed UFOs, and much more. Most are reprinted from other sources. £1.50 from 16, Newton Green, Great Dunmow, Essex, CM6 1DU.

WOULD YOU BELIEVE? The Controversial Phenomenon Magazine. No.42 Always a good read, this has a cover and features about Howard Menger, and plenty of other unusual pieces, mostly well-chosen reprints from the Fifties and Sixties. \$5 an issue from Armand A.Laprade, HC80, Box 156, Marshall, Arkansas 72650, U.S.A.



Further thoughts on censorship, from Catherine Groves, Editor of the Christian - New Age Quarterly (see News from the Front for publication details).

Censorship and Belief by Catherine Groves

As I see it, censorship - at least in the formal, legal sense - does not really describe the actions of most publishers when they reject material or edit a manuscript. In a society where there is little state regulation of the press, and anyone is free to publish what they wish, it is hardly censorship to reject material. Obviously, if a publisher provides the financial means and know-how to support a forum of ideas, that publisher has the right to choose what he will or will not put his bucks behind.

But leaving the formal, legal sense behind, it does get more delicate in certain areas of publishing. For example, if a journal is devoted to scholarly enquiry into, say, Biblical historicity and - while granting the veracity of the method of translation and material - rejects an otherwise sound study of the Dead Sea Scrolls, simply because the content of the scrolls contrasts with the philosophical premise of the publisher, well, that may be a true case of censorship. But should the same piece be submitted to an inspirational magazine, there is no censorship should the piece be rejected. An author may wish to think he is being censored in such an instance, but the reality is he simply submitted to an unlikely forum for his work.

Editing is one of those areas where questions of censorship are most likely to arise. Take, for example, my own periodical, Christian - New Age Quarterly. Because my readership is comprised of both traditional Christians and New Agers, and is dedicated to dialogue between the two, an author really needs to be sensitive to the wide range of viewpoints our readers hold. Else he'll be speaking to a portion of our readers only, losing or alienating the rest. Our writer's guidelines clearly advise against a patronising style and instruct writers to "own your own understanding."

For obvious reasons, I prefer those essays that offer opinions as opinions rather than confusing belief with fact. Most of the authors who submit here are more than willing to comply. But every once in awhile, whenever one deals with religious or spiritual belief, the line between belief and fact becomes very muddy indeed.

For example, in the context of a dialogue between Christians and New Agers a statement such as "Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour" (or, to offer a ticklish New Age variety of the same sort of statement, "We are all one") is not a fact universally accepted by all our readers. Hence, I would much prefer it if a writer were to express a statement like that along the lines of, "I believe Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour". That much is obvious.

But not so fast. It's not that easy. A Christian who believes Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour generally does not mean that as a statement of belief, just as a New Ager who believes the monistic "All is One" does not mean that as an opinion. Is it censorship to ask them to revise such a statement into "I believe . . ."? Maybe. Sort of. Sometimes.

Let me put it this way. While there is very little alteration in meaning, for all intents and purposes, between my stating, "The walls of this room are yellow" and "I believe the walls of this room are yellow," there is no way in normal conversation I would say the latter. No. To me, reality is that the walls of this room are yellow. It's not a statement of opinion or belief. It's a fact. In my mind it is just as much of a fact as "Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour" is for many Christians or "All is One" is for many New Agers.

As an editor, I have to be extremely sensitive not just to the beliefs of my readers, but also to the nuances of fact and belief in the eyes of my writers. And some days, with some writers, the delicacy of the line between effectual, albeit unintentional, censorship and good editing is extreme.

Often what is seen as censorship is simply cultural perspective. I think of Leslie Price's example of the translation of the Bible. He's right that the Bible is a fertile field for one generation reading their assumptions into their translations. While I wouldn't call it censorship, the text still comes out swayed. One contemporary example of this is the NRSV, a translation which perhaps deservedly has received, in some circles, the dub, "the politically correct version." In an attempt to gender-neutralize the Bible, pronouns which were supposedly meant in the Greek to refer to both men and women, but for centuries have reflected the now un-popular male universal when converted into English, have been expanded to include male and female.

