

## CHAPTER THREE Hypnotic Confabulation

We know from Revelation that individuals have been rehearsed deep in their minds.

UP1257: With the exception of less than a score of contact personalities, the members of this unique group are wholly unconscious of their preparation for possible function in certain planetary crises. These mortal reservists are chosen by the corps to which they are respectively attached and are likewise trained and rehearsed in the deep mind by the combined technique of Thought Adjuster and sephoric guardian ministry. Many times numerous other celestial personalities participate in this unconscious training, and in all this special preparation the midwayers perform valuable and indispensable services.

We can speculate that some of those celestial personalities are our Visitors.

Betty Andreasson said that her celestial host buried things deep within her mind.

“It seemed as if he were going deeper inside of me—my mind.

Likewise have many experiences with our Visitors been buried deep within the mind. David Jacobs emphasized the Mindscan episodes. How, then, do we retrieve that material, and is it necessary to do so?

Much of what we know today about our celestial Visitors depends on the methods of hypnotic regression. Unfortunately, those methods are fraught with great deceptions and pure invention.

### **Hypnotism**

Hypnotism is an altered mental state in which a hypnotist guides a subject through the mazes of the mind, — conscious, semiconscious, or unconscious — and all of its elaborations created from fears, phobias, traumas, desires, and personal history.

Following are remarks from the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. They represent a general professional consensus of the phenomenon of hypnosis. I italicize or comment on those statements that are important to our understanding of the dangers of hypnotic recall.

(The hypnotic) . . . state is characterized by a degree of increased receptiveness and responsiveness *in which inner experiential perceptions are given as much significance as is generally given only to external reality.*

This means that the subject becomes receptive and responsive to suggestions by the hypnotist. Internal perceptions, what the subject may believe is real, but not necessarily true memory, become crucially important in the subjects mind, and may modify recall.

The hypnotized individual appears to heed only the communications of the hypnotist. He seems to *respond in an uncritical, automatic fashion*, ignoring all aspects of the environment other than those pointed out to him by the hypnotist. He sees, feels, smells, and otherwise perceives in accordance with the hypnotist's suggestions, even though these suggestions may be in apparent contradiction to the stimuli that impinge upon him. *Even the subject's memory and awareness of self may be altered by suggestion*, and the effects of the suggestions may extend (posthypnotically) into the subject's subsequent waking activity.

This fact is especially dangerous in psychotherapy. The subject may become thoroughly and completely convinced that a scene suggested by the hypnotist is real, and then carry that scene into his real life as an actual event. Many lives and family relationships have been ruined through such methods.

. . . The resulting hypnotic phenomena differ from one subject to another and from one trance to another, depending upon the purposes to be served and the depth of the trance. Hypnosis is a phenomenon of degrees, ranging from light to profound trance states but with no fixed constancy. Ordinarily, however, *all trance behavior is characterized by a simplicity, a directness, and a literalness of understanding, action, and emotional response that are suggestive of childhood.*

*Suggestibility, a state of greatly enhanced receptiveness and responsiveness to suggestions and stimuli presented by the hypnotist, constitutes the central phenomenon of hypnosis.* Appropriate suggestions by the hypnotist can induce a remarkably wide range of psychological, sensory, and motor responses from persons who are deeply hypnotized. By acceptance of and response to suggestions, the subject can become deaf, blind, paralyzed, hallucinated, delusional, amnesic, or impervious to pain or to uncomfortable body postures, or he can display various behavioral responses that he regards as reasonable or desirable in the given situation that has been suggested to him by the hypnotist.

Since suggestibility is the central phenomenon of hypnosis, the subjects become instruments by which the hypnotists may carry forward their philosophies. The hypnotist may produce results by conscious suggestion or by unconscious stimuli suitable to his view of the world. Then the general public believes that "recovered memories" are actual facts, In this manner the abduction investigators can promulgate their perceptive errors and godlessness.

Benjamin Simon, in his Introduction to *Interrupted Journey* (IJ), made a related observation.

Though I have confined my active participation in this book to editorial supervision of medical statements, I feel that I should make clear the status of hypnosis because of public misconceptions which often envelop hypnosis with an arcane charisma, and the practitioner with the robe of Merlin. Hypnosis is a useful procedure in psychiatry to direct concentrated attention on some particular point in the course of the whole therapeutic procedure. In cases like the Hills', it can be the key to the locked room, the amnesic period. Under hypnosis, experiences buried in amnesia may be recalled in a much shorter time than in the normal course of the psychotherapeutic process. Nevertheless, there is little produced under or by hypnosis that is not possible without. The charisma of hypnosis has tended to foster the belief that hypnosis is the magical and royal road to TRUTH. In one sense this is so, but it must be understood that hypnosis is a pathway to the truth as it is felt and understood by the patient. The truth is what he believes to be the truth, and this may or may not be consonant with the ultimate nonpersonal truth. Most frequently it is.

