

SD
STRANGE DAZE

A.D. 2000-AN EXTRAORDINARY SPIRITUAL JOURNEY?

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Final Farewells-Louis E. LaGrand Ph.D.
Sacred Sites - Kevin McClure
Time Travel- Dr. Michio Kaku
Paul Devereux, John Spencer & Bill Rose

editorial



AD 2000 – At the Threshold of an Extraordinary Human Journey

To begin this editorial, I would like to wish you all a very happy, healthy and productive new Millennium. In many ways the hype surrounding the year 2000 has been generated by the media and this combined with the misleading information surrounding the actual year of Christ's birth adds to the muddle as to whether this really is the year 2000. However, we cannot change these possible inaccuracies so, as far as we are all concerned, this is January 2000!!

On Boxing Day, the Mail on Sunday ran an exceptional article by Stewart Steven, which examined the scientific and philosophical problems which have entered the arena in this brave new world as science attempts *and fails* to explain issues, which are so staggering they appear to lie outside of scientific explanation. In his concluding paragraphs he writes...

'... it is interesting, is it not, that as researchers go deeper and deeper into the core of things, they are beginning to understand the limitations of science? God, it seems, is not dead after all. The further they go, the nearer he seems to be. That's a thought for the new Millennium that somehow, so wonderfully unexpectedly thanks to science, until now always the enemy of religion, we have actually got closer to the face of God.'

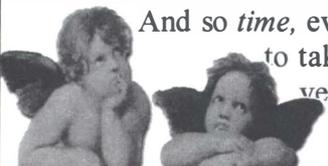
Since the last issue of Strange Daze, world events have been occurring at a phenomenal speed with disasters and weather changes that are evident in every part of the globe resulting in human tragedies of enormous dimensions. Debate also continues to rage regarding the moral ethics of evolving medical technology and genetically modified food and as we gather pace into this twenty-first century we are standing on the threshold of a very brave and unique new world indeed.

BBC's Radio Four continues to present informed programmes covering deeply profound issues and debates on consciousness, the principles of the universe and life; and human understanding of what these may show us in terms of who we are and where we go from here. During December Radio Four presented its regular programmes *In Our Time* with Melvyn Bragg and looked at the imponderable issues of *time* and *consciousness* examining what consciousness *is* and what the *cause* of consciousness is. Roger Penrose the British Physicist and an American philosopher focused on these questions and an amazing dialogue emerged, which explored the idea that the human mind is not built to understand its own basis and asked whether consciousness can actually be located in the brain or can it exist in isolation and independently of brain activity? The question of what consciousness *is* remained unresolved, but the discussion aroused some emotive debate for the contributors and mind provoking questions for the listeners. Following on from this at the end of December *In Our Time* broadcast another programme on the *notion of time*, and the contributors set out to probe what we mean by time and whether time is a figment of our imagination...an illusion.... a collection of moments, or as one of the contributors put it *'time is nothing but an aspect of relationship between events'*. Contributors went on to discuss the idea that in the world of quantum physics, time takes on very strange characteristics where all things that **could** happen **are** happening at the same time. Of course this is all very weird and wonderful stuff and hard to explain, let alone understand, but the bottom line is that these are crucial issues and maybe we need to grasp a small concept of the essence of who we are and indeed **why** we are.

This issue of Strange Daze carries articles that reflect the idea of time and consciousness with an outstanding and perceptive article by Dr. Louis E. LaGrand taken from book *After Death Communication – Final Farewells*. John Spencer examines how perception and recall of events are influenced by a whole collection of imagery from childhood onwards and what this may mean when a witness tries to understand and interpret an unknown experience. Also in this issue Kevin McClure is at the cutting edge exploring the ramifications of the abduction phenomenon, scrutinising the subject and the researchers, asking some very difficult questions and arriving at some even more startling conclusions. Maybe these articles and others will change the face of Ufology and give us some tangible insight into the nature of remarkable human experiences and their real value and meaning in terms of our spiritual journeys and encounters..

And so *time*, ever elusive and illusionary, rushes on from one century to another, and therefore I would like to take this particular moment... *somewhere in time*.... to wish you all a very happy beginning to this twenty-first century.

Gloria Heather Dixon



S STRANGE DAZE **D** HANGOVER ISSUE



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IT CAME FROM HOLLYWEIRD!
Bill ROSE. Bill hangs up Helmet, scarf & goggles, buys a big bucket of popcorn and goes to the movies. Page 14



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THE IMAGINAL IN ANCIENT PERSIAN RELIGION



AND MODERN EXPERIENCE

An introductory lecture delivered by

Paul Devereux

at the 'Otherworld Reality' Conference organised by the Consciousness Connection and held at

The Royal Society of Arts, London, May 1 & 2, 1999.

PREAMBLE

As one ploughs through the serious, academic consciousness-studies literature that has exploded on us in recent years, there is an abiding sense that while theories about the nature of consciousness are legion, and smoke-and-mirror hypothesising by ever-clever philosophers of consciousness is seemingly endless, certain crucial issues—the knotty problems if you like – that lurk at the roots of the whole mystery of consciousness are being ignored, missed, or at least are not being fully addressed. There is a certain conceptual poverty pervading the scene. Our aim in forming "The Consciousness Connection" has been to start throwing the spotlight on these knotty problems, one at a time, and inviting highly informed speakers to present a wide range of approaches, to see if fresh (though not necessarily new) paradigms or, at least, "approach patterns" can be identified for further development. In short, we are making an attempt to break out of the straitjackets that are all too readily being donned by those engaged in today's mainstream, Western consciousness studies. We wish to attempt this, however, without losing scholastic rigour, for there is little point in shunning strait-jackets in order to simply put on the loosely flowing but faintly-patterned costumes of the New Age movement.

OTHERWORLD REALITY

We have taken as our first "knotty problem" the question of "otherworld reality", a remarkable level or realm of consciousness that the scholar of Islamic religions, the late Henri Corbin, called the "Imaginal", in which some or all the physical senses—sight, hearing, smell, taste, and even touch—seem to be operative in an environment that appears to have full spatial reality as we understand it in our normal waking consciousness, and yet which is not physically real. Those who have experienced this will not need to be told that this "otherworld" is not merely some metaphorical or symbolic device, but a direct, experiential fact for the person encountering it. The imaginal realm carries at least the same weight, impact and realism as the consensus material world of our everyday waking experience, but, crucially, the "reality channel" (so to speak) has been flipped.

We are not talking here merely about vivid dreams, or fleeting hallucinations, or jumbled drug-induced mental mirages, but a coherent, relatively stable state of consciousness in which access to what appears to be an alternate environmental reality is achieved. It can contain landscapes and vistas, mountains and rivers, light and dark,

music and voices, complex interiors, the taste of wine and the scent of roses, and sometimes the presence of entities that can be human in appearance, or suprahuman, or non-human. All of these things appear real to the perceiver, but they are literally non-sensory. This Imaginal reality also seems able to interact in unusual ways with physical reality in certain circumstances.

PROBLEMS WITH UNDERSTANDING

Our understanding of the nature of this specific state of consciousness, as with other altered states, is hindered by three underlying factors:

The first concerns the numerous conditions that can encourage the manifestation of this otherworld mental reality. These conditions are all those which can be loosely termed "trance-inducing". So, for examples, the otherworld reality can be accessed deliberately through the use of meditation, breathing exercises, intensive prayer, initiatory practices, and other religious techniques, and deliberately or accidentally through fasting, sensory deprivation or overload, sleep deprivation, physical exhaustion, the ingestion of psychoactive substances, bodily trauma, hypnotic distraction, entering or waking up from sleep, becoming consciously alert within a dream, neurophysiological aberration, physical or mental illness, and a host of other conditions and circumstances. Some people seem particularly prone to entering this otherworld mental state, while others have to work very hard indeed to achieve access. Shamans, visionaries, mystics in all societies and periods of time have tended to be the ones who can enter the otherworld with relative ease.

The second factor is really a corollary of the first, namely the variety of frames of reference, or contexts, into which the imaginal realm is placed in modern society, which has no overarching philosophical framework regarding it. Indeed, we are, as a culture, largely ignorant of the imaginal realm, being somewhat primitive in our understanding of consciousness in general. So, for instance, a person

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in a First World society today who falls into a trance while driving along a straight road at night, or who enters a similar state while falling asleep or awakening from a nap, and who then experiences an apparently real, physical world in which strange and disturbing things are taking place and in which curious beings appear, is likely to interpret the encounter as a "UFO abduction" because of prevailing cultural influences in such societies. Other conceptual boxes commonly used today to package the imaginal experience include: out-of-body experiences, near-death experiences, lucid dreaming, hallucinogenic visions, hallucinations, sleep paralysis, night visitors, and so forth. Although these terms merely apply either to the circumstances triggering the experience of the imaginal realm, or to a specific aspect of it, they tend to be viewed as separate phenomena—a consequence of the fragmenting nature of our current cultural processes. It is very difficult to persuade people to cross boundaries, to get outside of their conceptual boxes. The question of treating the mental state involved as a single phenomenon therefore tends to get by-passed.

The third underlying confounding factor is the basic materialistic philosophy that currently orients the intellectual compass of our culture. This ensures that any generally acceptable scientific theory dealing with the otherworld experience, where science bothers with it at all, has to reduce it to a phenomenon rising solely from the workings of the brain—to neurophysiological explanations. Within its frame, this explanatory approach is a powerful one and has to be taken on board by anyone seeking to understand the imaginal experience. It is known from work with brain trauma patients as well as from experimental research, that, visions, or if you prefer hallucinations, can be produced by interfering with or modifying neurophysiological processes. We know that it is the brain processing away within the darkness of the skull that conjures the world we apprehend around us, yet we so easily forget that that apparently solid and "real" world is a mental construct. The brain may even conjure a ghost we call the "mind" or "self", and some contemporary philosophers of consciousness try to maintain that consciousness itself is an illusion. Such proponents argue that if "I" do not exist, if "I" am not in the body, how can "I" possibly have an out-of-body experience? Further, as the physical, sensory world is conjured up by the brain, why is it difficult to accept that fantasy worlds can be created with similar reality by the workings of the brain, the most complex object we know of in

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the universe? And it is apparent that the content of the imaginal realm can be affected by prevailing cultural imagery and motifs.

These are good arguments, and at some level they have to be true. But in the words of the song—"Is that all there is?" Is there only a choice between scientific reductionism or naive literalism?

OTHER APPROACHES

Well, there are in fact important shades of grey between these extremes, some of which will doubtless be explored over this weekend.

One of those "shades of grey" concerns quantum reality. We might note that while the sensory world is created for us within our brain from raw information received from the environment, what actually gets built into the mental model we know as consensus reality is only a tiny snapshot of what is actually "out there". Underpinning the vast range of shuttling energies that comprise the universe, including the brain itself, is the mysterious quantum sea, the unborn mother of all energy, and therefore all matter and manifestation—if you like, it is the Dao, the source of the ten thousands things. So could the worlds we see in the imaginal realm have their origins in that sea just as much as do the sensory data we process in normal everyday reality? Is information from some distantly deep level of reality being presented to us as a psychodrama using the costumes found in the brain's wardrobe of sensory experience?

Or, again, is there evidence to show that the imaginal realm can be more than simply a private, subjective event? Where does the paranormal fit into this picture? This, too, will be explored.

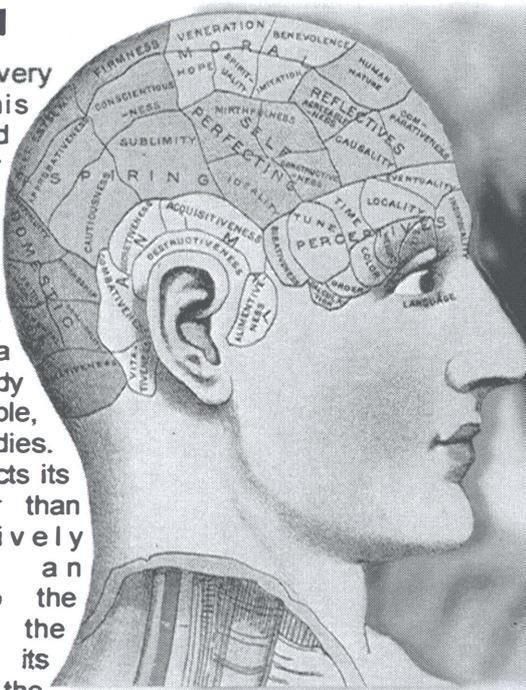
A third approach is to posit that we are locked into a kind of lucid dream. If this is so, then the physical laws that physical science studies are simply aspects of that greater lucid dream.

Fourthly, we should not rule out traditional models such as, there being an actual spirit world. We can accommodate that idea and still keep some scientific rigour on board by considering that our minds can make contact with such a spirit world only through the medium of neurophysiological mechanisms. The one might not necessarily exclude the other.

Finally, to bring us full circuit, there are perhaps paradigms for probing the nature of Imaginal consciousness that have yet to be constructed. Among the possible sources of these, we have to consider looking into the truly deep and sophisticated religious experience of an otherworld reality that emanated from ancient Persia, and which caused Henri Corbin to coin the term "Imaginal".

THE IMAGINAL REALM

Putting it all very simplistically, this philosophy emerged out of Zoroastrian or Mazdean Iran. It held that each human being has a number of bodies or souls, a perishable physical body, a subtle elemental body that is imperishable, plus spiritual bodies. Each of these, projects its own "Earth", rather than merely passively experiencing an environment. So the physical body has the physical Earth as its environment, while the



other bodies have varieties of visionary or spirit Earths, as their respective environments. This philosophy means that the world that is perceived is itself soul-like in nature, thus the distinction between subject and object is removed, which is, of course, an unfamiliar pattern of thinking for the modern Western mind. At death or in visionary states or mystic rapture, we can rise through the bodies, automatically transforming the Earth that is perceived or experienced, a form of transfiguration glimpsed by Wordsworth when he wrote:

"... The earth, and every common sight/ To me did seem/ Apparell'd in celestial light/ The glory and the freshness of a dream."

Now, to continue oversimplifying this immensely subtle and complex philosophy, the Zoroastrian system encompassed the idea of a visionary or otherworld geography. This was mythically projected onto the physical geography of ancient Iran, but was in essence what Corbin referred to as the *mundus imaginalis archetypus*. It had what we would call zones but which the Iranian texts referred to as "climates". The "eighth climate" was a central, "world-navel" zone occupied by a paradisaal enclosure that has gone by numerous names over the many centuries and various religious contexts in which it has found itself:

Eran Vej, the Earth of Hurqalya, the Earth of the Emerald Cities, the Celestial Earth, the Earth of Visions, the Transfigured Earth. In Sufi tradition it is called BARZAKH, the Interworld. This Interworld paradise secretes light, Xvamha, the Light of Glory, the primordial universal force permeating all things, and the substance of souls. In the Interworld one does not cast a shadow - a way of saying that one cannot enter there in the corporeal body. It is the subtle, elemental body that is the natural denizen of the Interworld.

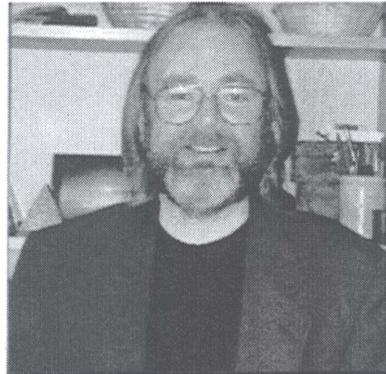
This Interworld is real but non-physical. As one Islamic mystic put it:

"This intermediate world... is the world through which spirits are embodied, and bodies are spiritualised." Corbin said it mediated between "the sensory and the intelligible". It was precisely because this state was so difficult to describe let alone conceive that he coined "Imaginal", knowing that the adjective "imaginary" in our modern usage was far too weak

and would falsely imply that the Interworld was somehow unreal.

This whole ancient Iranian tradition, which was carried over into Islam, is far too rich for me to attempt to describe here, and I suspect that it will be explored in greater depth tomorrow, but all that is needed here and now is to note that in attempting to find adequate ways of trying comprehend the ontological status of Imaginal consciousness, we might yet come to realise that within this ancient Interworld philosophy there is model we can re-work and make new use of today.

