

## Correspondence

### CRYPTOMNESIA AND PLAGIARISM

DEAR SIR,

In his otherwise excellent article on "Cryptomnesia and Plagiarism" (*Journal*, November 1965), Dr. F. Kräupl Taylor makes several inaccurate statements about the case report in *The Search for Bridey Murphy*. These errors probably arise from Dr. Kräupl Taylor's unfamiliarity with later editions of the book by Mr. Morey Bernstein and his dependence on Mr. M. Gardner's *Fads and Fallacies*.

Dr. Kräupl Taylor first states that the search in Ireland "to find out whether the story about Bridey Murphy could be true . . . was . . . unsuccessful." Although this search did not lead to the identification of any person whose life corresponded in details to that of the "Bridey Murphy" elicited by hypnotic regression, it *did* uncover facts verifying a great many of the names of peoples and places mentioned by "Bridey Murphy", as well as her descriptions of places and customs of that period. Furthermore, the verifying facts uncovered were frequently turned up only after extensive search into records, old maps, and other documents of early 19th century Ireland. A number of the items mentioned by "Bridey Murphy" were originally denied by scholars or unknown to them and were later verified as correct. Unfortunately, the first edition of Bernstein's book reported only some preliminary inquiries conducted by correspondence. After its publication, Mr. William J. Barker spent three weeks in Ireland in the work of verification. The products of his investigations were then included in a paperback edition of *The Search for Bridey Murphy* published later in 1956. This material, together with some additional evidence, has been incorporated also in a reprinting of the original book in 1965.

Dr. Kräupl Taylor further implies that the acquaintance of the subject of the Bridey Murphy experiments with an Irish woman named Bridie Murphy (as maiden name) adequately explains the provenance of the correct information stated by "Bridey Murphy". There are several points to note here. First, although the subject of the experiments did know the children of this woman for a time, there is no evidence whatever that she ever knew the woman herself, and she has no recollection whatever of having done so. But even if the subject of the experiments had known this woman, this alone would not permit assignment of the information

given out by "Bridey Murphy" to this origin. The woman in question came from County Mayo and not from the areas of Ireland (chiefly Cork and Belfast) described by "Bridey Murphy". And "Bridey Murphy" made no reference to County Mayo. Also, this woman almost certainly could not have known the various recondite details of the life of 19th century Ireland which required considerable effort for verification.

Dr. Kräupl Taylor also states that the subject of the experiments was "known as a talented actress who could assume a heavy Irish brogue". There is no evidence to support this statement. It is denied by the subject of the experiments. It seems to have gained currency when it was discovered that the subject had once taken some lessons in recitation. The teacher of the subject (then a child) could not recall that any of the pieces learned by the girl had been Irish.

When *The Search for Bridey Murphy* was first published (without the later verifications of some of the declarations of "Bridey"), critics set upon it with vigour and attempted to explain it as an instance of cryptomnesia. Some of these critics embellished the scanty facts they uncovered with surmises and plain inventions. It is regrettable that these should be caught up and reprinted in scholarly journals. Readers who wish to study both sides of the question of cryptomnesia in this case would do well to read C. J. Ducasse's "A Critical Examination of the Belief in a Life After Death" (Springfield, Illinois. Charles C. Thomas, 1961). Ducasse devotes a chapter to the Bridey Murphy case and examines carefully the evidence bearing on the question of cryptomnesia in it. The new edition of *The Search for Bridey Murphy* (New York, Doubleday and Co., 1965) contains a chapter by William J. Barker in which the claims for the discovery of a human source for "Bridey's" information are undermined.

In drawing attention to these matters, I am not saying that the Bridey Murphy case could not have been one of cryptomnesia; but I am saying that there is no evidence that it is a case of cryptomnesia. It is one thing to conjecture about possible sources of information allegedly remembered by someone whether hypnotized or not. It is quite another thing, and much more difficult, to identify positively a source or sources for the material remembered. This task was accomplished in the Sackville-West case. There the almost word-for-word similarities of the

two poems and the dated correspondence establish cryptomnesia as by far the most probable explanation. But this clear identification of a source has not been accomplished so far in the Bridey Murphy case. This failure does not in turn automatically confirm the interpretation of the case as an instance of either paranormal perception or reincarnation. These also remain quite unproven in the case. But until positive evidence supporting cryptomnesia is brought forward, the paranormal explanations are not ruled out.

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#### PERSEVERATION IN SCHIZOPHRENIA AND DEMENTIA

DEAR SIR,

I was interested in Freeman and Gathercole's (1) pathopsychological study of this subject, having long felt (2) that such an approach to schizophrenia was being neglected. Schizophrenic symptoms and signs thus more clearly delineated psychologically should also help to advance the cause of psychophysiology. It would be interesting to know, however, whether Freeman and Gathercole consider their "compulsive repetition" to be synonymous with stereotypy, since the latter has been described by Henderson and Gillespie (3) as monotonous repetition, long after fatigue would ordinarily have caused relaxation, of an activity which may have begun in an understandable way but from which meaning has subsequently partially or wholly departed. The same authors defined perseveration as persistent repetition in spite of a patient's efforts to change the topic or produce new movement, and this equates well enough with Freeman and Gathercole's "impairment of switching", although the latter give no clue as to whether any subjective sense of frustrated volition was experienced by their patients.

To enlarge on the possible psychophysiological significance of such observations, when comparing jargon dysphasia (4) recently with "verbigeration" I encountered a difference of response between the organic and the functional, similar and perhaps related to that which Freeman and Gathercole have demonstrated within perseveration. I found that patients afflicted with such schizophrenic disorder of language could apparently read a text almost perfectly, in striking contrast to their disturbed spontaneous speech, whereas the jargon dysphasic in question was able to produce written or spoken

thoughts somewhat better formed linguistically (5) than his difficulty with straightforward reading might have led one to expect. The psychophysiological mechanisms involved in my own observations (and maybe those of Freeman and Gathercole) therefore appear to be a disturbance of "fluid" spontaneity underlying "functional" gibberish, as opposed to difficulty with "crystallized" recall behind "structural" jargon.

I have used the word "verbigeration" (6) to mean schizophrenic language (as opposed to thought disorder), because Henderson and Gillespie describe verbigeration as the most complete degree of "disconnection" up to complete incoherence, i.e. simply a flood of unconnected words, some of them oft-repeated and similar to a word salad. Whilst containing the "ideational" perseveration of Freeman and Gathercole, this definition admittedly makes no reference to any "neologistic" element which it may have in common with paraphasia of organic origin as described by Brain (i.e., the utterance of *non-existent* or incorrect words) in his account of jargon aphasia (7). Other authorities (8), however, have described paraphasia as the dysphasic use of wrong words or words in wrong and senseless combination, without making any reference to neologism, so that the failure on the part of Henderson and Gillespie to mention neologisms in their account of verbigeration may simply have been an oversight, especially as they stress that perseveration is often associated with paraphasia, where Brain does not mention this.

Finally, may I evoke memories of an earlier case of jargon aphasia due to a lesion of the left middle cerebral artery, described by Mott (9), and of Mott's other contributions on the subject (10-12). They illustrate the similarity of his interest in the analysis of intellectual function to my own (13).

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