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'Alien' Writing

From: **Greg Sandow** <GSANDOW@prodigy.net>
Date: Mon, 30 Dec 1996 11:13:31 -0500
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Subject: 'Alien' Writing

Since I've written a lot here about samples of alleged alien writing I've seen, I thought it might be helpful to summarize, both because of the potential value this writing has on evidence, and because of its effect on me.

I first heard about the writing from two experiencers who work with Budd Hopkins. They told me their stories independently. They know each other -- I've seen them both at Budd's support groups -- but they're not friends.

Both told me essentially the same thing, with one difference. One said she'd been doodling the writing since childhood, and thought it might have something to do with the abductions she felt she'd experienced. The other thought he'd remembered the writing under hypnosis.

(Parenthetically, I don't think there's any problem with alleged writing that surfaces after hypnosis. There's at least one paper in the psychological literature documenting the use of hypnosis in police investigations. Evidence has been uncovered through hypnosis, corroborated, and used to get convictions. Obviously, the corroboration is key. In the case of supposed alien writing, there's no way to get direct corroboration, unless the aliens land, and we grab the little strip of notes the Martian ambassador uses when gives a speech...that's a detail from Mars Attacks, by the way; very funny movie. Anyhow, what we're doing here is comparing one sample of alleged alien writing to another. That some emerge under hypnosis seems irrelevant to me, especially once you read the full range of research studies on the subject.)

Returning now to the narrative, both these experiencers drew the supposed writing for Budd. Both told me that he didn't say anything. Instead, he left the room and returned with a scrapbook in which he'd collected very similar samples. Both experiencers said they were devastated by the shock of seeing these.

Budd confirmed these accounts for me, and, with great reluctance, showed me his book of samples. There were more than a dozen, mounted under plastic, each in a different handwriting. They were extraordinarily similar...but my testimony to that similarity doesn't count as evidence. In fact, Budd's whole procedure here is unfortunate.

In my opinion, what he should have done would be something like this. Ideally, his sessions with experiencers would be moderated by neutral outsiders, who could confirm that the experiencers mentioned and drew the writing with no prompting from Budd. Budd would leave the room while the experiencers drew the supposedly remembered samples, which would immediately be sealed, and given to the outside observers. Budd would never see them.

When a reasonable number of samples -- a dozen? 25? social scientists would have an idea of what the proper number might be -- had been collected, they'd be studied in a formal research project. This is when the sealed envelopes would be opened. Independent judges would compare pairs of samples, assigning a numerical ranking of similarity. (It should be kept simple, and might range from zero -- no perceived similarity -- to five, which would mean very great similarity.) This is a standard procedure in social science research. It's also been used in parapsychology, I believe, to evaluate results of experiments in remote viewing. The evaluations of the separate judges would be averaged, giving an overall score.

This, or something like it, is the procedure that ought to be followed. But now I want to say something more subjective, about my own reaction to the book of supposed writing samples. The similarity among them was so very great that -- speaking only for myself, now -- I didn't feel a need for objective outside study before I formed my opinion.

Imagine looking at pages of books printed in French, Italian, English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Rumanian. There would be differences, obviously. But you'd notice that all six pages were written by and large in the same roman alphabet. You wouldn't feel you needed an independent study to tell you that.

And in fact the supposed writing I saw was even more similar than that. I've promised Budd not to describe it. But I can say this much: It's not nearly as complex as any written alphabet we know. Nor is it anything like Chinese or Japanese characters. It might be compared to Morse Code, though it's a level or two more complicated than that.

But suppose it was morse code. Here's what I would have seen, as I turned the pages of Budd's scrapbook. Page one...nothing but dots and dashes. Page two...nothing but dots and dashes. Page three...nothing but dots and dashes. And so on, up to the end. There's no way that's not going to have an effect on me, or, I imagine, on most other open-minded people who might see it.

I'll say again that my testimony has little value as evidence. The "writing" should be published and formally evaluated. Nor can I prove that any or all of the samples weren't faked, and that Budd and the two experiencers haven't been lying to me.

Speaking only for myself, though, I have to say that this experience pushed my view of the abduction evidence quite a bit further out. That is, I only see two general possibilities. One is that the writing has been faked. The other is that something really extraordinary is going on. Maybe it's some kind of telepathic confabulation, evidently unconscious. Or else -- and I must say this strikes me as the more parsimonious explanation -- the experiencers really did see the writing, which in turn suggests that their abductions might be real.

Greg Sandow

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