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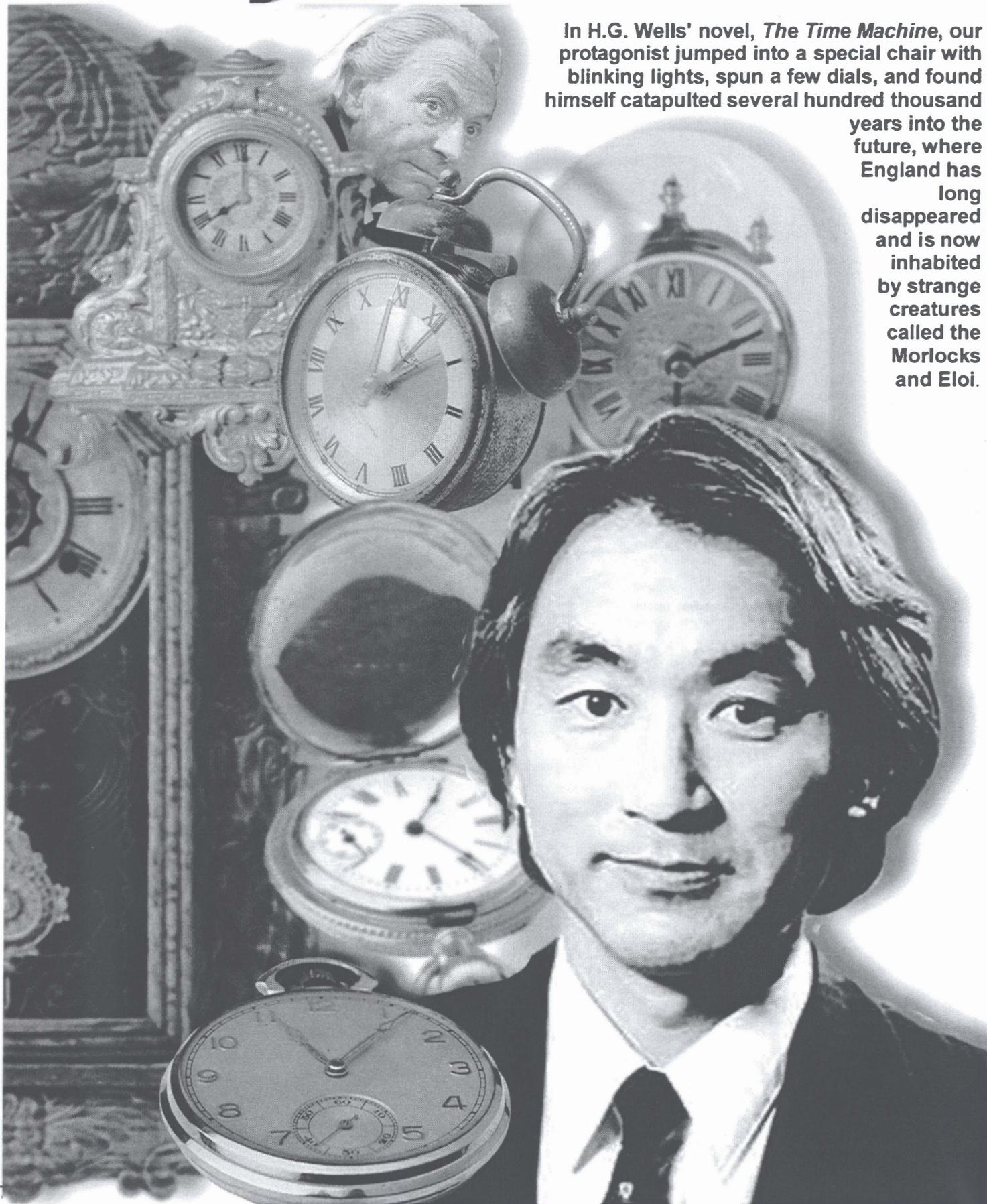
Paul Devereux is an author, international lecturer, broadcaster and consultant. He has written twenty books to date (1979-1999), and his writing spans the range from academic to popular on archaeological and consciousness research themes and geophysical

anomalies. Recent book titles include: *Re-visioning the Earth*, *The Secret Language of the Stars and Planets* (with Geoffrey Cornelius) *UFOS and Ufology* (with Peter Brookesmith) and *The Long Trip*. He is currently working on three new books and engaged (1999-2000) upon an extensive field research programme on *Shamanic landscapes* throughout the Americas. He is a Research Fellow of the **International Consciousness Research Laboratories (ICRL)**, Princeton, and takes part in collaborative research on lucid dreaming, ancient sites dreaming and geophysical anomalies.

The next issue of *Strange Daze* will feature an interview with Paul Devereux by Philip Mantle.

The Physics of Time Travel

In H.G. Wells' novel, *The Time Machine*, our protagonist jumped into a special chair with blinking lights, spun a few dials, and found himself catapulted several hundred thousand years into the future, where England has long disappeared and is now inhabited by strange creatures called the Morlocks and Eloi.



That may have made great fiction, but physicists have always scoffed at the idea of time travel, considering it to be the realm of cranks, mystics, and charlatans, and with good reason. However, rather remarkable advances in quantum gravity are reviving the theory; it has now become fair game for theoretical physicists writing in the pages of Physical Review magazine.

One stubborn problem with time travel is that it is riddled with several types of paradoxes. For example, there is the paradox of the man with no parents, i.e. what happens when you go back in time and kill your parents before you are born? Question: if your parents died before you were born, then how could you have been born to kill them in the first place?

There is also the paradox of the man with no past. For example, let's say that a young inventor is trying futilely to build a time machine in his garage. Suddenly, an elderly man appears from nowhere and gives the youth the secret of building a time machine. The young man then becomes enormously rich playing the stock market, race tracks, and sporting events because he knows the future. Then, as an old man, he decides to make his final trip back to the past and give the secret of time travel to his youthful self. Question: where did the idea of the time machine come from?

There is also the paradox of the man who is own mother. (My apologies to Heinlein.) "Jane" is left at an orphanage as a foundling. When "Jane" is a teenager, she falls in love with a drifter, who abandons her but leaves her pregnant. Then disaster strikes. She almost dies giving birth to a baby girl, who is then mysteriously kidnapped. The doctors find that Jane is bleeding badly, but, oddly enough, has both sex organs. So, to save her life, the doctors convert "Jane" to "Jim."

"Jim" subsequently becomes a roaring drunk, until he meets a friendly bartender (actually a time traveller in disguise) who whisks "Jim" back way into the past. "Jim" meets a beautiful teenage girl, accidentally gets her pregnant with a baby girl. Out of guilt, he kidnaps the baby girl and drops her off at the orphanage. Later, "Jim" joins the time travellers corps, leads a distinguished life, and has one last dream: to disguise himself as a bartender to meet a certain drunk named "Jim" in the past. Question: who is "Jane's" mother, father, brother, sister, grand- father, grandmother, and grandchild?

Not surprisingly, time travel has always been

considered impossible. After all, Newton believed that time was like an arrow; once fired, it soared in a straight, undeviating line. One second on the earth was one second on Mars. Clocks scattered throughout the universe beat at the same rate.

Einstein gave us a much more radical picture. According to Einstein, time was more like a river, which meandered around stars and galaxies, speeding up and slowing down as it passed around massive bodies. One second on the earth was Not one second on Mars. Clocks scattered throughout the universe beat to their own distant drummer.

However, before Einstein died, he was faced with an embarrassing problem. Einstein's neighbour at Princeton, Kurt Goedel, perhaps the greatest mathematical logician of the past 500 years, found a new solution to Einstein's own equations which allowed for time travel!

The "river of time" now had whirlpools in which time could wrap itself into a circle. Goedel's solution was quite ingenious: it postulated a universe filled with a rotating fluid. Anyone walking along the direction of rotation would find themselves back at the starting point, but backwards in time!

Anyone who can harness the power of a star would consider us to be very primitive. Imagine your friends coming across an anthill. Would they bend down to the ants and give them trinkets, books, medicine, and power? Or would some of your friends have the strange urge to step on a few of them?

In his memoirs, Einstein wrote that he was disturbed that his equations contained solutions that allowed for time travel. But he finally concluded: the universe does not rotate, it expands (i.e. as in the Big Bang theory) and hence Goedel's solution could be thrown out for "physical reasons." (Apparently, if the Big Bang was rotating, then time travel would be possible throughout the universe!)

Then in 1963, Roy Kerr, a New Zealand mathematician, found a solution of Einstein's equations for a rotating black hole, which had bizarre properties. The black hole would not collapse to a point (as previously thought) but into a spinning ring (of neutrons). The ring would be circulating so rapidly that centrifugal force would keep the ring from collapsing under gravity.

The ring, in turn, acts like the Looking Glass of Alice. Anyone walking through the ring would not die, but could pass through the ring into an alternate universe.

Since then, hundreds of other "wormhole" solutions have been found to Einstein's equations. These wormholes connect not only two regions of space (hence the name) but also two regions of time as well. In principle, they can be used as time machines.

Recently, attempts to add the quantum theory to gravity (and hence create a "theory of everything") have given us some insight into the paradox problem. In the quantum theory, we can have multiple states of any object. For example, an electron can exist simultaneously in different orbits (a fact which is responsible for giving us the laws of chemistry). Similarly, Schrodinger's famous cat can exist simultaneously in two possible states: dead and alive. So by going back in time and altering the past, we merely create a parallel universe. So we are changing someone ELSE's past by saving, say, Abraham Lincoln from being assassinated at the Ford Theatre, but our Lincoln is still dead. In this way, the river of time forks into two separate rivers.

But does this mean that we will be able to jump into H.G. Wells' machine, spin a dial, and soar several hundred thousand years into England's future?

No. There are a number of difficult hurdles to overcome.

First, the main problem is one of energy. In the same way that a car needs gasoline, a time machine needs to have fabulous amounts of energy. One either has to harness the power of a star, or to find something called "exotic" matter (which falls up, rather than down) or find a source of negative energy. (Physicists once thought that negative energy was impossible. But tiny amounts of negative energy have been experimentally verified for something called the Casimir effect, i.e. the energy created by two parallel plates). All of these are exceedingly difficult to obtain in large quantities, at least for several more centuries!

Then there is the problem of stability. The Kerr black hole, for example, may be unstable if one falls through it. Similarly, quantum effects may build up and destroy the wormhole before you enter it. Unfortunately, our mathematics is not powerful enough to answer the question of stability because you need a "theory of everything" which combines both quantum forces and gravity. At present, superstring theory is the leading candidate for such a theory (in fact, it is the ONLY candidate; it really has no rivals at all). But superstring theory, which

happens to be my specialty, is still too difficult to solve completely. The theory is well defined, but no one on earth is smart enough to solve it.

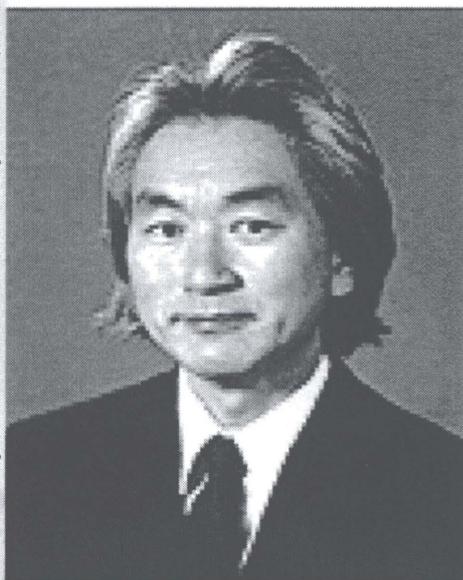
Interestingly enough, Stephen Hawking once opposed the idea of time travel. He even claimed he had "empirical" evidence against it. If time travel existed, he said, then we would have been visited by tourists from the future. Since we see no tourists from the future, ergo: time travel is not possible.

Because of the enormous amount of work done by theoretical physicists within the last 5 years or so, Hawking has since changed his mind, and now believes that time travel is possible (although not necessarily practical). (Furthermore, perhaps we are simply not very interesting to these tourists from the future. Anyone who can harness the power of a star would consider us to be very primitive. Imagine your friends coming across an anthill. Would they bend down to the ants and give them trinkets, books, medicine, and power? Or would some of your friends have the strange urge to step on a few of them?)

In conclusion, don't turn someone away who knocks at your door one day and claims to be your future great-great-great grandchild. They may be right.

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MICHIO KAKU**

Michio Kaku is Professor of Theoretical Physics at the City College of the City University of New York. He graduated from Harvard and received his Ph.D. from Berkeley. He is author of Hyperspace: A Scientific Odyssey through Parallel Universes, Time Warps and the Tenth Dimension, Beyond Einstein (with Jennifer Trainer), Quantum Field Theory: A Modern Introduction and Introduction to Superstrings. He has also hosted a weekly hour long science program on radio for the last ten years.



How Perception Works; How Recall Works

By John Spencer

A UFO report is not the documentation of a set of facts relating to an incident. It is the result of the witness' attempt to understand an unknown experience.

But just what is behind the witness' own understanding? If we are to understand how close encounter reporters perceive their experiences we must first understand how people perceive anything.

From childhood, a person's beliefs, attitudes, opinions and values are developed by the influence of parents, grandparents, siblings, other relatives, teachers, clergy, friends, neighbours and people in authority. People are influenced and shaped by the law, by society, by the arts, by the media, by advertising and by a host of subliminal messages received through day-to-day dealing with others even in brief encounters; on trains and buses for example. Influence can be direct or subtle: repeated suggestion; reward and punishment; related experiences; censored views; guilt; and fear.

Interaction with the world consists of applying the result of all those influences – i.e. your beliefs – to any stimulus that you are forced to respond to. Interaction with it becomes, first and foremost, a personal experience owned by the witness. These are the phases we go through:

Phase One

Firstly, people have a natural tendency to personify or attribute intelligent direction to any unknown event, until proven otherwise. This is a product of measuring the potential threat of a stimulus; survival is the most basic response of all creatures. If something is seen that has luminosity, or is visible in some way then it may be perceived as a ghost or an alien. The choice may not be made by the object, but rather by the prevailing mood or beliefs of the witness. If the witness is walking through an old monastery ruin they may be thinking of ghosts, if in a road or bedroom situation they may think of alien encounters.

Phase Two

We seek out further clues to confirm that 'we weren't just imagining it'. Part of that is a selective process known as 'the ratchet effect'. Like a ratchet screwdriver, turns in one direction have effect, turns in the other direction do nothing; evidence for is added to the pile, evidence against is ignored as irrelevant. So the initial impressions, based on personal views, are strengthened. For

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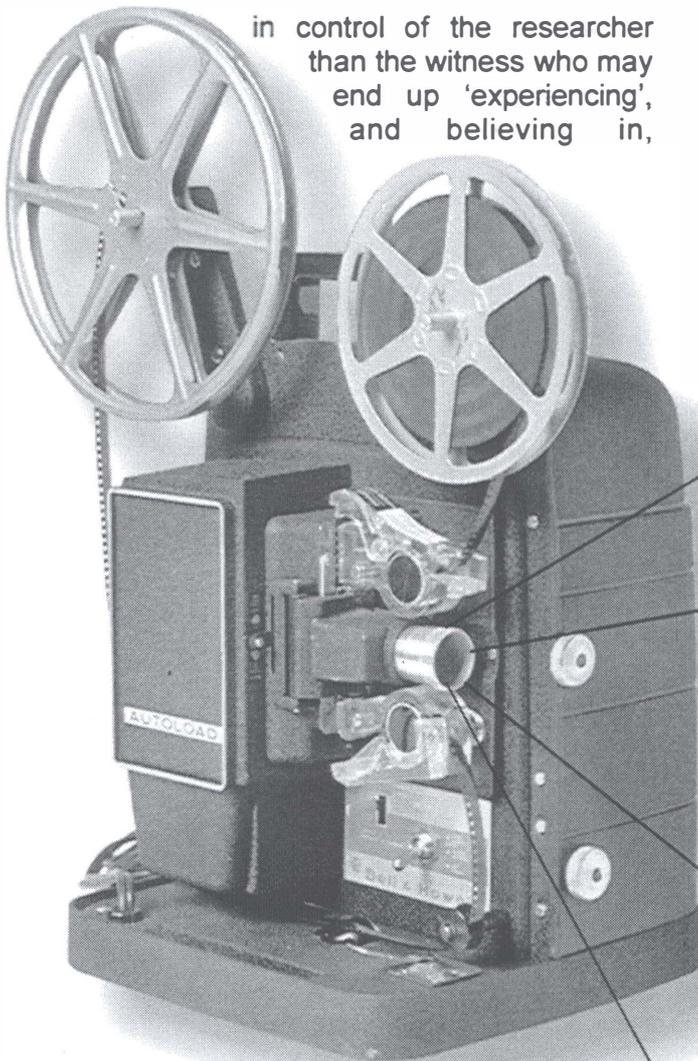
example, UFO ground traces are often found 'after the event'. First, the witness experiences or sees something and then looks for clues.

Phase Three

There is then a checking of the event itself against expectations, with the unfortunate effect of creating false memories of what really happened in line with those expectations. This is not a factor of close encounters, it is a normal way by which we deal with the world and would therefore be abnormal if it were not part of the close encounter experience. There is evidence from some multiple-sighting reports that the differences in description of objects depends a lot on what each person thought they would be seeing, once they had 'decided' what they were seeing.

Phase Four

Because close encounters may involve some loss of accuracy of memory, or if some researchers are to be believed, whole time lapses of memory, then a process of uncovering the lost information is undertaken. In UFOlogy, this usually involves using hypnosis. Unfortunately this often puts the detail of the experience more 10



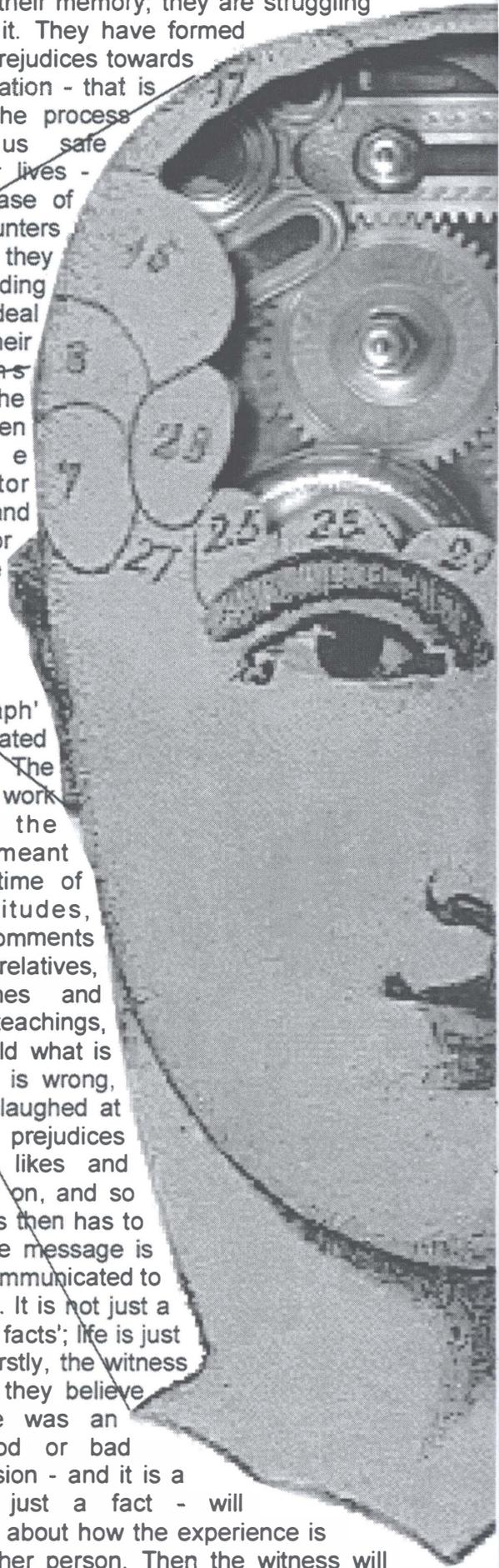
in control of the researcher than the witness who may end up 'experiencing', and believing in,

factually and accurately. That is simply not the way the mind works, nor the way the memory works. The witness has perceived an event for which they have no 'card index' in their memory; they are struggling to understand it. They have formed opinions and prejudices towards a likely explanation - that is normal, it is the process that keeps us safe throughout our lives - and, in the case of close encounters particularly, they are deciding how to deal with their emotions towards the event. Then the investigator arrives and asks for the

something that actually did not happen. If the witness believes their experience to have been an essentially bad thing, reinforced by prejudicial beliefs about aliens and UFOs derived from science fiction imagery and perhaps reinforced by the writings of prominent UFO researchers and the media, then the encounter will become a bad thing. Or those believing it to be a good thing may then 'experience' it as a good thing. Worse still, the witness may seek out a UFO researcher who is known to share the same prejudicial views, with the result that both researcher and witness suffer from the ratchet effect, both seemingly gaining additional evidence to support their beliefs.

