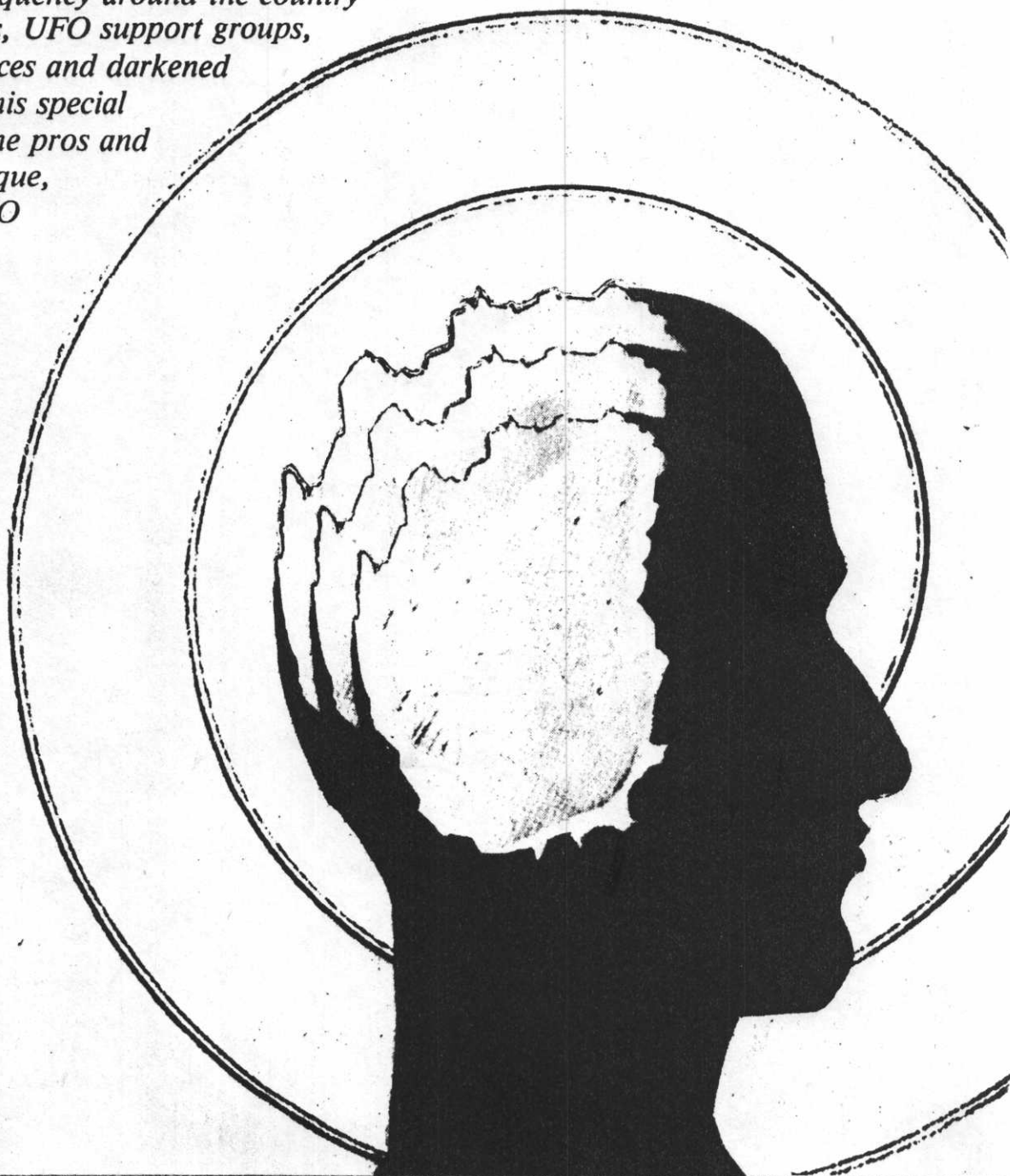


● HYPNOTIC REGRESSION

How reliable are accounts of UFO experiences recalled through hypnotic regression?

As an investigative tool to aid UFO witnesses in remembering "missing time" occurrences, hypnotic regression is being used with increasing frequency around the country and in universities, UFO support groups, psychologist's offices and darkened living rooms. In this special section, we examine pros and cons of the technique, from both the UFO witnesses' and researchers' points of view.





Abductee's Perspective:

Technique Out-Of-Control

By Whitley Strieber

*Whitley Strieber's bestsellers **Communion** and **Transformation** read like a tale-spinner's ongoing travelogue into his own weirdly-populated unconscious, which his brush with hypnotic regression first opened up. But like many, Strieber claims largescale alien memories apart from hypnotic recall. Here, he relays his thoughts on the technique.*

After I first encountered the visitors, I turned to my doctor. When I realized that intelligent non-humans might be involved, I consulted a UFO investigator. He led me to Dr. Donald Klein, one of the most respected psychiatrists in the profession and also a hypnotist with many years' experience.

Since then, I have seen what I feel are abuses perpetrated by "investigators" who are really nothing more than part-time, unlicensed and unregulated mental health counselors. They are carrying out their activities in an inappropriate, misguided and dangerous effort to use hypnosis to build a so-called "credible" case for UFO abduction.

Abduction research may not even be possible utilizing hypnosis; even highly trained hypnotists cannot use the technique reliably for retrieving basic factual information. Until there is a base of information gained from unhypnotized subjects, it must properly remain a therapeutic tool, not an investigative one.

The so-called "abduction narrative," which has been gained primarily from hypnotically-induced recall, probably does not reflect actual experience, but rather the application of the subject's worst fears to their most enigmatic experiences.

When he first interviewed me, Dr. Klein explained why we would never uncover a final explanation through

my hypnosis. This is because the regressed subject is susceptible to cues from the hypnotist, to an unknown degree. Thus, it can never be known how much even the most objective hypnotist has influenced the outcome of the regression. However, we did have my extensive conscious memories to use as a base. Often conscious memories are sketchy or even nonexistent.

Hypnosis is often cited as a means of gathering legal evidence. Strictly speaking, this is not true. Information from a regressed subject is sometimes used in the context of other evidence, but it is not itself evidence. A hypnotized subject's recollection of the license number of a car is worthless as evidence unless the actual car can be found and determined to have possibly been at the scene.

Hypnosis can be useful to gain access to the memories of someone suffering from traumatic amnesia. But only if those memories receive other, independent support do they obtain the weight of evidence.

An example: a witness sees a child run down by a car which whips around the corner and disappears. It can be established that the witness saw the back of the car, but he recalls only its color and general shape. He is hypnotized and remembers that it was a Pontiac, and the first three letters of the license number were XYZ, and the car was being driven by a young man. The police find such a car owned by such a driver. Impact marks confirm their suspicions, and the young man is arrested.

The evidence is not testimony given under hypnosis, it is the *hard facts* obtained as a result of that testimony.

But the regressed testimony of UFO witnesses cannot currently be confirmed by hard facts. While I have in my files dozens of cases of witnessed visitations and abductions,



Whitley Strieber

there are absolutely none where evidence of what took place while the witness was with the visitors can be supported in any way except by that person's own testimony or the testimony of witnesses. Hard facts remain impossible to obtain. Still, the sheer weight of the existing conscious, unhypnotized testimony strongly suggests that something real is happening.

But there remains an enormous, overwhelming difficulty with trying to use hypnotized testimony as evidence of real events, even when that testimony agrees in particulars among a group of unconnected witnesses. This is especially true of testimony obtained by investigators—even professionals—

whose views on UFOs are known by their subjects, because there is obviously no way to tell whether or not the subject has a hidden wish to comply with the known beliefs of the hypnotist—a wish that will be greatly magnified by the highly suggestible state that the subject will enter when regressed.