To continue with remarks from the Encyclopedia Britannica.

. . . Many subjects seem unable to recall what happened while they were in deep hypnosis. This posthypnotic amnesia, as it is called, can either result spontaneously from deep hypnosis or it can result from suggestion by the hypnotist during the trance state. The amnesia may include all the events of the trance state or only selected items, or it may be manifested in connection with matters unrelated to the trance. Posthypnotic amnesia may be successfully removed by appropriate hypnotic suggestions.

This phenomenon is at the heart of the testimonies we receive today. Our Visitors may have buried the experiences deep within the minds of those they abducted. The investigators attempt to remove the amnesia, to get at the experience. But the recall is fraught with the possibility of great pollution, depending on the procedures employed by the hypnotists. Since suggestibility constitutes the central phenomenon of hypnosis the slightest inadvertent suggestion, uncon-

scious cue, or prior conscious suggestion, can cause the subject to wander off into fantasy. Hypnotism does not necessarily recall real memory; it may reveal only what the subject believes in his mind to be true. If the investigators have conditioned beforehand what the subject feels they should produce the hypnotic methods may result in a highly adulterated state of recall, or even pure invention.

*The abductee may slant his "recall" to produce what he thinks the investigator wants.*

This fact heavily conditioned the work of Jacobs, Hopkins, and Mack, who were eager to tell their subjects, implied or direct, what they expected.

Conversely, hypermnesia, a memory capacity that transcends the everyday ability, is another aspect of hypnotic behavior. For example, in the trance state, the subject, by virtue of an uncritical willingness to make the effort and a freedom from inhibitions deriving from preformed judgments, can vividly remember long-forgotten, even deeply repressed experiences, recount them in extensive detail and still maintain an amnesia for them at the ordinary level of consciousness. This remarkable ability permits the recovery of memories that are otherwise unavailable to conscious awareness, and it was thus of great usefulness to Freud as he embarked on his explorations of his patients' unconsciously held memories.

This is the element of hypnosis pursued so vigorously by the investigators. Unfortunately, they ignored the false potentials of hypnotic recall.

. . . Memory of a hypnotic trance is often vague and fragmentary, as in awakening from an ordinary dream. This may be due in part to defect of registration during the period of altered consciousness. At the same time, very much more complete posthypnotic amnesia can be induced if an individual is told that, when he awakens, he will remember nothing of what went on during the period of hypnosis. This is clearly a psychogenic phenomenon; memory is fully regained if the patient is rehypnotized and an appropriate counter-suggestion given. It may also be regained if the person is persistently interrogated in the waking state, again suggesting that the amnesia is apparent rather than real. This observation led Freud to seek access to ostensibly forgotten (repressed) memories in his patients without the use of hypnosis.

### The Hypnotic State

No one has a precise definition of the hypnotic state. No experts exist on earth today who can tell us exactly what goes on when a subject enters a state of altered consciousness. Various individuals have attempted definitions but there is no consensus among the many workers in the field. Opinions vary from the claim that there is no such thing as hypnosis, merely willingness of a subject to follow the suggestions of the hypnotist, to demonstration of profound performances not available to the normal conscious mind.

I recall an event when I was in high school. A hypnotist stage performer visited our country school. He hypnotized several individuals, including our music teacher. He then asked her to play part of a Beethoven concerto using the pages of *Life Magazine* as her music sheet. Within her physical dexterity she did well, remembering the entire piece.

Some years later a business associate of mine dabbled in hypnosis. I recall a woman to whom he had given a post hypnotic suggestion. She appeared at a later meeting, seemingly ordinary, but on cue she took pen and paper and began to write a long letter, without understanding why she was doing it.

One web site, designed by licensed professionals, answering frequently asked questions, made the following remark:

Can Hypnosis Be Used to Accurately Recall Everything That Has Ever Happened to You?

The mind does not simply take in experience and store it in exact form for accurate recall later. In fact, memories are stored on the basis of perceptions; therefore, are subject to many of the same distortions as perceptions. People can remember things that did not actually happen, they can remember selected fragments of an experience, and they can take bits and pieces of multiple memories and combine them into one false memory.

