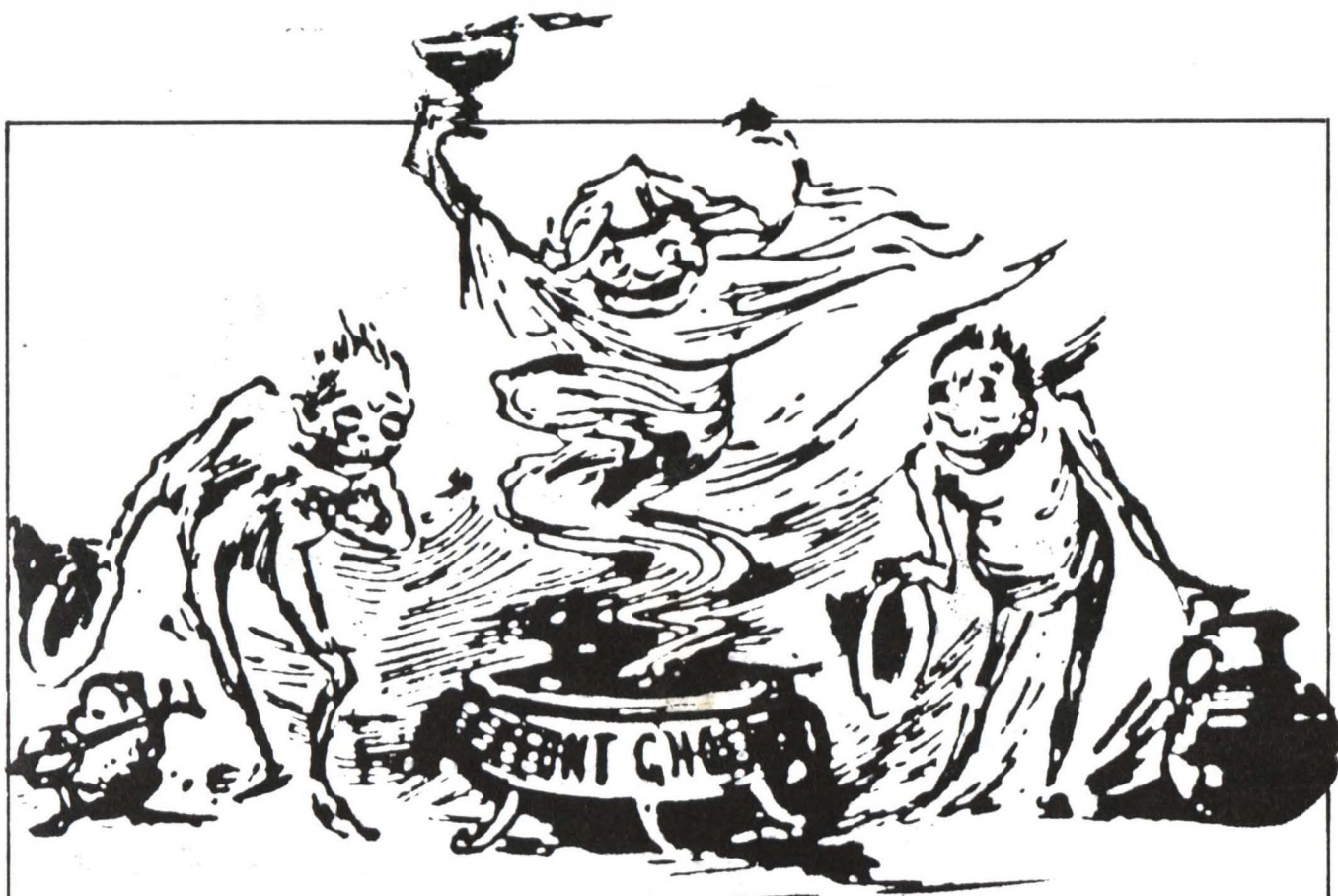


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THE DECLINING SOCIAL STATUS OF GHOSTS

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EDITORIAL

Ten years ago or more, the pages of Merseyside UFO Bulletin, as 'his magazine then was, rang with a declamatory tirade on the 'Life and Death of British Ufology'. The obituary was rather premature, for within a few years a hopeful new mood had again pushed British ufology into the vanguard of the subject.

So we are reluctant now to essay any such generalised dismissal of the present state of British ufology. But equally, it would be unrealistic to gloss over the very real malaise which seems to overshadow our field of study.

There is certainly a decline in the number of competent investigators, some of the best researchers of the seventies have dropped out of the subject altogether, others, once the focus of serious research now maintain only a marginal interest in the subject, and other influential figures make no secret of their desire to opt out of active research, for a while at least.

It would be easy to seek analogies in the present climate of economic decline and recession; and indeed there must be some link. On a very basic level, there is now much less money around for the production of reports and journals, and for personal expenditure on investigation expenses. Indeed, MAGONIA came very close to a desperate choice between closure and an

unacceptable increase in subscription fees when our printer became another victim of economic forces (fortunately in a neat reversal of roles, we are now being printed by LANTERN, the East Anglian magazine whose printing we had previously managed!).

But the recession in ufology seems to go deeper even than this. There has been much comment recently on the paucity of new UFO reports. In the last year the decline has been spectacular. But more disturbingly in compiling INTCAT, Peter Rogerson has noted a long-term decline which seems to have started after the '73 wave, and continued remorselessly ever since, with only the occasional flicker of revival, most notably when UFOIN was set up (and whatever happened to that?) unearthing some extra cases. But by and large the picture for ten years now has been one of steady decline. The public, it seems, has got more important things on its mind than UFOs!

One is left wondering whether ufology (and perhaps the rest of the 'paranormal') is one of the last remnants of the times of starry-eyed enthusiasm, a delightful, marginal preoccupation that fitted in well with the ethos of the flower-child sixties, a light and transient interest that is ill at ease in the harsh world of post-industrial dole queues?

I only ask because I want to know.

GHOST WRITERS

Peter Rogerson



A review of

recent literature on ghosts, polts and other things which go bump in the night, with certain additions by a crabbed librarian with a haunted look in his eyes.

Translated from the original Gothic script.

Ghosts are making a belated academic comeback, with officially sponsored volumes by the Folklore Society (1) and the Society for Psychical Research (3), and a detailed social history (2). So I take this opportunity also to review some volumes which fell through my fingers first time round.

That academics and journalists are both fascinated by ghosts is good testimony to their continued presence in our minds. As Finucane shows, ghosts have a pedigree going back to Greek and Roman times, a point also made by W M S Russell in the Folklore Society symposium. Russell suggests that a culture's perception of its ghosts depends on its funeral customs; people who bury the dead portray concrete ghosts - 'raw head and bloody bones'. An excellent Icelandic example of this is provided by Hilda Ellis Davidson, in which the revenant comes from the grave to claim person after person to join the legion of ghosts, as in east European vampire legends. This is symbolic of plague and other epidemics claiming victim after victim. Those who burn the dead envisage smoky, hazy spirits who drift across consciousness.

Finucane traces the evolution of the ghost through various stages of Christian theology. In medieval Christianity, ghosts were far from the marginal entities they are today. They were integral parts of society, enforcing its codes, demanding that justice be done, that debts be paid, that remains be buried properly and that harmony prevail among surviving relatives. Fear of ghosts' wrath enforced proper respect for the helpless aged. Ghosts could give evidence in

court. Most importantly, they enforced the correct theological line, with graphic descriptions of purgatory, heaven and hell. Living and dead were part of an organic unity: Church Militant, Church Suffering and Church Triumphant. (R H Bowyer, in (1), p. 190)

The Reformation abolished purgatory and literally damned all ghosts to hell; spectres refusing to stay there were clearly demons.

This theological doctrine clashed with traditional belief and posed the awful dilemma: 'Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned?' Hamlet's ghost may well be reinforcing social mores, but in doing so it leads to demonic tragedy.

The religious persecutions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries created a great crop of ghost stories. The trauma of the shattering of the old order created a vast number of ghostly monks; expressions of grief and guilt, and Civil War, tore the nation apart; the ghostly Roundheads and Cavaliers, crimes magnified by the legion of rival pamphleteers, haunted on. History's wounds were unforgotten and unforgiven, held in thrall by generations of local gossip and tradition. It should be remembered that in the last century there were districts where families voted Liberal or Conservative, depending on which side their ancestors had fought in the Civil War.