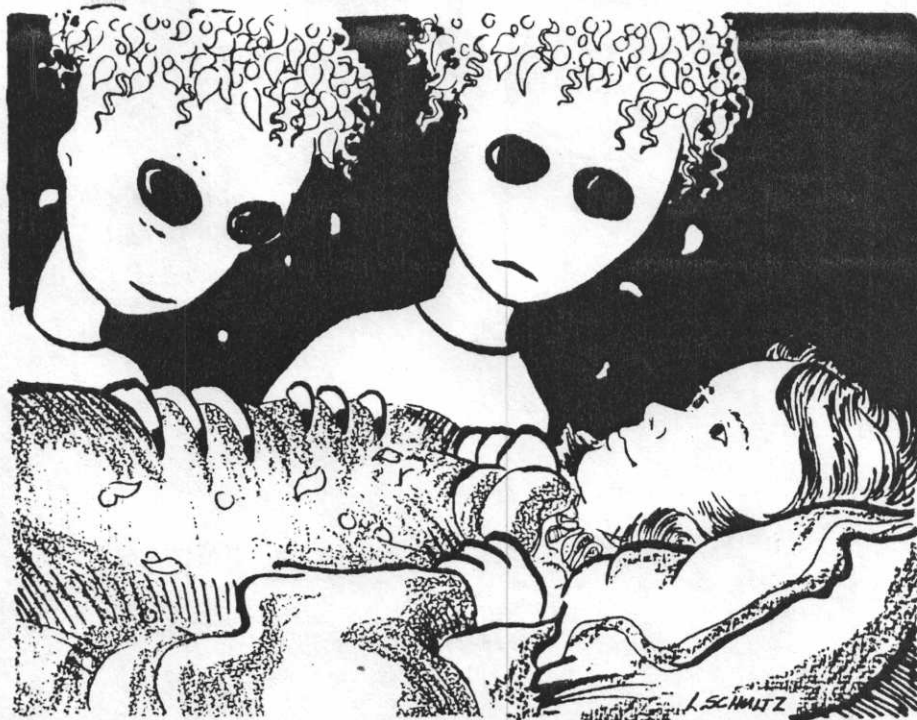
But hypnosis as a counseling device—that's another story. I think it has a very useful place as a therapeutic tool, as it is uniquely capable of enabling the subject to break fear-amnesia.

If anyone is to counsel people in situations as sensitive as that of a close-encounter witness, it seems essential that the counselors involved be trained, subject to confidentiality requirements and governed by a peer-review process. There is a tendency among abduction researchers—largely untrained in the scientific method and unrestrained by licensing—to be less-than-objective in their treatment of witnesses and to summarily dismiss evidence not consistent with their previous findings.

I have come to believe that many techniques used by amateur investigators are not just suspect, but disastrous. They amount to a form of unintentional but devastatingly effective brainwashing that denies witnesses access to the truth of their experiences as they originally perceived them. I define the word "amateur" very narrowly; it means someone who has not been formally trained and who does not answer to any professional review board.

Some of what I have heard from witnesses reveals what problems can be caused by this. One witness wrote, "My fear is that if I contact you, I will be kicked out of the . . . group." She added, "I have turned to your book for comfort even though I am not supposed to read it." This sounds more like the concerns of a member of a religious organization than of someone connected with a group of witnesses to an experience as unknown as close encounter, and reflects the propensity of less-than-impartial investigators to compel witnesses to think in compliance with their pet theories.

The "experimenter effect" is a well-known problem in behavioral science research. In his book, *Experimenter Effects in Behavioral Research*, (Irvington Press, 1976),



FLOWER HEADS—An abductee remembers encountering beings with foliage growing out of their heads, and dirt falling on her when they bent over her in bed, an example of testimony that indicates strangeness far and above the classic abduction story given under hypnosis.

There is a tendency among abduction researchers—largely unrestrained by licensing—to be less than objective in their treatment of witnesses ...

Dr. Robert Rosenthal states, "the expectations of the scientist are likely to affect the choice of the experimental design and procedure in such a way as to increase the likelihood that his expectation or hypothesis will be supported." But there are no experimental designs in abduction research, and no controls, protocols or standards, per se. It is a matter of amateur investigators hypnotizing people and reporting the results when they tell stories compatible with the investigators' theories.

Right now, a limited scenario of abduction appears to be in fashion among such investigators. The scenario centers around sexual activity and renders stories of women being given gynecological examinations and having their ova extracted by a form of amniocentesis. Men are having semen extracted by a painful vacuum process or are being subjected to sessions of sexual intercourse with aliens—often quite peculiar-looking ones.

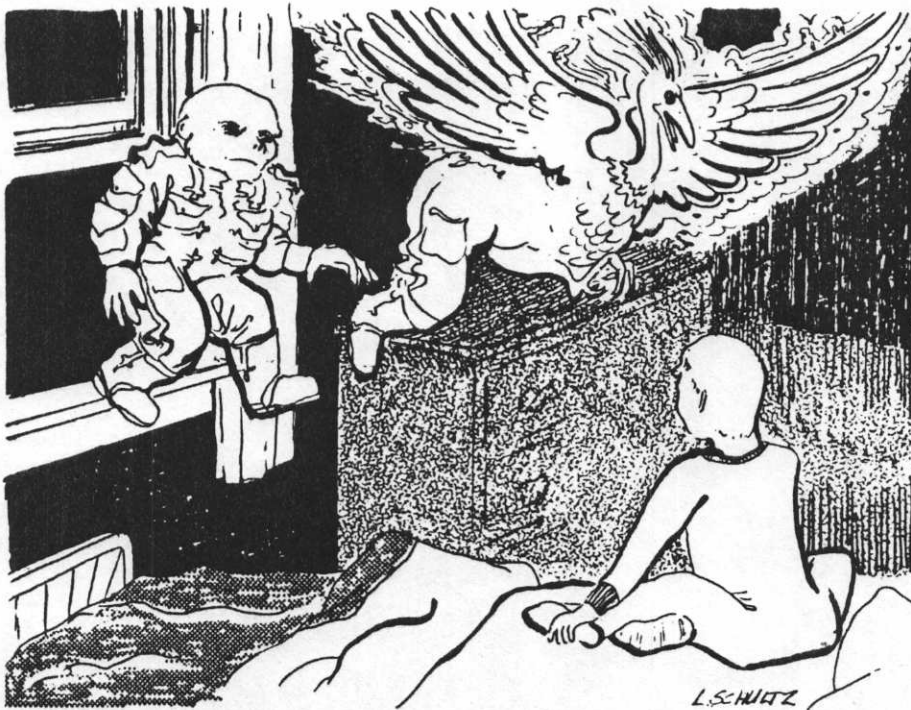
I am not trying to deny that

witnesses have reported terrible things in connection with their close encounters. But nothing is going to be proved one way or the other by investigators who seem driven almost to a state of hysteria by the apparent horrors their studies have unearthed.

Another correspondent of mine wrote, "When I drew a picture of the object they [the abductors] wanted to put on the inside of my thigh, (the investigator) seemed to be disappointed or dismissed it because it didn't match any design or shape he had seen before."

At this stage of investigation on this enigma, such a stance by an investigator is clearly very premature and not reflective of a properly objective outlook. A good researcher must maintain a stance of absolute objectivity about the matter under study. And he or she must not be too quick to seek for results when, in fact, little is known.

When the free narratives are examined, it quickly becomes obvious that the witness experience is vastly



BIRDMEN—Another "high strangeness" abduction memory recounts short, squat aliens who turn into beautiful birds of paradise mid-air.

The point of publishing witness testimony is not to make it seem credible and believable, but to expose it as it really is. Unless we do this, we have no chance at getting at the truth.

complicated and full of unknowns. The scenario mentioned above, with its general focus on the reproductive and genetic details found in some abduction accounts, may also be a premature reference point for investigators. Of the 690 narratives sent to me by *Communion* and *Transformation* readers, only a few appear to support these present theories of abduction. The vast majority instead describe perceptions and experiences far stranger than any reported by mainstream abduction researchers. But they are not simply unconscious processes; many of them involve multiple witnesses. In fact, just under half of our narratives mention some sort of independent witness at the outset of the encounter. Many of these witnesses have been contacted and their stories corroborated.

Some abduction narrative examples that suggest major overlooked unknowns:

"I knew they were aliens because they had flowers and plants growing out of their heads. When they would

bend over, I felt the dirt from the tops of their heads falling on me."

"They showed me arms and legs (of their type) growing out of big, aluminum pots."

"All of a sudden the little man turned into a bird of paradise."

"They wanted me to marry a big bug."

These strange but repeated themes certainly do not suggest a study by a coldly objective group of alien scientists. They suggest that we have a lot of questions still to answer.

When I wrote *Transformation*, I was religious about including every bizarre detail, no matter how crazy it made me look and how much ammunition it gave my detractors. Why? Because we do not know what is true, and until we do we *must not* edit testimony or it becomes absolutely worthless, even as an aid in developing effective therapeutic strategies.

The point of publishing witness testimony is not to make it seem credible and believable, but to expose

it as it really is. Unless we do this, we have no chance at all of getting at the truth.

Since I wrote *Communion*, I have received over 7,000 letters, thousands of which contain extensive narratives of experience. The highest incoming volume has been recorded in the three months after my new book *Transformation* appeared. The high-level strangeness of many of the episodes recorded in that book opened a floodgate of response. This happened because my testimony was closer than ever before to what witnesses are *actually* perceiving.

