# Magonia 53

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Interpreting Contemporary Vision and Belief

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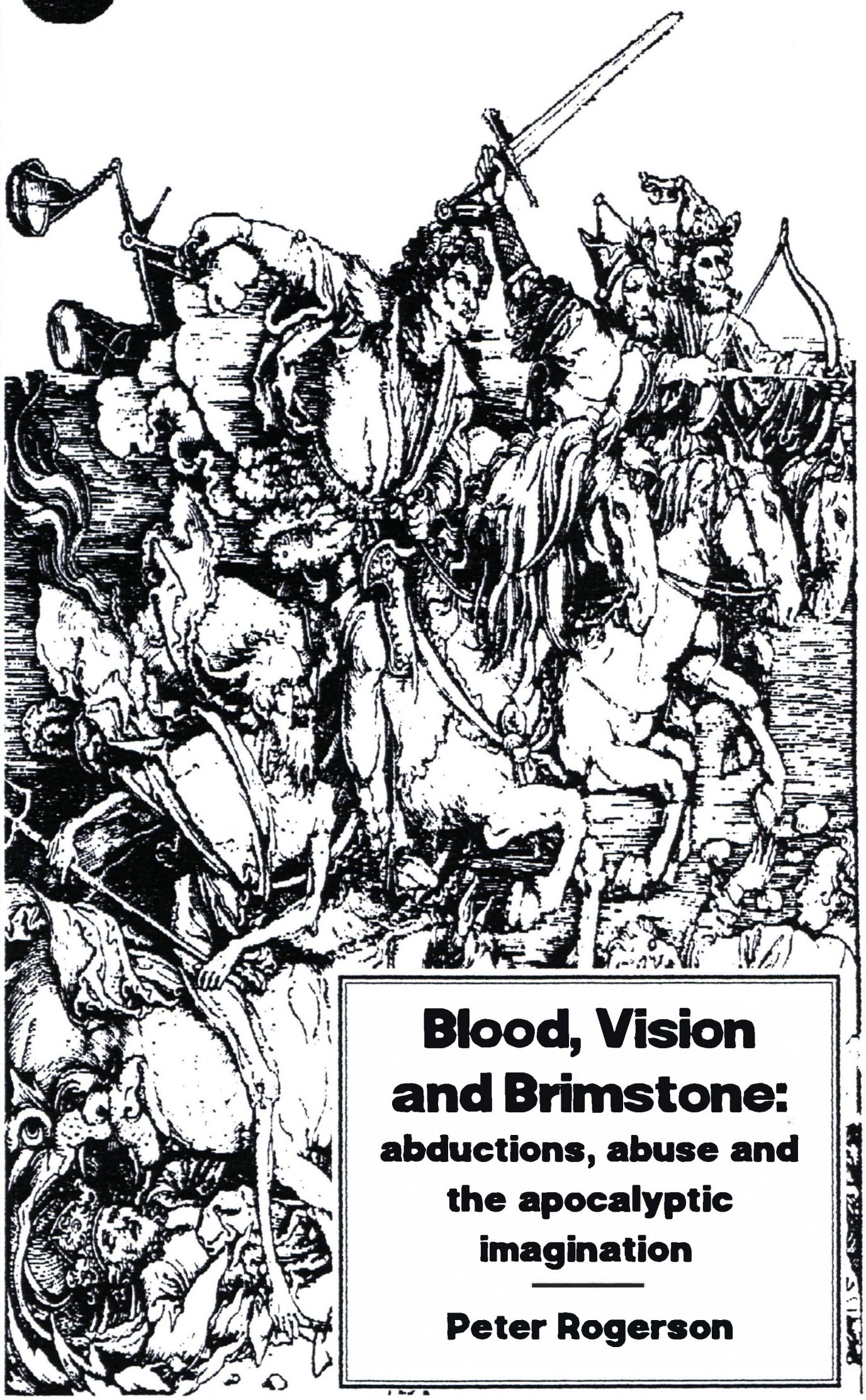

## Blood, Vision and Brimstone:

**abductions, abuse and the apocalyptic imagination**

**Peter Rogerson**

Magonia
Investigating Contemporary Vision and Belief

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# editorial

## From Roswell to Oklahoma City

A FORMER US soldier with a good Army record, living in a rural area, sees UFOs on his land on several occasions, and discusses them with his neighbours. Later he tells investigators that he believes there is an implant inside his body. This might seem a fairly familiar introduction to an abduction-type case. However, the investigators are not Budd Hopkins and his associates, but police officers, for the UFO percipient is Timothy McVeigh, chief suspect in the Oklahoma City bombing. [1]

Right back in the 1970's one of the first article Peter Rogerson wrote for *MUFOB* (*Magonia's predecessor*) dealt with the ultra-right politics that were then to be found on the American ufological fringe. Today the overlap has become larger and more significant than ever. In the confused 90's USA the militia groups are gaining new audiences and incorporating Government - UFO links into their conspiracy theories. Meanwhile in American ufology those tales of dead aliens in air bases that in the 70's were generally ignored, are now being taken seriously by many people who see the conspiracy theories of the militia groups as providing a political explanation for them. The interaction between the groups is shown most clearly by William Cooper, who has moved from spinning retrieval tales at UFO conventions, to becoming a major figure in the militia movement.

When Peter Rogerson first wrote on this topic the examples he quoted were all American. Such ideas rarely surfaced in *Flying Saucer Review* or the publications of BUFORA. Today however *FSR* exists chiefly as a vehicle for the conspiracy theory rantings of its editor, and *UFO Times*, BUFORA's official journal has devoted large amounts of space to Mary Seal, organiser of the 1993 'Global Deception Conference' that was addressed by Eustace Mullins, the veteran US anti-semite and Nazi apologist.

More alarming than those publications are the recent pronouncements of David Icke. After a strange odyssey from sports personality to Green campaigner to New Age guru, his most recent book, *The Robot's Rebellion* uncritically endorses a variety of extreme right-wing conspiracy theories. Icke is also reported to be having problems finding a publisher for his next book because of the Holocaust denial material it contains. [2] He has also apparently recently been favourably written about in the publications of the neo-Nazi group Combat-18.

A future issue of *Magonia* will examine the '90s resurgence of conspiratorialism in more detail, and we will continue to cover new developments. Meanwhile the organisers of events that help legitimise these sinister ideas (such as UFO conferences which feature David Icke) and those who share platforms with their advocates without exposing their ideas and affiliates, would be well advised to think very carefully about what they are actually doing.

*Roger Sandell*

Notes: 1. McVeigh's UFO sightings were mentioned in *The Independent*, 28 April 1995.
2. 'New Age Nazis', *New Statesman*, 23 June 1995.

Meet Magonia

The Magonia Readers' Group meets on the first Sunday of each month at the Railway pub, Putney High Street on the corner of Upper Richmond Road, opposite Putney B.R. station (about 15 mins. from Waterloo). Meet in the upstairs bar (non-smoking) from 7.15pm onwards. Just turn up and join in the conversation - look for the prominently displayed copies of Magonia! the usual good value Wetherspoon's range of food and drinks is available. Ring 0181 876 7246 or 0181 876 6602 for more details

# blue is the colour...

## the hypno-show controversy

MICHAEL GOSS

"Y'KNOW... Hypnotism is Not Just About People Making Fools Of Themselves On Stage," confides the head-and-shoulders caricature, speaking word balloon-wise from the bottom right foreground of the "Biff Weekend" cartoon strip. "It's Also About Flogging Videos." **(1)**

Sure enough, there are the self-help home-hypnosis videos cascading down from the top of the frame like comic gifts from a benevolent Creator. But as far as many of us are concerned, hypnosis is not about them. It is about shows in which our conspecifics make fools (nay, prats) of themselves, with more than a little help, we're led to believe, from a vibrant young man who is billed as a stage hypnotist. (*Brief digression in acknowledgement of political correctness: I dare say there are also vibrant young women stage hypnotists, but they don't seem to make the headlines. Again, my remark should not be construed as evidence of prejudice against vibrant,* not-so-young stage hypnotists, *though it's true they don't get on TV so often.*) **(2)**

The aforementioned head-shoulders/bottom-right-foreground Biff caricature had a more than accidental resemblance to Paul McKenna. As purveyor of both self-improving home-hypnosis videos *and* a superior TV-friendly hypno show (reputedly watched by 12 million viewers each week) he has earned the tribute of being turned into a cartoon caricature. This isn't a comment on his act, nor upon the man himself. What it means is that he's so well known as to be instantly recognised even when reduced to cartoon character format. If Mr McKenna's rise to celebrity and (also reputedly) astronomical wealth is unparalleled in the annals of TV history, it is mainly because he was the first to crack the televisual tabu against broadcasting shows such as his. In consequence he has become a household name. Another, more predictable consequence has been the swarm of stage hypnotists (vibrant, male, young or youngish) anxious to acquire some of what he's got vis-à-vis the celebrity, the cash, the overall kudos. This is where the trouble starts, if it starts anywhere.

"The Hypnotic World of Paul McKenna" is, as I just wrote, TV-friendly - which means it is tailored to be suitable for TV and specifically for peak-viewing times. What he makes his subjects get up to is seldom more than risque; if you want something more "adult", try *Brookside*. "Adult" shows are what many of his would-be, yet-untelevised rivals earn their living from. When not billed as "comedy hypnotism" (to distinguish it from "tragic hypnotism", of course) their acts may be advertised by that very term: *adult*. Some titillate with bylines like: "not for the easily outraged" - nudge-nudge, wink-wink...say no more. **(3)** Basically, these are acts that span the gulf between the sexually implicit and sexually explicit.

Taking the susceptibility, amenability or even the collusion of volunteers for granted, the content of a hypnotic stage act may seem unpredictable: determined or limited, that is, only by the inventiveness of the performer (and perhaps what or how much he thinks he can get away with). In practice, it tends to be the very opposite - predictable or predictable within a little. As Paul McKenna once admitted, all the performer can present are variations upon certain well-known themes. Certain stunts with or without minor variations have become stereotyped ingredients of hypno-shows: The X-Ray Specs (where giant lens-less joke spectacles cause subjects to "see" everyone about them in the nude), negative hallucination scenarios, the When You Wake Up You Will Be Elvis/Madonna/Michael Jackson, et cetera. **(4)** When it comes to sex routines, aficionados may expect the following:

- *Being More Than Just Good Friends with a Stranger*: this has to be classed as potentially embarrassing for the subject(s) but otherwise innocuous. Even safe-as-milk TV shows may feature suggestions which have entranced volunteers cuddling or fondling one another; unscreened variations may involve more vigorous gropings, fumblings, kissing. As the wily hypnotist may word the suggestion so that the focus of each subject's amorousness is the person beside them - and as that person may belong to the same sex - this shades over into:
- *Homoerotic Behaviour*: again, TV performers may engage in modified versions of this, as where one

■1. *Guardian Weekend* supplement, 11 Feb. 1995, p. 6

■2. Female stage hypnotists do not appear to have been over-prevalent at any period in entertainment history. In *Mystic London* (1875) the Rev. Charles Maurice Davies writes of seeing a Miss Chandos, "a very pretty young lady indeed, of not more than 18 or 20 years of age" with "a mystic crop of long black curls, which waved about like the locks of a sibyl" and his phraseology suggests there were others who, like her, bid for popularity on the mesmeric public-lecture circuit at this time. Miss Chandos evidently made adroit use of her girlish charm: "When she asked for volunteers I thought the room had risen on masse", wrote Davies (slightly miffed that he was too far back from the stage to get a go). "Everybody wanted to be mesmerised." Perhaps the best-known and most successful female stage performer is or was Pat Collins, who enjoyed Hollywood modishness in the early 1960s and capped it with a cameo role in *Divorce American Style* (where she hypnotises Debbie Reynolds, of all people).

male is told to stroke another's knee...and so forth. (For maximum effect, pick two macho types for this experiment. Oh, won't they look disgusted at themselves and each other when you snap 'em out of it?!) The macho-man is also useful for:

- *Cross-Dressing*: the subject is handed female attire (the saucier the better) and puts it on in the hypnotically inspired belief he's getting into his own clothes. Illustrative example: one recently reported show ended with "a tattooed trawlerman" in fishnet tights and basque; for good measure he was told to respond to a musical cue by leaping into the air with a cry of, "I believe in fairies". **(5)** The direct opposite to having subjects dress in specially provided and uproariously inappropriate clothes is to have them take off their own, hence:

- *The Striptease*: this, as far as I'm aware, is *not* judged suitable for television although mostly restricted to (a) male subjects only who even then (b) strip down to their underpants only and (c) usually as a finale to the show. (Perhaps once you have reduced a bunch of guys to their underwear, the audience won't expect you to cap that achievement. There again, they might hope you'll try.) In some venues, however, the strip may continue and become absolute, witness the reported comment of one subject's embarrassed girlfriend: "You saw everything when Jack took his clothes off." **(6)** A kind of sexual-discriminatory code operates to protect female subjects from exposing themselves in the same way or to the same extent. Still, under the ever-popular hypno-illusion they are the World's Greatest Stripper, they may lose all except bra/pants and some reports speak of women going topless. **(7)** Arguably and assuming he could find a subject who would comply, a hypnotist who went beyond these sartorial confines would be risking more than a few cancelled bookings. However, he could always fall back on good old:

*Simulated Sex*: most definitely not suitable for TV as we know it today and an easy target for journalists composing one of the "sick sex hypno show" pieces in which this article of mine is interested. Subjects engage in what critics of 1920s Negro dance styles referred to as "dry screwing" with a variety of unlikely objects, in which cuddly toys frequently figure. In one case summarised by *Magonia*, the female victim thought she was enjoying the services of Patrick Swayze when in fact what she was enjoying was whatever services you can expect from an inflatable doll when you haven't taken your clothes off. **(8)** On the same (low) level is:

- *Oral Sex*: well, not really, but the female subject who thinks she is sucking at a lolly/ice cream is actually gobbling away at a vibrator. **(9)**

Before the atmosphere steams up completely, a few things ought to be conceded. These reports all come from papers consciously, industriously and mayhap deviously constructing "sick sex porno-hypno show" articles. This may not disbar them as evidence, but it should be taken into account. More important are the non-hypnotic suggestions of those who claim that hypnosis has little if anything to do with anything that the *subjects* do (or did...or are alleged to have done). Their argument would be that nothing occurred here that might not have occurred without hypnosis. Also, there is a difference between acted-as-if (simulated) acts and actual, for-real (performed) acts. Even agreeing that some hypno-shows may include volunteers who are capable of gross exhibitionism, people who don't need to be hypnotised to perform in a "hypnotic" manner - admitting also that for them hypnosis may be a fair excuse for behaving irresponsibly and coarsely - I would still question a too-general application of this hypothesis.

Let's leave that difficult question for the moment. The published evidence affirms that certain stage hypnotists spice up their acts with routines which are sexually implicit or explicit.

In most cases, the sexuality remains a hint. The hypnotist *implies* he can make his subjects do anything ("sexual things") but is careful not to risk putting that notion to the test. This is a sort of verbal lubricity, the audience being invited to think that if the performer can get his volunteers to behave as outrageously as they are seen to do then he could also get them to do a lot more outrageous ("sexual") things besides. Such appears to have been the ploy utilised by the hypnotist re-christened by the *Sun* of 12 January 1994 "Watt Sleaze". His opening address to the audience implied he was willing to live up to such a soubriquet, holding out the promise that anyone who took part might have their greatest sexual fantasies realised. "If you want a sex orgy", the headline quotes him as announcing, "we'll shut the doors and start right away." **(10)** Disappointingly from the reporter's point of view, perhaps, nothing in the act that followed came close to the orgiastic. The performer merely pointed the audience's collective imagination in one direction and then headed off in another.

