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UFO UpDates Mailing List

Re: Solved abduction cases?

From: clark@canby.mn.frontiercomm.net [Jerome Clark]
Date: Mon, 06 Oct 1997 10:38:50 PDT
Fwd Date: Mon, 06 Oct 1997 13:02:09 -0400
Subject: Re: Solved abduction cases?

> And finally, for this posting, Jerry Clark, someone I have enormous
> respect for, chipped in his two-pennyworth on a related topic:

> >From: clark@canby.mn.frontiercomm.net [Jerome Clark]
> >Date: Wed, 01 Oct 1997 11:32:01 PDT
> >To: updates@globalserve.net
> >Subject: RE: UFO UpDate: Re: Questions for abductees

> He takes the venerable Duke of Mendoza (30 Sep 1997 - "Questions
> for Abductees") to task:

> >Does anybody, including yourself, know the meaning of the phrase
> >"the folklore that calls itself 'abduction research'"? All of
> >us, including the undersigned (as you kindly reminded me
> >recently), are capable of writing (and thinking) in haste, and
> >I daresay you are doing so here. There is folklore about
> >abductions, but the experience of abduction is not "folklore,"
> >as you yourself imply when you suggest that "abnormal psychology"
> >is the be-all and end-all of the question. You are too intellectually
> >sophisticated, I should think, to use "folklore" and "nonsense"
> >as if the two were interchangeable, for another thing. Labeling
> >"abduction research," whatever else can be said against or for
> >it, "folklore" is to mischaracterize the nature of both, or to
> >find meanings for these words not immediately apparent to the
> >rest of us. All you are saying, I guess, is that you don't like
> >people to research abductions and come to conclusions about them
> >you don't like. <snip>

> The last sentence reveals that Jerry is in his hot-under-the-collar
> mode, and we all know, despite his scholarship, intelligence and
> erudition, that the ETH paradigm has Jerry firmly caught by the
> short and curlies.

> Jerry is trying to fabricate friction. The Duke was clearly referring
> to how abduction research, especially in North America, has attracted
> its own themes, sub-themes, beliefs (many simply assumed), protagonists,
> etc. All the stuff of folklore. What I read the goodly Duke as saying
> is that the activity of abduction research is a study in its own
> right. He didn't say that abduction experiences in and of themselves
> were folklore. I also didn't see him say that "abnormal psychology"
> was the be-all and end-all. What I did see him do was to carefully
> qualify the term with "so-unhelpfully-called".

> Once upon a time, Jerry didn't accept the ETH, but now (I would
> say under the pressure of the intellectual ufological environment
> in which he is immersed in the USA) he does. Once upon a time,
> Jerry didn't seem at all impressed by abduction reports. Now,
> he seems to be softening (I'd say for the same reasons). In the
> way Jerry now doesn't credit contactee claims of early ufology, I

> just hope he and I live long enough for him to be able to look
> back and come to the same, if tragically belated, conclusion about
> today's "abduction scenario".

> I must stress that I think the abduction experience is real in
> many cases, and of tremendous importance. But I feel we can learn
> more about it by not tunnel-visioning ourselves into just abduction
> reports. We are SO ignorant about the realms of the mind, of the
> range of conscious experience, that we really do need to explore
> "abnormal psychology" and study a wide base of literature and
> conduct practical experiments. (That is what I and colleagues
> are doing with lucid dreaming right now, and the much slagged-off
> Persinger is doing important mind-altering investigations too.)
> Numerous researchers in various fields are all supplying important
> and highly germane information that needs putting together before
> any of us plump for an ET literalist answer. This is not "medicalizing"
> the matter, as you suggested elsewhere in your posting, Jerry
> -- a crude, knee-jerk attitude if I may say so. And it is far from
> being a be-all and end-all -- good lord Jerry, we are all so ignorant
> in this whole business of consciousness research! It is the literalist
> "explanation" that has become the be-all and end-all of abduction
> research, surely? Dennis Stacy has listed some of the inconsistencies
> in the whole abduction business. Jerry, take a deep breath: doesn't
> it sound more like a mental phenomenon (however remarkable and
> important -- all of which I think it to be) than real cosmic ships
> taken away people at night? Really and truly? The experients themselves
> are being given the literalist framework in which to interpret
> their experiences -- that is just part of the shame and the disgrace
> of abduction research as it currently stands.

