

tion through a wall in a bubble, the mysterious mutant fetus, the transferred embryo, the creatures suspended in tubes, the occlusions of memory, the great-eyed animals with cold voices, the prophecies of doom or transformation, *etc.*

I am not about to spring any unseemly revelations, leap from the UFO closet. But it did focus my amazed attention on the ubiquity of these narrative elements, the odd way in which they seem to have seeped into our dreams and our unconscious (or out of it), long before they were written in fat lurid paperbacks or dramatized for network television and Spielberg movies. I do not know their source, and nobody else does either.

Matheson is surely correct: The abduction mythos *is* a culturally created phenomenon or perhaps a spontaneously emergent one, catching in its slowly shifting narratives the changing pressures, fears, and hopes of turn-of-millennium technological societies. I hope other scholars, drawing on more recent techniques and perspectives, soon open out the trail he has broken.

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At the Threshold by Charles F. Emmons. Mill Spring, NC: Wild Flower Press, 1997. xi + 268 pp.

Skeptics unfamiliar with the field often dismiss the UFO phenomenon with something like, “If it were true, then surely science would recognize it by now.” And even for people sympathetic to ufology, the lack of mainstream acceptance is something of a puzzle. Surely, given the reported size of alien craft and the frequency of sightings, one would expect overwhelming evidence despite institutional resistance.

At the Threshold goes a long way toward resolving this puzzle. Author Charles Emmons, a professor of sociology at Gettysburg College, adopts primarily a sociological perspective—but not to explain away the UFO phenomenon as myth and folklore. Instead, *At the Threshold* examines the social mechanisms through which orthodox opinion has come to reject UFOs and through which ufology has become a deviant field. It also surveys the spectrum of opinion—among scientists, skeptics, and believers—regarding UFOs and explores some of the challenges UFOs pose to science, both as a social institution and as a method of understanding reality.

Indeed, there is much explaining to be done. Emmons overviews the entire spectrum of UFO phenomena—from sightings, to physical evidence, to abductions, to channeling and other associated paranormal phenomena, making it clear that there is no facile, obvious means to explain away any category of UFO events. In discussing false-memory syndrome, for instance, Emmons discusses the precautions that hypnotherapists use to test for suggestibility and

notes the corroborations between hypnotically induced memories and other evidence.

At the Threshold gives the lay reader a good feel for the type of dialogue that exists among debunkers, skeptics, and true believers. Without going into the minutiae of the debates, it overviews each type of UFO phenomenon, the explanations typically used to debunk it, and the severe weaknesses of these explanations. Emmons makes a convincing case that although there may be no incontrovertible evidence for any single UFO event, taken as a whole they defy conventional explanation. The debunkers' position is portrayed as a hodgepodge of *ad hoc* explanations, ridicule of opponents, and out-of-hand rejection of evidence that "couldn't be true and therefore isn't true." Emmons refrains from impugning anybody's personal integrity, but his point that CSI-COP and the debunkers are caught in a narrow "reality tunnel" is hard to resist.

At the Threshold draws on an impressive array of secondary sources, representing skeptical positions as well as those of ufologists. He also has gathered some new data (on ufology, not UFOs) that will make this book relevant even to seasoned researchers in the field. The surveys and interviews with mainstream astronomers are particularly illuminating in understanding how ufology became a deviant science.

Emmons has found that most astronomers are shockingly uninformed about ufology, despite their majority opinion that the existence of extraterrestrial intelligence is highly likely. As Emmons carefully elucidates through interviews and statistics, astronomers (and other scientists) shun the field mostly because there is no funding for UFO research and because an interest in UFOs could ruin their academic careers. Such institutional mechanisms are abetted by media sensationalism and (official) government insistence that it has no evidence of UFOs, to isolate ufology from the rest of (mainstream) science.

The disagreement between skeptics and believers as to what constitutes the realm of scientific possibility is mirrored within ufology itself. *At the Threshold* devotes an entire chapter to the New Age versus nuts-and-bolts division in ufology. While giving a clear exposition of the factions and controversies among ufologists, *At the Threshold* laudably avoids delving too deeply into the Byzantine web of conjecture, rebuttal, and conspiracy theory that has grown up around many of ufology's famous cases and phenomena.

Just as orthodox science has no justification for summarily excluding ufology from its domain, neither can one justify excluding any UFO phenomena, no matter how New Age or weird (and some are weird indeed!) from ufology itself. Thus, taking UFOs seriously calls into question the very boundaries of science—not just scientific fact, but scientific method as well. Of course, ufology is not the only field to pose such a challenge; Emmons argues that such a challenge may even be raised within science itself by the New Physics. Emmons' final message is thus a call for tolerance and a suspension of judgment—an appropriate attitude for any field of scientific inquiry, but particularly for one that so powerfully challenges so many fundamental assumptions about reality.

At the Threshold is written in a clear accessible style, free from jargon and free from any obvious agenda to debunk UFOs or prove they exist. Moreover, because *At the Threshold* covers most major UFO-related issues, it makes a fine introduction both to the content of the field and to its sociology. Emmons has done a commendable job of placing ufology in a social context that takes its researchers and discoveries at face value.

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Minds in Many Pieces: Revealing the Spiritual Side of Multiple Personality Disorder by Ralph B. Allison, M.D., with Ted Schwarz, 2nd ed. Los Osos, CA: CIE Publishing, 1998. 208 pp. ISBN 0-9668949-0-1.

The author of this book is probably the most experienced and honored investigator of Multiple Personality Disorder in the world, and certainly in the United States. His foundational papers on the topic were published in the 1970s, when Dr. Allison started a tradition of giving workshops on the diagnosis and treatment of Dissociative Identity Disorders at meetings of the American Psychiatric Association. Discoveries and conclusions of the last 20 years are featured in the current edition of this work. Certain tentative opinions on some borderline or parapsychological issues followed from Dr. Allison's research.

Since the topic is, even today, not widely studied in clinical and therapeutic medicine, Allison's account of how he became interested, and of early vicissitudes and later conflicts, deserves careful attention by borderline investigators.

There is a fairly standard aetiology to be discovered in most highly developed cases of multiple personality disorder. Very early trauma and continued conflict within the family would surprise no student of cases. Allison is most impressed by and offers detailed discussion of cases that are not typical. Some of those even suggest spirit possession or successive life histories of the same "essential" person.

Dr. Allison, himself, does not endorse either concept. He notes, however, that therapeutic methods suggestive of exorcism have been used, and sometimes were found effective in his own experience. The recommended attitude is pragmatic. If a certain procedure helps the patient recover unity of personality, it may be used before any conclusive interpretation of the forces or mechanisms involved. Some of the methods of exorcism are like those of monotheistic religions while others are more animistic in character. At one point in his career, Allison was investigated by the medical staff of an institution with which he was associated, but any suspicion of unprofessional practice was judged to be unwarranted and totally without merit. The pragmatic viewpoint