It was, in the opinion of Dr Sue Blackmore who accompanied the reporters, "a tawdry display of manipulation... many of the tricks seemed more like humiliation than entertainment"

Elsewhere, though, stage hypnotists appear to sell the idea of their power over the subjects by frankly sex-orientated routines. It is hard to think otherwise about a recent *Sunday Mirror* report of an "adult" show staged by Alex Tsander in which we are told of women instructed to think they were having sex on a train, copulating with a pink toy elephant (not that the colour makes much difference), having the biggest orgasm of their lives *and* licking the hypnotist's boots every time he cued them with the word, "Grovel". **(11)**

It was, in the opinion of Dr Sue Blackmore who accompanied the reporters, "a tawdry display of manipulation", wherein the hypnotist "exploited his power for too long...Many of the tricks seemed designed for his own gratification", and were "more like humiliation than entertainment". Then we have the delightful scene in which, by way of a change, the hypnotist became the one to suffer from an induced suggestion. Under the spell of thinking that he was negotiating a future booking, he handed the undercover reporters "a sick

■3. "Not for the easily outraged": as mentioned in "The Human Zoo" columnist Jon Ronson's "It's a trance of a lifetime" (*Guardian Weekend*, 31 Dec. 1994) which followed an evening at Fifi's Palace of Dance near Dudley with rubber-clad stage hypnotist Alexxx.

■4. The X-Ray Specs routine was popularised (if not actually invented) by the American George Kreskin. Practically all stage hypnotists currently performing have incorporated it into their acts. Negative hallucinations are ones which prevent the subject from seeing (or appearing to see) any object which the hypnotist designates as invisible, e.g. as where the performer suggests that he himself or some other person will be invisible to the subject. A good way to create the illusion of things moving psychokinetically.

■5. "Lads Strip for Gay Bathtime" (*Sun*, 11 Jan. 1994, pp 22-23). This was part of that paper's three part and amazingly sexsational exposé of stage hypnosis.

■6. David Jack, "How hypnotist made my man strip naked for sick sex show...as shocked crowd watched" (*Sunday People*, 1 May 1994, pp 10-11). Ah, but how many of them walked out? Among the other alleged hypnotic indiscretions of this subject was a confession that he wished his girlfriend would get on top more often and "do more of the work".

■7. Until comparatively recently (in most venues, at least) the World's Greatest Stripper involved female subjects in nothing more outrageous than mimicking a bump and grind routine, the hypnotist specifying "... but you *will not take off your clothes*". (This was traditionally accompanied by a knowing look that told the audience that unless he'd said that, the subject certainly *would* have taken off her clothes.) In an interesting but questionable incident at the Wallasey nightclub Tramps in 1980, two females instructed to dance to that old

album of snaps of his past stunts at pubs, clubs and private parties", encouraging them with the promise that if hired, "I can make it as blue as you like".

There is a possibility that the performer thought he had to sell himself - thought that his supposed customers *wanted* it blue and wouldn't book him unless he could prove that, as in the Chelsea FC song, "Blue is the Colour". What the future holds for acts like his, though, may bring blues of the old-fashioned sort.

Ever since the days of the animal magnetists, stage hypnosis has passed through cycles of popularity. Each has been accompanied by recriminations and accusations of harm to volunteer-victims. Currently we are seeing the latest and greatest manifestation of this two-way process, with reports of traumas, severe mental disturbances and emotional as well as occasional physical harm done to subjects. **(12)**

There is no point in pretending this is a non-issue. There is no point in pretending that hypno-act volunteers deserve whatever they get purely because they *are* volunteers and have therefore exposed themselves to avoidable risks. There is no point in pretending there are no risks or that all the reported cases of harm, physical and emotional, are fabrications. Things have started to go wrong.

A name of someone for whom it went wrong, allegedly - a name which crops up like a memento mori whenever the press engage in another minatory treatment of stage hypnosis - is that of the late Sharron Tabarn. Her obituary reads: age 24, mother of two - volunteered as subject in unlicensed pub hypno-show at Leyland, Lancashire; instructed by hypnotist that she would awaken from her trance as if 10,000 volts had passed through her (or words to that effect). Found dead in bed five hours later. Coroner's verdict: epileptic seizure, death by natural causes.

I have been working quite hard to avoid saying that Sharron Tabarn died as a result of that hypnotic suggestion. I feel safe in saying that something of that kind was *implied*, however, since practically every account I have seen of the case has already done so. Mrs Tabarn's mother, Margaret Harper, went further than that. Pointing out that her daughter hadn't suffered a seizure before, she was quoted as stating that "Hypnosis brought on her fit". Mrs Harper went on to launch the Campaign Against Stage Hypnosis, an organisation which has become increasingly prominent as the newspaper coverage of the hypno-show controversy progresses. This, of course, owes much to the way journalists target useful, quotable persons and organisations when researching their material - persons to whom they can say, "What is your reaction?" and get a usable, quotable reply. (We often get the feeling that the interviewer has a better-than-vague idea of the answer before the question is asked; also that the person concerned has been chosen to respond to that question because the interviewer already has a better-than-vague idea of what the answer will be.) Another obvious source for "reaction quotes" on hypno-shows, was, of course, Paul McKenna. Towards the proposal to implement a ban on stage performances he was, unsurprisingly, not sympathetic, even when reporters laid the fact of the Tabarn case in front of him. "It's like saying that because only one restaurant is responsible for food poisoning, all restaurants should be banned." **(13)**

Mr McKenna's opinion was sought again in November 1994 when an out-of-court settlement made 25-year-old Ann Hazard about £20,000 richer, though most would agree it was a poor return for what happened after she'd volunteered as a subject during a stage hypnosis show at Glasgow's Pavilion Theatre some six years before. **(14)** At one point in the performance, Mrs Hazard asked hypnotist Robert Halpern if she could use the lavatory and was allegedly told to go by the quickest route or exit. **(15)** Hypnotised subjects sometimes respond with dreadful over-literalness to suggestions. It appears that in Mrs Hazard's case taking the "quickest exit" involved jumping off the four-foot stage, whereupon she broke her leg in two places.

Unable to follow her sports interests, given over to moods of irritability and to nightmares, she decided to take legal action. This was not without precedent. In March 1952 a 23-year-old shop assistant named Diana Rains-Bath had brought an action for negligence and assault against a stage hypnotist and had won damages, though the sum eventually awarded to her wasn't the sort that anyone could retire on. **(16)** As already mentioned, the Hazard affair ended in an out-of-court settlement - and also a press conference and more calls for a ban on stage hypnosis. Glasgow Council had already pre-empted this, vetoing such displays in all halls and theatres under its jurisdiction. More significantly, the case strongly implied that in future stage hypnotists might be held liable for any proven harm incurred by folk who took part in their acts.

By now it was evident that some newspapers were on the lookout for scandalous, if possible lubricious hypno-stories, inviting readers to contact them at once with personal anecdotes of "life-changing" experiences at stage shows. Typically, these invitations were appended to articles critical of hypnotic entertainments in tone if not in direct statement and it was understood that when they talked about "life-changing" experiences, they meant ones which had changed somebody's life for the worse.

When challenged by the media on the subject, stage hypnotists have an endearing way of agreeing that there *are* rascals who ignore local licensing requirements and guidelines, the 1952 Hypnotism Act and much else besides. They freely admit there are a few who get volunteers to perform unsuitable and sometimes dangerous stunts. But of course, the interviewee scrupulously declares that *he* is not one of the reprehensible band. So far, one of the few stage hypnotists who might say that and be believed was also the best known, Paul McKenna.

favourite "The Stripper" were said to have ignored the hypnotist's injunction and actually went much further than many professional striptease artistes and had to be hustled off stage ("The Stripnotist", *Sun*, 23 June 1980, p. 11). The fact the volunteers were both go-go dancers may or may not have some bearing on these events. Ironically, the hypnotist reported here as distraught ("It was awful. I just want to forget all about it.") and as taking a pride in having a "family" act was Les Power - a name which featured in the same paper's "sick sex hypno show" series of Jan. 1994.

■8. As reported by John Rimmer (*Magonia* 51, Feb. 1995, p. 20), taken from the *Sunday People*, 24 Dec. 1994. (Interesting sexological point: can an inflatable doll ever be used for anything *other* than simulated sex?)

■9. Allegedly featured (and condemned, of course) in the Alex Le Roy act described by Chris Blythe in the *Sun*'s "Dirty Trancing", 10 Jan. 1994. Mr Le Roy's tete-a-tete with the reporter elicited much boasting of sexual conquests accreditable to hypnosis. By contrast, Andrew Newton's with Gary Bushell for the *Sun's TV Super Guide* (no date, late 1994?) produced the complaint that "The pubs are full of third-rate hypnotists ripping off my act" and also the threat of taking Paul McKenna to court for pirating his ideas. However, it also included a cautionary tale of an unnamed hypnotist whose typically unprofessional act included the vibrator/oral sex stunt.

■10. This was the last of the three-part *Sun* exposé cited in Note 5 above.

■11. "Hypno show began as fun but it ended in sex shame", by Hilary Knowles and David Rowe, *Sunday Mirror*, 18 Dec. 1994, pp 14-15

■12. Since at least 1983 several newspapers have quoted Dr Prem Misra, a psychotherapist who to some extent specialises in treating the negative

Ignoring a few less-than-mesmerised TV pundits, the press had always been good to Paul McKenna. Most found him an ideal subject for cosy "human interest" articles. In the best tradition of celebrity journalism, we heard all about his Kensington flat, his days as a disc jockey, his girlfriend (how he proposed to her - and where); even the man who made his waistcoats came in for a mention. **(17)** Interest in TV's latest star was sustained between the end of his first series and the start of the next (autumn 1994) by carefully timed articles of this homely kind. On 1 July 1994 a *Sun* "exclusive" by Peter Willis announced that McKenna had just clinched a £2.5 million, two-year deal with ITV (designed, it was said, to prevent his defection to the BBC) which would enable him to branch out - "hypnotism will take a back seat for now as he concentrates on more widely ranging family shows". (Of these, we've seen no sign so far.) October brought another *Sun* "exclusive" revealing that he was holding secret hypnotherapy sessions to combat the Duchess of York's stress and also her recurring weight problem. **(18)** In all this time, no hint of scandal. As we've seen, McKenna's only contact with anything resembling it took the form of well-considered "reaction quotes" arising from other folks' alleged misfortunes or misdemeanours. Writing about him in *Fortean Times* that same year, I remarked on the odd fact that there'd been so few complaints about him. That disguised the truth, which was that I hadn't heard of any at all. **(19)**

Making such a statement probably brought down a curse on me, on Paul McKenna or upon both of us. With his second Carlton series at the end of its Monday night run, the dailies for 14 December 1994 named him in the context of what sounded a notably serious hypno-scandal which took on added significance from the co-inciding announcement of a governmental decision to review the rules relating to stage hypnosis performances.

Chris Gates (aged 26) had allegedly been transformed from a robust fishing and martial arts enthusiast to someone with the mental state of an eight-year-old after having taken part in a McKenna show at High Wycombe the previous March. Acting and presumably believing he was only eight, the sufferer couldn't be expected to furnish the press with much information on the matter, but his girlfriend could and did. On stage, Mr Gates had responded to instructions to become a ballerina; he had taken part in one of the most popular seen-on-TV McKenna routines, a spoof version of "Blind Date". But according to his girlfriend, he had also been left unattended in a "regressive" state throughout the show's interval and thereafter suffered a noticeable psychiatric deterioration. He complained of headaches - of being scared of God - of someone controlling his thoughts - of voices in his head. He refused to wash his hair or to hang clothes in his wardrobe for reasons plainly outside the realms of rationality. Hospitalised at last for (it was said) acute schizophrenia, Mr Gates was described today as, to all intents, an eight-year-old needing adult supervision and whiling away his time with puzzle-books. **(20)**

Solicited for "reaction quotes" yet again (but under somewhat less positive circumstances than usual) Mr McKenna denied ever having used regression techniques on stage. He also pointed out, quite legitimately, that Mr Gates's mental troubles might have surfaced even had he *not* taken part in the High Wycombe show: "He blames hypnotism," ran one attributed remark, "but there was never any evidence to prove that." Evidence notwithstanding, the implied relationship between the two events - between Mr Gates taking part in the hypno-show and the onset of his mental disturbances - seemed suspiciously causal. This was heightened, arguably, by a Charing Cross Hospital consultant psychiatrist's opinion that the "emotional impact" of the trance may have triggered the subsequent breakdown.

There was an element of glee in some quarters that at last someone had "got something on McKenna". (Too brash, you see - too self-satisfied. Too *successful*.) His figurehead role in his profession - and let's remind ourselves that the public has come to identify Paul McKenna with stage hypnosis and vice versa - gave the allegations immense weight as regards the campaign to ban such shows. How this episode will affect his career as a mass-entertainment celebrity remains to be seen. At the time of writing (February 1995) we are waiting for news of the Government's assessment of the rules regulating hypno-shows. It seems likely that changes will be introduced; the future for the McKenna wannabees isn't bright and the Man himself may have to make a few revisions to his act. The question, as always, comes down to whether *new* laws need to be implemented or whether existing ones could be more effective if they were more vigorously enforced.

For instance and limiting discussion to "sick sex hypno-porno shows" - aren't these events already covered by existing laws? I confess to being quite confused by all this. What follows are a few random and quite likely refutable thoughts on the topic.

Suppose for a moment that the Hazard case had been settled in court instead of outside one. Suppose also that the verdict had been the same, that is, in favour of the complainant. (As it *might* have been: the Rains-Bath case could provide a valid precedent, showing as it does that injured subjects *can* win damages from a hypnotist.) Since it appears that hypnotists can be held liable for actions performed by their subjects against their own safety or against their own interests, could the latter be construed to encompass sexual acts carried out as per hypnotic instigation which the subject retrospectively felt were damaging to his/her emotional health or social status? If so, might a woman pointed out in the streets of her home town as someone who'd publicly simulated sex with a fluffy pink elephant sue on grounds of emotional harm or similar?

I suppose she would have to show that, in a normal state of consciousness *sans* the specific hypnotic instruction, she would *not* have simulated sex with said fluffy elephant. That connects with one of the most recalcitrant questions concerning hypnosis: can or can not a person be made to carry out acts other than what would or might be performed in his/her normal state of consciousness? Again, the act of volunteering to be hypnotised might be taken as consent to the act - unless (in a form of diminished responsibility plea) the subject counter-argued that she consented only to the act of being hypnotised, *not* to the act which came out of it, responsibility for which is down to the suggester, the hypnotist.

So the volunteer-subject argues that she did not know what being hypnotised would lead her into. Might it not be shown that the act of attending an "adult" show *and* of volunteering to take part in it was tantamount to prior awareness? That anybody attending such a show would have *some* inkling of the things she might be involved in as a result of volunteering, so that in

after-effects of stage hypnosis performances. See, for example, Anthony Howard's "Blunder the Spell!" (*Daily Mirror*, 2 March 1994, p. 3) where Dr Misra was said to have handled sixteen "severely disturbed cases" among hypno-show volunteers. This article was published just prior to Dr Misra's appearance on BBC1's "Here and Now" programme in which the dangers of such shows provided the theme.

■13. *Daily Mirror*, 29 March 1994, "The show must go on says McKenna"; cf. "Paul: Stage Ban is Unfair", by Caroline Sutton, 2 April 1994 - possibly the *Sun*

■14. Many national papers for 4 November 1994 carried reports on this case; my summary uses material from the *Guardian, daily Mirror* and *Sun* of that date.

■15. The career of Robert Halpern, perhaps the most oft-publicised Scottish stage hypnotist, has provided the theme for numerous press reports, including some which make him sound worthy of the cliché "no stranger to controversy". It appears a matter of fact that his shows revived the declining fortunes of Glasgow's Pavilion Theatre; in its 4 September 1980 issue *The Stage & Television Today* (p. 3) credited him with achieving 95% capacity audiences in the 1400-seater venue over the traditionally dead summer season. Occasionally criticised by older members of his own profession but something of a folk-hero amongst younger Glaswegians, Mr Halpern suffered from a general concern over possible bad after-effects among hypno-show volunteers (*News of the World*, 24 April 1983, p. 3) and more recently a series of eight scheduled London performances was terminated after just three shows when Westminster City Council reacted to alleged complaints of sexual innuendo, etc. (*Sunday Scot*, 26 May 1991.

effect the subject acquiesced in a process which carried a strong *possibility* of emotional distress?

