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Location: [Mothership](#) -> [UFO](#) -> [Updates](#) -> [1996](#) -> [Dec](#) -> Re: 'The Most Authentic Alien Image Ever'

## UFO UpDates Mailing List

### Re: 'The Most Authentic Alien Image Ever'

From: **Greg Sandow** <GSANDOW@prodigy.net>  
Date: Fri, 13 Dec 1996 00:41:53 -0500  
Fwd Date: Sat, 14 Dec 1996 12:10:24 -0500  
Subject: Re: 'The Most Authentic Alien Image Ever'

My friend the Sasquatch wrote:

>Ask yourself next how abductees wend themselves  
> to Hopkins, Jacobs and Mack in the first place. Do you honestly think it's  
> because previously frustrated psychiatrists and psychologists refer them to  
> abductionologists?

As we all know, that's a rhetorical question, so it's hardly necessary for me to say "No, of course not."

It's easy to see why abductees go to Hopkins, Jacobs, and Mack. Just read Budd's mail. A consistent stream of letters come from people who say they've had troubling experiences that the abduction scenario appears to explain. These people appear, from their letters, to be in various emotional states. Some are emotionally distressed, some aren't; some have been in therapy, some haven't. The reason they write to Budd, though, is that they don't consider their experiences to be an emotional problem. They think they're a real-world problem. In other words, they think their experiences are real.

You might disagree. Maybe you think they should seek emotional help. Maybe you think their belief that their experiences are real is a sign of emotional trouble. Fine...go argue with them. Maybe some of them do need psychiatric help. Just last week, Budd referred someone who wrote to him to a therapist. I spoke to this guy myself. (Newcomers should be aware that I'm monitoring Budd's work with abductees, as a research project of my own.) Whatever his abduction situation, he's clearly in emotional difficulty, and Budd -- rightly, I hope everyone will agree -- doesn't want to talk abduction with people who can barely cope with everyday life.

One point to emphasize...these letter-writers don't claim to have been abducted. They say they remember unexplained lights in their bedrooms, unexplained disappearances when they were children, UFO sightings near their homes, and, sometimes, the vaguely sensed presence of beings by their beds. When they come across abduction accounts, they realize that their experiences fit...but that doesn't make them conclude that they were abducted. What they all say is "please help me find out whether this could be the explanation."

And one more thing about therapists. I don't know if it's relevant to ask if you've ever been in therapy, but I have, and it doesn't surprise me a bit that abductees -- in fact, anyone with anomalous experiences -- wouldn't mention them to a therapist. You don't, for one thing, bare your entire soul. For another, you don't want to be ridiculed. Therapists are only human. If your shrink is a Republican and you're a Democrat, you might well avoid political discussion, and if you're a deep believer in the paranormal, you certainly don't talk about that with everyone. Why would your doctor be an exception?

Now, it's true that abduction memories, whatever their cause, might be troubling. But if you seriously believe that you've seen weird lights in your bedroom, what does that have to do with, let's say, trouble with making romantic commitments? Dennis, you seem to be treating such a belief -- or verging on treating it -- as a psychiatric problem, or potentially one, and it just doesn't seem so to the people who have it. If there's any emotional problem, it might lie in how to talk to other people about those lights, or whether to, or how not to, if you're intimate with someone...and how are you going to bring <that> up without fearing you'll be ridiculed?

It's interesting to read the psychological literature, to find out therapists' views of the paranormal. I did; I did a computer search of psychological journals (keyword "paranormal") and found quite a few papers. Nearly all of them attempted to prove that paranormal beliefs were pathological. Or maybe it's more accurate to say that they started from that view, treating it as an assumption. Anyhow, after reading that stuff, I'd advise anyone in therapy <not> to bring up any sort of paranormal experience, even the mildest form of ESP, unless you know for sure that your therapist is open to it.

Here's where my own experience is relevant. My paranormal interests became an issue in my own therapy, because I'd kept things like my lifelong interest in UFOs secret even from my best friends. Clearly, there's no reason to do that, or not to find friends who'd be supportive. So it was something to work on.

But my otherwise wonderful shrink had enormous problems with this. The climax of our difficulties came when I told her I'd had out of body experiences (for which, as I told her, I'm not making any claims; I don't know that I really left my body). She was shocked. One problem was that she'd never heard of such a thing. The second problem was that she couldn't understand why I wasn't worried about myself. It did no good to show her that there's a vast literature on OBEs, and that, to anyone who's read it, the mere fact of having the experience isn't all that remarkable. She kept shaking her head and coming back to the same point: "Some of my other patients tell me things like that happen to them, but they all think they're crazy!"

When we were finally able to talk about this objectively, she agreed that her reactions had actually been harmful to me, and that they weren't atypical of people in her field (something certainly borne out by the journal articles I read). All of which is a lengthy way to tell you that abductees won't get anywhere telling their therapists about their abduction beliefs. In fact, they'd be crazy to do so.

On a very different subject, you wrote:

*>Privately, I sent you my own theory about abductions possibly being  
> related to some sort of abortion guilt/anxiety complex, citing similarities  
> between "traditional" greys and culturally absorbed fetal imagery. One thing  
> I didn't point out at the time was that such "fetal" imagery is present (and  
> therefore available for absorption [and regurgitation]) in numerous other  
> contexts as well.*

When you sent me this, my response was that it was hard for me to appreciate. That's because I live in New York, where abortions are considered relatively unremarkable. Also, it's true, I've never been involved closely with one, though plenty of women I know have had them.

In any case, I'm not going to get involved in the powerful controversy that broke out here over this. For me, the idea is far-fetched; I'm unable to grasp exactly what makes it plausible. To say images are out there isn't enough; we need to know what makes some images take root the way the abduction imagery has, while most just float around not bothering many people. Take the mythology of satanic ritual abuse. Since fundamentalist Christians talk about Satan so much, it's not surprising that people start believing in satanists. The pathway from fetal imagery and abortion guilt to the abduction scenario isn't nearly as simple.

I agree that your theory is testable. The simplest test would be to survey abductees. Though I do think there are conceptual difficulties. How do we measure feelings about abortion? How do we quantify abortion guilt? Exactly what questions do we ask? We'd need a control group, to make sure that abductees' answers were different from those of the world at large.

Other tests are tricky. You mentioned comparing the reported abductions in countries with varying views of abortion. Trouble is, there are other variables as well. How can we control for factors that might make people

more or less willing to report their supposed abductions?

You also wrote:

*>With the emergence of abductees as hapless victims, however, the  
> emphasis has significantly shifted. Rather than being grilled and  
> questioned, today's abductees are routinely treated with kid's gloves,  
> hypnotized and shuttled off to support groups.*

"Hapless" is an interesting word in this context. One thing John Powell and I seem to agree on is that abductees are far from hapless. Nor are they encouraged to think of themselves as victims. Nor are they shuttled off anywhere. They strike me as, on the whole, strong-minded people who take a large role in shaping what happens to them. Not many of them go to support groups, to judge from the turnout I've seen at Budd's What does he get...20 or 30 people tops, maybe less, and not the same ones each time? It's not as if he's created a tight-knit community of desperate souls who keep returning to validate their beliefs.

The people who seem to do the hardest grilling and questioning are the abductees themselves. The ones I've met stress that they didn't easily accept alien abduction as an explanation for their memories, nor did they automatically trust what emerged under hypnosis. I grant your point (which you made more strongly in private) that present-day abductees aren't expected to take polygraph tests, the way Travis Walton was. But I think you're treating abductees as far weaker, and far more easily led, than they actually are.

Greg Sandow

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