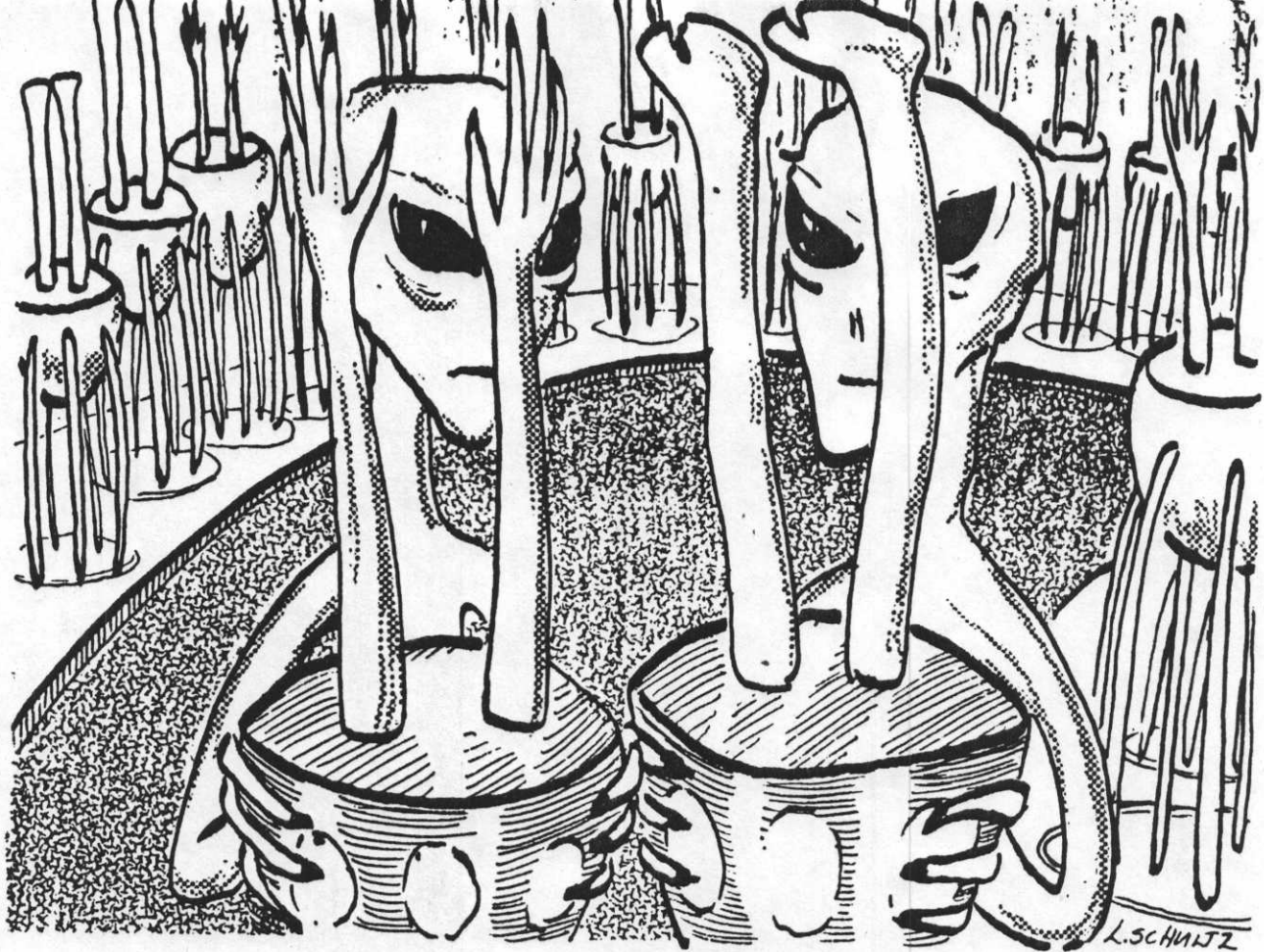
Because of the high-level strangeness of the witnesses' actual material and their pervasive fear of ridicule, the UFO community must create an atmosphere of absolute openness to all reports, and not edit narratives prematurely. Witnesses must not be made to fear rejection or actually be dismissed from support groups because of the strangeness of their reports. Another witness complains of an investigator, "He and his associates make no secret they think I'm prime material for the looney lounge." This individual also claims that she was dismissed from her "abductee" group for her beliefs and ideas.

The reason that this kind of thing happens is that investigators are looking very hard for consistent groups of facts, while witnesses are looking for support and counseling. These are two very different objectives and do not mix.

No mental health professional would ever make his feelings obvious to a patient, let alone dismiss one from a therapy group. And yet the threat and actuality of dismissal seems to be a part of many "abductee" groups.

A woman recently called a well-known investigator to report an experience and ask if she should be hypnotized. When she tried to tell her story, the investigator kept interrupting her to ask if she had been given a gynecological examination by the aliens. Finally she gave up, realizing that this was the only thing he cared about.

We have under 50 narratives on file which report gynecological examination by aliens, although many correspondents report their interest in observing or manipulating their sexual organs. Among un hypnotized



Art by Loren Schultz

STRANGE GARDEN—Some abductees remember seeing alien hands and legs growing out of huge pots.

correspondents, only one even mentions a needle entering the abdomen for an apparent amniocentesis. More often, witnesses report examination of their heads.

Are researchers interested in alien examination of sexual organs because this is actually a central feature of the encounter experience, or because sexual organs are a central concern of human beings?

It would seem that nobody except a professionally trained hypnotist—preferably one with the credentials and ethical considerations of a mental health professional—should hypnotize any UFO witness for any reason, and then only for therapeutic purposes. Both free and regressed narratives should be interpreted by behavioral psychologists and other professionals skilled in the process.

Present theories about the nature and content of the experience should be called into most rigorous question and the community should open its mind to high-level strangeness.

Close encounter witnesses are often a deeply troubled and vulnerable group of people. They live, many of them, with bizarre

memories that they must keep secret. Every night, they must face their questions and their fears. And they must do this alone.

If counseling is to be offered by non-professionals then the UFO community should create a contract including a confidentiality requirement to be signed by the counselor involved, and counselors should accept the legal liability that such a contract would imply.

Lest it be assumed that investigators already adhere to high standards of confidentiality, I would like to point out some recent lapses. In a magazine article, an investigator mentioned the true first name of a witness, and offered sufficient details of her testimony for her to be immediately recognizable among her personal friends, and among her acquaintances in the UFO community. He then stated his objections to her "religious" interpretation of her experiences.

She was deeply hurt by this and her standing among her peers was damaged by the fact that the highly-respected investigator had disclosed a negative opinion of her.

One of the witnesses mentioned in a recent book wrote to me that "(The investigator) was present as a guest and observer at a hypnosis regression" of the witness, "and she was asked not to reveal any of the findings. Our experience has never been published until a couple of months ago. It was done behind our backs . . . (this investigator) has made us look like fools and left us open for public ridicule." The fact that this witness had reported her experience verbally before a meeting of UFO investigators by no means justified its being made public without her permission.

Close-encounter witnesses should be offered the same level of confidentiality by the UFO community that mental health professionals offer their patients and that behavioral scientists assure their research subjects. Their narratives are one of the community's most precious resources. It must not be abused, and the witnesses courageous enough to bring forward their stories must be treated with the greatest respect.

If otherwise, this resource will be lost.



One Ufologist's Methodology

By Budd Hopkins

Considered ufology's leading authority on alien abduction, Budd Hopkins has accrued many years' worth of valuable data by dogged pursuit of the elusive phenomenon through witness testimony. Hundreds of abductees have submitted to his probings, many allowing Budd to hypnotize them into hidden reaches of memory where often the most significant clues appear.

It has been nearly 15 years since I first slogged my way into the tangled thicket of UFO research, and a calm, retrospective glance now seems appropriate. In my 1981 book *Missing Time*, I explained that my curiosity about UFOs had originally been triggered by my own "daylight disc" sighting near Provincetown, Massachusetts, in 1964. However, it took 11 years and the 1975 North Hudson Park UFO landing case before I turned from being merely an interested reader of UFO books and newsletters to a new role as an active investigator. And within six months, to my great surprise, I found myself investigating a UFO abduction case, the first of hundreds I've looked into since then. At the time, I sensed that this type of incident was, potentially, the most important source of information on the UFO phenomenon. It's a judgment I'm even more certain of today.