The Hypnotism Act 1952 clearly states that a licence is required from the local authorities controlling other forms of entertainment before an exhibition, demonstration or performance of hypnosis can take place. **(21)** Prosecutions arising from contravention of this or other parts of the Act seem rare. Licensing authorities vary in their willingness to think hard before granting hypno-show authorisation; Westminster Council is said to be diligent about examining the content of each performer's act but others appear to be less bothered. It has been suggested that not all performers and/or promoters are aware of the need to obtain such a licence and that some quietly ignore it; the Leyland (Lancashire) show in which Sharron Tabarn took part was described in at least one press report as "unlicensed".

All this may be incidental, beyond indicating that stage hypnosis *is* regulated under existing entertainment licensing laws. *Other* laws, notably those regarding public decency, govern what may be staged in places to which the public are admitted. I've been talking about

We get a buzz out of supposing that subjects do what they do because of hypnosis, even if sometimes we harbour a few suspicions that they may only be acting hypnotised

suggested actions of a sexual nature; this, after all, is what press coverage of "sick sex hypno shows" presents as one of the chiefest causes for concern. Are these shows not covered by those laws? Realistically, perhaps, those laws may be unenforceable. They may be too expensive in terms of legal costs to be enforced. Many pub striptease acts play fast and loose with the laws of pornography, for example; the offenders could be prosecuted but (unless someone complains strenuously) they seldom are. The same might apply to *some* stage hypnosis shows.

In any event, all these finicky little problems go away if we follow a particular trend in current thinking about hypnosis, namely that hypnosis doesn't really exist. A few paragraphs back, I slipped in the phrase, "normal state of consciousness", the understanding being that the hypnotic state is not normal, but "altered" or somehow "different". The school of thought just alluded to proposes that it isn't. "Hypnosis" may stand as a term of convenience, but it is not a genuinely distinct state. You may even consider it to be a "cultural invention...a fantasy, like the belief that you are possessed by the devil". So says Dr Graham Wagstaff of Liverpool University in an interview with a rather unconvinced Peter Hillmore. **(22)** Dr Wagstaff is not the first researcher to suggest that "hypnosis" is an invention (and perhaps an unnecessary one); the experimental work of Theodore X. Barber in the 1960s aroused considerable discussion as to the extent to which the phenomena put forward to establish the discrete character of the hypnotic state could be duplicated, even simulated, by non-hypnotised persons. **(23)** But it is Dr Wagstaff who has emerged as a leading proponent of the idea that we may not need to consider hypnosis as anything more than a spurious name for a collection of psychological mechanisms, not as an authentic or unique condition. Speaking in an edition of "Equinox" just before Christmas 1994, he went as far as to say that before too long the word would have dropped out of usage and the concept itself out of sight. Along with it, presumably, would go any notion of prosecutions or regulations to do with hypnosis. You can't prosecute and don't need to regulate what does not exist.

So hypnosis does not exist - the stage volunteers aren't hypnotised - the routines they perform are not "hypnotic". If there is no concession to the idea that "hypnotic suggestions" are carried out in a state *other* than normal, surely any indecent act performed is punishable, the offender blatantly transgressing the "Indecency Laws" and without any extenuating excuse, such as the averral that they would not have performed that act in a "normal state"?

"Equinox: The Big Sleep" was a good programme, if you ignored the unhappy attempt to capitalise on the title by staging it as a Chandler PI case complete with sardonic Marlowesque voice-over. Dr Wagstaff was one of the best things on it, especially in a segment where he replicated a number of "characteristic" or "typical" hypnotic stunts with a man who was *not* hypnotised. (He freely confirmed that he wasn't. Ah, but perhaps he'd been hypnotised to say that. Ah, but Dr Wagstaff affirmed that he hadn't.) The biggest obstacle to his propositions gaining more attention is that most of us persist in wanting to believe that hypnosis *is* a genuinely unique state. Stage performers owe their living to that attitudè. We get a buzz out of supposing that subjects do what they do because of hypnosis, even if sometimes we harbour a few suspicions that they may only be "acting" or "pretending" to be hypnotised.

"The Big Sleep" also had Dr Wagstaff at a Blackpool hypno-show and interviewing some of the people who'd taken part as volunteers in it. Since hypnosis doesn't exist, evidently, it follows that people can't be hypnotised - so what had caused them to do all the crazy things they did? Compliance...task motivation...et cetera. Dr Wagstaff went over this when he talked to Peter Hillmore, making the point that TV shows like "The Generation Game" prove "many people are more than happy to make fools of themselves to please the compere". Does this mean that Bruce Forsyth is really a hypnotist? Is Paul McKenna really Bruce Forsyth? While you're about it, savour the televisual irony that one of the more amusing routines in the last series of "The Hypnotic World of Paul McKenna" was a spoof version of..."The Generation Game".

But then Peter Hillmore came back with what sounds a nice objection pointing towards a distinction. In "The Generation Game" contestants *know* what they are doing is making them look ridiculous; they laugh at

■16.See box, p.8.

■17. "Star Paul Casts A Spell On His Friends" (*People Magazine*, 21 November 1993, pp 12-13) was composed almost entirely of snap-quotes from persons close to Paul McKenna professionally or socially. In case you were worried about it, the tailor of the McKenna waistcoats at this period in his life was Tom Gilbey.

■18. *Sun*, 20 October 1994, pp26-27. If we believe the reports of certain papers (which a lot of us don't) this was not the Duchess of York's first experiment with hypnotherapeutic weight-loss. Claims of similar "secret treatments" (though not with Mr McKenna) were made in November 1986 - and subsequently denied. Come to think, I haven't seen any actual confirmation of these more recent (*Sun*) claims, either.

■19. "The Hipster of Hypnosis", *Fortean Times*, 74, April/May 1994, p. 53.

■20. This summary includes Pascoe Watson's "McKenna's Trance Left My Boyfriend Like A Child" (*Sun*, 14 December 1994, p. 11) and - more detailed, if only because there were more pages - "My Man Became A Child After McKenna Hypno Act", by Roger Kasper and John Chapman (*News of the World*, 18 Dec. 1994, pp. 13-15).

■21. Clause 1 (1) states that any authority in an area empowered "to grant licences for the regulation of places kept or ordinarily used for public dancing, singing, music or other public entertainments of the like kind" shall also have the power "to attach conditions regulating or prohibiting the giving of an exhibition, demonstration or performance of hypnotism on any person at the place to which the licence relates".

■22. "Peter Hillmore's Notebook", *The Observer*, 29 January 1995, p. 25

themselves as they do it. In hypno-shows you rarely see participants laugh at themselves. The laughter is directed *at* them and they often appear confused by it. Or as Mr Hillmore wrote, the volunteers "continue with their absurd actions in spite of the laughter, not because of it". **(24)**

One more thing: as the audience, we are doing the laughing - not merely condoning the act, but encouraging it. If we're worried about hypno-shows, we ought to remember that we aren't forced (or hypnotised) to watch them. There is evidence that audiences, familiarised through what they have seen on TV or elsewhere, expect to be shown certain tricks like the now clichéd "X-Ray Specs" routine. "All Your Favourites", promised a poster for a hypno-show in Thurrock recently - implying that we not only knew all about hypnotists' routines, but have connoisseurs' preferences among them. Performers sometimes admit to feeling the pressure of their public's expectations. "Audiences love it", said Andrew Newton of his men-stripped-to-underpants trick. "When I used to do late-night spots in Liverpool, they used practically to demand it." **(25)** And there are some venues where the audience demand tricks more audacious than that. Outside TV's enchanted circle, more overt sexual stunts may become standard items. People want to see them and they aren't happy if they don't. The hypnotist who doesn't oblige, the hypnotist who doesn't come up with the simulated sex routines, risks being the hypnotist who doesn't get many bookings.

Is there a case for redefining where the responsibility for what goes on at "hypno-porno" shows lies? Is there a need for new laws to control what goes on or might go on at these shows? Is this all a waste of time, because hypnosis doesn't exist?

Is there a lawyer in the house? ●●●

■ 23. Theodore X Barber, *Hypnosis: A Scientific Approach*, New York, Van Nostrand, 1969. In his first chapter of *Hypnosis for the Seriously Curious*, (New York and London, W W Norton, 1976, paperback edition, 1983) Kenneth S Bowers provides a review of the evidence that hypnotic behaviour can (in his words) be faked.

■ 24. Cf the remark from Dr Prem Misra (note 12, above): "The fun is always at the expense of the individual." I think it may be legitimate to point out that when interviewed in the wake of their hypno-performances the majority of volunteers affirm that they enjoyed the experience, even if they are now aware of having made themselves look a trifle foolish.

■25. Roger Tedre, "Hypnotism takes the country by trance"", *The Observer*, 6 November 1994, p. 13. Andrew Newton was perhaps the first of the "younger generation" of stage hypnotists to attract national publicity. Apart from the success of his late-night Liverpudlian shows (see main text) he managed to obtain a licence that enabled him to become the first hypnotist to perform on a central London stage in 35 years ("All eyes on the hypnotists seeking West End fame", *The Observer*, 18 January 1987) and ushered in the TV boom from which Paul McKenna benefited greatly with a one-hour, one-off ITV programme in December 1993. He now has his own series on Sky TV.

**From note 16:** In March 1952 at Sussex Assizes, shop assistant Diana Rains-Bath sought damages for negligence, breach of contract and assault from American stage hypnotist Ralph Slater relating to her participation as a volunteer in one of his Brighton Hippodrome performances in 1948. It was alleged that during the show Slater had jerked her head sharply and painfully forward (presumably to rehypnotise her - Miss Rains-Bath had spontaneously slipped out of trance at the time) and had also forgotten to cancel the successful suggestion that she was a baby crying for its mother. Miss Rains-Bath was subsequently treated for depression and anxiety neurosis by Dr J S Van Pelt of the British Society of Medical Hypnotists who, it transpired, was mounting a campaign against stage performers. This was one detail emergent from the lively exchange between the doctor and Mr Slater, who took over the conduct of his own defence when his counsel withdrew, being unable to concur with the direction in which Slater wished the defence to proceed. Miss Rains-Bath was initially awarded £1,000 damages on the negligence plea, £107 special damages and £25 for assault. However, in July 1952 a Court of Appeal overturned the negligence plea award, allowing only that for damages to stand and in December that same year it was announced that Miss Rains-Bath had dropped the special damages claim. The case is believed to have been a factor in the passing of the 1952 Hypnotism Act which received the Royal Assent on 1 August that year and became operative on 1 April 1953. Most national dailies carried reports of the hearing; this summary is compiled from those in *The Times*, 1, 12, 14, 21, 25 and 27 March, 20 July and 13 December 1952. The case is also discussed as a working illustration of the problems facing civil pleas (such as negligence) in Eric Cuddon's "Hypnosis and English Law", part of a "Frontiers of Hypnosis" special issue of *Tomorrow*, 6:4, August

## 25 Years Ago

The June 1970 number was a very slim issue of *MUFOB*, which contained a sour little article by your esteemed Editor, 'The Death and Life of British Ufology', criticising the barren UFO scene in Britain and condemning the various UFO groups as a series of overlapping 'in-groups'. We seem to have been recycling this article in one way or another every few years since.

Only the names have been changes to protect topicality. Who now remembers the Scorriton sensation? Who gives a damn about Warminster (except later as a scene of the spectacular non-appearances of corn-circles)? The only one of the 1970 'in-groups' that's just about still around is BUFORA. At the time I was sneering wearily at its endless "Machiavellian plots and counterplots". My, my, how times have changed! At the time the article cause a bit of a stir, and even got me invited to defend my heresy at a BUFORA meeting in London.

Elsewhere in the issue we looked at exploding pianos in Lowestoft (a potential social panic which never really caught on, unfortunately).

In retrospect the most significant item in the magazine was Patrick Huyghe's review of John Keel's then new *Operation Trojan Horse*. This was a review of the US edition before it arrived in Britain, and it was reviewed jointly with Keel's *Strange Creatures from Space and Time*. This gave a first indication of a book that was to have a significant effect on the growth of ufology in Britain and was to prove to be a major influence on *MUFOB* in the years ahead.

As there is so little else to comment about in the June 1970 issue, I'll ramble on a bit about how the magazine was produced at that time. *MUFOB* came out every two months, and Editor John Harney was rather better at keeping a regular schedule than I seem to be. However, individual issues would vary enormously in size. As it was produced on a hand-cranked Gestetner duplicator on foolscap sheets with a separately printed cover it could have any number of pages. Some issues actually had as few as four pages, but the largest issue was 18 pages (these were the old-fashioned large foolscap size pages). This was devoted to Alan Sharp's mighty critique of the 'New Ufology' which appeared in December 1971, and I will comment on it in some depth in due course.

Stencil duplicating of small magazines is now almost a lost art, and just as well, as it was an incredibly messy and fiddly process. It involved typing on wax-coated 'skins', which were extremely fragile and had to be manipulated onto ink-soaked rollers. Few people emerged without getting elbow-deep in duplicator ink, one of the most spreadable substances known to science.

At press time John Harney's house would be strewn with piles of inky sheets drying or awaiting collation, as well as the hundreds of waste sheets which emerged from the duplicator out of alignment or smeared with surplus ink. This gruelling process was followed by the hand-numbing routine of gathering the sheets together and stapling them. Nowadays, each night, small-magazine editors should offer up a brief prayer to cheap photocopying and print-shops such as our own dear Emjay!

*John Rimmer*

This article was long just a title, originally intended for a review of Kenneth Ring's *Omega Project*, but as time has gone on it has become the generic title for a wide range of the latest lore. We shall see how ufology has transformed itself yet again, perhaps the most dramatic transformation yet: the end of secular ufology itself, the triumph of 'religious saucerdom' sweeping aside the hopes of 'scientific ufologists' to distinguish abductees from contactees. The title, then, refers to the three central theories of post-secular ufology:

**BLOOD** - that UFO and other anomalous experiences are more likely to be experienced by those whose childhoods and formative years have been traumatic.

**VISION** - That as a result of such experiences the percipients become open to ESP and 'non-ordinary realities'; they may see themselves as being wholly or partly 'other' in origin.

**BRIMSTONE** - At the heart of much post-secularist ufology is an apocalyptic vision: the abductions and other experiences are signs of the End Times, the contactees are heralds of the New Age when all will be transformed.

# blood vision and brimstone

**Peter Rogerson**

## BLOOD

LET us start then with Blood, with childhood trauma.

Kenneth Ring claims that a higher proportion of both close-encounter and near-death experiencers have a higher than average level of childhood abuse (significant figures for neglect, "negative home atmosphere", sexual abuse, and less so for psychological and physical abuse) [Ring, p.276]

> ...a history of child abuse and trauma plays a central etiological role in promoting sensitivity to UFO encounters and NDEs... that growing up under such conditions tends to stimulate the development of a dissociative response style as a means of *psychological defense*... a child who is exposed to either the threat or actuality of physical violence, sexual abuse or other severe traumas, will be strongly motivated to selectively 'tune out' those aspects of his physical and social world that are likely to harm him... by *dissociating*. By doing so he is more likely to 'tune into' other realities where, by virtue of his dissociated state, he can temporarily feel safe regardless of what is happening to his body.
>
> This kind of attunement, however, is not a gift of dissociation itself, which only makes it possible, but of a correlated capacity... *psychological absorption*. This is the ability to concentrate and focus one's attention on the figures and features of one's inner reality to the exclusion of events taking place in the external environment.
>
> From my own personal point of view [they] are actually the unwitting beneficiaries of a kind of compensatory gift in return for the wounds they have incurred in growing up... their difficult and in some cases even tormented childhoods. (Ring, p.144-5)

Readers will note that there is a crucial ambiguity already in Ring's position, as absorption into an inner world turns into perception of an extended external world, and the world of the imagination becomes a quasi-geographical location.