The Reformation had damned ghosts, partly because it was trying to escape tradition. A society which perceives the world in fairly stable terms might be able to come to terms with its 'history' walking around; a society seeing itself in dynamic terms needed to jettison history - it was now necessary to dispose of traditional customs, producing the tensions which also gave rise to increased witch belief. (8)

There were other effects of the Civil War. The farmers and artisans who joined the Parliamentary armies were exposed to the ferment of new ideas, questioning the whole

basis of traditional society. Conversely, the gentry and aristocracy, repelled by 'the mob', withdrew physically and intellectually to an unprecedented degree. Both sections of society began to reject ghost stories and traditional religion, while the Anglican Church, re-established and protected by penal legislation, looked on in apathy.

In these conditions Puritans like Richard Baxter, who 60 years ago would have considered ghosts as damnable, now began to use them to conduct the campaign against the modern Sadducees. (cf. (9)) Though the intellectual and literate elite may have despised ghosts, the vast majority of their fellow countrymen probably continued to hold traditional beliefs.

These traditional beliefs were taken into the rapidly growing industrial towns by the masses coming in from the country. Finucane does not cover the ideas of the working classes during this period, but some background can be gleaned from studies by Thomas (10) and Hamson (11).

By the mid-nineteenth century the ghost had receded into a dim figure on the margins of consciousness. The only message that it had to give was the message of survival itself. Ghosts receded from society. From Mackenzie (3) emerges a nice picture of the typical Victorian ghost. The Despard ghost was a widow in black - like the maiden aunt or the widowed sister an embarrassing addition to the family.

The anonymous Victorian ghost flitting through the house reflected the breakup of the traditional home held for generations. The Victorian family, drifting from one leased house to another, were strangers in their own residences. The servants often had far more intimate connection with the house than their masters; they were part of the local community and its repository of folk history. As Claire Russell points out in the Folklore Society symposium, ghosts are about the living. In the Victorian period houses tended to become haunted because the local community decided that some fundamental violation of the social mores had occurred. This could range from anything between murder and leaving the house vacant too long. In many cases, ghosts were the expression of the community's hostility to new tenants, and the tenants' alienation from their residence. Significantly, many modern haunted houses are council houses or rented properties.

Haunts were not the only ghosts: death-bed apparitions, crisis apparitions, fetches and warnings, testified to the uncertainties of Victorian life - the separation of relations sent abroad to colonial fever spots, the rampant infant mortality. Many of the people who became the centre of crisis app-

aritions had broken social mores in some way. One suspects that many 'old and dear friends' from the colonies who appeared to married women, were lovers sent away in disgrace.

Finucane notes the rigid social distinctions that operated in Victorian psychological research: that the middle classes never lied, that servants were timid and unreliable, and that the 'peasantry' were unthinking brutes. This led to some embarrassing situations, as in the case of poor Judge Horby, who found he either had to admit to lying or to sleeping with his wife before they were married.

If the psychical researchers turned their backs on the peasantry and their be-



liefs, the folklorists put them on pedestals. Romantics, rejecting the industrial revolution, dreamed up a fairytale past of noble peasants in little thatched cottages in a green and pleasant land. Such folklorists as the Dane, Evart Tang Kristensen could take seriously any ghost. These included revolving fiery wheels, or the wagon with three wheels which had the power to paralyse other wagons on the road, like modern UFOs. The folklorists and romantics created a market for Gothic horror stories and gibbering spectres.

The traditional Victorian ghost story reflected a sense of the horror beneath the placid surface of everyday life. They were reminders of the thin veneer of Victorian rationalism. It is hardly surprising that, as Julia Briggs points out, the ghost story

as an art form fell when that veneer was wiped away in the trenches.

It is hardly surprising, then, that the heyday of the 'true' ghost story lay in the period before the First World War. It is significant that more than half the accounts in Mackenzie's book refer to the period before the War. If ghosts are products of the human imagination's response to real or imaginary outrages, then how can they be generated by the truly unimaginable outrage?

The modern ghost may well be more extrovert than his Victorian predecessor. Randy spectres fondling young ladies in council houses are all right in the pages of the Sun or the National Voyager, but are hardly the right sort of company for the SPR. Modern



ghosts are often drained of terror completely. The once-grim messengers are now reduced to competition with space-invader machines as tourist attractions in pubs. No longer even dim messengers of survival, perhaps memories of a lost history.

The poltergeist is the truly contemporary ghost, in its element in the age of the vandal. The poltergeist becomes a symbol of the shattering of society's rules, the voice of the voiceless. The horror of contemporary fiction is now the super polt, heavy with fantasies of omnipotent destructive power. The quiet, old-fashioned ghost, like the spectre of little Johnny Minty, as described by Mackenzie, weeping endlessly for his mother, may pull at our heart-strings; the polts, evoked by Gauld and

Cornell (4) or Rogo (6) can still give us the horrors. The emotion evoked by an attack by a poltergeist is the same as that of an attack by burglars or vandals, one of violation. It is this sense of violation of the home as a bastion against the forces of the wilderness outside, the overthrow of the safe rational world of everyday reason and common sense.

It must be said that the pre-poltergeist worlds of many of the victims do not seem especially safe or rational. The family discussed by Playfair (5) were already under the attention of social workers, and other polt families have had pretty severe problems. It is hardly surprising that both 'normal' and 'paranormal' trickery take place together; they are perhaps different means of expressing the same crisis.

Gauld and Cornell also describe place-centred polts, places which seem to be hostile. The old term 'boggart' seems aptly to describe this centre which generates confused multiform hallucinations and strange noises. Once again, is it not to the neighbours and the local community that we should look for reasons why a place becomes labelled 'off-limits'? The only 'message' here seems to be: 'Fear, fear'; 'Get out!'; 'Boggart off!'

Ghosts are on the retreat, their role as dispensers of justice replaced by a modern police, their power to communicate across distances replaced by the telephone and television. Perhaps they have now faded forever beyond the reach of psychical researchers; soon the vandals will drive the polts away. Yet if their disappearance marks the end of our capacity for outrage, then we are in deep trouble. Maybe the ghosts of Belsen, of Hiroshima and of Kampuchea should howl and gibber and cry out for vengeance.

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A SECOND LOOK

OBJECTIONS TO THE 'B.T.' HYPOTHESIS

Ian S. Cresswell

While one must congratulate Dr Lawson for a most original and mentally stimulating piece of theoretical writing on the apparent similarity between relived birth image traumas and the reported observations of abduction percipients, a number of very clear and important objections to this theory come to mind.

Without completely rejecting the general ideas put forward in Dr Lawson's paper, grave doubts enter the picture, both from the area of psychoanalytic psychology, from other more general sections of psychiatric medicine and from ufology itself. Although not wishing to be absolutely negative, upon careful thought the regretful opinion must be that there is no real basis for assuming that the images involved in close-encounter experiences of the third and fourth kinds are either partly or wholly the result of relived images associated with the so-called trauma of birth.

The results of so-called test situations we find unconvincing and the means by which these were brought to light in general highly unsatisfactory. While by no means denying the possibility that psychological processes are at work here, in fact quite the contrary, what we would rather suggest is that research and investigation is directed down other paths than images of birth trauma or other forms of psychopathology.

Before any particular theory is proved to be factual every part of the content of this group of ideas must be compatible with other valid knowledge and evidence in the area that one is writing about. Some amount of deviation is allowed, as no scientific subject can remain stationary for long periods of time without becoming stale. The very centre of Dr Lawson's theory of a

universal birth trauma is based upon the work of Otto Rank and the psychiatrist Stanislav Grof, a follower of Rank. Their theory of mental imagery reappearing later on in the individual's life as the cause of later neurosis and general behaviour disorders has now been almost completely rejected within psychoanalytic and psychiatric medicine. It is now mainly of interest for its historical place within psychological thought and is rarely if ever employed within the treatment of the psychoneuroses. (1)

Rank died in the United States in 1939, and outside America his theories are no longer the subject of discussion, although many of his suggestions have influenced others. Dr Nandor Fodor, a New York analyst, makes use of the Rankian theory of the birth trauma, which he claims to have based upon clinical rather than philosophical foundations, in his extraordinary books, The Search for the Beloved and New Approaches to Dream Interpretation. Since nearly every aspect of human behaviour - not excluding constipation - is traced back in these books to the trauma of birth, it is a little difficult to see why they needed to be written at all. But if Dr Fodor is somewhat lacking in imagination as to origins, nobody can accuse him of lacking ingenuity in his interpretations. He informs us, for example, that children may start life with a handicap owing to prenatal influences, one of which is the violence of parental intercourse, the memory of which is said to be clearly apparent in the dreams of adult life. The fact that there exist no nerve connections between mother and unborn child does not trouble Dr Fodor, who postulates that communication takes place by telepathy. According to this theory, then, prenatal influences and the trauma of birth play a major part in the

formation of character and determine mental health in adult life.