Standard UFO investigation arguably takes the view that the witness has stored in his or her mind a 'photograph' of the event that is objective. In other words, the witness has seen, heard and perhaps experienced something that happened outside of them and that any witness standing where they had stood would have seen heard and felt the same thing. The investigator then has to ask the right questions to re-build that snapshot, perhaps use hypnotic regression to take that witness 'back in time' to remember the incident more clearly, and then it can be related

'photograph' to be related to them. The witness has to work out what the experience meant through a lifetime of beliefs, attitudes, experiences, comments of friends and relatives, TV programmes and films, religious teachings, having been told what is right and what is wrong, fears of being laughed at or disbelieved, prejudices and cravings, likes and dislikes and so on, and so on. The witness then has to decide what the message is that must be communicated to the investigator. It is not just a question of 'the facts'; life is just not like that. Firstly, the witness must decide if they believe the experience was an essentially good or bad one. That decision - and it is a decision, not just a fact - will determine a lot about how the experience is related to another person. Then the witness will select the facts that he or she believes are significant,



and this process of filtering is also done through personal belief systems. If the witness believes they have been abducted by aliens from another planet then they will automatically seek out and bring to the fore those details from 'memory' that confirm and strengthen than belief.

Those areas which, if not contradictory are at least unsupportive, will be downgraded or ignored.

Again this is not a factor of UFO experiences, this is normal and the way we operate in our lives every minute of the day. It is the basis of a simple decision to cross the road here or a hundred yards further down the road, to eat an apple or an orange, to save or to spend.

In any decision the facts are outweighed by subjective aspects nine-to-one. If the witness has another belief (he or she does not like science fiction but does think God and Satan are the only forces in the Universe, for example) then they will go through a similar process, but come forward with a different priority of what 'facts' are important to 'get across' to the investigator.

On top of all this is the fact that the receiver of the information (the investigator) receives a report through his or her series of lifetime experiences, and also has a set of subjective criteria, that takes more account of 'desired' aspects of the report than those that run contrary to his or her personal beliefs about the subject.

This has serious implication for hypnotic regression because the input of data from the researcher to the witness is not just misleading, but hypnosis leads to reinforcement of the false image. What researchers also seem to fail to take account of is the very little communication that takes place through words in an interactive situation. In a normal conversation only

approximately twenty percent of the meaning is expressed through words; eighty percent is expressed through eye contact, vocal shifts, body language and so on. Even researchers questioning witnesses who are diligent to avoid leading questions often fail to avoid leading in these other ways. I was once sent a tape by a researcher to defend against my suggestion that the witness had been led. The tape was supposed to prove otherwise, but in my view proved me correct. The witness, under hypnosis, said he could see small people around him. The researcher asked for further information by asking: 'Do you mean people about three or four feet tall?' The witness agreed he did. But did the implied command under hypnosis re-direct the thinking of the witness?

Like it or not, we have no world wide consensus as to what a UFO experience is or means. We do not *really* know what a UFO abduction is. Given all the stages from initial sighting or experience, through coming to terms with it, seeking out an investigator and trying to explain an experience there are many, many filters and barriers to true comprehension. Without a consensus as to what we are all involved with any understanding is fatally flawed.

Of course some witnesses are traumatised by their experiences and they seek help and it is right that structures should exist to offer that help. But the question is still one of the quality and type of help offered.

Experiments conducted:

Some years ago a team of researchers from **ASSAP**, including myself, conducted experiments to test the reliability of hypnosis. We used, I must stress, only researchers who had volunteered for the experiment and no actual experiencers.

The first subject was T. He was in a very light trance state, just enough to let his imagination be creative. T had been part of a team that had 'learned' the totally fabricated details of a race of tall aliens from Jupiter. Under hypnosis he was able to recall an abduction by these aliens, with graphic details of their encounter at Canary Wharf, on the River Thames, and a medical investigation by the aliens. Many of the details were not part of the original learning but were generated by fantasy during the recall. Impressions from the room also seemed to affect him. The aliens he described turned out to be wearing cowboy boots; one of the people in the room was wearing cowboy boots. T would not have been able to see that person, but could presumably have heard the 'leather 12

creaking' of the boots, and he knew that this particular researcher was due to join us, and knew that he habitually wore cowboy boots. But somehow that knowledge or those impressions became incorporated into the recall.

A second experiment was designed to test how easily a witness could be 'turned around' in their recall. Again, the 'witness' - A - had learned the details of a false race of aliens, created to be very evil and unpleasant. She described them as evil, doing bad things. She had been asked to learn that she had suffered a very unpleasant rape-like trauma at the hands of the aliens. With slight suggestions, at my written prompts A could not see, the hypnotist indicated a religious overtone to the event, and a benign reason for the alien intervention. He used words such as 'cathedral-like' to indicate size etc, gradually creating a spiritual and pleasant atmosphere. Very easily A began to recall the aliens as friendly and became quite comfortable with the abduction. In further parts of the experiment, which were admittedly less clearly successful, it seemed that A was able to be influenced by body language and gestures even without words being used. For example, she became more attracted to ideas that 'pleased' the 'investigator' - expressed by open hand gestures and moving forwards, than to ideas that 'offended' the investigator, demonstrated by closed gestures and moving away during recall.

All of this seemed to indicate that the attitude and beliefs of the researchers could affect a great deal about even the witness' own understanding of the experience.

Case Study: My own 'suppressed memory'.

During my teenage I was a passionate, if somewhat reckless, cyclist. I travelled all over the United Kingdom alone or with friends. Like most teenagers I had little regard for personal safety and no thought of danger. I was once stopped, by the police, near Marnhull in Salisbury after speeding down a one-in-three hill; they assured me they had 'clocked' me at sixty miles an hour and threatened to arrest me. When I was sixteen I, inevitably, came unstuck. I was cycling from my then home in Kenton in Middlesex to Willesden to visit my grandmother. Cycling through Kingsbury, in north London, I was - according to a witness - going far too fast down Church Lane when suddenly I seemed to be distracted by a multi-note car horn (probably directed at me!). I turned at just the wrong split second. Apparently at full speed I hit the back of a parked car, flew over the handlebars, cleared two cars and finally landed face first on the pavement and unconscious. I was taken to Edgware General Hospital where I spent three days under observation for concussion. I had been lucky. I had suffered a few physical injuries, several deep cuts around the eyes and on one ear, the skin on half my face

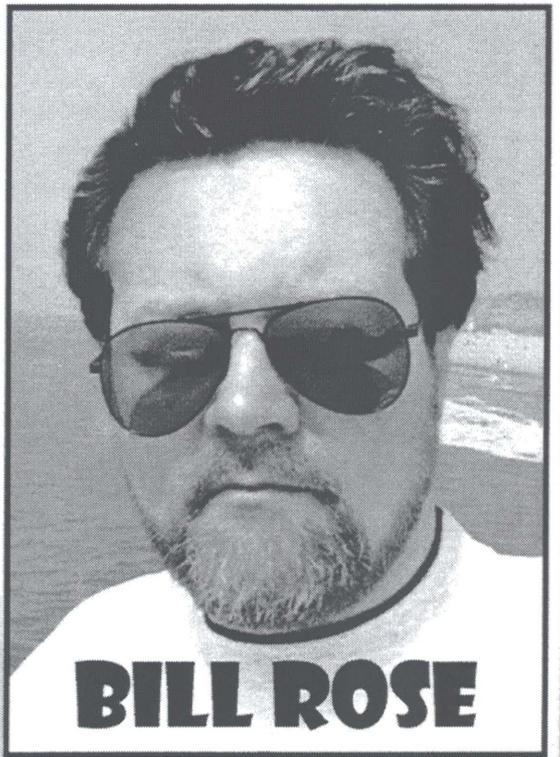
scraped off and damage to the nerves around my mouth that, even today, mean that when I talk there is less mobility to the left side of my mouth. When I woke up in hospital I had little memory of anything. In fact I didn't recognise my parents in the first few hours after the crash, and it was several days before I could remember any of the journey that had led to the accident. In the years since, mostly in the months immediately after the accident, I remembered details of the journey that day; they came back in stages. Firstly I could remember leaving the house, but not much more. Then I could remember some of the early part of the journey, but not the last roads. Finally I could remember turning into the road where I had the crash. Since that day to now I cannot remember further. The last minute or so before the crash is a memory I cannot access. However I have been told what happened by a witness and I have a fairly vivid picture of it. The problem is that if I were regressed and recalled the crash I would be uncertain whether I was remembering (a) the reality, (b) the description given to me by the witness or (c) some image of the whole thing that suits me. I feel it is at least probable that I would remember the basic incident as described to me but coloured by my own images of what I must have looked like that day. The reality is that there is probably no way that I could ever be certain now, and that is the problem for close encounter witnesses. **How do they 'check up on' their own memories?**

John Spencer is Director of Research (and former Chairman) of the **British UFO Research Association (BUFORA)**. He is an officer of the **International Committee for UFO Research (ICUR)** and a Research Specialist for the **Mutual UFO Network (MUFON)** in America, the world's largest UFO Research network. He is author of *UFOs 1947-1987* (with Hilary Evens), *Phenomenon* (with Hilary Evans), *Perspectives, Gifts of the Gods, The UFO Encyclopaedia UFOs-The Definitive Casebook* and *Fifty Years of UFOs* (with Anne Spencer)

John Spencer is a member of **The Ghost Club** and **The Society for Psychical Research (SPR)** and **The Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena (ASSAP)**. Both he and his wife Anne have co-written several books including the best-selling *Encyclopaedia of Ghosts and Spirits*. Both John and Anne were major contributors to the 40-part *Encyclopaedia of UFOs, Contact Experiences and the Paranormal* and were primary consultants for the CD *The Unexplained*, which has broken all previous sales records since publication in 1996.

He has lectured extensively both in the UK, Europe and America and contributed to many television and radio programme. John and Anne Spencer live in Hertfordshire

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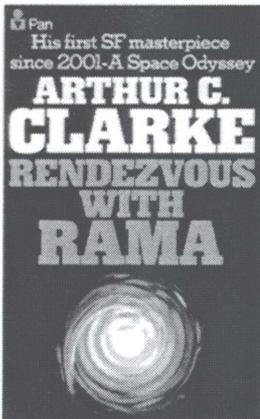


BILL ROSE

**GIVES US A GLIMPSE
OF FORTHCOMING
ATTRACTIONS.**



**CAME
FROM
HOLLYWEIRD**



Fans of science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke will be pleased to know that *Rendezvous With Rama* is about to be made into a big budget film starring Morgan Freeman.

Clarke's story was first published in 1973 and describes the arrival of a gigantic 50km long alien

worldship in the Solar System during the 22nd Century. A team of astronauts are sent to investigate and they find their way inside the craft...

Rama will undoubtedly rely on digital special effects and the scale of the story has probably prevented it from being filmed before now. I've always rated *Rama* as Clarke's best book and hope it transfers well to the big screen.

During 2000, Hollywood producers will turn their attention towards the planet Mars and two major films are about to enter production. The first is simply called *Mars*. It concerns a catastrophic accident on the planet's surface during an early manned mission. Val Kilmer, Gary Oldman and Carrie Ann-Moss have been signed up to play the lead roles. Another film called *Mission to Mars* will be directed by Brian DePalma and it is rumoured to contain some elements of *Alien*.

Battlestar Galactica becomes a screen movie starring Richard Hatch, although this isn't a new idea and about 20 years ago, a handful of episodes from the TV series were cobbled together into rather a dull cinema release for UK audiences. This will not be the only resurrection of ancient TV material. Expect to see *The Man From Uncle*, *Charlie's Angels* and *Mission Impossible II*. Other follow-ons and TV developments under discussion, are *Raiders of the Lost Ark 4*, *Mad Max 4*, *Barbarella 2*, yet another *Superman* sequel, possibly starring Nicolas Cage and *The Prisoner*.

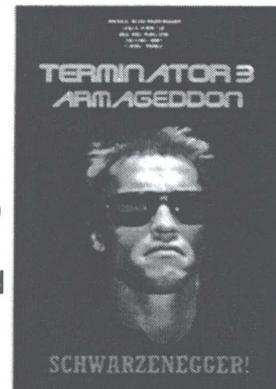
Wesley Snipes makes a second appearance as the vampire hunter in *Blade 2*, which shares a similar theme to the fairly

entertaining *Ultraviolet* series, shown recently on British TV.

Arnold Schwarzenegger's next film is:

Doc Savage - Man of Bronze based on the 1930s comic strip hero and this will be followed by the eagerly anticipated

Terminator 3 - Armageddon, directed by James Cameron. Nothing is currently known about the storyline for T3 or for that matter the fifth *Star Wars* movie, (to be made in Australia) which might benefit from less emphasis on special effects and a better script than the last film.



A forthcoming sci-fi movie that may prove too smart for a mass audience is *Cosm*, starring Dustin Hoffman and Angela Bassett. Based on the brilliant 1998 novel by sci-fi author Gregory Benford, (a professor of physics) *Cosm (MicroCosm)* is a tennis ball sized universe, accidentally created at the RHIC, (Relativistic Heavy Ion Collider) which is a real facility, currently under construction.

In the horror department, Stephen King fans can look forward to a screen version of

Desperation which tells the story of a group people who are trapped in a small Nevada town run by a demonic policeman. Nick Nolte and Kevin Spacey have been signed to play the leading roles. A film of King's short (by his standards) story,

The Mist, is also in the pipeline, which may star Michael J. Fox. A strange fog descends over a small American town and the local ecology goes berserk. A group of people are trapped inside a supermarket and must find some means of escape. It's some years since I read *The Mist*, although I don't remember it being one of his better stories.

Anthony Hopkins and Jodie Foster return in the long awaited sequel to *Silence of the Lambs* called *Hannibal*, which should do well in terms of box office returns.

Two movies that deal with religion and belief are bound to prove controversial. The first has the working title:

The Sky is Falling which tells the tale of two priests on an archaeological dig in the Middle East, who apparently discover proof that God does not exist. (Don't ask me how!)

The second film called:

The Body concerns the discovery of Christ's body, which religious leaders attempt to keep secret. New superstar Antonio Banderas plays the lead.

Harrison Ford and Michelle Pfeiffer are due to play roles in a forthcoming film, which contains elements of the supernatural called:

What Lies Beneath.

The Mothman Prophecies will be based on a series of unexplained 1960s sightings of large humanoid moth-like creatures and UFOs around a town called Point Pleasant which is located on the Ohio-West Virginia State line. Directed by Carl Franklin and starring Richard Gere, filming is expected to begin in June 2000. This film is unlikely to follow documented events too closely, but it should generate a great deal of public interest.

The long awaited screen version of William Gibson's award winning cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer* has reached the pre-production stage and filming will begin in late 2000.

Sylvester Stallone will play Jack Carter in a remake of the classic 1971 Newcastle upon Tyne gangster movie:

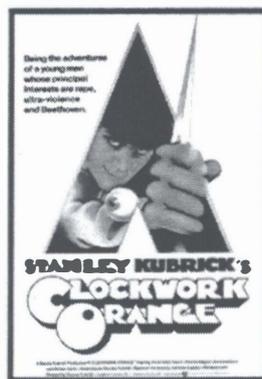
Get Carter, with Michael Caine (who starred in the original film) taking a secondary role as his sidekick. Not a lot of people know that! The 21st Century version of this movie will be set in a US city and directed by Mike Canton, who promises to give it a *Pulp Fiction* feel. Mike Hodges who made the original *Get Carter* has been quoted as saying, "(this idea) shows a total lack of imagination" and "I never understand why people want to remake perfectly good films!"

Stallone is also expected to take the lead in a film with the working title:

Fatalis Weird, which concerns dangerous animals on the loose in Los Angeles and may have a supernatural theme.

Little is being said about the proposed re-make of Stanley Kubrick's infamous;

A Clockwork Orange based on Anthony Burgess's 1962 novel. Personally, I can't see it surviving a relocation to America, but on the subject of the late Stanley Kubrick, he was working on a sci-fi script with Brian Aldiss called:



AI (Artificial Intelligence) which may now be made by Steven Spielberg.

However, before starting on this project, Spielberg will have to complete

Minority Report, a Philip K. Dick's story which will star Tom Cruise. The theme of *Minority Report*

is that at some point in the future, governments will have the technological means to determine if individuals are about to commit crimes. Locking people up who haven't committed crimes? What a strange idea, who would ever consider doing that?

In the political-action area, there will be another "Jack Ryan" film based on Tom Clancy's novel *The Sum of All Fears* starring Harrison Ford. This time, Deputy CIA Director Jack Ryan must stop a group of Palestinian terrorists exploding a nuclear weapon. I read the first two hundred pages of this book during a transatlantic flight some years ago and finally gave up on it. Clancy's stories make pretty good films, but in my opinion, the books are too long and over-descriptive for an easy read. I'm sure he'd be really concerned to know that!

Finally, we can expect to see Kevin Costner in *13 Days* which explores the Cuban Missile Crisis. I wonder if it will have the same feel as *JFK*? It would certainly be nice to see Costner in something good for a change.

Bill Rose is a regular contributor to *Strange Daze* and he specialises in aerospace matters. He has a degree in economics, several technical qualifications and earns his living as a photojournalist.

AFTER DEATH COMMUNICATION—FINAL

DOES CONSCIOUSNESS

FAREWELLS: LOUIS E. LAGRAN D Ph.D



SURVIVE PHYSICAL DEATH?

True Grief is beyond expression

DOES CONSCIOUSNESS SURVIVE PHYSICAL DEATH?

This question was very much on my mind during the Christmas of 1997 whilst browsing in Dillons Bookstore looking for new publications on the near-death experience (NDE), when I came across Dr. Louis LaGrand's remarkable book entitled: *After Death Communication – Final Farewells* and purchased it immediately.