Dylan Morgan of Ilkley, West Yorks, North England, did some striking work in attempt to define the hypnotic state. His books included *Hypnosis for Beginners*, *A Beginners Guide to Psychotherapy*, and *The Principles of Hypnotherapy*. In England he is a member of the National Council of Psychotherapists, the National Council for Hypnotherapy, the British Hypnotherapy Association, and Fellow of the Hypnosis Research Society. Morgan has a remarkable history, first as a scientist, and then as a therapeutic worker.

I was educated at Welsh-speaking primary schools. I went to Jesus College Oxford on a scholarship to read Mathematics. After getting a first class honors degree I went on to do a doctorate in Elementary Particle Theory in the Oxford University Mathematics Department. From

1970 I was doing research in the Mathematics Department of Dundee University. For a period in between I was a Senior Scientific Officer at the Royal Aircraft Establishment.

These are some of the things he said about the emotional and mental state of human beings, and the use of hypnosis to probe those states.

#### Emotional Systems

The emotions tend to shade into each other more gradually than do the senses: it is hard to put a clear line between a pleasure and happiness in the way that we can distinguish touch and pain, for example. . . . Whether we consider love, liking, excitement, pleasure, happiness, or fear, anger, grief, guilt, depression or any other shade of feeling, it is true that they can be induced or suppressed or altered in quality.

. . . If a person is induced by some hypnotic technique to feel fear or excitement then the adrenal glands respond as a part of the process. This underlines the fact that hypnotic techniques can also affect the functioning of the endocrine system. Another example might be the arousal or suppression of sexual feelings, which would be accompanied by changes in the level of sexual hormones.

Note that emotions can be induced, suppressed, or altered. This is one of the great fallacies in probing experiences of contact with our Visitors. The investigators may induce fear, excitement, or sexual feelings by inadvertent suggestion, unconscious cue, or prior conscious discussion offered their subjects. Or the abductees may have their recall modified from reading books, or from Television and Cable programs.

#### Relationships

Of very great importance to most people are their relationships with others. A relationship is a complex pattern of feelings and habitual actions and responses in two or more people, so it involves systems which have been mentioned above. Very often the problem presented to the Hypnotherapist lies in this area, and the task is to sort out what parts of the complex pattern it is best to change in order to improve matters. Insofar as it is possible to alter feelings and actions by Hypnotic techniques, it is by the same token possible to alter the course of a relationship.

Again we see how the perceptions of a relationship between a human being and a celestial Visitor can be altered by the hypnotic techniques employed. The investigator may induce confidence, or he may induce fear. Or he may replace love with hate, and respect with contempt. This conditioning of relationships shows vividly in the abduction reports.

#### Mental Systems

Memory is a particular function of the brain which has also been demonstrably affected by Hypnotic procedures. It, also, can be enhanced, inhibited, made selective or falsified. On the stage a popular alteration is to make the Subject forget some quite simple thing, like the name of a color or the number 7. The Subject may struggle very hard to recall the missing fact but fail totally. An alternative is to get him to believe that something is true or has happened which has not. If a Subject is induced to "remember" that another person has cheated him in some way, he will start to act in a way which is amusing to the audience. But the serious side to this is that certain individuals can be influenced to believe that they have remembered episodes or early sexual abuse which never in fact happened. The problems that can arise from this are termed the False Memory Syndrome.

This is a crucial remark. Memory can be affected by hypnotic procedures. It can be enhanced, inhibited, made selective, or *falsified*. Over the past three decades horrifying scenarios were created through hypnosis in which subjects believed a father, a brother, a grandfather, or an uncle sexually abused them, when no such abuse actually took place. The results can be permanently damaging to family relationships.

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Durbin wrote:

In discussing Recovered Memory Therapy, I . . . am including those therapists who plant false memories and encourage their clients to confront, hate, break with and sue parents for something that may or

may not have happened years ago. . . . Recovered Memory Therapy is bad therapy because it makes assumptions that are not valid, it rewrites a persons history with very painful results, it makes the client very dependent on the therapist, it separates clients from their natural families, (and) it causes the client to induce some very emotionally painful experiences which come only from the imagination and quite often makes the client worse instead of better.

. . . Our conscious mind consists of what is available to our conscious thinking process. It is the analytical, rational, logical, two-plus-two-is-four part of the mind. The subconscious is not logical and it contains our emotions, habits, automatic responses, feelings, instincts, impressions and much of our memory. One of the peculiarities of the subconscious mind is that (it) cannot tell the difference between imagination and reality. In regards to memory: a thought, image, (or) idea, whether real or not, repeated often enough or when emotionally charged, becomes like a real memory to the subconscious mind.