A more scientific exposition of this view has been put forward by Phyllis Greenacre, who believes that constitution, prenatal experience, birth, and the situation immediately after birth together play some part in predisposing the individual to anxiety. She notes that loud noises, maternal nervousness, and similar stimuli increase the rate of the foetal heart and the frequency of foetal movements, and supposes that these may fairly be taken as signs of anxiety. Such 'anxiety' is, of course, without mental content, but Dr Greenacre believes that it supplies an organic potential which may influence later anxiety reactions.

Turning now to one of the most highly critical reviews of birth trauma and its possible cause of future neurosis we have to turn to what Freud thought about this very speculative theory, bearing in mind that he had changed his own mind about the theory of birth trauma over the years, as can be clearly seen by reading some of Freud's works. (2)

In the act of birth there is a real danger to life. We know what this means objectively; but in a psychological sense it says nothing at all to us. The danger of birth has as yet no psychical content. We cannot possibly suppose that the foetus has any sort of knowledge that there is a possibility of its life being destroyed. It can only be aware of some vast disturbance in the economy of its narcissistic libido. Large sums of excitation crowd in on it, giving rise to new feelings of unpleasure, and some organs acquire an increased cathexis, thus foreshadowing the object-cathexis which will soon set in. What elements in all this will be made use of as the sign of a 'danger situation'?

Unfortunately, far too little is known about the mental make-up of a newborn baby to make a direct answer possible. I cannot even vouch for the validity of the descriptions I have just given. It is easy to say that the baby will repeat its effect of anxiety in every situation which recalls the event of birth. The important thing to know is what recalls the event and what it is that is recalled.

All we can do is to examine the occasions on which infants-in-arms or somewhat older children show readiness to produce anxiety. In his book on the trauma of birth, Rank has made a determined attempt to establish a relationship between the earliest phobias of children and the impressions made on them by the event of birth. But I do not think he has been successful. His theory is open to two objections. In the first place, he assumes that the infant has received certain sensory

impressions, in particular of a visual kind, at the time of birth, impressions, the renewal of which can recall to its memory the trauma of birth and thus evoke a reaction of anxiety. This assumption is quite unfounded and extremely improbable.

It is not credible that a child should retain any but tactile and general sensations relating to the process of birth. If, later on, children show fear of small animals that disappear into holes or emerge from them, this reaction, according to Rank, is due to their perceiving an analogy. But it is an analogy of which they cannot be aware. In the second place, in considering these later anxiety situations, Rank dwells, as suits him best, on the child's recollection of the traumatic disturbance which interrupted that existence - which leaves the door wide open for arbitrary interpretation.

There are, moreover, certain examples of childhood anxiety which directly contradict his theory. When, for instance, a child is left alone in the dark one would expect it, according to his view, to welcome the re-establishment of the intrauterine situation; yet it is precisely on such occasions that the child reacts with anxiety. And if this explained by saying that the child is being reminded of the interruption which the event of birth made in its intrauterine happiness, it becomes impossible to shut one's eyes any longer to the far-fetched character of such explanations.

I am driven to the conclusion that the earliest phobias of infancy cannot be directly traced back to impressions of the act of birth and that so far they have not been explained. A certain preparedness for anxiety is undoubtedly present in the infant-in-arms. But this preparedness for anxiety, instead of being at its maximum immediately after birth and slowly decreasing, does not emerge till later, as mental development proceeds, and lasts over a certain period of childhood. If these early phobias persist beyond that period one is inclined to suspect the presence of a neurotic disturbance, although it is not at all clear what their relation is to the undoubted neuroses that appear later on in childhood.

Only a few of the manifestations of anxiety in children are comprehensible to us, and we must confine our attention to them. They occur, for instance, when a child is alone, or in the dark, or when it finds itself with an unknown person instead of one to whom it is used - such as its mother. These three instances can be reduced to a single condition - namely, that of missing someone who is loved and longed for. But here, I think, we have the key to an understanding of anxiety and to a reconciliation of the contradictions that seem to beset us.

Where the theory for birth trauma appears to fail as the cause of all future anxiety in a purely psychological sense is that a newborn baby just can't function in a very developed conceptive-perceptive mode. The newly born infant, we assume, can only experience its environment by way of sensations of different types and sensory impressions of one sort and another, and by no other means. The sense of self is not present at birth to any great extent, with the young child not aware of the fact that he is a separate personality. His outward world is totally mixed in with his inner world. There is no ego state of personality, for this is still to come. We just don't know what kind of mental images are present (if any) in the newly born child. This being the case, logically we can't say what is in the mind of the developing child in the womb either. Therefore to even hint at the possibility that the conceptive contents of the CE (close encounter) reports are nothing more than relived flashbacks to the area of time before, during and after birth on the part of the percipients is just assuming far too much.

Another factor that we are not very happy about is the part that hallucinations are being made to play in this particular theory. If a person is suffering from any of the different forms of sensory hallucinations, then he or she is in a state of very serious mental confusion in which the borders of reality become totally obscured. This is mainly a state that is associated with psychoses rather than neuroses (although the line between them can become very thin in certain cases). A person suffering from a psychotic disorder is usually pretty obvious, as hallucinations don't exist in a state of vacuum but along with other serious symptoms of psychosis.

Hallucinatory states do not occur just once or twice and then never again but rather recur pretty frequently, usually matching in with whatever particular individual delusional element is present at any given time in the mind of those so disturbed. Yet another feature of most psychotic states is that normal life becomes nearly impossible as the person gets more and more out of touch with reality. How many close-encounter percipients can really be classed as being in this particular category?

We are not happy either with the manner in which the comparison material was collected from artificially created situations involving the use of hallucinogenic drugs, hypnosis or sensory deprivation. Just how often are close-encounter experiences of the third and fourth kinds of this nature?

It is not very unusual to see all kinds of strange entities while under the influence of various hallucinogenic drugs.

Pain-killing drugs also at times produce hallucinations of a visual nature when patients suffering from serious illnesses are given large amounts of certain kinds of these drugs. To suggest that these people are reliving images associated with the trauma of birth is far-fetched indeed. These people are not psychotic but only display hallucinatory indications when under drugs and not at other times.

In cases of loss of sensory impressions hallucinations frequently occur but, once again, they don't when the person is again fully aware of his or her external environment. To assume, as Dr Lawson does, that the images associated with these particular states and the close-encounter images are all of a birth-relived image state is very hard to accept. It appears more like science fiction than the close encounters do.

We would also view very doubtfully the apparent similarity between the humanoid and the human foetus. There does not appear to be any real link here at all, which becomes only too clear if one checks out the relevant books on gynaecological medicine. To suggest that there is any likeness between a human foetus and the type of entity that Betty Andreasson saw during her experiences is taking the imagination to its limit.

We can find no confident proof in Dr Lawson's statement: 'It is beyond question that there are extensive similarities between perinatal imagery and UFO abduction narratives, as the presentation of parallels from both areas and an analysis of a prominent abduction have shown'. Dr Lawson's theory, mainly based upon the work of Grof, fails to explain the category of reports known as CE4, rather it makes an understanding of these human experiences harder to form. It is not a very good practice to take a minor and mainly discarded theory from its original subject and then transfer it into the field of another subject which is itself highly controversial, to say the least.

Dr Lawson's speculative arguments against multiple witness CE3 and CE4 reports seem to be very strange indeed. Firstly, he quotes Allan Hendry's excellent book on UFOs, but appears to make the mistake that Hendry classifies CE cases involving multiple witnesses as being very doubtful. It appears to me that Hendry is meaning this to apply to mass sightings of a low-definition variety, which are much more likely to have conventional explanations than ufological ones.

To regard encounters involving more than one person as being due to such causes as multiple hallucinations (I have not yet been able to find out just what this means in a psychiatric sense. I have not come across any cases that feature this unusual symptom of

mental disorder in literature dealing with hallucinations), folie a deux, imaginary companions and mass hallucinations (really more like mass hysteria which is due to the spread of rumour and the desire to believe something to be true and which correctly belongs in the study of human behaviour) is bordering on the ridiculous.

To further make the point, as Dr Lawson does, that testimony of this type is no guarantee or proof of an objective event, but rather of its subjective psychological validity for those experiencing it is of course fair up to a point, but if taken too far is again illogical. If this is so then no one should ever be trusted who gives evidence in a court case on behalf of someone else in support of them because of possible subjective motivation.

Dr Lawson's theory appears to pay very little attention to any sort of physical factor involved in close-encounter reports, dismissing them too casually and seeing no link between the events experienced and the physical factors involved. No doubt a great deal of so-called physical evidence is rather ambiguous and can indeed be open to many interpretations. But to make the sort of statement which follows is going to far:

'The inescapable fact is that no abduction case has thus far presented unambiguous physical or physiological evidence which compels us to conclude that a UFO landed in that spot, or left that mark on the abductee's skin, or abducted that family. I am speaking not of probabilities or possibilities but of certainties.'