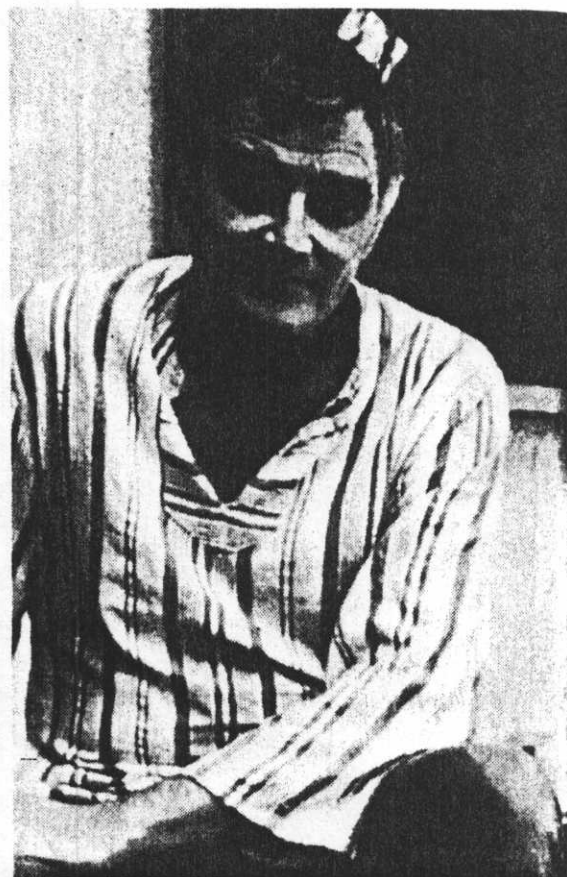
When I began in-depth research in 1975, I had no preconceptions. I am an artist by profession, so these new investigations provided an outlet for my non-emotional, non-mystical impulses. I was free to be a scientist, a detective, a seeker after literal, provable truth. But I was aware that the field of UFO research was awash with confusion. Contactees told of lolling in interplanetary swimming pools with long-haired

Venusian space brothers. Paranoid types predicted imminent invasions of vicious, body-snatching aliens. Conspiracy theorists of every persuasion spun their complex tales, fingering at one time or another every respected UFO researcher in the field as a government spy. The vast majority of those interested in the phenomenon had an ideological ax or two to grind, and it was easy to see how they tried to fold UFOs into their own previous religious, mystical or political beliefs. (Unfortunately, the scene has not changed much since those mad earlier times.)

When I began looking into abductions, the most significant book about the phenomenon was John Fuller's *Interrupted Journey*, the cool, objective 1966 study of the Betty and Barney Hill case. In fact, Fuller was so careful and objective that virtually nothing in his book requires deletion or an apology today, 23 years later. This classic work is my own candidate for the most important UFO book ever written. *Interrupted Journey* delineates the quintessential UFO abduction scenario, which involves a period of (enforced?) amnesia, paralysis, capture and physical examination by the UFO occupants, who pay particular attention to the human reproductive system. Fuller includes riveting transcripts of the hypnotic regression sessions which aided the Hills' recollections of their experiences and helped alleviate their post-traumatic symptoms.

In the later 1970s, my own ongoing investigations replicated the Hill case findings, but I discovered several new and startling patterns which earlier investigators had apparently overlooked.

The Steven Kilburn case, among others, led me to conclude that one might, after an abduction, remember infinitely fewer details than the Hills recalled. UFO abductions, therefore, might be much



Budd Hopkins

more widespread than we previously suspected.

I discovered another pattern in the very similar scars that many abductees bear on their bodies after certain operations are carried out by the UFO occupants. I also discovered the unsettling fact that abduction is not a one-time event; instead, it appeared to be an ongoing process, beginning in childhood and recurring later in life.

These discoveries I considered so important that they deserved presentation in book form, and so I wrote *Missing Time* to alert other researchers and the public at large. In offering this new information, I wanted to see if my findings would be replicated by others. After an in-

tervening eight years, I am gratified at the accuracy of my earlier findings and their general acceptance within the field. There is nothing in *Missing Time* which I feel requires deletion or an apology, a situation which gives me confidence in both my methods and my scientific objectivity.

My investigatory method is simple. I try to discover everything I can about a given case or individual reporter through conventional interviews and visits to relevant sites. Once I exhaust these approaches, and if there is a period of amnesia involved, I turn to hypnotic regression to help fill in the blanks. I have conducted many hypnotic sessions myself, though all the hypnotic sessions prior to the end of 1983 were conducted by cooperating psychologists and psychiatrists. In a few instances I simply sit in while someone else does the work, while in other cases a psychiatrist may observe while I conduct the hypnosis. In roughly one-fourth of the abduction cases I've investigated, the subject has recalled virtually all of his or her basic abduction scenario prior to hypnosis.

My experience, as well as that of independent researchers such as Dr. Thomas Bullard, shows that no differences exist in the material that is recalled in any of these various situations. Bullard's work clearly demonstrates that the process of hypnosis is not a factor in the content of UFO abduction recollection (see next article in this section). It should also be mentioned here that in 25 borderline but possible abduction cases, we have used hypnosis with *no* abduction scenarios coming to light. I am sure that these 25 individuals are not abductees, and their cases attest to the scientific objectivity of our use of the hypnotic process.

Perhaps the most basic misconception about hypnosis holds that one's hypnotically-recalled memories and one's normal memories are somehow innately different. They are not. Normal recollection, obviously, can be inaccurate, so can hypnotic recall. *All testimony*, hypnotically elicited or otherwise, is affected to some extent by the questioner. In a court trial, a calm, non-leading judge can elicit one kind of information, a bullying prosecutor another. A lover sharing one's bed may inquire with a special



1961—More than 25 years have passed since Betty and Barney Hill ushered in a modern era of hypnotic regression. UFO investigators applied the technique to find out more about their prototypical abduction.

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kind of intimacy, eliciting yet another kind of recollection. All of this is self-evident with regard to hypnosis, but it is not so easily recognized that with normal recall exactly the same problems exist.

From the very first year of my interest in UFOs, I have employed the interview technique which has the greatest chance of success in discovering the truth. As an interviewer and/or hypnotist, I first provide a friendly, non-challenging atmosphere of simple curiosity about "what happened." My questioning is resolutely non-leading, and I use neutral, unemotional language. For example, one must avoid using words like "abductor," or "alien" or "humanoid," since they subtly color the entity with clear—possibly false—ominous suggestions. One must also avoid other words which subtly color the entity with clear—possibly false—friendly connotations, terms such as "space brother" or "visitor."

I am appalled to see people capitalizing the "V" and referring to "Visitors." The capital letter represents a kind of deification, paralleling the "G" in God and thus

forcing upon the witness a misleading, even intimidating view of what I choose to refer to neutrally as "UFO occupants" or "figures." The point of the guidelines I've listed above is that they should apply to *any* involvement with witnesses, whether their recall is or is not being aided by hypnosis.

It is hardly necessary to state that we only receive answers to the particular questions we ask. My more wide-ranging investigations in the past five years have allowed a handful of forthright abductees to mention a previously unmentionable facet of the physical examinations they underwent at the hands of the UFO occupants: that is, the examinations' apparent reproductive and genetic focus. Neither I, nor apparently any other investigators had routinely inquired into that sensitive area of health and recollection, so most witnesses never felt inclined to volunteer such information. The data which underlies my later book *Intertruders* is of the sort that only surfaces when a particular trust is established with the abductee. The genetic focus of UFO interest is of absolutely crucial im-

portance, yet it only becomes visible if the investigator is willing to ask probing and pertinent questions. Much like the now-familiar phenomenon of the widespread sexual abuse of children, this aspect of the UFO abduction phenomenon lay hidden for years beneath the weight of unasked questions.

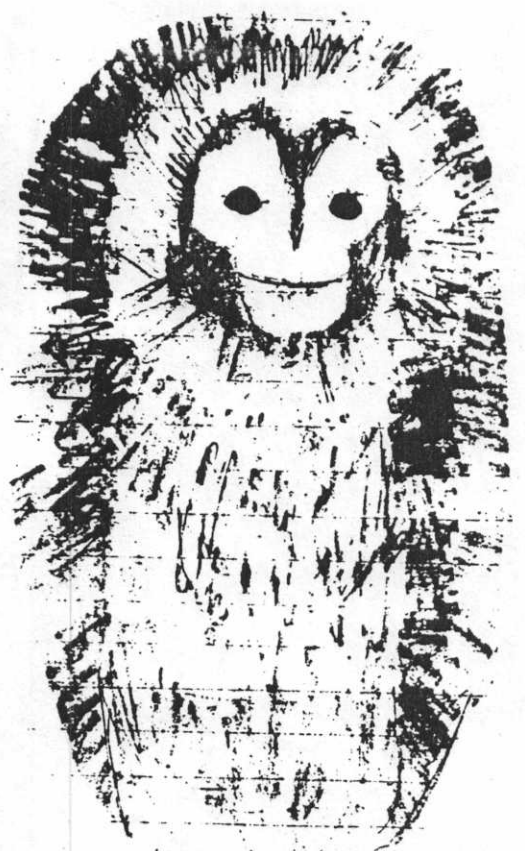
One of the important things I discovered in the course of my abduction investigations in the late '70s is a phenomenon that I call the "cover story," or, in classic psychological parlance, the "screen memory." I described a case in *Missing Time* in which a teenage girl recalled talking to a beautiful deer with dark, compelling eyes. Under hypnosis the deer turned out to be a small, dark-eyed UFO occupant. In another case, a man driving on a Long Island parkway remembered being passed by a huge, brightly-lit, 18-wheeler trailer-truck. The rig appeared to topple over in front of him. Panicked, he swerved around it, and when he looked in his rear-view mirror the road was bare. The wrecked semi had vanished! His drive home was nearly two hours longer than usual, and a UFO abduction turned out to have been the cause. The 18-wheeler was a screen memory for the approaching UFO.