Many believe that a memory retrieved in hypnosis is true and accurate. I used to accept this assumption, but as I came to (better) understanding, . . . I realized that one can easily produce a false memory that can seem just as real as a true memory.

I was first introduced to Recovered Memory Therapy about five or six years ago. A man called me from California. He said that he had got my name and phone number through the United Methodist Church. He had an adult daughter in New Orleans who had sent him a letter accusing him of childhood sexual abuse. She had recovered the memory while in therapy at a local psych-center in New Orleans. She wrote her father requesting that he pay for her therapy and that he should send her a specific amount of money each month (because) she was too emotionally disturbed to hold a job. She was in her forties when she began therapy and was working and making a living. After a few months (of therapy) she (supposedly) recovered these memories of sexual abuse and had steadily gotten worse. The father denied that he had ever touched his daughter sexually and was overcome with sadness and despair as a result of the accusations. He ask me for help. As his daughter was receiving counseling at another health care facility, I contacted the chaplain at that hospital to look into the situation. I talked to the father one more time and he said that he was trying to get an appointment with the therapist but had been unsuccessful. The therapist keep telling him that he was in denial and that the only way the daughter and therapist would meet with him was if he confessed that he had indeed molested his daughter when she was a child. He asked me if I had ever heard of the False Memory Syndrome and an organization called, "False Memory Syndrome Foundation" which had been formed for parents of adult children who had accused their parents of sexual abuse. I admitted that I had not.

Other professionals have commented on hypnotic memory recall:

Hypnosis does not have any special power by itself to enhance the recall of old memories. It can indirectly help us rebuild past events, but it can also rebuild events that never happened. This is partly because hypnosis has the side effect of increasing our confidence in what we remember, whether it was experienced or imagined.

In other words, under hypnosis we may imagine a scene through slight suggestion, but that fantasy may become a memory we regard as real. Excellent examples are Betty Andreasson's "dress" given her by her abductors, or the "hoods" they wore in the "red" atmosphere, or implants in her nose.

. . . Under hypnosis, people report more details about a remembered situation than without hypnosis. Some of these details turn out to be accurate, while some turn out to be incorrect. The hypnotized person will have a high degree of confidence that both the correct and the incorrect details are accurate . . .

Memory experts today are in general agreement that recall is actually a reconstructive process, rather than one where we simply access and display recorded information (Bower, 1990). When we remember an event, we actually recreate and re-experience it (to some degree), and often change it in the process. Most commonly, we organize our recall of past events in a way that makes sense of our present situation and is congruent with our current expectations. (Spanos et al., 1994; Nash, 1994).

Note that when hypnotic regression is used to recall a celestial contact most investigators and their subjects expect a preconceived set of conditions. Thus the extracted memory may be heavily influenced not only by the expectations of the investigator but also by current social expectations. This total cultural environment is sure to produce results which gratify its current desires. If we have promulgated inimical aliens through books and television, the abductees may become influenced by such images, and respond accordingly.

The way we distinguish remembered actual events from events we dreamed or fantasized about is by various qualities of the memory, such as its vividness and particularly its perceptual fluency (Whittlesea et al., 1990). One reason why hypnotic fantasy is sometimes confused with real events is that the quality of imagery under hypnosis may often be very close to the quality of remembered real events. This is one of the characteristics of hypnosis that makes it so interesting and so useful (for therapeutic healing) — its power to make sensory imagery very realistic and very vivid, and to help provide emotional inten-

sity. Under hypnosis, the cues that help us distinguish memory from imagination may become confused, and we may lose track of the source of an imagined event (source misattribution).

#### The “False Memory” Controversy

A controversy has entered media attention around this topic because many psychotherapists who specialize in treating traumatized people use hypnosis (or interviews under the influence of barbiturates) as part of their treatment, whether or not they use it to deliberately “recover memories.” Hypnosis has also been used for forensic purposes in criminal investigations. Both of these uses have come under severe scrutiny. The expectations of the hypnotist have a strong effect on events created or recreated under hypnosis, via contextual cues. The motivation of the client to find meaning in their life history is an even stronger factor in creating or recreating experiences. Information gathered by means of recall under hypnosis needs to be independently verified.

Again we see how investigations of celestial contacts may be heavily influenced by the expectations of the investigators, and conditioned by contextual cues. Even more, the motives of the abductees to find an explanation of their extraordinary experience, may result in *creating explanatory experiences*. There need be no overt leading questions. The investigators mostly ignore the pollution this mental phenomena may introduce into their results.