There are a number of close-encounter abduction reports which do appear to have a clear physical result, either to the environment or to the percipient, and other close-encounter reports show the same thing. Just what this might mean as to the nature of the experiences we are dealing with is another matter.

Dr Lawson does not seem to distinguish between close encounters of the third and fourth kinds but tends to regard them as being the same thing, which they may not be at all! There does appear to be, however, a subjective factor present in most close-encounter reports of all types, but I don't feel that this subjectiveness is at all pathological. Rather, it may be more the result of some natural process of the human psychical structure interacting with the electromagnetic-chemical fields of energy both within the percipient's brain and the environment to produce a manifestation which is both objective and subjective in its cause and effect.

Again one must question the validity of Dr Lawson's contention that in CE3 reports the dominant creature type is humanoid and that it resembles the human foetus, espec-

ially such entities as observed by Betty and Barney Hill, and Travis Walton. It is true that there are more reports of humanoid entities than of other kinds, but the latter are not rare and one must have very good imaginative ability to see any likeness between them and the human foetus. What would Dr Lawson make of a report of the fourth kind that involved more than one type of entity, we can only wonder?

No doubt taking the full range of ufological manifestations into account only tends to lead one to conclude that there is more than just a single cause at work here. I am classing only reports (all across the board) that are unexplained, with the cause of unexplained low-definition reports being different from that of medium reports and so on, with perhaps the cause of the close-encounter cases being something else again. These ufological manifestations can not be put down to images associated with birth trauma. They are world-wide and are reported by all social groups, and are generally not the result of any pathological syndrome of either a physical or psychological nature.

Dr Lawson's theory poses more questions than it answers, leaving too many strands untied and open. He admits that 'a causal nexus between specific events of one's biological birth and particular images has yet to be established', and that 'we cannot yet explain what stimulates the sequence of visual imagery and events which makes up an abduction'.

Another weakness, we feel, lies in the unproved assumption of Rank and others that the presence of birth trauma elements are universal in their manifestations; that it has always been present, that it is something which sets the pattern for future anxiety. Yet not everyone is affected? If what Dr Lawson writes is correct then we all should be having CE4 encounters, yet this is not so. Nor are the percipients of these strange images repeating their subjective manifestations time and time again, which they should be doing if these images really are the long-lost memories of life in the womb, of birth and just afterwards.

Turning to reports of CE3 and CE4 which involve EM effects. Just how can the birth trauma theory fit in to try to explain them, because a birth memory of great anxiety can not stop a motor car's engine, put out its lights and cut out radio reception?

Turning lastly to historical factors associated with UFO manifestations and the possible appearance of birth trauma effects, we must pose the question: Why did not the present-day images of CE3 and CE4 encounters occur to the extent they do today, taking as true the age-old and universal nature of the birth trauma?

Why did people see airships, mystery aircraft, ghost rockets, all of which do appear to be prototypes of present-day ufo-logical manifestations, instead of just seeing UFOs and their occupants? There can't have been all that many airships present at birth to give rise to early infant anxiety, or strange, unmarked aircraft flying about in the womb prior to birth to cause pre-birth nightmares to the unborn child.

Lastly, a question! How is it possible for the unborn child in the womb to know just what its own appearance is, in order for this to be later superimposed in adult life as part of a close-encounter abduction experience?

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As mentioned in our Editorial this issue, we have been obliged to change our printing arrangements, and offer our thanks to Ivan Bunn and the BSIG team in East Anglia. This means, of course, that we are having to withdraw our offer of printing facilities to other journals. Our apologies to those people who had shown an interest in this service.

The following back issues of MUF0B and MAGONIA are still available, but in some cases supplies are limited: MUF0B new series 8 - 15 40p. each
MAGONIA numbers 1 - 10 50p each
Please send orders with cheque or postal order made payable to 'John Rimmer' to the address on page two.

LETTERS

Sir,

It was fascinating to see the Lawson Birth Trauma material presented in full in MAGONIA 10, though I suspect that the theory was more convincing when left in more general terms. The point that as an English Literature specialist Lawson is apt to make too much of the simplest event has been well made; my 'A' level interpretations of 'King Lear' suffered from some of the same problems.

However, there is no doubt that the BT element is vitally important in a substantial proportion of cases, and that many investigations do look very different when viewed in this light. Certainly, Lawson has taken all the fun out of Budd Hopkins' Missing Time, but one point persists in disturbing me. I cannot understand why all the BT images appear to be self-images. That is to say, why do so many of the characters in the BT scenario have a foetal appearance? If I was, for instance, suddenly transported to the most conservative quarter of Tehran, and this were to have upon me a traumatic effect that could be recalled under hypnosis, I do feel that I would be more likely to recall swarthy men in flowing robes and women clad in black with their faces covered, rather than imagining a city populated by overweight, balding parano-maniacs with beards and glasses!

Perhaps the most intriguing part of all this is that we are closing yet another loop-hole in the UFO mythos; neither witnesses nor researchers are now as likely to put forward cases that can be susceptible to the BT analysis. Much as aliens had to stop coming from the moon in the 1960s and from nearby planets soon after, those who feed us our cases have got to become yet more crafty. Being as they have to avoid cases that could be explained by the Persinger/Devereux crushed rock hypothesis as well, they are certainly going to have to come up with something original. I bet they will, and that two years hence we'll be analysing those cases.

As for me, I'm nipping off to study visions of the Virgin Mary and other humanoid materializations, while the rest of you clever so-and-sos sort this lot out.

Sincerely

Kevin McClure
Leicester

Dear John Rimmer,

I have recently obtained your magazine MAGONIA number 8 (says No. 7 inside) plus a few earlier ones. So far I have only skimmed through them, but they certainly look readable and level-headed.

In No. 8 is a review of Robert Sheaffer's UFO Verdict, a book I would certainly place in the top three or four ever written on UFOs. Your reviewer made some valid points about the book; however, on the question of whether UFO writers set out to entertain rather than inform, I think Sheaffer was fully justified in thinking that the late Ray Palmer seriously did believe all his own pseudo-science over the years. I believe Palmer fully believed everything he wrote about (although I cannot claim to have had much contact with most of it).

Ray Palmer propounded a lot of crackpot ideas about the shape of the earth, its interior, the Shaver stories (not his originally, of course), plus sniping at orthodox physics, the space programme, and trying to bolster the infamous Maury Island nonsense. All the evidence points to his seriousness in all of these, and he was not alone.

There is of course our own Lord Clancarty. He has published his 'hole at the pole' satellite photos. He believes in just about every kind of paranormal and fringe science subject and there is no question of his sincerity. If Lord C. can be utterly sincere, why cannot Ray Palmer be? If Palmer was a fraud he must have been a pretty poor one because there is nothing to suggest he profited much from it (not like Berlitz or von Daniken who have made enormous profits and certainly are frauds). Although I have not read all that much of Palmer I find it very hard to believe he could have hoodwinked his readers for so long, 20 years or more. My view is that Palmer was sincere.

Don't forget the late Samuel Shenton. Don't forget Velikovsky, or even our own present day writers like Arthur Shuttlewood. I would say all three (and many others) are unquestionably sincere in their beliefs, as is Lord Clancarty.

Your reviewer in fact touches on a very important matter which is: 'How can we tell if someone who keeps propounding obvious crackpot science is sincere in his beliefs?' If such people are not sincere they must be in it for money or publicity; there is no alternative. UFO books are published as non-fiction. If their authors do not believe their own writings then such books should be classed as science fiction and treated as such.

Patrick Moore had a lot to say about the fringe scientists in his entertaining little book Can you speak Venusian? Moore, I believe, bends too far over backwards to give some of them the benefit of the doubt over their sincerity. But the question remains. How can we tell? Should we try to tell at all?

Sheaffer decided Palmer and Keel were both sincere. He may have been wrong, but I think he was justified.

I have followed ufology for many years now. Experience has taught me to regard all UFO reports with suspicion, especially those seen at night. In fact I have almost decided that no night-time report is worth bothering with (at least as far as establishing the reality of something really unknown to science). There are far too many overrated cases like New Zealand, Lakenheath, Father Gill, Socorro, Betty Hill, etc. Not a single one will ever establish the ETI or any other far-flung hypothesis because every one is explainable in terms of something 'down-to-earth'. The true unknowns are very few in number. The trick is not to investigate a UFO case too thoroughly. Investigate it just enough to keep it unexplained. If you go into it too far it will just 'fall apart in your hands'. But, of course, very few investigators can afford the time and expense to do this!