Strange, four-foot owls have revealed themselves under hypnosis to be large-eyed UFO occupants, and odd boats and houses have emerged as landed UFOs. The function of a cover story is to *soften* a disturbing memory and render it more benign and acceptable. One never finds a screen memory working the other way—escalating the terror. Thus, an abductee would never remember being involved in, say, a scene of revolting carnage with bullet-torn bodies as a screen for a conventional UFO abduction and physical examination. Like the other mechanisms I uncovered and wrote about in *Missing Time*, the "cover story" phenomenon has subsequently appeared in the investigations of many other researchers across the world. But more important here is the fact that screen memories clearly establish the need for hypnosis if we are ever to know the whole truth about any abduction experience.

A second and even more basic reason for the use of hypnosis is the idea of "missing time" itself—a



REST POSITION



ACTIVE POSITION
* WHEN TAKING * DEEP BREATH

'SCREENED?'—Drawings of a creature that may have served as a screen memory within the witness' recollection of her abduction.

Screen memories clearly establish the need for hypnosis if we are ever to know the whole truth about any abduction experience.



period of memory loss that often accompanies UFO abduction reports. The American Medical Association endorses the use of hypnosis in recovering "lost" memories in particularly intractable cases of amnesia. From the Hill case forward, many abduction accounts include such periods of missing time, and there is no doubt that hypnosis has over and over again proved both useful and accurate in recovering these lost hours or minutes. One might speculate that some sort of exotic "alien hypnotic suggestion" is used by the UFO occupants to block abductees' memories in the first place; hypnosis, therefore, becomes the most appropriate and effective technique to undo the loss by reinstating the missing time. At any rate, hypnosis works.

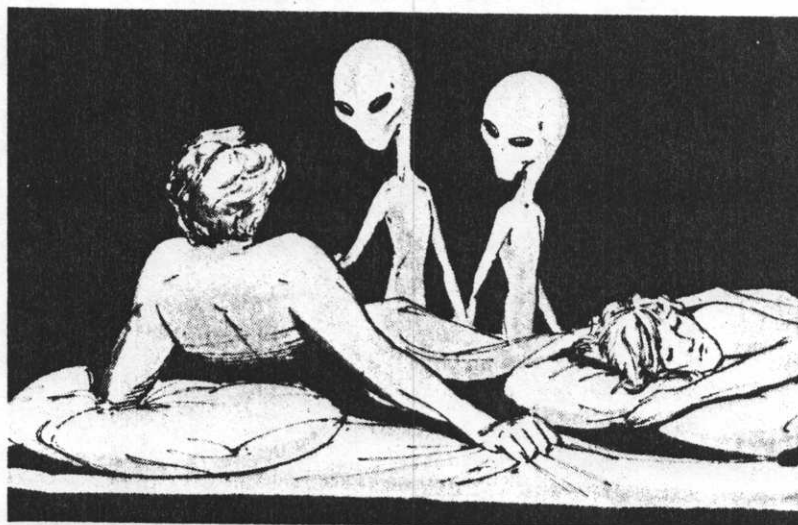
Having investigated over 200 such cases, I am very familiar with the problems of working with UFO abductees, each of whom comes equipped with numerous personal issues and/or misconceptions. As an investigator I am aware that buried trauma is almost invariably present. Second, I am aware that screen memories may have radically distorted the abductee's conscious recollection, no matter what the abductee may think at the present time. Third, I am aware that inevitably there are chunks of memory missing, so the abductee is probably not presenting a complete account of the experience. Hypnosis is obviously called for to straighten out the last two problems as best we can.

And fourth, I am aware of the abductee's often desperate need to make sense of the nearly senseless. This last problem is rarely discussed, but one can easily imagine its complexity. A born-again Christian might try to deal with his experience within a familiar theological framework, involving God and Satan, angels and demons. Another abductee with a background in metaphysics and occult spiritualism may invoke "spirit guides," "visitors," a "higher consciousness" or whatnot. A military type might worry about enemies or invaders.

In my own quest for scientific truth, I have lately found myself flanked on the left by those who would have us believe UFO occupants are literal cannibals, drinking our blood and eating our flesh. On



FIRST IMAGE—Many abductees with 'missing time' see a looming UFO.



EXPOSED—Buried trauma will sometimes surface with memories of the beings' interest in human sexuality. Art by Rick Moore

the right we have people determined to read the phenomenon as marvelously benign, believing that "Visitors" are here because "they understand us better than we understand ourselves," and thus are here to help.

It is easy to understand these views within the framework of deep-seated psychological needs and desires, but it is virtually impossible to persuade their proponents to take a more objective, more scientific look at the actual content of their experiences. Many such cultists—and that, unfortunately, accurately describes their situation—avoid any further exploration of their memories, especially through hypnotic regression, lest their belief systems suffer any damage. I recently heard from an ab-

ductee who attended a meeting of a newly-established space-brother network. She was reprimanded for stressing the traumatic aspects of her abduction experiences, and for mentioning the physical pain to which she had been subjected. She was told the "Visitors" did not like such "negativity" and her complaints would get in the way of a "wonderful relationship" with these magical, but obviously touchy tourists.

I have also had to battle equally hard against the demon-mongers, for whose opposing mindset there is, as with space brothers, virtually no supportive evidence.

This is not the place to spell out the reliable patterns that I and a number of other scientifically-inclined investigators have uncovered

within the mass of abduction reports, since this material is readily available in my two books and in many articles. But it is important to understand the ideological reasons for the resistance some people have to the exploration of their experiences, with or without the use of hypnotic regression.

In addition to these committed ideologues, one must also occasionally contend with a fantasy-prone individual, the truth of whose various stories it is impossible to discover.

In one case I investigated, I

Sadly, cases of this sort are practically worthless to the serious investigator.

In an effort to get at the objective truth of a subject's feelings about his or her abduction experiences, I often employ, after the first few sessions, a basic therapeutic device. In a hypnotic trance state—and sometimes in normal recall—the subject is asked to picture one of the UFO occupants that he or she has previously described. "Perhaps you haven't had the chance before to talk freely with this entity," I will state. "Now you

'Normal' memory is no more trustworthy in the case of the fantasy-prone individual than is hypnotically-refreshed recall.

became convinced for various reasons that the subject had indeed suffered real UFO abduction experiences—but I also came to realize that he was totally unable to tell fact from fantasy. He once told me about an encounter with a possibly "alien" woman. His tale involved a box she had forbidden him to look into. He disobeyed, and found in it something so terrifying that it caused him to flee the city where they had met. It was, he said, a dead, stuffed owl. Some time later, he informed me that the dreaded object was a nun's habit, and when I asked about the owl he said that maybe there had been an owl there, too, though he wasn't certain. Still later, he told me the frightening object was a latex-like body covering with a human face, hair, etc. A fellow investigator had just seen the movie "Cocoon," which included just such a rubber disguise, so he suggested I ask the subject if he was acquainted with the film. When I phoned, the witness said he did not remember having seen the movie, though his wife, speaking in the background, reminded him that they had in fact seen "Cocoon" a week or so earlier!

Two of the images the witness thought he remembered were recalled consciously and one was recalled through hypnosis. It makes no difference; none is reliable. "Normal" memory is no more trustworthy in the case of a fantasy-prone individual than is hypnotically-refreshed recall.

have the chance. I want you to look at this figure and tell him (or her) what benefits you feel you have gained from your relationship so far." After that discussion I ask the subject to picture the figure again and I ask him or her to tell the figure "anything you wish the entity had done differently, and why you feel that way." There is generally more of a profound outpouring at the latter part of the question than at the former. Anger, fear and resentment almost always surface.

A hypnotic trance state provides the best context for this kind of totally open catharsis. It provides the abductee with a precious and much-needed sense of partial control in these encounters, though it is the kind of exercise only a non-ideological and objective investigator will attempt. In my experience, it has been immensely helpful to many abductees and demonstrates one of the therapeutic uses of hypnosis.