At times, previously unreported traumatic events are reported during hypnosis, and the question is raised whether hypnosis allowed the recall of a previously unavailable (“repressed”) memory, or whether the memory is a vivid fantasy inspired by other psychological needs.

. . . The biggest concern among experimental memory researchers has been their perception that some therapists may have misconceptions about memory retrieval with hypnosis or drugs. In particular, the concern is that some therapists may not realize that the high confidence of memories from hypnotized clients is deceiving. A high level of details and high confidence in recall, particularly under hypnosis, do not necessarily mean that the events are historical. Many believe that this sometimes creates conditions where families are unnecessarily destroyed by accusations based on “false memories.”

In adult psychotherapy, with or without hypnosis, two types of memory errors can potentially occur: false negatives (believing that something didn’t happen when it actually did, repression or dissociation), and false positives (believing something happened when it did

not, pseudomemory or “false memory.”). Clinical efficacy does not guarantee that either of these mnemonic errors was avoided in therapy (Nash, 1994).

A history of severe early psychological abuse or other trauma causes a lifetime of serious psychological problems, and psychological trauma can even cause physical damage to the brain (Bremner, 1995). This brain damage, in the critical hippocampal area, appears to be responsible for many of the memory problems associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Gabbard, 1995). Some theorists have claimed that early sexual trauma has special qualities that sometimes cause the events to be blockaded from memory. Most evidence though seems to show that the greatest damage appears to be due not to any one particular type of abuse but to dysfunctional family life in general (Levitt, 1995). Our recall of early life is particularly vulnerable to distortions over time, even without hypnosis, and hypnosis increases the possibility of distortion. The sticking point from a memory perspective is that someone may have very real trauma and very real damage, but not always a reliable way to reconstruct what actually happened.

If a person comes to an investigator and expresses belief that he is an abductee, the investigator may accept such claim, often because of his intense desire to discover new evidence. The investigator then induces a hypnotic state, and may lead the person down the path to recall of an amazing adventure which never took place, or took place in a form distant from the current recall.

The investigators today do not have methods by which they can “prove” the reliability of a claimed adventure. The notorious case was an incident in which graduate students at Harvard conspired to trap John Mack. A woman posed as an abductee. Mack followed, and sincerely believed in, the pure deception of the student. I know from study of Mack’s book that he believed reports which had no foundation in actual events. The subjects offered no real evidence and used Mack’s interest as a vehicle for expressing their emotional concerns. He had no accurate method to distinguish between reports based on actual events, and reports invented in the mind.

The devastations which took place in families because of false scenes of sexual abuse created in the mind through hypnosis forced a much more careful scrutiny of hypnotic recovered material, and initiated a rigorous study of the False Memory Syndrome.

Another person to testify to this devastating impact in his private life was Mark Prendergast. In an article entitled *Victims of Memory: Sex Abuse Accusations And Shattered Lives*, published in the *Magazine for Hypnosis and Hypnotherapy*, Prendergast asked the question: *Hypnosis: Memory Prod or Production?*

Prendergast, an independent scholar and investigative journalist, has written the most comprehensive work on the recovered memory debate. He originally came to examine the subject through painful personal experience, after

both of his young adult daughters went to therapy and cut off all contact with him. The following is from *How To Believe the Unbelievable*, a chapter in his book, *Victims of Memory*, Hineburg, VT: Upper Access Books, 2d edition, 1996(VM).

After both of my children cut off contact with me, I thought that maybe I really had done something horrible to them and had repressed the memory myself. So I went to a hypnotist. Like most people, I thought that when you sank into a deep hypnotic trance, you could magically tap into your dormant subconscious, unlocking long-forgotten memories. Fortunately, I went to an ethical hypnotist who did not lead me into believing I had committed incest on my children. She failed, however, to tell me how questionable memories are when “uncovered” in hypnosis. I discovered that fact during my research. From its inception hypnosis has caused considerable controversy and spawned innumerable myths. One thing that experts agree on, however, is that memories retrieved under hypnosis are often contaminated mixtures of fantasy and truth. In many cases, outright “confabulations” — the psychologists’ term for illusory memories — result. Here is an unequivocal passage from the 1989 fifth edition of the *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry*:

‘An overwhelming body of research indicates that hypnosis does not increase accurate memory, but does increase the person’s willingness to report previously uncertain memories with strong conviction. Furthermore, the hypnotized individual has a pronounced tendency to confabulate in those areas where there is little or no recollection; to distort memory to become more congruent with beliefs . . . and fantasies; and to incorporate cues from leading questions as factual memories. Finally there is a high likelihood that the beliefs of the hypnotist will somehow be communicated to the patient in hypnosis and incorporated into what the patient believes to be memories, often with strong conviction.’