This theme is taken up by several other writers. Richard Boylan claims "based on my research and anecdotal reports of other researchers findings, there seems to be amongst experiencers and over-representation of native Americans, psychics, persons who were severely sexually or physically abused as children, adult children of high-ranking or sensitively posted military officers, offspring of intelligence agents and children whose parents were themselves experiencers" (Boylan, p.19)

Boylan argues that 'psychics' and the abused share a "highly permeable psychological boundary layer [which] results in their attention to subtle external signals - what we call intuition or sensitivity to 'vibes'. They can read emotion as a carrier of information and have a heightened attunement to the thinking of others. " (Boylan, p.10)

Boylan interprets the other categories in terms of his own paranoid mind-set about military officers and intelligence agents collaborating with the aliens. But presuming they are not just an artifact of that paranoia they may be further examples of troubled childhoods, the authoritarian personalities of military types and the

Due to editing of this text, marginal reference numbers do not follow in sequence. However no references have been omitted.

severe stress suffered by intelligence agents unable to speak of their work to their families mat well lead to unsettles, stressful family relationships.

Mack reports: "I was struck by how many abductees come from broken homes or who had one or more alcoholic parents. There also seems to be a 'poor fit' between some experiencers and their parents, and a number... complain about coldness and emotional deprivation within the family." (Mack, p.17)

In their interpretation of these events "[I]t appears to be the very plight of severe childhood abuse that draws sympathetic ETs to first start visiting a particular child when it is abused" (Boylan, p.20)

## Books Reviewed and Referred to in text:


- BOYER, Paul. *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy belief in modern American culture.* Belknap Press/ Harvard U.P., 1992.
- BOYLAN, Richard J. *Close Extraterrestrial Encounters: positive experiences with mysterious visitors.* Wild Flower Press, 1994
- BRINKLEY, Dannian, *and* PERRY, Paul. *Saved by the Light.* Piatkus, 1994.
- BRUMMETT, Barry. *Contemporary Apocalyptic Rhetoric.* Praeger, 1991.
- BUDDEN, Albert. *Allergies and Aliens, the visitation experience: an environmental health issue.* Discovery Times Press, 1994.
- COCKELL, Jenny. *Yesterday's Children; the extraordinary search for my past life family.* Piatkus, 1993.
- COHN, Norman. *Cosmos, Chaos and the World To Come: the ancient roots of apocalyptic faith.* Yale Univ. Press, 1993.
- DAVIES, Nick. *Murder on Ward Four: the story of Bev Allitt.* Chatto and Windus, 1993.
- HARPUR, Patrick. *Daimonic Reality: a field guide to the other world.* Viking Arkana, 1994.
- MACK, John E. *Abduction: human encounters with angels.* Simon & Schuster, 1994.
- RANDLES, Jenny. *Star Children.* Robert Hale, 1994
- RING, Kenneth. *The Omega Project: near death experiences, UFO encounters and mind at large.* William Morrow, 1992.
- SCHNABEL, Jim. *Dark White: alien abductions and the UFO obsession.* Hamish Hamilton, 1994.
- SPENCER, John. *Gifts of the Gods: are UFOs alien visitors or psychic phenomenon?* Virgin, 1994
- SPENCER, John *and* SPENCER, Ann. *Spirit Within Her: the story of Heather Woods and the stigmata.* Boxtree, 1994.


"Sexual abuse seems to be one of the forms of human woundedness that... has led the aliens to intervene in a protective or healing manner." (Mack, p.18)

Boylan and Mack take us far beyond the boundaries of secular ufology, back to the fairy faith of old, where the fairy god-mother assures Cinderella, that classic victim of child abuse, that she shall go to the ball!

We can run through the literature and find many cases which illustrate these points:

- Ed comes from a 'flag-waving family' who wanted him to have technical career so he could develop a weapon to defeat the communists. (Mack, p.53-4)
- Sheila is grieving over the death of her mother who was abused as a child, and estranged from her husband when he does not give her enough emotional support. (Mack, p.69)
- Jenny's first husband was a paedophile who she claims had oral sex with their children; her parents' marriage collapsed when she was eight; the family moved perpetually; with her second husband she was frigid, drowning her sorrows in alcohol. (Mack, p.111-113)
- Catherine has a disturbed, alcoholic father who would disappear frequently when drunk, was given to impulsive bursts of anger, on one occasion burning all Catherine's belongings. At the age of four she was sexually abused by a family friend. (Mack, p.144-45)
- Bryan, aged 15, was abused and nearly drowned by his stepmother, who was a drug addict. At the time he was interviewed he had been dumped on an aunt by his natural mother who was going to Switzerland for career reasons. (Spencer, p.251-2)
- Lucy, aged eight, had witnessed her father's death in a gun accident (or suicide?), she had a difficult relationship with her mother. It seems probable she was sexually abused by a teenage relative at about this time. Her hallucinatory figures constantly intrude on her life. (Schnabel, p.249-50) Such motifs crop up again and again, not just in ufological contexts. Consider two recent 'psychic' narratives:
- Jenny Cockrell's father was a depressive, with bouts of aggression. (Cockrell, p.14-15) Jenny had premonitions (p.13), had two imaginary male friends (p.15) and gradually immersed herself in memories of a 'past life' in Ireland as a woman married to a violent and unpredictable man. She hated school, and at college had a series of disastrous affairs (p.19-20). She appears to have inherited her father's manic-depression with periods of hyperactivity and ebullience, alternating with periods of black depression. 1
- Heather Wood's mother was a psychotic with drug and alcohol problems who eventually committed suicide. Her father was unable to cope, and the children were sent to various institutions, where Heather was the victim of abuse. She was a 'wild' teenager who constantly ran away. her husband had also been abused as a child. her history also contains evidence of manic depressive behaviour (e.g. her involvement in an organisation called Scope, about which she writes to the Queen and the Prime Minister). During one episode she is forced to put her daughter into a foster home, from which she does not want to come home. (Spencer and Spencer, *passim.*) her repertoire includes ESP, premonitions, channelling and stigmata.
- Eileen Garrett's parents both committed suicide when she was a small child and she was raised by an aunt and uncle. The aunt was emotionally cold and a harsh disciplinarian. She felt more secure outside than indoors and had imaginary companions called 'The Children' as well as an ability to dissociate, claimed ESP and premonitions. Her late adolescence and early adult life was marked by unsuitable marriages and nervous breakdowns. Her later career was as a channeller and medium. 2
- 'Doris Fischer's' parents were bourgeois who had fallen down the social scale owing to her father's alcoholism and bouts of violence. After she was injuring during such a bout of violence as a toddler, she began to show dissociative behaviour, escalating into multiple-personality disorder, pathological lying and self mutilation. She had premonitions, claimed precognition, clairvoyance and visitations from phantom presences. Adopted by Dr Walter Franklin Prince, she and her adoptive

family heard the usual repertoire of raps, bangs and other 'haunting' sounds. After Prince's death, she suffered a series of depressive breakdowns and nightmares in which she was presented with images of suicide, murder and 'revolting sexual visions'. [3]

These images recall the violent sadistic imagery of the adult survivors of Satanic abuse stories. Survivors have been linked to Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD), sufferers from which have been described as "... pathological liars in their own defence... they are very good at what they do. These patients are amazingly seductive and often ruthlessly manipulative". [4] They can be ruthless and imaginative manipulators of their therapists, seeking to manipulate the therapist throughout the session, wreaking havoc on researchers and hospitals. [5]

This sounds almost identical with descriptions of Munchausen Syndrome (MHS) patients. "These people are very disruptive and demanding. They become angry and offer new physical complaints when told their tests

It is hard to disagree when faced with the appalling things that someone like Allett has done to herself and others "that she was suffering from some illness that was so profound that it beggared the imagination"

are negative. They also have a... knack of being able to divide the staff and create tension and hostility among caregivers. [6] Even more interestingly the MHS patients' past is "overshadowed by an abusive, alcoholic parent". [7]

MHS appears to be one of a range of bizarre behaviours such as pathological lying, self-mutilation, induced anorexia and so-called borderline personality disorder, characterised by unstable and intense relationships, feelings of abandonment and loss, mood swings and self-destructive and manipulative behaviour. [8]

An extreme example of MHS is demonstrated by Beverley Allett, whose sadistic, masochistic behaviour, manipulation, attention-seeking, 'sob-story' lying culminated in homicidal MHS by Proxy. More centrally from our perspective is the role of poltergeists in her repertoire (Davies, *passim.*). Allett used poltergeist effects to manipulate colleagues at her nurses' home, and her friends the Johnson family. The most significant point about Allett is that she was not someone 'just pretending' poltergeist forces, but is an extreme example of the personality type at the centre of poltergeist episodes. The impulse to trick, to manipulate, to gain attention, as well as other more pragmatic needs are encountered throughout the poltergeist phenomenon. One cannot help comparing Beverley Allett with Marianne Foyster, the 'Widow of Borley' [9], or Betsy Bell, whose repertoire included fainting fits, vomiting pins and needles, pinching and bruising herself, and the persecution and possible murder of her father [10]. Compare also Ms Forbes, with a history of multiple childhood and adult illnesses and (claimed?) trauma, suicidal violent obsessions, poltergeist trickery and 'vampire visitations' [11] and Eleanor Zurgun and her bite marks [12].

The pattern of multiple multiple medical dictionary emptying occurs in the cases of Heather Woods (Spencer and Spencer), 'Kathie Davies' [15] and others, also points to the possibility of MHS. Even more interestingly Heather Wood had a mixture of real and imaginary illnesses, along with the physically or psychosomatically induced stigmata.

Jim Schnabel's describes 'Lucy', who claimed rape and psychological harassment from two 'phantom' men, abduction and gynaecological invasion by aliens and a variety of psychic and poltergeist effects. At a conference she predicted to Budd Hopkins that 'something was going to happen', and sure enough she was abducted into Boston, becoming the centre of attention. Later she moved into the Hopkins home, and her demands for attention were so extreme as to put perhaps fatal strains on Hopkins' marriage. (Schnabel, p. 249-258). This should be compared with the case of 'Marie's' manipulation of her tutor 'Laurel' as documented by Marc Feldman, with her tales of rape, cancer, pregnancy, hardship, etc. [16] Note also the similarity with claims of Satanic abuse survivors, or with Linda Neapolitano's story of her kidnap and harassment by 'Dan' and 'Richard', or with Claire's narrative, documented by Ring: "In my many encounters... I have always been kidnapped from home... from 1969.to January 6, 1989. with wounds and injuries examined by four different doctors" (Ring, p.79)

Jim Schnabel has argued that MHS should really be considered as part of a broad spectrum of dissociative disorders (Schnabel, p.294-300) [17], and with the activities of religious ascetics and shaman. However, the labelling of MHS as a medical problem was disputed by Robert Bartholemew [18] who argues that it is really 'nothing but' deception. However it is hard to disagree, when faced with the appalling things that someone like Allett has done to herself and others "that she was suffering from some illness that was so profound that it beggared the imagination". (Davies, p.328)

When thinking of MHS, of abductions, of Satanic abuse survivors or of stigmatics, some comments of Davies's stand out with stark clarity:

> ...desperate for sympathy, but remorselessly cruel to anyone who gives it... dangling pain and vulnerability, but constantly pretending to be stricken; defiant and indifferent, but addicted to approval. She sees herself a victim of family, friends, of her whole existence, and somehow it relieves her to make victims of those around her. Perhaps her love of illness is in fact a cry for help from the healthy remnant of her personality, an attempt to translate all her madness into something that can be seen and treated and cured." (Davies, p.347-8)

We can sympathise and care for those whose wounds are external and visible, or are victims of clear-

■1 Interview with Jenny Cockrell in *Fortean Times* 72, p.36-9

■2 Garrett, Eileen. *Advances in the Supernatural*, Paperback Library, 1968

■3 Rogo, D. Scott. *The Infinite Boundary*. Aquarian, 1988. p117-55, 211-15. *See also* Prince, Walet F. *The Psychic in the House*, Boston S.P.R., 1926

■4 Sherrill Mulhern, quoted in Hicks, Robert D., *In Pursuit of Satan*. Prometheus, 1991.

■5 Hicks, *op. cit.* quoting in part paper by Braun and Bennett (eds.) *Treatment of M. P.D.* American Psychiatric Press, 1981.

■6 Feldman, Marc D. and Ford, Charles V. *Patient or Pretender*. Wiley, 1994. p.212

■7 Ibid, p.210

■8 Ibid, p.16

■9 Wood, Robert. *The Widow of Borley*, Duckworth, 1992

■10 Fodor, Nandor. *'The Bell Witch', in The Story of the Poltergeist Down the Centuries* (with Hereward Carrington), Rider, 1953, p.137-65

■11 Fodor, Nandor. *On the Trail of the Poltergeist*. Citadel, 1958

■12 Price, Harry, *Leaves from a Psychic's Casebook* Gollancz, 1933, chapters 13 and 14. See also Tabari, Paul, *Companions of the Unseen*. Humphrey, 1968, ch. 7.

■15 Hopkins, Budb. *Intruders*, Random House, 1987

■16 Feldman and Fort, *op. cit.* p172.

■17 Schnabel, Jim. 'The Munch Bunch', *Fortean Times*, 70, p. 23-9

■18 Bartholemew, Robert E. 'Munch Bunch Revisited', *Fortean Times*, 73, p

cut, identifiable physical abuse. Perhaps the wounds of abductees, like the marks seen on the ground, are marks whereby an inner experience can be perceived and publicly validated. Forbes description of her vampire visitation, recorded by Fodor [19] has all the hallmarks of sleep paralysis:

> It may have been around midnight that I awoke with the sensation that there was something ghastly on my left hand side... on top of the cover. It felt like a human body. Pressing against my neck was something cold and hard about the size of a man's head. I could not move, I could not shout, I was frozen with fear."

The 'thing' then seemed to fly away as soon as she could move. To validate this experience and dramatise it as a vampire attack, she pierced her neck. In this description we have an almost perfect fit with the many sleep paralysis episodes which are central to the abduction experience.

Jim Schnabel may be on tricky ground when he argues that potential shaman may have been victims of MHS by proxy - the hypoxia associated with their mothers smothering them leading to seizures which led to a shamanic vocation, but he seems to be on the right track when he discusses the role of pain and suffering in the promotion of attenuated states of consciousness, and in the drama of initiation.

## VISION

As I mentioned in my article *Taken to the Limits*, [20] initiation takes the form of separation from the ordinary, a ritual stripping of the previous identity, a ritual grinding down of individual differences in a return to the collective world. This is a theme which occurs in several of the works reviewed here.

For Mack "the abductee makes a pilgrimage to receive a new dimension of experience or knowledge. This involves a rebirth which is sometimes very distressing, a retracing of ones steps to a preternatural primordial area [of] precosmogenic chaos that the individual has been exposed to. The abductee is a modern Dante, whose ontological underpinnings are unravelled" (Mack, p.8). Patrick Harpur suggests that people can be "unwittingly initiated by the exigencies of their lives, such as family catastrophes, bereavement or even the ordeal of schooling. Initiation depends less on the experience itself than on what we make of it, how we use it for self transformation. But without traditional rites that channel suffering it is difficult for us to use it correctly, we are encouraged instead to seek a cure for it" (Harpur, p.237-8)

One source of spontaneous initiation may be trauma shock. The victims of massive disaster feel traumatised less by the actual occurrence than by the sense of total helplessness. For the first time in their lives they were not in control **or could not help their families** [21]. Exactly the same sensations are expressed by abductees: Mack's subject Sheila is "especially troubled by the lack of control and knowing she can't protect her daughter Beverley (p.84). Scott feels helpless and traumatised (ch.5, *passim.*), Jerry regards sex in the same manner as abductions, "a feeling of powerlessness and the inability to have any say in the matter.

If, as seems likely, a substantial portion of the 'real' abduction experience lies in sleep paralysis with its psychological tone of overwhelming terror, paralysis and helplessness [22] we can see how these images develop and indeed see the formation of a series of linked motifs of helplessness. These include sleep paralysis itself, surgery with its overtones of helplessness before authority, sexual abuse, traumatic shock, and initiation, as well as the helplessness of a small child in an adult world. [23]

If we reconsider initiation, we must ask by who and into what are abductees being initiated? For the secular ufologists abductions were scientific examinations by aliens from other planets, for the post-secular ufologists the answer is very different. For them UFO encounters are religious experiences, encounters with the primordial depths of being., for which various metaphors are employed. Ring calls it 'mind at large', Harpur 'the imaginal realm' or 'anima mundi'. Mack has the 'cosmic source'.