The network of psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists and investigators which I have slowly been assembling now encompasses 22 cities in 14 states, Canada and the District of Columbia. In addition to this network, three psychiatrists have come to me for hypnosis because of their own apparent abduction experiences, as well as four psychologists and a number of therapists. Others have referred their clients to me if they felt that hidden abduction encounters may have been part of the problem.

Unfortunately, unqualified practitioners abound, with and without the necessary academic and medical degrees. One female abductee with whom I've worked joined a cultist network before we met. The cult leader referred her to someone with an M.D. degree who claimed to have developed the "avatar" method of dealing with what he called "Visitor experiences." This doctor's fee was only \$2,000 for the full course of hypnotic regression, and it was represented as guaranteed to work—money back if not satisfied! The only catch was that the first visit cost \$200 and was not refundable. A psychiatrist who works with me is looking into the matter because, among other things, the "avatar man" may be violating the law.

Practitioners in my network maintain the highest professional and investigative standards, yet one critic has gone beyond these to the ridiculous length of insisting that no one with an *opinion* about the reality and/or nature of UFO abductions should ever use hypnosis with a possible abductee. This is like saying that no therapist who suspects, say, a repressed incident of child abuse with one of his or her clients should ever use hypnosis in the case! The legalistic fallacy here is the confusion of courtroom testimony with other discourse. Suppose no policeman, therapist, reporter or investigator could ever ask a question of anyone—except under the severe limitations of courtroom rules of evidence. The ludicrousness of such a proposal is self-evident. One suspects that the real reason behind such a prohibition is a fear that possibly "undesirable" information might come to the surface—particularly if skillfully-administered hypnotic regression is employed. It is a new and more subtle version of "shoot the messenger": "denounce the communication medium."

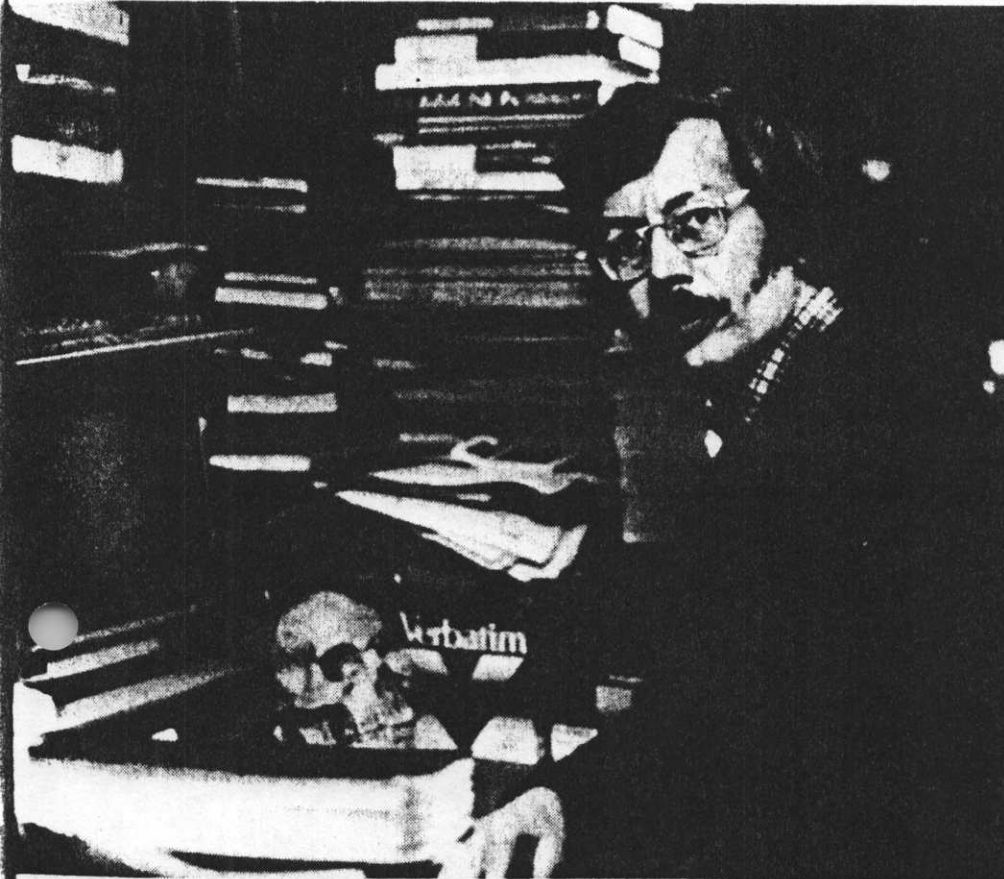
With every advance of science there are rear-guard actions fought by those whose prior belief systems are being challenged. Surely the extreme high-strangeness cases—to use J. Allen Hynek's phrase—and the genetic experimentation accounts that I have uncovered over the years have upset a number of ideological applecarts. But that, unfortunately, is how science works. To be saddled with the truth is still to be free.



An Academic Analysis:

Hypnosis No 'Truth Serum'

By Dr. Thomas Bullard



Thomas Bullard

Researchers have relied on hypnosis to uncover apparently hidden dimensions of UFO encounters and discovered extraordinary abduction stories in the process. Yet scientific studies prove hypnosis is no foolproof truth serum, but a procedure fraught with risks for error, distortion, and false memories. Critics using these studies have charged that abduction stories amount to nothing more than a structure of fantasy and cultural influence raised to an unusual height of vividness by hypnotic investigation itself. The resolution of these criticisms defines the foremost methodological issue facing abduc-

tion research today, and the value of much of the evidence for these phenomena depends on its outcome.

First of all, we must analyze some common misconceptions about hypnotic regression, to determine what we can and cannot glean from the technique.

A popular image, built up over the past two hundred years and sustained by literature, stage shows, motion pictures, and popular beliefs, links hypnotism with almost magical powers to control the subject. The idea of hypnosis as a sleeplike trance induced by a swinging pendulum or the overpowering eyes of the hypnotist includes an assumption that

the subject loses all free will, and therefore lying becomes impossible. Recent successes by police hypnotists in recovering forgotten clues from crime victims has added to the reputation of hypnosis as an almost supernatural channel to truthful past memories. Ufologists are most likely to subscribe to this popular view, or give little more than lip service to skeptical reservations.

A scientific understanding of hypnosis dispenses with Svengali-like hypnotists, occult overtones, and nearly all other tenets of naive popular belief, only to replace them with a less mysterious but far more complicated phenomenon.

Effects of hypnosis on subjects

While experts cannot agree whether hypnosis is a distinct neurological condition or state of awareness, or a behavioral mode brought about by expectation and situation, two categories of observable impact on subjects seem constant.

Firstly, hypnosis reduces the volition of subjects so that they become passive and pliant, susceptible to suggestion far beyond their "waking" norm. The external influence of the hypnotist assumes dominant proportions over subjects, and whatever he suggests, whether a selectivity of attention, a calming of emotion, the assumption of a role, or the sharpening of memory, becomes a direction they follow with literal obedience and remarkable success.

Along with this enhanced suggestibility goes a second notable set of characteristics. Subjects appear to gain uncommon mental and physical powers, like sharper memory for past and even long-forgotten events, an ability to act an assigned role with thoroughgoing fidelity, and extraordinary keenness or selectivity of perception in keeping with instruc-

tions from the hypnotist. The imagination may improve as well, gaining a new capacity for vivid fantasy. Then at the end of the session the subject often forgets the whole experience with a sort of automatic amnesia.

Many of the mental phenomena of hypnosis may trace to its ability to weaken judgement. If less volition means that subjects edit their thoughts less rigorously and test reality less than usual, concentration of literal detail will improve and expressions flow more freely. Tolerance will also increase for bizarre ideas and flights of fantasy. Relaxed and detached by encouragement of the hypnotist, subjects could lose some of their normal inhibitions and act with unselfconscious spontaneity.

Alterations in subjects' behavior under hypnosis may be striking, but laboratory results affirm that these differences do not lead inevitably toward greater truthfulness. Hypnotic control is far from absolute. A matter as fundamental as knowing whether or not subjects are really hypnotized turns out to be problematic, with even experienced practitioners liable to deceit. Well-motivated subjects can lie in their own self-interest even from deep hypnosis, a finding which demolishes the faith that hypnotized subjects exercise no will and therefore cannot deliberately deceive.

Worse dangers than these deliberate efforts are part and parcel of hypnosis itself. The suggestibility of subjects is as real in scientific fact as in popular belief, but few people realize that any hint or cue dropped by the hypnotist, even an inadvertent gesture or careless phrasing of a question, may lead subjects to provide answers the hypnotist seems to want instead of the truth. In an effort to comply, subjects may fabricate an answer when they have none, simply to fulfill the hypnotist's request. Any prior beliefs or expectations, any ideas gleaned from such exterior sources as reading or movies, may join clues from the hypnotist as sources of content for statements made under hypnosis.