Sadly, this is exactly the situation we face in the recovery of unconscious abduction memories. The hypnotized individuals have a pronounced tendency to confabulate in those areas where there is little or no recollection. They also distort memory to become more congruent with the beliefs of the hypnotist-investigator. Budd Hopkins was especially effective in communicating his beliefs to his subjects, forever altering what they believed to be actual experience. How truly unfortunate.

Psychologist Robert Baker observes that “confabulation shows up without fail in nearly every context in which hypnosis is employed.” No experimental study has ever provided evidence that hypnosis helps

unlock real memories, although, as one researcher put it, “It is difficult to disregard totally the wealth of anecdotal reports extolling the virtues of hypnotic memory enhancement.” Perhaps, then, hypnosis can enhance both real memories and fantasies . . .

Dylan Morgan, in a private note to me, said that even the most careful hypnotic procedure does not guarantee that recalled memory is reliable. Command by the hypnotist to suppress memory between recall sessions does not prevent the mind from confabulation.

Prendergrast goes on:

The reason that memories retrieved under hypnosis are suspect goes to the very definition of the process, which invariably includes the concept of suggestion. Clark Hull and A. M. Weitzenhoffer defined hypnosis simply as “a state of enhanced suggestibility.” When a subject agrees to be hypnotized, he or she tacitly agrees to abide by the suggestions of the hypnotist. This state of heightened suggestibility can work quite well if the goal is to stop smoking, lose weight, enhance self-esteem, reduce perceived pain, or improve one’s sex life. But it is not an appropriate method for retrieving supposedly repressed memories, as psychiatrist Martin Orne and psychologist Elizabeth Loftus have repeatedly stressed in courtroom settings. Orne asserts that hypnosis is a technique that “greatly facilitates the reconstruction of history, that allows an individual to be influenced unwittingly, and that may catalyze beliefs into ‘memories.’” He emphasizes that “we cannot distinguish between veridical [true] recall and pseudomemories elicited during hypnosis without prior knowledge or truly independent proof.” Loftus has said virtually the same thing. “There’s no way even the most sophisticated hypnotist can tell the difference between a memory that is real and one that’s created. If you’ve got a person who is hypnotized and highly suggestible and false information is implanted in his mind, it may get imbedded even more strongly.

One psychologist tried to use a polygraph to distinguish between real and phony memory but it didn’t work. Once someone has constructed a memory, he comes to believe it himself. Consequently, numerous psychologists have recognized that reality is routinely distorted under hypnosis. Theodore R. Sarbin and William C. Coe have referred to hypnosis as “believed-in imaginings,” while Ernest R. Hilgard calls the process “imaginative involvement.” J. P. Sutcliffe characterized the hypnotic subject as “deluded” in a purely descriptive sense. Jean-Roch Laurence and Campbell Perry assert: “Hypnosis is a situation in which an individual is asked to set aside critical judgment, without abandoning it completely, and is asked also to indulge in make-believe and fantasy.”

The hypnotized subject is not the only one who is deluded. The hypnotist who believes that he or she is delving for hidden memories takes an active part in the shared belief system. Both hypnotist and subject are engaged in a tacitly accepted mini-drama in which they act out prescribed roles. Psychiatrist Harold Merskey has defined hypnosis as “a maneuver in which the subject and hypnotist have an implicit agreement that certain events [e.g. paralyzes, hallucinations, amnesias] will occur, either during the special procedure or later, in accordance with the hypnotist’s instructions. Both try hard to put this agreement into effect.”

. . . Eric Greenleaf observes that “the pretense of hypnotist-operator is a sort of shared delusion which both patient and therapist participate in.” He states that the methods of hypnotic induction are “more like following the rules of social procedure than . . . chemical analysis.” Robert Baker puts it more bluntly: “There is no such thing as hypnosis.” Numerous experiments have demonstrated that all of the mysterious hypnotic phenomena, such as pain reduction, posthypnotic amnesia, blindness, paralysis, and the like, are simply part of a subject’s belief system and, with the sanction of the authority — the hypnotist — they can all magically reverse themselves. I am not trying to imply that “hypnosis,” whether a real state or not, does not have a profound effect, however. The human imagination is capable of incredible feats, so that subjects under hypnosis can even will away their warts . . . Hypnotism entails a powerful social mythology. Just as those “possessed” by demons believed in the process of exorcism, most modern Americans believe that in a hypnotic state, they are granted magical access to the subconscious, where repressed memories lie ready to spring forward at the proper command.