Well, I don't want to ramble on forever about the subject. In my view investigating UFOs is probably a pointless, thankless task. It is the sort of thing that seems to produce an almost zero return from a vast effort.

The books and theories abound, but still we await the breakthrough we need, and my guess is that come the next century (and very likely the one after that!) we shall still be waiting.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Allan
Alsager, Cheshire

Dear John,

Several times just lately I've attempted to formulate my thoughts on what may be a neglected aspect of UFO study. The reason, I think, that these thoughts are not as coherent as they might be is that I am by nature a Fortean, where my primary interest lies, and as such I do not possess the background knowledge necessary to treat the subject to its necessary depth.

These thoughts concern the media, not their reportage of UFOs but their credulity and how this has changed over the last 30 years, and how by a greater public knowledge of the UFO subject this has acted as a censor on UFO reports. For instance, a junior reporter on a provincial newspaper is more likely to spot an obvious fraud than he was 30 years ago. Also tied in to this is how the UFO reports are apparently in an inverse ratio to the number of media outlets. Back in the early days of the modern era of UFOs (I consider all pre-1947 sightings in a different category) there were comparatively fewer media outlets for UFO reports. Yet today there are more, but apparently fewer UFOs seen. How come when there is greater opportunity?

Moreover, I see other aspects of the media as relevant to this subject. After the wave of the 1950s, sci-fi films, us v. them, good v. bad, etc., the resurgence of sci-fi films in the 70s, and here I'm particularly thinking of Close Encounters, seems to have drained the imagination of the public. If a film can present stunning images, any personal sighting has to be a bit of a pale imitation and if the sighting is more spectacular than CE3K the obvious reaction is an accusation of fraud. That is why I think CE3K almost sated and then 'vampirically' drained public interest in the subject.

Yours

Alan Gardiner
Lewes, Sussex

Dear John,

Peter Rogerson's article 'Why have all the UFOs gone?' in issue 7 of MAGONIA reminds me of a comment made by Mark Twain in Life Along the Mississippi: 'Science is wonderful, you get such a wholesale return of conjecture from such a trifling investment of fact'.

While I recognize that the article is an attempt to explore the myth surrounding the UFO phenomenon, which is laudable, it bothers me that he must use such a convoluted argument to attempt to show a causal connection between the myth and the basis for the phenomenon - the UFO reports. Many times he seems to get his dates confused when he attempts to make broad generalizations linking events in British and American societies. He fails to consider that ideas in vogue in one culture may not be in vogue at the same time in another. Furthermore, although he spends a great deal of time tracing the evolution of the myth down through the decades, he fails to make a case for how the myth generates reports. Apparently we are to accept this portion of the argument on faith.

I find the connection that Rogerson tries to make between political events in the US and the south-eastern US UFO wave of 1973 unconvincing. My own impression is that the average American just doesn't pay that much attention to foreign events. The Vietnam War ceased to be a major issue with the ending of the Draft and the involvement of US ground forces in 1971. Until the fall of Saigon in 1975 most Americans' perception of Vietnam was one of a stalemate, and not a defeat. As for the effect of the Watergate revelations on national morale, it seemed to this observer to be more stimulating than demoralizing, although I grant that the observation was made from the side of the fence rooting for impeachment. While Rogerson's analysis of the motives behind the writings of British and American UFO enthusiasts is interesting from a historical perspective, I find it highly doubtful that any causal connection exists between the political and emotional ups and downs of UFO enthu-

siasts and the occurrence of UFO waves. By what mechanism can the writings of such an infinitesimally small percentage of the populace, appearing in obscure journals, have any measurable impact on society?

Many have tried to fathom some understanding from the reporting cycle of the UFO phenomenon. Some, like David Saunders, believe that the occurrence of some UFO waves is not linked to social phenomena. Some, like Allan Hendry, believe that the waves of UFO reports are a social phenomenon but that the underlying cause of UFOs (as opposed to IFOs) is constant over time. Others, apparently with Peter Rogerson included, believe that the entire phenomenon is myth directed and controlled. I tend to think that Saunders is right, but I can think of no way to test these hypotheses without possessing a much firmer grasp of the motivations behind making a report (which have changed over time) and the reporting mechanisms (which have also changed over time). In the case of Rogerson's theory, we also have to more carefully document who was thinking what; when they were thinking it; and who they influenced by their thoughts or actions.

One piece of evidence that casts doubt on a connection between UFO popularity and the occurrence of UFO sightings is the response the Center for UFO Studies received from the release of the film Close Encounters of the Third Kind. The preponderance of sighting reports received occurred many years earlier. My limited experience with investigating sightings that have occurred many years earlier than the date of the investigation left me impressed with the fact that quite often these events reportedly occurred during times of earlier UFO waves.

It appears that a major sociological investigation would be required to unravel the answer to the question. It also appears that such an investigation would be in order, given that there are still enough of us interested in the answer to the question.

Yours truly

Donald A Johnson
Kirkland, WA, USA



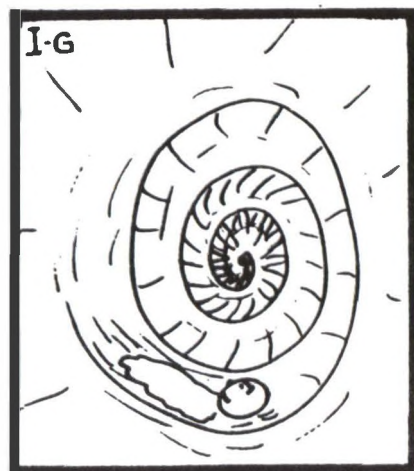
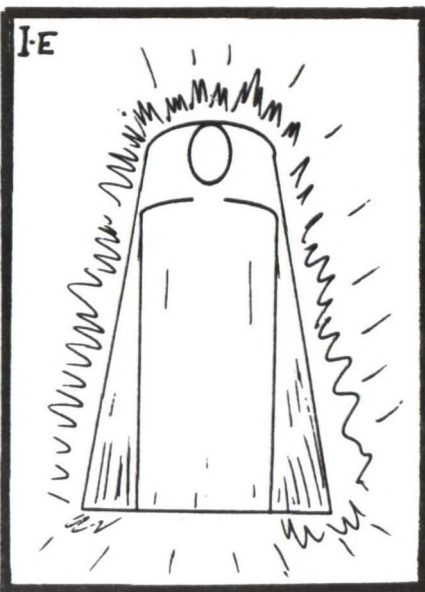
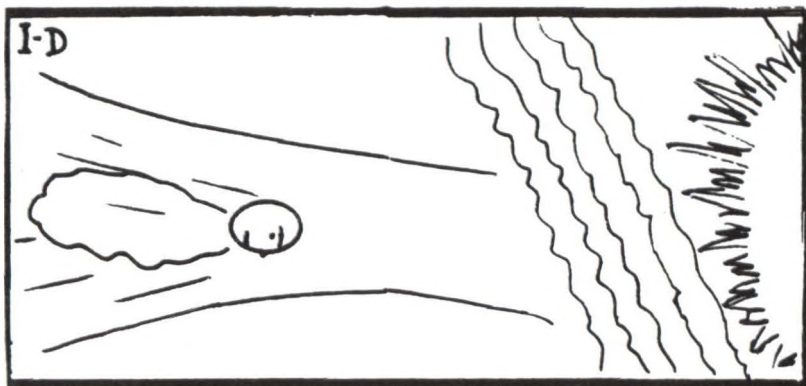
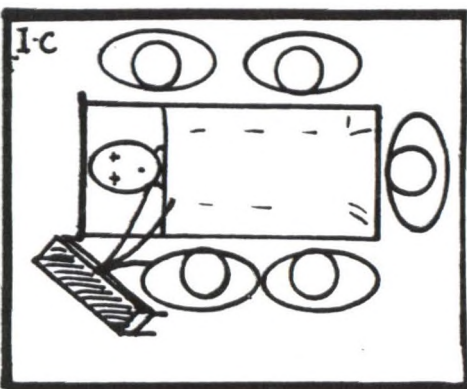
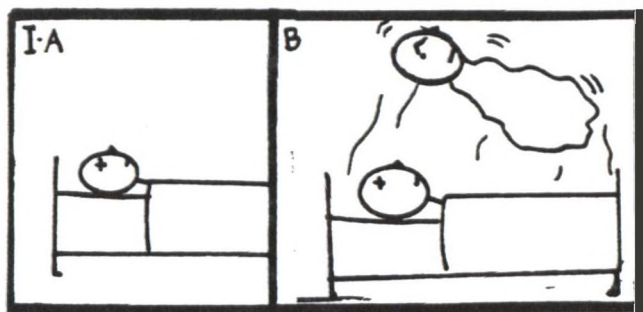
Letters for publication are always welcomed, whether commenting on articles in the magazine, or on any other subject.

