

BOOK REVIEWS

Anomalous Experiences & Trauma: Current Theoretical, Research and Clinical Perspectives, edited by Rima E. Laibow, Robert N. Sollod and John P. Wilson. Center for Treatment and Research of Experienced Anomalous Trauma (TREAT): 13 Summit Terrace, Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522; 1992. 320 pp., \$35 (paper).

In these Proceedings of TREAT II, a 1992 conference held in Blacksburg (VA) at the instigation of Rima Laibow, 17 authors express their views in 19 articles. The intent is to acquaint psychologically oriented clinicians with the dark side of the UFO phenomenon—abductions and their associated trauma; and to attract a larger fraction of them to expand their outlook on this field of study. Although the quality and relevance of the 19 articles varies, the number of typos is more abundant than is desirable, and no addresses or backgrounds of the individual contributors are included, I believe the Proceedings should succeed in their modest goal.

The experiences of anomalous trauma (EAT) considered do not necessarily refer to UFO experiences; a few of the articles treat the latter only peripherally if at all. Shaffia Laue's article reviews non-UFO-related abusive childhood events, while David Cheek discusses the retrieval of information from witnesses under hypnosis. Bonnie Greenwell presents a comprehensive review of the Kundalini spiritual awakening process—which might seem irrelevant except that it pops up also in the article by Ring & Rosing on the increased psychic awareness and other traits shared by those who have undergone UFO experiences and those who have had near-death experiences.

In two articles, Rima Laibow gives an excellent description of the manifestations of patients who have reported EAT; these include UFO abductees who report positive experiences as well as negative. Neither class of patients tends to be psychopathic. Laibow discusses differences between how the UFO abductee is typically viewed by the conventional therapist and by the rare therapist who is knowledgeable about the UFO phenomenon. In passing she notes (as others have) that during hypno-therapy the UFO abductee resists being led or diverted by the clinician. The question, whether the abduction phenomenon could be either a case of mass psychogenic illness or a response to occasional media attention, is addressed by Robert Hall, who concludes that neither is at all probable.

Robert Sollod and John Wilson call for abductees to be treated with understanding and consideration and to be encouraged to join support groups. The time seems to be past when the abduction investigator/hypnotist was supposed to advise his abductee to stay ignorant of the UFO phenomenon, to read no UFO books and to talk with no other abductees, so as to preserve an uncontaminated mind for scientific research.

Bruce Maccabee discusses the physical evidence that would help the skeptic learn, if he were to read of it, that UFOs indeed represent real objects that can interact with our environment. In a compact summary of 46 UFO incidents, John Schuessler does the same with respect to harmful radiation-like trauma inflicted upon unlucky close-range UFO witnesses. Most outstanding are the two contributions by Thomas Bullard reviewing UFO abductions and analyzing their coherency. He notes that the overall evidence would indicate that this phenomenon is made up of real events despite their seemingly bizarre and inexplicable nature.

However, in a well written article David Pritchard argues that no amount of evidence from abductees—including implants—will be convincing to scientists as a whole; i.e. nothing short of such massive evidence as crashed saucers and dead aliens that could be called up at will. In the lead article by Henry Bauer, the reader is made to understand how this could be: why science has difficulties with studies of the anomalous, and thus why investigators of anomalous experiences have grave difficulty in bringing the reality of those phenomena to the attention of the scientific community. I believe that SSE members will concur strongly with Bauer's conclusions.

Michael Swords first acknowledges the firm connection between abductions and UFO-related events and then argues that it might all be a result of child abuse. Swords finds some company in Joe Nyman, who concludes that the abduction phenomenon cannot be caused by UFO entities because abductions seem much too frequent relative to the frequency of UFO reports, judging from polls showing the prevalence of certain indicator experiences like missing time, going out-of-body, and the waking-up-scared feeling that someone else is in the bedroom. However, Nyman's numerical estimate of the consequent frequency of UFO-encounter reports to be expected may be inflated by a factor of 1,000 or so, since he failed to account for: (a) some fraction of these indicator experiences being due to non-UFO related experiences or "normal" psychic events, (b) UFO aliens processing multiple abductees at a time during a single night's outing, (c) the aliens not allowing their craft to be glimpsed by victims' relatives or neighbors except some small fraction of the time, (d) the great reluctance of abductees to report their own abduction-related UFO sightings, except perhaps years later when no longer newsworthy, and (e) the fraction of abductees who do not have the opportunity to glimpse the UFO from the outside and so cannot report a UFO sighting.

Unfortunately, none of the contributors discusses the essence of what the knowledgeable and curious abduction ufologist should be considering: that the UFO intelligence involved would evidently far exceed our own in knowledge and psychic abilities as well as in technology. Judging from the ubiquitous use of mental telepathy during UFO abductions, these capabilities include monitoring our thoughts. So in pondering the whys and wherefores of it all, we should bear in mind that these aliens are apparently in control, that what they can do seems indistinguishable to us from magic, and that many of them are not very ethical by our standards; we should then learn something by noting that they seem purposely to avoid affecting society as a whole and

leaving sufficient evidence that would force science and society to believe what a majority of humans are presently unprepared to believe.

(A lengthier review, by Michael Swords, is to be found in *Journal of UFO Studies*, 4 (1992), 201-205.)

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The Case for Astrology by John Anthony West. London & New York: Penguin/Viking, 1991. 515 pp. \$25.

(JAW wrote a book with the same title in 1970, but this is substantially a new book, taking into account recent developments.)

"Astrology is true because it is a system of magic" (p. 223).

West believes firmly that astrology works, and he is angry with those of us who fail to share that belief. This failure he attributes to prejudice: because we are a priori convinced that astrology cannot work, we are reluctant to study it seriously. If we did, we would realize that our criticisms are beside the point, because we are judging astrology as if it were a scientific system, when in fact it is a magical one.

If West had the courage to keep to this bold approach, the critic who ventured to question the viability of astrology would be effectively disarmed. Instead of evaluating it by the cause-and-effect yardsticks of the mundane world, for which the scientific method—or indeed, everyday common-sense—might be considered sufficient qualification, a critic would need to verse himself in the occult "sciences" before he would be qualified to venture an opinion.

However, West has chosen not to abide on the high ground of his magic-or-nothing approach, perhaps because he knows that although the occult is a safe refuge, it is also likely to be a lonely one, into which few skeptics will venture. Instead, he descends into the plain to do battle with his critics, seeking to persuade us that even his magical system can be seen as scientifically acceptable if we will only view it in the right way. But in so doing, he allows his demonstration to be flawed from the outset by a fatal ambiguity—an ambiguity which is to be found in a great many discussions of astrology: the failure to distinguish between the system of ideas which constitutes astrology per se, and the premises on whose basis that system is constructed.

The possibility that there may exist some kind of correlation, direct or (more probably) indirect, between the position of the celestial bodies at a given moment and the character (and consequently destiny) of a person who happens to