The problem, of course, is that English has no gender neutral third person singular. So, the translators have rendered singulars as plurals in places. Which leads to some mighty humorous and ungainly conversions. One ripsnorting instance of such is Luke 2.23 which reads in the NRSV, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me." As Robert M. Price - a Bible scholar, frequent C-NAQ contributor and general genius - has pointed out, this leads to a picturesque vision

of a host of Lilliputians lugging one humongous cross on their backs. One fears to think what future generations of literalists will do with this one! Makes the mind boggle. But the point is that in trying to set straight past translation problems, one often creates a whole new set of bloopers - and that exactly because of the cultural preferences of well-intentioned translators.

But it's hardly a new problem. One sees the same process at work in the text itself. As scholars and most of the rest of us know, Matthew and Luke did not arrive at their gospels in a void. They worked independently of each other, off two of the same sources, Mark and a sayings document we no longer have, which is referred to as Q. By studying the ways they differently rendered Mark and Q, we can see their clear preconceptions read into the text. Most scholars grant that Luke was to a greater degree faithful in his rendering of the Q saying which appears at 14:26: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother . . ." What does Matthew do with it? At 10:37 of Matthew's gospel we read, "He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." We can almost see Matthew's wheels spinning here, "Hey, Jesus, you couldn't have meant that!"

We can hear Matthew muttering a similar sentiment at his 19:9, "And I say to you, that whoever puts away his wife, except for immorality, and marries another, commits adultery." Now here we do have the statement as recorded in Mark 10:11 - and let's remember that Matthew worked off Mark's text - "And he said to them, "Whoever puts away his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her." Unless someone somewhere down the line edited Mark's gospel (and we have plenty of instances of that in history) we can fairly conclude that Matthew was not opposed to modifying what he took to be the sayings of Jesus! Seems no-one is exempt from a bit of editing here and there!

Now, I don't think any of this is censorship, per se. It's a mess, to be sure, but not exactly censorship for most of this kind of thing happens when someone hopes to clarify what he fears will be otherwise misunderstood in the eyes of the reader.

And censorship can be much in the eyes of the beholder. Authors will often scream censorship when instead they might be more seriously considering how to strengthen their work or style. Recently I received one of those borderline submissions here - one that had pretty intriguing ideas but was so poorly expressed that it needed major help both structurally and stylistically. It was tempting to just reject it outright. But instead I suggested ways of revision. I've worked with this author before and know that any suggestion I make will be questioned as to my motive. The author in question immediately suggests censorship no matter that his work is, as he submits it, so at odds with our guidelines as to self-exclude itself from Christian - New Age Quarterly. Simply, his work reads like a harangue, disjointed in phrasing, hostile and

snide to both Christian and New Age worldviews, and so utterly condescending in its over-intellectualising that it just won't fly in our crowd. After a couple of agonising revisions where each and every suggestion I made would spark his anger and contention - and often be entirely dismissed - we arrived at a piece I figured I could publish. I was all ready to accept it until . . . He commented that he couldn't wait for someone to call him a heretic in print so he could sue the party for libel. Whoa! The author writes in a style which thinly veiled his contempt of Christianity, with controversial ideas all over the place, and he's planning to sue if someone uses a thoughtless word in response? Now I run a pretty loose and uncensored 'Letters to the Editor' column. While I do require some common sense standards for regular articles and essays, I'm much more flexible when it comes to "Letters".

When I pointed out that I print all sorts of comments in C-NAQ, and that I was not exactly pleased that he might sue some poor schmuck who writes a letter of comment, the author had the gall to ask if he could preview any negative response to his work before I published it. When I said no, he withdrew his manuscript to my sheer and utter relief.

Of course the story doesn't stop there. This week I did receive a letter of response, in which the 'h' word was used, to a piece from the same author I had previously published. While the letter writer did not call him a heretic, he did write that others might. Would that be enough to trigger the author to sue? Damned if I know. It certainly would be a frivolous lawsuit, one sure to be thrown out of court, but while I might myself be happy to face the judge on this one, dare I put the writer of that letter in such a position? I've not decided what I'll do in this instance. But the question arises: who is censoring who?

In the meantime, author of said manuscript now wants to resubmit the manuscript he withdrew, realising, I surmise, that he managed to cut off his nose to spite his face. At this point, I am not about to accept it. But is that censorship?

Interestingly enough, this is the kind of 'behind the scenes' thing that readers of a periodical do not see. But it directly affects what they read, and often the label 'censorship' does more harm than good, since it seems frequently and blanketly applied to a host of very delicate and mind-stretching questions, which really need to be evaluated case by case, instance by instance. As Leslie Price's article suggests, it's often much more of a grey area than a black or white type of thing. But I think it's an issue editors work with, subtly or overtly, at every stage of publishing.