I was extremely moved by the way in which Dr. LaGrand addressed the poignant and sensitive issues surrounding bereavement. He did this with a compassion and perception that reached the core of emotions that people experience after the loss of someone whom they have loved. Through his work within the field of grief counselling, he has examined, in depth, the extraordinary experiences of people, who feel they have received communication from those loved ones, for whom they are grieving. These

contact experiences come in many forms, such as seeing, hearing or sensing the presence of the deceased loved one and in many other familiar ways, which involve all of the senses. A notable part of the equation here is that these contacts are also experienced by those who do not believe that consciousness survives death, and a central and revealing feature of these accounts is the spontaneity of communications, occurring when least expected and always very real and defined to the bereaved person.

It is intriguing to note Dr. LaGrand's observations that the living person is not actively seeking to make contact with the deceased and their experience does not involve a third party such as a psychic or medium. Researchers have coined the term after-death communication (ADC) in order to describe the diverse area of these extraordinary phenomena. What is also significant is the fact that throughout this book, Dr. LaGrand does not deny the possibility of these experiences as being part of another reality.

Strange Daze Publications have been fortunate enough to obtain permission from Llewellyn Publications in St. Paul, Minnesota, USA to publish extracts from Dr. LaGrand's book. I would like to express our gratitude to both Dr. LaGrand and Llewellyn Publications for their response in allowing Strange Daze to do this. I have chosen the Preface and Chapter Twelve, entitled 'Skeptics All' and these are reproduced in the following article. These extracts will act as a prelude to our section on *Strange Places*, those mystical and inexplicable places that we all journey through from time to time.

GLORIA HEATHER DIXON

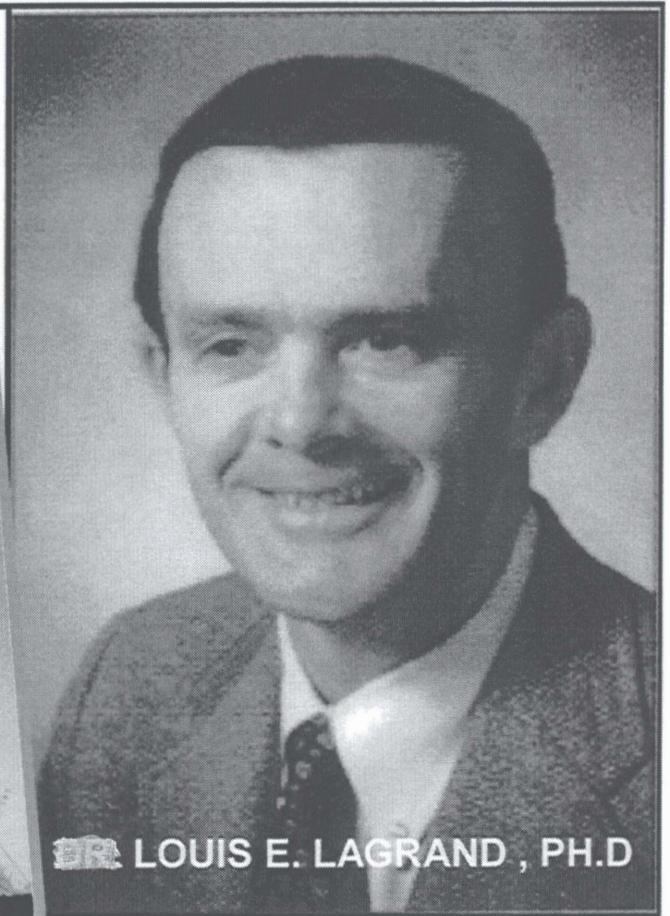
After Death Communication

FINAL FAREWELLS

EXTRAORDINARY
EXPERIENCES OF
THOSE MOURNING
THE DEATH OF
LOVED ONES



Louis E. LaGrand, Ph.D.



DR LOUIS E. LAGRAN , PH.D

After-Death Communication (ADC) is an exciting new field of research which focuses on a variety of extraordinary experiences in which a person believes he or she has been spontaneously contacted by a deceased loved one. It is important to emphasize that the living person is not actively seeking to make contact with the deceased; the experience does not in any way involve a psychic. Instead, it is the deceased (or the unconscious or perhaps a Supreme Being) who seems to reach out to the bereaved and in doing so provides much needed comfort and solace. Although a contact experience may occur at any time, it commonly takes place when one is grieving the death of a loved one and becomes the basis for the bereaved person to deal with the loss and go on with life.

ADCs include sensing the presence of the deceased, feeling a touch, smelling a fragrance, hearing the voice or seeing the deceased, and meeting the loved one in a vision or dream. Messages are also received in symbolic ways, such as finding an object associated with the deceased, unusual appearances or behaviour of birds and animals, or other unexplainable happenings, which occur at or, shortly after the moment of death. Several combinations of the above phenomena may occur within weeks of the death or

over a period of years.

ADCs have a long and eventful history, but the nature of the experience has caused many who feel they have had contact with the deceased to maintain their silence. They seldom share the experience with others out of fear that they would be considered in need of professional help. It is only recently, with the openness displayed toward miracles, the paranormal, and near-death experiences, that people have been willing to speak about these helpful contacts. Andrew Greeley, the well-known author and researcher at the National Opinion Research Centre, found that 42% of adults responded in the affirmative when asked whether they "felt as though you were really in touch with someone who had died." (This figure does not include children who also report the experience.) It is estimated that nearly fifty million have had a contact experience.

New interest in the phenomena has skyrocketed in both the general public and in professional care giving circles.

"Skeptics All" - see overleaf.....

In spite of its reputation as the most powerful arbiter of reality, it is nowhere written down that science is the only or the best gateway to what is real. We invented the scientific method; it did not descend from on high.

—Larry Dossey, M.D. in *Healing Words*

We tend to delegate the spiritual to others who are more interested in it, or who we feel are perhaps better equipped to deal with it. In reality, of course, the spiritual can't be delegated. We all participate in it. It is our very nature, the core of our humanity.

—Rachel Naomi Remen, M.D. in *"Spirit: Resource of Healing," Noetic Sciences Review, Autumn 1988*

One day when my wife and I were on our way to visit friends, the topic of the extraordinary came up in our conversation. I proceeded to tell her about the "visit" that the world-renowned psychiatrist Elisabeth Kubler-Ross had from a patient who had died ten months earlier. As Kubler-Ross tells the story, she was about to quit her work of giving seminars on dying and death for caregivers at the University of Chicago, and possibly discontinue this phase of her work permanently when she had this experience. Her former patient "visited" her for two reasons—to thank her for all she had done for the deceased person when she was alive, and to implore Kubler-Ross not to stop the vital work she was doing in the field of death and dying. Kubler-Ross at first wondered if the experience was the result of

working too hard or having seen too many schizophrenic patients. However, realizing that nobody would believe her about what was happening, she asked her "visitor" to write a note to a mutual friend. She obliged, wrote, and signed the note.

On concluding the story my wife looked at me and said, "Do you expect me to believe that a deceased woman came back and wrote a note as proof of her existence for this psychiatrist?" "Well," I said, "that's up to you."

We are all skeptics by nature. At times, we all question the validity or authenticity of something, which has been presented as truth. Some people are skeptical of anything that is presented to them as "the real truth." Certainly, we all have our doubts about a variety of topics in many fields of study—philosophy, sociology or psychology, to name a few. And within each of those disciplines we may doubt specific theories or doctrines and embrace others. Some of us may be skeptical of the infallibility of the Pope in Church matters, the sincerity of owners of professional athletic teams, or the reality of the id, ego, and superego. Others of us may be skeptical of the near-death experience, the validity of aptitude or IQ measurements or the existence of the Bermuda Triangle. Skeptical opposition to the supposedly unscientific field of parapsychology abounds, even though in 1969 the Parapsychological Association was granted affiliate membership in the American Association for Advancement of Science. Of course, the same natural skepticism is quite obvious among scientists themselves when they do not agree with a new theoretical model introduced in their specialty field.

The Making of a Hard-Core Skeptic

No one is immune to skepticism. It is a natural product of our deductive reasoning abilities. However, some skeptics become excessively rigid and unbending. The point of concern is this: How do we become skeptics about a subject, particularly one as controversial as the spontaneous contact by a deceased loved one, and how can we balance our skepticism? In a single word, the answer is our perceptions—the way we grasp a given subject. It is our world view, our paradigm. Interestingly, once we change our paradigm or worldview, we change our attitudes and beliefs about a given subject.

What are perceptions and how do we come by them? Perceptions are the personal meaning we give to an



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observation or an experience. And perceptions are highly variable because, although we all see with our eyes, we perceive with our brains. That is why two individuals can look at the same object or experience and perceive it quite differently. Recently, for example, a dear friend of mine was about to make a telephone call to a prospective employer to follow up on an earlier inquiry her son had made for a part-time job. As she was

looking up the number, the telephone rang. It was the potential employer wanting to speak to her son. Her immediate response was: "How about that for telepathic communication?" Her son countered with the view that it was just plain coincidence. They had both shared a common event but they had perceived it differently. No two people perceive the same event in exactly the same way. We all see the world through our own lenses.

There are several factors which play prominent roles in the development of the way we perceive an event or an experience, including the length of time a person has lived (age usually affects the meaning one attaches to an event), the self-concept (how one feels about the self, good or bad, positive or negative), immediate needs (whether or not what you are perceiving fills a present need), past experiences (all of the opportunities one has had to perceive as part of his/her cultural heritage), the nature of the physical organism (we see things quite differently when we are sick than when we are well, and we are all very different at the cellular level), and finally, the experience of threat.¹ All of these factors help shape how one gives personal meaning to an extraordinary or paranormal event. Because threat (fear) most dramatically influences perception, let's examine how threatening circumstances aid in the development of hard-core skepticism.

Threat hinders perception; it narrows the focus of observation, creating a tunnel vision of sorts. Thus, we consciously (and sometimes unconsciously) refuse to be open to alternative explanations. We limit awareness. For example, if you fear water and are told you must take a swimming course, your fear will reduce your awareness of the mechanics of any swimming stroke that the instructor is trying to teach you. The result is predictable: you will find many excuses not to attend class—you have a cold, you forgot your bathing suit, or (if you are a female), you are having your period. In all of this, the

focus is switched from learning to swim to doing everything to stay out of the dreaded water. Because fear is the major catalyst of threat, it too is consciously or unconsciously the centre of attention. In either case, it is damaging to growth and the development of new awareness and knowledge about any topic. Most importantly, fear eliminates openness to the new.

Science is sometimes threatened by that which it cannot explain or does not understand. Furthermore, there is a genuine fear among some medical professionals, scientists, and even counsellors that their closely guarded view of reality might crumble. Yet, the likes of Pasteur, Salk, Einstein, and thousands of others have had to deal with their fears associated with forging into uncharted waters and were able to manage their dilemmas. The unexplainable was not shut out; it was given careful consideration.

We all have our fears, which distort the way we perceive certain life events. In many instances, threats to deeply held beliefs cause people on both sides of an issue to become dogmatic and demanding—a defence against the possibility of change and the apprehension, which is so often inherent in giving up the old for the new. Author and physician Melvin Morse suggests that the insensitivity of some physicians to death-related visions is the result of their fear of criticism and loss of control. That is, they cannot control the arrival or departure of death-related phenomena.²

Probably the most influential factor of all in the way we perceive any event is our belief system. What we believe to be true affects everything we do, and there are many unconscious beliefs we are not aware of that affect our behaviour. In fact, there is much evidence to suggest that more of our daily mental activity takes place on an unconscious level than on a conscious one.³ These unconscious beliefs are ingrained early in life and heavily influence perceptions and our actions. Consider the following unconscious beliefs associated with grieving:

Grief should be brief.

Controlling the expression of sorrow is essential.

Crying is a sign of weakness.

Women are expected to be emotional.

Men must "be strong."

Medicine and psychology have shown over and over again that beliefs also strongly affect our biology. Gerontologists, for example, have changed the beliefs of many elderly people, encouraging them to refrain from sedentary lifestyles and remain active. The result is a

reduction in the loss of skeletal and muscle tissue. Further evidence of the reality that belief affects biology is a study of cancer patients in Birmingham, England, who were informed that the chemotherapy they were to receive would cause loss of hair. Unknowingly, a number of patients were given a placebo of no medicinal value, yet all suffered hair loss. In fact, the field of psychoneuroimmunology—the study of the relationship between the brain, the endocrine system, and the immune system—shows that what we think affects the viability of the immune system as well as every cell in the body.

Culture and the Skeptic

Especially when it comes to examining extraordinary phenomena, beliefs which the culture imprints below the level of conscious awareness—like seeing is believing—play a leading role in how we perceive and ultimately judge an event. For example, even though our senses do play tricks on us at times, most people are still led to believe, sometimes erroneously, that reality is that which can be seen.

It is commonly accepted that Western civilization is particularly oriented toward scientism and naturalism. Indeed, we have made huge strides forward in all fields of endeavour because of the scientific method. Belief in it is thoroughly ingrained in each of us. How did that come about?

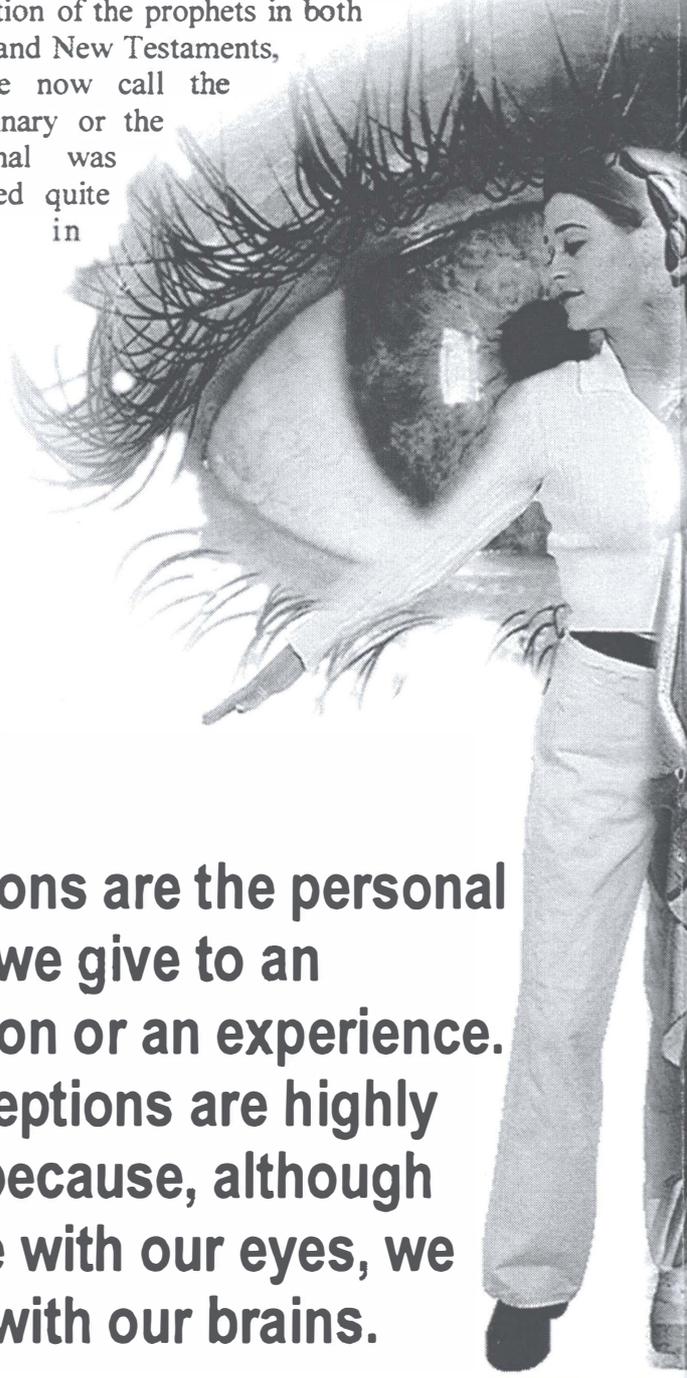
A major player in the thrust of transforming society from the strict

authoritarianism of the Middle Ages to the equally strict scientific method we know today was the canon and lawyer Nicolaus Copernicus. The Copernican Revolution (not to minimize the contributions of Galileo and Kepler) challenged the old belief that the earth was the centre of the universe, and ultimately showed that the earth revolved around the sun. More important to our discussion, this discovery, among others, was the beginning of the rapid swing of the pendulum away from ancient authority and the old way of looking at the universe. This swing also brought about a change in critical beliefs about the role of Providence in the creation of the universe, the occurrence of miracles, and the possibility of supernatural or unseen phenomena.

In the past, contact experiences—visions, voices, apparitions, unexplained happenings—were quite normally accepted. For example, in the tradition of the prophets in both the Old and New Testaments, what we now call the extraordinary or the paranormal was considered quite normal in



“Perceptions are the personal meaning we give to an observation or an experience. And perceptions are highly variable because, although we all see with our eyes, we perceive with our brains.



communicating with Divine Providence. In this vein, consider when Paul was about to be shipwrecked on his voyage to Rome.

With the Adriatic Sea erupting in tumultuous waves an angel appeared and told him that God granted safety to him and all who sailed with him. The ship was destroyed, but not one of the 276 people on board perished. Then there is the account of Joseph and Mary fleeing to Egypt, having been warned in a dream that Herod wanted to kill the Christ child. Spontaneous appearances of angels, prophetic dreams, unusual signs, or voices heard were constant forms of communication. For some, mystical experiences of various kinds were actively sought after.

However, as the scientific pendulum picked up speed with the publication of Descartes' Discourse on Method, it also picked up and strengthened the belief that truth and authority are only found in direct systematic observation and experimentation. Assumptions, anecdotal data, and the spiritual nature of people and the universe did not fit the scientific view of reality. A new theme was gradually adopted, one that asserted we are not spiritual beings; we are physical beings with anomalies science has yet to explain. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the new belief structure fashioned by the scientific method took on additional potency by branding all which could not be systematically observed and categorized as either nonexistent or the work of devious men trying to trick a gullible public.

The swing of any pendulum commonly goes to extremes. And the swing from church authority to scientific authority was bound to bring abuses. One of the most serious was

“That is why two individuals can look at the same object or experience and perceive it quite differently.”