For Ring, following Michael Grosso, 'mind at large' is a "benign transpersonal aspect of mind that is conscious, purposive, intelligent... capable of interacting with matter in critical times in the Earth's evolution, for example the origin of life, the development of higher species..." (Ring, p.225)

For Harpur the anima-mundi is the collective unconscious or the daemonic realm, which is seen as a transpersonal realm of images, a realm connecting mind and matter. From this realm the witness return with wild talents and new vision and a sense of mission. The abduction is therefore a spiritual revelation and transformation - a theme common to Mack, Randles, Ring and Spencer.

It is in this context that the theme of 'witness-centred' ufology has arisen. From the post-secularist perspective the term Witness has a clear religious connotation; the percipients give witness to the awesome majesty of the 'wholly other'.

There are problems with this vision, however. Randles and Mack provide many example of the childhood experiences of these visionaries. But these 'talents' are not the result of the encounter. The witnesses statements, given *in extensio* in Spencer, or as detailed summaries in Schnabel and Mack, scarcely give an impression of spirited assurance; rather they give an impression of a formless, chaotic experience, both exciting and terrifying, and hinting at numinous possibilities. Dare one suggest that the defining transformative moment for these people is the encounter with the 'investigator' who provides an ideological framework by which the chaos of experience can be interpreted. The investigator may well be playing the role that Wandering Bishops played for Heather Wood (Spencer and Spencer), or that the various theological advisers play in the lives of Marian witnesses. As far as we know *no* contactee or abductee has *ever* come up with anything but recycled occultism, ufological cliches or pop science. Can we relate the wild talents to previous hints of childhood neglect and abuse? Some idea of the 'psychic' childhood of these percipients can be gleaned from the perceptive Eileen Garrett:

> The Children (her imaginary-imaginal-virtual companions) also taught me to watch changing expressions of anger, fear and uncertainty in people's faces - to listen to their voices and catch the meanings of varying tones and cadences. Together we watched my aunt and listened, and though she was still the power that controlled my immediate destiny, I gradually lost my awe of her. [24]

From this we can get a hint of the sixth-sense, whether interpreted as hyper-sensitivity to borderline perceptual stimuli, or as ESP, as a defence against emotionally unstable carers. Similarly we can see Jenny Cockrell's premonitions as originally an early warning

■19 Fodor, Nandor, *Tradition... op. cit.* p. 194.

■20 Rogerson, Peter, 'Taken to the Limits', *Magonia* 23, p.3-12.

■21 Sheridan, Geraldine, *and* Kenning, Thomas. *Survivors*, Pan, 1993.

■23 Hufford, David. *The Terror that Comes in the Night.* University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982.

■24 Garrett, *op. cit.* p.18

system of her manic-depressive father's moods.

Eileen Garrett gives us a further clue to the development of a virtual experience-prone personality. She describes

> Lying on my bed, I became aware of the vitality inherent in all light, colour and space. In a beam of sunshine falling against a shadowed background I perceived globules of light that moved and weaved in patterns and burst at intervals... I discovered they floated in light and without light, swirled about one another, carrying colour within themselves, expanding and bursting like bubbles and creating rainbows of beauty as they burst [25]

These globules sound very much like what Jenny Randles calls 'psychic toys'. She remembers that as a child of seven "I used to really look forward to going to bed as I had some playmates... beautiful lights which had vivid colours, with speckles inside sometimes with a haze around them." (Randles, p.42). Like Eileen Garrett she also saw them rising into the air and merging.

I suggest that what is going on here is a mixture of hyperaesthesia and synethaesia. The former is the condition when the mechanism by which the brain damps down sensory input is not working properly. Mild cases produce Garrett's feeling of vibrant aliveness and sensory awareness, severe cases produce extremely unpleasant sensory overload. In synethaesia the senses become mingled so that people 'see' sounds, 'hear' colours, 'taste' shapes as so forth. [26] In synaesthesia it appears that the nervous pathways from the various sense-organs are linked. In addition it seems possible that in some cases there may be extended sensory abilities. Garrett and many others claim to see auras, indicating the possibility that they may be able to detect infrared radiation and synthetistically convert it into visible colours. Perhaps in virtual experience proneness something similar happens in which the parts of the brain which deal with internal images and use them to create dreams and fantasy become interconnected with the parts of the brain dealing with sensory input. The brain would then have great difficulty distinguishing material from its own imagery store from sensory perception. **(Because nothing in ufology or life is simple this does not mean all cases of psychic toys are synaesthesia. In cases such as 'Caroline' (Randles, p.44), they seem to be classical sleep paralysis hallucinations, in other cases they may relate to poorly understood physical phenomena.)**

**Perhaps we each have to learn to separate all these channels out and for some reason - maybe genetic, maybe, in other instances the effect of childhood environment - there are cases where it does not happen.**

**There may be a connection between this and the high artistic abilities claimed in abductees and percipients, from Antonio Villas Boas onwards (c.f Randles, Spencer). Is there a common cause linking perceptual anomalies with (particularly visual) creativity? It is interesting that two of the artist subjects featured by Spencer produce work that includes strong 'swirls', mandala forms reminiscent of the tunnel effect described in near-death experiences, and which is one of the primary patterns of visual hallucinations.**

**Some abductees demonstrate a deep alienation from their families and homes. They feel that their 'real' home is elsewhere. As Mack puts it "the abductees... experience themselves as returnees to their cosmic source or 'Home', an inexpressibly beautiful realm beyond" (Mack, p.48) for which they feel a sort of nostalgia - the nostalgia for paradise** [27]. There is within much of Mack's writing a strong strain of gnosticism, with its theme of sparks of divine light trapped in the world of gross matter. the nostalgia may, in secular terms, be the nostalgia for the protected, cozy world of childhood. For some of the abductees however it is the nostalgia for a childhood they did not have, and coming into the ufological mainstream is the myth of the unknown parents. Some abductees, at some level, cannot believe that their dull, or distant or even abusive, or just plain *ordinary* parents could be the real parents of someone as special

■25 Garrett, *op. cit.* p. 25-6

■26 For synesthesia, see , Richard E. *The Man who Tasted Shapes*, Abacus, 1994. Because nothing in life or ufology is simple this does not mean all cases of 'psychic toys' are synesthesis. In other cases such as Caroline (Randles, p. 44) they seem to be classical sleep paralysis, other cases may refer to poorly understood physical phenomena.

■27 Eliade, Mircea. *Images and Shamen.* Harvill, 1961, p.16-18

**I became aware of the vitality inherent in all light, colour and space. In a beam of sunshine falling against a shadowed background I perceived globules of light that moved and weaved in patterns and burst at intervals**

as themselves. In past times many children must have believed that their real parents were simply foster-parents, that their *real* parents were kings and queens, or the people who live in the big house down the road. In modern times similar fantasies have centred around film stars and pop singers.

Linda Napolitano became convinced that her real father was Perez de Cuellar, who tried to present a diving suit helmet to her son as a present. (Schnabel, p. 242) But for a growing number of abductees their real parents are aliens - this is a major theme with Mack's abductees:

- 'Joe' is "intimately involved... in cahoots - a double

agent, somehow betraying his humanness, and experienced making love to a female abductee while in the form of a seven to eight foot tall alien... [He] half believes his son is a hybrid and they might take him away." In therapy sessions he has imagery of being an alien soul, taking incarnation in a human foetus as an act of exploration, contrition and ordeal in a world he sees as a lunatic asylum. (Mack, ch.8)

- 'Scott', who as a child wanted to run away, feels "different, not from here", that he is 'one of them'. (Mack, ch.5)
- Peter has "an alien wife and kids". His hybrid children will re-populate the ruined world - a clear echo of the shamans spirit wives. (Mack p.320-1)
- Paul feels that 'home' is on another planet where all is peaceful. He is an alien spy, one of many here. He also claims, in a past life, to have been present at Roswell. (Mack, ch.10)
- Edward Calos has times when [he] "feels that he is himself alien in the sense of feeling isolated", and has 'experiences' of looking through an alien helmet, and has blocks of missing time. (Mack, p.361)

Jenny Randles discusses similar stories. There is Audrey who lived on Alpha Centauri in a past lifetime (Randles, p.78-9) and who has always felt 'strange' and different. There is Gary who claims he is an alien inhabiting an earthly body, from which he feels alienated. Gary's claims centre around Nostradamus and are said to have impressed Eric Laithwaite (Randles, p.17-18, 72-73; Nigel Watson, personal communication)

When we encounter "a woman from Walsall... [who] had a daughter whom she claimed had been exchanged for an alien" whilst in a pram in the garden at the age of nine months we are truly in the realm of fairies who exchange unattended babies for their own. (Randles, p.129)

Thus post-secular ufology brushes close to the star-child folklore. As the blurb to Randles' *Star Children* puts it:

> There are people living amongst us whose origins are other than human. Some believe they were born on another planet and put here during a period of imminent crisis to help mankind. Others feel that they have been used in a global plan to develop superhumans... eggs and sperm have been taken from them during enforced space abductions in order to create hybrid human/alien babies. These entities, unaware of their origin may be growing up in our midst, seeded here as representatives of a brighter future and awaiting a trigger signal deep into their subconscious preparing to set the world alight.

Anyone reading *Star Children* can have little doubt that however much her daylight reason and common-sense may protest, some 3 a.m. portion of Jenny's mind more than half believes that she may be one of the star children. These themes are not new. They have appeared in Randles' *NUFON News* magazine for over a decade, and form the basis on her unpublished novel *Children of the Apocalypse*. *Magonia* readers may recall that I commented on these myths in issue 20 back in 1985. [29]

In the present form the star-child belief was first published in 1976 by Brad Steiger in *Gods of Aquarius* [30] where he referred to 'star maidens':

> A unique group of individuals who claim to have memories of having come to this planet from somewhere else, or to have experienced interaction with paranormal entities - UFO intelligences - since their earliest childhood... [and] have knowledge of the fact that [they are] essentially 'star seed' and strangers in a strange land.

One of these star maidens was Francie, who later became Steiger's second wife. Significantly, several of these 'star maidens' were victims of childhood abuse, including whippings and being parcels passed through up to fourteen foster families. No wonder they felt strangers in a strange land with overwhelming feelings of alienation.

Steiger's ideas were introduced into Britain by Graham Phillips in about 1978. Although they never became part of the ufological mainstream, they gained widespread circulation in the tabloid press, including articles on how to tell if your next-door neighbour in an alien.

The star-seed legend can be traced much further back. The idea of incarnating entities to assist humanity in times of crisis can be found in the early works of Brinsley le Poer Trench [31] and George Hunt Williamson. The latter's 1953 publication *Other Tongues Other Flesh* told of the Wanderers, who voluntarily chose to be incarnated on Earth: "They occupy physical vehicles born to parents of their own choice who they feel will best give them advantages and training they need to fulfil their missions on Earth" [32]

**Howard Menger claimed to be a reincarnated Saturnian and his second wife a Venusian**

Howard Menger claimed to be a reincarnated Saturnian and his second wife a Venusian. Menger claimed he was 'really' Sol do Nova, a spiritual teacher who occupied the body of the dying Howard. [33]

Much further back there was the Swiss medium Helene Smith (i.e. Catherine Elsie Muller, 1861 - 1927) [34] with her fantasies of visits to a previous incarnation on Mars. Like the modern star-children

> ..she felt like a stranger in her family and as one away from home. She had a feeling of isolation and abandonment in exile... so strong were these feelings that she actually one day seriously asked her parents if it were absolutely certain that she was their daughter, or [might not the nurse] "some day, by mistake brought home another child from the daily walk?"

She also had a mysterious sense of destiny and it comes as no surprise to note that her youth was filled with dreams, hypnagogic hallucinations and indefinite terrors, and artistic ability.

Allied with this are themes of mission. Randles quotes 'Donna' who claims that a spaceman materialised in front of her mother and told her that her second child [Donna] was to be used by the aliens to spread their message. A clear echo of the Annunciation. (Randles, p.126) Other abductees and contactees have similar messages: Rohan has a sense of destiny, of going to do something (Spencer, p.242); Sara has a mission to do with ecology and "polar and geomagnetic reversals" (Mack, p.201); Paul is to be a healer and bridge between worlds (Mack, p.232). The main concern of these missions is the classic drama of excitement and anxiety; being missionaries preaching the word in advance of the apocalypse.

■29 Rogerson, Peter. 'Children of Another God', in *Magonia* 20, p. 11-14.

■30 Steiger, Brad. *Gods of Aquarius*. W.H. Allen, 1977, chapter 7

■31 Le Poer Trench, Brinsley. *Men Among Mankind*, Spearman, 1962

■32 Williamson, George Hunt. *Other Tongues, Other Flesh*. Amherst Press, 1953, chapter 2.

■33 Menger, Howard. *From Outer Space to You*, Saucerian Books, 1959, quoted in: Flammonde, Paris, *The Age of the Flying Saucer*, Hawthorne Books, 1971, p.99-100

■34 Berger, Arthur and Joyce. *Encyclopaedia of Parapsychology and Psychical Research*, Paragon House, 1991.

## BRIMSTONE

Ken Ring and Jenny Randles have noted the similarities between abductions and the near-death experience, so let us start this section with a very abduction-like NDE.

Dannian Brinkley, an ex-soldier and intelligence agent is on the phone when he is struck by lightning. He then has a typical NDE, experiencing images such as the tunnel, the Being of Light, and the life review. Then he is taken by the Being to a crystal city where is is led into a cathedral of learning. The Being disappears, leaving him alone, or with invisible spirits. Then, on a podium, thirteen great Beings of light present him with visions of the End-Time. These conform to a classic right-wing agenda: domestic collapse, and alliance of Arabs and orientals against the west, Syrians developing chemical weapons, nuclear catastrophe and starvation in Russia, a Sino-Russian war, a war in the desert between two vast armies, a computer genius who controls the world by inserting computer chips under peoples' skin, and many similar prophecies. To prevent this, Brinkley is given a mission to build meditation rooms. Returned to life, and a surprisingly good recovery, he possesses powers of telepathy and other wild talents. (Brinkley and Parry, *passim.*)

The perceptive reader will have seen the cultural symbolism: the desert war, now being touted as a premonition of the Gulf War but originally no doubt supposed to be the Battle of Armageddon, and the computer expert who is in fact the antichrist, the Beast of Revelations who will mark everyone with 666.

For the Buryats of Siberia, Brinkley would have been a lightning shaman, empowered by the lightning bolt. In some cultures the lightning shaman is dismembered and re-assembled with another strike. After being struck by lightning the Blackfoot medicine-man Wolf Head developed wild talents and high creative abilities. [36]

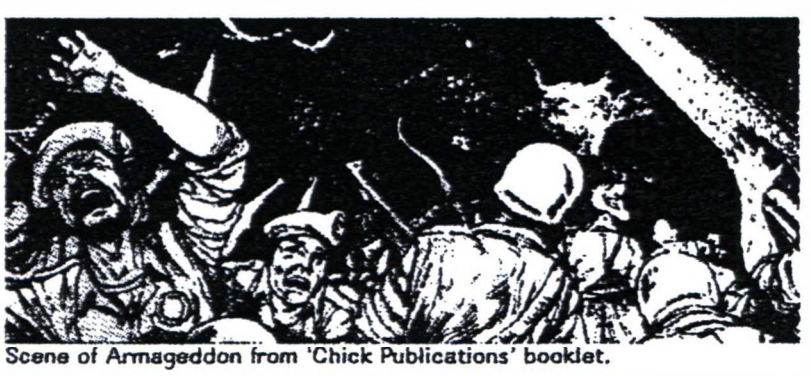
An example of the second motif is Wovoka, the leader of the 1890 Native-American ghost dance movement. He became ill during an eclipse of the sun in January 1887, and claimed to have had a NDE vision of a land of ancestors, and been instructed by God to establish a new movement which would re-unite the dead and the living. The mythology took on an increasingly apocalyptic tone as it developed with visions of earthquake, fire and flood, which would sweep the white soldiers away. [37]

Other modern near-death experiencers have apocalyptic visions. Ring presents a number which have similar features; many will perish in earthquakes, fire and flood; there will be nuclear catastrophe or economic collapse, but a saving remnant will be able to rebuild a new world of peace and hope. These people are 'educated' and prepared for this new world. [38] Folk images such as the sinking of California and the pole shift occur frequently. As with Brinkley, many of these images reflect the visionary's own political views, and we should note the symbolism of the polar shift, a crude literalisation and secularisation of 'the world turned upside-down', when the rich and powerful will be thrown down and the poor and oppressed exalted.