Cross Talk

Firstly, I must mention the sudden appearance in the more right-wing Christian bookshops of a range of books about clearing debt and securing wealth. The 'give me \$10 and the Lord will return it to you ten-fold' sort of ministry has, of course, been around for some time, but these works - with hard-sell covers - build from that principle. The idea seems to be that God (yes, the Fundamentalist Christian one, not the others) wants those who follow him not only to be free of debt, but actually to be better-off, in purely material terms, than non-believers. In that there is only a finite amount of wealth around, I can only conclude that if God (yes, that one) is going to give to those who have chosen him, He's going to have to take from others. Looks like they've not only sold the Mount to the highest bidder, but they've publicly burned the Sermon, too.

Elsewhere, Alpha magazine for Jan.1993 agonised over the continued occurrence of miracles, and the continued existence of Hell. As this decade proceeds, the sharp end of Western Christianity turns ever more readily to belief uninformed save by Scripture, replacing the Bishop of Durham-style 'less-than-divine' theorising of the Seventies and Eighties.

For Miracles a continuous - if very fragmented - history of healing is traced, from the Book of Acts to Oral Roberts, via Catherine of Siena and George Fox. Why God is so sparing in his use of channels for healing - in both time and space - is not clear. Actually, the sparsity of reports seems to argue more for a rare and remarkable human-based talent rather than one associated with any omniscient, and continuous, deity.

As to Hell, the publishers of Alpha are more circumspect, trying to differentiate between the concepts (as a punishment for sinners and unbelievers) of retrievable suffering, annihilation, and eternal pain and hellfire. The Book of Revelation, not known for giving the concept of a loving God much of a boost, presents great problems, and is interpreted less literally than is usual here. Overall, the 'marketing' element among preachers and theologians gains the upper hand, unwilling to frighten off potential converts with unacceptable harshness. But there are still plenty of fire and brimstone merchants about, and I sincerely hope they are wrong!



UFO Witnesses and Fantasy Proneness

by Tom Ruffles

The psychological status of UFO witnesses has come under increasing scrutiny over the last decade. There is a split between ufologists who regard UFO experiences as 'normal', i.e. typical of the wider population (e.g. Zimmer, 1984), and those who believe that they are poorly socialised, with a generalised tendency to believe in mystical phenomena, and prone to hallucinations or fantasy (e.g. Grinspoon & Persky, 1972; Klass, 1974).

Vallee & Vallee (1967) discuss one approach which takes the latter tack. This is to dismiss reports of sightings as 'flying saucer psychosis', whereby feeble-minded individuals generate rumours which spread in a contagious manner until people think that they really do see aliens. They question this possibility on the grounds that patterns would not be expected in a rumour (i.e. there would be randomness in terms of, for example, type of location and time of day), whereas bona fide reports of sightings do exhibit structure suggestive of a physical rather than a psychological origin.

A more recent and respectable version of flying saucer psychosis (minus the contagion trappings) has emerged in discussions of the Fantasy Prone Personality (FPP). The concept is not confined to work carried out in the UFO field; it is being increasingly used in the development of models exploring the origins and functions of paranormal belief (eg Irwin, 1992).

Research into the FPP owes much to the work of Wilson & Barber (1983) who coined the term, although fantasy proneness is derived from Hilgard's earlier work on 'imaginative involvement'. As the name suggests, it denotes a tendency to fantasise a lot, and also to become deeply absorbed in the fantasy. Wilson & Barber estimated that the trait was present in up to 4% of the population, although later research has emphasised that these individuals are at one end of a continuum, and that fantasy proneness is present to a lesser extent in the population in general.

Lynn & Rhue (1988) found that fantasiers differed from non-fantasiers on measures of hypnotisability, imagination, waking suggestibility, hallucinatory ability, creativity, psychological pathology and childhood experiences. Fantasiers recollected being physically abused and punished to a greater extent than non-fantasiers,

and reported greater loneliness and isolation as children. It should be stressed that Lynn & Rhue found many fantasiers to be relatively well adjusted. Some were, however, maladjusted according to Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory and Rorschach data.