. . . In the introduction to *Theories of Hypnosis: Current Models and Perspectives* (1991), editors Steven Jay Lynn and Judith W. Rhue summarize the views expressed by the majority of the contributors: “Hypnotic behavior is interpersonal in nature . . . Subjects’ sensitivity to the hypnotist, subtle cues, and the tacit implications of hypnotic communications have a bearing on how they respond.” Further, they note that “subjects may engage in self-deception, may be unaware of the intrapsychic and contextual determinants of their actions, and may engage in behaviors that fulfill suggested demands with little awareness that they are doing so.” Experimental psychologists have long understood that false memories can be implanted during hypnosis. In 1891, Bernheim suggested to a hypnotized subject that his sleep had been disturbed the night before by a neighbor who “coughed, sang, and then opened the window.” After the session, the patient elaborated on this illusory event, even adding how someone else had told his neighbor to close the window. Bernheim then told him that the scene had never happened, that he had dreamed it. “I didn’t dream it,” the

patient protested indignantly. “I was wide awake!” Laurence and Perry performed a similar experiment in 1983. Under hypnosis, subjects were asked to relive a night from the week before. During this experience, they were asked whether they had been awakened by loud noises. The majority took the hint and described the sleep interruption in some detail. After the hypnotic session, most of them continued to express a belief in the sounds. Even after they were told that the hypnotist had suggested the incident to them, they insisted on their reality. “I’m pretty certain I heard them,” one subject stated. “As a matter of fact, I’m pretty damned certain. I’m positive I heard these noises.”

The sequence of these comments is revealing. In three sentences, we hear the subject rehearsing his convictions, progressing from “pretty certain” to “positive.” Similarly, those intent on recovering memories of incest are usually unsure of their newly envisioned scenes at first. It is only with rehearsal and reinforcement that the memories gradually come to seem real and convincing.

Canadian psychologist Nicholas Spanos performed an interesting extension of the above experiment, trying to show that the implanted memories weren’t “real,” but were instead the result of role playing. As the authoritative hypnotist, he first got his subjects to agree to the memories, then reverse themselves, then agree again, then reverse themselves. By doing so, Spanos asserted that the pseudomemories were never truly believed, but were simply reported in compliance with role expectations. Yet by the end of the confusing process, four of his eleven subjects still insisted that they had really heard the phantom noises. Here, Spanos appears to have missed the vital importance of rehearsal and reinforcement in the production of false memories. If 36 percent of his subjects still believed in the “memories” without a therapist insisting on their truth, what kind of results would you get when any doubts are dismissed as attempts to deny the awful truth?

One of the characteristics of well-rehearsed hypnotic confabulations, in fact, is the utter confidence with which they are eventually reported. Such memories tend to become extraordinarily detailed and believable with repetition. “The more frequently the subject reports the event,” Martin Orne has written, “the more firmly established the pseudomemory will tend to become.” As a final caution, he warns that “psychologists and psychiatrists are not particularly adept at recognizing deception,” adding that, as a rule, the average hotel credit manager is a far better detective. Unfortunately, clinical psychologists and other therapists appear to have little interest in playing detective, even when they realize that hypnotism often produces false memories.



While I do not agree with all of the philosophical views of Prendergast, he certainly has done an excellent job in reviewing the situation we now face in the abduction phenomena. In fact, he went on with his opinions about abductions. I include it here because of the value of what he has to say, even though he does not accept that possibility.

. . . *In Abduction: Human Encounters with Aliens* (1994), John Mack is impressed by “the intensity of the energies and emotions involved as abductees relive their experiences,” in which they report being grabbed against their will and “subjected to elaborate intrusive procedures which appeared to have a reproductive purpose.” Mack acknowledges the similarity to repressed memories of sexual abuse. In one case, he says, a woman went to a therapist “for presumed sexual abuse and incest-related problems. Several hypnosis sessions failed to reveal evidence of such events.” Instead, however, she recalled being abducted by aliens when she was six. Mack stresses that the UFO therapist must have “warmth and empathy, a belief in the ability of the individual to integrate these confusing experiences and make meaning of them . . . , and a willingness to enter into the co-investigative process.” I am sure that David Jacobs and John Mack feel real empathy for these people, who truly believe that they have been taken to UFOs and forcibly subjected to bizarre sexual experimentation.

