

The old and new material presented in this special issue underpins and explains what I'm trying to do with *AW*, and why. We've already achieved a number of worthwhile 'hits', but the abduction myth, and the way it disturbs and disrupts real human lives, is the serious target I'm aiming at. If any responsible editor wants to reprint this whole issue, as an article, I'll be happy to give permission if asked, and to provide a copy on disk if you wish. Maybe I'll do another special next year, to bring the legal and medical material up to date, and assess just how far we've got!

Abduction Watch 6

RECOVERED MEMORY & HYPNOSIS SPECIAL

If I'm right, and there never has been a single, physical, enforced act of abduction of a human being by an alien, non-human being, the belief in abductions has left some very confused people out there. For some, the confusion will arise from a belief that aliens intervene in our lives for our benefit. They will be depending on an alien presence for love, support, care, even rescue. Even if they feel that they have been abducted and used for physical, sexual purposes, and have minimal control over what is happening to them, they will have faith in the good intentions of their unseen benefactors. A sort of Stockholm Syndrome with invisible captors.

For others - apparently the great majority - the confusion will have more serious implications. Because of their belief in the reality of abduction, many groups and individuals have changed their ways of life. Many believe that they have been abducted to be inseminated by aliens, have become pregnant with a hybrid foetus, and have been abducted again to have that foetus removed so the child can grow up on a spaceship. They recount their memories of these supposed events during hypnotic regression and they, and others, live in fear that the next time they are regressed they will discover that they have, once again, been abducted and abused. They will have concluded that they are not in control of their own lives, and that compliance is the limit of their range of choices. They will be deeply involved in listening for explanations of their perceived experiences, in sharing their experiences with other abductees. To borrow a term from the 'Courage to Heal' movement, they will be sharing much of their lives with other abduction 'survivors'. They may believe that because abduction is "generational" - an often suggested possibility - that if they have children they, too, will become abductees. They may not want to have children.

A thorough look at 'UFO close encounter' reports before Hopkins' *Missing Time* appeared in 1981 shows that claims of physical, involuntary abduction were exceedingly rare. They had none of the really unpleasant elements - the repeated interference with children, the gynaecological and rectal examinations, the implanting and removal of foetuses, the maternal visits to alien nurseries. Until these concepts were introduced from 'recovered memory' material, and they received wide publicity, they scarcely occurred in published accounts. Researchers as wide-ranging as John Keel, Jerome Clark, D Scott Rogo, Brad

Steiger and Jacques Vallee found it possible to believe in, and write about, all kinds of phenomena. But they simply found no evidence for the type of abduction experience which, by the time Streiber's *Communion* came out, had become the standard. The alien abduction mythos has appeared from somewhere, by some means, and it has appeared surprisingly suddenly. How has this happened?

It is increasingly clear to me that the alleged 'physical' evidence that we were told would validate the claims that the abduction experience is real is all, simply, worthless. Implants continually disappear prior to investigation, except for those 'obtained' by Derrel Sims which are somehow never fully analysed, however much time passes. 'Cup and scoop marks' could be anything, and are almost certainly ordinary abrasions, wounds and scars. There is no evidence that they are made by aliens. The alleged UV fluorescence resulting from 'alien handling' has been shown to be a hundred and one things - but none of them 'alien handling'. There is no medical evidence of alien involvement in 'missing' or interrupted pregnancies. Indeed, there is no medical, or even simply objective and tangible, evidence to suggest that aliens interact with human beings at all.

Which leaves only three possible sources for the increasingly widespread belief in the reality of abduction by aliens. The 'memories' recovered through the use of memory enhancement techniques, primarily regression hypnosis; the assertions of the researchers, investigators and authors involved in arranging the use of those techniques that the accounts so obtained arise from real events; and those who are so convinced by those assertions that they come to believe that they, too, may have been abducted. At which point they will often find themselves being regressed by the investigators and authors, thus completing the cycle, confirming their own beliefs and those of the researchers, and themselves becoming full-fledged abductees.

I suggest that, without the use of 'recovered memory' techniques, there would be no alien abduction phenomenon. The line of development of the abduction mythos in the US is clear. From the freak example of the Hills, to Hopkins, Jacobs, Mack, Carpenter, Boylan, Sims and their various acolytes and assistants, all can quote cases - a handful of cases - which have first presented from supposedly conscious recall. But none of these has ever been shown not to derive from the key, media-friendly, 'recovered-memory' accounts of which anyone with an interest in the subject is inevitably, unavoidably aware. And all those researchers resort to 'recovered memory' techniques to further explore those consciously-presented cases. Similar approaches prevail in the UK. Recovered memory techniques are utilised by Tony Dodd of Quest International, who has refused to disclose who his hypnotists are, or what appropriate qualifications they may have, if any. Malcolm Robinson of SPI became convinced of the reality of abductions through the 'A70' case, although all its abductions arose during hypnosis. He says that he only uses a qualified hypnotist, but has repeatedly failed to reveal what that qualification is. Other researchers who publicise material obtained only through the use of recovered memory techniques include Jon King, Philip Mantle, Jon Downes, Matthew Williams and Peter Hough, none of whom have dealt satisfactorily with the question of why regression and hypnosis need be used if the memories are actually of real events, when real events are so seldom forgotten.