> This wheel is still very much in spin. Be careful where you stand.

> Paul Devereux

Paul,

You're in your mind-reading mode, I'm afraid, my friend. You don't know me well, so -- in defense of a not particularly persuasive argument -- you feel free to attribute personality and motivation to me. The phrase "the folklore that calls itself `abduction research'" still makes no sense, and I am surprised that you would try to defend it. In doing so, you rephrase the argument -- you'd have to, for the sake of coherence -- to recycle the usual jumble of claims, long effectively refuted by the one academically trained folklorist participating in the discussion, Eddie Bullard; see, for but one of many examples, his "Folkloric Dimensions of the UFO Phenomenon," JUFOS 3 (1991). I also see the inevitable North America bashing, a particular obsession of yours. Correct me if I'm wrong, but don't you actually live here at least part of the time?

(A small, irrelevant aside: When are you going to learn to spell Chris Rutkowski's last name correctly?)

Though I think you are wrong about the UFO phenomenon (though more interestingly so than most, except in the above-expressed; I trust that the full treatment in your and Peter's forthcoming book is more substantive), I respect the intellectual processes that led you to the conclusions you espouse. Anybody who knows me would find immensely hilarious the suggestion that I hold views out of some craven need to conform with fashion. I would appreciate your extending the courtesy to me of respecting my own thinking even when you disagree with it.

My views (which you don't understand in any case) of the abduction phenomenon are complex and evolving. I have grave reservations about the excesses of both camps; see, for one example, my piece on John Mack (IUR, March/April 1994). Those who are interested in understanding why I have come to the particular conclusions I have about the UFO phenomenon are invited to read my UFO Encyclopedia, where the reasons, right or wrong, are laid out in full and, if you disagree, you will not be forced to bring my personality into the discussion.

I find the debunking literature (which is what we're discussing here) mostly shallow and vacuous; it would never pass muster in other areas of scholarly discourse, and it does not deserve to be taken seriously until its standards improve. (Please don't now insist that I'm therefore arguing that abductions are true unless proven

otherwise. Give me a break.) I see more evidence here of traditions of disbelief (as David Hufford would call them) than of traditions of scholarship. But one is allowed free rein when the target is something presumed to be both absurd and contemptible, such as the UFO experience. For a revealing survey of the logical and evidential inadequacies of alternative explanations to abduction phenomena, see Stuart Appelle's "The Abduction Experience: A Critical Evaluation of Theory and Evidence," JUFOS 6 (1995/1996).

It seems to me that we needn't be frantic for conclusive answers when such manifestly are unavailable. I simply don't understand your need to bash all to whom Ultimate Truth is not so apparent as it is to you. A few abduction cases strike me as impressive and truly puzzling, and more plausibly (albeit tentatively and undogmatically) interpreted as interactions with nonhuman intelligences than as hallucinations generated by immersion in obscure folklore texts. Most abduction stories are not evidential, for all sorts of reasons, and I see no reason to believe that abductions are happening to untold millions. But there is a phenomenon here in search of an explanation. I feel perfectly comfortable as an agnostic here. Anybody who seeks to persuade me that he or she has that explanation would do well to use good arguments, which I always am happy to hear. No effort to bully -- or caricature -- me, or any of the rest of us who remain open-minded about this most difficult and contentious of subjects, into submission is going to do the job.

And finally, as to the Dylan quote/paraphrase at the end of your posting: it seems to me, my friend, that you, too, ought to take heed.

Jerry Clark

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