Similar apocalyptic visions are produced by the techniques of post-life progression as pioneered by Helen Wambach and Chet Snow, [39] who again produce vistas of catastrophe, including a Soviet attack on Western Europe while the USA is preoccupied with the little matter of the sinking of California (all this in 1998). As we are creasing ourselves with laughter at this little gem, the laughter freezes on our lips, for what Snow next calmly says: in the future there will be only two types of humanity, the garbage and the garbage men. Suddenly the toothy grin of the new age guru widens to a vast chasm leading straight to the gas chambers of Auschwitz.

Snow drags in UFO abductions, and abductees now bring their own apocalypticism. Mack's subjects turn up images of ecological catastrophe, earthquake and flood. Amongst the billions who will die, a few will escape in a UFO arranged Rapture (Mack, p.40-1). This apocalypticism mingles readily with a sense of mission. Thus 'Ed' has a "great agenda connected with ecological catastrophe and the weeping of the spirits". 'Scott' has visions of being an alien messenger from a wasteland world, saying 'they' will only feel safe to land when AIDS has wiped out most of humanity. 'Joe' believes a hybridisation programme is creating a new humanity to repopulate a post-catastrophe world. 'Peter' has "vivid, disturbing apocalyptic images" of earth changes and the sinking of the [US] West Coast, followed by the millennial golden age. Elsewhere, Donna says she is a mouthpiece for the aliens in the End Times. (Randles)

**The perceptive reader will have seen the cultural symbolism: the desert war now being touted as a premonition of the Gulf War but originally supposed to be the Battle of Armageddon**



Scene of Armageddon from 'Chick Publications' booklet.

The images of the abductees are more than echoed by the imagery of the post-secular ufologists. Randles, Ring and Mack all include dramatic apocalyptic imagery. Randles takes a classic, post-millenialist stance that the millenium is coming into being in history, through a process of amelioration and reform:

> We are gradually being turned into star children.. cosmic citizens, Omega people... This experience exists despite us and because of us... bathing every thinking person in the heady scent of true reality. For the world is a stranger place than we can possibly imagine and the universe is infinitely stranger. That is what we are being taught by all of this. We are climbing a stairway to the stars with a dazzling light far ahead of us at the top. We do not know where we are going or why we have to go there, but we know it is as inevitable a journey as life itself...
>
> ...we will all get there in the end. And when we do arrive, I suspect we might well find that our joy is short-lived. For we are only on the first floor of a very tall building. (Randles, p.205-6)

Ring has a basically post-millennial, but much more dramatically apocalyptic vision.

■36 Kalweit, Edgar. *Shamans, Healers and Medicine Men*, Shambhalla, 1992, chapter 4.

■37 Wilson, Bryan. *Magic and the Millenium*. Paladin, 1975, p.292-8

■38 Ring, Kenneth. *Heading Toward Omega*. Morrow, 1985, chapter 8.

■39 Snow, Chet B. *Mass Dreams of the Future*. McGraw-Hill, 1989, as quoted in: Baker, Robert, *Hidden Memories*. Prometheus 1992, p. 164-7.

> What we see with *imaginal vision* is a representation of our future environment [by which I] am not talking about some purported after-death world. I mean that it will become our environmental setting before death. Indeed the world of the dead and the world of the living are ones between which there may eventually be no longer a sharp distinction. Veils will be lifted from the face of the non-physical, and we ourselves will become diaphanous beings, with bodies of light. .. the shamanizing of humankind... a major shift in levels of consciousness that will eventually lead to humanity being able to live in two worlds at once - the physical and the imaginal
>
> We shall have a new consensus world, but it won't have anything to do with 'the senses' [rather] an expanded ability on the part of human beings for imaginal vision. And what that would mean in no less than this: Humanity would be led back to its true home in the realm of the imagination where it would be liberated to live in mythic time and no longer be incarcerated in the doomed prison of historical time... [less] a new heaven as an imaginal earth. (Ring, p.239-40)

Mack bemoaning "mindless corporate acquisitiveness that perpetuates vast differences between rich and poor and contributes to hunger and disease, ethnic-national violence resulting in mass killings, and ecological destruction" sees abductions leading us back to "our spiritual cosmic roots" and returning us to the divine light or 'Home', a place where secrets, jealousy, greed and destruction have no purpose. (Mack, p.3-4; 415-16)

The apocalypticism is quite explicit in Ring's title *The Omega Project*. Omega is Teilhard de Chardin's name for the End Time - when the perfected human collective will merge with Cosmic Christ. The Omega Point was the ultimate expression of the 'noösphere' within which human culture would totally dominate the earth. For Teilhard de Chardin the mass movements of the inter-war years, Fascism and Stalinism were, for all their 'imperfections' [*sic!*] superior to liberal, individualist society. He shared little of the concerns of the modern New-Agers, having no interest in space-travel, and no great love for the concerns of modern ecologists. His future was that of H. G. Wells. It is not surprising therefore that despite surrounding his work with an effective moat of incomprehensible and barbarous neologisms he ran foul of the Catholic Church authorities. [40]

Though for most people knowledge of Teilhard's ideas probably derives from the popularisation in Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* [41] his ideas have clearly caught on as a paradigm of the heady amalgamation of escalator evolution and traditional apocalypticism. The most extreme us of the Omega hypothesis is in Barrow and Tippler's *The Cosmic Anthropic Principle*, where, at the end of a massive tome filled with formidable physics and even more formidable mathematics, we find:

> At the instant the Omega point is reached life will have gained control of all matter and forces, not only in a single universe, but in all universes where existence is logically possible; life will have spread into all spatial regions in all universes which could possibly exist and will have stored an infinite amount of information, including all bits of knowledge which it is logically possible to know. And this is the end. [42]

Ring, with his constant reference to evolution, and Randles, with her vision of a 'stairway to the stars' are expressing what the philosopher Mary Midgley has described as the Panglossian escalator. [43] This is an idea which originated with Lamark, that evolution is a sort of cosmic elevator with a purpose. That purpose being the production of human beings, usually white, Anglo Saxon Protestant males, and then to continue onwards to exalt them to supernatural heights. Indeed it is difficult to resist the notion that Randles' vision might have been inspired by the cover of the paperback version of Midgley's book.

The point Midgley is actually making is that these ideas, which have no basis in Darwinian biology, have become central in Western culture, probably - though she does not herself draw this inference - because they represent the 'biologisation' of early post-millennial doctrines, which became enshrined in 18th-century notions of enlightenment. What separates Ring and Randles from the mainstream is their radically foreshortened timescale for this pseudo-evolutionary process and incorporation of more overtly supernatural elements. Their consummation of history is not in some vast, cosmic future, but in the next decade or next year.

It is this foreshortened timescale which leads to the idea that some particular Omega people are the vanguard of evolution, transforming human consciousness through their own altered states. This is quite simply nonsense; there is no reason to believe that twentieth-century Californians say,are any more evolved than the artists of Lascaux, to say nothing of the builders of Stonehenge or Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. the visionary experiences discussed by Ring, though the cultural content changes, occur in all times and places. They may have played a role in the emergence of full human consciousness 50 or 60,000 years ago, but human consciousness in a biological sense has not changed since.

I arranged the quotations from Randles, Ring and Mack in order to demonstrate the progression from Randles' post-millenialism to Mack's much more dramatic pre-millenialism. Ring stands between them, his Omega contains not only elements of 'evolutionary' millenialism, but images of a more profound apocalypse: the 'imaginal' or spiritual Earth with its vocabulary of the parting of the veil between the living and the dead which is redolent of Victorian Spiritualism. The bodily assumption of the living into the 'imaginal' realm is a barely secularised version of the Rapture of the saints.

The appearance of these apocalyptic themes in the fantasies of a wide range of people should not surprise us because this occurs in a culture permeated by apocalyptic imagery. Few works can have had such an impact on Western culture as the *Revelations* of John. Norman Cohn, who had previously chronicled the power of apocalyptic movements in medieval and early modern Europe [45] has now (Cohn) sought to track down its origins in Zoroastrian dualise, took the archetypal combat myth by which the tribal chief subdues the monster of chaos and carves habitat out of the wilderness in the time before time, and transformed it into a once and for all defeat of evil and disorder in a time to come. It is the apocalypse which transforms Time's Cycle into Time's Arrow - to quote Stephen J. Gould.

Not only does apocalyptic imagery pervade our culture, the has been an astonishing rise in literal apocalypticism in the last twenty-five years. A generation ago belief in 'the end of the world' was looked upon as an historical curiosity, [46] today End Times beliefs are stronger than ever.

The rise of apocalyptic belief in contemporary America is chronicled by Paul Boyer who demonstrates the links between Christian fundamentalism, radical right politics and conspiracy theories. All the themes in Brinkley's End Times vision referred to at the beginning

■40 Teilhard de Charden, *The Phenomenon of Man*, Collins, 1959. c.f. the entry for him in: Gurley, Rosemary, *Harper Encyclopaedia of Mystical and Paranormal Experience*, Harper, 1991, p.604-6.

■41 Clark, Arthur C. *Childhood's End.*

■42 Barrow, John D and Tipler, Frank J. *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*, Oxford U. P., 1988, p. 676-7.

■43 Midgley, Mary. *Evolution as a Religion*, Methuen, 1985.

■45 Cohn, Norman. *The Pursuit of the Millenium*, Pimlico 1993 (Secker and Warburg, 1957)

■46 See for example: Hunter, Anthony. *The Last Days*, Blond, 1958.

of this section are derived from contemporary fundamentalist writings. Boyer demonstrates how the image of the apocalypse permit the articulation of a powerful critique of capitalism which allow the expression of discontent by the disadvantaged, whilst by proposing fundamental change in a supernatural realm preaches a gospel of helplessness and opposition to all reform.

It seems probable that there are several direct inputs of the Christian fundamentalist apocalypticism described by Boyer into the 'New Age'. Remember those NDE's who claimed the world was going to end in 1988? It seems likely that their inspiration was a best-selling book by fundamentalist Edgar Whisenart called *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be In 1988*. (Boyer, p. 130) At the same time it seems highly likely that ideas of abductees being beamed out of houses through solid matter derives from pop iconography of the Rapture.

What the material reviewed here has demonstrated is the apocalyptic imagination extends far beyond the mainstream of Christian fundamentalism discussed by Boyer. Barry Brummelt has extended the range of his study of apocalyptic religion beyond the confines of fundamentalism, for example citing Fukuyama's 'End of history' as an example of post-millenialism, but even he ignores the development of such ideas in the New Age movement. Indeed, it seems that the whole New Age field has been excluded from academic debate.

The apocalypse offers simple solutions. It is the catastrophe which will sweep away the oppressors, iron out the complexities, turn the world upside down. The seventies, the decade which saw religious fundamentalism come in from the outermost fringes, ws also the decade of the catastrophe film, each disaster being a small apocalypse.

Beyond the apocalypse lies *communitas*, the world of sacred sharing and total community, (examples which come to mind are the Woodstock Festival, the moment the Berlin Wall came down, or the 'Velvet Revolution' in Czechoslovakia) which is close to Teilhard de Chardin's vision of Omega. But any attempt to impose *communitas* will end in tragedy. [47]

Post-secular ufology appears to be part of a widening revolt against the dream of the secular city, predicted by Jerome Clark:

> The collective unconscious, too long repressed, will break free, overwhelm the world and usher in a world of madness, superstition and terror... war, anarchy and fascism. [48]

It is impossible to read those lines today without thinking of Iran and Bosnia, Somalia, the wreckage of the Soviet Union, the rise of the religious right in the US and of nationalism and xenophobia across Europe. And beyond those gross examples we can see many more: the rise in witchcraft accusations, the *communitas* of the football hooligan, the rise of the passionate violence of the righteous elect (anti-abortionists in the US, animal rights movements in Britain)

One does not have to subscribe to any sort of Jungianism to appreciate Clark's vision. We could rephrase it to something like "the one-sided economism which only values human beings and consumers and producers will lead to a reaction in which the needs of humans to belong and find meaning in their lives will take extreme forms".

The abduction myth, with its themes of manipulation, the intermingling of rape and Rapture, the evocation of the naked helplessness of the operating table and loss of autonomy seems to articulate many of these fears. But whether any of the post-secularist UFO myths can in any way seriously replace the old myths of flag and altar seems doubtful. There are interesting times ahead: we shall be on the watch. ●●●

■47 For a discussion of liminality, communitas, etc., see: Rogerson, Peter, 'Taken to the Limits', in *Magonia* 23.

■48 Clark, Jerome *and* Coleman, Loren. *The Unidentified*. Warner, 1975, p.241.


# MAGONIA BACK ISSUES

We have recently had a lot of demand for back issues of *Magonia*, and some issues are in short supply. We have copies available of the following numbers, which are all available for £1. 50 each, including postage (overseas £2.00 or $4.00). Highlights of each issue include:

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37: Death of Ufology; Bullard defends The American Way
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# letters

## Boxing Jenny

Dear Editor

I am not sure how long you wish to perpetuate the 'slugfest' but I felt that if I failed to respond at all then your esteemed contributor would miss my just retribution. Sorry, but it was all that talk about Ajax and White Knights.

Firstly, I do appreciate people who find ufology fun (because it is) and being ironic and amusing from time to time is an excellent antidote to the biggest single danger of the subject, a belief in ones self importance. It is easy to take UFOs seriously virtually all of the time and forget that 95% of all we deal with is nonsense - and often amusing nonsense at that. Indeed, if Mr Brookesmith were to read my *Northern UFO News* he would find that I lose myself in irony there from time to time - especially in my comments on the media and sceptics. To be sure, I have got into trouble as a result of people not understanding my sense of humour - especially Americans. Unfortunately this has led me down the legal road which in Britain is a hard one for ufologists to tread, since its guiding light is that you are guilty until proven rich.

Returning to the book that started the controversy. The 20 page chapter on UFOs contained many things that were current in the year under discussion. These included the possible solution of the Peter Day film as an IFO, some sightings at Gulf Breeze due to hot-air balloons, the social triggers for the Bonnybridge wave, Keel's balloon bomb theory for Roswell, and more. I doubt that any other book from a ufologist in that year carried such a range of objective coverage, to indicate how ufology spends much of its time resolving cases. The Alitalia story is just a few lines in a four-page section which was a summary of four encounters between aircraft and very similar lozenge shaped objects that had occurred over Britain in the preceding year or so. It had a place in my chapter, whatever Brookesmith says, since it reflected an interesting new trend in cases.

In my report I start by saying that balloons were involved, showed how the media misrepresented the case, examined various options from floating bin-liners to toy balloons, and ended the piece with yet another reference to a balloon as a possible cause for the sightings. So my quibble with Peter Brookesmith is that he ignored all this - the undoubted ethos of the chapter and this particular section - and inferred (or implied - whatever word he thinks best) that I did not treat this case fairly. Yet I cannot see how I did otherwise. Whether he meant it or not, I saw references in magazines that took his article as an attack on my competence. So if he is accusing me of writing incoherently he ought to be looking to his own work as that seems to be persuading people of things he does not intend.

Concerning *Northern UFO News*: this has never been a magazine that has tried to sell itself and never advertises anywhere. Since it is completely written, compiled and distributed by myself without anybody else's help frankly I would not have the time to run it as a commercial venture. I am quite happy with its subscription level (about 250); it breaks even at this rate, it has never been a profit-making publication, and I don't want to find the time to print and distribute many more copies. However as copies tend to go to as many groups as individuals, its probable readership is several times its circulation. Steuart Campbell will be pleased to hear that copies have been lodged with the national UFO archives at the Central Library in Newcastle upon Tyne for as long as I can recall.