Increasingly, the evidence regarding the use of 'recovered memory' techniques suggests - strongly - that they are wholly undependable. That what is produced is likely to be an impenetrable melange of fabrication, misapprehension, remembered real experience, misremembered real experience and the 'rememberer' wanting to please those he knows to be present, or interested in, the 'memories' that are recovered. And there is pretty much no evidence that material obtained in this way is actually true.

To me, if I understand this right, this suggests that those whose lives are being affected and interfered with by their belief in their abduction experience are victims of abuse. Not, maybe, abuse that is committed or caused deliberately, but abuse that arises from the strong, utterly mistaken, personal beliefs of those who propagate the abduction myth. It isn't real abuse like that which human beings regularly, persistently inflict on each other. But it's abuse, and it hurts, and it damages nonetheless. I think we would be right in seeing 'alien abductees' as victims, who we have a duty to inform and assist.

Unfortunately, much of the vital evidence about the reliability of recovered memory techniques is drawn from the field of real, human to human, abuse. There is strong, indeed overwhelming evidence that 'recovered memory' can produce accounts which are wildly, tragically, untrue. But I want to emphasise that nothing I say here belittles or doubts the horrors of the real abuse of children by adults, which is one of the unforgivable failures of our society. It is not those who are abused or hurt who are at fault, but those who take on responsibilities for therapy, and for establishing the truth, in circumstances which they are totally incapable of handling.

It has become undeniably clear that the use of techniques for hypnosis and regression can have disastrous consequences for therapists, patients and their families. Across the USA, courts and juries are awarding huge amounts of damages to patients whose therapists have led them to believe, through using these techniques, that they were the victims of hideous physical, sexual and psychological violence, including what became known as Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA). When it became clear that the 'memories' they had produced were not of real events, the therapists and their therapies were closely investigated, and found to be tragically flawed.

\$5.8 million was awarded in one case alone in Texas in August 1997, where a patient had been led to 'remember' that her family had "practised murder, cannibalism, sexual abuse and incest". Courts awarded two patients of a Minnesota psychiatrist sums of \$2.67 million and \$2.5 million, because "under hypnosis and sodium amytal, and after being fed misinformation about the workings of memory, they had come to remember horrific abuse by family members". A church counsellor in Missouri settled out of court for \$1 million because it was found that the memories developed during therapy, which her patient had been convinced were accurate, could not have been. Her father had resigned his post as a clergyman because of the accusations. A Wisconsin psychiatrist who implanted demonstrably false memories, and attempted to exorcise her patient, too, settled out of court for \$2.4 million.

In some of those cases, families had been broken up, lives had been ruined. But though greed - in obtaining money from medical insurances - played its part in the exploitation of unwitting patients, most of the therapists involved believed sincerely that the information they extracted was true, and a recollection of actual events. They believed they could help their patients by telling them to accept the reality of these 'memories', and to challenge their supposed abusers, who were commonly close family members. Now we are considering a much more unlikely phenomenon for which there is absolutely no objective evidence, where the abusers are extraterrestrial. Yet what research and investigation there is, is often conducted using very similar techniques. The claims of alien abduction are, perhaps, even more outrageous and incredible than those of SRA, and even less likely to be true.

There is minimal medical or scientific support for the belief that 'hidden' or 'forgotten' memories can be accurately recovered or restored through hypnosis or other regression techniques. Such techniques are seldom used by the Police, and, increasingly, courts will not accept testimony recovered through regression unless there is separate, independent corroborative evidence to support what has been 'recalled'. It is rare for regressions involving abduction by aliens to be conducted by anyone other than amateurs, well-meaning or otherwise. Where professionals are involved, they are generally already believers themselves, and bring to the scene of the regression all their own beliefs and preconceptions. It's not hypnotising people that's difficult, it's having the sense and knowledge to understand what you should, and should not, do with a person's mind once trance has been induced. And how what you do might affect their lives, and the lives of those around them.

Plenty of professional research results, and advice and opinion, at the highest level, is available to those considering exploring supposedly hidden memories. Any therapist willing to make the effort should have no trouble finding out about the unreliability of hypnotic regression. A statement by the Research Council of the American Medical Association in 1985 said that

"memories obtained under hypnotic interventions contain confabulations, pseudomemories and inaccuracies. Self-report, alone, cannot be used to determine the reliability of true from false memories."

The *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry* (Kaplan & Sadlock, 1985) said

"Hypnosis not only fails to produce more accurate memories but also increases the patient's willingness to report unclear memories as facts. Confabulations, distortions, fantasies and cued responses all add to the potential unreliability of such memories."

Phil Mollon, the Head of the Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy Service at Lister Hospital, Stevenage states in *Clinical Psychology Forum* that

"Experiments show that false memories, including those of past lives and abduction by aliens, can be implanted through hypnosis. Hypnosis can elicit both true and false memories, but with enhanced belief in their accuracy".