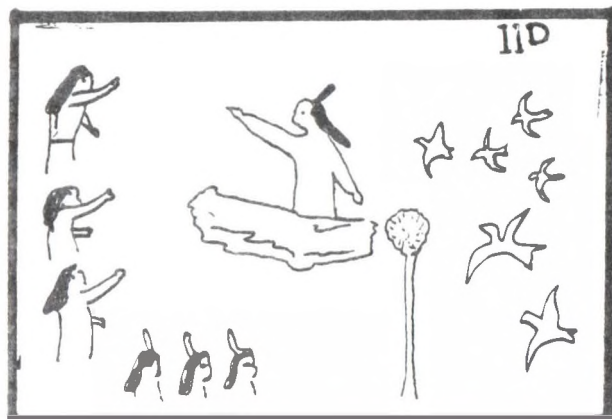
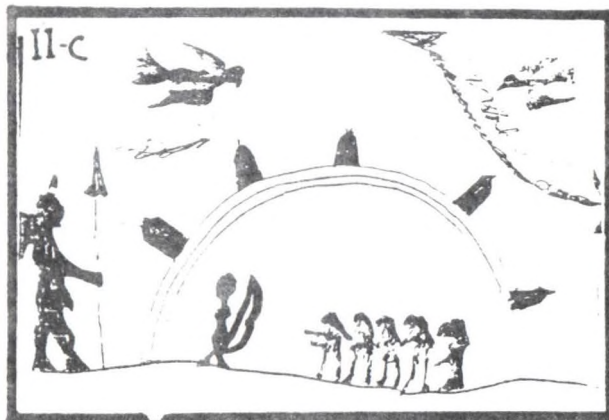
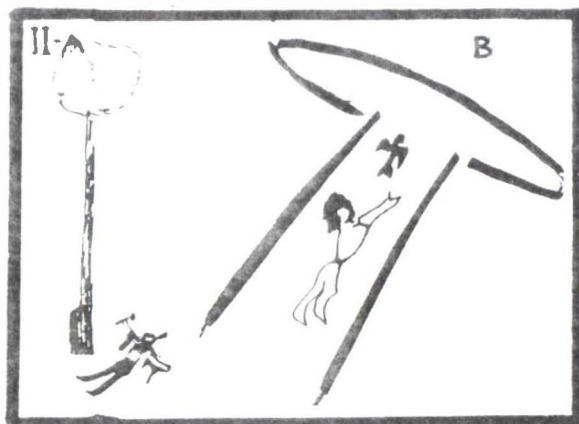
The Abduction Experience

Alvin H Lawson

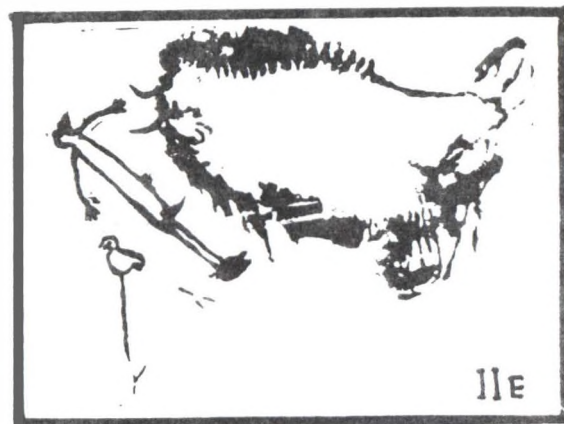
These sketches illustrate some of the many parallels between UFO abductions and Near-Death-Experiences. In figure I-A-B, the subject 'dies, then apparently conscious undergoes a sense of floating in an OOB experience. This is usually followed (I-C)

by an 'examination' or resuscitation table. I-D illustrates the 'tunnel' or 'tube' leading to a 'border' or doorway. The border is often of water, perhaps suggestive of the amniotic fluid. Beyond this is a brightly lit area in which the percipient confronts a 'being of light' (I-E); and often the subject is presented with a TV-screen like 'review' of his past life. The subject returns (I-G), often with an aftermath, a recognised psychological effect. Writers such as Kubler-Ross emphasize its significance for the NDE witness's personality. The witness's personality and life is never the same. All these images and effects have direct UFO abduction parallels.





Amerindian shamans like Black Elk, an Oglala Sioux, believed that they could travel from earth to their worlds by means of a 'cosmic pillar', often symbolised in sketches by a pole or tree (II-A). Black Elk's typical trance started beside a tree (pillar). Shortly a 'spirit guide bird' led him upward through a tunnel-like aperture and thence upward into a 'flaming rainbow tepee' (II-B) where Black Elk met and communicated with a group of 'grandfathers'. (Note the womb/UFO shape of the tepee.) At this point (II-C) in many accounts the shaman is forced to undergo painful bodily dismemberment - a demon removes every organ, bone, and even blood cell in his body! But everything is then replaced, after being cleansed and purified, and lo! the shaman is spiritually and physically reborn (a rich echo of birth-trauma imagery) and is thus ready to return to his people with renewed spiritual energies. Sometimes (II-D) Black Elk was returned by a 'little cloud'. A cave painting (II-E) (12,000 - 30,000 BC) indicates the antiquity of this analogue - an entranced shaman lies beside a spirit-guide bird atop a pole.



IV-A. In this Algonquin Indian star-maiden myth, there is an abduction, but reversed! A brave has captured a beautiful maiden from a group which came down to Earth in a flying basket. Algonquin myths have a number of sky-travelling creatures: contacts between earth and heavenly entities, spirit guides, and the like.

The star-maiden pictured eventually was able to return to her sky home, but she came back years later, again in her flying basket, for her brave. After many years together in the sky world, they were transformed into white falcons, and lived out their lives on the prairies.

Although their myth is traditional, the illustration dates from 1914.

MAGONIA CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR QUIZ

For the first time in MAGONIA (MUFOB) the Editors present a prize competition. Suitable prizes will be awarded to the best three entries in the following Quiz. The closing date for receipt of entries is 28 February 1983. The Editors' decision is final. No correspondence will be entered into etc. (you know the rules for this sort of thing.)

To begin: Some UFO authors have written books on other subjects. So for our first question - we name the books, you name the authors.

1. Non-UFO books written by UFO writers.

- (a) Living mammals of the world.
- (b) Fun in bed (and what was it about?)
- (c) Dr Yen Sin and the mystery of the Dragon's Shadow
- (d) The outcast manufacturers
- (e) Hip-pocket Hitler
- (f) Jadoo
- (g) The Great Exhibition of 1851
- (h) The oldest profession: a history of prostitution

2. Which ufologist...

- (a) Made press headlines in 1962 by punching one of Britain's best-known journalists on the nose, live on TV, and for what non-ufological reason?
- (b) Was suspected of being a possible Russian

agent by the US House Committee on Un-American Activities?

- (c) Was an aide to Atlantic flyer Charles Lindbergh?
- (d) Was once a diplomat in China?
- (e) Started the world's first SF fanzine?

3. What have these in common?

- (a) J Allen Hynek, Max Miller, Ludwig Wittgenstein
- (b) Al Bender, 'The Stranglers', the New Zealand Rugby team

4. Which contactee...

- (a) Led a South American guerilla group?
- (b) Was summoned by a US district attorney for alleged involvement in JFK's assassination?
- (c) Had his extraterrestrial visitor cited in his divorce case?
- (d) Represented his town at Lyndon Johnson's inauguration?
- (e) Was assassinated in a ballroom in New York in 1965?

5. Which 'entity'...

- (a) First made contact through a Post Office telephone box without paying?
- (b) Had previously attempted to pass himself off as President Idi Amin?
- (c) Was widely believed to be a member of the House of Lords?

Illustration credits from previous pages.

I-A - G Lawson

II-A Katherine M. Lawson, as suggested by Black Elk in J. Neihardt, Black Elk Speaks (university of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1961)

II-B Katherine M. Lawson, as suggested by Black Elk

II-C Indian God Vishnu dismembering shaman (traditional: Victoria and Albert Museum)

II-D Katherine M. Lawson, as suggested by Black Elk

II-E Cave drawing, Lascaux, France (between 30,000 and 12,000 BC)

IV-A from L. Spence, Myths of North American Indians (New York 1914)

IV-A



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BOOKS



MAUSKOPF, Seymour H. and McVAUGH, Michael R. The Elusive Science: Origins of Experimental Psychological Research. Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980.

The authors of this book examine, from the viewpoint of historians of science, the transition from 'psychical research' to 'parapsychology' during the quarter-century 1915-40 and, in particular, the work of Dr J B Rhine. The archives of Dr Rhine at Duke, and those of the Society for Psychical Research and the American Society for Psychical Research have been extensively consulted and much new material has been brought to light.