Brookesmith's reference to my magazine in *Fortean Times* was derogatory. He knows it, so do all those who read his remark. He does it less cruelly in *Magonia* by terming it a 'fanzine' - which to me is not a reasonable description of the news and sighting data-base that *NUN* has always been. A fanzine to me conveys an images of masses of readers sending in impassioned letters rabbiting on about trivial irrelevancies (er, a bit like this one?) or Dr Who stories written by schoolkids.

With regards to *FT* printing a retraction to what Brookesmith said, I should tell you what really happened. I was greeted on arrival at the 1994 FT Unconvention by either (or both) Bob Rickard and Paul Sieveking apologising for what they had done, who told me that they were *voluntarily* publishing a comment in their next issue to redress the balance. This to me is a retraction. Why they chose to do so in the form of a letter supposedly from me, I have no idea. But as they will tell you, this "classic beside the point letter from Randles whingeing" was not written by me at all, but by one of the *FT* editors, who evidently copied my literary style (bad as it is) to perfection!

Best Wishes,

Jenny Randles, Fleetwood, Lancs.

*This is definitely the end of the slugfest, the referee stopping the fight because of the threat of brain damage to the spectators*

## Navel Manoeuvres

Dear Sir

I was interested to read your correspondent Tom Harney's comments on the omphalos of London (*Magonia* 51). For me, its location is not the Isle of Dogs at all, as apparently suggested by the *Observer* article to which Harney refers, but a point within the Lanesborough Hotel, formerly St. George's Hospital, at Hyde Park Corner. It's quite possible that for each individual in London, the 'central point' is in a different place according to the particular coordinates of their own actual and imaginative lives. Possibly some more of your readers have views on the matter.

Yours sincerely,

Nicholas Royle, London N15

# book reviews

**Goss, Michael and Behe, George, *Lost at Sea: Ghost Ships and Other Mysteries*. Amherst, New York, Prometheus Books, 1994. £19.50**

Vanishing ships always generate a great deal of speculation. As there are no survivors it is often difficult to refute the wilder theories. In discussing the disappearance of the Blue Anchor Line steamer *Waratah* off the coast of South Africa in 1909, the authors mention the confused seas which can sometimes develop off the Cape of Good Hope, creating enormous, steep waves capable of overwhelming quite large vessels. Depending on how such waves strike the ship, she may drop into "a hole in the ocean".

This phrase reminded me of the time I was asleep in my bunk on board an Ocean Weather Ship in the North Atlantic in the early hours of the morning some time in 1961. I was suddenly awakened by a sensation which was just like falling into a hole. The ship had been sailing into a heavy swell, but being a small vessel, was simply riding up and down the long waves. Apparently the officer on watch and the seaman at the helm were horrified to see a wall of water suddenly towering over them. The great wave crashed over the bows, causing considerable damage. Fearing for the integrity of the ship the master decided to make for Reykjavik, the nearest port, so that her hull could be inspected on the slipway there. We were lucky that time, but others have been less fortunate.

In the case of the *Waratah* there were allegations that she was unseaworthy, but the authors are less concerned with technicalities than with the folklore of the sea and the alleged psychic experiences of people connected with maritime disasters.

Some passengers and crew members refused to sail in the *Waratah* on her last voyage, but the authors were unable to establish whether this was because of visions or premonitions, or simply because the allegedly unusual motion of the ship indicated to them that she was unstable and thus likely to founder in a storm.

The book begins with a survey of stories of phantom ships. There is a detailed discussion of the legend of a ship called *Lady Luvibond* which is said to have been deliberately wrecked on the Goodwin Sands in 1748 by the mate, who was consumed with jealousy because the captain had just married the woman he loved. He is said to smashed the helmsman's skull with a belaying pin and steered the ship on to the Goodwins, where she was broken up by the waves, and there were no survivors. Every fifty years, a phantom ship is seen being wrecked at the same spot. A most unlikely tale, especially as nobody could have known what happened on board when there no survivors, and the authors show that the story is probably quite modern and developed, probably from some obscure work of fiction, into a local legend.

A section deals with submarine disasters, real and imaginary, and ends with the story of the highly successful "Top Secret" experiments in telepathic communication on the US submarine *Nautilus* which took place in 1959 - or did they? The authors trace this one to Pauwels and Bergier's gee-whiz book *The Dawn of Magic*. Others wrote articles based on this yarn and there are apparently some people who actually believe it.

The last section of the book gives brief accounts of a number of sea disasters and the alleged psychic experiences associated with them and ends with stories of hauntings on board the *Queen Mary* at her berth in Long Beach, California.

The treatment of the subject matter in this book ensures that it will be of interest to those interested in folklore, psychology and parapsychology, ships and the sea. One moan, though; at the end of the book there seems to be something missing - an index. Lost at sea, perhaps?

*John Harney.*

**Matthews, John. *King Arthur and the Grail Quest*. Blandford, 1994. £16.99**

Not long ago Jenny Randles wrote to *Fortean Times* commenting on their snide reference to her 'potboilers', saying that such books helped her pay the bills, and so financed more serious and less economically viable books. In the same way, John Matthews is the author os a series of books relating to the Arthurian and related legends, some of them very learned and esoteric, others rather less so. The present volume is clearly aimed at the popular market, being well illustrated from old engravings, photographs of Arthurian sites, and paintings by Steven Brown. Nonetheless it is by no means a 'potboiler', but a pleasant trip through a selection of legends of the Round Table and the Grail, some of them little known. The result is readable, but could be a useful introduction for the serious student too. Gareth Medway.

**Brookesmith, Peter. *UFO: the complete sightings catalogue.* Blandford, 1995. £16.99.**

As he is a contributor to *Magonia*, and the writer of an embarrasingly fulsome panegyric to your editor and his gallant little team in the most recent issue of *The Ley Hunter*, we ungrateful wretches were naturally looking for a chance to slag off Brookesmith's latest opus as soon as it fell into our grubby hands, just to show how splendidly unbiassed we are.

It was harder than I though. The large, pictorial format can of course be sneered at as 'coffee-table'. However, for once the illustrations are relevant to the topic, with few luridly coloured 'artists impressions' of sensational cases - most of the illustrations are black-and-white photographs. These include some photographs which are obvious fakes. Unfortuately for us old cynics, when this is the case, Brookesmith clearly labels them as obvious fakes - he's even pretty sound on the not-so-obvious fakes.

The book is divided into chapters covering historical periods in the development of the UFO myth, with key cases being described in some detail, giving background, an account of the events as reported, and usually concluding with the author's own assessment. Little chance for sneers here, either, as in all cases the assessments represent a sound summary of the available facts. If it's a fake he says so, if there is a natural explanation it is given. Most importantly, if we just have no idea what happened, Brookesmith also makes this clear, without blowing it up into an extraterrestrial mystery.

I suppose I could complain that the cases are given with no references to sources. Most the reports will be familiar to seasoned Magonians, but as the book is probably aimed at the less seasoned reader some indication of the origins of the tales would be welcome (I criticized the appalling Mantle and Nagaitis book for this, so I can't let Brookesmith off without a slapped wrist). He rounds it off with a series of appendices in the form of short essays looking at general topics such as abductions and 'where do they come from?' which to my great disappointment would all probably fit very well into our own dear *Magonia*. So, it's a pretty good book. If someone wanted to read just one book to find out what ufology is all about I don't think they could go far wrong with this.

Oh, the hell with this elaborate pose of world weary cynicism: it's a bloody good UFO book which I will probably find a very useful reference work; and I thought that even *before* I saw he's put me in the 'Who's Who of Ufology' section. And it's got an index - all librarians like that.

*John Rimmer*

**Davies, Paul. *Are We Alone? philosophical implications of the discovery of extra-terrestrial life.* Penguin, 1995. £5.99**

This is an excellent example of the 'escalator theory', discussed by Mary Midgly, and referred to in 'Blood, Vision and Brimstone'. Three themes emerge: evolution is the same as 'progress', with white, male Anglo-Saxon mathematicians and physicists in the vanguard; said mathematicians and physicists are on the verge of revealing the divine truth of the universe, which makes them very special indeed; and they are so special that some natural force is propelling many other places in the galaxy towards them - the galaxy might be teeming with beings just like them - only better!

There are a number of straw men set up to be knocked down. No biochemists would argue that life arose through 'chance combinations' of molecules, rather they would argue that evolutionary forces were already acting on a pre-biotic molecule. The argument is presented that 'what an extraordinary thing it is that latent in the human brain lay a mathematical ability to decode nature... to do abstract advanced mathematics... for tens of thousands of years' (p.82). Eh, well, yes, so has presumably the ability to drive motorcars or play computer games. All of these abilities are specialisations of general symbolic consciousness which can adapt itself to almost any circumstances.

The real problem with SETI claimants is that they seem to assume that contemporary Western culture is somehow inevitable, and will be widespread in the galaxy. This seems extraordinarily unlikely. It is much more probable that every biosphere will be unique, and that heavy industry, leading to spaceships, radio telescopes, etc., will be very rare indeed.

In an appendix Davies discusses the notion of an infinite universe in which everything that can possibly happen - no matter how remote the possibility - will happen, an infinite number of times. In such an universe totally, categorically, impossible events will occur an indefinite number of times. There's a nice explanation for all the Fortean's wonders for you!

*Peter Rogerson*

**Moore, Steve (Ed.) *Fortean Studies*, Volume 1, 1994. John Brown Publishing. £19.99.**

**Huyge, Patrick, and Stacy, Dennis. *The Anomalist: 1.* 1994, $10.00. From Dennis Stacy, PO Box 12434, San Antonia, TX 78212, USA.**

These volumes represent an important development in Fortean publising. Semi-annual compilations of long, well researched, well written essays on a wide variety of topics. *Fortean Studies* is probably the more scholarly work, even if purely for the sheer volume and comprehensiveness of its documentation. Mike Dash's survey of the mysterious 'Devil's Footprints' of 1855 in Devon is as complete as it is imaginable. Every source is outlined and reviewed, every explanation comprehensively investigated. Naturally, at this distance in time no-one is going to be able to come up with an 'explanation', but neither is anyone going to be able to come up with a more comprehensive exposition of the facts as we have them. Such detailed research is not in the least boring or long-winded, and one's fascination in the case is rekindled.

Of considerable importance are several articles on what might be considered the 'history of Forteanism', or pre-Fort Forteanism including Joan Petri Klint looking at a Swiss collector of the bizarre in the 16th century, and Mick Goss reviewing Fortean phenomena in 17th century broadsides. I have heard some criticism (O.K., I have probably expressed some criticism, too) that *FT's* association with John Brown may have led to a more tabloid, populist magazine. Without that professional and financial input this volume would probably not have been possible, and we would have been worse off without it.

The articles in The Anomalist are briefer, and are not intended to carry the depth of documentation of *Fortean Studies*. Nonetheless, there is much valuable material here: Martin Cannon on a remarkable telephonic mystery, Martin Kottmeyer takes a typically detailed (and entertaining) look at something you might have thought was blindingly obvious, but proves not to be so - exactly who first worked out that the sun was round - Patrick Huyghe on a spectacular one-off natural phenomenon, Loen Coleman on spontaneous combustion, and much else.

Both are essential reading for anyone calling themselves a Fortean, and I look forward to future editions of both magazines - support them.

*John Rimmer*

**Green, Celia, and McCreer, Charles. *Lucid Dreaming; the paradox of consciousness during sleep.* Routledge, 1994. £9.95**

This is the first book produced from the Institute of Psychophysical Research at Oxford for nearly twenty years, and covers their work on lucid dreams (where the dreamer is aware that they are dreaming and often is able to take conscious conrol of the dream events) and other forms of what the authors call metachoric experiences, in which the whole perceptual field is hallucinated.

Of particular interest are chapters 6, 7, and 8 which discuss topics such as false-awakening, sleep paralysis, apparitions, and - as an aside - waking dreams, which they suggest may account for certain UFO experences. the authors suggest there is a close relationship between 'Type 2' false-awakenings (in which the sleeper awakes to an apparent bedroom scene, but then has hallucinatory experiences, such as that discussed by John Rimmer in *Magonia* 48) and sleep paralysis, often known as the Old Hag. Though Green and McCreery only appear to be aware of the latter in a mediaeval context. They do not appear to be aware of Hufford's *The Terror that Comes in the Night*, which would have shown them just how intimate the connection is.

Long-time readers will be aware that MUFOB/*Magonia* was greatly influenced by the early work of the Instutute, and I can heartily recommend this addenda.

*Peter Rogerson*

**Hess, David J. *Science in the New Age: the paranormal, its defenders and debunkers and American culture.* University of Wisconsin Press, 1993. £16.50**

This sociological analysis of three groups of paranormalists - the New Agers, the parapsychologists and the sceptics shows how similar the three groups are in constructing heroic images of themselves, in apocalyptic thinking, and in constructing images of 'the other' from which they differentiate themselves. They each see themselves as defenders of society against the destructiveness of the others.

For Rhine, the 'other' was scientific materialism at home and dialectical materialism in the Communist states. For the sceptics there is the defence of reason against the chaotic wilderness of the occult, whilst New Agers fight against the backwardness of greed and materialism. Each group sees itself as uniquely open minded, as against the dogmatic 'others'.

Hess also examines the role of gender, claiming that the sceptics 'paranormal other' is often female, and that traditional sex stereotyping often abounds in sceptical literature. New Age literature may also equally stereotype science as a masculine activity. In this context Hess refers to his own anthropological studies in Brazil, where he found that poltergeist 'victims' were able to use their experiences to restructure domestic power relations, and as a cry for help.

Hess also notes that the New Agers are more willing to treat mind and body as a whole, and to move away from the puritanical, body-repressive dualism of Platonic/Cartesian parapsychologists.

Though not an easy read or inexpensive, I would certainly recommend that *Magonia* readers try at least to obtain a copy of this book from their library.

*Peter Rogerson*

**Haines, Richard. *Project Delta: a study of multiple UFOs.* Published by the author, 1994. £9.95.**

Sick of post-secularist ufology, abductions and channelling; weary of plots and paranoia and longing for the straigtforward nuts and bolts ufology of the pre-Keel years? Then this is the book for you - back to basics ufology with a vengeance. It is essentially catalogue of cases where more than one UFO was seen at a time, arranged under various headings, but not in date order, which makes checking the influence of one report on another difficult.

Haines simply assumes he is dealing with mechanical devices, proceeding then to argue that as their reported performance is incompatible with current aircraft technology, they must be 'alien craft'. Were these cases representing events which had taken place very recently and had been subjected to rigorous critical enquiry, they might present the evidence for something truly anomalous. But what we find is that more than three-quarters of the cases presented occured more than 25 years ago, and nearkly half more than forty years ago. the sources are often second- or third-hand popular accounts.

On critical reading, several of the reports resolve into misperceptions of stars, planets, etc., or meteors. Others, such as the alleged fleet of UFOs seen at the time of the Pharaoh Thutmos III was exploded by Rosenberry in the Condon Report, but for the bulk of the cases it is impossible to say what was seen on the basis of the details given.