Once freed from normal critical judgement, subjects can imagine and fantasize shamelessly. Fragmentary memories and inaccuracies usually censored by everyday caution can emerge with greater ease. Exper-

iments requiring subjects to recall an elementary school class or recite poetry memorized long ago resulted in detailed responses of great verisimilitude. When checked against historical records and original poems, these responses proved only half-truths. Subjects blended truth and fiction into a coherent and inseparable whole. An important lesson in caution is clear—the suggestibility and guilelessness of hypnotic subjects may cut two ways, sometimes toward a more reliable truth and other times toward a more convincing fiction.

Hypnosis and Memory

Accessing memory, in waking or hypnotic states, is not a simple process, because memory is not a museum for preserving past events in a pristine and unchanging state. Experimental evidence shows that memory remains fluid, its processes constructive and not just reproductive. If memory were simply a storehouse for the past and hypnosis merely a retrieval service, all memories should be equally accessible. In fact no evidence suggests that hypnosis improves recall of nonsense materials. Only when the materials are meaningful are memories enriched under hypnosis, but motivational and emotional factors complicate recall of meaningful contents. The more involved with his memories a subject becomes, the greater the risk that creative functions will change or distort those memories. Research indicates that hypnosis increases true and false statements alike.

A great deal of research into hypnosis has been motivated by its use as a forensic tool. Criminal investigation and abduction investigation have much in common, since they deal with sudden, often traumatic events and witnesses with perhaps only confused memories. Any verdict on hypnotically enhanced testimony is thus a matter of great interest for ufologists. Police use of hypnosis during the '70s scored some spectacular successes and some equally spectacular failures due to confabulated testimony. Law enforcement hypnotists have defended hypnosis as reliable when used properly and argued that any form of investigation risks distorting witness memories. The International Society of Clinical Hypnosis and the Society

for Clinical and Experimental Hypnosis sounded an alarm in 1979 with resolutions calling for extreme caution in procedures and corroborating evidence for any assertions made under hypnosis. In 1985 the American Medical Association reviewed the relevant scholarship and also rejected hypnosis as a generally dependable forensic tool. Several state supreme courts sided against hypnosis as too unreliable for trial purposes. Then in June 1987 a U.S. Supreme Court decision ruled that states could not absolutely ban testimony acquired by hypnosis. The ruling was 5 to 4, hedged with many warnings, and permitted such testimony for defense purposes only. Hypnosis won a victory but not a vindication.

One of the experts' key reservations focuses on the motivations of everyone in an investigative situation. Motivations are powerful determinants in hypnotically influenced behavior, and everyone in an investigation brings motivations along with them. Self-interest takes a hand at every point and can distort results even in interrogation of fully conscious subjects. Hypnosis simply amplifies the danger.

Another reservation is that a demanding investigative situation increases suggestibility and leads to the creation of fictitious memories. Investigators often assure witnesses that they will remember the truth or give a posthypnotic suggestion to remember everything that comes to light during hypnosis. The witness then becomes even less able to sort out the real from the unreal. In a therapeutic situation fact and fantasy can mix to the benefit of the patient, leading to a relief of symptoms. In a courtroom or UFO investigation where truth counts, nothing could be more perilous than this mixture.

What makes it all the worse is that the witness testifies with honesty and good faith that the confabulations are true, because they seem as real as actual memories. Once established and repeated, true and false memories may become inseparable—at worst hypnosis may spoil legitimate memories.

* * *

Certainly, both theory and practice could provide some grounds for skeptical dismissal of the abduction

evidence obtained by hypnosis, but another approach might be to start at the other end and look at the evidence itself.

Instead of considering what might happen under hypnosis, we turn to what has happened, what investigation shows about the form and content of abduction reports and whether the results indicate a stable phenomenon independent of the hypnotic procedures used.

A project sponsored by the Fund for UFO Research to catalogue and compare abduction reports provides the raw material for this study. The effort netted about 300 reports of abductions or abduction-like events in the published literature, and of this number, 104 cases qualified as high in both reliability and information content. This sample allows several tests for the effects of hypnosis on the abduction story.

Comparison of abductions revealed with and without hypnosis

Any attempt to dismiss abductions as a side effect of hypnosis runs up against a serious obstacle from the start, in that not all abduction testimony emerges under hypnosis. Even for the well-investigated, high quality cases, 30 do not depend on hypnosis and 74 do.

A comparative study of the abduction reports demonstrates that numerous aspects of form and content recur time after time. An overall tally of 50 traits show that in nearly 3/4 of the time, the results were homogenous among hypnotic and non-hypnotic cases.

The traits used for comparison were specific, distinct details, such as the sequence of described events: the capture, examination, conference, tour, otherworldly journey, theophany, return, and aftermath.

Some differences in the two groups actually define what we mean by distinct samples and therefore do not count as troublesome incompatibilities. A time lapse is the hallmark of cases requiring hypnosis, but some cases never require hypnosis for the simple reason that no time lapse ever occurred. This same difference explains one dissimilarity in order as well. Since the time lapse event figures in the capture episode, cases without time lapse necessarily

diverge in a comparison for order.

What remains are the irreconcilable differences, the elements most likely to condemn hypnosis as an active agent in abduction-making. The examination procedure involves several of these problems. Under hypnosis the episode proves longer and more detailed than without hypnosis; hypnotized abductees report the undressing step twice as often as nonhypnotized abductees, while in a surprising outcome, only one unhy-

to aliens' control techniques, these subjects will prove less docile and might resist certain procedures. Implants are painful and frightening enough to provoke such resistance. Undressing might offend a conscious captive, though hypnotized subjects may better overcome their bashfulness about relating this incident. Once the aliens discover that a captive is hard to control, they may truncate the examination procedures and seek more congenial subjects.

Any attempt to dismiss abductions as a side effect of hypnosis runs up against a serious obstacle in that not all abduction testimony emerges under hypnosis.

notized subject reports an implant in to his head or body.

Hypnosis might account for this difference, perhaps because the investigator presses to find an implant and the witness obliges. Cleansing and sample taking compare in frequency, but carry little weight because their entries are few. Scans are also compatible, but this element has been familiar ever since the Pascagoula case. Reproductive tests like the needle in the navel might stand out in the memory of anyone acquainted with the Hill case. The many reports of witnesses being charged with a mission or having their thoughts altered is surprising because the notion is less familiar and yet comparably represented in both samples. The high frequency of implants in the hypnotic sample may result from investigators who favor this trait as something concrete, a potential for physical confirmation; but they might push equally hard for scans and sample taking as vivid, "traditional" and meaningful parts of an examination within the context of alien exploration beliefs. The investigators have as much vested interest in one trait as the other.

Overall, important or "classic" elements remain too scarce, little-known elements too common, and equal or unequal distributions too unpredictable to allow much confidence that hypnosis is to blame.

An interpretation that takes abduction at face value fares better with these findings. Assuming some captives are less susceptible than others

This interpretation solves another problem difficult for the hypnosis explanation to handle—far more hypnotized abductees state that the beings promised to return for them. Susceptible people might be worth coming back for, while for less pliant witnesses, goodbye may mean good riddance. Promises aside, a third of the un hypnotized witnesses nevertheless report some kind of subsequent encounter.

The most serious differences between the two samples concern the beings, with a disproportionate concentration of tall humans with hair and normal facial features in reports from un hypnotized witnesses. (The testimony of Betty Hill of the seminal Betty and Barney Hill abduction case of the '60s may offer a clue to this discrepancy. Her initial dream recollections of the beings included human figures with hair and long noses, while these beings metamorphosed into typical hairless and small-nosed humanoids during hypnotherapy. No other changes of comparable importance occurred in her testimony, suggesting that hypnosis is responsible in part for the humanoid aliens.)

Overall, the results of this comparison show that hypnotic and non-hypnotic samples match rather well, even with the beings included. Not all abduction cases are alike by any means, and most stories veer off the standard line at some point or other, but similarities prevail with or without hypnosis. Under these circumstances the influence of hypnosis

appears modest at best. It may shape a few traits, but it leaves the majority untouched.

The Hypnotists Compared

Critics propose that the beings a witness describes may reflect the personality of the hypnotist investigating the case. Skeptic Phil Klass bases this conjecture on the observation that Budd Hopkins, used to the fast pace of New York City, discovered businesslike or cruel aliens, while Leo Sprinkle, living in a college town in Wyoming, finds his more easygoing nature reflected in a gentler breed of abductors. This observation is more playful than precise, since Sprinkle's investigations have covered the almost sadistic beings of the Casey County abduction and Hopkins the tender reunion of Kathie Davis with her alien half-daughter, but even if Klass misplaces his evidence, he still raises a good point. Does the hypnotist make a difference? Does personality and individual style cause perceptible variation in the story?