The result is one of the most interesting, informative and novel works in this field for some time. Unlike so much of the endless rehash presented, we actually learn a great deal, some of it quite surprising. For example, British psychical researchers were far more critical of Rhine's 'lax experiments' than American academic psychologists, who saw this as normal in the first stages of an experimental investigation. We also learn that some statisticians came to Rhine's defence because they saw sceptical psychologists' attacks on Rhine's statistics as an attack on the infant science of statistics itself. Most interesting is the extent to which a large proportion of American psychologists were at least 'not unsympathetic' to Rhine, and by 1940 if his results had been replicated by a fair number of the people quietly replicating his experiments, parapsychology would have been on the way to being respectable. The authors leave off

just at the point that parapsychology began to get bogged down.

Perhaps a wider historical perspective would show that such a result is too typical of psychical research, which seems to lack persistence. There are repeated patterns of 'good leads' or 'crazes' (depending on how you look at them) being taken up, followed for a while, petering out when the going gets rough, and abandoned for something new.

This book is also welcome because its scholarly, calm tone is such a contrast to those which argue in a hectoring way either that those who are not convinced by the overwhelming evidence are thick-headed S.O.B.s, or that those who don't laugh the whole thing out of court are credulous twits. For agnostics like myself both sides are equally irritating.

- PR

EYSENCK, Hans J. and SARGENT, Carl. Explaining the Unexplained: Mysteries of the Paranormal. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982. £9.95

This is somewhat better than the average for such productions. It suffers from the setback of never being able to be quite sure of what audience is being aimed at. The result is too simplistic for the scientist, too technical for the man in the street. The authors may well have been wise to omit Walker's 'hidden variables' theory of consciousness at which physicists look askance. Though the treatment of experimental research is cautious, the authors (or one of them, at least) are too ready to take claims of reincarnation and 'drop-in communicators' at face value.

- PR

EVANS, Hilary. Intrusions: Society and the Paranormal. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982. £5.95

The sub-title of this book suggested that it would be a sociological examination of alleged paranormal phenomena, and of society's reaction to them. However, in effect, if not intention, it turns out to be yet another 'history of psychical phenomena from the earliest times to the present day'. This is a topic which has been over-worked already and, in the compass of just over 200 pages, many given over to illustrations, the treatment cannot be anything but superficial. This is especially so when one considers that huge tomes have been written about very narrow fields, such as the sixteenth-century East Anglian witchcraft. Maybe this would not have mattered so much if the author had provided refer-

ences to them, but I searched the bibliography in vain for the works of Keith Thomas, Frank Podmore, Lawrence Moore, James Webb, Renee Hayes, Frances Yates, Norman Cohen, or even Brian Inglis.

The result is that the treatment is misleading in places. For example, Hilary does not make clear whether by 'society' he refers to the ordinary people or a small minority of the intelligentsia. For example, the so-called 'Age of Infidelity' had little impact on the vast mass of agricultural labourers, whose world view in 1750 was probably little different from that of 1550. If religious revivalists complained of 'infidelity' it was more likely to be a complaint against maypole dancing and village wakes than a predilection for Voltaire.

In assessing the growth of rationalism in the nineteenth century, the role of social climbing should not be underestimated. To believe in ghosts was to risk being tarréd with the brush of 'lower classedness', a fatal step for a member of the rising Victorian bourgeoisie, who could not face the fact that his grandfather was an agricultural labourer. 'Superstition' was part of a whole melange of working-class life, which included the village wakes, gin and cock-fighting, which tidy-minded Victorians attempted to clear up.

It is instructive to note that when the (outwardly) prim and proper members of the SPR collected ghost stories, they made sure to collect outwardly prim and proper ghost stories. Headless horsemen and shrieking spectres were far too working class; the proper Victorian ghost, like the proper Victorian child, was seen but not heard.

Phantasms of the Living, by Gurney, Myers and Podmore, is a document which has been sadly underused by social historians. It gives a vivid and very moving portrait of an age of rampant child mortality, raging consumption, and the perpetual anxiety of families whose members served in fever-ridden colonies.

It is probably a mistake to regard the growth of spiritualism, at least in its earlier years, as a reaction to materialism. Rather it was a continuation of the secularizing trend, as the mid-Victorian clergy clearly saw, with science pushing at the mystery of death while, at the same time, the birth-control propagandists were pushing at the mysteries of conception and birth. Spiritualism did not seek to oppose the new science; it regarded itself as part of the scientific advance. Clearly this situation changed when spiritualism ceased to be part of a working-class reform movement and became home to romantics outraged by mechanistic science, but unable to accept church doctrine.

I do not really share Hilary's view

that grieving widows went to mediums 'in defiance of science' during the First World War. If they went in defiance to anyone it was more likely to be the local clergyman. The role of 'science' in general society was surely not that prominent.

The value of Hilary Evans's book lies less in the information provided than in its ability to provoke questions and discussion. On that level it succeeds. I hope Hilary will follow up with a book exploring a narrower field in much greater depth.

-- PR

HASTED, John. The Metal Benders. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981. £9.75

This book takes one back to the heyday of William Crookes and Oliver Lodge, when white-coated scientists soberly and po-facedly reported all sorts of astounding marvels. There is the same deep assurance that 'none of these conjuror Johnnies' could get the better of the scientist. So we see Hasted claiming many things for his child metal-benders.

Far from adding confidence to claims of metal-benders this book, albeit unconsciously, does much to undermine them. Those looking for a detailed account of a conclusive experiment will be disappointed. There are, however, plenty of anecdotal accounts of Uri Geller (whatever happened to Uri Geller, by the way?) and others even more amazing. These include tales of children being teleported through walls, which apparently feels like being in a blizzard.

Tales of Philippine healers, long demolished as hoaxes, are retold without critical comment. This is perhaps less an indication of the author's credulity than of his lack of background knowledge in parapsychology. It is also an indication of the way in which scientists have a general tendency to quote papers and monographs quite uncritically. Most of the time this escapes notice, and it is only in controversial areas, and places where pseudo-scientific garbage is quoted with the same solemnity, that this comes to notice.

Much of the book is very technical; strain gauges and equations abound, and the non-technical reader (like yours truly) is of course unable to tell whether any of this is of much validity.

-- PR

BORD, Janet and Colin. Earth Rites. Granada, 1982. £8.95

PEGG, Bob. Rites and Riots. Blandford Press, 1981. £8.95

Earth Rites deals with a wide range of

British folk customs and argues that all of them are derived from fertility rituals going back as far as the Stone Age. A great many people have a vague idea that this is the origin of folk customs, probably because it has served as the background for many supernatural thrillers (such as the British film 'The Wicker Man'), so it's worth pausing to look at this explanation.

The idea originated with Dr Margaret Murray's The Witch Cult in Western Europe, written in the 1920s. According to Dr Murray the prehistoric fertility religion was still the religion of the mass of the population of Britain throughout the Middle Ages until it was stamped out by the witch persecution of 1550-1650. Unfortunately, there are serious problems here that Dr Murray (and the Bords) leave undealt with. First of all, it is rather hard to picture an unbroken continuity of beliefs from the Stone Age to Medieval Britain when in the intervening period Britain had undergone invasion and settlement by Celts, Saxons and Vikings. It is certainly true that whole cultures did not become Christian overnight and that we can trace pre-Christian survivals into the Middle Ages. However, neither Druidism, the pre-Christian religion of the Celts, or the worship of the Viking or Saxon gods bears much relation to any hypothetical fertility cults. Nor does what we know of the popular culture of the Middle Ages from sources such as Chaucer suggest the existence of any such cult.

Furthermore, the Bords follow Dr Murray in believing that several violent deaths of medieval monarchs and other prominent people were in reality human sacrifices to ensure fertility. The reason this idea has failed to convince any historians is not because they 'know nothing of esoteric pagan practices' but because Dr Murray's evidence is based to quite a large extent on misquotation and misrepresentation. (For further details see: Norman Cohn, Europe's Inner Demons and Elliot Rose, A Razor for a Goat.)

In spite of the problems with the Bords' main thesis, their book contains much that is interesting about folklore and customs, many excellent photos and detailed documentation, making a welcome change from many recent works on fringe science which consist almost entirely of material rehashed without acknowledgement from other equally dubious works.