The *Guidelines Related to Recovered Memories* of the Australian Psychological Society state that,

"'Memories' that are reported either spontaneously or following the use of special procedures in therapy may be accurate, inaccurate, fabricated, or a mixture of these."

Even experimental hypnotists themselves, commenting in *The International Journal of Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis* (January 1996) on the use of hypnotically elicited recall as legal testimony, list a number of problems with hypnotically induced memory. These include the likelihood that suggestibility increases; confabulation increases; confidence in the memory increases; critical review of the memory decreases; sources of the memory are confused; reconstruction increases as a result of new in-puts; fantasy development may increase; practitioner's beliefs may influence the patient. Comments of this kind are the rule, not the exception, and continue to emerge as the seriousness of the recovered memory problem becomes apparent. I'll try to update you in AW whenever important new findings appear.

Although here are hundreds of academic and professional studies, books, and journals about the problems of the recovery of memory in therapeutic situations, I haven't yet seen one which regards recovered memories as always being even halfway dependable, let alone completely accurate. Not only is recall under hypnosis widely recognised as unreliable, and has been repeatedly proved to be so, but it is very unusual for people not to remember, consciously and often repeatedly, a severely traumatic event that happened to them either recently, or many years ago. I understand that memory blocks are very rare, because that isn't generally how memory works. So, if a detailed, vivid, exotic account of supposed events emerges during regression, there is a high probability that the exotic elements of the account will have no objective reality at all. This is where the common argument that because some truthful material will emerge from regression, regression should be used regardless of the known risks, fails miserably. It's an argument born of desperation, which defies rational thought in accepting that the most implausible 'recovered memories' are also the most likely to be true.

Those who want - need - to defend the myth of alien abduction protect their belief by claiming that conscious recall of abduction is rare, and regression necessary, because the aliens deliberately confuse abductees and block out their memories of what they have suffered. This stupid and unprovable suggestion is remarkably arrogant - brave hypnotist defeats sly aliens - but it can serve to lead people away from the reasonable, logical conclusion that where the only evidence for an event is the product, direct or indirect, of recovered memory techniques, then it is highly likely that the evidence results from the techniques, and not from memories locked away by aliens. The near-Victorian idea that the brain is a series of little storage facilities, some locked and some not, is particularly popular among those who want to be seen to have the power to do the unlocking, but I am now confident that the secret lies in the process and circumstances of regression, and not in the hidden memory of the person being regressed. Regression is not a magic key to unlock

limitless hidden truths, but that is certainly a valuable illusion for an unscrupulous investigator - or therapist - to maintain.

So, what separates those who 'recalled' being victims of Satanic Ritual Abuse from those who recall being the victims of complex abductions and medical procedures at the hands of aliens? Only one factor, in my opinion. That the 'experiencers' of alien abductions have not yet questioned the validity of the experiences they have said they have had. They have not yet started fighting back.

With SRA, the accusations were made against human beings, who could in some cases start their own legal actions, provide their own information about what had been recalled. They could prove that they didn't chop the heads off babies, didn't perform sacrifices to Satan. They could prove that they were in another state, another country, at a time when their son or daughter said they were at home abusing them. They could show that the accusations of abuse, the supposed memories, had never existed before the therapist became involved. They were able to prove that while their accusers had not told deliberate lies, the hypnosis, the regression, the therapy, were all deeply flawed.

The aliens - should they actually exist - have no such opportunities. They can't take the abduction investigators to court for leading people into having false memories, or being persuaded of horrible abuses they never really suffered. The aliens are compliant, silent, ideal bad guys who can never say anything to defend themselves.

It will, in the long run, be down to the abductees to begin to realise that they've been led into making reports for which there is no substance, through the use of recovered memory techniques that are known to be inaccurate and unreliable, if not actually dangerous. Ten years from now, I doubt that new abductees will be coming forward, and many current abductees will, by then, be deeply embarrassed by what they have reported. Even now, I'm sure that some of those who have reported extraordinary events to their repressers must, sometimes, wonder why on earth they ever did so. But they must be afraid of looking foolish, or gullible, or just plain ill. It's not like SRA, where your family can forgive you and welcome you back. There is little for an abductee to gain by recanting, saying it never happened, saying they were wrong. And there are scarcely any examples for them to follow.

Despite all the adverse publicity, some investigators, researchers and therapists may still not know the important facts about seeking recall through regression. They may not realise what they are doing. For me the first tenet of therapy, of helping people in any way, is 'Above all, do no harm', but great harm is being done. There is clearly a need to stop the abduction mythos causing any more damage to those it has already taken in, and to prevent it taking in any more than is absolutely unavoidable. Then, beyond that, there is the important task of enabling those who have become convinced they have been abducted, with all that entails, to realise that they have been misled. To enable them to realise that, simply, they are not abductees, and that they don't have to deal with those problems any more. And nor, as investigators, do we.

ABDUCTION WATCH is published monthly, and in the UK a 12-issue subscription costs only £10. Please make payments out to 'Kevin McClure', and send to 3, Claremont Grove, Leeds, LS3 1AX. Thanks.