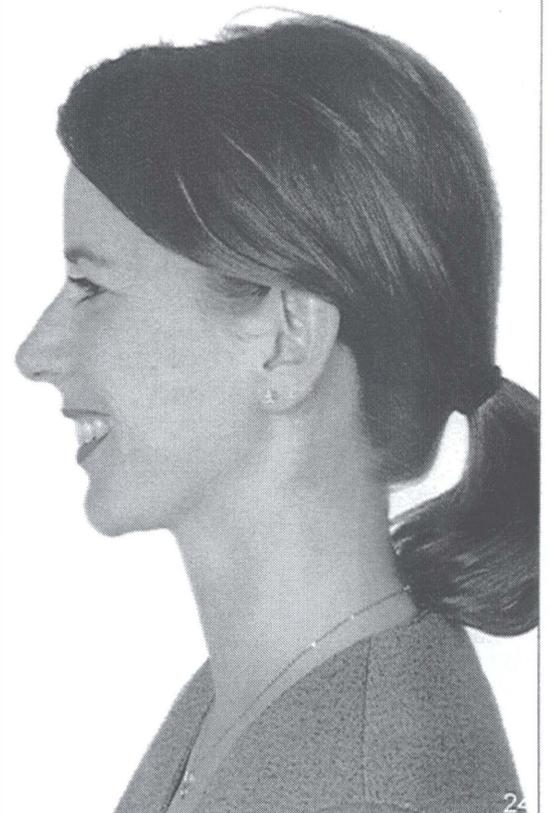
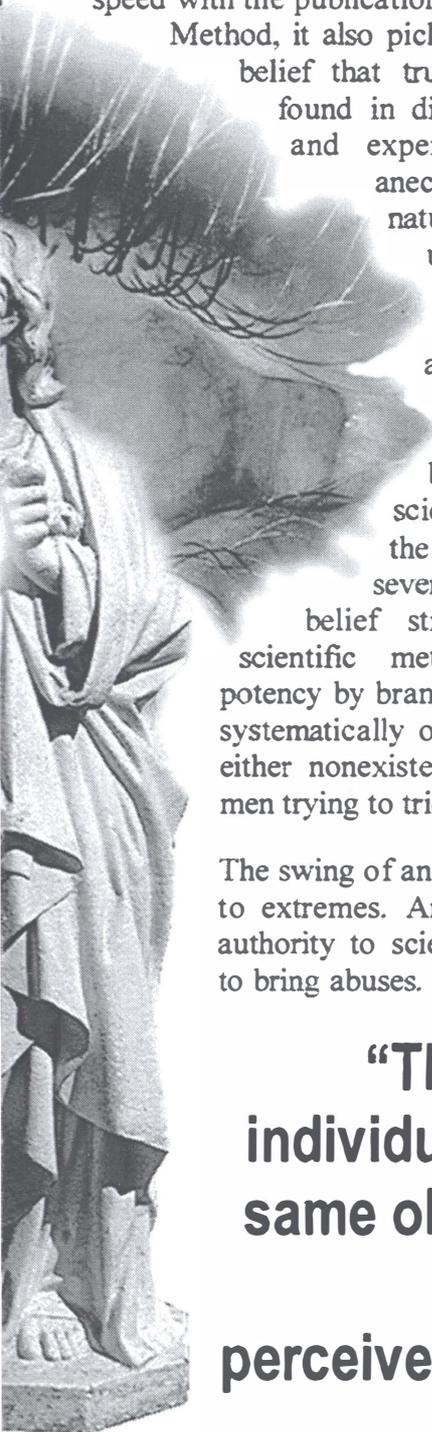
the loss of the importance of mystery, faith, and the acceptance of the extraordinary. There has been no place for that which cannot be systematically observed, such as a vision or an apparition. Because science would not allow for any phenomena which would transcend space and time, miracles were now forbidden to exist.

One historian says bluntly that the scientific revolution was “the most momentous mutation in human affairs since the advent of agriculture or the dawn of civilization.”⁵

Whenever the collective belief is that an event is fictitious, it is very difficult for an individual not to conform and go along with the prevailing winds of disbelief. In our society, science has a monopolistic claim to knowledge.

Why the Unseen is So Hard to Believe

Is there only one reality? As a society we have minimized, indeed forgotten and expunged, the huge untapped resource of the unseen for healing and renewal in daily life. The beliefs accompanying this loss have been passed down from generation to generation, affecting the way we perceive any unproven or un-provable event. Consider for a moment a common response to the following: Telepathy, clairvoyance, psychokinesis, and precognition. What is your initial reaction to reading these words? Do they strike you as being unscientific, occult, mysterious, or strange? Do you immediately feel



a less-than-open attitude toward the processes they represent? Not infrequently, such attitudes are a product of the sub-conscious resistance toward the unseen inherent in the beliefs of Western society. And I would be one of the first to admit that it is no easy task to change those ingrained resistances.

Some of those resistances are reinforced by the media, which has sensationalized the extraordinary for entertainment and profit. Credibility is strained as contact experiences are portrayed in grossly distorted fashion. At the time I am writing this, even one of the popular daytime soap opera shows is featuring a story line in which one of the characters is regularly visited by his deceased wife, who is upset by his new romantic interest.

Every society has its way of programming its members, which is why each country possesses very strong beliefs about what is important and valuable. It is the cultural programming of values, beliefs, and traditions which causes conflict among countries. Generally, the citizens of each country believe that what they have been taught is the way it should be everywhere. We often forget we are wearing these cultural lenses, and our way becomes, to us, the only way of looking at life. In short, it can be argued that we are all in a cultural trance of sorts and it takes concerted effort to break the trance. Consequently, the cultural ethic in the mind of Americans that regards extraordinary phenomena as being nonexistent is strong. Indeed, it is just as strong as our beliefs in individual freedom and due process under the law. We have learned our lessons well in many ways, and are closed off to the possibility that non-physical reality may be as genuine as physical reality.

Extensive clinical and experimental research and anthropological observations have provided further support for the hypothesis that to some degree we only see what our culture tells us we can see, only know what our society tells us we can know.

—Willis Harman & Howard Rheingold,
Higher Creativity.

Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, 1984

The negative image of the unseen has been reinforced through the years by the uncovering of fraudulent behaviour by unscrupulous pretenders.

It is important to recognize at the outset that

the field of the extraordinary (or the paranormal, if you prefer the term) has been riddled with trickery, deceit, misrepresentation, and misunderstanding. And, as in most fields of study, it has its share of incompetence, overgeneralization, and self-deception.

You will not have to search far to find chicanery. Many books on parapsychology give ample coverage to the fact that fraud in this area has been a fact of life, especially in the early history of the study of unusual phenomena.⁶ Many Society for Psychical Research (SPR) investigators exposed the fraud and deception of those who purported to have had extraordinary experiences. The SPR's mission has always been to investigate the extraordinary within a strictly scientific framework. At times, it seems the SPR's research designs have been too rigid as they try to appease the skeptics. (For example, many high-quality experiences submitted for research purposes have been discarded because of time lapses between the time they occurred and they were reported.) However, in recent times,

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there are a number of organized groups (like the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, a not-for-profit scientific and educational organization) which zealously point out the faults in some reports—sometimes by means which are themselves suspect. As a result of this fraudulent history and the demand for evidence far exceeding standards required of other disciplines, the likelihood of the scientific community demeaning any type of extraordinary phenomena—as well as those reporting it—is naturally increased. However, as with most controversial issues, there are various degrees of truth, half-truths, and lies to be dealt with, not the least of which are the host of statistics and evidence purportedly showing proof for or against the validity of the phenomena. Of course, scientists are not immune from supporting their pet hypotheses with less-than-quality work either. They have to deal with the occupational hazards of ambition, greed, and jealousy just like those in other lines of work. Both science and parapsychology are only as reliable as those who apply their methods. It is clear that either side can sometimes be found sacrificing truth on the altar of notoriety.

What I am getting at is that it may well be impossible to obtain scientific evidence to say unequivocally that the contact experience is, beyond a shadow of a doubt, true. Unfortunately, but undeniably, the evasiveness of the contact experience is another reason mainstream scientists have shunned investigation of the phenomena. Who is ever going to pull off an

apparition in a laboratory setting? Who will be able to obtain the cooperation of a deceased husband to talk to his widow with researchers standing by in white coats with pencils poised? As they say in Missouri—show me. I regret to say at this time that such a demand cannot be met, and probably never will be. So some individuals will always look at those reporting extraordinary events with a jaundiced eye, and view the events as simply captivating tales. It is a prejudice deeply based in cultural consensus.

Balancing Your Skepticism

But what about those who are on the fringes of believing, who are unsure, who are open to the possibility that some of the bereaved may be experiencing something that is real, that maybe they “know” something that we can’t yet fathom? The decision to be open about those possibilities is the most important single step you can take toward understanding such experiences. Keep in mind that the attitudes and beliefs of the people you live and work with have a major impact on your own beliefs when it comes to subjects that cannot be easily explained. The power of suggestion is a potent force. So we have to counter those influences and introduce alternative explanations.

Even if you are a full-blown skeptic, who insists that there is no evidence to support the existence of the unexplainable, let me recommend where you can start to make progress on coming to a more reasoned judgment about the unusual experiences of the bereaved. It all begins by being open to the possibility that the phenomena can be explained. As Goethe, Germany’s gifted man of letters, put it: “Man must cling to his faith that the incomprehensible is comprehensible, else he would cease to investigate.”⁷ It is good to be skeptical, but not to be overcome by skepticism.

In the opposite vein, the same over-identification happens to some people who think they have had a contact experience when they have not, or who believe that all unusual experiences are supernatural in origin. For example, some people have reported apparitions which on investigation have turned out to be nothing more than shadows or reflections off of shiny surfaces. They build on their biases and close off any reasonable discussions to the contrary, and their reasoning becomes heavily biased without their being fully aware of it.

So to avoid both traps, you need to start from the bottom and build. How? First and foremost, do your homework. Become as fully informed about the content and meaning of the contact experience as you can.

Once we become fully aware of perceptions other than our own, we often find some things we can agree on. Read a number of research reports on the subject. You will be surprised that although there is some questionable data bandied about, a number of studies are reputable and deserve serious consideration. The American and British Societies for Psychical Research have several thousand cases of every description in their archives, many well documented, and they will provide some of the most interesting reading in this regard. Make it a point to read *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* by F. W. H. Myers, *Hauntings and Apparitions* by Andrew Mackenzie, and *Parting Visions* by Melvin Morse. These books will provide material that will suggest lots of new questions for you to consider. See the suggested readings section at the end of the book for additional information. Then you will be in a much better position to make a decision about the authenticity of contact experiences from a new frame of reference.

Next, make every attempt to locate and speak with someone who has reported a contact experience. Start first within your own family and with your relatives. You may be surprised that someone in your family has had an experience but has been afraid to share it within the family, since there is always the fear of being branded too far out or too imaginative.

In my own family, my twin sisters finally told me after fifteen years that a day or two before my mother died, they both saw a dark cloud over her head as they saw her working at a crafts fair in our town. It was, to say the least, a strange premonition of her death, since the cloud was not seen by anyone else and was there only momentarily before suddenly disappearing. Was it a premonition, a sign? Did it occur so that they would later be able to deal with her death in a more healthy manner, because they were very close to her? (Some people who receive a premonition of this type believe it to be a privileged sign which reinforces their belief in an afterlife and a Supreme Intelligence.) Or was it simply their imaginations working overtime—and at the same time? And why did only the two of them see whatever it was? It is well known that twins often possess psychic ability. However, neither of them offered to tell me about their experiences until I told one of them that I was gathering data on unusual experiences of the bereaved. Then they knew I was safe to talk to. To say the least, I felt bad I was not told of this when it happened, yet I could understand

their motivation for maintaining their silence.

After checking in your own social circle, try finding a counsellor or clergy person you may know. Ask if they have had people who have reported extraordinary events when grieving. Try to obtain their opinions about what they believe they have seen. The more you can become informed, the more you may be able to partially balance the one-sided view which we all so easily pick up, and which closes the mind to the possibility that the unseen is a viable reality.

You can ask if someone who works in or is a volunteer for a hospice has heard any unusual stories about the bereaved. Hospices provide follow-up care for the families of people who die in their care by way of ongoing bereavement support groups. Open discussion of unusual events is encouraged. Of course, your efforts in this regard will only provide anecdotal data, which is not considered as evidence of anything. Nonetheless, you will at least get an idea of the variety of experiences reported, which will raise more questions in your mind than provide answers. That's good, because additional questions will spur you on to seek more data upon which reasoned decisions can be made.

Also consider this: A huge database has been generated (see Chapter 2) through the millions of people who report a variety of extraordinary experiences concerning deceased loved ones. Isn't that enough to say, "Let's take a closer look at what's going on out there?" There is no question that people have extraordinary contact experiences, and other not-easy-to-explain experiences as well. Let's not close our eyes and say that the phenomenon is impossible to experience. Use the scientific method to acknowledge there is something going on that science can't pinpoint, but which is, to use their language, a major anomaly to be studied.

The Seen vs. the Unseen

One of the most critical factors in denying the existence of any type of difficult-to-explain activity, whether it be psychic ability or contact experiences, is the overvaluation of material or physical phenomena. From birth to old age we are ceaselessly subjected to a constant barrage of visual imagery from the environment in which we live. The abundance of movies, television, billboard advertisements, pictures, video games, and the glittering decor of the cities is both attractive and eye-catching. This persistent

one-dimensional view of reality becomes an integral part of our lifestyles, highlighting the importance of physical reality while minimizing the possibility of other realities. We are engulfed with media hype from all sides. As mentioned earlier, it is that same media which, as part of its entertainment goals, has distorted extraordinary phenomena, adding a fairy tale dimension.

This exclusive focus of our society on physical reality is self-reinforcing. The need to see, measure, weigh, and touch that which one thinks is real becomes the sole criteria for deciding what to believe. Our orientation to physical reality significantly limits our awareness of, and participation in, the spiritual development of our humanity. Let's illustrate this in the following way. For comparison purposes, consider the two lists below:

Physical Reality	Non-physical Reality
Conscious Mind	Unconscious or Subconscious Mind
Reason	Imagination
Logic	Faith, Hope, Love
Scientific Method	Extraordinary Experiences
Cause and Effect	Miracle Healings
Conversations	Autosuggestion
Physical Senses	Visualization Techniques
Space/Time Barriers	Visions
Research	Intuition
Objective	Subjective
Experimental	Spiritual

Obviously, the lists are abbreviated. Nonetheless, the topics in the left-hand column are very much a part of our physical orientation, while those on the right cannot be accurately measured. I dare say that many people utilize some of the items in the right-hand column on a daily basis, or turn to non-physical reality when dealing with persistent problems and to enrich their lives. For example, millions of people successfully use visualization techniques in coping with stress, or as motivation to achieve a specific goal. In fact, we often utilize that which is invisible and difficult to measure and receive tangible and visible rewards for our efforts. Consider the many scientific studies on the efficacy of prayer found in the highly regarded book *Healing Words*, written by a physician who has observed that, simply put, prayer works. Yet some scientists still scoff at the possibility that prayer could affect the healing of someone miles away.

Non-physical factors, among others, lead to the development of our often-neglected spiritual side. Surely, the reassuring presence of non-physical reality bolsters faith and the motivation to go on in the face of loss. Actually, both of the columns are simply a beginning description of the totality of each person—

we are not merely physical beings, but rather both physical and spiritual. French philosopher and mystic Teilhard de Chardin put it this way:

"We are not human beings having a spiritual experience we are spiritual beings having a human experience."

Indeed, the nature and quality of physical reality is a direct reflection of the degree to which the non-physical is embraced.

There is a question of profound significance to ask ourselves: **Is the materialistic scientific worldview an adequate view of reality?** A second and related question of consequence is: Does gender play a part in the overemphasis on physical reality? Let's begin with the second question, which will lead us back to the first. It may be of more than passing significance that the most vociferous of skeptics happen to be males (who are also seldom seen at support groups for the bereaved). Men have lost a great deal of their feminine side, that sense of mystery and awe in the presence of the unknown, and there is too much mystery in each of us that is not fully understood to calmly accept the thesis that the materialistic worldview is the only answer to the question of our nature. We possess what appears to be a variety of puzzling abilities, yet at the present time I am inclined to believe that there are far fewer contact experiences reported by men because they are less willing to recognize and share their experiences for fear of damaging the false image of strength imposed by society. There are few males willing to say, "Yes, I've had a spiritual experience."

Regrettably, we are very uneasy about mystery; we have trouble accepting or dealing with it due to our orientation toward clear-cut matter-of-fact answers. That is why labelling contact phenomena an illusion, a hallucination, or a chance occurrence gives a sense of security and control; we have a formula to explain the

with the material world. In *A Return to Love*, author Marianne Williamson put it another way when she wrote,

*"We overvalue what we perceive with our physical senses, and we undervalue what we know to be true in our hearts."*⁸

What we know to be true in our hearts is often not amenable to scientific study, but that does not necessarily make it less valid in our experiential world. In fact, knowledge of the heart is more embracing and inescapable than scientific knowledge.