In their earlier work, Wilson and Barber too had noted a strong link between fantasy proneness and hypnotisability, although Lynn & Rhue found it not to be as strong as Wilson and Barber claimed. The latter had in fact stumbled across their fantasy-prone subjects in the course of examining hypnotisability, and listed various attributes which the 'excellent' hypnotisable subjects reported, as opposed to the not so good ones.

These attributes included fantasising much of the time; the ability to hallucinate objects, and experience them as real; rich and varied hypnogogic imagery; the vivid recall of personal experiences; psychic and out-of-body experiences; and a belief in the ability to heal. Fantasiers occasionally had difficulties differentiating between fantasised events and persons, and real ones. Given the phenomenological closeness of hypnotisability and fantasy proneness, the tendency to hypnotise abduction claimants can be seen as a dubious one if the result is the production of spurious fantasies.

Wilson and Barber also found that there was a correlation between claims of psychical experiences and fantasy proneness: 92% of their fantasy-prone subjects considered themselves to be psychic. There are thus implications for a variety of phenomena which fall under the umbrella of psychical research, as well as for ufology.

Ross & Joshi (1992) examined the links between reports of paranormal experiences, childhood trauma and dissociation. They argue that this could be triggered by trauma, especially if occurring during childhood, which would account for their finding that paranormal claims were more common among those reporting childhood abuse.

Making the abuse link less clear, however, is Ross & Joshi's finding that reports of paranormal occurrences were also common among members of the general population who showed no psychopathology, from which they concluded that paranormal experiences are not unitary in nature. Irwin (1992) addresses this point in his model by including the encouragement of childhood fantasy by a significant adult as a factor in the development of the FPP. It is not dependent solely upon the experience of childhood abuse. He proposes that fantasy proneness is conducive to paranormal belief, which then interacts with parapsychological experiences, providing mutual reinforcement.

The concept of fantasy proneness is of particular significance in the study of abduction accounts. Bartholomew et al (1991) exam-

ined 152 contactees, and found that 132 exhibited signs of fantasy proneness, or to be more precise, a generalised belief in the paranormal. They were characterised by high scoring on scales of hypnotic suggestibility, religious visions and apparitional experiences. These subjects were not typical of the general population. This finding contradicts Zimmer's (1984) finding that the major difference between UFO experiencers and non-experiencers was merely the former group's tendency to have seen a visual anomaly - otherwise there was little to distinguish them.

Parnell (1989) falls somewhere in between, having found out that UFO experiencers had more unusual experiences in general, and had more unusual thoughts, feelings and attitudes, than non-experiencers. They tended to be distrustful or suspicious, and possibly to have schizoid tendencies. No differences were found by Parnell with regard to level of experience, whether the claim was of a light in the sky, or having been taken on board a spacecraft. She does make the point that there is a problem with establishing causation, and that the negative reception of an abduction claim could lead to such effects as being reserved and defensive.

This begs the question of why anybody should want to make these sort of claims. According to Irwin (1992), a consequence of paranormal beliefs and experiences, facilitated by fantasy-proneness, is to instil a sense of control over a complex world, particularly in the sphere of interpersonal relationships. This sense might be illusory, but it provides a coping mechanism. How this squares with abduction reports is hard to determine. Saying that one's body has been subjected to humiliating and painful examination and surgery hardly seems to be consistent with a desire to project an image of control. It is possible, given the amount of media coverage that such claims can attract, that considerable self-esteem could be generated by being the focus of attention. If this is so, Parnell's findings indicate a downside to the attempt.

Vallee (1990) makes the point, frequently overlooked by abduction enthusiasts, that the medical examinations which are allegedly carried out seem to serve no purpose which could not easily be achieved (given the obvious technical superiority displayed in the craft themselves) by far subtler means. This leads to the conclusion that the experiences are either fantasies, or, if the experiences are genuine, that the operations are simulated for the purpose of manipulating cultural images. He concedes that neither theory is completely satisfactory.

There is clearly much work to be done on fantasy proneness as a possible factor in UFO experiences. The danger is in adopting a reductionist stance, and claiming that all reports can be attri-

buted to a single cause (or pair of causes: in the opinion of Baker & Nickell (1992), all UFO contact experiences can be explained by hoax or FPP). In any case, even if the FPP is a major determinant in UFO experiences, the aetiology of fantasy-proneness has to be explored further. Labels are useful, but there is always the danger that explaining something can turn into explaining it away.

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