[FOOTNOTE: John Mack’s *Abduction* follows the same basic pattern as that described by Jacobs. His hypnotized subjects reveal that the aliens took sperm and egg samples and inserted probes into their vaginas, anuses, and noses. Mack’s aliens, however, are ultimately benign, trying to save humans from ecological disaster. The expectancy effect appears to be at work here: Mack has long been an activist for environmental causes. It appears that his expectations are sometimes quite overt. One reporter invented an abduction story that Mack eagerly accepted. Prior to her hypnotic sessions, he “made it obvious what he wanted to hear.”]

But their findings seem only to confirm what is already known about hypnotism — that subjects tend to “remember” whatever the hypnotist is looking for. The pain is real — regardless of whether the memories are of past lives, UFO abductions, or incest by parents — but it was more likely prompted and encouraged through the dubious means of hypnotic “regression.” Investigators such as Jacobs and Mack dupe themselves and others because they genuinely want to help people, especially if, in the process, they can feel that they are also exploring uncharted territory.

Paul McHugh, MD, Chief of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins Hospital presented a paper he entitled *How Can Someone Get False Memories?* at a *Memory and Reality Conference*, April 1993. He said:

Memory is a construction of fragments which are then reconstructed into a narrative that makes sense in the here and now. In doing this we fill in the blanks with information received since the event, and this mixes with the original memory until it becomes impossible to separate. This means that every thing we have seen or heard or read can become garbled with our own memories and we will truly believe that it is our own true memory.

This statement well describes the problem of memory recall in abduction scenarios. Our culture has been saturated with pictures, descriptions, horror movies, and many other assorted mass media exploitations.

Garbled memory can occur in three areas: when the memory is stored (encoded), while it is being stored, and when it is retrieved. Something could be misunderstood at the time and hence an erroneous memory could be stored. Memory is subject to deterioration and change over time while in storage. And our current expectations and beliefs can alter our perception of a memory when it is recalled. Careful experiments have shown that it is remarkably easy to influence people so that they come to believe in memories that are false.

These remarks are especially critical to evaluation of the recovery of abduction memories. When the investigators go into repeated sessions, and instruct the subjects to remember what they recovered between sessions, they enhance creation of false scenarios. This was especially bad with Betty Andreasson because she was anxious to improve her income and her fame by providing sketches of her so-called recalled scenes and personalities. This intensified her imagination, thus provoking increased confabulation until, at the latter part of *The Andreasson Affair* we find nothing but imagination. As Fowler proceeded through the sessions he more and more lost reliable information. His later books, again with Betty’s drawings done in collaboration to sell books, are nothing more than sheer imagination.

Because of the ability of the mind to reconstruct memories of events that never occurred, the method of post hypnotic amnesia is highly important to more reliable memory recall. All abduction investigators of which I am aware, except Benjamin Simon, made the fatal error of remembering recall details between sessions. He had Betty and Barney Hill suppress their recall until he felt he had exhausted their experience details, at which time he permitted them full recall. But, as I noted above, that did not eliminate the possibility of confabulation. All other investigators, because of their driving desire to obtain details of events, multiplied the opportunities for perverted materials. The subjects had adequate time to review their memories, explain to themselves the reason for the events, offer a mental justification for the information, and otherwise shape the recall to expectations, theirs and the investigators.

Out of this horrendous mess we are left with pieces of information which can tell us something about our Visitors and their purpose, but the results are fraught with potential for great error, and for conceptual horrors.

How sad.

I shall now illustrate how the desires, expectations, and psychology of the investigators heavily pollute reports obtained under hypnosis. But through those filters we find valuable information.

Since the subjects respond according to what they think the investigator wants to hear, the details and color (tone) of their reports is determined beforehand. If the investigators had been neutral, not exhibiting desire toward a belief in UFOs or abductions, the material would have been much more reliable. The work of Benjamin Simon with Betty and Barney Hill is especially important because he was a psychiatric professional who had no personal interest in the UFO phenomena, and who did not exhibit prior expectations to Betty and Barney. Unfortunately, Ray Fowler's investigation of Betty Andreasson, Budd Hopkins's work, the studies of David Jacobs, and the research of John Mack were all done with prior knowledge by their subjects on their intents and purposes. They all carried that heavy baggage. The subjects responded accordingly. Then each published book, elevated by movies and television shows and documentaries, multiplied social expectations, and a general culture of horror images, gave us literally tortured views of our celestial Visitors.

For that we all shall pay a terrible price.