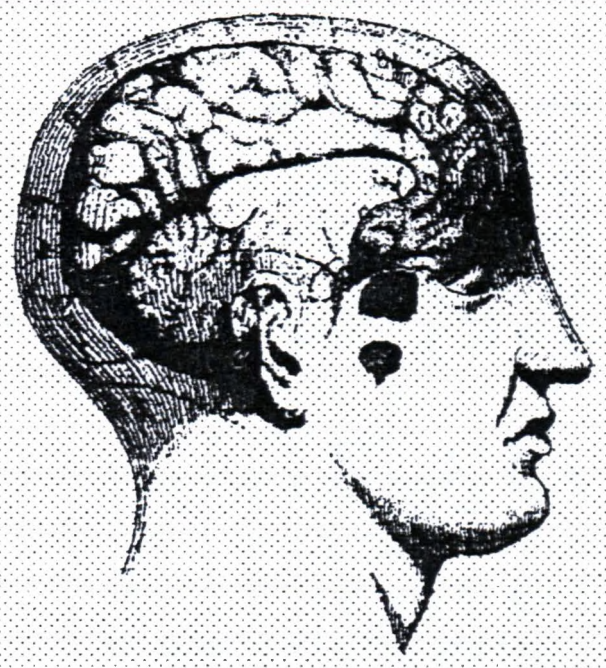
However, the data from the nineteen-forties and fifties suggest that cultural influences were at work. Images of 'fleets of UFOs' in particular derive from the 'Martian Bomber' ideas of the period, and the notion that spaceships would resemble high-performance aircraft. Perhaps even more significant is the fact that so many of the cases come from a period when many of the witnesses must have been affected by wartime experiences. A significant proportion of airline pilots in the 'fifties would have had combat experience in World War II or Korea and would have been primed to see almost any ambiguous sighting as a potential enemy aircraft. After all, to misperceive Venus as an enemy aircraft might make you look rather foolish back in the Mess, to misperceive an enemy aircraft as Venus might leave you seriously dead!

*Peter Rogerson*

**You've read the rest, now get the first and best!**

John Rimmer's *Evidence for Alien Abductions*, the first British book on the subject, is still available to *Magonia* readers. Written in 1984, this book gives an idea of the range of the abduction phenomenon before it became dominated by the American 'Hopkins-type' abductions. It is still the only book which looks fully at the psycho-social dimension of the abduction phenomenon. A few copies are still available at just £2.50, post and packing included., from the *Magonia* address. Please make cheques payable to "John Rimmer".

# Feature Review



**Pendergrast, Mark. *Victims of Memory: incest accusations and shattered lives.* Upper Access, Hinesburg, VT., 1995.**

**It is essential reading not merely for anyone concerned with this particular controversy but concerned about contemporary culture and society as a whole.**

LIKE many other parents in Britain and the USA in the past decade Mark Pendergrast has been accused of child abuse on the basis of recovered memories. However he is a professional non-fiction writer, and instead of writing a 'personal testament' or confronting his accusers on a TV talk-show, he has written a wide-ranging survey of the whole phenomenon.

Recently a number of sceptical books have appeared in the USA on the subject of recovered memories, some academic, some popular in approach. Pendergrast's however scores over all the others by the breadth of his social and historical perspective. Seeking the origins of, and analogies for, recovered memory stories he touches on many topics of interest to *Magonia* readers, including UFO abductions, reincarnation claims, Satanic cults, urban legends, hypnotism, 'bedroom visitor' stories and the witch mania.

Many matters dealt with in this book were new to me. There is a section on 'facilitated communication', a technique alleged to assist autistic children to communicate by holding their hands over a keyboard and picking out characters. The technique has obvious analogies with ouija boards and the experiments conducted earlier this century in which animals were alleged to be capable of producing messages by picking out letter cards. When a high proportion of 'facilitated communications' turn out to be allegations of abuse, further experiments produced clear evidence of subconscious cueing by the facilitators.

Even more bizzare are the claims of multiple-personality disorder (MPD). According to MPD specialists victims of abuse become so traumatised that they distance themselves by splitting into separate personalities, which lie dormant and can be recovered by therapists. Some patients turn out to have a hundred or more personalities, who ike American TV wrestlers seem to each have one stereotyped characteristic, and answer to names such as 'The Zombie' and 'Mean Joe Green'. Some therapists think the Satanists deliberately induce MPD so that their victims will carry out activities which they will not remember afterwards, such as murder, gun-running or prostitution. Others think it is the CIA, Mafia or Ku Klux Klan that are responsible. Pendergrast notes the similarity of all this to older demonic possession traditions, but does not note its closest parallel with another contemporary American fad, channelling or claiming to be the voice of some dead figure dispensing cryptic wisdom.

To the best of my knowledge MPD has not, at least so far, been a feature of British recovered memory or Satani abuse cases, a pretty clear indication of its status as a purely cultural artifact. Its origins probably lie in images from film versions of *Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and similar stories. One wonders if the popular misuse of the term 'schizophrenia' has contributed. This word, literally meaning 'split mind' is often misunderstood to mean having two minds rather than simply meaning 'shattered mind' (it is slightly regrettable that Pendergrast himself uses the term in the incorrect colloquial sense).

Pendergrast makes it clear that such beliefs as recovered memory are part of a wider climate of irrational therapy. Some therapist believe that their patients have been traumatised by sex abuse in past lives (a development that Peter Rogerson predicted in an earlier *Magonia*). Others believe that traumas can be traced to memories of experiences while in the womb (a belief that formed the basis of L. Ron Hubbard's pseudo-science of Dianetics in the 1950s).

These beliefs are not confined to an occultist influenced fringe, but are signs that psychiatry in the U.S.A. is widely affected by what may be a terminal climate of irrationality. One study suggests that about a quarter of qualified therapists accept the validity of past-life regression tales. Other qualified psychiatrists have written books endorsing belief in demonic possession and exorcism, and containing accounts of recovered memories of early embryonic stages of development.

After this overall survey, Pendergrast devotes a major section of his book to interviews with therapists, accused and accusers. This is a grim section, but comic relief comes in an interview with a therapist who not only deals with abuse memories, past lives and UFO abductions, but pregresses her patients into their future lives. Pendergrast may of course be accused of deliberately seeking those who can be held up to ridicule, but my own reading elsewhere supports his claim that, if he had wished to do so, he could have found far

There are signs that psychiatry in the U.S.A. is widely affected by what may be a terminal climate of irrationality.

more bizarre therapists than those he actually quotes.

Particularly interesting are the interviews with 'retractors', the increasingly large group who have repudiated earlier allegations and now, like the accusers, seem to be forming a quasi-religious group with its own networks, counsellors and personal testimonies. One wonders perhaps whether some of the retractors may be over-keen to emphasis the part played by their therapists in the emergence of their stories, and to minimise their own responsibility. As with the stories of the accused and accusers it seems best to suspend judgement on a number of aspects of these cases where more detailed information is not available.

One quoted retractor, in particular, makes serious accusations against a therapist and the most that can be said is that some recent cases Pendergrast relates of scandals involving therapists mean that this story is not necessarily implausible. (When, one wonders, are the first retractor UFO abductees going to appear?)

Pendergrast then looks at the history of psychology, seeking the background to these allegations. He finds many historical parallels 18th and 19th century beliefs in imaginary mental ailments and bizzare treatments. Sigmund Freud emerges from this section as one very much influenced by some of these ideas, and his heritage has meant that their influence has lasted to the present day.

Pendergrast's examination of the social roots of the child abuse panic highlight the part played by specific factors such as the interactions between private medicine and the U.S. insurance companies that provide a major source of income for therapists, and wider issues such as current obsessions with victim status and the drive to pathologise an increasingly wide range of human behaviour under terms such as 'co-dependency', 'emotional incest' or 'sex addiction'.

Of particular interest is the section of 'survivorship as religion', which sees many forms of therapy as amounting to a quasi-religious movement based on the worship of self, an analysis which certainly explains the apparent contradictory alliance of mental health professionals, New Agers and Christian evangelicals in the Recovery movement.

The increasing breakdown of any overall consensus on sexual morality suggests another line of analysis, in which child-abuse provides a rare example of practices that different sides in cultural wars can unite to condemn. As a historical parallel, the mediaeval persecution of the Bogomils, the first Christian heretics to be accused of worshiping the devil and participating in orgies, not only came after a similar breakdown, the rift between Greek and Roman Christianity, but occured right in the contested territories. The 16th century disruption of Christendom preceeded the witch mania which provided an issue uniting Protestants and Catholics.

One can extend the socio-political analysis of the child abuse panic in other directions. The role played by some sections of the women's movement in fuelling the panic is reminiscent of earlier social reform movements in the USA which, in the 19th and early 20th century moved from support for slave emancipation, workers' rights and universal suffrage, to supporting authoritariam measures such as Prohibition and the taking of the children of the poor into state care (an activity that was frequently attacked by early filmmakers, not merely in melodramas such as D. W. Griffiths' *Intolerance*, but in comedies such as Charlie Chaplin's *The Kid* and Laurel and Hardy's *Pack Up Your Troubles*). Peter Rogerson has suggested that now American youth culture has become too depoliticised and commercially dominated to express any revolt against established values, child abuse allegations have emerged as purely individual anti-parental gestures.

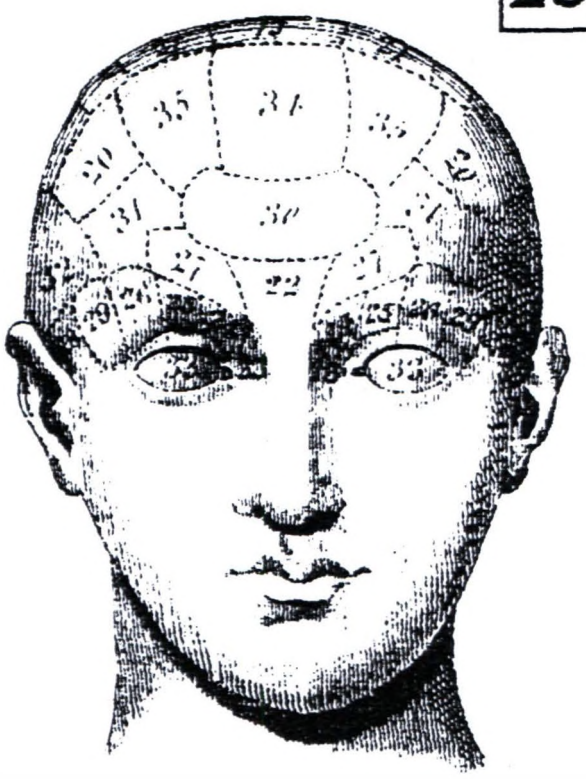
Pendergrast ends with a section of advice and recommendations both for individuals caught up in recovered memory cases and for legislative action. Sensible and helpful as this section is, it is hard to believe that calls for licensing of therapists will achieve much since those with genuine academic qualifications have played as dubious a part in the controversy as those with none.

My final verdict is that it is hard to recommend this book too highly. It is essential reading not merely for anyone concerned with this particular controversy but concerned about contemporary culture and society as a whole. *Roger Sandell*

## THE FATHER'S TALE

Apart from whatever insight it gives into the phenomenon of false memory, and the illumination it throws on the medical, social and historical context of the contemporary controversy, this book is also an intensely moving account of a personal tragedy. It recounts in harrowing terms the estrangement of first one, then both, of Pendergrast's daughters as a result of 'memories' recovered through therapy. However his account is not, as perhaps one would expect, a bitter condemnation of the therapists involved, nor an unqualified protestation of his own innocence. Instead he reexamines with almost painful honesty his relationships with his daughters and his ex-wife, and seeks out those aspects of his behaviour and attitudes which may have led to his current plight, to the extent that many readers might think that he is over self-critical. The account he provides of the childhood and adolescence of his daughters may perhaps reinforce the suggestion that some abuse accusations are an aspect of a repressed, late developing revolt against parental authority. Certainly Pendergrast's children, like some of the other children described in the individual accounts, seem to have had remarkably rebellion-free adolescences. More than most other books on the topic this book reveals the personal tragedies behind the sociological and legalistic descriptions.

*John Rimmer.*



# hold the back page

## Competition Time

A good entry for last issue's competition to come up with suitable slogans for UFO, Fortean and similar magazines. Our three top choices are:

Maidstone based writer **Neil Nixon's** suggestions include:

Not the Peter Brookesmith Appreciation Society - *Northern UFO News*

Lies, Damn Lies and Statistics - *Journal of UFO Studies*

The Good Out to Lunch Guide - *Flying Saucer Review*

**Paul Screeton**, editor of *Folklore Fronties* gives us these:

Great Balls of Fire - *The Ley Hunter*

Randles and Hopkins (Deceased) - *Northern UFO News*

Raining Cats and Dogs - *Fortean Times*

Soft Corn - *The Cerealogist*

**David Sivier** of Bristol came up with:

Simply Surreally Scottish - *S.P.I.*

Dutifully Defending Disbelief - *The Skeptic*

Relentlessly Rabbiting about Roswell and Rendlesham - *UFO Magazine*

If pigs might fly, we'd interview them - *Fortean Times*

Whoever they are, they're behind you! - *Conspiracy Digest*

The *Magonia* judges agree that Paul Screeton wins the first prize - a fabulously rare collector's edition of the Japanese translation of your editor's great opus *The Evidence for Alien Abductions*, while the others get a consolation prize of a one year extension to their *Magonia* subscription.

And now our new competition: We would like you look at the titles of well known magazines in our fields as if they were acronyms, then tell us what they stand for. Some examples:

UFO TIMES - Ultimately Futile Organisation Trys Investigating Mysteries Extremely Slowly.

MAGONIA - Malicious Ale Guzzlers Outrage Numerous Innocent Anomalists

One condition: every entry must include a totally libelous acronym for *Magonia*. Entries to John Dee Cottage by the end of November for another fabulous surprise prize!!!

## The Curse of Magonia

strikes again! After publishing *Magonia's* nomination for the World's Worst UFO Book of 1994, the universally slammed abduction fiasco *Without Consent*, Ringpull Books of Cheshire have gone bust. Described by the *Manchester Metro News* as "Britain's hippest publisher" the paper says the firms creditors are about to call in an insolvency practitioner. The final straw came with plans to publish a work of towering intellect, *La Philosophie de Eric Cantona*, quotations of celestial wisdom from the great polymath, martial artist and erstwhile footballer. Ringpull's Managing Director is quoted as saying "we've never had any money. It was always a miracle getting our books on the shelves".

*Magonia* readers could offer him a few suggestions why that was the case!

## The New Pretenders

After the phenomona of phantom social workers, mysterious cat-skinners, secret Satanic cults and all the other terrors of modern urban society, a new panic arises. Here is the *Epsom and Banstead Guardian* for 6 April 1995 (sorry for the delay but our truncated issue 52 had to manage without a BackPage):

"Bogus Midwife on the Loose. Police are hunting for a bogus midwife who carried out an examination on a pregnant woman. The con woman tricked her way into the woman's Epsom home and told her she was making a spot check on her condition. She checked her blood pressure and felt her stomach. The woman, who is expecting her first child shortly, had an instinct that the [midwife] was not genuine.

"The bogus midwife was of Chinese appearance and she was wearing a light blue uniform-style dress with a white collar and had some kind of identity card fixed to her waist. When the pregnant woman talked to a genuine midwife at Epsom General Hospital she realised she had been duped. Police were alerted

"The motives behind the incident - technically classed as an assault - are unclear, but the future abduction of a baby has not been ruled out."

Police are naturally wise not to rule out such a motive, but it seems unlikely to be the real motive. Although the paper refers to the bogus midwife as a 'con woman' there was no monetary fraud involved. The phenomonon of untrained people pretending to be doctors turning up in hospitals, treating and sometimes operating on patients (at times quite effectively) is a well recorded and long standing problem for the profession. More recently there have been cases of bogus ambulancemen and paramedics, complete with fully equipped vehicles, who listen in to emergency radio bands and turn up at accidents attempting to give medical treatment to the victims. And of course there have been the recent spate of bogus social worker stories - we hope to have some more about this in a future issue of *Magonia*. We are just wondering when the first bogus ufologist will turn up on a witness's doorstep. Comments such as 'they all are' are quite uncalled for! Actually, perhaps that's not quite as cynical as it sounds. the motivation of the average investigative ufologist, usually unqualified and untrained, yet trying to impress the unwary layperson with their homegrown expertise, may not be so far from our bogus medics!

Even the police are not immune to such pretenders. Last year a Surrey man was convicted of impersonating a police officer. He apparently got his kicks by driving around the notorious M25 London orbital motorway, stopping drivers whom he considered were driving dangerously and ticking them off. There seemed to be no attempt to defraud - he didn't try and charge on-the-spot fines - and his only motive seemed to be a need to identify with the police.

As far as we are aware our bogus midwife has not returned to the Epsom area; perhaps she was frightened off by the publicity of her first attempt at midwifery. However, we would like to hear of any similar stories that appear in *your* local paper.