A rather different approach is taken in Rites and Riots. This book examines a variety of European traditional annual customs and attempts to analyse why they have lasted and what social function they fulfil in their community, rather than treating them as

ancient survivals. In the process it turns out that many may be considerably less ancient than often thought and in some cases may have been influenced by published accounts of alleged 'ancient rituals' that the participants had read rather than 'ancient fertility cults'. (The way that some folklorists assume that those they study are illiterate and incapable of original thought is rather similar to the way some ufologists assume that those they interview are incapable of picking up information on UFOs from the printed word.)

The kind of social analysis attempted in this book may be usefully applied to the current popularity of 'fertility cult' explanations of popular customs. The idea of a once-universal cult centred around childbirth and the need to renew the earth, although it may not tell us much about the origin of our popular customs, speaks eloquently to a time when many are becoming more conscious of the importance of the earth's resources and of the manner in which the experience of women is excluded from many orthodox religious and philosophical discourses.

- RS

LIND, Tom (Comp.) The Catalog of UFO Periodicals. Said of Saucers Publications, PO Box 711, Hobe Sound, Florida 33455-0711. \$12.50 + 75¢ postage (outside USA and Canada \$2.00 postage).

In his introduction Tom Lind admits that this work is incomplete. He asks for corrections and new information, and promises supplements updating the information. But even in this first state it is a monumental piece of research, listing over 1000 UFO periodical titles.

In fact, in its very incompleteness it reflects the strange and shadowy world of UFO publications. Vague, half-formed journals loom up from the mists of antiquity. All we know about Interplanetary News Scope, for example, is that it was 'publishing in the early 1950s'; Cosmic Science Newsletter appears with only the rather alarming information that it was edited by Charlotte Blob!

But even when the magazine is more fully documented the changes of title, editor and publisher are so confusing they make your head spin (MUF0B/MAGONIA is not blameless here, of course). The magazine Probe appears to have had eleven editors between 1968 and 1980; a US magazine UFO Analysis Report bears the note: 'This publication replaced Interplanetary Intelligence Report (which) was replaced by The UFO Reporter (which) was to be replaced by International UFO Report, but before an issue was published...the title was changed to UFO Analysis Report'.

The titles themselves intrigue: surely Space Twilight - Ufological Corner: Star Dance must have been the daftest title ever, The Panufology Twelves one of the most enigmatic?

Some people seem to have edited dozens of UFO magazines. Allen H Greenfield warrants a bibliography to himself. One of his titles, Inner Circle Bulletin has the baffling annotation: 'This publication is often mistaken for a non-existent publication entitled AMUFO Bulletin'. In the world of ufology, I can quite believe it!

- JR

DEVEREUX, Paul. Earth Lights: Towards an Explanation of the UFO Enigma.
Turnstone Press, 1982. £9.95

In this book Paul Devereux tries to set out a new approach to the UFO problem. He admits that '...this current version is still by no means a complete theory...' and indeed the gaps in the theory are rather obvious. Devereux resorts to the device of plugging these gaps with highly speculative ideas, so that unexplained observations are discussed by employing rather dubious hypotheses, which only adds to the confusion.

The basic idea of the book is that UFOs are natural phenomena, produced by forces generated by stresses which build up in the vicinity of geological faults. An additional hypothesis is that the people who built the stone circles and other mysterious structures in various parts of Britain were aware of these forces and that the structures were designed to tap the energy and to use it in some way that we do not understand. There is nothing new in this idea, of course; various pseudo-scientific books and articles have been and are being written on this topic, most of them showing little understanding of elementary logic or basic scientific principles.

However, Devereux is associated with a group known as the Dragon Project, which was formed to investigate the 'Earth energy' allegedly associated with many prehistoric sites. The group includes people with qualifications in appropriate subjects, such as physics and electronics, and they claim to have recorded anomalous readings in the vicinity of stone circles, particularly in their measurements of radioactivity, which are said to differ significantly from the normal background readings. This aspect of their work has recently been described in the New Scientist (21 October 1982).

Unfortunately, only a brief account of the work of the Dragon Project is given and much of the book is taken up with trying to link up UFO reports with geological faults. Apparently, the distribution of stone circles in Britain shows a strong positive correlation with geological faults and these in turn

show a fairly strong correlation with the distribution of UFO reports, when this distribution is corrected for population density. However, in order to map the distribution of UFO reports it is first necessary to make a selection from all available reports and such a selection must inevitably be a highly subjective process.

Many of the reports described in detail by Devereux seem to be somewhat similar to reports of ball lightning or St Elmo's Fire. Many writers seem to think that ball lightning occurs only in thunderstorms, but there are many reports of it being encountered in their absence. A perhaps more common, but usually less spectacular, phenomenon is St Elmo's Fire. When the potential gradient near the ground reaches a certain intensity the flow of current between earth and air may produce visible or even audible phenomena. High potential gradients exist on hill tops in certain atmospheric conditions. Such phenomena could thus be seen to favour certain places.

The work of Devereux and his colleagues no doubt gives us some ideas to work on in investigating UFO reports, but he goes beyond science in speculating that UFO phenomena can be directly affected by the minds of the observers, like the 'ectoplasm' allegedly produced by physical mediums. This hardly seems helpful if it is desired to attract the attention of scientists to the study of such phenomena.

So many controversial matters are discussed that it would be impossible to deal with them in a reasonably brief review, so I can only invite our readers to read it critically and judge it for themselves.

Before I finish, I cannot resist drawing attention to the photograph on page 98 which shows: 'An example of ball lightning. The dashed form of the light trace indicates that the phenomenon was pulsing..' This same photograph is reproduced, in colour, on the cover of The Taming of the Thunderbolts (C. Maxwell Cade and Delphine Davis, Abelard-Schuman, 1969) only the other way round (i.e. laterally inverted. Which is the correct version?). It is obvious to me that the 'ball lightning' is a sodium-vapour street lamp (the lamp-post is clearly visible) and the trail is produced by the photographer waving his camera about during the exposure. The dashed effect is caused by the alternating current. However, as Devereux does not mention this picture in his discussion of ball lightning reports, I suspect it may have been inserted by the publisher.

- JH

RANDALL, John L. Psychokinesis: A Study of Paranormal Forces through the Ages.
Souvenir Press, 1982. £8.95

After describing some alleged feats of mind-over-matter by ancient or primitive peoples, the author begins Chapter 3 by saying: 'Western civilization as we know it is largely the result of the confluence of three ancient cultures: those of the Jews, the Greeks and the Romans. Most of our present-day attitudes can be traced directly to one or other of the three'. This seems a promising start to the process of setting reports of psychic phenomena into their historical, religious and social contexts. Alas, there is no follow-up to this useful idea. All we get, chapter after chapter, is credulity, credulity and yet more credulity.

The author reviews historical reports of paranormal events, especially those attributed to various saints, such as Francis of Assisi, Teresa of Avila and Joseph of Copertino. Of such reports he admits that most of them can be dismissed as pious myths, as many of them were not written down until long after the alleged occurrences. However, he insists that a few of the accounts cannot easily be dismissed.

Obviously, there is generally not much point in arguing over things which are supposed to have happened hundreds of years ago and Randall rightly devotes much of the book to the period since the beginning of serious attempts to investigate reports of

paranormal phenomena using scientific methods.

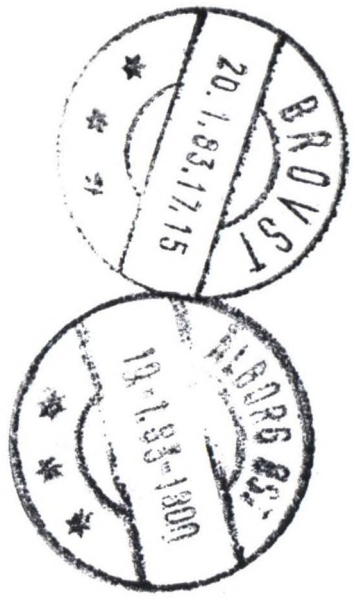
Unfortunately his account of recent research is hardly unbiased. Investigators who return negative verdicts on alleged paranormal feats are accused of unfairness or 'dirty tricks'. Some of these sceptics are dealt with by not mentioning them at all! John Taylor is mentioned and noted as endorsing Uri Geller's paranormal metal-bending as genuine. Yes, but didn't Taylor later change his mind? How does Randall deal with this? He doesn't! Taylor's later book, Science and the Supernatural (Granada, 1980) is not mentioned. In the Preface to this book Taylor writes that '...error and deceit became more and more relevant for me in understanding the supernatural as my work proceeded'.

There are quite a few other curious omissions along these lines and they greatly detract from the usefulness of this book as a serious review of apparently paranormal phenomena and the investigation of them.

The final chapters, on non-Euclidean geometries (the fourth dimension and all that) and quantum theory discuss a number of points which are of interest to philosophers but they do not appear to point to any new practical methods for investigating the 'paranormal'.

- JH

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