Some pattern in idiosyncrasies should emerge among a given investigator's cases if the personal touch really makes a difference, but this did not turn out to be the case in our study. Descriptions varied enough from case to case in each investigator's sample to deny that any hypnotists carbon-copy their own work or successfully impose a predetermined idea on a succession of witnesses. In addition, Sprinkle's sample, which contained the most cases, also contained the most variety. His witnesses furnished a whole menagerie of aliens and yet he is the "believer," the veteran investigator most likely to have fixed ideas and impose them on witnesses. The idiosyncrasies turned up under hypnosis seem to belong to the witnesses and not the investigators. Rather than a full-scale shaping force as postulated by the skeptics, hypnotists appear less the leaders than the led.

Hypnosis of real and imaginary abductees compared

Dr. Alvin C. Lawson, Dr. William C. McCall and John DeHerrera challenged an objective interpretation of the abduction phenomenon when they hypnotized people with no inkling of an abduction experience, and

still recovered "abduction" stories. In a 1977 experiment the investigators selected volunteer subjects with minimal prior UFO knowledge, hypnotized them, then asked them a series of questions based on an outline of reported abduction experiences. The hypnotist asked each subject to imagine a UFO, board it, describe its interior, describe the occupants, describe a physical examination, receive messages from the beings, exit the UFO and imagine subsequent life changes. Subjects responded and the investigators compared these accounts with reports from "true" abductees.

The outcome was astonishing. Not only did the subjects readily respond to an initial suggestion with an elaborate and detailed story, with little need for prodding along the way, but the contents bore striking similarities to alleged real abductions, both in more obvious matters and in odd, minute details. The investigators scored their data in eight categories including pattern, strangeness, subject objectivity, and emotional component. When reduced to percentages and plotted on a graph, the findings for abductees and experimental non-abductees nearly coincided. Lawson hedged his discoveries with a list of differences, cautioning that the emotions, time lapse, amnesia, nightmares, and conscious UFO encounter of real abductees distinguished them from the experimental results. Still, these observations did little to soften the impact of the experimental results.

These experiments have provoked extensive critical response from ufologists. James Harder condemned the leading structure of questions contrasted with the neutral language proper in actual investigations. The cues guided subjects well enough, he said, for their responses to appear similar to the descriptions from real witnesses, but otherwise differences would multiply. Scott Rogo pointed out that the procedures too often let the wolves guard the sheep—McCall was a poor choice for hypnotist because he was already deeply versed in real abductions, and the quantitative comparisons would be more convincing if performed by an outside party unaware of what to expect. Dr. Willy Smith criticized Lawson for seeing similarities where differences prevailed. This failure

was especially notable among the beings, since humanoids predominate in natural reports but comprise a minority in the experimental cases; but the list of false identities could go on and on.

Whether the experimenters or the critics are right depends in large part on how similar the stories really are. Unfortunately, the sequence of questions in the experiment forecloses any test for order of events, so comparison must depend only on description features. Lawson's quantitative comparison is of no help here, since it uses generalized categories like "pattern" and "strangeness" rather than particular traits, and relies on a small sample of eight imaginary and four real cases, so that most proportions remain rough estimates at best.

Another loose end is descriptive terminology. Three experimental subjects described Saturn-shaped craft, whereas this specific term is rare among natural cases. Other metaphors like a "Chinese hat" shape might reduce to the same thing, but Lawson's article does not elaborate on how the experimenters rounded off their terms. A corollary problem is the vagueness of some categories, for example the messages. Several experimental subjects reported messages for ecological and scientific content. Messages from real cases touch on the same theme, so the two samples qualify as alike in general thematic terms. Yet too broad a base of comparison leaves room for largely incompatible traits to stand side by side in an apparent but ultimately unconvincing match-up. Without more specific details of the experimental findings, no informed judgement is possible about whether the categories are tight or tenuous, and consequently no definite conclusions can be reached about how compatible the traits really are, but too many similarities appear in the transcripts for chance alone to explain.

Imaginary cases pose a vexing question—how can non-abductees tell stories even broadly like those of real abductees? Any answers can only be speculative, given the uncertainties surrounding the non-abductee experiment. We need to know more about them, and we need very much to repeat them.

In the meantime, a reasonable guess would be that real abduction

narratives trace to no single source, but represent a melange of contributions—from popular culture, the hypnotist, actual experience, and the life of the witness. Many investigators have noticed that personal content slips readily into an abduction story and becomes part of it, perhaps ideas drawn from general interest and concerns, or matters related to psychological anxieties, or specific memories such as the experience of a painful operation. Adapted to an extraordinary event, these mundane elements could distort into unearthly events in keeping with the overall tenor of the story. Real and imaginary abductees might share this earthbound content and outfit their stories with it, resulting in a series of ready-made similarities.

An even more prosaic source for likenesses in abduction stories is the common cultural language shared by real and imaginary abductees. If real abductees experience an objective event, they necessarily would describe it in terms of the vocabulary, metaphors and expectations learned in the course of a lifelong social education, just as non-abductees would draw from this same fund of ideas to create and describe an imaginary abduction. Some terms in this cultural language seem bound to overlap, with the consequence being a series of similarities. They imply nothing more than that the narrators share the same opportunities and limitations of language.

One fact still favors a sharp distinction between real and imaginary cases: real abductions present the appearance of a coherent phenomenon. Their consistency in content and narrowness of variation contrast with the much greater looseness and diversity of imaginary abductions. Real hypnotic and non-hypnotic abduction stories share more in common with each other than with imaginary abduction stories, strengthening the sense that not hypnosis or the hypnotist, not cultural or personal elements can explain the unity behind real reports. Of all possible factors that might contribute to imaginary abduction stories, only experience is surely lacking. An experience of some sort thus offers the most plausible explanation for the underlying coherency to real abduction stories.

What the imaginary abduction

story teaches us about the real abduction story is not that the two are ontological equivalents, but rather that real stories may well incorporate extraneous elements. The final expression of the story may represent a core of experience layered more or less thickly with unrelated events and ideas. A real abductee is thus a bad reporter, since his news includes inaccuracies. Understanding the ultimate nature of abductions depends greatly on the proportion of experience to these inaccuracies.

In Conclusion

The potential for misuse of hypnosis is undeniable, yet an examination of abduction evidence points to a reassuring conclusion: what might happen according to theory seems not to have happened in fact. Outcomes in every comparison give little reason to believe that Svengali-like hypnotists lead witnesses or impose standardized abduction stories onto them.

True, the popular reputation of hypnosis suffers from unreasonably high expectations. Contrary to popular belief, hypnosis cannot guarantee truthful testimony, and in that sense, hypnosis is a disappointment, a technique full of promises it cannot keep. On the other hand, if abductions are actual and traumatic experiences, no other tool may serve as well for releasing repressed memories. Ufologists can take comfort from the findings that many abduction investigators have followed sensible precautions in the use of hypnosis, and that the body of abduction evidence now on record seems little contaminated with fantasies and inaccuracies of hypnotic origin. Investigators are becoming increasingly aware of the potential for danger in hypnosis. Carefully worked out programs of abduction investigation now under development promise far tighter control over hypnotic procedures in the future, leading to even more reliable testimony.

One cloud still darkens this otherwise bright vista: the negative scientific reputation associated with hypnosis. Too many doubts surround it for the scientific community to readily embrace hypnotic testimony as valid, especially for any claims as remarkable as UFO abductions. However rigorous the procedures,

however unequivocal the comparative analysis, doubters looking for ways to condemn abduction evidence without facing up to it can always create doubt by questioning hypnosis. For ufologists hypnosis will remain an indispensable tool, but attention to conscious testimony, multiple-witness cases, and physical evidence holds out better hope than hypnosis for gathering the kind of evidence no one can ignore. Only time and open-minded research can reveal the ultimate value of hypnosis in abduction research.

Thomas Bullard has a Ph.D. in Folklore from Indiana University, and is an active ufologist. For a copy of his complete, footnoted, 40-page article from which this was excerpted, send \$15 to the Journal of UFO Studies, 2457 W. Peterson Ave., Chicago, IL 60659.

In our next article on hypnotic regression in UFO research, we will look at specific methods of the hypnotic process, and case descriptions investigated from this method. We will also further explore criticisms of its veracity, including theories that hypnotically-induced abduction reports are replications of long-dormant "birth trauma," or other psychological manifestations.

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