Ask members of the medical profession what happens when you cover one eye for a period of time, and they will respond that the remaining eye becomes stronger and dominates the scene. The subject also loses their depth perception. That is exactly what has happened with our covering of the subjective and spiritual side of our being—we are dominated by physical imagery and have lost touch with the depths of our beings, our spiritual selves—greatly diminishing the true nature of our humanity. We have two selves which naturally coalesce unless they are purposely kept separated. If we are to attempt to reduce our dogmatic skepticism and open ourselves to explanations that cannot fully carry the scientific seal of approval, it is necessary to surrender some of our personal resistance and let our defences down. Robert Jahn and Brenda Dunne, in *Margins of Reality*, have rightly suggested that extraordinary claims demand extraordinary proof, but they follow this suggestion with an important admonition:

Nonetheless, that same science, and that same psyche, must have the openness of mind, the humility in the face of empirical evidence,

"What we know to be true in our hearts is often not amenable to scientific study, but that does not necessarily make it less valid in our experiential world. In fact, knowledge of the heart is more embracing and inescapable than scientific knowledge."

unknown. But mystery is part of the richness of life, and labelling limits the awareness of mystery: it narrows our vision. The perennial problem of language is that by labelling we prejudge and assume. **What is becoming clear to many people is that the conventional model of reality does not fully address actual experience.**

The dilemma of mystery and our spiritual malnutrition is exacerbated by pre-occupation

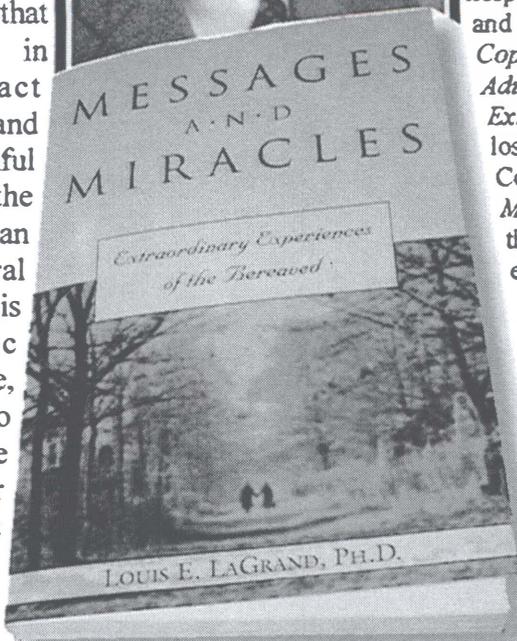
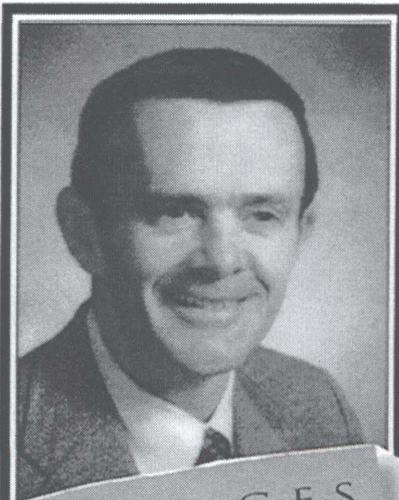


and the flexibility of spirit to accommodate to new information when such is incontrovertibly presented, for therein lies the only route for their vital growth and maturation.⁹

If transformation occurs in the lives of many of the bereaved who have a contact experience—and it obviously does, as we have witnessed in the preceding chapters—then regardless of our preconceived notions about cause, let's muster that "humility in the face of empirical evidence" and begin the search for the how and why.

To sum up, there are five key points to be restated in view of the firmly entrenched skepticism that engulfs the extraordinary in general and the contact experience in particular, and thereby eliminates the healthful effects for the bereaved. First, the personal meaning we give to an experience is based on several factors, not the least of which is the dominant scientific orientation of the culture, particularly when it comes to addressing the topic of the extraordinary. Second, fear and the perception of threat reduce awareness and the ability of many hard-core skeptics to entertain an openness to the possibility that the contact experience is something other than the product of overactive imaginations or people "in need." Again, the consequences for the bereaved can be damaging when the significant people in their lives trivialize such a meaningful event. Third, just because the contact experience cannot be systematically observed and authenticated, it should not be categorically ignored nor should it automatically imply that many of these experiences are not real. Fourth, each of us can develop a healthy questioning attitude about the contact experience by first doing our homework and finding out all we can from the most reliable sources. And finally, the overemphasis on and the overvaluing of physical reality puts us at a disadvantage by minimizing the spiritual dimension and the mystery which is an integral part of every individual. If only

for the potential healing benefits to the bereaved, let us take that first step of exploring the wide range of their extraordinary experiences with a pragmatic view. In so doing, we will be gathering data which may break the logjam between believers and unbelievers. After all, as Dr. Larry Dossey stated in the opening quote of this chapter, "It is nowhere written down that science is the only or best gateway to what is real."



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A certified grief counsellor as well as a trainer for hospice volunteers, he is the author of five books and numerous articles. Two of his earlier books, *Coping With Separation and Loss as a Young Adult* and *Changing Patterns of Human Existence*, are based on his ten-year study of the loss responses of youth. *After Death Communication: Final Farewells and Messages and Miracles* are the result of more than eighteen years of interest in the extraordinary experiences of the bereaved.

Dr. LaGrand is a founder and past president of the board of directors of Hospice of St. Lawrence Valley, Inc. and a member formerly on the board of directors of the Association for Death Education and Counselling (ADEC). He is also a member of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, and of the American Society for Psychical Research. He presently is Director of Loss Education Associates and Bereavement Coordinator at our Lady of Lourdes in Venice, Florida.

As a counsellor, educator, lecturer, author, and media guest, Louis E. LaGrand brings the fruits of more than thirty-five years of experience, research, and compassion to the lives of those who mourn a loved one. With an open-mindedness often missing in his profession, he encourages clients and counsellors alike to accept the healing value of communication with departed loved ones. Dr. LaGrand and his wife, Barbara, reside in Florida.

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STEPPING STONES TO OTHER WORLDS?

The most profound puzzle of all is the fact that, whatever we may experience mentally, time does not pass, nor does there exist a past, present, or future. In its place is an existence of many universes, overlapping at their 'edges', where 'time' as we understand it is an irrelevance.....

*Professor Paul Davies,
Other Worlds.*

**GLORIA
HEATHER
DIXON**

In the previous article, which encompassed extracts from *After Death Communication – Final Farewells*, Dr. LaGrand looked at the beliefs and scepticism surrounding claims of extraordinary contact experiences in bereavement. In order to illustrate this further I would like to take the reader one step beyond and into these realms from a first hand account of after death communication and the complexities of our view of reality.

These experiences were related to me by Patricia, who also has a curious and unusual story to tell relating to a

possible haunting in a hotel in the Cheltenham area, whilst staying there in 1996.

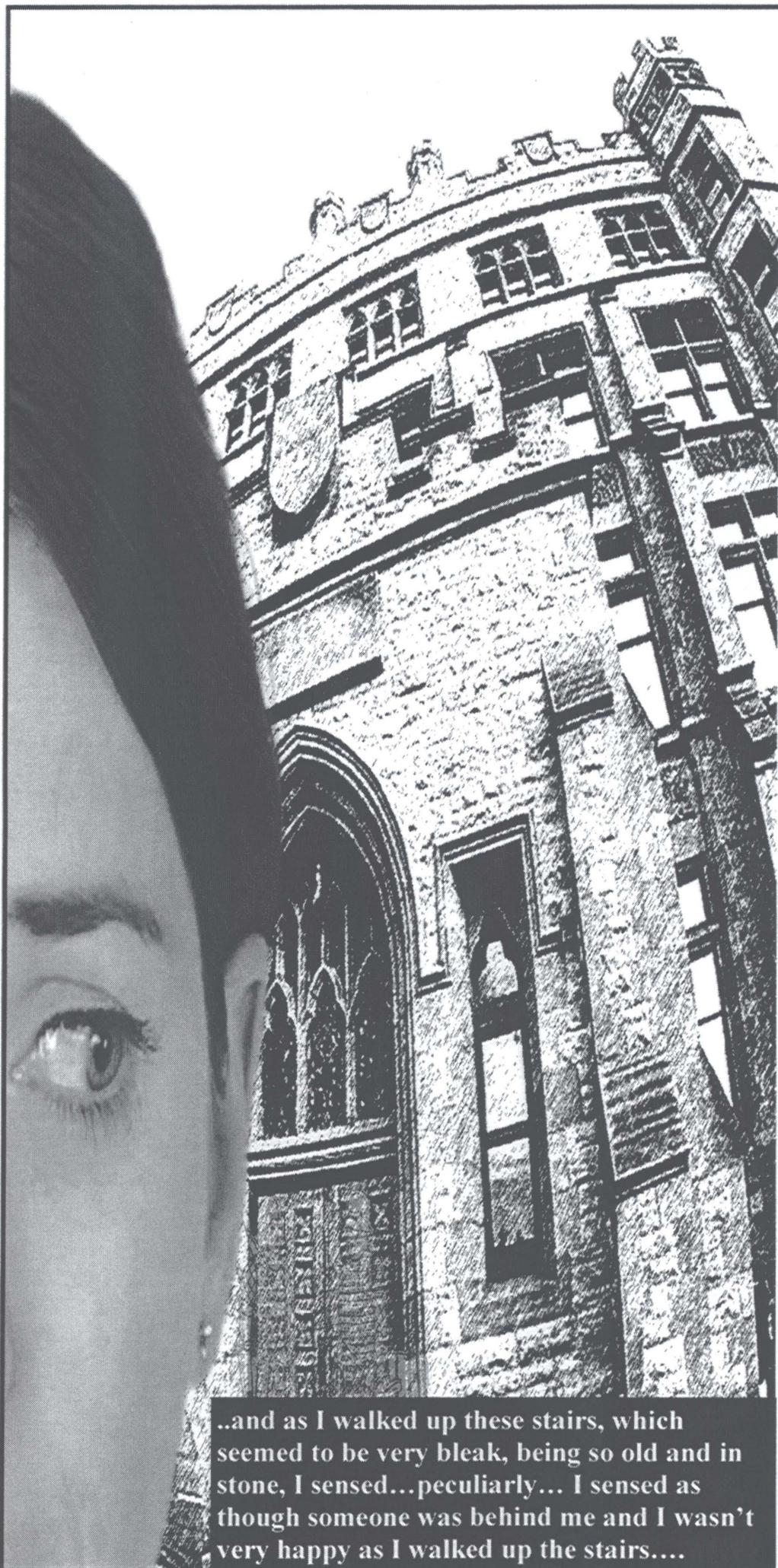
Let us begin the journey that will take us through many future issues of *Strange Daze*.

The lady concerned in the following reports has had many unusual experiences, which have occurred intermittently during her life. She was married to an RAF officer and has travelled extensively because of this. She is a down-to-earth, sensible and practical lady, who takes these experiences and anomalous events in her life very much in her stride. She does not particularly examine the nature of what may be happening or concern herself with why she has experienced these events. She accepts them as part of her life and feels that they occur in some way that she has yet to understand. However, she does not dismiss the reality of these events, and the possibility that there is an interaction with those 'other worlds' that maybe operating outside the framework of our perception of reality.

This lady is well known to me and I have heard of many curious incidents in her life, which she has related from time to time. She neither dwells on these unusual experiences, but nor does she discount them. She appears to integrate them into her life and just gets on with day-to-day living.. The following is a transcript of her account of these compelling events.

PATRICIA'S STORY

I was invited to join some old American friends of mine as their guest. I was to stay with them at a hotel just outside of Cheltenham in Gloucestershire in May of 1996. It was a very old hotel from the thirteenth century. When I arrived in the afternoon I was given my room number, which was nineteen and made my way up the stairs to unpack my luggage etc. It was on the second floor, but there were no lifts as it was a very old hotel. The stairs were just like going up into a turret and as I walked up these stairs, which seemed to be very bleak, being so old and in stone, I sensed...peculiarly... I sensed as though someone was behind me and I wasn't very happy as I walked up the stairs. I thought, 'this is ridiculous', but there was some kind of pressure as I walked up the stairs, which I had to do slowly because they were shaped like that. You couldn't dash up the turret stairs,



because they were awkward to climb.

I went into my room to unpack all my things and I can't explain exactly in words....but....I was uneasy in the room. I didn't know the reason why, as there was nothing there to upset me, but I just felt very uneasy in the room, which was very unusual for me. I unpacked all my things then came downstairs and we went out and then we had our dinner together. When I went upstairs later in the evening to retire, I still sensed something peculiar. It was before midnight at this time and when I went to open the wardrobe door, I hesitated before opening it, which was rather strange because I thought, 'why am I hesitating, it's only a wardrobe', but I felt as though there was some presence there. I opened the wardrobe, there was nothing there, so I put my clothes away, shut the door and went to bed.

My bed was against wall and was a single bed. I went off to sleep and I was awakened by this terrific force on my back. I was turned towards the wall in the bed and I woke up with this terrific pressure on my back, forcing and pushing me in a very unpleasant way and I was really frightened and thought, 'dear me what is going on?'. Because it was my first night in the room, I had to collect my thoughts as to where the lights were and I remembered that there was a light there somewhere further up, high above and to the side of the bed where I was sleeping. It took great courage, I have to say, to find the light and put it on, because I was petrified to turn because of the pressure in my back, which was really hurting me. I put the light on and very reluctantly turned

..and as I walked up these stairs, which seemed to be very bleak, being so old and in stone, I sensed...peculiarly... I sensed as though someone was behind me and I wasn't very happy as I walked up the stairs....

roundand there was NOTHING there. After putting the light on, the pressure dispersed. I was definitely awake, because when awakened... and I am sure it was that that made me awaken... I felt 'can I be imagining this', but I was quite well awake and it continued...this pressure.... and I was really quite frightened...it was almost as though someone was pushing me into the wall with such force.... and really to be quite honest it took a lot of courage for me to try and find the light, bearing in mind it was my first night in the room...to switch it on...to find out.

Now from then, I could not get back to sleep, as one would appreciate, for quite some time. I left all the lights on in the room all night long and I was most unhappy about it.

However, the following morning, I went down to join my American friends for breakfast. During breakfast, I told my friends about my experience the night before. They insisted I should change my room, but in a way I felt they hesitated because of the fact that the year before I had lost my husband and maybe they thought that I was vulnerable, but really they knew me well enough to know this would not be the case.

I then went to the reception area, because it was still on my mind, and asked the receptionist if he could enlighten me with any information about the hotel because of the bad experience I had during the night in my room. He said to me "your room number, was it nineteen?". I said, "yes, it is nineteen". "Oh", he said, "the maid, who changes the beds, would not go up to that room, because she was petrified whenever she went up the turret stairs, there was the marching of heavy feet behind her and she was petrified and ran down and would not go back there...to that room...anymore". However, although my friends felt I must move rooms, I felt rather embarrassed that there would be all this performance to try and find another room, and I said just to leave it and I would try and cope with it..

That night I did not go to sleep at all without all the lights on and I even had the television on and I hesitated and went towards the wardrobe again and I had a terrible sense that there was somebody there. It was as though... almost as though...the spirit or whoever it was that was there were out more or less to injure you, not to be pleasant. Another strange thing was that on looking out of the window, there were four white doves there...four white doves, outside of my window, on top of a little turret outside. This fascinated me to see those four white birds there. I thought it was very strange....very strange.

I never felt at ease in that room at all. After the third night we left, so I didn't have that problem, but it was something very strange that I experienced. I hadn't experienced that

type of thing before and I was really quite shaken by these experiences. Actually I asked for a booklet, which I was given, about the history of the hotel.

I asked Patricia a few questions after her account of these events

This unusual presence that you felt in the room, you talk about the wardrobe, would you say that this was emanating from within the wardrobe or from the general area?

Patricia: It felt as though it was within the wardrobe and I felt as though it was an evil presence, nothing pleasant.

You kept the lights on and you did not receive this sensation of the pressure on your back again?

Patricia: No, no I did not. I had a terrible sense of uneasiness that there was some presence around that I couldn't see, because I had the light on all the time and it is something I never do at night when I go to sleep, I never leave the lights on. I am not inclined to worry about that at all. I am sure that helped to keep, whatever it was, at bay....the lights on and the television.

Did you mention in the hotel about these white doves at all and whether these may have been indigenous to the area?

No, as a matter of fact I didn't. I don't know why I didn't do that, but I did find it very unusual..

Is there anything else you can remember that anyone else told you about that room during your stay there?

Only the receptionist, who told me about the maid, who felt there were people behind her marching up the stairs and it was very forceful and the noise was indescribable to her and she was petrified and ran back down saying she would never go up there again.

There is little doubt that Patricia experienced some strange and inexplicable events in this hotel. She called me the following day after arriving there, and when I asked how she was enjoying herself, she was very apprehensive in her response and went on

to tell me about this experience the previous night and the fact that she was very uneasy in this particular room. I did mention to her about changing her room, but she obviously felt embarrassed about having to do this and had decided against it.

I asked Patricia to tell me about her experiences from April of 1995. She recalls these experiences in the following way.

Approximately within a week after my husband, Ron, was buried, I was in the bathroom in the morning getting dressed and putting my make-up on and we have a radio in the bathroom... there was music playing and suddenly this voice shouted out "Pat" and it was exactly like my husband calling my name and I thought I must be imagining this and it must be on the radio and I was listening to the music and I thought... well, no.... and I felt quite perturbed about it so I turned and walked out of the bathroom door and went onto the landing to the room that he used to be in a lot. It was a sort of office where he did lots of things after he was retired and I looked up and looked around thinking 'well that sounds just like Ron's voice'. And again it came in a loud voice "PAT", calling out as though...you know.. ..you've got to hear me, this was the way it was portrayed to me. That was my first experience, and I knew then that was definitely Ron's voice. There's nobody, who could make me think it was anything else, but HIS voice calling me from wherever or whatever place he was in.....there was something and there was a connection there.

Do you remember thinking about Ron at the time?

No I can't say that I was, particularly, at that moment, but when the name came, it definitely was his voice, I momentarily thought, well I am imagining this, maybe it is someone saying

'Pat' on the radio, but then I thought how could there be, they're playing music, so that was when I went out on to the landing, went towards the room and sure enough a very definite clear 'Pat' was shouting to me, calling me.

Did that appear to be coming from the radio again?

No, because I was out of the room and nowhere near the radio and I was in another room.

What did you feel after that, I mean, did you believe you had heard his voice.

I was most definitely convinced. There is no-one who could make me think otherwise. That was definitely Ron's voice both times.

And this was nothing to do with your imagination because of the fact that you had been so recently bereaved?

None whatever, it was exactly the kind of calls he would give if I was downstairs or upstairs, when he called me ...it was clear, very clear.

Have you ever heard this since?

No I have never heard that since.

It was just the one time?

Correct.

Patricia goes on to relate a further event....

Two to three months after this incident, I was sitting in my dining room watching a television programme and I started to drift off and came to and looked at my watch and thought 'damn I'm busy with a programme' although I doubt I had

been asleep more than ten minutes or so at the most. I looked back at the programme and happened to look across at the dining room door. The dining room door has four lots of glass in it and I looked across at the door. I don't know why I did this, but it was as though something was compelling me to look across at the door. I still sat in the seat exactly the same and when I looked across through the glass, I saw my husband

I saw my husband standing in the hall... most definitely saw him very clearly in the jacket he most often wore, which was like a blue/grey Harris tweed jacket. I looked in amazement actually... am I imagining this... and I looked again and then it became stronger... the picture of him became stronger, the apparition or whatever you want to call it... and he was clearly there, defined....his face, hair...he had sort of wavy grey hair and everything...



"I believed and still do absolutely that Ron was there, trying to show himself to me. He was very clear to me."

Photographic impression from actual site & reproduced with Patricia's kind permission.

standing in the hall...most definitely saw him very clearly in the jacket he most often wore, which was like a blue/grey Harris tweed jacket. I looked in amazement actually...am I imagining this... and I

looked again and then it became stronger...the picture of him became stronger, the apparition or whatever you want to call it... and he was clearly there, defined....his face, hair...he had sort of wavy grey hair and everything....just standing in the hall with his head turned towards the glass dining room door. Now, I don't know why I didn't get up and go towards the door, but I think it was because I was held spellbound looking at him and then I would say in a fraction of another minute it had gone...that was it. It seemed to fade...faded away and I have never seen him again.

I believed and still do absolutely that Ron was there, trying to show himself to me. He was very clear to me.

I don't know why I didn't get up and go towards the door, but I think I was so amazed to see him, I wanted to see that picture and hold it and look at him, and not make an effort to get up, but I don't know why I didn't make an effort to get up. Seeing him did not frighten me, I was spellbound by this image of him. He was there exactly as he was in life...he was just standing there all dressed in his normal gear...standing there with his head turned toward the glass dining room door. I think maybe he was there just showing me that he was still somewhere around in other words.

I have never had any further experiences of seeing or hearing Ron after these experiences.

I asked Patricia whether she felt that this image could have been induced by hypnagogia, that altered state of consciousness between being awake and being

asleep?

No, I was wide awake, because I looked

back at the programme and I looked at my watch and thought, "oh, it 's only been roughly ten minutes of the programme that I have missed and was annoyed I had missed the rest of the programme, and by looking at the programme, that was when for some unknown reason I turned my head to look through the glass.

So you felt that you were seeing something right before your eyes?

Yes, definitely, he was there....he was portrayed there exactly as he was in life and then he seemed to suddenly fade away.

Did it seem as though he was actually physically there?

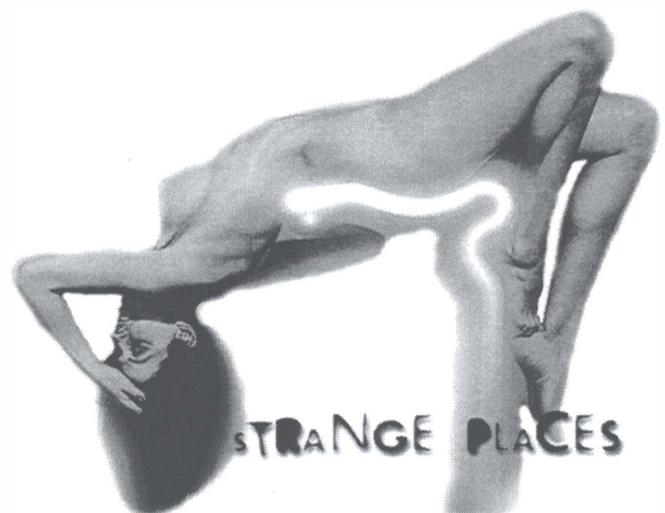
Yes, I felt he was just standing there, all dressed in his normal clothes, with his head turned towards the glass dining room door. I think maybe he was just there showing me that he was somewhere else....

Patricia has experienced other unusual phenomena during her life and although you could define her sense of seeing and hearing her husband as due to her recent bereavement, I have a problem feeling that this is the case. These experiences only happened once. They did not occur again, so these incidents were not repeated. Patricia is adamant that she saw and heard Ron, her deceased husband, and in both cases felt that her senses were indeed correct and that Ron was trying in some way to communicate with her. It is of course thought provoking as to what these experiences mean and whether psychological explanations can account for some of these reports

However, it should be remembered that Patricia has had many extraordinary experiences during her life, starting at a young age as a teenager and as documented at the beginning of this article, although she has never particularly explored these things in any great depth. On two occasions, these experiences have involved apparitions, one of her father, who died when she was sixteen years old, and on another occasion whilst she was staying in Northern Ireland at an RAF base with Ron whilst he was a serving officer. On this occasion she awoke and saw a figure leaning over her bed. She described the figure as female with an old fashioned type of head-dress. She found this rather frightening. She also saw her brother on one occasion during the night whilst they were stationed with the RAF in Cyprus. She describes him as standing at the bottom of the bed

with a cigarette in his hand. The remarkable feature of this incident is that her brother was and is very much alive and had never been to Cyprus, but Patricia awoke and saw him in the room. She awoke Ron to observe this 'apparition', but he did not see him as by this time the image had gone. This could be dismissed as a dream or a form of hypnagogia (sleep state) but for the fact that her brother wrote to her after this questioning why her adult daughter was sleeping in the bed with her one night and asking where Ron was. He was perfectly correct in this, at that particular time and it was a very unusual occurrence for her adult daughter to be sleeping in the bed with her mother. Therefore this appears to give some form of credence to the idea that Patricia had awoken that night and had indeed seen her brother in her bedroom, albeit that this was on a different night to the one he had written about in a letter to her.

With regard to claims of contact experiences during bereavement, we are at the tip of an iceberg in assessing the enormous number of these reports. I believe that we cannot ignore them and that world-wide research being conducted into this field of study is probably the most compelling for the next century, as we try to grasp the issues that are being raised here. Whatever they may mean and however sceptical we are about the reasons for these experiences, they are still vitally important in our quest to understand what these extraordinary experiences mean in terms of the human consciousness.



SACRED SITES

“It seems that, in the past, spiritual experience has generally been positive and life-enhancing.

.....Our real sacred sites are the human beings in whom these complex, unfathomable experiences are perceived. Let’s stop desecrating them with the dark, harsh, and unjustifiable fantasy of abduction.”

KEVIN McCLURE



There are only two key dates in the history of UFOlogy. One is 1947, the year of Kenneth Arnold's reported sighting over the Cascade Mountains.

The other is 1981, the year of the first publication of Budd Hopkins' book 'Missing Time'. Before Missing Time (BMT) UFOlogy was primarily about aerial events, or terrestrial events consequent on aerial events (landings, marks etc) which supposedly had been, or could be, physically observed. It began with Arnold's report, and not before. After Missing Time (AMT) UFOlogy has progressively become a matter of reported personal recollection of experiences which have not been, and quite possibly cannot be, physically observed. By now, 18 years AMT and counting, BMT and AMT UFOlogy have virtually nothing in common.

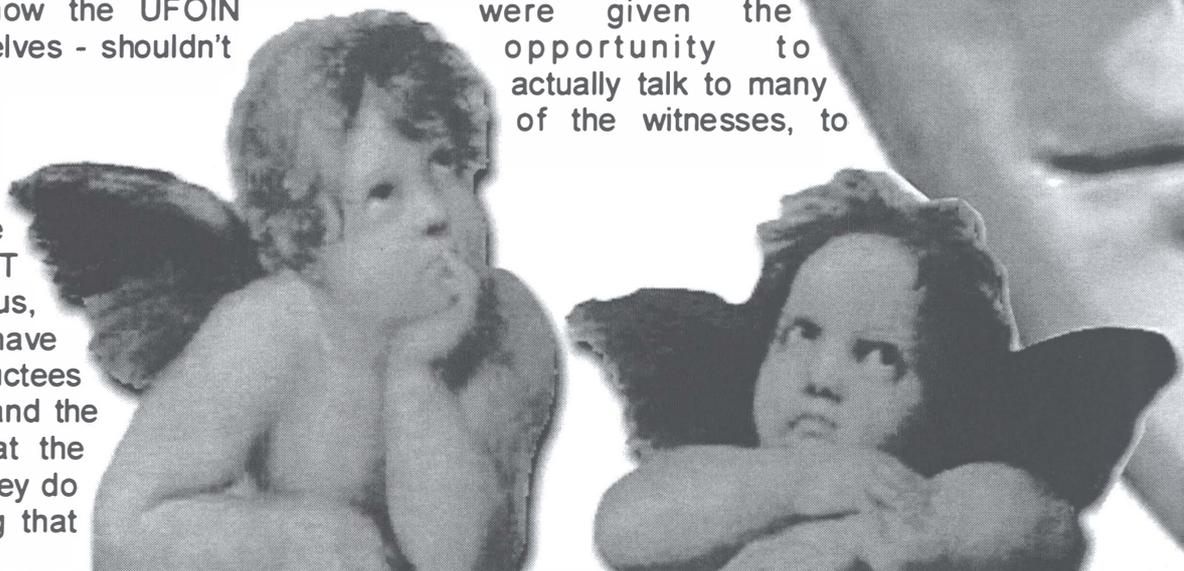
You can, of course, still partake of BMT UFOlogy. In the UK, the successful revisiting of supposedly anomalous events in the Berwyn Mountains in 1974 and near Sheffield in 1997 have led to a revival of sorts in physical investigation, and to the establishment of the Campaign for Real UFOlogy . . . sorry, I mean UFOIN. Here, a group of intelligent people have united their considerable talents to, apparently, deal with anything but abductions, apparently on the assumption that AMT UFOlogy can be dealt with separately from the BMT variety.

In making this assumption, UFOIN is probably wise, if unambitious: the average BMT UFO investigator shouldn't be allowed near an abduction account, or the person giving it. I suspect that even the unarguably-above-average BMT UFO investigator - and there's little doubt that's how the UFOIN founders see themselves - shouldn't be, either.

The current obsession among abductionists - those who evangelise AMT UFOlogy - is to tell us, the public, who have among us the abductees of both the present and the future, not only what the aliens do, but why they do it. And underpinning that

to assert, repeatedly, that what the aliens are perceived as doing is real, physical, tangible and objective, however absurd their supporting explanations may be: Hopkins' argument for 'selective invisibility', explaining why those present at abductions, but uninvolved in them, can see nothing unusual is a fine example of just how stupid these explanations have become.

To any rational, informed observer, it should now be plain that the evidence produced to support the claims of the physical reality of abduction is very poor indeed, and arguably does not exist at all: there probably is no evidence. If interested non-believers were given the opportunity to actually talk to many of the witnesses, to



Because we want spiritual experiences, and want others to share the beliefs we construct around them, we create places where we may more easily have those experiences, if we wish, or where we may take others to persuade them of the strength of our own spirituality, and hope they are led to share our beliefs. We build churches, temples, mosques and fill them with beautiful objects, architecture, light, and scents. We often build those places on what we describe as sacred sites.

their families, friends, work colleagues and doctors: to see their medical records and have professional examinations conducted of their 'scoop marks', 'cup marks', implants, skin fluorescence and alien-induced cancers, of the hybrid fetuses the abductionists assert the abductees have growing inside them after an abduction experience, and of the immediate medical aftermath when those supposed fetuses allegedly go missing, then I suggest that the myth of physical reality would be comprehensively dismissed. No abductionist has, of course, ever presented such an opportunity for investigation by others. No abductionist has even conducted such a rigorous investigation himself. It simply never happens.

I suggest that the abductionists – many names with which you will be familiar – are amateur, embarrassing, often deluded, sometimes deceitful and at best wrong in believing that abduction takes place in the real world. If I'm right, how should we – as a society, and not as a handful of ufologists – determine who should attempt to deal with abduction accounts, or abductees?

To date, there has been a widespread failure to recognise the different skills required to investigate a misapprehension of Venus, a lenticular cloud, or a plane crash on the one hand, and the potential effects of sleep paralysis or the veracity of recall during regression hypnosis on the other. The same people who were involved in BMT UFOlogy just carried on AMT, and many of the newcomers who came to join their ranks were already associated with self-help, analysis, counselling, fringe psychiatry, the exploration of apparently altered states of consciousness and other activities that could broadly be described as 'New Age'. Some of you may remember David Jacobs, author of the sexually-charged 'alien abuse' books *Secret Life* and *The Threat*, when he was still an outstanding BMT UFO historian. That, of course, was before he fell under the influence of Hopkins, Mack, Strieber and others, and seemingly lost his ability to consider the evidence with a balanced, historical perspective of the evidence. David Jacobs uses hypnotic regression to extract 'memories' of abduction, and 38

corrects those he is questioning if they don't produce the details that he, as an expert, expects to hear:

Some of the attempts to persuade individuals that they have suffered repeated and tragic intervention in their lives, and the worst extremes of alien abduction may, on the evidence, be coldly and cruelly deliberate. But most of the problems caused by abduction belief arise from the utter incompetence and unsuitability for the task of all those who, to date, have achieved fame, influence, and not a little money by publishing and interpreting reports of abduction experience. This applies not only to the growing army of published and broadcast abductionists who actually believe in abduction, but also to most of the handful of sceptics who have dealt - occasionally at length, more often with a dismissive wave of the hand, or an impersonal suggestion of sleep paralysis - with precisely the same material.

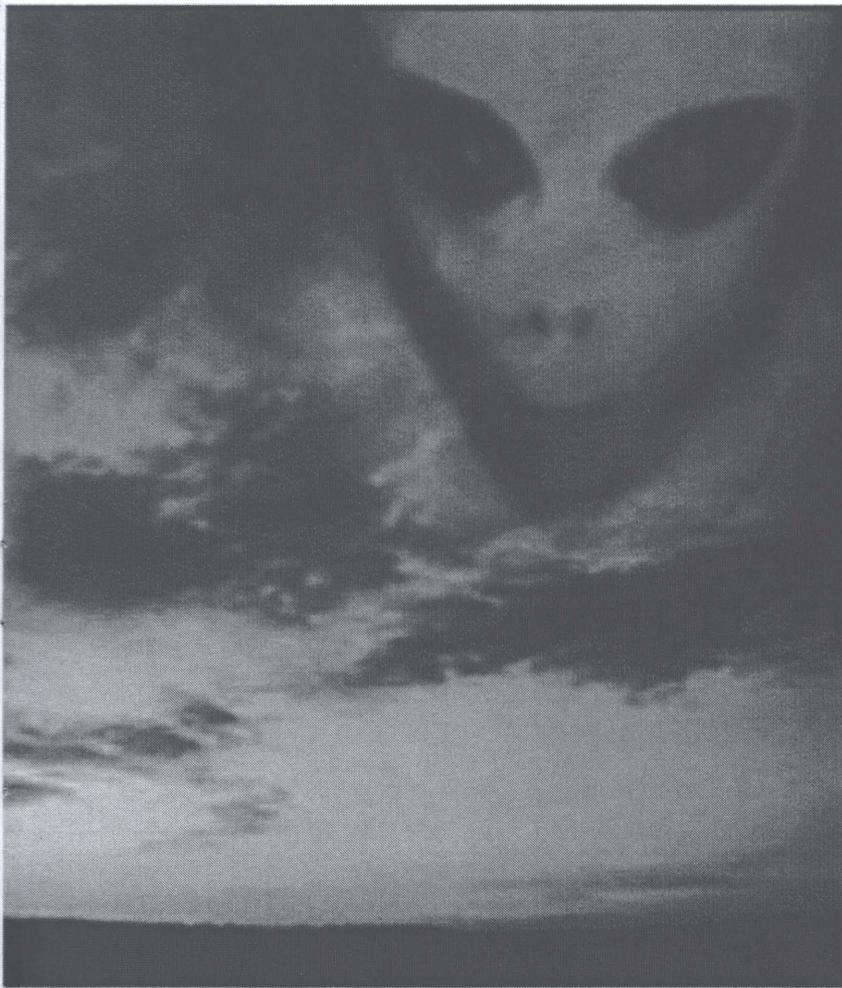
Although the abductionists are primarily responsible for the common belief in the reality of abduction, that belief is often firmly and genuinely held. All of us, whatever our motivation for trying to do so have, so far, failed even to begin to find the answer to abduction reports. As, of course, have I. All I have managed to do, to date, is to look for the flaws in the evidence, reasoning, honesty and, sometimes, the psychological well-being of the abductionists, and tried to convey the significance and effect of those flaws. Generally, I have tried to avoid direct criticism of the abductees themselves, because the problem they present to research and investigation is different. Everything else aside, if there were no abductionists there would be few, if any, abductees. If your resources are limited, you should use them carefully. Go for the organ-grinder, and hope the monkey will have a better life once it's gained its freedom.

So, I'm arguing that abduction is not, ever, a physically real event. But if we accept that the physical evidence is completely absent - and I am happy to issue an open challenge to any abductionist who thinks he can offer convincing proof to the contrary - then what



we have is actually another, much more difficult set of evidence to deal with. Regardless of our personal beliefs and convictions, we have a moral obligation to deal with the abductee evidence, the great many personal accounts of abductions of different kinds, in different places. And that obligation has one key characteristic: if after making every effort to determine whether or not the account was of a real, physical event, we conclude that it was not, we should try to relieve the abductee of the pain and fear he or she is very likely to be experiencing. Not write about them as though they were freaks or liars.

It's pretty much standard practice for abduction authors to commence their books with a brief UFO history. This is usually a pathetic effort, drawn without question from earlier authors, and presented to show that Earth has been visited by aliens for many years. It is meant to validate the claims of the current author, but oddly, the idea promoted is normally that a smooth, developmental transition has taken place: I have yet to see what would be a much more appropriate explanation - something along the lines of "They're back, and this time they're perverts". Maybe it wouldn't sell, but then again maybe it would.



These UFO histories - the odd flying wheel, airships, ghost rockets, foo fighters, Villas Boas, Barney & Betty - demonstrate the inadequacy of both the knowledge and the thinking of those who present them. They simply glue these allegedly physical events to the products of their own efforts at amateur hypnosis, together with what sad souls at UFO conventions come up and tell them, and what other abductionists have written, and then pretend that they understand the abduction experience. John Mack interprets it one way, Budd Hopkins another, David Jacobs and an increasing number of others as a much darker alternative. They begin their histories at the point where what they've bothered to read, matches their limited knowledge. And because of their laziness, they come nowhere near to establishing what may be the true nature of the abduction experience.

The history of AMT UFOlogy - distinguished as it is by a wealth of internal experience that BMT UFOlogy seldom presented - is a different history entirely. It begins pretty much wherever humanity begins, and will probably end where humanity does, too. The only role played in this history by unidentified lights or flying objects is as a trigger, or gateway or, perhaps more accurately, a facilitator of

that internal experience. When I use the term 'facilitator' I don't mean to imply that an alien turns up with a laser pointer, a laptop, and a presentation on interbreeding prepared in Powerpoint.

Let's look more closely at this 'facilitator' concept. Naturally, others have thought along similar lines before me, and I've written previously about the possibility of a 'trigger' which sets off a 'core experience' of interaction with aliens. Now, I don't think I was spreading my net wide enough. I've spent years trying to understand why so very many people have reported experiences of contact, visitation, interaction and, recently, abduction that ought to be vividly observable by third parties, and ought to leave explicit physical traces. Yet they're never observed, and never leave any traces. These experiences run throughout human history, variously reported as meetings with gods, and demons, and nature spirits, angels, aliens, guides, spirits, guardians, and - even more recently - circlemakers. They have two common strands. First, they demonstrate no physical presence, and second, they include some kind of encounter with a non-human intelligence.

If we're going to look for a word to describe these experiences, then 'spiritual' seems like the most appropriate. These rich, personal, non-physical encounters seem to define what 'spiritual' experience is all about: something that communicates not with the body or the physical senses, but in a different way, and with a different effect. No doubt Hopkins and Jacobs, obsessed with their tales of real and utter nastiness, would object to my describing abduction as 'spiritual'. As would most mainstream religions. But human beings want spiritual experiences, they seek them out, anticipate them, and they repeatedly report that they have had them.

Because we want spiritual experiences, and want others to share the beliefs we construct around them, we create places where we may more easily have those experiences, if we wish, or where we may take others to persuade them of the strength of our own spirituality, and hope they are led to share our beliefs. We build churches, temples,

mosques, and fill them with beautiful objects, and architecture, and light, and scents. We often build those places on what we describe as sacred sites. And what is a sacred site? Why, it's a place known and chosen because, previously, internal, personal spiritual experiences were reported as taking place there. And it's not only structures with roofs and windows, either. It's hard to imagine that stone circles were built to specific solar or lunar orientations to demonstrate the achievements of observational science. It seems much more likely that if a crowd of people were gathered together in the dark in anticipation of the Sun rising over, say a particular stone, or within an arch or trilith, the moment of sunrise as and where predicted would be intensely spiritual. This is what many, even most, of us want, and we give power not only to those who appear to provide it to us, but to those who explain it to us, too.

Most abduction accounts spring from no more than fragments. At their most genuine they are grounded in attempts to resolve the puzzlement and confusion arising from the fragmentary recollection of an unexpected or anomalous event or events which couldn't be readily identified. As time has gone on, some people have produced full-fledged abduction accounts from the outset, and they're often the most embarrassingly unreal of all, but that isn't at all true of the early subjects of Hopkins', Mack's, or Jacobs' investigations. Their accounts had to be constructed through the use of unreliable and unsatisfactory techniques to enhance recall, on the understanding that the abductors had blocked accurate memory in such a way that only those techniques could break through the barrier, and that what emerged would be that hidden truth. Once the explanation favoured by Hopkins was in the public domain, any fragmentary, possibly anomalous recollection could form the basis of a play-acted exploration of the hidden 'memories' that everybody involved was already sure the aliens had locked away. Malcolm Robinson's careful construction of the A70 'abduction' case is probably the finest example of this process in the UK to date (even ahead of Harry Harris' handling of Alan Godfrey), and perhaps one of the most instructive anywhere in the world.

(See Malcolm Robinson's response at the end of this article- EDITOR).

There have probably always been such fragmentary experiences; brief, odd perceptions which make no sense, and can both facilitate a perception of spiritual experience, and demand an explanation. There have long been sites deemed to be sacred, where the facilitation of the experience is carefully designed and arranged, and where the non-human forces or intelligences behind the experience are often said to visit or dwell. Our relationship with those forces and intelligences underpins more societies in this world than it does not, and where it is forbidden or repressed it simply becomes stronger and more important to that society, often leading to dramatic social and political change.

This week, I have been mostly reading accounts written by the medieval Christian mystics. Accounts like those of Mother Julian of Norwich, and St John of the Cross, and the range of fascinating material presented in Carol Zaleski's *Otherworld Journeys* (OUP 1987), and Evelyn Underhill's 1911 classic *Mysticism* (my edition is a hardback from Bracken Books in 1995, but I think it's still available from Penguin). Accounts from which the abductionists could really learn because, with all due respect to the fascinating tradition of Christian mysticism, Mother Julian in 1400, St John of the Cross in 1578, and thousands, hundreds of thousands of others, had much the same spiritual experience as have the 'genuine' abductees - rather than the simple fantasists - of AMT UFOlogy.

The world of alien abduction is, unfortunately, a world of stinking ignorance, as authors and 'investigators' seek out, attract, and mislead individuals who have been through a common, time-honoured and, potentially, deeply enriching experience, and twist it into one of depravity, pain, and fear of the future. They present random histories which only underline their lack of knowledge, and resort to claims of the physical reality of encounter and abduction experiences because they fail to recognise the nature and importance of human spirituality, or of how they are abusing it.

I remain - and probably will until that period shortly before death where believing in anything is worth a try - sceptical of the reality of the communication element of spiritual experience. I

don't suppose, when we perceive contact with God, or Satan, or the spirits of people or animals, or Jesus or Mary, or angels, or any other of the visitors and intruders who feature in such experiences, that those intelligences have any existence independent of the experiencer. There is no more physical, objective, hard evidence for their presence in our world than there is for that of the abducting aliens, but that doesn't, I suggest, justify dismissing all these experiences regardless of their content.

It seems that, in the past, spiritual experience has generally been positive and life enhancing. Difficult, certainly, and often demanding on resources of faith and self-control. But the pattern has been, broadly, that spiritual experience has led to spiritual living, to hope for the future in this life and beyond, and to displaying care and concern for others. It appears that positive spiritual experience is a component - whatever its true source and nature - of how both

individuals and societies grow and develop. Persuading those individuals to believe that their own perception of spiritual experience proves that they were chosen before birth to be used for hybrid interbreeding with cruel and uncaring alien beings who will return repeatedly to hurt and exploit not only that individual but her (it's so often her) children and grandchildren too is not truthful, it is not right, and its effect can be the same as the effect of deliberate abuse. Our real sacred

sites are the human beings in whom these complex, unfathomable experiences are perceived. Let's stop desecrating them with the dark, harsh, and unjustifiable fantasy of abduction.

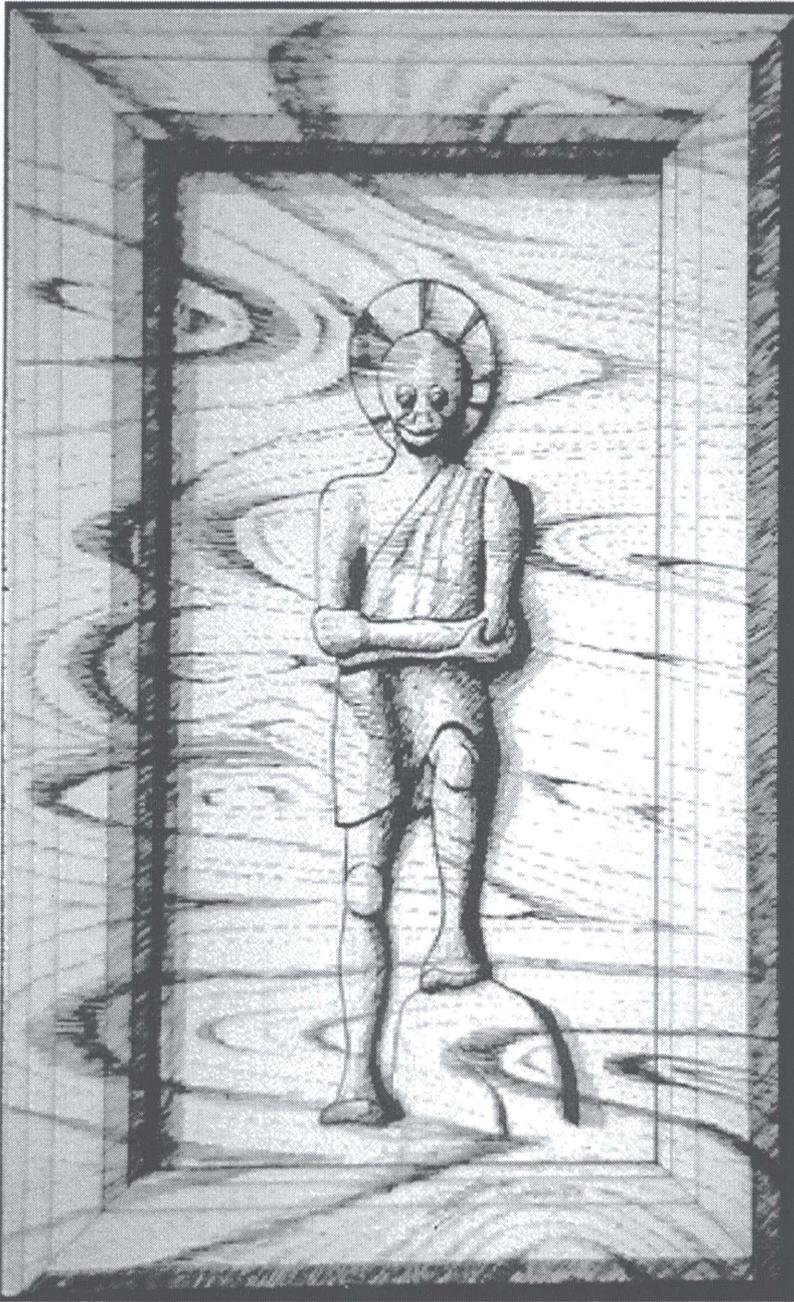
So, to return to my question, who is fit to deal with people who, in the absolute absence of hard

evidence for the physical reality of alien abduction, have become persuaded that they might have had the experience? Or who think that they might have had the experience, and want to 'explore' that possibility? Perhaps it's best to start with a list of those who are probably not suitable.

There is clear proof, supported by the Royal College of Psychiatrists, numerous higher courts in the USA, and all trained, competent and informed medical professionals whose opinions I have seen, that regression hypnosis is dangerous, unreliable, and is likely to produce false information that complies with the perceived

expectations and preferences of those present with the hypnotic subject. So we can start with ruling out anybody who uses regression hypnosis, particularly if they conduct it themselves without any medical background or training. The same goes for the use of hyperventilation, however it's dressed up, and creative visualisation. Why should anyone need to be creative, or to be in an ASC of any kind, to remember such vile and vivid experiences?

Moving on, we should definitely exclude anyone



who believes him or herself to be an Alien Ambassador, or a Star Child, or any other variety of specially chosen or bred, more-than-human being, especially when they publish those very personal beliefs in spite of the risk that others may adopt them. As we should anyone who believes him or herself to be an abductee only in consequence of regression hypnosis, particularly where that recall seems to relate to a positive career choice involving substantial financial gain. It is unlikely that anybody who calls themselves "Doctor" on the strength of a Ph. D that was not properly supervised and earned in a real university will do any good to anyone. And nor will those - and there is more than one - who claim that they themselves, or the hypnotists they use, are professionally qualified to conduct regression hypnosis, and are members of a professional association maintaining professional standards, when sufficient investigation will demonstrate that they are not.

All of that would, in any context other than UFOlogy, seem perfectly reasonable and obvious. It would amount to no more than taking reasonable precautions to ensure accuracy and objectivity, and the credibility of investigation outcomes. In AMT UFOlogy it will, of course, read like heresy, and the work of an agent of the New World Order. But excluding only the abductionists and extremists won't, now, be sufficient to resolve the problem. If these are, essentially, what I have described as 'spiritual experiences', then anybody who doesn't know about, and understand their causes, range and history will be no use at all in assisting the victims of abduction belief to understand the true nature of their experience. The truth is that I don't know exactly who is fit to deal with so many individuals who have been callously, and carelessly, hurt and deceived by the abduction belief and those who have persuaded them to accept it. It isn't really a mental health issue, and professionals in that area would be of limited help. And it isn't anything much to do with BMT UFOlogy, and I can't think who else would be interested. But I know that it's time to stop what's happening, and that if we haven't spoken out against the abduction belief yet, we have a responsibility to do so now.



"It's been a pleasure working with you"

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kevin McClure was born in London in 1950. He went on from Christ's Hospital, Horsham to read Theology at Oxford (leaving before obtaining a degree!), where he revived and ran the University Society for Psychical Research. He has been actively involved in researching and investigating accounts of extraordinary religious and paranormal experience ever since.

He contributed extensively to the part-work '*The Unexplained*', and as well as numerous articles for magazines he has edited himself, his work has appeared in established titles such as '*Fate*', '*Fortean Times*', '*Magonia*', '*Reincarnation International*', '*The Skeptic*', and the SPR's '*Psi Researcher*'. He wrote a regular column for '*Psychic News*', and has lectured at various conferences and study days, to the Society for Psychical Research, to BUFORA, and at two of the Fortean Times 'Unconventions'.

In 1983 Aquarian published his book, '*The Evidence for Visions of the Virgin Mary*', which sold particularly well in the USA, and was translated into several languages. He provided many contributions on phenomena and the unexplained during the past 4,000 years to the Reader's Digest work, the '*Almanac of the Uncanny*'.

A careful, but not utterly sceptical researcher, he has written and published two investigations into reports of extraordinary events, '*Visions of Angels, and Tales of Bowmen*', about the Angels of Mons and other legends of the First World War, and

'Stars and Rumours of Stars', dealing with the light phenomena that accompanied evangelist Mary Jones of Egryn during the great Welsh Revival of 1904-05. His second book, 'The Fortean Times Book of the Millennium', was published in 1996.

In 1997, tired of the dangers presented to vulnerable individuals by the uninvestigated claims and amateur hypnosis that form the basis of the abduction mythos, and realising that the nature of the problem will never be communicated by media soundbites, he started publishing the monthly investigative newsletter *Abduction Watch*. This looks for hoaxes, disinformation and outright lies in the claims for the reality of alien abductions of human beings and animals, and has achieved a steady success rate of direct hits in its first year. In 1998 he acted as Programme Adviser for the BBC Religion series 'The Big End', and in July 1999 was the voice of common-sense on C4's 'The Real Nostradamus'.

Malcolm Robinson responds....

I would like to point out to the readers of *Strange Daze*, that I now have new thoughts with regard to the use of hypnosis on UFO abductees. Where, in the past I thought it was a valuable tool in possibly retrieving hidden subconscious memory of an event, I now have deep reservations.

Kevin McClure sent me numerous articles and data pertaining to the clinical and general use of hypnosis and the harm that it can do, and due to reading that material, (*sent early last year*) I have now come to revise my position on the use of hypnosis. As far as the A70 case goes, both witnesses only ever recall witnessing a strange black hovering object about 20 feet above the surface of the road which they are both state as not resembling a conventional aircraft or helicopter. Both gentlemen are in full agreement that this was something different, something out of the ordinary, and they will not change their minds on this.

The use of hypnosis on that case produced a typical abduction scenario and some may say that both witnesses elaborated somewhat in their recollections. This may be the case and I haven't got the space to go into this with any great detail. All I will say is that hypnosis should not be seen as a way of assistance in researching these strange experiences and I am now quite clear in my way of thinking and research, that it should not be used.

Malcolm Robinson.

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Saturday 1st April 2000. Rev LIONEL FANTHORPE.

Unsolved Aerial Mysteries. 'Ancient And Modern'. Fortean television presenter, broadcaster and leather jacket entertainer, Reverend Lionel Fanthorpe will, in his own inimitable style, lecture on Aerial mysteries from man's ancient past. Lionel is a well known Television personality, and his Channel 4 programme on accounts pertaining to UFOs and the Paranormal broadened the mind of many a TV. viewer, a 'not to be missed' lecture.

Saturday 6th May 2000. BILLY DEVLIN & BRIAN ALLAN

Scottish UFO & Paranormal Mysteries. From north of the border we have Scottish UFO & Paranormal researchers Billy Devlin & Brian Allan, who will be lecturing on some of the more interesting cases that have come their way over the past several years. These cases will clearly show, what a strange world that we do indeed live in.

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**Lancashire UFO Society and the British UFO Studies Centre
CONFERENCE 2000**

Those of you interested to support our fourth annual Conference will be happy to know that it takes place in four weeks time - Sat.29th January - at the Central Library, Chorley, Lancashire, starting at 10.30am and finishing at 8pm. Speakers include:

RAS Hennessey - SETI researcher, writer for astronomy, history and philosophy journals.

Jenny Randles - to date, our most popular speaker.

Brian Allan and Billy Devlin - on the latest remarkable paranormal happenings in Scotland...

Ralph Ellis - researcher/writer - his two books on ancient mysteries have caused a BIG stir!

Tim Matthews - FBI-approved, in league with Satan, MI6-funded and generally a nice, family guy speaking on his part in the biggest UFO-related case for 20 years - the Winter Hill CE3/MIB case of November 13th 1999 - and other stuff...

Steve Mera - Details on the Winter Hill case - you don't want to miss this!

Jon Downes - Fortean, paranormal and cryptozoological expert, Environmental Editor to the Planet on Sunday - speaking on something horribly weird.....not unlike himself.

Andy Roberts - fresh from publication of his third "The Armchair Ufologist" and another great book entitled "The UFOs That Never Were" (with co-conspirators Dr Dave Clark and Jenny Randles) Andy is prepared to heap yet more misery on the mythmakers within Ufology!

Entrance £10 Tickets on door or from me; (cheques, negotiable barrel bonds to "T. Matthews"); The Secretary, P.O.Box 15, SOUTHPORT PR8 1GR.

ARNOLD WEST REMEMBERED

*Remember in the Winter, far beneath the bitter snow
Lies a seed, that with the sun's love, in the Spring
Becomes.....The Rose.*

On Wednesday 8th December 1999, Arnold West passed away suddenly from a heart attack.

Arnold was a founder member of the British UFO Research Association (BUFORA). He was a BUFORA Vice-President, Council Member and ran a very busy BUFORA Central Office dealing with all the day to day administration that this role encompasses.

He had many roles during his long association with BUFORA, but beyond this, I knew him as a wise and gentle man with an intricate knowledge of the history of the UFO subject and the people both past and present who have walked within the corridors of BUFORA and Ufology.

**BUFORA, his colleagues and friends will be the poorer without him.
I shall miss him terribly.**

The Strange Daze team would like to express their deepest sympathy to his family at this time.

Gloria Heather Dixon



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he has done his best to form
a conception of life after
death, or to create some
image of it - even if he must
confess his failure. Not to
have done so is a vital loss..
...Carl G. Jung**

